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# Βασανίζειν

## *Practical Experience as the Touchstone of Platonic Education*

### 1. Introduction

Socrates remarks throughout the *Republic* that the education of the guardians encompasses both theory and practice.<sup>1</sup> At the end of book III (412E-414A) he explains which powers threaten their education and which tests they must be set in order to check their capacity for retaining true belief. The ones who pass these tests become rulers: practical experience demonstrates whether education has been successful or not.<sup>2</sup> I will argue that practical experience plays the same role in book VII: the philosopher must be sent back to the cave for fifteen years and tested (539E-540A). The analysis of the image of the cave will demonstrate that the tasks the philosopher is set mirror the ones in book III: the disruptive powers he is faced with are the same. In both passages the image of the touchstone (βάσανος) plays a crucial role. As rubbing gold upon the touchstone (βασανίζειν) is the only way to check whether it is actually pure gold or not, so practical experience is the only way to check whether rulers-to-be have pure gold in their souls – that is to say, their souls are led by the rational part. Education without practical experience is insufficient: only under testing the guardians reveal the gold in their souls and prove to be worthy of ruling.

### 2. Book III, 412E-414A

This short passage is crucial to understanding what Plato means by practical experience and why it is needed. Yet, these pages have gone largely unnoticed.<sup>3</sup> After describing the musical and gymnastic education, that engenders in the guardians' souls harmony and true belief, Socrates states:

I think we should observe them at all ages, to make sure they are the guardians and defenders of this belief, and that neither magic (γοητευόμενοι) nor force (βιαζόμενοι) can make them forget, and jettison their conviction (δόξαν) that they should do what is best for the city.<sup>4</sup>

Training to become a guardian is life-long and involves learning music, gymnastics, and the ability to retain throughout one's life the harmony acquired thanks to these disciplines. Guardians are always exposed to the risk of forgetting the opinion of what is best for the city. Socrates asserts that belief can be lost by our minds (δόξα ἐξιέναι ἐκ διανοίας) in two ways:

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<sup>1</sup> In book II, Socrates states that the guardian's job requires knowledge and practice (ἐπιστήμην ... μελέτην, 374D5-6; τέχνης ... ἐπιμελείας, 374E2). Rich people, conversely, have neither knowledge nor practice in war (ἐπιστήμη ... ἐμπειρία, 422C6). In book VI, the guardians are the ones who know about each thing that is and have practical experience (ἐγνωκότας ... ἐμπειρία, 484D6-7), and the rest of human excellence: indeed, they match virtue in word and deed (ἔργῳ τε καὶ λόγῳ, 498E4-499A1). This is the reason why Socrates asks which study and way of life (μαθημάτων τε καὶ ἐπιτηδευμάτων, 502D1) will prepare them for their task. Their education requires both knowledge and exercise (μάθησιν ... ἄσκησιν, 536B3).

<sup>2</sup> This is the first time the distinction between guardians and rulers appears in the *Republic*.

<sup>3</sup> In most of the works on the *Republic* and on platonic education, these pages are barely mentioned – if not ignored altogether. Cf. for instance Stenzel 1928, ch. III; Nettleship 1935, Jaeger 1944, book III, ch. 9; Murphy 1951; Cross-Woozley 1964; Friedländer 1964-75; Annas 1981, Gill 1985, Scolnicov 1988, ch. 10-11-12; Reeve 1988, Gastaldi 1999, Ferrari 2007, Renaut 2014.

<sup>4</sup> *Resp.* 412E5-8. Transl. Ferrari-Griffith 2000. I will always use this translation.

willingly, with our consent (this happens when a false belief is replaced with a better one); unwillingly, without our consent, in the case of all true belief (πᾶσα ἡ ἀληθής).

True belief – the one guardians are endowed with – can be lost in three ways: theft, force, seduction (κλαπέντες, βιασθέντες, γοητευθέντες, 413B1). Each of these is briefly explained.

By theft Socrates means either people who are talked into changing their minds, because some argument (λόγος) makes them forget their belief, or people who forget because of the passage of time. The latter condition is clear: time can make people forget. This is why guardians must be held in check throughout their lives: showing once the ability to act in accordance with the principles of their education is not enough; it is necessary to hold on to these principles in every action despite the forces that drive away from the true belief of what is best for the city. As for the former condition, I think that Socrates is referring to the arguments of the sophists and to their ability to understand and manipulate the mood of the masses. This topic is analyzed in book VI (especially 493A-C): Socrates describes their ability to understand the pains and pleasures of the masses and to use their speech to manipulate them as if they were a large beast. The sophists call good what pleases them, even though it is not: in this way, they strengthen false beliefs on what is truly pleasurable and painful, good and bad.

By force Socrates means those whom pain (ἀλγηδών) or grief (ὀδύνη) causes to change their beliefs. This remark receives no explanation. However, it is clear that pain has the force to make people forget their true belief. The words ἀλγηδών and ὀδύνη can mean both bodily and psychic pain. Several examples can be found in the *Republic*: in the allegory of the cave, the prisoner who is freed from his chains feels pain (ἀλγοῖ) and at first he wants to turn back to the familiar realm of shadows (515C9); people who are ill are mistaken in thinking that the cessation of pain is truly pleasurable (583D3-4, here recurs the verb ὠδύναμαι); the man who grieves for his lost son is unable to moderate his grief, resist to it and reflect on what has happened (606A-C). All these examples show the power pain has over human beings: it impairs their judgment; it makes them acquire a wrong perspective on what is truly pleasurable and painful; it prevents them from pursuing true belief. The verb Socrates uses to describe the action of pain, βιάζω, indicates its constraining force: the power of pain is hardly resistible, it overpowers human beings.

Finally, by seduction Socrates means that there are people whose beliefs change because they are seduced by pleasure (ὑφ' ἡδονῆς κηληθέντες), or because there is something they are afraid of (ὑπὸ φόβου τι δέισαντες). Glaucon agrees that all the things that deceive us do look like a form of magic (γοητεύειν πάντα ὅσα ἀπατᾶ). The seduction operated by pleasure will be discussed in book IX: bodily pleasures are not true ones because they are just reliefs from pain; however, most people regard them as true and worth pursuing for their own sake. Thus, they are caught in an endless circle of depletion and replenishment that cannot bring true satisfaction. They are deceived (ἀπατῶνται, 585A6) by the misleading appearances of these pleasures, but there is nothing reliable in these illusions, it's all sorcery (γοητεία, 584A10). The allure of such pleasures makes people forget the correct opinion about them – the opinion that says that they are only a shadow-picture, an illusion. Fear too can make people change their opinion. Fear is elsewhere defined as the expectation of future pain.<sup>5</sup> Socrates seems to refer to the fact that also future expectations can be misleading.<sup>6</sup>

Guardians are always faced with the risk of losing true belief. Therefore,

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Phil.* 32C; *Leg.* 644C10.

<sup>6</sup> Plato is aware of this problem. In the *Philebus*, indeed, the discussion deals at length with the interplay of memory, opinion and expectation, and with how our memories and opinions shape our expectations (cf. especially 33A-36B).

we must look for those who are the best defenders of their conviction that in any situation they must do what they think is in the city's best interests for them to do. From their earliest childhood we must watch them, and set them the kind of tasks which could most easily make them lose sight of this aim (ἐπιλανθάνοιτο), and lead them astray (ἐξαπατῶτο).<sup>7</sup>

Guardians must be watched throughout their lives because they could be led astray at any moment, and they must be set tasks in which their endurance is checked. There is a particular kind of task for each of the three possible causes of loss of true belief.

Guardians must be faced with tasks that could lead them astray and deceive them. Only the ones who always remember their aim, have good memory and are not deceived (μνήμονα καὶ δυσεξαπατήτων, 413D1) must be chosen. These guardians are able to resist to the deceiving power of the passage of time (they are endowed with good memory) and of arguments that can lead them astray.

With regard to the second cause of loss of opinion, they must be given hardship, pains and trials (πόνους, ἀγληδῶνας, ἀγῶνας, 413D4). Their resistance to pain must be tested; some of these pains and trials are probably sport competitions.<sup>8</sup> As for hardship, the word πόνος encompasses a wide range of meanings: physical toil (i.e., the toil of gymnastics), psychic toil (mathematics is a πόνος, 526C1); it can mean any hardship suffered during one's life, either physical or not (in the myth of Er, Odysseus remembers his former πόνοι, 620C5), and even the toil of political life (see below, par. 3); anyway, πόνος always entails endurance and the capacity for resistance.

As for the third type of test, they must be exposed first to danger, to find out if they are easily frightened,<sup>9</sup> and immediately after to pleasure: they will be tested more than gold in the fire (βασανίζοντας πολὺ μᾶλλον ἢ χρυσὸν ἐν πυρὶ, 413E1-2).

It is worth reporting Socrates' conclusions:

Does this one stand out in every situation as immune to magic (δυσγοήτευτος) and endowed with grace? Is he a good guardian of himself and the musical education he has received? Does he show qualities of rhythm and harmony in all the tests we set him? Is he the kind of person who would be the greatest use to himself and the city? From our children, from our young and grown men the one who under constant testing (βασανιζόμενον) emerges as pure is the one who should be appointed as a ruler and guardian of our city. [...] The one who fails the tests we should reject.<sup>10</sup>

Guardians must be tested at all ages, throughout their lives, because in each and every action they perform they are at risk of losing the harmony they received in their education. Being trained in music and gymnastics is not sufficient: they must show their ability to retain the harmonic disposition of the soul they received when faced with the passage of time, misleading arguments, pain and pleasure. Everything they do is the touchstone (βάσανος) that shows whether they have gold in their souls,<sup>11</sup> or they are not able to preserve true belief and they are

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<sup>7</sup> *Resp.* 413C5-9.

<sup>8</sup> The word ἀγῶνας might refer to military training: at 374B the skill (τεχνική) possessed by the guardians is defined as περὶ τὸν πόλεμον ἀγωνία.

<sup>9</sup> As for danger, the young must watch battles: 466E ff.; 537A.

<sup>10</sup> *Resp.* 413E2-414A7.

<sup>11</sup> It is worth noting that the discussion then turns to the famous Phoenician tale, in which gold-related imagery plays a crucial role.

led astray. Having a true belief means being able to act in accordance with the inner harmony engendered through habituation and exercise. Guardians are able to recognize what is beautiful and well-proportionate in all the situations they are faced with because it corresponds to their inner beauty and harmony. The passage of time, arguments, pains and pleasures threaten their inner harmony: practical experience reveals whether they are able to resist to such powers and to hold on to the principles of their education. Only the ones who show the ability to rule themselves in every occasion have the right to rule over others.

### 3. Book VII

The introduction of the difference between δόξα and ἐπιστήμη in book V makes education in music and gymnastics insufficient.<sup>12</sup> Now the rulers are not only the best among the guardians, but philosophers – lovers of true being. Therefore, new education is required: this will be described in book VII. Although philosophers have to spend many years learning theoretical disciplines (arithmetics, geometry, stereometry, astronomy, harmony and dialectic), practical experience is not discarded. Conversely, it is again the touchstone that demonstrates the effectiveness of their education. Indeed, after spending many years learning these disciplines, they must be sent back to the cave and tested:

After that [training in dialectic] you will have to make them go back down into the cave we were talking about. You will have to compel them to hold military command, and any other position which is suitable for the young, so that others will not have an advantage over them in practical experience (ἐμπειρία). And even in these positions they must be on trial (βασανιστέοι), to see if they will stand firm when they are pulled in different directions, or if they will to some extent give way.<sup>13</sup>

Knowledge without experience is insufficient: this is the reason why they must be sent back to the cave. While there, they must hold political office and display the ability to retain the true belief on what is the good of the city as a whole, despite the disruptive forces they are faced with.<sup>14</sup> Their δόξα is not grounded on habituation anymore; it is grounded on epistemic

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<sup>12</sup> Albeit insufficient, musical and gymnastic education is still needed as a first step towards more comprehensive education. Socrates remarks several times in the dialogue that the education described in book III is not discarded, but becomes part of a longer and more difficult training: cf. 502E-503A; 503E-504A; 535A.

<sup>13</sup> *Resp.* 539E2-540A2.

<sup>14</sup> In the following pages I will not be able to deal at length with a difficult problem: the meaning of the distinction between ἐπιστήμη and δόξα. My argument relies on a reading of this distinction that falls under the so-called “two-world view”. The power of δόξα is directed toward the sensible world: δόξα, therefore, is unreliable because its object belongs to the ever-changing sensible world. The power of ἐπιστήμη, conversely, concerns the true, never-changing being, and thus is true. The philosophers back in the cave have to exercise their power for δόξα, because they have to deal with the ever-changing and fluctuating mundane situation. While the δόξα of the guardians in book III is grounded on habituation, the one of the philosophers is grounded on knowledge. The philosophers in the cave can tell apart true and false beliefs not on the grounds of their habits, but on the grounds of knowledge of what is – and they can give reasons for their position (see below, note 17), because they have experience of the distance between the sensible and the intelligible (520C). Nevertheless, since the sensible realm of the cave is unreliable and not stable, there is always the chance that they might be led astray and deceived by sensible appearances. The “two-world view” has been notoriously challenged by Annas 1981 and Fine 1978, but their views have been criticized by Gonzalez 1996 and Delcomminette 2008, on which my interpretation relies. See especially Gonzalez 1996 for a thorough literary review.

knowledge of the ideas gained thanks to years spent practicing dialectic.<sup>15</sup> The analysis of the image of the cave demonstrates that the tasks they are set are meant to test their resistance to the same disruptive forces listed in book III: the passage of time, arguments, pains and pleasures.<sup>16</sup> The first test is the passage of time. The return to the cave is the longest period in platonic education: fifteen years. There are two reasons why the philosopher is sent back to the cave for such a long time. First, getting accustomed again to seeing the shadows takes time: this period of acclimatisation is anything but short (ὁ χρόνος μὴ πάνυ ὀλίγος εἶη τῆς συνηθείας, 517A2; συνεθιστέον, 520C3). Second, as in book III, the passage of time tests the capacity for good memory, which is one of the features of the philosopher-ruler (486D2; 535C1). His memory is different from that of the cave-dwellers. In the cave, there are rewards and prizes for the persons who have the best memory for the shadows. They remember which came earlier or later, and they can predict which is going to come next (516C9-D2). Conversely, the objects of the philosopher's memory are the ideas.

The second task is resistance to λόγοι. In the cave, the prisoners talk to each other (διαλέγεσθαι, 515B5) about the shadows, regarding them as true realities (515C1-2). Their λόγοι deal with these objects as if they were objects of knowledge, but their arguments about them are laughable: the philosopher who contemplated true objects of knowledge pities them (516E6).<sup>17</sup> The philosopher is capable of supporting his claims with true arguments, because of his education in dialectic.<sup>18</sup> However, the cave-dwellers will laugh at him (γέλωτα, 517A2). According to the prisoners, the philosopher makes a fool of himself (φαίνεται σφόδρα γελοῖος, 517D6) because he is not able to identify the shadows: his arguments, indeed, have nothing to do with them. They do not realize that they are the fools, because they argue about shadows. The philosopher, despite adapting again to the dark world of the cave, must resist to the false arguments of the cave-dwellers, according to which the shadows they see are objects of knowledge. He must hold on to what he learnt so as not to be deceived by the λόγοι that concern the shadows.

Third, resistance to pain must be tested in book III through pains (ἀλγηδόνες), hardship (πόννοι) and trials (ἀγῶνες). In the cave, the prisoner who is freed feels pain (ἀλγοῖ, 515C9; ἀλγεῖν, 515E2), and his ascent out of the cave is painful (ὀδυνᾶσθαι, 515E8). The return to the cave is painful too. Exploiting the eyesight metaphor, Socrates explains that there are two correlative painful disturbances (ἐπιταράξεις, 518A2) of the eye: the one which is felt when passing from darkness to light, and the one experienced when passing from light to darkness. Therefore, sending guardians back to the cave tests their capacity for enduring the cognitive pain of

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<sup>15</sup> However, it is worth noting that up to this point knowledge of the idea of the Good has not been reached yet.

<sup>16</sup> As far as I know, this analogy has never been noticed. Cf. the works quoted above, note 2, and also Weiss 2012; Jaeger 1944, book III, ch. 9, observes that education does not produce mechanical results, but does not explore this interesting line of thought. Moreover, the topic of testing through practical experience is not stressed in the wide bibliography on the topic of “compulsion to rule” (see Kraut 1999 for a thorough literary review).

<sup>17</sup> Compare 493D-E: the masses do not know beauty or good itself, but only the many beautiful or good things. Yet, sophists strengthen these false opinions by claiming that what the masses approve of is really good or beautiful. However, all the arguments that support these false opinions – they mistake the particular and sensible for the universal – are laughable (λόγον διδόντος [...] καταγέλαστον, 493D9).

<sup>18</sup> Contrary to the masses and the sophists I referred to in the note above, the philosopher is capable of λόγον διδόναι (531E4-5). Dialectic is an intrinsically dialogical exercise (διαλέγεσθαι, 532A2, 6; Glaucon asks in which way dialectic operates, τίς ὁ τρόπος τῆς τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δυνάμεως, 532D9-E1, cf. also 533A8). However, it does not deal with the sensible world, subject to generation and corruption, but with what each thing is (533B-C). This topic is too complex to be analyzed here. It suffices to point to the difference between the λόγοι – and the dialogical capacities – of the prisoners and that of the philosopher. For an account of dialectic in book VII that stresses its dialogical modality, see Vegetti 2003.



adapting again to the shadows – objects they are not acquainted with anymore, because their eyesight has been turned to brighter and more real ones. Moreover, the pains the guardian is faced with go beyond the merely cognitive level: while being in the cave, he must share the political toils (πόννοι) of the prisoners. He must not be allowed to remain out of the cave, he must be sent back to take part in the cave-dwellers' hardships (πόννων, 519D6) and rewards – be they trivial or important. Philosophers in other cities are allowed not to take a share of the toils (πόννων, 520B2) in those cities, because they do not owe their education to them. Conversely, the philosopher in the Callipolis will do his share in the hardships of the city (συμπονεῖν, 520D7, stresses the togetherness of this task). The trials (ἀγῶνες) he faces are more difficult than sport competitions. These new trials are the ones in the lawcourt, where cave-dwellers fight for a shadow of justice (ἀγωνίζεσθαι, 517D9; διαμιλλᾶσθαι, 517D10).

The fourth test is resistance to pleasure.<sup>19</sup> Since they hold political office, they have the opportunity to enrich themselves and to be honored. In the cave, the prisoners who are quickest at identifying the shadows are honored, given praise and prizes (they receive τιμαί, ἔπαινοι, γέρα, 516C8-9). The philosophers who go back to the cave have to share these honors (τιμῶν, 519D6). Despite sharing these honors, they do not care about them: they do not fight over ruling (520C9) as the cave-dwellers do, because holding political office is not their final end (520D3-4). Nor will they regard richness as worth pursuing, because the only richness they care about is the inner one: the gold in their souls. Rulers in other cities, conversely, will rule in order to accumulate as much gold as possible for themselves.<sup>20</sup> It is worth noting that they will display resistance to the pleasures that in book XI are said to be distinctive to the lower parts of the souls (honors and money), therefore demonstrating that their souls are truly “golden”, that is to say, led by the rational part.

#### 4. Conclusion

The guardians in book III are educated in music and gymnastics. Practical tests demonstrate their ability to retain the true belief and inner harmony instilled by their education in each and every situation they are faced with. The philosophers-rulers of book VII receive education that leads them to knowledge of the ideas. However, knowledge does not make them immune to the powers that operate in the sensible world: forgetfulness due to the passage of time, deceiving arguments, pain and pleasure. Thus, they must be sent back to the cave: practical tests reveal whether they are able to retain in each and every situation the inner harmony of their souls, and to act always under the leadership of the rational part. These tests are the touchstone that checks the gold in their souls. The ones who pass these tests are deemed worthy of ruling, since they proved to be successful both in their studies and in practical affairs (ἀριστεύοντας πάντα πάντη ἐν ἔργοις τε καὶ ἐπιστήμας, 540A5-6). At the age of fifty, they are led to their final goal, contemplation of the idea of the Good, and they use it as a model to govern the city, the individuals in it, and themselves.

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<sup>19</sup> In book III guardians must also be exposed to confusing situations (θορύβους, 413D9) and to danger, to see if they are easily frightened. This topic is not prominent in the image of the cave. However, the one who returns to the cave at first cannot see well and is in difficulty, his soul is in a state of confusion (θορυβομένην, 518A5).

<sup>20</sup> *Resp.* 520E8-521A6: “If you can find a better life than ruling for the people who are going to be your rulers, then your well-governed city becomes a possibility. It will be the only city ruled by those who are truly rich. Not rich in money, but in a good and wise life, the riches needed for good fortune. If you get beggars – people who are starved of good things in their own lives – going into public life because they believe that the good is something to be taken from there as plunder, then your city is not a possibility.”

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### *Concealment, Compulsion, and the Educated Citizen of the Protagoras*

Among the virtues that make him a formidable sophist, Protagoras shows himself, throughout the dialogue that bears his name, to be uncommonly attuned to the distinction between what is and is not perceived. From the outset of his encounter with Socrates he characterizes his art of sophistry hitherto in terms of a secret practice pursued beneath the screens of other arts for the sake of avoiding jealousy and enmity (316d-317b). The many, he explains, pose little risk to the itinerant professor who wishes to extract surreptitiously the most promising of young minds from their communities for instruction, since “the *hoi polloi* perceive practically nothing, but instead merely echo reports passed on to them” (317a). The more powerful, on the other hand, are distinguished at least in part by their ability to detect sophists in disguise, and it is due to this perceptive superiority that Protagoras is forced to become an innovator, plying his trade openly and thus avoiding the violence he would suffer if his cover were blown.<sup>1</sup>

Yet the new brand of sophistry that Protagoras represents does not put an end to the concerns about detection and protection that provoked it but rather reproduces these at the level of his teachings. Much of his so-called Great Speech reflects a deep preoccupation with the force of the state to both structure and restrict human behavior, and the skills he promises his students – the good judgment that correctly presides over one’s home and that also effects the most power in public affairs – appear designed to navigate and even exploit that force for one’s own advantage. *Politikē*, that is to say, is a means of gaining and exercising power over others for the sake of one’s own ends. Language, accordingly, is the means whereby self-concealment and coercion are carried out as an essential part of that power.

Thus conceived, it is not unreasonable to assume that Socrates, in his famous commitment to truthfulness, would counter Protagoras' approach to politics by championing the values of transparency, openness, and the absence of coercion as instruments of justice wherever possible. Yet this is precisely what he does *not* do in the *Protagoras*. Rather than condemning secrecy and compulsion he promotes these, in particular circumstances, not only as marks of proper civic education, but moreover as essential to the welfare of the state. In this paper I examine the alternate version of power and excellence – in particular the excellence of *sophrosunē* – that Socrates offers as a counter to the fearful attunement driving the Protagorean picture of communal life as the sophist presents them.

Protagoras delivers his Great Speech initially as a demonstration that the art of politics, by which individuals are made into good citizens, can be taught. This art, as he tells it, is simply an extension of basic *paideia* as such, handed down from one generation to the next, and is designed ultimately to replicate a certain order in the city essential the survival of the whole. Yet violence and mortal fear inflect Protagoras' vision of education at its very roots, and this is first evinced by Zeus' edict, in the sophist's retelling of the Prometheus myth, that whoever cannot partake of the elemental aspects of *politikē* – the “friendly bonds” of shame and justice (322c) – will be put to death as a sickness to the city.

Indeed, as the gods in Protagoras' *mythos* exercise the power of molding the first human forms beneath the earth, so too does the sophist's conception of *paideia* have to do with shaping human behavior. The nature of this shaping is manifest in the sophist's language of force or compulsion (*anankē*) throughout his account, where ‘teaching’ and ‘admonition’ are paired from the outset (325c). To begin with, in the earliest stages of linguistic acquisition, each child is

educated by a kind of 'instructive' violence: "as each act and word occurs [family] teach and impress upon him that this is just, and that unjust, this noble, that shameful, one holy, the other unholy, and he should do this and not that. If he willingly obeys, then good, but if he does not they treat him as a bent and twisted piece of wood and straighten him out with threats and blows" (325d).<sup>2</sup> In learning to read they are "given works of good poets and *compelled* to learn them by heart" (325e-326a), their music-masters "*compel* them to become familiar with rhythms and scales" (326b), the city "*compels* them to learn the laws and to live according to them as if by a pattern" (326c), and "just as writing teachers first draw letters in faint outline with the pen for their less advanced pupils, and then give them the copy book to *compel* them to write according to the guidance of their lines, so the city sketches out for them the laws devised by earlier legislators and *compels* them to govern and be governed by these" (326d).<sup>3</sup>

As one ascends through these levels of education and braves the force that accompanies each, one graduates eventually from the fear of threats and blows in modeling good behavior to the fear of institutional punishment levied upon anyone who "steps outside" the lines of law (326d). Such punishment, to which Protagoras refers several times over the course of his demonstration, is instituted as the final check within a generalized form of civic *sophrosunē*, and it is the sophist's primary evidence that virtue is regarded by Athenians as both learned and provided through teaching. Not only is one's failure to exhibit virtue an occasion for "wrath, punishment and admonition" from others (323e), but these imply a certain force of behavioral shaping from without: civic punishment "exercises power (*dunatai*) over the unjust" and furthermore "looks to the future and aims at preventing that particular person and others who see him punished from committing injustice again" (324a-b). As such, the *sophrosunē* of the whole

– the order under law that preserves the state – is conceived as imposed obedience to law as a means of the individual’s own self-preservation.<sup>4</sup>

Of course, the virtue of the obedient many is not the whole story here. On a closer reading, we detect another kind of *sophrosunē* to be implemented by the more daring and more calculating individuals in the city, and this *sophrosunē* pits itself against that of the whole. This second species of good judgment appears precisely in the face of the threat of punishment. For Protagoras states that, while in the other arts one is regarded as mad if he tries to lie about possessing a *techne* that he lacks, in the case of the virtues of the polis, one should never admit to lacking these. For, where “a certain person is known to be unjust, if he confesses the truth about his behavior before the many, the truthfulness with respect to the other arts which is regarded as *sophrosunē* would here be seen as madness. Everyone, they say, should claim to be just, whether he is so or not, and whoever makes no pretense to justice is mad” (323a-b). The proper use of *logos*, then, in concealing one’s injustice from others, is an expression of *sophrosunē* on the part of those who do in fact wish to step outside the lines of the law without suffering punishment. Provided one is clever enough, one is never done with screens, and the power of appearing just in this case is consistent with Protagoras’ claim to teach that good judgment through which his students can gain power in the city “in both speech and deed” (319a).

Seen thus, the supplement of Protagoras’ special teaching in *politikē* constitutes a set of linguistic devices for navigating the threats of violence in the city while pursuing one’s desires beyond the bounds of law. Subterfuge, previously a means for allowing sophistry to carry on its business undetected, is accordingly revealed in Protagoras’ Great Speech as the business of sophistry itself, where the power of the state is counteracted by the power of the calculating individual. Civic *sophrosunē*, with its punitive deterrents, is to be transcended by an individual

*sophrosunē* whose aim terminates in the security and gratification of the one skilled enough to wield one's *logoi* successfully.<sup>5</sup>

Socrates' elenctic attempt to call into question Protagoras' pairing of *sophrosunē* and injustice (333d-334a) is diverted by Protagoras' extended and evasive soliloquy on relative conceptions of goodness across the plant and animal spectrum.<sup>6</sup> It is not until their discussion is resuscitated within the context of competing interpretations of a poem by Simonides that Socrates can provide an effective riposte to the figure of the unjust liar as the sophist's implicit champion of *politikē*. There, as a result of some wondrous hermeneutical prestidigitation that makes Simonides into an adherent of Socrates' own views (where in fact intentional injustice is impossible and thus punishment must be supplanted by education) Socrates finds himself in need of clarifying the distinction between willing and unwilling praise. It is a remarkable passage, underappreciated by scholars who largely tend to write off this entire section of the dialogue as mere comedy. Yet if viewed closely, it is here that Socrates most forcefully illustrates the alternative ethos of political education over and against Protagoras' account.

Rather than address the case of the individual who avoids just punishment under the law, Socrates takes up the educated individual who has fallen victim to the injustices of a fellow citizen, where, as Socrates states, one "happens to have a monstrous mother or father or homeland or other such thing" (346a). He continues:

For when this happens to the lesser sort, they appear glad at the sight of their parents' or homeland's shortcomings, blamingly pointing to them and excoriating them so that their own lack of care of these [faults] may not be blamed by their

neighbors, who would otherwise blame them for their neglect. And in this way they increase their blame, adding willing to necessary enmities. But good men, [Simonides] knew, hide (*epikruptesthai*) the trouble and *compel* (*anagkazesthai*) themselves to praise, and if there is a basis for being angry at their parents or homeland for some injustice done against them they pacify themselves and carry out a reconciliation, compelling themselves to love and praise their own (345e-346b).

Here Socrates decisively counters Protagoras' notion of Zeusian wisdom: the political art that reproduces civic *sophrosunē* through legal means that receive their sanction in mortal fear, and which moreover, encourages on the part of the calculating opportunist a restricted sense of self-interest, is set off against a form of education that proceeds in accordance with the good of the community as a whole. One, as we have seen, advances a logic of external human containment, the other a logic of internal transformation. And these, moreover, are to be distinguished in part by the way in which each speaks.

The 'lesser' individuals with whom Socrates first deals fit the implicit picture of the cunning and politically-minded individuals trained in sophistic: they exploit unfortunate circumstances to make themselves appear upstanding, and the faults of others are regarded as occasions for one's own civic advancement. Through public blaming of her family or compatriots the lesser citizen carries out an act of self-concealment, wherein her own faults of civic negligence are hidden in the shadow of that viciousness in her neighbors on display.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast, according to Socrates, the power possessed by the *kalos k'agathos*, the well-educated citizen, is less a power over others in the *polis* than a power over oneself. It is, to begin with, a management of one's affects, where anger and a desire for pleasure in repaying damage



with damage are not merely contained by legal means, but transfigured by psychological ones. What the good person conceals is not her faults but her suffering and antipathy, and, rather than parading the latter in a show of excoriation, she turns her attention inward, toward the alliance between appetitive and thumotic drives within her soul. In this self-treatment, Socrates supersedes Protagorean civic compulsion with his own alternative conception of self-compulsion: through an interior form of soothing speech (as *paramutheomai* suggests<sup>8</sup>) to, or with, herself, the good citizen pacifies these common inclinations to repay harm with harm and effects a reconciliation. What is translated as ‘reconciliation’, *diallattesthai*, carries with it a sense of conversion from the common notion of justice as an equalization of effects, to an exchange of enmity for friendship.<sup>9</sup> Through such inner speech with the subservient aspects of the soul, the good citizen maintains her noetic agency – the agency of which Protagoras, in his dazzling oratorical performances, routinely deprives his listeners – precisely because her knowledge of the good overtakes her ill-will, transmuting it ultimately into a care for the city in both speech and affect.

More proximally, this care means loving and praising the offenders, not because they show themselves worthy of either form of treatment, but because such action promotes the welfare of the *polis* first and foremost by avoiding any additional form of civic conflict beyond what is necessary.<sup>10</sup> This conversion of affect allows, as far as possible, for a greater coherence among the inhabitants than the alternative course of action, and by maintaining (or at the very least not inhibiting) the order of the city, by protecting it from the debilitating strife that Zeus sought to remedy, the educated citizen promotes the welfare of the whole.<sup>11</sup> We must imagine, then, that it is knowledge that counters the thumotic and appetitive faculties of the soul, that overtakes these in a kind of inner struggle through which the desire for satisfying one’s anger

and one's limited sense of justice finds itself no match for the enchanting, taming silent *logos* delivered by the soul's intellective part.<sup>12</sup> As a consequence, knowledge and love conspire to obscure, through praise, the moral shortcomings of others, carrying on a charade that is indispensable to the city's flourishing.

Seen thus, the education of the good citizen bespeaks not a greater set of technical capacities for navigating civic relations, but a radical difference in her understanding of that in which both power and goodness consist. For Protagoras, supremacy in the city has to do with crucial technico-political addenda to what all individuals are taught as a matter of course: with respect to what the majority of the Greeks are taught, his 'teaching', as he states, is "ever so little superior in leading the way to virtue" (328a-b), a small difference that would, it seems, make all the difference. Yet, as we have seen, the sophist's supplementary teachings would be, like the other *technai*, a power placed in service to the individual who wields it, without any necessary compulsory force exerted from outside upon that individual's desires.<sup>13</sup> At best, it presupposes an ordered soul, and at worst it becomes an instrument of the tyrant. The political art that Socrates appears to have in mind, on the other hand, an art of sorts that he only hints at elsewhere,<sup>14</sup> is a knowledge that places one in subservience to the benefit of the community. In so doing, it not only encourages self-mastery, but self-development: we become better, fuller selves through this ordering of soul, and as we do so, the order of the city itself is maintained and strengthened. And this maintenance involves loving one's fellow citizens *as if* they were similarly virtuous, treating them as if they were in the process of realizing an idealized image of human virtue that is informed by an understanding of the good.

Whereas the fruits of such education call at times for false praise – an offense that Prodicus, for example, finds to be a mark of untrustworthy characters<sup>15</sup> – it is not undertaken as a

form of sophistic flattery that Socrates elsewhere clearly condemns as shameful.<sup>16</sup> For while one may object, and find a sophisticated calculative self-interest in praising those who have wronged them, such individuals would nonetheless maintain their sentiments of antipathy; what is here practiced for the sake of one's own benefit as consistent with the unity of the city would yet involve an extension of the logic of containment. The fact that Socrates calls our attention to the *transmutation* of this antipathy into love reveals a noetic capacity – less common and yet no less seemingly wondrous in its powers than the sorcery of sophistic speech – that does not merely re-order those affections in the soul that are believed to overpower one's judgment, but that can in certain circumstances newly create affections of solidarity therein.

In this way, the false praise conferred by the educated citizen, as an expression of love and care, can be read ideally as an encouragement to others lacking in this or that virtue to embrace their polished image in speech, an incitement for them to assume their own agency as contributors to the good order of the city rather than either making use of it for personal advantage or relying upon that order to serve as the externally given limit-point for their own appetitive inclinations. It is, I believe, in this light that Socrates calls attention to the lines of Simonides: “The one who knows justice, support of the city/ is a healthy man.” For in this conception the poet and philosopher appear to be unified without hermeneutical violence.<sup>17</sup> As Socrates mentions early on to his desirous young protégé, the health that we must take as paramount, over and above the health of the body,<sup>18</sup> is the health of our souls. And for the well-taught citizen, psychic health and political welfare are of a piece: the cultivation of self-compulsion through inner speech proves to be both a political and a psychological power, capacities united in *dikē* and *sophrosunē*, respectively.

<sup>1</sup> As Patrick Coby notes, “much of what the sophist says is unwilling praise, mere flattery, designed to protect himself and to attract students” (*Socrates and the Sophistic Enlightenment: A Commentary on Plato’s Protagoras* [Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1987], 124). Seen thus, the loving on account of which Protagoras’ students come to him is the reverse side of his own mortal fear. And through this lens, his attachment, as detailed below, to compulsion is a perverse expression of his own imperative to be loved.

<sup>2</sup> “Perhaps the most remarkable feature of Protagoras’ logos,” writes Seth Benardete, “is the resemblance of its stages to those of the *Republic* 2-3 together with an extraordinary emphasis on beating.” *The Argument of the Action: Essays on Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, ed. R. Burger and M. Davis (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), 194.

<sup>3</sup> Any reader of the *Republic* will quickly recognize that this program of forced education runs in conspicuous opposition to the pedagogical strategies taken up by Socrates in the city in speech. There he explicitly states that “the form of instruction must not be that of a compulsion (*epanankes*) to learn ... [since] the free man should not engage in any learning slavishly. Forced deeds carried out by the body don’t make it worse, but nothing learned by force remains in the soul,” (536d-e). The pedagogical alternative to force that Socrates there suggests is that of *playing* (*paizontas*).

<sup>4</sup> As Marina McCoy puts it, “the desire to pursue one’s self-interest is in Protagoras’ view more deeply ingrained in human nature than the capacity to look to the interests of the city as a whole. This priority of self-interest is reflected in its temporal priority in the mythic genesis of the human being, in its being innate while justice and shame require teaching – and even violence – for fruition, and in the priority that the many give to the cultivation of the appearance of justice as a means only.” “Protagoras on Human Nature, Wisdom, and the Good: The Great Speech and the Hedonism of Plato’s *Protagoras*,” *Ancient Philosophy* 18 (1998), 30.

<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, Griswold states: “To adopt a Protagorean perspective is therefore to detach oneself from professed moral ideals, to become distanced from the sort of concern that (for Socrates) ultimately matters most, and instead to concentrate on how to manage self and others in such a way as to become “*dunatatwv*” (most able, powerful) in both deed and word in civic matters,” “Relying on Your Own Voice,” 300.

<sup>6</sup> It is in this brief elenctic exchange that Socrates secures Protagoras’ admission that being ‘temperate’ (*sophronein*) equates with being ‘sensible’ (*phronein*), which in turn equates with ‘good judgment’ (*eu bouleuesthai*) (333d). To this extent, the sophist verges on (though is at the same time careful to avoid) confessing that the good judgment in which he specializes may be utilized for unjust ends.

<sup>7</sup> In “The Sophists and Democracy Beyond Athens,” Eric W. Robinson finds evidence of democratic or proto-democratic institutions in Protagoras’ hometown of Abdera in extant inscriptions, dating from 470 B.C., of “the famous public imprecations decrees which, among other things, list curses against wrongdoers that officials of Abdera and its mother-city Teos (whence documents come) were to read aloud at three annual festivals.” *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2007), 111. This may suggest that Socrates’ attitude toward public blaming in this connection is aimed at the political practices through which Protagoras himself came to be educated, and hence carries with it an extra degree of condemnation.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Rep.* 442a, where Socrates speaks of training *thumos* in the soul to be obedient to the calculating part, “tightening the [calculating part] with speeches and learning, the [spirited part]

being relaxed by soothing tales (*paramuthoumenē*), taming it by harmony and rhythm.” See also *Euth.* 277d. In addition, see the extensive detailing of compounds of ‘*muthos*’ in Appendix II (145-155) of Luc Brisson’s *Plato the Mythmaker* (trans. G. Naddaf [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998]), wherein he finds in the various senses of *paramutheomai* to “conserve the primary sense of *muthos*, ‘thought expressing itself, opinion’,” (152).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. eg. Antiphon, *On the Choreutes*, 6.39, Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 2.95.

<sup>10</sup> Insofar as *eros* primarily takes as its object the beautiful (cf. *Charm* 167e), and in its higher stages the philosophical good (*Symp.* 206a) here we find in civic *philia* a more flexible form of love that would appear to consider one’s *potential* justice within the context of the collective. For a more thorough discussion on the distinctions between *eros* and *philia*, see Hyland, 1968.

<sup>11</sup> This notion of *philia* is entirely consistent with Aristotle’s observation about *philia* in Book 8 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, namely that love “seems to hold the city together, and lawgivers are more serious about it than about justice. Kinship of thinking appears to be similar to love, and lawgivers aim most at this in particular, while stasis is that which they most wish to expel” (1155a23-26).

<sup>12</sup> In this respect, Stalley (“Punishment in Plato’s *Protagoras*”) does highlight one of the significant weaknesses of Protagoras’ view on the necessity of punishment as education through coercive or violent means, namely that “punishment, understood in these ways, does not address itself primarily to the intellect. Obviously, if punishment is to have an educational effect it must be accompanied by some form of instruction ... But the part punishment plays in the educational process is to discipline and train the passions. In doing so it may make the mind more receptive to instruction but it does not in itself impart knowledge or understanding,” 14.

<sup>13</sup> As Anne Carson puts it, not only Protagoras but Simonides as well “approach the human soul from the outside, through concepts that are notably spatial, external and authoritarian. Protagoras’ sophistic *technē* is a practical skill for improving techniques of moral reasoning, conceived as a matter of boundaries defined and enforced from without” and a little further on, adds: “[w]e might say that paradigm-acquisition was the commodity that Protagoras and Simonides put on sale, in different ways” (“How Not to Read a Poem: Unmixing Simonides from ‘Protagoras’” in *Classical Philology*, Vol. 87, No. 2 [1992], 124). While I am in agreement with her assessment of the sophist, the question of whether Simonides is to be read as consistent in his approach to human improvement with Protagoras is an issue I leave for another occasion.

<sup>14</sup> Recall the famous passage of the *Gorgias*, wherein Socrates boldly proclaims that he “is one of the few, if not the only one, in Athens who attempts the true art of statesmanship (*politikē technē*), and the only man at present who busies himself with the matters of the city” (521d).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. 337b, where Prodicus distinguishes between holding someone in high esteem (*eudokimein*) and engaging in praise (*epainesthai*): “For high esteem is in the soul of the listener without deceit, whereas praise comes in the words of liars contrary to what they believe.”

<sup>16</sup> *Gorgias* 464e-465a.

<sup>17</sup> C. M. Bowra lends support to this notion in reading Simonides’ primary significance in this respect as one who was able to find expression for the changing ideas of virtue and citizenship in Athens in his time: “The man of whom Simonides approves is the  $\alpha\upsilon\gamma\eta\iota\sigma\tau\alpha\tau\eta\varsigma$ , and here he presents a new political notion. For the old school, represented by Theognis and Pindar,  $\alpha\upsilon\gamma\eta\iota\sigma\tau\alpha\tau\eta\varsigma$  means possessing good health and as such is applicable to the perfect man. But in Athens the word was turned to mean possessing health of mind and particularly political sanity,” “Simonides and Scopas,” *Classical Philology*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (1934), 238.

<sup>18</sup> Keeping in mind that when asked to clarify the nature of goodness, Protagoras argues that the good is both elusive and manifold: one thing may be good for one sort of creature, and bad for another. Yet in his wealth of examples from medicine, nutritive science, and animal husbandry, Protagoras nonetheless operates with a unifying notion of goodness as physical sustenance (334a-c).

## Imag(in)ing Nature and Art in Plato's *Phaedrus*

Plato's *Phaedrus* is arguably one of Plato's most powerful dialogues from both an artistic and a theoretical perspective. The myth of the charioteer as well as the vision of the forms to which erotic love yields, the discussion of writing, speech, and rhetoric, and the debunking of sophistry remain as long-lasting images in every reader's memory.

Apparently, there is little (if any) explicit discussion of nature and art per se in the dialogue. Yet the initial theme of the dialogue is one of the most innate (shall we say natural?) drives in human beings, namely, *eros*. *Eros* will later be defined as "an inborn desire for pleasures" (237d), as "the unreasoning desire that overpowers a person's considered impulse to do right and is driven to take pleasure in beauty, its force reinforced by its kindred desires for beauty in human bodies" (238c). On this topic, Phaedrus has spent the entire morning hearing a speech, a written copy of which he carries with himself under his cloak (228d). Pressed by Socrates, he agrees to read rather than recite from memory the speech given by Lysias, the renowned orator who is also a famous sophist. Socrates rebukes Lysias' speech first by offering, his head covered, a stylistically better-constructed version of the same content and then by recanting the first version and providing, this time with his head exposed, an entirely new, impressive content in praise of the benefits of love. After this, in what appears as a second, almost self-standing part, the dialogue turns to a discussion of rhetoric and the superiority of oral speeches over the written form of discourse.

The dialogue is named after Socrates' main interlocutor, Phaedrus. We know from the *Symposium* that Phaedrus is an exceptionally handsome young man with ambitions to become a politician. He is also a rather naïve thinker, who understands love opportunistically in terms of the utility and benefits *eros* can bring especially with respect to honor, virtue, style, and behavior—all aspects that ultimately impact one's fame and reputation, and thus make one visible: exactly what politicians need. Significantly, in the *Symposium* Phaedrus' speech comes first, as the one that provides an opening but also constitutes a foundational opportunity for additional refinement by the other speakers—in both cases, Phaedrus occasions and increases visibility. As his name implicitly manifests by sharing the root with *phainesthai* (to appear, shine forth) but also with *phos* (light, brilliance), Phaedrus is the one who enables things to shine forth, open up, emerge, become detectible, manifest themselves—exactly like the word for "nature" (*physis*), which also, at least according to Heidegger, comes from the same root *phy-* or *pha-* and indicates that which emerges, "the process of a-rising, of emerging from the hidden, whereby the hidden is first made to stand."<sup>1</sup>

What is it that the dialogue *Phaedrus* lets emerge and makes visible through the brilliance encrypted in its title name and irradiated by Socrates' main interlocutor?

My claims in the present essay are: first, that the dialogue provides important insights into, and thus makes visible Plato's understanding of nature, art, and their relationship; second, that the notion of *eros* functions to both enlighten and be itself enlightened by the concepts of nature, art, and their relation as they are understood by Plato; thirdly, that approaching the dialogue in terms of the mutual reverberations of nature and art on *eros* and vice versa casts light on the unity and

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics* 14-15.

integration of a dialogue that might otherwise appear as somewhat schizophrenic; and fourthly, that Plato sees nature and art to stand in a general integration ultimately kept together by the notion of *eros*.

### 1. In the Garden of Truth: Nature, Art, and Their Relation

A consideration of the dialogical setting clearly discloses how nature and art play an essential though not immediately evident role in the dialogue. Phaedrus and Socrates are on their way out of the city which, as we know from *Republic*, is itself an artifact, a product of art or *techne*. Natural instincts and needs may push individuals to gather into temporary aggregations for transitory, contingent purposes (food, shelter, clothes, sex), but the result of that is at best the so-called city of pigs (*Rep.* 372d). In order to have citizens and a city, even if the city is not the *kallipolis*, the *art* of politics is needed to supplement what nature alone cannot achieve. In the *Sophist*, politics is included among the productive arts; politics is a form of production, *poiesis*, insofar as it produces citizens. When Socrates and Phaedrus leave the city, they are in fact leaving the world of humanly made products, the world of artifacts, that is, technical and artistic outcomes, which are fatiguing because they require effort and continuous maintenance to be kept assembled and functional.

Yet, Phaedrus leaves the city on a doctor's advice—or so he says. The relation between art and nature is not, in Plato's view, a matter of sharp distinction or separation. The dichotomy of countryside vs. city, *physis* vs. *techne*, nature vs. art to which later philosophy has accustomed us is barely there. Things are more complicated despite the city walls that may have been erected by humans to separate or at least circumscribe the two aspects. In Plato, it is not clear that such walls, if they exist, are not in fact porous; it is not clear that natural elements do not penetrate the city as much as art infuses nature. Medicine too, on whose advice Phaedrus walks, is an art—the art of restoring the body to its natural well-being. Whereas some arts may allegedly require relinquishing nature, others demand restoring one's relation with nature. So, Phaedrus and Socrates take a walk in the countryside exactly to restore the healthy balance that artificial city life may have compromised. The natural remedy, the *pharmakon* they seek in the countryside as a solace to the *polis* as artifact is itself art-induced. Nature and art disclose themselves as complementary and intertwined.

Eventually, Socrates and Phaedrus land in an idyllic place, where the charms of nature seem to be overwhelming—beautiful shady trees, refreshing stream water, fragrant blossoms, gentle grassy slopes, the song of the cicadas, the summery midday heat that seems to bring everything to a standstill in nature—the standstill from which the intensity of the eternal can be captured. Here too though, it is only in appearance that the scene is entirely natural, that is, untouched or unspoiled by human hands. Art has in fact already infiltrated the landscape. Artistic are the statues and votive altars that constellate the place; artistic are, most likely, the stories about the divinities, their love affairs and kidnappings that Socrates refuses to demythologize; and artistic, although possibly of very poor artistry, is also the book containing Lysias' speech that Socrates detects under Phaedrus' cloak and that provides the occasion to enter the charming natural landscape.<sup>2</sup> The apparently natural landscape is thus deeply marked by the presence of human arts (medicine, politics, story-telling, rhetoric, sculpting, and engraving) as well as divine mementos. In the *Phaedrus*, in the stillness of the eternity of high noon, nature, art, human actions, and divine presences are disclosed as interconnecting to make up the naturalness of life.

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<sup>2</sup> In the *Sophist*, sophistry too is classified under the group of the productive arts.



Thus, the place is truly a garden, that is, a site where nature and art work together to let new truths emerge.

In order to enter the place where nature and art infuse each other, purification from the worries and concerns of socio-political-cultural-historical life is necessary. The river has to be crossed. Whether in town or outside, Socrates, who is barefoot as usual (229a), is always immune from the teleological, instrumental orientation societal life imposes on art and nature as well as on anything else.<sup>3</sup> But Phaedrus has to wash away the societal dust that works to enframe and hinder a deeper understanding of the truth of matters as it can be apprehended only at high noon, the time of the day when the shadows of *doxa* are at a minimum.

Entering the garden is entering a place of disclosure of truth, which results enriched by the coupling of nature and art. “Landscapes and trees have nothing to teach me—only people in the city can do that,” Socrates claims (230d). This may be true if the interest lies in learning the truth as it manifests itself within an already cultured, artificial environment in which nature has been instrumentalized and bent to obey human goals, plans, projects, laws, and constraints that ultimately bridle it. It is in a garden though that, in the *Phaedrus*, the truth regarding the most intimate, hidden part of human nature, that is, the *psyche*, is made visible. Nature alone may teach nothing; but nature coupled with art, as a garden properly is, enables truth to emerge. It will be an important truth impacting art, nature, and their relation in life. None of them are explicitly thematized, yet they are omnipresent on the stage of the *Phaedrus*. That too is a truth that emerges and a lesson to be learnt from the dialogue.

## 2. Under the Shady Plane Tree: Casting Light on Nature, Art, and *Eros*

Having crossed the watery border that allows access to the garden, Phaedrus and Socrates sit under a tall plane tree. Like the midday sun, the light of truth is dangerous to contemplate for the naked eye and may lead to permanent blindness if artificial precautions are not employed. In the shape of the tall plane tree, nature provides the protection necessary to access and disclose truth. Protective and disclosive, nature bestows the model to understand the truth of love, which is the topic of the conversation.

Noticing that this might be the place where, according to stories, Boreas carried Orethua away while playing with Pharmaceia, Phaedrus inquires of Socrates: “In the name of Zeus, do you really believe that the legend is true?” (229c). Later, taking in the view, Socrates bursts out: “By Hera, it really is a beautiful resting place” (230b). Indeed, the garden is full of divine apparitions; it is not the presence of the minor gods of the mytho-poets, to whom Phaedrus refers and on whom Socrates wishes to waste no time though. It is Zeus and Hera, the royal couple among the Greek Olympians, who reveal their secret attendance to the site. Their discrete presence is protected and disclosed in nature. The plane tree, the *platanos*, is associated with the cult of Zeus. A grove of plane trees sacred to the god existed in Olympia, and according to the myth, it is under a plane-tree that Zeus and Europa mated after Zeus brought Europa to Gortyn, in Crete. Europa is not Zeus’ royal wife though. What the tree reveals is the passionate, violent, instinctual, unruly side of the god’s amorous desires, which are aroused by the mere sight of beauty and desire to possess it regardless of all artificial restraints—a natural exemplification of

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<sup>3</sup> In that instrumental light, art becomes artworks and nature becomes exploitable natural materials. We know from the *Apology* that not even when threatened with death is Socrates willing to compromise the search for truth and bend it to external purposes, be it his own survival.

the artistic image of the black horse, of which we hear later in the dialogue and which constitutes a fundamental part of the human *psyche*.

Having defined love as “some kind of desire,” Socrates adds: “Each of us is ruled by two principles which we follow wherever they lead: one is our inborn desire for pleasures, the other is our acquired judgment that pursues what is best” (237d). The acquired judgement has to be learnt; it is not natural; rather, it is the outcome of an art, namely, the art of self-control, self-constraint, or education. This is exactly what is required of the loyal love with which Hera honors her divine spouse. In Greek mythology, Hera is the goddess protecting marriages and faithful unions. Besides the plane tree, another tree casts its wonderful shade on the place. It is a chaste tree, an *agnos*. Not surprisingly, this is a tree sacred to Hera, who was said to have been born and nursed under a chaste-tree. As its name indicates, the chaste-tree also acts powerfully on sexual desire. An aphrodisiac for women, it acts in the opposite way on men’s desire, which is instead impaired by the perfume of its flowers, leaves, and branches. It is also used to induce abortion, and to take care of various menstrual ailments. In general, the chaste-tree works naturally toward altering the natural course of sexual instincts to the point of preventing generation of physical offspring. It restrains where instinct would want to expand. When it heightens instincts, it also blocks sexual reproduction. In this sense, it is a remedy, a *pharmakon*, the use of which requires “acquired judgement” or expertise in the art of erotic medicine.

Whereas the young, passionate, impulsive, ultimately naïve Phaedrus invokes Zeus, the artful, committed, self-declaredly sterile Socrates invokes Hera. Both Phaedrus and Socrates are necessary for the generation of the discursive truth of *eros* as given to us in the dialogue. In the garden where the truth of love is disclosed, the two trees appear next to each other, exactly like Phaedrus and Socrates. As legitimated through the divine presence of the highest couple in the Greek pantheon, in their respective associations with nature and art the two trees disclose and protect what the myth of the charioteer reveals in narrative—that is, artistic (and highly artistic)—terms; namely, that to ascend to the plane of truth we need both passion and restraint, nature and art, the black horse and the white horse—at least as long as we are human.

To reach that plain, which is the plain “where truth stands,” we need powerful wings though, and a wind that can help carry us high. Again, nature’s collaboration is both required and beneficial. In this respect, the natural conditions in the garden are optimal: “feel the freshness of the air; how pretty and pleasant it is,” exclaims Socrates (230b).

### 3. Unity and Integration in the *Phaedrus*

Already fecund each on its own, when they join in a beautiful environment nature and art increase their individually generative power and produce the highest form of natural art, that is, philosophical speeches. The wind is already there in the garden; that is, nature is, in itself, well-disposed. What may be needed is the wings that make thought be “winged thought” for “by their nature wings have the power to lift heavy things and raise them aloft” (246d). Once they have been shed with the soul’s embodiment or through forgetfulness or wrongdoing (248c), what makes the wings regrow is the vision of the beauty of the beloved, for beauty alone has the privilege of providing us with the most radiant and sparkling reminder of the vision of being that constitutes the best nourishment for the *psyche*. Like Phaedrus, referred to by Socrates as the “beautiful boy” (252 b), beauty makes shine forth, renders visible what is otherwise invisible to both senses and mind. The one who falls captive to the power of beauty is the lover, and the force that drives such a lover is *eros*, a form of madness albeit of a divine kind and highly

beneficial. When Socrates encounters him, young, beautiful Phaedrus is precisely in a state of excitement and madness that comes to him naturally from having listened to Lysias' speech. Such passionate madness makes him blind to the opportunistic, self-interested aspects that Lysias' speech quite evidently betray. Fascinated by the invisible (the book he hides under his cloak), Phaedrus does not see what is actually quite visible (the deception in Lysias' speech). The first half of the dialogue can be read as Socrates' attempt at sobering up, through the fine art of his own speech-making ability, Phaedrus' natural insanity, that is, an erotic madness that arises spontaneously but mistakes its target. Nature needs to be molded and directed by art. Thus, surrounded by the artful beauty of a natural garden that is no longer left to the uncontrolled forces of nature, Socrates and Phaedrus engage in an artful speech, one of Plato's best, regarding a most natural theme. All through the first part, the topic is *eros*, which gets to be molded, shaped, redirected from sheer passion blindly pursuing a goal not worthy of its divine status to an artful way of enhancing what is natural to *eros*, namely, its ability to elevate the *psyche*. In other words, the first half of the dialogue accomplishes not the repression but rather the re-orientation and hence sobering up of Phaedrus' black horse through the art of Socrates' philosophical speech-making powers, or Socrates' white horse under the guidance of reason. The product of this reorientation is the dialogue itself, or rather the first half of it.

The second part of the dialogue (257c-279b), which I consider only briefly, is also about *eros*, but in a subdued, self-controlled form. *Eros* has been made philosophical in the first part; the natural passion for the beautiful is now applied to the production of beautiful forms of expression that remain loyal to the truth, that is, that are philosophical. Such production is not a form of *poiesis* but rather a *techne*, the artful mastery of various skills that orient the *psyche* in a good, that is, truthful direction. Lysias' speech appears unstylish because his *eros*, which is reflected in the form of his written speech, is disorderly. Ultimately, oral speeches turn out to be superior to writing because they possess the ability constantly to respond (this is the artistic production) in a flexible manner to what appears as the audience's natural posture. A profound knowledge of the psychological nature of the auditor is required. In other words, oral speeches are the artful integration of nature and art in the pursuit of the beautiful nature of the true. Such integration holds together the dialogue itself, which in many senses is purely a performance of the erotic ascent described in the *Symposium*—a passage from the physical body to the embodied beauty of the god-like beloved in the first part, and then a further move from material, embodied writing to the immaterial writing on the *psyche* that is oral speech in the second part. In both parts as well as in both the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, what holds the whole together is *eros*. In the *Phaedrus* specifically, what is held together by *eros* is the intertwining of nature and art.

Having opened under the auspices of Zeus and Hera, the dialogue concludes with a prayer to Pan (279c), the musical god of wilderness and companion to the Nymphs. A highly erotic figure, Pan himself is the integration of animal and human body, natural instincts and artistic refinement. Unlike Zeus and Hera, Pan has no temples. His abode is the natural settings, like the garden where the *Phaedrus* occurs. Neither Zeus nor Apollo but Pan is ultimately the model for philosophy according to Plato—at least in the *Phaedrus*.

## Aristotle, *Philosophêmata*, and Aristotle's Disciplinary History of Philosophy

### Introduction

This paper concerns a word found at most three times in Classical literature, and only in Aristotle: *philosophêma*.<sup>1</sup> Aristotle scholarship has assumed the term refers principally to Aristotle's own published (and now lost) dialogues. I show the falsity of this view. I argue that it refers instead to the output of the activity of philosophy as a discipline. This result sounds bland, as following trivially from the *-ma* ending.<sup>2</sup> Yet not only is this a novel claim; the word's coinage points to a radical shift, from the early to the mid- fourth century, in thinking about philosophy *as a discipline*. Up through Plato's time, "philosophy" was not *cumulative* in a way Aristotle came to find it. People could improve in it, and learn argument forms, and create a curriculum. But the results of philosophizing were localized to the instances of philosophizing: the psychic wellbeing of its participants, the honor of the victor, the policy of a city. By Aristotle's, however, philosophizing created results that transcended any particular conversation, debate, or education. Specific puzzles or their solutions were found, elaborated, and criticized, and these became the common material of philosophy. This accumulation of philosophical material is the non-epistemic correlate of philosophy's being seen as a science (*epistêmê*). The term *philosophêma* refers to that material, and depends on the sociological attitude toward philosophy that Aristotle describes in *Metaphysics* *α*. There Aristotle claims that philosophy is a joint enterprise, none of us alone capable of getting wholly at the truth, and that it comprises both the opinions we share with others and those that allowed others to have those shareable ideas in the first place. This is not an Socratic-Platonic idea. Thus attention to the term *philosophêma* jointly illuminates the Aristotelian and pre-Aristotelian conceptions of philosophy that are ignored when merely the content or epistemic norms of philosophy (e.g., study of *archai*, knowable first principles) are considered.

These consequences for the history of philosophy depend on successful rejection of the consensus view of the term's meaning. The term arises in *De Caelo* 1.9 as the *enkukliois philosophêmasi* concerning divinity, and in *De Caelo* 2.13 as the *aporia* concerning Earth's stability being a *philosophêma pasin*. It also arises in *Topics* 8.11 as being a "demonstrative argument." These are tricky passages, whose analysis has not been helped by problematic twentieth-century editorial decisions. Making sense of them requires making sense of Aristotle's habits in referring to discussions and publications outside his lectures, the way he deals with the history of philosophy, and how he treats clear argumentation as largely constitutive of philosophical activity (and thus justification for including somebody in the history of philosophy). What this means, however, is that the very work we must put into those three passages justifies the claims I make about Aristotle's novel attitude toward philosophy.

### A *philosophêma* for all

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<sup>1</sup> I count four uses through Plutarch, all of which are consistent with the argument of this paper. Strabo *Geographica* 1.2.17.12 (= Polybius 34.4.4.3): "Everyone believes that the poetry of him [Homer] is a *philosophêma*," to be judged in terms of its thought and historical content. Plutarch *Aetia Romana et Graeca* 269b3: it might be a *philosophêma* of king Numa to have put funerary items in a place of Aphrodite, so as to teach people not to feel repugnance at them or shun them as pollution. Plutarch *Adv. Col.* 1125b6: "by means of these exchanges and *philosophêma* (τούτοις τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς καὶ φιλοσοφήμασιν)...." In these cases the noun means "something achieved with philosophy," whatever "philosophy" happens to mean.

<sup>2</sup> Other *-ma* words include *poiêma* and *sophisma*. LSJ s.v. defines *philosophêma* in two parts: "a subject of scientific inquiry or a philosophical treatise"; while not untrue, it is misleading in the Aristotelian context.

Aristotle generally uses the term *pragmateia* to refer to the product or activity of philosophizing,<sup>3</sup> but not always. In *De Caelo* 2.13, Aristotle observes that while earth as dirt falls, Earth as our planet does not. Not only he has wondered at this apparent inconsistency:

[1] The puzzlement has, as one might expect, become a *philosophêma* for all (294a19)<sup>4</sup>

Aristotle goes on to describe the broad range of solutions proposed by Xenophanes, Empedocles, Thales, Anaximenes, Anaxagoras, Democritus, and Anaximander. Thus at [1] Aristotle allows that his predecessors philosophized in addressing themselves to this puzzlement. What exactly makes their work count as philosophizing? Probably not their concern with the movement of the Earth as such; the way Aristotle uses of *philosophêma* implies it applies more broadly than to puzzles about celestial movement. Nor their use of demonstrative or quasi-demonstrative arguments as such; otherwise nearly all sequential thinking in quotidian life would count as philosophy, and much more would be called *philosophêmata*. A more plausible explanation comes from the fact that all seven men mentioned here have prominent roles in Aristotle's capacious account of "philosophers" in *Metaphysics* A.

There Aristotle describes two overlapping groups. The *sophoi* include all those who have abstract, difficult, and precise knowledge. Their lineage presumably goes back indefinitely. *Sophia* is not disciplinary or cumulative; as we learn from John Philoponus' references to Aristocles, who himself seems to follow Aristotle,<sup>5</sup> it seems rather a matter of clarity. Early in the hypothetical development of civilization, *sophoi* were those who did epistemically better than their neighbors. Among the historical *sophoi* Aristotle includes poets like Homer and Orpheus as much as physicists like Anaxagoras and Empedocles, and indeed Xenophanes, Thales, Anaximenes, and Democritus (missing only Anaximander).<sup>6</sup>

Aristotle also identifies *philosophoi*. These include many of those called *sophoi*. We can infer his criterion of inclusion by determining whom he excludes. He excludes those whose basic cosmic explanations he cannot pin down, and indeed who seem uninterested in giving explanations that he can comprehend.<sup>7</sup> The *theologoi* are *sophoi*, and may even have views about ultimate origins, but because either he cannot translate their views out of poetic language or he finds too little material for answering his questions about those views he does not count them as *philosophoi*. The *philosophoi* are thus those with whom he can engage conversationally concerning matters of wisdom, in the present case concerning basic physical explanation.

So the philosophers who produce the shared *philosophêma* about the Earth's movement are talking about basic cosmic explanation in a way open to Aristotle's comprehension and response. In the language of *Metaphysics* α, they are those with whom Aristotle can "share opinions." This does not mean he *accepts* those opinions; he does not. *Philosophêmata* represents opinions shareable among philosophers, which means that are opinions that add to, advance critiques of, or reformulate opinions held by others considered philosophers. The field of *philosophêmata* marks out the field of inquiry: what has been taken to deserve explanation and what attempts at explanation have been taken to deserve consideration. The novelty of this

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<sup>3</sup> Horky 2013, 3–6, 19, citing *Meta.* A 986a8 and 987a30 ("system"); *Top.* 100a18, 101a26, *Phys.* 194b18, *EN* 1103b26 ("philosophical argument or treatise"); *Phys.* 198a30 ("subject of such a treatise").

<sup>4</sup> τὸ μὲν ἀπορεῖν εἰκότως ἐγένετο φιλοσόφημα πᾶσιν.

<sup>5</sup> Aristotle *On Philosophy* fr. 8 Ross.

<sup>6</sup> Instead of him Aristotle includes Leucippus, Diogenes of Apollonia, Hippasus of Metapontum, Parmenides, Melissus, the Pythagoreans, and Alcmaeon.

<sup>7</sup> Similarly Palmer 2000.

view of philosophy can be seen in contrast to the Socratic view of philosophy. Socratic philosophy attempts to improve the souls of others and oneself, or even to improve their access to truth; but the extent of philosophizing is the extent of these interpersonal exchanges, and success is measured not by the promising opinions generated but by the effect on souls.

We might note that, obviously, shareable opinions need not be written down. Views can be transmitted orally, or summarized by others, or reconstructed from memory. The point is that *philosophêma* refers to philosophical articulation enterable into future philosophical inquiry.

### Philosophêmata in circulation

Aristotle's other reference in *De Caelo* (1.9) complicates the story we just told.

[2] For consider too how in the *enkuklia philosophêmata* concerning divinity it often appears in the arguments that the divine – the completely first and highest – is necessarily unchangeable; thus it provides a witness for what we have said (279a30)<sup>8</sup>

Aristotle has been arguing that the heavens are eternal and unchanging. Immediately before this passage he gives an etymological argument.<sup>9</sup> He then gives this final and almost incidental argument, the frequency of this view in the *enkuklia philosophêmata*.<sup>10</sup> To what does he refer?

Stocks' Oxford translation has the following: "So, too, in its discussions concerning the divine, popular philosophy often propounds the view that..."<sup>11</sup> Guthrie's Loeb translation puts it differently: "In the more popular philosophical works, where divinity is in question, it is often made abundantly clear by the discussion that..."<sup>12</sup> Stocks refers to some recurrent commonplace of philosophy that can be said to "propound" "in its discussions." Guthrie, by contrast, refers to specific texts, "the more popular" ones, of Aristotle's, as he notes.<sup>13</sup> He continues in his note: "The evidence of Simpl[icius] seems conclusive for identifying the ἐγκύκλια φιλοσοφήματα, like the ἐξωτερικοὶ λόγοι, with A[ristotle]'s own published works. He refers to the dialogue Περὶ φιλοσοφίας by name for the present passage."<sup>14</sup> He has in mind something connected to what Ross prints in his *Fragmenta Selecta* as *On Philosophy* fr. 16, Simplicius' commentary on this passage of *De Caelo*, the first paragraph of which I translate: Aristotle "calls *enkuklia philosophêmata* what was originally presented for the masses, what we [i.e., Simplicius] usually call the *exoterica*, just as [we usually call] the serious ones systematic and lectural; Aristotle

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<sup>8</sup> καὶ γάρ, καθάπερ ἐν τοῖς ἐγκυκλίσις φιλοσοφήμασι περὶ τὰ θεῖα πολλάκις προφαίνεται τοῖς λόγοις ὅτι τὸ θεῖον ἀμετάβλητον ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι πᾶν τὸ πρῶτον καὶ ἀκρότατον· ὁ οὕτως ἔχον μαρτυρεῖ τοῖς εἰρημένους.

<sup>9</sup> The "ancients" (τῶν ἀρχαίων) uttered αἶωνα with inspiration, playing on αἰεὶ ὄν (279a23–29).

<sup>10</sup> Elders 1965, 63, 147–149, thinks these lines (279a30–b3) were inserted from some other Aristotelian work; Düring 1957, 363, thinks by contrast that these lines (279a17–b3) represent Aristotle's excellence of prose that Cicero admired.

<sup>11</sup> Stocks 1922.

<sup>12</sup> Guthrie 1939.

<sup>13</sup> Guthrie 1939, 92n(a); he takes Stocks to agree with him, and quotes Simplicius in *De Caelo* 288.28 but only for the text and punctuation he prints, *contra* Jaeger. For a similar but qualified view see Elders 1965, 148; Guthrie reviews scholarship and also qualifies at Guthrie 1981, 53–55. See Bos 1989, 113–152, for extensive review of scholarship on *exoterica* and *enkuklia* though with the idiosyncratic view that the former refer to works whose topic concerns the hyperuranian and the latter to works whose topic concerns "what's all around us," i.e., in the natural world.

<sup>14</sup> Guthrie 1939, 92n(a); cf. Guthrie 1981, 53n4.

speaks about this in his *On Philosophy*.<sup>15</sup> Thus it appears that Simplicius appeals to a lost work – presumably one of the *enkuklia philosophemata* itself – for evidence that Aristotle is here, in *De Caelo*, appealing to his own popular work in corroboration of his present view, in a more serious and systematic work. If Guthrie is right, then what *philosophêma* means is “a writing of Aristotle’s,” and would not then serve as evidence for Aristotle’s sense of philosophy as a cumulative discipline. This would be a big deal, requiring we rest a bold claim about the history of philosophy on a single use of a word. So I want see whether, before more closely analyzing Simplicius’ reference to *On Philosophy*, we have independent reason to read *enkuklia philosophêmata* as “Aristotle’s popular works.” I will suggest we do not.

First, we might hesitate to suppose that Aristotle appeals to his own popular work to support an argument in his serious study. Granted, the level of support he expects from his work may be no more than the general corroboration he expects from his etymological argument. And he may have plausible though not compelling arguments in that public work. Or if, as some believe, the dialogues were Platonic, and Aristotle now distances himself from them, then their arguments would provide a sort of impartial support. But if those arguments are adequate for citing, why not include or adumbrate them here? Or does Aristotle assume everyone knows his work? But if the arguments are inadequate for citing, why reference them at all? What authority could be conferred by this reference to his popular work? Now, as it turns out, Aristotle does have such an argument, in the lost *On Philosophy*, which Simplicius spells out for us. But so too does Plato, as Simplicius acknowledges. So the fact that Aristotle has such an argument does not mean he is referring to it in particular; and indeed, that he has an argument in a popular dialogue might suggest the extra-Peripatetic popularity of the view (and the plausibility that he does not assert it in his own voice). So, it is safer to read Aristotle as appealing to a general conclusion he identifies in the results of others’ popular philosophizing. His appeal would parallel his appeal to ancient etymology: both represent views of earlier authorities. He would not need to give any detail about the arguments because he wants only to acknowledge popular agreement, in the distinctive terms of “*pan to proton*” and “*akrotaton*” in favor of his own view. A clinching argument is the fact that Aristotle says that it “often” (πολλάκις) appears, in these arguments, that the divine is necessarily unchangeable, and it would be very strange for him to refer to his own work this way.

Second, we have seen that later in *De Caelo* that *philosophêma* does not refer to his own written work. And third, Aristotle has a perfectly good term for popular works: οἱ ἐξωτερικοὶ λόγοι. Fourth, while one might think that *enkuklios*, what I have so far translated “popular,” has a technical meaning for Aristotle, such that it picks out his own popular writing, this is a hard view to countenance. The word is attested once in Euripides, where it means “making a circle,” as a chorus does, and three times in Isocrates, where it means “everyday,” that is, “recurrent” and “unexceptional,” in civic life.<sup>16</sup> It has that Isocratean meaning in its five uses in Aristotle’s *Politics* and *Athenian Constitution*,<sup>17</sup> and the Euripidean meaning in its nine uses in *De Caelo* and *Meteorologica*.<sup>18</sup> Only once does Aristotle use it in a way similar to [2]. In *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.3, Aristotle adumbrates the numerous and obvious problems faced by the thesis that the

<sup>15</sup> Simplicius in *De Caelo* 288.31–289.2: ἐγκύκλια δὲ καλεῖ φιλοσοφήματα τὰ κατὰ τάξιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς τοῖς πολλοῖς προτιθέμενα, ἅπερ καὶ ἐξωτερικὰ καλεῖν εἰώθαμεν, ὥσπερ καὶ ἀκροαματικά καὶ συνταγματικά τὰ σπουδαιότερα· λέγει δὲ περὶ τούτου ἐν τοῖς Περὶ φιλοσοφίας. This is entry twenty-five in Ross 1952, 5.

<sup>16</sup> Euripides *IT* 429; Isocrates 3.22, 8.87, 15.316.

<sup>17</sup> Aristotle *Pol. Ath.* 26.2, 43.1, *Politics* 1255b25, 1263a21, 1269b35.

<sup>18</sup> Aristotle *De Caelo* 286a11, 286b6, 290a2, 293a11, 296a35; *Meteorologica* 339a4, 339a12, 341b14, 344a9. I note here that the word does not reappear until late Christian authors except in possibly spurious attributions to Epicurus.

bare possession of virtue is the goal of life. One would advance it only as a debater's task.<sup>19</sup> Anyway, he says, "enough has been said about these things in the *enkuklia*."<sup>20</sup> We have no reason to suppose he refers to his own popular works rather than others'; this was evidently a frequent debate in first-generation Socratic literature, which Aristotle's audience would know.<sup>21</sup>

Our fifth reason for hesitation comes from the Aristotelian use of *philosophêma*, at *Topics* 8.11.

[3] While a *philosophêma* is a demonstrative argument (συλλογισμὸς ἀποδεικτικός), and an *epicheirêma* a dialectical argument, a *sophisma* is an eristic argument, and an *aporêma* is a dialectical argument from a contradiction (162a15–18)<sup>22</sup>

If a *philosophêma* is a worked-out demonstration, this is consistent with [1]: anything Aristotle takes to be a contribution to a philosophical discussion might have to share this form. Indeed, this passage provides additional reason to think that *enkuklia philosophêmata* are not Aristotle's popular or dialogical writings, since those writings presumably favor dialectical or sophistic arguments over the "philosophical" arguments of the sort found in his unpublished lectures.

For these five reasons, I suggest that at [2], Aristotle means philosophical products (*aporiai*, *logoi*, *hupotheseis*) constituting the canon shared by those who philosophize.

So what are we to make of Simplicius' claim, which has underwritten more than a thousand years of thinking about Aristotle's meaning here? The first thing to notice is that Simplicius does not say that Aristotle defines the *enkuklia philosophêmata* as one thing or another. Simplicius is instead giving his own inference; his next two clauses reinforce this. We might not have thought so, given Ross' punctuation. Because Simplicius' continuation, λέγει δὲ περὶ τούτου ἐν τοῖς Περὶ φιλοσοφίας, follows a high dot in Ross' edition, it appears that Aristotle speaks in that dialogue about his use of the term *enkuklia philosophêmata*.<sup>23</sup> We could dream up some contexts for his doing so, but we do not need to. The punctuation is misleading. λέγει δὲ περὶ τούτου... should start the new paragraph. The antecedent of τούτου is not the way Aristotle names his works but the nature of divinity. In *On Philosophy* Aristotle does not describe his literary usage but rather gives an argument about the necessarily unchanging divinity.<sup>24</sup>

But I said Simplicius has merely guessed the meaning of *enkuklia philosophêmata*. Let me explain. Aristotle says an argument is in the *enkuklia philosophêmata*, but does not say where; Simplicius finds one in the *On Philosophy*; and so he assumes that Aristotle means *On Philosophy* when he says *enkuklia philosophêmata*. But this is just Simplicius' assumption. It is

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. 1098b30–1099a7.

<sup>20</sup> *EN* 1096a3: ἰκανῶς γὰρ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐγκυκλίοις εἴρηται περὶ αὐτῶν. Rackham 1926, 16, admits that it is unclear whether Aristotle refers to his own dialogues, to others' popular works, or to philosophical debates in general; Gerson 2005, 49n7, says of the "circulated works" that it is unclear whether these are exactly the exoteric works; but I cannot tell whether Gerson thinks they are Aristotle's in either case.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Vlastos 1991, ch. 8.

<sup>22</sup> ἔστι δὲ φιλοσόφημα μὲν συλλογισμὸς ἀποδεικτικός, ἐπιχειρημα δὲ συλλογισμὸς διαλεκτικός, σόφισμα δὲ συλλογισμὸς ἐριστικός, ἀπόρημα δὲ συλλογισμὸς διαλεκτικὸς ἀντιφάσεως.

<sup>23</sup> Ross 1955, 6 (= Ross 1952, 5).

<sup>24</sup> This is at 289.2–15, which begins Καθόλου γὰρ, ἐν οἷς ἔστι τι βέλτιον, ἐν τούτοις ἔστι τι καὶ ἄριστον: "for in general, wherever there's a better, in that place there's a best." It continues – the best is the divine, and the divine does not change, for this and that reason – and ends with Simplicius saying that this proof Aristotle took from Plato's *Republic* Book 2. As it turns out, Ross has double-counted, using the reference to *On Philosophy* for the material before it and after it.



of questionable consistency with the other uses of the term *philosophêmata*. The fact that the argument does arise in *On Philosophy* confirms nothing, since, as I said, Simplicius himself admits that the argument also arises in Plato's *Republic*, which means that Aristotle could, again, be referring to the philosophizing found in the public sphere – in the republic, as it were, of philosophical letters.

### Conclusion

This work has been a necessary long way around to show that Aristotle refers to *philosophêmata* as the product of philosophizing (I don't mean *result*). This result comprises arguments – at least about the Earth's motion and the stability of the divine – that lay claim to demonstrativity and transcendence of specific conversational contexts. This shows what Aristotle thinks philosophizing so-called amounts to: namely, a contribution to a disciplinary trove of arguments, positions, and explanations. I think this differs from the way earlier users of the term *philosophizing* would have construed its outcome. Herodotus, for example, uses *philosophein* as a word connected to acquiring *Sophos*-like insight into happiness and human nature (1.30); the outcome would be that acquisition. Gorgias uses it as a word connected to public recreational debate (*Helen* 13); the outcome would be victory in such debates. Socrates and the first-generation Socratics use it as a word connected to examination of self and others; the outcome would include recognition of one's ignorance, or appreciation of virtue, or closer proximity to truer claims.

Aristotle by contrast sees philosophy as a cumulative activity, one that generates material that can be generalized beyond any particular instance of thinking or talking. Interestingly, however, this puts us in a quandary. This material *can* be spoken of independently of the thinker. But as we see from Aristotle's practice, this is not usually done; he mentions specific (big name) authors as responsible for the views. Why would he do this? It must be because the views need to be interpreted, and this can be done only in light of other things a thinker has said or in light of the influences on that thinker. This means that while for Aristotle the results of some philosophical activity transcend that moment of activity, so too do the thinkers who deserve to be treated as philosophizing! That means that the *philosophêmata* are the materials by means of which we can continue our conversations with the dead! And so perhaps Aristotle's view is, in the end, not so different from Socrates'. Socrates says, at the end of the *Apology*, that he looks forward to an afterlife in Hades where he could talk endlessly and philosophically with Homer, Hesiod, Orpheus, and the rest of the wise.

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# Aristotle on Pleonexia, Proper Self-Love and the Unity of Justice

## 1. The Unity of Justice, Self-Love and the *Pros Heteron* Condition

In the past decades commentators have argued that Aristotle's notion of justice as a personal virtue is incoherent,<sup>1</sup> and that his conception of justice as lawfulness (or general justice) may be abandoned in preference for his views on the narrower forms of justice—namely distributive and corrective justice.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to these approaches, my goal in this paper is to offer reasons against dealing with the different forms of justice as equality independently from justice as lawfulness or general justice. The key claim that I want to present and defend is that Aristotle's notion of justice as lawfulness is not an extra item that we can set aside in order to focus on narrower questions about distributions or reparations, but instead, it is the necessary framework to properly understand equality in all its forms.

One of the causes of the neglect of the intimate link between justice as lawfulness and justice as equality is our modern tendency to center discussions of justice mainly on questions about how to reach equality or fairness in distributions, reparations and exchanges –i.e. on questions about how best to cut the cake, so to speak. But in contrast to the modern approach, and in step with some recent movements for social justice, Aristotle defends the view that any deliberations about how to best cut the cake must be inseparable from how we think about the personal relationships between individuals and their community, and most importantly, how we think individual advantage relates to the advantage of others and to the common good. These unavoidable connections between the lives of individuals and those of their communities are precisely what Aristotle wants to emphasize when he repeatedly claims that justice, not only in the general sense of lawfulness, but also in the particular sense of equality, is “in relation to another” (*pros heteron*).

To clarify the other-relatedness of justice, I turn to Aristotle's discussion of the notion of self-interest or “self-love” (*philautia*) in *Nicomachean Ethics* IX.8. What is most interesting for us is the fact that the kind of behavior that prioritizes the wellbeing of others is precisely what Aristotle considers to be truly advantageous for us as individuals. Proper self-love is able to orient us away from desires for gain and towards the right kind of relations to others by encouraging our desires to be the best and do the best we can in each circumstance. As a consequence, proper self-love has a crucial role to play in the production of both equality and lawfulness.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See some of the complaints in Williams (1980) and Bostock (2000, esp. p.55). Since Williams' main criticism is that Aristotle is wrong when he identifies *pleonexia* (graspingness, greed) as the motive of injustice, and that there is no such a thing as a characteristic motive of injustice or of justice, several commentators after Williams (e.g. Curzer (1995), Drefcinski (2000), Foster (1997), Keyt (1989), Young (1989)) have tried to propose a characteristic motive of justice (or of injustice), but the project seems hopeless to many.. O'Connor (1988) suggests that the modern puzzlement about the Aristotelian notion of justice as a personal virtue is a consequence of the modern conception of justice as a property that applies primarily to institutions: “In the modern view, justice seems primarily a virtue of social institutions, and it seems a distinctly derivative virtue of individuals, perhaps being nothing other than a settled resolve to promote and support just institutions and the policies issuing from them. From this point of view, there is in contemporary literature little independent interest in justice as a personal virtue” (417).

<sup>2</sup> As Yack (1993) puts it: “The great majority of contemporary, and especially English-speaking interpreters dismiss or downplay the importance of Aristotle's concept of general justice. For them, the general virtue of justice is little more than an inconvenience of ancient Greek vocabulary that Aristotle himself quickly discards” (158).

<sup>3</sup> Danielle Allen calls proper self-love “equitable self-interest” (*Talking to Strangers*, 125-139). The view I defend in this paper is inspired by and owes much to the view that she presents in her discussion of these concepts, and

Aristotle's discussion of self-love, then, teaches us that there is something fundamentally wrong with trying to understand questions of justice as a matter of finding the proper balance in the material gains and losses of the members of a community. To promote justice in all its forms, Aristotle tells us that we need to adopt the approach of the proper self-lover, who is no other than the lawful person, and who is concerned not merely with fair distributions but with finding ways of living that promote the well-being of others and, ultimately, the common good.

## 2. Two Sorts of Justice: Lawfulness and Equality

Aristotle starts his discussion of the virtue of justice in *Nicomachean Ethics* V by distinguishing between two main senses: (a) justice as lawfulness, and (b) justice as equality. The first one, *lawfulness*, sometimes called "universal" or "general justice",<sup>4</sup> is identified with complete virtue in relation to other people, and encompasses temperance, courage, generosity, and all the particular virtues insofar as they are exercised in our interactions with others. This is the justice that we violate when we eat more than we should, thereby not leaving enough for others; when we abandon a battle, thereby endangering our fellow soldiers; or when we fail to help a friend with money due to our stinginess. These are examples of a lack of temperance, lack of courage, and lack of liberality, but in each case the failure is expressed not simply as affecting our relationship with ourselves, but as also and more prominently affecting those around us.

The second form of justice is *equality*, "particular justice" or "justice in the narrow sense", which is concerned with questions about the gain and loss of material goods, and contains the notions of distributive, corrective and reciprocal justice.<sup>5</sup> This is the kind of justice that we exercise in the distribution of wealth, recognition (honor) or power (office), when we repair violations of fair distribution or other damages suffered by others, or when we exchange goods fairly.

### 2a. Justice as Lawfulness: An Outdated Concept?

Modern analyses of Aristotle's notion of justice tend to focus on justice as equality because justice as lawfulness sounds like an outdated concept, inadequate for our modern pluralistic societies. The two main reasons for the common rejection of justice as lawfulness are:

- (a) Justice as lawfulness has *too much content* and encroaches on too many areas of our lives. The idea is that the broader the sphere of justice, the more sacrifice of our individual liberties it seems to require.

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particularly to the idea expressed in the following quotation: "Our real social capital problem is simply that we have come to believe that self-interest comes only in one form, namely the rivalrous variety, when, in fact, it inhabits a spectrum from rivalrous to equitable" (*ibid.*, 138).

<sup>4</sup> Many scholars use these labels of 'universal' or 'general' justice for lawfulness, and call justice as equality 'particular' or 'special' justice. Although I use these terms sometimes for brevity's sake, I agree with Kraut (2002) that these tags can be misleading and try to follow him by talking about a broad and a narrow sense of the word. For a justification of this choice see Kraut (2002: 102, note 6).

<sup>5</sup> Some authors recognize only two kinds of justice, distributive and corrective, and take reciprocal justice to be an explanation of the shape that distributive or corrective justice takes in some cases. Among those who acknowledge three kinds of particular justice are Irwin (1988), Kraut (2002) and Inamura (2015).

- (b) Justice as lawfulness typically *lacks the kind of neutrality required in liberal, pluralistic societies*. Here the point is that the thicker and broader the concept, the more difficult it is to agree about it. If we keep the sphere of justice narrow enough, we can more easily get people from different cultural backgrounds and with different preferences to agree.

Although these are serious difficulties, I think that an exploration of the advantages that Aristotle sees in a robust notion of justice as lawfulness is crucial to understand potential problems with our thinner liberal notion of justice as equality. Two important revelations:

- (1) Modern liberal notions of justice as equality are *excessively individualistic*. (This is a standard criticism of liberalism, which Aristotle's perspective helps to emphasize.)
- (2) They are *excessively focused on the value of competitive goods* for a good life. (Against their own aspirations to neutrality and inclusivity, many theories of justice as equality give priority to the possession and enjoyment of material goods.)

### 3. Relationship between Lawfulness and Equality: Two Views

What is, then, the relationship between the two Aristotelian kinds of justice? Here I want to challenge what I take to be the standard view, which is deflationary about the link between the two justices, in favor of a more robust conception of their relationship.

The *standard view* is that there is nothing special about the relationship between justice in the broad sense (lawfulness) and justice in the narrow sense (equality), as their relationship is similar to that which exists between lawfulness and any other particular virtue.<sup>6</sup> That is, justice in the narrow sense is simply *a part* of general justice, just as temperance or courage are parts of it as well. This deflationary account is attractive, since Aristotle does not give us an explicit explanation of the link and sometimes seems even to emphasize the separateness of the two senses of justice.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast, the *robust conception* that I propose is that there is something special about how the two justices are connected; the relation between the two senses of justice is closer than the link between general justice and temperance or courage. The root of this more robust relationship between lawfulness and equality lies in their common other-regarding character. Moreover, the special relationship between the two justices is supported by the fact that there is a direct correlation between graspingness (*pleonexia*), which is the mark of particular injustice, and lack of orientation towards the noble, which is the general goal of virtue.

But first, to lay the groundwork for my argument, let us look at the texts in which Aristotle offers a preliminary characterization of the two kinds of justice.

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<sup>6</sup> This view is typically assumed in most recent commentaries, although many of them do not explicitly discuss it. The view defended, e.g. by Irwin in "Homonymy in Aristotle", *The Review of Metaphysics* 34:3, 1981.

<sup>7</sup> For example, in his first claim about the relationship between the two justices in *Nicomachean Ethics* V, *NE* V.1, 1129a26-31, Aristotle says that these two justices are "homonyms", which suggests a certain separation between the concepts: "Now 'justice' and 'injustice' seem to be said in various ways, but because the homonymy is close, it escapes notice and is not obvious as it is, comparatively, when the meanings are far apart, e.g. (for here the difference in outward form is great) as the homonymy in the use of *kleis* for the collar-bone of an animal and for that with which we lock a door." And throughout the text of *NE* V 2 he repeatedly refers to particular justice as "the justice which is a part of virtue" (τὴν ἐν μέρει ἀρετῆς δικαιοσύνην, 1130a14; cf. 1130a23, a33, b16, b17).

### 3a. Inequality as Excessive Concern with Material Goods/

The first chapters of *Nicomachean Ethics* V seem to directly associate particular injustice, or inequality, to ‘graspingness’ (*pleonexia*).<sup>8</sup> The relation between graspingness and inequality is clear, since it is often the case that the reason for someone’s unequal behavior is an excessive concern with external goods and a constant attempt to acquire a greater share of those goods for herself, without regard to whether it is adequate or not to do so or to how it affects the well-being of others.<sup>9</sup>

Those that are unjust because of their lack of equality, the “unequal” individuals, are grasping and focused on those goods that are the matter of prosperity and adversity, i.e. the material goods over which people compete with one another. And unequal people always try to get the greater share of those goods or the lesser share of evils without consideration of *whether or not those goods are in fact good for them*.

An important part of the problem with unequal people, then, is that they are misguided about what is truly good for them, and they pursue material goods as if they were always beneficial, when —Aristotle suggests in our text— material goods (or competitive goods in general) are not good for everybody, particularly not for those who lack virtue. While their goal is to stay ahead in the distribution of material goods, they do not make any effort to become the kind of person for whom those goods are in fact good.

### 3b. Justice as Lawfulness and the Common Good

In contrast, Aristotle characterizes the lawful person, at least initially, without any reference to *pleonexia*. He instead says that, insofar as the laws are oriented towards the common good, the actions of the lawful person are concerned with the promotion and preservation of happiness in her community.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the lawful person will promote the common good by being virtuous in

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<sup>8</sup> Πλεονεξία could be translated as “greediness, assumption, arrogance” (see s.v. Liddel and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1968)). It is often understood as “desire for an excessive amount of something”, “desire for gain” (see Curzer 2012). Alasdair MacIntyre offers another helpful translation—“having and wanting more” (see *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 1984), 137.

<sup>9</sup> “Since the unjust person is grasping (*pleonektēs*), he must be concerned with goods—not all goods, but those with which prosperity and adversity have to do, which taken absolutely are always good, but for a particular person are not always good. (People pray for and pursue the same things; but they should not, but should pray that the things that are good absolutely may also be good for them, and should choose the things that are good for them.) The unjust person does not always choose the greater, but also the less—in the case of things bad absolutely; but because the lesser evil is itself thought to be in a sense good, and graspingness is directed at the good, therefore he is thought to be grasping. And he is unequal; for this contains and is common to both.” (*NE* V 1, 1129b1-1129b11) This passage does not make it explicit whether *all* unjust people, including those who we consider unjust in the general sense are unequal and grasping, or if he is here merely talking about particular injustice. We have reasons to think it is the latter, particularly since he mentions specifically the ‘unequal’ person towards the end of the passage; however, if that is the case, the placement of this paragraph between the particular-general justice distinction and the discussion of general justice is confusing. Perhaps he wants to leave open the possibility of a connection between graspingness and lawlessness?

<sup>10</sup> *NE* V.1, 1129b15-19: “We call just those actions that tend to produce and preserve happiness and its components for the political community.” (δίκαια λέγομεν τὰ ποιητικά καὶ φυλακτικά εὐδαιμονίας καὶ τῶν μορίων αὐτῆς τῆ πολιτικῆ κοινωνία). See also *Pol* III.12, 1282b17: “justice is the common good”. Modern commentators who discuss

general and thereby doing the kinds of virtuous actions that directly or indirectly affect the lives of others in their communities. Lawful people are disposed in such a way as to respect and admire the virtuous actions commended by the law, and to act according to them, particularly in public matters.

### 3c. The Spheres of Equality and Lawfulness

In the light of this initial characterization of the two types of justice, the separation between their spheres seems clear on a first approach: equality is the disposition in charge of keeping graspingness under control, while lawfulness is the disposition that leads us to perform well virtuous actions in situations in which our behavior affects others. However, in the next step in the discussion Aristotle introduces an element of commonality and reveals the source of the strong link between the two forms of justice. Equality would not simply be one part of lawfulness among others, but the central core of lawfulness, without which the exercise of the other virtues is incomplete.

### 4. Synonymity and the Other-Relatedness (*Pros Heteron*) Criterion

In the first lines of *NE* V.2 Aristotle claims that the common element between the two types of justice (and the two types of injustice) is that both are “in relation to others” (*pros heteron*), although they deal with different objects.<sup>11</sup> What does this ‘*pros heteron*’ or *other-relatedness* requirement involve? And how does it constitute the link between the two justices? I think that the crux of Aristotle’s view is that both justice as lawfulness and justice as equality are not about our individual well-being but about our social dealings with others, and ultimately about our impact on the common good.

#### 4a. Lawfulness’ Other-Relatedness

Lawful agents have all the virtues, but they possess them in such a way that those virtues govern not merely how they behave as isolated individuals, but importantly, in their interactions with others. In this regard Aristotle says of lawfulness that it is “complete virtue in its fullest sense” because it is not just virtue in one’s own affairs but also “in relation to another”.<sup>12</sup> Thus, what gives the quality of completeness to the virtue of justice in this general sense is not simply that it involves

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the centrality of the common good for Aristotle’s conception of justice: Irwin 1988 (ch. 20), Miller 1995 (ch. 3), Kraut 2002 (ch. 5), Curzer 2012 (ch. 13), and Morrison 2013 (179-98).

<sup>11</sup> *NE* V.2, 1130a32-1130b5: “Evidently, therefore, there is apart from general injustice another injustice, in the narrow sense, *which is a synonym of the first*, because its definition falls within the same genus; *for the force of both [sorts of injustice] lies in their relation to others* but the one is concerned with honor or money or safety—or that which includes all these, if we had a single name for it—and it is on account of the pleasure that arises from gain; while the other is concerned with all the things with which the good person is concerned.” (ὥστε φανερόν ὅτι ἔστι τις ἀδικία παρὰ τὴν ὅλην ἄλλη ἐν μέρει, συνώνυμος, ὅτι ὁ ὀρισμὸς ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ γένοι· ἄμφω γὰρ ἐν τῷ πρὸς ἕτερον ἔχουσι τὴν δύναμιν, ἀλλ’ ἢ μὲν περὶ τιμῆν ἢ χρήματα ἢ σωτηρίαν, ἢ εἴ τιτι ἐχοιμεν ἐνὶ ὀνόματι περιλαβεῖν ταῦτα πάντα, καὶ δι’ ἡδονῆν τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ κέρδους, ἢ δὲ περὶ ἅπαντα περὶ ὅσα ὁ σπουδαῖος.)

<sup>12</sup> *NE* V.1, 1129b33-1130a1: “It is complete because he who possesses it can exercise his virtue towards others too and not merely by himself; for many people can exercise virtue in their own affairs, but not in their relations to others.” (τελεία δ’ ἐστίν, ὅτι ὁ ἔχων αὐτὴν καὶ πρὸς ἕτερον δύναται τῇ ἀρετῇ χρῆσθαι, ἀλλ’ οὐ μόνον καθ’ αὐτόν· πολλοὶ γὰρ ἐν μὲν τοῖς οἰκείοις τῇ ἀρετῇ δύναται χρῆσθαι, ἐν δὲ τοῖς πρὸς ἕτερον ἀδυνατοῦσιν).

the exercise of *all* other virtues, but that it involves the exercise of one's virtues *in relation to others* (*pros heteron*).

Thus, with the '*pros heteron*' specification Aristotle underlines a very important aspect of justice and opens a new dimension of virtue. He reminds us that the sphere of complete virtue is not limited to our individual behavior in isolation, but must include our social interactions and the impact of our actions on others.<sup>13</sup>

#### **4b. Equality's *Other-Relatedness***

Similarly, what is crucial about unequal individuals is that they fail to give to others what they deserve or what is owed; instead, they try to get for themselves as much as they can, centering their attention on the accumulation of as many material goods as possible. As a result, they disregard considerations about whether they are treating other people properly or not, and concentrate only on questions about their own gain and loss.

The equal person, in contrast, will not try to get more, but rather will aim at fairness and nobility in her actions. This requires that they go beyond considerations about gain and loss in their decisions about how to act. Moreover, if I am right about Aristotle's proposal, equality requires that agents move away altogether from considerations about gain and loss understood in a narrow or formal way and turn towards more general questions about well-being—both their own, and that of members of their communities—and questions about the effects of their actions on the lives of others.

#### **5. Self-Love and Justice: Aristotle on the Two Kinds of Self-Love (NE IX 8)**

To clarify the central notion of the other-relatedness of justice as equality, and how Aristotle sees the focus on gain as an obstacle to both particular and general justice, I want to turn to Aristotle's discussion of the notion of self-interest or "self-love" (*philautia*) in NE IX 8. My view is that the two kinds of self-love that he differentiates directly correspond to the unjust person in the narrow sense (the unequal) and the just person in the broad sense (the lawful). Insofar as Aristotle contrasts these two figures as opposites, our analysis of his discussion will shed important light on the relationship between the equal and the lawful.

The *vulgar self-lovers* give preference to the competitive goods over the noble, and try to get as many of those goods for themselves as possible.<sup>14</sup> This kind of self-lover is identical to the

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<sup>13</sup> Rather than restricting our notion of being good to the private sphere, Aristotle locates it in the framework of our life among others. Even if in some occasions eating more or less, responding to an insult, or entering in a fight might be a personal choice, frequently our choices have a direct impact upon our social environment so that it might be our duty to others to act in the right way. For example, a trivial action such as eating an avocado might be viewed as a matter of mere personal choice, but often it involves matters of justice—e.g. Is it a local product? Were the farmers decently paid? Were they treated with dignity? Would it have been more ecological or economical to grow a different kind of fruit instead? How much waste does the production and transport of this fruit generate? If we have to take into consideration these factors (which reveal the other-relatedness of our action) to make our choice, we are treating our decision as a matter of justice and not an isolated question of temperance. Thus, the other-relatedness of justice emphasizes the fact that each individual actor is always embedded within a social context.

<sup>14</sup> NE IX.8, 1168b15-21: "Those who use the term as one of reproach ascribe self-love to people who *assign to themselves the greater share* of wealth, honors, and bodily pleasures; for these are what most people desire, and busy themselves about as though they were the best of all things, which is the reason, too, why they become objects of competition. So those who *are grasping with regard to these things* gratify their appetites and in general their feelings



person who is unjust in the narrow sense. They are concerned with the same kinds of goods and assign greater shares to themselves without regard to whether it is appropriate or not, or how it affects others. The terminology that Aristotle uses to describe the vulgar self-lover is similar to the one that he uses to characterize the unequal person: they “are grasping” (*pleonektai*) and assign to themselves greater shares of competitive goods.

In contrast, there are self-lovers who do not seem to care as much for the competitive goods and who choose for themselves noble activity and the noble instead. They do aim at their own well-being or self-interest when they choose this way, but they understand it very differently.<sup>15</sup> Instead of mere gain or the merely advantageous, he takes for himself the noblest and best things, which are truly good as opposed to merely apparently good; and he obeys the rational and “most authoritative” part of his soul.<sup>16</sup> Similarly to the just person in the broad sense, the proper self-lover characteristically performs virtuous actions of all kinds: temperate, courageous, etc., which benefit others and often contribute to the common good, and he considers those actions as beneficial to himself.

The mark of the proper lover of self is that he pays attention to considerations of nobility instead of focusing on questions about gain, and although he does not disregard material goods as worthless, he is aware of the fact that they are only conditionally good. When they are not used for the promotion of one’s own intellectual, moral or physical development, in favor of one’s friends or in favor of the common good, those “gains” are harmful and only contribute to injustice both at

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and the irrational element of the soul; and most people are of this nature ...” (οἱ μὲν οὖν εἰς ὄνειδος ἄγοντες αὐτὸ φιλαύτους καλοῦσι τοὺς ἑαυτοῖς ἀπονέμοντας τὸ πλεῖον ἐν χρήμασι καὶ τιμαῖς καὶ ἡδοναῖς ταῖς σωματικαῖς· τούτων γὰρ οἱ πολλοὶ ὀρέγονται, καὶ ἐσπουδάκασιν περὶ αὐτὰ ὡς ἄριστα ὄντα, διὸ καὶ περιμάχητά ἐστιν. οἱ δὲ περὶ ταῦτα πλεονέκται χαρίζονται ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις καὶ ὅλως τοῖς πάθεσιν καὶ τῷ ἀλόγῳ τῆς ψυχῆς· τοιοῦτοι δ’ εἰσὶν οἱ πολλοί.)

<sup>15</sup> *NE IX.8*, 1168b25-30: “For if someone were always anxious that he himself, above all things, should do just actions, or temperate actions, or actions in accordance with any other of the virtues, and in general were always to try to secure for himself the noble, no one will call such a person a lover of self or blame him. But such a person would seem more than the other a lover of self. At all events he assigns to himself the things that are noblest and best” (εἰ γὰρ τις ἀεὶ σπουδάξοι τὰ δίκαια πράττειν αὐτὸς μάλιστα πάντων ἢ τὰ σώφρονα ἢ ὅποια οὖν ἄλλα τῶν κατὰ τὰς ἀρετὰς, καὶ ὅλως ἀεὶ τὸ καλὸν ἑαυτῷ περιποιεῖτο, οὐδεὶς ἐρεῖ τοῦτον φιλαυτον οὐδὲ ψέξει. δόξειε δ’ ἂν ὁ τοιοῦτος μᾶλλον εἶναι φίλαυτος· ἀπονέμει γοῦν ἑαυτῷ τὰ κάλλιστα καὶ μάλιστ’ ἀγαθά.)

<sup>16</sup> The second reason that Aristotle gives to support the claim that this is the true self-lover is that only he will love the best part of himself, namely his reason: “And gratifies the most authoritative element in himself and in all things obeys this; and just as a city or any other systematic whole is most properly identified with the most authoritative element in it, so is a human being; and therefore the person who loves this and gratifies it is most of all a lover of self.” (*NE IX.8*, 1168b30-34) Aristotle expands on the notion of the “most authoritative” part of the soul and connects it with questions of self-control and the ownership of one’s actions. At the same time, he reminds us that there is a correlation between “living according to reason” and “desiring the noble” and between “living according to passion” and “desiring what seems advantageous”: “Besides, someone is said to have or not to have self-control according as her intellect has or has not the control, on the assumption that this is the person herself; and the things people have done from reason are thought most properly their own acts and voluntary acts. That this is the person herself, then, or is so more than anything else, is plain, and also that the good person loves most this part of her. Whence it follows that she is most truly a lover of self, of another type than that which is a matter of reproach, and as different from that as living according to reason is from living as passion dictates, and desiring what is noble from desiring what seems advantageous.” (*NE IX.8*, 1168b34-1169a6) The proper self-lover, then, is someone who obeys the most authoritative part of his soul, thereby living by reason alone (and not by passion), and who desires what is noble as opposed to what is merely advantageous. This general attitude is not only praiseworthy, but also conducive to one’s own well-being insofar as one gets for oneself the best of all goods.

the individual and at the social level.

Insofar as Aristotle opposes the vulgar self-lover (who corresponds to the unequal person) to the proper self-lover (who directly corresponds to the lawful person), he is giving us some indication that for him there is a special tension between graspingness and lawfulness in general. The key point here for Aristotle is —I think— that by being focused on “getting more” of the material goods for themselves and paying attention to questions of gain, vulgar self-lovers become unable to exercise their moral dispositions and they become not only unequal but also lawless and unable to contribute to the common good; conversely, by disregarding considerations about gain and focusing their efforts on doing noble actions and being virtuous, proper self-lovers are most able to exercise their moral capacities and thereby benefit not only their communities but also themselves.

Moreover, a second advantage of being a proper self-lover is the *promotion of the common good* through one’s actions: “if all were to strive towards what is noble and strain every nerve to do the noblest deeds, everything would be as it should be for the common good, and every one would secure for himself the goods that are greatest, since excellence is the greatest of goods.”<sup>17</sup> Therefore, there is a strong link between one’s own benefit and the benefit of others in our performance of virtuous actions. The reason why these two goals are (and have to be) accomplished simultaneously is that our individual well-being is inseparable from our capacity to exercise our moral dispositions and thus from the well-functioning of our political community.

## 6. *Pleonexia*, Proper Self-Love and the Right Approach to Justice

In conclusion, I have shown that for Aristotle conceptions of one’s advantage and of the good in general which focus on accumulation of the so-called competitive goods are contrary to justice both in the narrow and broad senses and serve as obstacles to its realization. For Aristotle, these conceptions of the good are based on a misunderstanding of what it is to love oneself and make the *pleonectic* assumption that having more material goods and political power is always beneficial.

As a corrective, I have showed that Aristotle’s proposal consists in not separating justice as equality from justice in the broad sense (lawfulness). These two justices are linked because they are both other-regarding and both turn agents away from thinking that their well-being is separable from the well-being of their community.

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<sup>17</sup> NE IX.8, 1169a9ff: πάντων δὲ ἀμιλλωμένων πρὸς τὸ καλὸν καὶ διατεινομένων τὰ κάλλιστα πράττειν κοινῇ τ' ἂν πάντ' εἴη τὰ δέοντα καὶ ἰδίᾳ ἑκάστῳ τὰ μέγιστα τῶν ἀγαθῶν, εἴπερ ἡ ἀρετὴ τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν. : ὥστε τὸν μὲν ἀγαθὸν δεῖ φιλαυτὸν εἶναι (καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸς ὀνήσεται τὰ καλά πράττων καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ὠφελήσει), τὸν δὲ μοχθηρὸν οὐ δεῖ

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*Philodemus and the Peripatetics on the Role of Anger in the Virtuous Life*

Among the most popular topics of interschool debate in Hellenistic and Imperial philosophy was the question of what role, if any, ordinary emotions such as love, anger, and the like play in a virtuous and fulfilling life. The two most famous interlocutors in this debate were the Stoics and Peripatetics, who held opposing views on the value of emotions. While the Stoics denied that ordinary emotions contribute at all to such a life, and instead maintained an ideal of complete ‘freedom from emotions’ or *apatheia*, the Peripatetics held that such emotions, at least if they are suitably moderate and concordant with the agent’s practical reasoning, play an important role in virtuous action; accordingly, they proposed the ideal of ‘moderate emotions’ or *metriopatheia*.<sup>1</sup> Although scholarship on the *apatheia/metriopatheia* debate has centered mostly on the Stoic and Peripatetic views, in this talk I wish to discuss the conception of ‘natural anger’ (φυσική ὀργή) that Philodemus proposes in his treatise *On Anger*, which, I argue, presents a sophisticated alternative both to Stoic *apatheia* and to Peripatetic *metriopatheia*.<sup>2</sup>

I

Philodemus’ *On Anger*, or what survives of it, is preserved in a single papyrus, which was buried in the Villa di Papyri in the city of Herculaneum by the eruption of Vesuvius in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century CE.<sup>3</sup> It should be noted right away that we are missing a significant amount of Philodemus’ treatise;<sup>4</sup> nevertheless, we have a considerable portion of the original text and, most importantly for my present purposes, substantial discussion of the Peripatetic account of ‘moderate’ anger and of Philodemus’ own quite different account of ‘natural anger’.

After a long diatribe section, describing in vivid detail the dangers of anger,<sup>5</sup> Philodemus begins the more theoretical and philosophically argumentative section of the extant text by describing the account of ‘moderate’ anger proposed by contemporary Peripatetics.<sup>6</sup> The Peripatetics, he reports, held that anger plays a

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<sup>1</sup> For discussion of Peripatetic *metriopatheia* see most recently B. Inwood, *Ethics after Aristotle* (Oxford, 2014). For discussion of the *apatheia/metriopatheia* debate see, e.g., J.M. Dillon, ‘Metriopatheia and Apatheia: Some Reflections on a Controversy in Later Greek Ethics’, in J.P. Anton and A. Preus (eds.), *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, vol. 2 (Albany, 1983), 508-17.

<sup>2</sup> For recent discussion of Philodemus’ theory of anger see E. Asmis, ‘The Necessity of Anger in Philodemus’ *On Anger* [‘Necessity’], in J. Fish and K. Sanders (eds.), *Epicurus and the Epicurean Tradition* (Cambridge, 2011), 152-182; V. Tsouna, *The Ethics of Philodemus [Philodemus]* (Oxford, 2007), 195-238; and V. Tsouna, ‘Philodemus, Seneca, and Plutarch on Anger’, in J. Fish and K. Sanders (eds.), *Epicurus and the Epicurean Tradition* (Cambridge, 2011), 183-210.

<sup>3</sup> For an accessible account of the discovery and excavation of the Villa di Papyri see D. Sider, *The Library of the Villa dei Papiri at Herculaneum* (Oxford, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> For discussion of the state of the extant text see Giovanni Indelli, *Filodemo, L’ira* (Napoli, 1988), 37-9, who estimates that we have about fifty percent of the original text.

<sup>5</sup> The best discussion of the ‘diatribe’ section is D. Armstrong, ‘Be Angry and Sin Not: Philodemus Versus the Stoics on Natural Bites and Natural Emotions’, in J.T. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought* (London, 2008), 79-121; see too, V. Tsouna, *Philodemus*, 204-9.

<sup>6</sup> *Phld. Ir.* 31,24-34,6 A-M. Throughout this essay, my references to Philodemus’ *On Anger* are based on the forthcoming edition by D. Armstrong and M. McOsker, *Philodemus: On Anger* (Society for Biblical Literature, forthcoming), which I will abbreviate as ‘A-M’. I also print their translation with slight modifications. I wish to thank them both for their generosity in sending me their edition and translation prior to publication.

crucial role in enabling us to stand up against and to punish injustices against ourselves, our associates, and our community, despite the prospect of suffering intense physical harm or even death. Indeed, according to him, they held that it is simply *impossible* to stand up for oneself in such cases without the aid of anger.<sup>7</sup> Thus, on the Peripatetic account, as Philodemus represents it, merely recognizing that one ought, say, to stand up against an invading army even at the risk of physical harm is motivationally ineffective without the added spur of anger. Rather, in order to act courageously, someone must both decide that it is right to act in a way that they reasonably expect will put them at risk of physical injury, and also form a strong emotional impulse in support of their decision. As Philodemus summarizes their position, the Peripatetics thus maintained that anger, when it is experienced in the right situations and ways, is ‘noble and just and beneficial both in private affairs and public, and in addition to these is pleasant’.<sup>8</sup> Except for the final clause emphasizing the pleasure of revenge as a significant advantage of anger, which we will return to at the end of the talk, the other items on Philodemus’ list all find close parallels in our other sources for the Peripatetic account of anger.<sup>9</sup> According to Peripatetic theory, then, anger is a necessary condition of courageous action, enabling us to act decisively against perceived injustices, even at the risk of death.<sup>10</sup>

Although Philodemus, as we will see, shares the Peripatetic view that anger plays a role in a virtuous and fulfilling human life, he strongly criticizes their account of the utility of anger, and especially their claim that a virtuous person would ever have reason to form a strong non-rational impulse. His criticism has two chief elements: first, he challenges their view that anger is required for courageous action; and secondly, he argues that, far from being useful for courageous action, anger often prevents us from acting sensibly and effectively in situations demanding courage.

Against the Peripatetics’ claim that anger is required for courageous action, Philodemus objects that there are many situations that demand courage, but in which anger would be inappropriate. For instance, to use an example of his, standing up to a dangerous animal clearly requires courage,<sup>11</sup> but it would be bizarre to think that it requires that one become angry with the animal, which would involve taking it, absurdly, to have slighted one.<sup>12</sup> But in that case, he argues,

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<sup>7</sup> Thus, in describing the Peripatetic position, he writes: ‘Or at least some of the Peripatetics, as we also reminded you earlier, citing their names, claim that people cut out the nerves of the soul when they deprive it of its anger and its rage, without which there can be neither chastisement nor self-defense’ (Phld. *Ir.* 31,24-31,32 A-M).

<sup>8</sup> Phld. *Ir.* 32,23-9 A-M: ὡς]αὐτως δὲ τὸ τιμωρητ[ι]κὸν τῶν ἐκθρῶν κατασκευάζειν, ὃ καλὸν τε ὑπάρχειν καὶ δίκαιον καὶ σύμφορον ἰδίαι καὶ κοινῇ καὶ πρὸς τούτοις ἡδύ.

<sup>9</sup> Other sources for the post-classical Peripatetic theory of emotions include Cic. *Tusc.* 4.38-47, Sen. *De ira* 1.7-20; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.116-152 Wachsmuth; and Asp. *in EN* Heylbut.

<sup>10</sup> As Seneca writes, in describing the Peripatetic account: ‘It raises our spirit and spurs us on; without it courage accomplishes nothing splendid in warfare: it needs that flame set to the kindling, that goad to stir the bold and send them into harm’s way’: Sen. *De ira* 1.7.1, translation by R. Kaster in R. Kaster and M. Nussbaum, *Anger, Mercy, Revenge* (Chicago, 2010), 20.

<sup>11</sup> Following Gomperz’s conjecture of θηρία at Phld. *Ir.* 33,35 A-M.

<sup>12</sup> Phld. *Ir.* 33,34-7 A-M. Philodemus attributes this example, together with the example of wrestlers and boxers, from the Stoic Antipater of Tarsus. Antipater’s criticism of the Peripatetic conception of

although anger may sometimes promote courageous action, courageous action can hardly, as the Peripatetics believed, *require* anger.

Philodemus also objects to the Peripatetic account of anger on the grounds that people in the grip of red-hot instances of anger are prone to act irrationally, and so also less effectively than they would have otherwise. For instance, he notes that soldiers who are enraged often act imprudently, thus endangering themselves and their comrades.<sup>13</sup> According to Philodemus, then, whatever motivational advantages the episodes of anger recommended by the Peripatetics may have are often outweighed by the irrationality of enraged behavior and its associated costs.

Finally, Philodemus is insistent throughout *On Anger* that far from providing civic benefits by underlying practices of punishment and accountability, as the Peripatetics argued, violent episodes of anger tend rather to destroy the civic community. For instance, he writes that ‘neither a juryman, nor council member, nor a member of an assembly, nor an archon can be just if subject to anger, or to put it simply, no human being’.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, in criticizing the Peripatetic ideal of ‘moderate’ anger, Philodemus not only denies the rather extreme view that anger is *necessary* for courageous action, but also raises serious worries about whether anger is of any *utility* at all. It may come as a surprise, then, when he subsequently insists that there is a ‘natural’ (φυσική) kind of anger, which is warranted by certain situations and is useful in defending oneself and one’s community. In particular, we might wonder whether Philodemus can consistently deny the cogency of the Peripatetic ideal of moderate anger, while insisting that even the Epicurean wise man should, and will, experience anger in certain circumstances. In the following two sections, I will, first, analyze Philodemus’ account of natural anger, and, then, turn briefly to two significant ways in which Philodemus’ natural anger differs from the Peripatetic ideal of moderate anger.

## II

Philodemus’ conception of natural anger emerges most clearly in his response to a critique of the Epicurean account urged by Nicasocrates, a philosopher of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> Century BCE.<sup>15</sup> According to Philodemus’ report, Nicasocrates challenged the coherence of the notion of natural anger on three grounds: first, such anger is intrinsically distressing and so undesirable; secondly, it obscures one’s deliberations and faculty of reason; and finally, it impedes the quality of one’s interactions with one’s friends, family, and fellow citizens.<sup>16</sup> It is worth noting that the latter two lines

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‘moderate’ anger seems to have been quite influential since these objections also appear in Sen. *De ira* 1.11.2. For discussion see J. Fillion-Lahille, *Le de ira de Sénèque et la philosophie stoïcienne des passions* (Paris, 1984), 211-20.

<sup>13</sup> Phld. *Ir.* 32,25-33,34 A-M.

<sup>14</sup> Phld. *Ir.* 28.21-7 A-M: ἐπειδήπερ οὔτε δικαστῆς οὔτε βουλευτῆς οὔτ’ ἐκκλησιαστῆς οὔτ’ ἄρχων δύναται δίκαιος εἶναι πάθεισιν ὀργίλοις συνεχόμενος, οὐδ’ ἄνθρωπος ἀπλῶς εἰπεῖν.

<sup>15</sup> While most scholarship on the topic has taken Nicasocrates to have been a rival Epicurean, he is as likely, as Elizabeth Asmis has recently argued, to have been an Academic Skeptic. For discussion compare E. Asmis, ‘Necessity’, 166 n. 50 with V. Tsouna, *Philodemus*, 202-3.

<sup>16</sup> Phld. *Ir.* 38,34-39,7 A-M: παρὰ δὲ Νικασικράτει λέγετα[ι] τὸ τὴν φυσικὴν ὀργὴν μὴ μόνον κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν φύσιν λυπεῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπισκοτεῖν τοῖς λογι[σ]μοῖς ὅσον ἐφ’ ἑαυτῆι κα[ι] τὸ || πρὸς τὴν [μετὰ]

of criticisms are nearly identical to Philodemus' own critique of Peripatetic moderate anger. Thus, if Philodemus is going to reject Peripatetic moderate anger, but maintain the existence of natural anger, he needs to defend natural anger from these lines of criticism without denying that they apply to Peripatetic moderate anger.

In responding to Nicasicrates, Philodemus' strategy is quite simple: he concedes that natural anger is to some degree distressing, but denies that natural anger either obscures the enraged person's deliberations or impedes the quality of their interpersonal and civic interactions. By contrast, as we have seen, he argues that Peripatetic anger is liable to all three lines of criticism. To see why he holds that natural anger differs from Peripatetic anger in these ways, it will prove useful to focus more closely on his concession that natural anger, like anger more generally, is to some degree distressing. While this concession may seem to be demanded by the phenomenology of anger, it raises a puzzle for Philodemus about the sense in which the anger he recommends is 'natural' or, as he also describes it, 'good' (ἀγαθόν).<sup>17</sup> For, as we saw in the previous section, he is emphatic that people are capable of acting vigorously in the face of physical pain and the prospect of physical harm and death even without the aid of anger. But in that case, if he holds that natural anger is not only distressing but also motivationally unnecessary for vigorous action, then why, according to him, should the wise man ever experience it?

Philodemus' response to this puzzle depends, I believe, on his conception of the cognitive basis of emotions. As he writes, when he first introduces the concept in Column 37, natural anger 'results from seeing what the nature of affairs really is, and from not allowing any false beliefs at all into our calculations of the harms done, and into our punishments of those causing harm'.<sup>18</sup> Philodemus thus holds that 'natural' anger results from a reasonable assessment of the real harms we have suffered and the efficacy and costs of punishing those who have harmed us.<sup>19</sup> Instances of natural anger therefore reflect the agent's rational and correct grasp of the situation. Moreover, this assessment is in turn produced by a stable disposition to appreciate and grasp the value of things accurately. At the least, such a disposition requires that one understand the real value of things and the nature of human happiness.

While this passage does not explicitly address why the Epicurean wise man naturally feels anger when he recognizes that he has both been harmed inappropriately and that he ought to resist vigorously, I believe that the broader context of the passage suggests an explanation. The first thing to notice is that since, according to Philodemus, natural anger 'results from' an accurate appraisal of one's situation and the costs and benefits of pursuing punishment, it is likely that he takes

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φίλων συμβίωσι[ν] ἀν[ε]κτὸν κατὰ πᾶν καὶ ἀπ[αρ]ενόχλητον ἐμποδίζ[ειν καὶ] πολλὰ τῶν κ[ατη]ριθμ[ημέ]νω[ν] ἐλα[ττ]ωμάτω[ν] συνε[πι]φέρειν·

<sup>17</sup> Phld. *Ir.* 37,29-32 A-M: κατὰ δὲ τὴν συνπλοκὴν τῆι διαθέσει κἂν ἀγαθὸν ῥηθῆσεται [sc. τὸ πάθος] νομίζομεν·

<sup>18</sup> Phld. *Ir.* 37,32-9 A-M: συνίσταται γὰρ ἀπὸ το[ῦ] βλέπειν, ὡς ἡ φύσις ἔχει τῶν πραγμάτων, καὶ μηδὲν ψευδοδοξεῖν ἐν ταῖς σ[υ]μμετρήσεσι τῶν ἐλα[ττ]ωμάτων καὶ ταῖς κολάσεσι τῶν βλαπτόντων.

<sup>19</sup> It is worth emphasizing that 'reasonable' here does not imply infallibility, but only that the agent judges as well as anyone could, given the information available to them.



feelings of anger to follow *naturally* and *unavoidably* from the judgment that one has been harmed and that it is worthwhile to pursue punishment as a result. This is suggested as well by his claim shortly afterwards that someone who does not become angry at all when he is insulted or maltreated, ‘gives the ultimate proof of his own baseness’.<sup>20</sup> Philodemus’ point here is not, of course, that such a person is base because they stand up for themselves calmly and deliberately, without anger. Rather, I suggest that, according to him such a person is base because they fail to fully appreciate either the harm done to them or the value of pursuing punishment and so deterring future assaults. The primary problem with their situation is not, therefore, an *emotional* failing – say, owing to the absence of sufficient fire in their psychic makeup – but a *cognitive* failure to appreciate their own value and, consequently, to appraise their situation accurately.<sup>21</sup>

We are now in position to understand Philodemus’ response to the other two lines of criticism that Nicasicrates urges against the ideal of ‘natural’ anger: namely, that episodes of natural anger, like episodes of anger more generally, obscure the agent’s deliberations and faculty of reason, and moreover, impede the quality of the agent’s interactions with their friends, family, and fellow citizens. While Philodemus agrees that both of these lines of criticism very commonly apply to cases of unnatural or, to use his phrase, ‘empty anger’ (κενή ὀργή),<sup>22</sup> his account of the cognitive basis of natural anger provides a straightforward explanation of why natural anger does not suffer from either of these faults. For, as we have seen, he takes natural anger to result from an accurate and reasonable grasp of our present situation and of the long-term costs and benefits of punishing those who have harmed us. But in that case, it is difficult to see how natural anger could involve any irrationality at all, let alone why it should, as Nicasicrates argues, necessarily do so. Similarly, to the extent that the excellent practical reasoning underlying natural anger takes into account our civic and social relationships and commitments it is bizarre to think that natural anger would prove inimical to such relationships. Philodemus’ cognitivist account of natural anger thus provides a straightforward explanation of why he concedes to Nicasicrates that natural anger is to some degree distressing, but denies that natural anger either obscures the enraged person’s deliberations or impedes the quality of their interpersonal and civic interactions.

### III

As we have seen, Philodemus strongly criticizes Peripatetic moderate anger on the grounds that it involves significant irrationality and tends to weaken our social and political bonds with one another. In this section, I wish to turn briefly to two further differences between Philodemus’ account of natural anger and the Peripatetic

<sup>20</sup> Phld. *Ir.* 38,20-7 A-M: οὕτως κακὸν ἐροῦμεν τὸ μὴ τὴν φυσικὴν ὀργὴν ἀναδέχασθαι, “κακῶς” γὰρ “ἀκούων” καὶ πάσχων “ὅστις οὐκ ὀργίζεται, πονηρίας πλεῖστο[ν] τεκμήριον φέρει” κα[τὰ] τὸν Μένανδρον.

<sup>21</sup> For the physiological aspect of the Epicurean theory of emotions see, especially, Lucretius 3.282-322, who argues that different wise people have different emotional propensities to natural and unavoidable emotions, such as anger (*ira*), on account of their particular physical constitution and upbringing; cf. Phld. *Ir.* col. 36, 17-22 A-M.

<sup>22</sup> For this expression see, e.g., Phld. *Ir.* 37,39-38,5 A-M: ὥστε καθ’ [ὃ]ν τρόπον ἐλέγομ[εν] τὴν κ[ενὴν] ὀργὴν κακόν, ὅτι ἀπὸ διαθέσεως γίνεται πα[ν]πληροῦ καὶ μυρία δυσχερῆ συνεπισπᾶται.

account of moderate anger, which, I believe, help to explain these objections. Since Philodemus presents distinct considerations in support of each line of criticism, I will discuss them in turn beginning with his critique of the social and political consequences of Peripatetic ‘moderate’ anger.

At first sight, Philodemus’ claim that the moderate anger recommended by the Peripatetics threatens to dissolve the social and political bonds binding families, friends and communities together might seem rather hyperbolic. After all, at least as the Peripatetics present it, the moderate anger they recommend will be justified by the agent’s situation and will support their efforts to repel and punish people assaulting them and their community unjustly. It is worth noting, however, an important distinction between the Peripatetics’ conception of anger and that of Philodemus, which I believe underlies this aspect of his criticism. In particular, as we saw above, he takes the Peripatetics to include the distinctive ‘pleasure’ (ἡδύ) involved in anger as a further advantage of the emotion, beyond its social and political function.<sup>23</sup> By contrast, Philodemus rejects the notion that ‘natural’ anger involves any intrinsic pleasure at all. Instead, he argues that the Epicurean sage will approach vengeance as, in his words, ‘something *most necessary* and *most unpleasant*, as he would the drinking of wormwood or the doctor’s knife’.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, he insists that taking pleasure in the anticipation and achievement of revenge is not only inappropriate, but also closely and perhaps even inextricably linked to cruel and asocial behavior.<sup>25</sup>

I take it that Philodemus has something like the following account in mind: people who find vengeance intrinsically pleasant, like the Peripatetic sage, will likely both overvalue the importance of securing vengeance relative to their other interests and aims, since their pleasure counts as an additional motive for pursuing it, and will also be disinclined to seek out or be adequately receptive to considerations speaking against the appropriateness of their anger. By contrast, since the Epicurean wise man finds contemplating and exacting vengeance to be, in Philodemus’ description, ‘most unpleasant’ (ἀηδέστατον),<sup>26</sup> he will hardly be inclined either to pursue it beyond what he takes to be absolutely demanded by his own and the communal good or to disregard considerations that come to light opposing the appropriateness of his emotion. According to Philodemus, then, since the Peripatetic wise man takes achieving vengeance to be intrinsically pleasant and

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<sup>23</sup> Phld. *Ir.* 32,23-9 A-M. While I have not been able to find any Peripatetic sources supporting Philodemus’ view that the Peripatetics took the pleasure involved in anger to be an *independent* reason in favor of it, there is very good evidence that they considered anger to be a complex emotion that *involves*, in addition to the distress caused by the perception that one has been slighted unjustly, the pleasure of contemplating taking vengeance on the aggressor. For instance, in the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle writes: ‘And some pleasure, which arises from the hope of taking vengeance, is involved in every instance of anger’ (Arist. *Rhet.* 2.2, 1378b1-2).

<sup>24</sup> Phld. *Ir.* 44,16-22 A-M: [οὔτε ὡς πρὸς ἀ]πο[λαυστ]όν—οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡδ[ύ] τι προσφέρεται—ἀλλ’ ὡς πρὸ[ς] ἀναγκαιότατον, ἀηδέστατον δὲ παραγίνεται, καθάπερ ἐπὶ πόσιν ἀψιθίου καὶ τομῆν.

<sup>25</sup> For instance, Philodemus contrasts ‘the extremely gentle and decent’ disposition of the Epicurean sage, with the ‘harsh’ disposition of people who take vengeance to be pleasant, and whom he describes, quoting Homer, as “‘tribeless and lawless” and in reality “lovers of war” – and vengeance – on mankind’ (Phld. *Ir.* 44,22-8 A-M.).

<sup>26</sup> Phld. *Ir.* 44,18-20 A-M.

desirable, even his allegedly ‘moderate’ anger is prone to harm himself and those around him.

As we have seen, Philodemus also objects to the Peripatetic conception of moderate anger on the grounds that such anger, like empty anger more generally, distorts and obscures the enraged person’s reasoning. While his criticism of the role that the lust for revenge plays in Peripatetic accounts of anger surely contributes to his account of this problem, it may be supplemented by a significant difference in the Peripatetic and Epicurean accounts of the cognitive basis of anger. While Philodemus takes episodes of anger to depend on the agent’s belief that he has been harmed unjustly and that it is appropriate to punish the offender, the Peripatetics commonly held that anger, like other emotions, depends most fundamentally not on the ‘belief’ (δόξα/ὑπόληψις) but on the ‘impression’ (φαντασία) that one has been harmed unjustly.<sup>27</sup> But in that case, it might seem plausible, especially against the background of a cognitivist theory of emotions such as Philodemus’, that on the Peripatetic account even the wise man might form an episode of anger on the basis of an impression that he would not endorse upon reflection.<sup>28</sup>

This distinction in the two schools’ conceptions of the cognitive basis of anger is mirrored in a more fundamental distinction in their respective accounts of moral psychology. While, as we have seen, the Epicureans take anger and other emotions to be based, at least primarily, on the agent’s reason, the Peripatetics hold that emotions are impulses, first and foremost, of the non-rational aspect of the soul.<sup>29</sup> Although Philodemus does not, in the extant text of *On Anger*, explicitly discuss the Peripatetic view that anger is, or at least includes, a non-rational impulse, it may be implied by his claim that, according to them, even the warranted anger of the wise man is both ‘a reasonable impulse’ and also, at the same time, ‘a

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<sup>27</sup> For instance, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century CE Peripatetic Aspasius, in discussing the Peripatetic conception of emotions, writes: ‘Some emotions arise from the impression itself without assent and supposition; for an emotion of the soul sometimes arises even on the basis of sense-perception itself, when something pleasant or painful appears. Therefore, emotions arise not only after suppositions, but also before suppositions’ (Asp. in EN 45,2-5 Heylbut). For more recent discussion of Aristotle’s theory of emotions see, e.g., J. Dow, ‘Feeling Fantastic Again – Passions, Appearances, and Beliefs in Aristotle’, *OSAP* 46, 213-51; G. Pearson, ‘Aristotle and the Cognitive Component of Emotions’, *OSAP* 46, 165-211; and especially, J. Moss, *Aristotle on the Apparent Good: Perception, Phantasia, Thought, and Desire* (Oxford, 2012), 69-99.

<sup>28</sup> To be sure, the Peripatetics would likely reject this consequence, but it seems plausible that Philodemus may have taken this to reflect a significant difference between Epicurean ‘natural’ anger and Peripatetic ‘moderate’ anger. This interpretation finds further support in his objection that, according to Peripatetic theory, even the anger of the *phronimos* includes a non-rational frenzy (τὸν ἄλογον οἷ[ον ἐν]θουσιασμόν): see Phld. *Ir.* 32,30-5 A-M.

<sup>29</sup> While the details of Aristotle’s own theory are, of course, controversial, there is strong evidence that Hellenistic and Imperial Peripatetics took the non-rational part of the soul to be responsible for emotions. For instance, the 1<sup>st</sup> Century BCE – 1<sup>st</sup> Century CE philosopher Arius Didymus opens his *Epitome of Peripatetic Ethics* with a quick summary of Aristotelian psychology, which he argues distinguishes between the ‘rational’ (τὸ λογικόν) part of the soul and the ‘non-rational’ (τὸ ἄλογον) or ‘emotional’ (τὸ παθητικόν) part: Stob. *Ecl.* 2.117.7-12 Wachsmuth. For discussion of Aristotle’s theory of emotions and its relationship to his moral psychology see the texts cited in n. 27 above.

non-rational enthusiasm'.<sup>30</sup> I propose, then, that Philodemus takes the Peripatetic view that even the moderate anger of the wise man includes a substantial non-rational component to suggest that even the wise man's reasoning is obscured when he acts on the basis of warranted instances of anger. By contrast, Philodemus holds that since the Epicurean wise man forms episodes of natural anger on the basis of his *considered appraisal* of the harm he has suffered and of the value of punishing the offender, his anger will express his excellent rationality and grasp of the situation.

#### IV

In sum, I have argued that in his *On Anger*, Philodemus develops a sophisticated and philosophically interesting account of natural anger, which differs significantly from the Peripatetic ideal of moderate anger. Although there is surely much that the Peripatetics might say in response to his criticism, I hope to have shown that Philodemus' own account of natural anger is both quite different from Peripatetic moderate anger and represents a significant and distinctive contribution to the post-classical *apatheia/metriopatheia* debate.

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<sup>30</sup> Phil. *Ir* . 32,30-5 A-M: διὸ τήν τε παράστασιν τήν εὐλόγον [ἦ] τινων καὶ τὸν ἄλογον οἶ[ον ἐν]θουσιασμόν οἶον[ται] θυμὸν εἶναι τὸν περὶ οἷ[δι]αλεγόμεθα.

## **Among the Boys and Young Men: Philosophy and Masculinity in Plato's *Lysis***

Near the middle of his first discussion with Lysis, Socrates asks an odd question.<sup>1</sup> It's one of many, of course, but it's odd nonetheless. Odd, and also funny: it's the one of just two comments in the book that makes Lysis laugh.<sup>2</sup> Also strange is that although this charming young dialogue has received quite a bit of scholarly attention, almost no one seems to have noticed this unusual bit.<sup>3</sup> So, what I hope to do here is spend a little time with this unnoticed oddity—partly in the hope of seeing what it might tell us about some more notorious oddities in the text, but also partly because, as Lysis noticed, strange questions are fun. This question, I shall argue, reveals the profound depth of Socrates' challenge to Lysis and his views about himself and his loved ones. It's a challenge so profound, in fact, that at first the only response is laughter. One aspect of the challenge, which comes out in this particular question, is a challenge to certain ideals of masculinity, and so momentarily I'll offer a brief discussion of Athenian conceptions of gender and masculinity, along with some of Plato's challenge to such conceptions. Finally, that discussion will help reveal a bit more of the odd fun of the conversation with Lysis.

First, though, let me back up and present Socrates' odd question. He begins his first discussion with Lysis by asking if his parents love him and want him to be happy, and then follows up by asking whether Lysis has free rein over things like the family mules and chariots. It turns out of course that Lysis' father does not let our young friend take charge of these, nor even of his own time, and instead sensibly entrusts them to trained drivers, teachers, and so on. And then, at the conclusion of this stretch:

“It looks like your father has decided to put quite a few masters and dictators over you. But what about when you come home to your mother, does she let you do whatever it takes to make you happy, like playing with her wool or her loom when she's weaving? She doesn't stop you from touching the blade or the comb or any of her other wool-working tools, does she?”

“Stop me?” he laughed. “She would beat me if I laid a finger on them.” (208d1-e2)<sup>4</sup>

In this one case, we see something different from all of the other things that Lysis is not allowed to do on his own. He might someday learn to drive a chariot, and he'll obviously have more freedom to choose how he spends his time when he's older, but it is incredibly unlikely that he'll ever do any weaving, or spend any time with wool-working tools: Athenians and other Greeks, as Plato's unnamed Athenian explains in the *Laws*, “concentrate our resources, as the expression is, under one roof, and let our women take charge of our stores and the spinning and wool-working in general” (805e4-7). Indeed, weaving is the paradigm of women's work in Ancient Greek culture.<sup>5</sup> Lysis will grow up to be a man in Athens, and so it's not just odd to ask

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<sup>1</sup> When I mention Socrates in this paper, I mean only the character in the *Lysis* and other works by Plato.

<sup>2</sup> The other is 207c6, when Lysis and Menexenus both laugh when Socrates asks whether they argue over which of them is better looking.

<sup>3</sup> A footnote in William Michael Vann's dissertation notes the difference in this particular question, and credits Elizabeth Belfiore. As far as I can tell, however, neither Belfiore nor anyone else has spent time discussing this in print.

<sup>4</sup> Translations of Plato are all from Cooper, with minor changes.

<sup>5</sup> Ruby Blondell writes that it “was the signature activity of women in Greek ideology, and the overwhelming

if his mother lets him play with her loom: it's laughable.

Throughout the *Lysis*, but especially in Socrates' discussions with the title character, Socrates makes some subtle (and some less subtle) challenges to Athenian ideals of masculinity. My purpose here isn't to credit Plato with any special or prescient ideas of gender, but rather to use this lens to show both how deep the challenge to *Lysis* goes and also how promising certain models of love and friendship look from this perspective.

## 1. Unmanly Philosophy

In the *Gorgias*, Callicles reprimands Socrates for his unseemly, persistent interest in philosophy, saying,

when I see an older man still engaging in philosophy and not giving it up, I think such a man by this time needs a flogging. For, as I was just now saying, it's typical that such a man, even if he's naturally very well favored, becomes unmanly (*ἀνάνδρω*) and avoids the centers of his city and the marketplaces... and, instead, lives the rest of his life in hiding, whispering in a corner with three or four boys, never uttering anything well-bred, important, or relevant (485d1-e2).

There seems to be a sense in which he seems to be right at least about the unmanly nature of Socrates' project. In particular, scholars have pointed to a handful of significant challenges to Athenian ideals of masculinity in Plato's work.<sup>6</sup>

As we all know, Socrates frequently reminds his interlocutors that they'll do better if they speak as friends rather than competitors. Insofar as competitiveness is characteristic of the Athenian conception of masculinity,<sup>7</sup> Plato's embrace of cooperation clearly appears as a challenge to that ideal. Next, as Saxonhouse has argued, masculine "discourse is... based on exclusion."<sup>8</sup> The restriction of rights, access, and education is a feature not only of how women and men's lives differed in Classical Athens—that exclusionary approach also permeates certain models of discourse. The extreme case is of course Pericles' comments in the famous funeral oration, where he says that the greatest respect will be for the woman with the least renown (Thucydides II.45).<sup>9</sup> When Plato's Socrates, however, includes women in his city or his speeches at symposia, he challenges this Athenian love of separate and delineated spaces. Finally, as we can see in Callicles' remarks, a male citizen is expected to engage in public and political life, and Socrates's refusal to do so, his apparent belief that he is sufficient unto himself in some sense, runs counter to this expectation. I shall argue that reading the *Lysis* with these questions in mind can open up some important aspects of this dialogue.

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preponderance of such work was performed by female labour in the home" (67).

<sup>6</sup> A number of thinkers have done excellent work on this aspect of Plato's thought, but in this section I am relying especially on Wendy Brown and Arlene W. Saxonhouse. Brown and Saxonhouse discuss other challenges to masculinity that I will not have space for (for example a notion of understanding that goes beyond rational discourse), but hopefully a longer version of this paper will incorporate those as well.

<sup>7</sup> See Brown, 595-597.

<sup>8</sup> Saxonhouse, 12.

<sup>9</sup> The discussion of men's and women's work in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* is another famous example. And see Saxonhouse, 7, and also Shaw, 256-257.

## 2. Wrestling with Masculinity

The opening moments of the *Lysis* in fact quickly draw attention to issues of masculinity and the transgression of social norms: the conversation takes place at a new palaestra, and it takes place during the festival of Hermes. Wrestling schools are the exclusive domain of men and boys in Athens, and they are spaces in which Athenians engage in masculine models of competition and military training. Additionally, during the Hermaia “participants in the gymnasium competed in the *euexia*, a contest judging the beauty and form of the naked body,”<sup>10</sup> and specifically the naked male body. There’s no reason to think this contest is taking place at the time of our dialogue, but this background again points to a heightened concern for masculinity.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, under normal circumstances a strict separation would be observed. During the festival of Hermes, however, “the younger and older boys are mingled together” (206d1-2). Indeed, on many accounts, a man like Socrates would not normally be allowed into a school like this, but since many stories about Hermes involve a “topsy-turvy” spirit, those normal rules are suspended during the festival.<sup>12</sup>

Clearly Plato’s reader is invited to consider the ways in which masculinity is being practiced and transgressed in this text, especially considering the age of the title character. Lysis, widely seen as the youngest interlocutor that Socrates engages with, is so young that he’s still referred to by his father’s name (204e3-5).<sup>13</sup> What’s more, there is reason to believe that the Hermaia involves a sort of coming-of-age ritual, being perhaps the first time that “*paides* performed their first sacrifice as *hieropoios*, thus being initiated into a ritual of central importance to the polis.”<sup>14</sup> Thus our dialogue involves a rare opportunity for Socrates to speak directly with a boy who is near the threshold of adulthood during a festival that celebrates masculinity, competition, and transgression. How much funnier, therefore, that this is the setting in which Socrates asks Lysis about playing with his mother’s weaving?

The reason that Socrates engages with Lysis again reinforces the relevance of masculine performance: Hippothales’ attempts to seduce Lysis are all framed in terms of capture and conquest, and even the poems he writes about Lysis focus on the family’s “wealth and their stables and their victories... in the chariot and horseback races” (205c2-5). Socrates proposes to show Hippothales how to “carry on a conversation with him instead of talking and singing,” a perfect illustration of the move from a competitive, agonistic model toward a cooperative one.<sup>15</sup>

## 3. Love and Kinship

It may be tempting to think that if competition is not the ideal way to express love, then enabling

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<sup>10</sup> Perriello 2009, 277.

<sup>11</sup> Indeed, in some descriptions of the ideal body, which would be judged at the *euexia*, there is a preference for bodies that appear “masculine and not feminine” (Perriello 2009, 279).

<sup>12</sup> See Planeaux, 66. For further discussion, see Perriello 2011, 219-220.

<sup>13</sup> Lysis and Menexenus of course argue about their age (207b8-c2); Scott 2000 guesses that they’re both 12 or 13 (at p.52), but whatever Lysis’ age, he’s certainly an adolescent.

<sup>14</sup> Perriello 2011, 224. Perriello 2009 also speaks of a typical member of a gym as “on the cusp of his entrance into the community of citizens (280; see also 283).

<sup>15</sup> Gonzales, especially 71 and 87; Belfiore, 83-84; and Rider, 44-45—among others—all note that a key part of Socrates’ goal with Lysis is to shift the focus from competition to cooperation.

one's beloved to act however they please might be better, but Socrates quickly helps Lysis see the flaws with that model. Rather than let Lysis do whatever he pleases, his parents impose strict limits on his actions. Lysis at first suggests that his age is the source of the limits (209a5); once Socrates reminds him of his freedom to write and to tune and play his lyre as he sees fit, though, Lysis recognizes the true explanation: "I suppose it's because I know (ἐπίσταμαι) about these things but not those" (209c2). Without knowledge, Lysis is useless and will not be trusted with chariots, mules, or the like: Lysis agrees that no one "is going to love us as a friend in those areas in which we are good for nothing" (210c5-6). Once he has knowledge, everyone from his father up through the Great King will trust Lysis to run their estates, heal their kids' eyes, and salt their soups (209c-210a).

Readers—including myself—often struggle to grasp this argument.<sup>16</sup> Something quite silly seems to be happening by the time Socrates says that Darius will let them throw handfuls of salt into the soup (209e4-6). Should we take this argument seriously, or have we encountered something like a *reductio* (and if so, what's the target of the *reductio*)?

Before turning to those puzzles, though, I want to turn back to weaving for a moment. As I mentioned earlier, the final example of something Lysis is barred from doing—this time by the threat of a beating—is touching his mother's weaving (208d1-e2). Neither of Lysis' attempted explanations (age or lack of technical knowledge) gives a complete explanation of his mother's refusal to let him play with her wool-working tools. Lysis will never learn how to weave or be at an age where his mother will hand him her weaving, because Lysis is a boy.

I want to briefly explore two possible ways to read this short stretch of text. Perhaps the text assumes that Lysis could in fact learn to weave, thus bringing this case in line with the rest; of course, that assumption might be surprising in the hyper-masculine setting of the palaestra during the Hermaia, but I don't see why that would stop our transgressive and unmanly Socrates. To take things that way would if nothing else reaffirm the degree to which all of Lysis is at stake in this conversation: philosophy may require a break from many norms, including gender norms.

On the other hand, perhaps there is a hint that an account of love or friendship in terms of knowledge and utility must remain incomplete. Thinking beyond utility points to another way to read the mention of weaving: the person who would be trusted with Lysis' mother's wool and tools would need both knowledge and something else—that person would have to be someone for whom weaving is appropriate, someone fit for weaving. In Athens of course that means a woman, but to generalize we might say that people will view someone as a friend if that person has the appropriate knowledge.

Picking up a thread from the end of the book, in fact, maybe what the lovable person has is something that is οἰκεῖον, that belongs to them (221e3-7). Given the final arguments in the text (which unfortunately I don't have time to review here), we have good reason to think that friendship involves more than usefulness.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, parents love their children at least in some sense because the children belong to them—as Socrates' examples seem to imply, part of the reason that Lysis' parents keep him from doing things like driving chariots is that they care for him and are trying to take care of him.<sup>18</sup> The conclusion that they don't love him, therefore,

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<sup>16</sup> But for a thorough and thoughtful account of the argument, see Rider.

<sup>17</sup> I believe Bordt (161) arrives at a similar conclusion concerning the opening discussion with Lysis, but as of the writing of this draft I have not had the time to track down a copy of his essay.

<sup>18</sup> Penner & Rowe recognize this, especially at p.34.



seems to be misleading at best.<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps instead another aspect of masculinity is at stake here? Plato's Socrates often appears to embody and promote a sort of self-sufficiency that runs counter to Athenian ideas of masculinity. Socrates does not measure himself by wealth, power, or honor. This self-sufficiency is part of what Callicles attacks when he calls Socrates unmanly for avoiding the agora in the *Gorgias* (485d1-e2), and some readers see a reference to this in this first discussion with Lysis.<sup>20</sup> Maybe what's absurd here is the idea that the way to measure a person's knowledge or wisdom is by seeing how many things are entrusted to that person by their parents or by the Great King? Maybe the the real *reductio* is a *reductio* of a model of love too dependent on Athenian values, including masculine values?

#### 4. Discipline and Love

The challenge to certain conceptions of masculinity appears again at the close of this first discussion with Lysis. Just as the argument reaches its conclusion, Socrates nearly gives Hippothales away by explaining his purpose out loud: "This is how you should talk with your boyfriends, Hippothales, cutting them down to size and putting them in their place (*ταπεινοῦντα καὶ συστέλλοντα*), instead of swelling them up and spoiling them (*χαυνοῦντα καὶ διαθρύπτοντα*), as you do" (210e2-5). He stops himself from actually saying those things, but in a culture that viewed submissiveness as a key feminine virtue it seems clear that this summary again serves as a defense of a philosophical attitude that also happens to threaten Athenian masculinity.

Hippothales, out to conquer Lysis, does indeed seem threatened by the discussion, and appears "struggling and upset (*ἀγωνιῶντα καὶ τεθορυβημένον*)" (210e5). Lysis, on the other hand, immediately begins encouraging Socrates to do the same thing to Menexenus. "Then Lysis turned to me with a good deal of boyish friendliness (*μάλα παιδικῶς καὶ φιλικῶς*) and, unnoticed by Menexenus, whispered in my ear: 'Socrates, tell Menexenus what you've been saying to me'" (211a2-5). Menexenus is the paradigm of the competitive male friend,<sup>21</sup> and now Lysis wants him to share in his move away from what I'm calling masculinity—in particular here competitiveness and a dependence on political and material rewards.

"Well, I guess I'll have to, since it's you who ask. But you've got to come to my rescue if he tries to refute (*ἐλέγχειν*) me. Or don't you know what a debater (*ἐριστικός*) he is?"

"Sure I do—he's very much one. That's why I want you to have a discussion with him."

"So that I can make a fool of myself?"

"No, so you can teach him a lesson! (*ἵνα αὐτὸν κολάσῃς*)" (211b7-c3).

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<sup>19</sup> See Rider, especially 56-57, for a more detailed account of the argument's flaws.

<sup>20</sup> Scott 1995 writes that Socrates "is not a slave to anyone not because he is a liberal man in the usual sense but precisely because he does not care for the material and political things by which men—and for classical Athens the gender specificity was significant—commonly appraise one another" (29).

<sup>21</sup> Lysis and Menexenus are certainly in a competitive mindset when they begin talking with Socrates: when Socrates asks Menexenus which of them is older, he says, "we argue about that" (207c2). Within a few lines, however, Socrates already begins to move things in a different direction. He says that he won't ask which of them is richer, because they are friends, "and friends have everything in common" (207c10). We don't learn whether Lysis and his friend argue about their justice and wisdom, since Menexenus gets called away by his (masculine?) ceremonial duties. A movement has already started, though, from the competitive spirit of the boys' friendship to a different kind of relationship.

Perhaps part of the lesson involves coming to see that success should not be defined in terms of victory in a competition, but instead by becoming the sort of person who might be self-sufficient enough to feel comfortable engaging in a shared, cooperative inquiry.<sup>22</sup>

The concept of teaching someone a lesson or chastising them (κολάζειν) shows up again in the discussion with Menexenus. Socrates asks whether friends are the ones loving or being loved, and although this line of inquiry never seems to bear fruit,<sup>23</sup> Socrates does call attention to one interesting feature of the parent-child relationship:

Small children, for example, who are too young to show love but not too young to hate, when they are disciplined (κολάζεται) by their mother or father, are at that moment, even though they hate their parents then, their very dearest friends (212e6-213a3).<sup>24</sup>

Being loved sometimes involves being chastised, and it is to Lysis' credit that he seems to realize this, and that he wants to share this benefit and include Menexenus rather than keep Socrates' conversation to himself. Indeed, as Lysis encourages Socrates to talk with Menexenus, Ctesippus interrupts, asking whether they're having a private part or if the others "get a share of the conversation" (211c11-d1). Without a moment's hesitation, Socrates says, "Of course you get a share!" (211d2). Socrates' project is a shared project, an inclusive project that values a common pursuit of understanding rather than a competitive pursuit of honor or other rewards.

I'd like to close with one last puzzle, a puzzle about self-sufficiency. Early I argued that part of the Socratic challenge to masculinity comes from Socrates' self-sufficiency: unlike stereotypical male Athenians, Socrates doesn't care about politics or money, but instead seems sufficient unto himself. I argued that this seems to offer a promising way of reading the first discussion with Lysis—the assumption that leads to the absurd conclusion (Lysis' parents don't love him) is the assumption that the way to measure love is in terms of honors or responsibilities bestowed. Someone less stereotypically masculine, someone more self-sufficient, would not need their parents to turn over their estate to them to know that they're loved.

Later, however, Socrates argues that someone who is self-sufficient has no need for other people, and so cannot be anyone's friend (215a-b). If that's right, how can we make sense of the discussion with Lysis? For one thing, being uninterested in money or politics is hardly the same thing as being perfectly good and self-sufficient. What's more, a person who can recognize that shared inquiry outweighs the value of wealth and power can enter into a different sort of friendship. As Francisco Gonzalez writes, "Socrates and the boys can establish a reciprocal friendship by seeking together that good that belongs to all of them but of which all of them are deprived." Instead of friendships of conquest or utility, there might be space for a friendship of shared philosophical inquiry.

Maybe none of that will convince Lysis' mother to let him help with the weaving, and maybe it's still laughable to think he'd even ask. Unmanly as he may be, Socrates alone cannot

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<sup>22</sup> Rider offers a similar account, stressing the ways in which Socrates "taps into Lysis's affinity for eristic argument and his competitive friendship with Menexenus in order to instigate the boys to begin to practice real philosophy" (61). I see slightly more here, however. Socrates is not only appealing to Lysis' interest in eristic, he's also subverting it, and showing the ways in which eristic leads to incomplete conclusions.

<sup>23</sup> At least not in a way I have time to examine in my discussion.

<sup>24</sup> I would simply like to acknowledge here that I am the parent of a four-year-old, whom I love very much...

undo the role of masculinity in Athenian culture. Has the conversation, though, opened up some space for a more cooperative and less competitive pursuit, or for less concern for manly achievements? No wonder the tutors soon show up to take the boys home.

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THE DIS-COMMUNITY OF LOVERS:  
Kinship in the *Lysis*

Es giebt wohl hier und da auf Erden eine Art Fortsetzung der Liebe,  
bei der jenes habsüchtige Verlangen zweier Personen nach  
einander einer neuen Begierde und Habsucht,  
einem gemeinsamen höheren Durste nach einem über ihnen  
stehenden Ideale gewichen ist: aber wer kennt diese Liebe?  
Wer hat sie erlebt? Ihr rechter Name ist Freundschaft.  
Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*

In turning our attention to the topic of community, we might be tempted to focus on the *Republic* or the *Laws*. However, if we turn our focus to the *Lysis*, we would find a different, privileged notion of community.<sup>1</sup> In turning to the *Lysis* and to the ἀπορία with which it is ends, we find ourselves within a community that differs from that of the political. Indeed, the distinction between the paths of these three dialogues can be seen in the starkly different ways in which both the Homeric expression, “Ever, god leads like to like [αἰεὶ τοι ὁμοῖον ἄγει θεὸς ὡς τὸν ὁμοῖον],”<sup>2</sup> as well as the proverb, “Friends have all things in common [κοινὰ γὰρ τὰ τῶν φίλων],”<sup>3</sup> are understood throughout the writings of Plato. Oftentimes these are employed with political connotations,<sup>4</sup> e.g., *Republic* 419a-424a and *Laws* 716c and 837b. In fact, Socrates uses the latter adage to justify his argument that the establishment of the good of the city-state should be aimed not at an individual or even toward a class of individuals but rather toward the city-state as a whole (*R.* 420b). Indeed, law is aimed at “the city as a whole, fitting together the citizens by persuasion or compulsion, requiring them to give a share of benefit to one another the benefit that each class can bring to the community [κοινόν]” (*R.* 519e-520a).<sup>5</sup> However, at 207c of the *Lysis*, Socrates makes use of the statement on friends after *Lysis* and Menexenus laugh when asked what characteristics are similar and dissimilar to them. Mary P. Nichols suggests their laughter is no mere poetic imagery but holds philosophical significance.<sup>6</sup> It is “not in spite of their differences but because of their reaction to their differences, especially their laughter, they are friends.”<sup>7</sup> As the dialogue unfolds we learn that friends are neither wholly similar nor dissimilar, but can reflect on ways in which they are both. I would like to suggest that what is of import here is that what they share cannot be articulated in language, but only in an immediate and direct response to each other. As such, the community in which friends find themselves is actually a dis-community: it is grounded in what cannot be grasped or expressed within the narrow confines of language, and therefore it cannot be forced upon them, but rather arises organically, outside of the political realm, through ἀπορία, and through the ambiguities surrounding φιλία.

I. A useful friend and a kinship within ἀπορία:

In order to flesh out how this dis-community is formed and expressed, the ontological status of the friend must be examined along with what he or she provides, if anything. We will then follow the discussion of how the phenomena of φιλία and of being a φίλος<sup>8</sup> unfold within the *Lysis*. This description will help to unveil both the relationship between the Socratic lover and beloved and, consequently, the type of community in which they participate.

Critics have long noted that utility and use-value permeate the *Lysis*,<sup>9</sup> for example Lysis' parents display φιλία toward him if he proves himself wise in certain matters, e.g., reading letters and tuning the harp (*Ly.* 210d), and in so doing he is useful to them. The concept of usefulness returns later in the dialogue, this time in the guise of whether or not two individuals who are like or unlike are of benefit to each other (*Ly.* 214d-216b). While the first passage characterizes φιλία as one-sided, the second gives at least the possibility for a mutual and reciprocal benefit. Accordingly, there have been two lines of interpretation of what characterizes the benefit and usefulness of a φίλον: instrumentalism and reciprocity.<sup>10</sup> Contrary to current scholarship, I will argue that whatever the form of community that is found in φιλία, it is neither governed by use-value nor even by reciprocity. For both interpretations give Socratic philosophy a positive content, which cannot be found within the ἀπορία with which the dialogue ends, and with which we are forced to contend.

Human φιλία is neither expressed between those who are wholly alike nor between those who are wholly different. Dismissing both of these alternatives, Socrates and his two young interlocutors propose that the φίλον is one who is τὸ οἰκεῖον, “akin or kindred” (*Ly.* 222b).<sup>11</sup> This suggestion not only has significance because it is the last proposal Socrates develops, but more importantly, it is the one that in closing the dialogue we encounter the immediate presence of ἀπορία. Τὸ οἰκεῖον is derived from οἶκος, “house or dwelling place.” An οἶκος is not only composed of free-born males, but of females and slaves as well. It is a place in which people of differing social statuses find commonality and belong together. Although they differ in significant ways, they find a community in sharing the same place. And in his discussions with individuals, Socrates is met with differing opinions and approaches to the topic at hand. Often these are contentious. However, despite these differences, Socrates' goal is always to place both his interlocutor and himself into ἀπορία. Given that the dialogue ends in ἀπορία, perhaps we should think of the οἶκος that friends share as the aporetic site<sup>12</sup> that the interlocutors find themselves confronted with at the end of the dialogue.<sup>13</sup> Such a dwelling together indicates they reside in a location that is distanced from, questions, but is aimed toward the topic of φιλία.<sup>14</sup> They are akin in their shared dwelling in ἀπορία.

## II. *Rethinking a non-reciprocal relationship:*

After the introduction of what a φίλον is, there are moments where non-reciprocal relationships are brought to the attention of the young interlocutors. Moreover, while these examples are seemingly dismissed and refuted by Socrates and the young boys, they nevertheless illuminate the concept of φιλία. For instance, the question of whether or not there are horse-lovers [φίλιπποι], quail-lovers [φιλόρτυγες], dog-lovers [φιλόκυνες], wine-lovers [φίλοινοι], sport-lovers [φιλογυμναστικά], and most importantly, wisdom-lovers [φιλόσοφοι] is asked at *Lysis* 212d. These examples are given within the context of Socrates asking Menexenus whether or not *both parties* must exhibit φιλία.<sup>15</sup> It would appear that none of these relationships can be an example of φιλία since there is no reciprocity. Related to this, one must also, it would seem, already have an idea as to what it means to be a φίλον, and thus have a concept of what φιλία is—the very question the dialogue undertakes to investigate and which ends in ἀπορία. However, such absurdities exist *only if* reciprocity is assumed. If we do not make such an assumption, something else comes to the fore. That which allows for the experience of φιλία

cannot lie in the object, the beloved, toward which it is shown, but must rather be a *comportment* of the individual who exhibits such a relationship, i.e., the lover.

Jean-Luc Marion has characterized this erotic disposition toward the world as asking the question, “Can I love first?,” which he states “means to behave like a lover who gives himself, rather than like one who is loved tit for tat.”<sup>16</sup> Such a lover risks loving by comporting him or herself as a pre-conditional lover. The lover risks that the object of affection will not return the desire. This act of φιλία draws its power from the fact that reciprocity does not affect it in a return for its investment. Even if such a φιλία is not returned, the lover loves without dispute. In this act, the φίλος *becomes* a φίλος, and for the first time, is open to receiving the givenness of φιλία.

The act of being a φίλος is an act concerned with the deed pure and simple. For instance, in order to become a wine-lover, I must comport myself in an open responsiveness to the wine; the question of whether or not wine is desirable must present itself first. The love or desire must precede the experience of wine. This is especially shown in the love of wisdom. We search for the wisdom that we do not yet possess. And more radically, we love wisdom before claiming to know. We must desire to comprehend before comprehending. The philosopher must recognize that he or she cannot grasp wisdom as a whole, and yet must nevertheless strive to obtain it. Such an individual is characterized as being neither good nor bad.<sup>17</sup> An individual who, while being ignorant, is not yet corrupted by this ignorance, and who “supposes not to know that which they may not know” (*Ly.* 218a). This is exactly how Socrates characterizes his own form of unknowing, at *Apology* 21d. We must be astonished at not comprehending, and it is this that begins wisdom. His wisdom does not grasp a definition wholly, but draws attention to one’s inability to know it. We must, then, begin in ἀπορία, and this is the founding of understanding. But this is always fraught with the risk of not knowing and of not possessing. However, it is precisely this fear that opens us up to wisdom. To arrive at wisdom, it is necessary first to desire it without preconceptions. We are made aware of our own lack: one feels one’s own insufficiency. The act of opening oneself up to the experience of the ἀπορία of φιλία is enough; it is seen in the comportment of the individual, and not found within the object. Consequently, when the φίλοι come together they do not become sufficient, but rather are confronted by a concern that reveals their inability to answer that with which they are confronted: what is friendship? We are thrown into the space of ἀπορία—that space in which we must admit of, due to our own non-knowledge, and which opens us to the phenomenon of φιλία.

### III. *Friendship beyond being:*

Socrates suggests that we give ourselves over to ἀπορία not only in his own examples given above, but also when he uses a language of prophecy which gestures to an area that lies beyond being.<sup>18</sup> This form of language should not surprise us, since the whole of the *Lysis* is governed by the god Hermes<sup>19</sup>—the mediator between the gods and the human. Socrates uses a very specific vocabulary to craft his unique prophetic, linguistic mode:

I have become dizzy [εἰλιγγιῶ]<sup>20</sup> due to the waylessness of the argument [ὑπο τῆς τοῦ λόγου ἀπορίας] and it ventures according to the ancient proverb “the beautiful is a φίλος.” It certainly resembles something soft, smooth, and sleek, on which account and in like manner it easily slips through and evades us because of these qualities. For I say that the Good is the beautiful...Accordingly, I will speak, announcing

as a prophet [ἀπομαντεύμεος],<sup>21</sup> that the beautiful and the good is a φίλον to neither the good nor the bad. What it is toward which I am prophetically speaking [μαντεύομαι], you must hear (Ly. 216c-d).

Socrates uses words like “dizzy,” indicating that he is out of his rational mind, and highlighting the difficulties in using language to express something “soft, smooth, and sleek” that “easily slips” and “evades” us. It is for this reason that we must express ourselves in alternative, and/or pre-lingual modes, such as laughter, comportment, and prophetic utterances. In fact, the only way to speak of τὸ ἀγαθόν and beauty is by way of a prophetic utterance, a manner of speaking that allows that which is inherently distant and obscure to appear here, in the lived world, but always as distant and obscure.<sup>22</sup> The beautiful or τὸ ἀγαθόν is a φίλον to the human being, and yet it slips through us, evading our grasp. It forever resists our grasp despite its inherent closeness, driving us into ἀπορία. The beautiful friend is not assimilated or mastered but rather experienced.<sup>23</sup> The experience is not so radically different that it is wholly unknown to us, that it should pass unnoticed, but is different enough not to be understood, and as such, is inherently question-worthy.

And yet, there must be a reason why these two individuals comport themselves to each other as φίλοι for “human beings, like all other beings, are attracted to (desire) that which is theirs by nature.”<sup>24</sup> As Socrates states, “then if you two are friends to each other by some natural bond you belong to one another [ὕμεις ἄρα εἰ φίλον ἔστων ἀλλήλοις φύσει πη οἰκεῖοί ἐσθ’ ὑμῖν αὐτοῖς]” (Ly. 221e).<sup>25</sup> There is an attraction or desire that draws Lysis and Menexenus to one another that is natural to them, and it is for beauty, since it is that which both lack. However this movement into φιλία would continue *ad infinitum* if it were not for the “first friend [πρῶτον φίλον]” (Ly. 219c). They will exhibit φιλία not for the sake of each other, but for the first friend. Through friendly conversation, both realize that they are in lack of it, and forever will be, however they will gain a partial glimpse of it. And so, the two young interlocutors are well advised to be friends, and yet they cannot fall into complacency believing they are “friends” in the full sense of the word, but rather recognize each other as “phantom friends.”<sup>26</sup> “Phantom friends” are grounded in reason, calculation, exchange-value, and economy, while the first friend “comes to light [φαίνεται] as being of a nature entirely opposite [πᾶν τοῦναντίον] of this” (Ly. 220e). It falls completely outside of exchange-value. Consequently, that toward which the two friends are aimed is beyond a discursive account, and thus resists being commoditized. In our typical understanding of community, Socrates is now moving outside the economy of reason and toward a broader understanding of community. To remove us completely outside the language of use-value, the introduction of desire [ἐπιθυμία] and lack [ἐνδεές] are employed by Socrates.

#### IV. Desiring and lacking a friend:

While attempting to find the cause of φιλία, Socrates suggests that is it desire (Ly. 221d).

“But still, I went on, the desiring thing desires that which it is in lack of [ἐνδεές], doesn’t it?” “Yes.” “And the lacking thing is a friend to that in which it is lacking?” “It seems so too me.” “And it becomes deficient in that of which is taken away from it.” “Certainly.” “So it is of kinship [τοῦ οἰκείου], certainly, that are the objects of erotic love, friendship, and desire, it appears Menexenus and Lysis” (Ly. 221d-e).



Here, desire, as the cause of *φιλία*, is for that which we are lacking. And it is in lacking that we find kinship [*τὸ οἰκεῖον*]. As an object of erotic longing, kinship is that which we always already lack and thus desire. The erotic-matters for which Socrates is renowned, are not static desires but are ongoing processes. He has not satisfied this erotic-longing and has never possessed it, at least as one would usually define “possess.”<sup>27</sup> Socrates recognizes through his knowledge of erotic-matters and prophetic utterances that the human being is not an object among other objects in the world. The human cannot be understood through propositional language or thought. Through this knowledge, Socrates is made aware of his profound lack of a *φίλον*, which only furthers his desire for it, and this is yet another example of how *ἔρως* is central to Socrates’ philosophical project.

Whatever the quality of the desire and lack discussed in the *Lysis* is, it must revolve around the recognition that neither can be fulfilled. If the desire or the lack is for a *φίλον*, one that can never be fulfilled within the limited span of one’s mortal life, there is an ontological necessity to the lack and to the ongoing desire. It is necessary that if one “desires and is erotically inclined [*ἐπιθυμοῦντα καὶ ἐρῶντα*]” one will exhibit *φιλία* toward that which “desires and erotically loves [*ἐπιθυμεῖ καὶ ἐρᾷ*]” (*Ly.* 221b). The origin of *φιλία* is desire itself and that which we lack [*ἐνδεές*] (*Ly.* 211d-e), which is to say, that which we will never possess.

That which *I* desire is what *I* lack. Such a lack defines me more than that which I possess as just another object, since that which I possess as an object is external to me. Not only can it be physically taken away from me, but ontologically it is what *I am not*. Moreover, an object acquired forces me into a comportment of self-forgetting; I can come to believe that I am defined by that object, that I am completed by something which lies outside of my being, as Hippothales seems to have come to believe with *Lysis*.<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless, a true desire and that which I lack and am thus defined by, must not denude itself completely, i.e., become an object.<sup>29</sup> Desire denudes in the sense of not uncovering; it reveals the one who does not manifest.<sup>30</sup> Desire, and that which I lack, reveal a principle of insufficiency which defines me by putting my being into question, by contesting it, and by placing me into a site of *ἀπορία*.

If, as I have suggested, it is the purpose of a *φίλον* to throw one into *ἀπορία*, this experience exists outside of the everydayness in which one finds oneself, and outside of the boundaries of language. *Ἀπορία* compels us to search for that which we do not yet have. In this dis-community, one only finds one in *ἀπορία* while already in the midst of it. Or rather, one is already lost in one’s journeying through this waylessness toward that which is desired. It is this condition that Socrates and his young interlocutors find themselves in while investigating the ambiguities surrounding *φιλία*. Thus, while there is a dynamic sense of thoughtful movement toward and within this dis-community, it is one that is always already engaged in a questioning that will not be eased. Moreover, to question and understand, we must turn to alternative modes in order to communicate our awareness of and kinship within this dis-community. As we have just seen, desire is the cause of *φιλία*, which is indicative of kinship.<sup>31</sup> That is to say, *φιλία* is a desire to be part of a larger whole—a community. But desire is for that which I lack, in this case, a desire for a type of kinship that cannot be reduced to the demands of the city. As a result, kinship, for Plato, does not rely upon a political model of exchangeability, use-value, and economy. In the *Lysis*, whatever the aporetic relationship between the two friends turns out to be, it exceeds the political, fashioning a dis-community that is rooted in a shared dwelling, and is nourished on the relationship between desire and lack that is at the heart of *φιλία*.



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<sup>1</sup> Plato not only returns to the erotic community in three dialogues, but also the type of knowing associated with this form of community is privileged by Socrates. He continually insists that he does not understand anything other than erotic-matters [τὰ ἐρωτικά] (*Sym.* 177e), and consequently he says of himself that he is a paltry and useless thing, save the gift that the gods have given him, i.e., to quickly come to know a lover and a beloved (*Lys.* 204b-c). So vital is this ability to Socrates that he asks the god Eros not to deprive him of his erotic art [ἡ ἐρωτικὴ τέχνη] (*Phdr.* 257a).

<sup>2</sup> *Lysis* 214a, *Laws* 716c, *Laws* 837a, *Phaedrus* 255c.

<sup>3</sup> *Phaedrus* 279c, *Lysis* 207c, *Laws* 739c, *Republic* 424a and 449c.

<sup>4</sup> See Mary P. Nichols, “Friendship and Community in Plato’s *Lysis*,” *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 68, No. 1 (Winter, 2006), p.1.

<sup>5</sup> So that the city becomes a unity, the entirety of the citizenry “must be forced and persuaded [ἀναγκαστέον...καὶ πιστέον] to do that which will make them the best craftsman of their own task [ἐαυτῶν ἔργου]” (*R.* 421c). Accordingly, as Socrates states, only in such a city will “we find the cobbler a cobbler and not a pilot in addition to his cobbling, and the farmer a farmer and not a judge added to his farming” (*R.* 397e). There is the presumption that one’s identity can be wholly captured by living within the political sphere. The citizenry is aimed toward the same future goal; each of them governed by the same sovereign force, the Good [τὸ ἀγαθόν]. As a result, τὸ ἀγαθόν must be made to appear immediately and be immanently present to the citizenry, since it is shared by all and would define them as being alike.

Julia Annas, (*An Introduction to Plato’s Republic*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p.104) suggests that only under such conditions, in which both justice and σωφροσύνη co-exist, can there be harmony and unity which define the city. Justice is that which allows each and every individual to work for “all in common [ἅπασιν κοινόν]” (*Rep.* 369e), allowing for a community that can participate in τὸ ἀγαθόν. For the city to be ruled justly and called good, each individual must know to what his or her own nature most properly fits so as to provide not only for oneself but for others as well. Regardless of whether an individual is an artisan, an auxiliary, or a ruler, in the city in *logos*, a stipulated ideal has everyone fulfilling his or her own τέλος perfectly, never straying from his or her particular task. For each individual is immediately identified and defined through his or her own task, since there is an excellence [ἀρετή] of the task assigned to each thing or individual (*Rep.* 353a). Just as the organs of the body are to work with excellence (*Rep.* 353a-353d), the soul of an individual is able to accomplish its own task with excellence when it functions according to justice (*Rep.* 353e). Consequently, a cobbler, an architect, an auxiliary, or a philosopher ruler accomplishes his or her own task with excellence, i.e., from justice, for the sake of and in reference to the common good of the city. Granted there are many differences which distinguish exactly how justice is expressed in each of the four cities in *logos*, (John Sallis, *Being and Logos* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp.346-368), there is one common element to be found: justice is defined as each individual performing one task that is naturally fitted to his or her own nature, so that one should mind one’s own affairs (*Rep.* 369d-370c). Defined in a more refined manner, Socrates states, “according to this, then, the possession and doing both of that which is akin to one [οἰκείου] and of what belongs to oneself would be agreed to be justice” (433e-434a).

And if the citizenry is to become a unity and to know what it lacks, since one “lacks in many things [πολλῶν ἐνδεής]” (*Rep.* 368b), each member must practice σωφροσύνη (*Rep.* 389d), setting a limit on the individuals’ needs (*Rep.* 373d-e). The practice of σωφροσύνη does not come naturally to the masses, however; they must give ear to and obey the rulers (*Rep.* 389d-e). At least for the artisan class, and I do not believe it need be limited to this class, the practice of an art “is acquired primarily by imitation, by subordinating oneself to a master practitioner of the art” and “excellence in the practice of the arts throughout the city as a whole requires that there be knowledge (or right opinion) regarding the ends to be served by the arts” (*Being and Logos*, p.366). This, according to Sallis, requires a hierarchy found *within* the city itself, which is achieved and kept according to σωφροσύνη, or the avoidance of extremes (*Ibid.*, p.367). It is a unilateral scale of being. The higher levels of the hierarchy determine the lower, which depend upon the latter for their existence and intelligibility. For example, if a practitioner is to know the end, the τέλος, toward which his or her art is aimed, e.g., cobbling, the practitioner must look to the next higher individual found in the hierarchy, the master under whom the practitioner learns. The practitioner’s art is assimilated by and made to resemble that of the master, who sits higher in the hierarchy of knowledge concerning the art. And so that the hierarchy should not run *ad infinitum*, e.g., this master must have learned art from another

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master, who learned the it from another, and so on, there must be a singular determination which provides intelligibility to all those who are within the hierarchy. This determining factor would be the form, the εἶδος or ἰδέα, of the art.

To place this within the broader schema of Platonic writing, the realm of intelligible objects is governed by τὸ ἀγαθόν. Socrates, at *Republic* 508e, states “that which provides truth to the things known and gives power to the knower is the idea of the good [τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέαν].” Furthermore, there must be “an art of the final ends—final *within* the context of the city...,” (Ibid) if the city is to be a unity. So that each element within the city, its citizenry, can be thought to be as a unity, τὸ ἀγαθόν is necessary; “the good and the right [τὸ ἀγαθόν καὶ δέον] ...bind and hold anything together” (*Phd.* 99c). Those who have knowledge of this final end and give context to all other arts *within* the city are the philosopher rulers. They are those who have wisdom. Consequently, it is said that everyone must subordinate themselves and the practice of their task to those who are wise, i.e., to the philosopher. The philosopher rulers through their wisdom give context, binding and holding the city as a whole, not only to what class every individual belongs to but also what this particular individual’s task is. Given the hierarchy described above, τὸ ἀγαθόν must appear immanently *within* each of the cities in *logos*, founded *within* the political structure of the city, if each individual is identified through the mediation of the “living body of the community” (Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* trans., Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2008), p.9). Nevertheless, We must remember that, at *Republic* 505e, Socrates states, concerning τὸ ἀγαθόν, “that which every soul pursues and brings about for its own sake [τούτου ἕνεκα], announcing like a prophet some ‘to be’ [ἀπομαντευομένη τι εἶναι], perplexed [ἀποροῦσα] and unable to receive sufficiently [οὐκ ἔχουσα λαβεῖν ἰκανῶς] just what it is.” As inherently resisting intelligibility, τὸ ἀγαθόν can only lead one into ἀπορία, waylessness, or unknowing. However, unable to reconcile this and to disavow such ἀπορία, the human being is liable to place τὸ ἀγαθόν within the realm of discursive thought.

Plato must have had this disavowal in mind, as *Republic* book VIII makes clear. It is inevitable that within the ruling class there will be fractures and that “political over throw [πολιτεία μεταβάλλει] comes from the origin itself [ἐξ αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἔχοντος τὰς ἀρχάς]” (*Rep.* 545d). The aristocratic community, the community ruled by the philosophers and based in λόγος, falls under its own weight. The philosopher rulers, perhaps because they must return to the proverbial cave, lose true insight into τὸ ἀγαθόν, for “although being wise individuals [σοφοί], the ones who you have educated as leaders of the city will nevertheless not attain, by means of reasoning [λογισμῶ] together with sensation, the proper time of begetting children, but it will pass them by and they will beget children when they should not. There is a period governed by divine birth, comprehended by perfect number” (*Rep.* 546b). Consequently, although the philosopher rulers are called wise, they are nevertheless forced to engage in practical political matter and the opportune and divine time to beget and rear children is obscured. The identity of the body politic becomes less clear. While it appears that τὸ ἀγαθόν must originate from *within* the city, in *logos* itself, since all the arts within the city are directed toward the rulers and by them, this cannot be the case—unless, of course, the philosopher rulers hide themselves as tyrants. Like those of the oligarchic state, who have established for themselves some good, which was the cause of their ruin (*Rep.* 562b), the tyrannical state arising from a democratic one has also established its own good. Such declines result from the establishment of a finite good that can be found within the limits of the λόγος of the city. This too must be the cause of the rise of timocracy out of the aristocracy.

By taking τὸ ἀγαθόν as a good established for their own ends, then, the philosopher rulers miss the divine, or rather the excessively intelligible nature of τὸ ἀγαθόν. In fact in book IV of the *Laws*, the Athenian states “wherever a city-state does not have a god but its principle is mortal, there the people have no rest from bad things,” consequently we must “order both our homes [οικήσεις] and states in obedience to the immortal thing in us, the understanding of thought [τὴν τοῦ νοῦ διανομήν] calling it law” (*Laws* 713e-714a). Here, law is explicitly linked to that which is other than or more than human. Furthermore, in *Laws* book III, Plato defines σωφροσύνη in accord with the reverence with which one should approach τὸ ἀγαθόν. Here, the Athenian stranger states, “there is something additional with regard to both honorable and dishonorable things, that of not to speak [οὐ λογοῦ] but something would be more worthy of a kind of speechless silence [ἀλόγου σιγῆς]” (*Laws.* 696e). According to this radicalized form of σωφροσύνη, even to utter the name τὸ ἀγαθόν is too much, not to mention establishing it as

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one's own end. The only response to such an experience is a speechless silence, which opens one to the vacuous eruption of the experience of το ἀγαθόν.

<sup>6</sup> Friendship and Community in Plato's *Lysis*, pp.13-14.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p.14.

<sup>8</sup> I will leave the Greek terms φιλία and φίλος largely untranslated, since there is no exact English equivalent. Furthermore, for the purpose of this paper I will not make a hard and fast distinction between φιλία and ἔρωσ. Although the noun φιλία suggests "affection, friendship" and even fondness for a thing or holding something dear, distinguishing it from the eroticism of ἔρωσ, their verbal forms φιλέω and ἐράω make it difficult to distinguish, for they both mean "to love, to desire." Φιλέω can even mean "to kiss." One major difference is that φιλέω connotes a familial tie as "to love and cherish one's wife or child" or "to welcome as a guest," making the term different from ἐράω. The two concepts, however, for Plato, are not clearly distinguished. For example, in the *Lysis*, Hippothales clearly desires an erotic relationship with the boy Lysis, and yet in the dialogue the verb φιλέω and its noun form φιλία are used to describe their relationship. Moreover, in the *Phaedrus*, the highest form of ἔρωσ is indistinguishable from φιλία, 255e. This is not to say that there are no distinguishing features between the two words or that the *Lysis* is not an attempt to tease out the nuances of φιλία, but rather that I cannot, in this paper address these differences and given the ambiguity between the two to which Plato gestures, such a discussion would lead us too far astray from the topic at hand. Nevertheless, this ambiguity between the two terms supports my argument and is on that creates this notion of dis-community in the *Lysis*. For a discussion of the relationship between φίλος and ἔρωσ, see James Harden "Friendship in Plato's 'Lysis'" *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (1983) pp.327-356. Here, he summarizes the Pohlenz-von Arnim debate, pp.331-334.

<sup>9</sup> Don Adams, "The *Lysis* Puzzles," *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Jan. 1992), pp.3-17.

<sup>10</sup> "Friendship and Community in Plato's *Lysis*," pp. 3, 7, 11.

<sup>11</sup> Derrida writes, in *The Politics of Friendship*, that the end of the *Lysis* is dominated by the concept of οικειότης (Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship* trans. George Collins (London: Verso, 2005), p.154.) or rather, as used in the dialogue, of τὸ οικεῖον, kinship, or being akin. Derrida asks whether οικειότης implies, due to its etymological roots,

an indissociable network of significations which are of import to us here, a semantic locus totally assembled, precisely, around the hearth (*oikos*) the home, habitat, domicile—and grave: kinship—literal or metaphorical—domesticity, familiarity, property, therefore appropriability, proximity: everything an *economy* can reconcile, adjust or harmonize, I will go so far as to say *present*, in the *familiarity* of the *near* and the neighbor (Ibid).

The οἶκος, as hearth, makes present the inhabitants to each other. They are immediately at hand and fully able to be made recognizable.

And yet, Derrida asks whether a friendship without presence is possible. He inquires into whether or not an economic friendship is possible, before which "truth itself would start to tremble" (Ibid, p.155), implying that a community founded upon economic principles erupts in the destruction of truth as a discursive concept. If, as I will suggest, it is the purpose of a τὸ φίλον is to throw one into ἀπορία, waylessness, and because this form of thinking exists outside of the everydayness in which one finds oneself, it is little wonder that Socrates speaks of the need of initiation into erotic mysteries, which is "the desire [προθυμία] of true lovers" (*Phdr.* 253c). As we have just seen, desire [ἐπιθυμία] is the cause of φιλία, which is indicative of a desire for kinship, as David Bolotin suggests (*Plato's Dialogue on Friendship: An Interpretation of the Lysis with a New Translation*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 1989), p.187).

<sup>12</sup> See Adam's article, "The *Lysis* Puzzles" for a discussion of ἀπορία in the *Lysis*. "The *Lysis*, however, is significantly different from these other two dialogues. Like the others, the *Lysis* is a prolonged investigation into the nature of one thing, and like the others the investigation takes the form of showing how each proposed definition raises puzzles which leave the interlocutors 'at a loss' (aporos)," p.3.

<sup>13</sup> In discussing the mutual dialogue between individuals David M. Halperin writes, "Without such desire or striving or '(counter-)love,' without participating in such a reciprocal exchange, the reader will not be able to interpret a Platonic dialogue and will find it baffling, pointless, incomprehensible. It is the function of the Socratic aporia, and it is characteristic of Plato's writings in general, to promote in the reader an inner dialogue that extends and continues the dialogue in the text...Erotic reciprocity, then, mirrors the dynamic process of thought: it reflects and expresses the distinctive, self-generated motion of the rational soul," "Plato and Erotic Reciprocity"

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*Classical Antiquity*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Apr., 1986), pp. 60-80, p.79. While it is true that dialogue promotes a dynamic process and that ἀπορία engenders this, it seems to me that *its function is simply to confound us* and not make an issue more clear. Ἀπορία compels us to search for that which we do not yet have and as the *Lysis* ends in ἀπορία that which we will never possess. After all, as Sean Kirkland notes ἀπορία is derived “from the *alpha privative* and the noun πόρος” meaning a “means of passing a river, ford, ferry” (*The Ontology of Socratic Questioning in Plato’s Early Dialogues* (SUNY Press: New York, 2012), pp.103-4). Πόρος names crossing an impassable limit. It is running up against such an impenetrable limit that ἀπορία names. However, this limit cannot be recognized as such. If it were, one would merely avoid the limit. One only finds one in ἀπορία while already in the midst of the limitation. One is already lost in one’s journeying. It is this condition that Socrates and his young interlocutors find themselves in while investigating φιλία. So, while there is a dynamic sense of thoughtful movement, it is a groping that one finds oneself engaged in already in the questioning and which will not be eased.

<sup>14</sup> See *The Ontology of Socratic Questioning in Plato’s Early Dialogues*, p.xxii for how the *Lysis* functions as a way to read the connection of the Socratic dialogues. I will be focusing on the dialogue itself, which Kirkland has focused on in his illuminating book.

<sup>15</sup> It is this concern that Naomi Reshotko attempts to solve in “Plato’s ‘Lysis’: A Socratic Treatise on Desire and Attraction,” *Apeiron: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (March 1997), pp. 1-18. She writes “This suggests that if Socrates were simply analyzing human friendship, we could expect reciprocity to be a central and necessary criterion as it is for Aristotle. In cases where Socrates ignores reciprocity as a criterion, his account of friendship will strike us as implausible if we assume that φιλία refers narrowly to human friendship (215e3-16a6, 216c1-3). However, our more general ideas concerning desire and attraction do not require that the relationship be reciprocated. People desire food, but food does not desire people. Plants are attracted to a source of light, but the source of light is not attracted to the plant. Thus, I suggest that the minor role which Socrates assigns to reciprocity in his discussion of φιλία is further evidence that Socrates uses the term broadly. Further, I recommend that we understand Socrates’ use of the term φιλία as reference to something akin to our notions of desire and attraction” pp.2-3.

<sup>16</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), p.71.

<sup>17</sup> See “Plato’s *Lysis*: A Socratic Treatise on Desire and Attraction, pp.7-10, and 15-18, for a comprehensive discussion of the individual who is neither good nor bad and this individual’s role in friendship.

<sup>18</sup> Marcel Detienne, *The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd, (New York: Zone Press, 1999), p.16.

<sup>19</sup> James Haden, “Friendship in Plato’s ‘Lysis,’” *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (Dec., 1983), pp.327-356 p.344.

<sup>20</sup> Εἰλιγγιῶ is the perfect aspect of the verb ἰλλιγγιῶ, meaning “To be or become dizzy, to lose one’s head, caused by looking down from a height or by drunkenness.” Both of these meanings suggest a feeling that forces one outside of one’s rational mind. Looking down from a great height, in the context of the dialogue, does not suggest that Socrates is elevated or has some knowledge that transcends the world, but rather that the rational world has receded, leaving Socrates looking down into an abyss of ἀπορία. At the end of the *Lysis*, Socrates states, “due to the argument, we have become drunk [μεθύομεν ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου] agreeing and saying kinship [τὸ οἰκεῖον] and being similar are different” (222c). Once again, the topic of τὸ οἰκεῖον has driven Socrates into a non-rational state. Whatever the community Socrates and his young interlocutors find themselves in is an aporetic site out of which the topic of φιλία arises and concerns them.

<sup>21</sup> Just as Socrates must resort to using “prophetic” language when speaking of φιλία in the *Lysis*, gesturing toward its non-rational and non-discursive nature, he must employ the same language in the *Republic* when speaking of τὸ ἀγαθόν. Leading up to the discussion of the idea of the good Socrates says, “That, then, which every soul pursues and for its sake does all that it does, announcing like a prophet of its being [ἀπομαντευομένη τι εἶναι] but yet wayless [ἀποροῦσα] and unable to apprehend its nature adequately, or to attain to any firm belief about it as about other things” (*R.* 505e). When we attempt to apprehend τὸ ἀγαθόν we announce it like a prophet. It strikes us but we cannot give a discursive account of it and throws us into ἀπορία. No discursive form of thinking can capture what it is.

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<sup>22</sup> There is one indication of this other notion of community that can be found in the *Republic*, if we take seriously the claim Socrates makes that the idea of the Good is “beyond being [ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας]” (*R.* 509b). While it is unclear how we are to interpret this particular phrase, it can be said that τὸ ἀγαθόν is beyond ‘what is,’ beyond what is knowable and sayable, it is what is discursively unthinkable, and so forces us into ἀπορία.

<sup>23</sup> The importance of experience is shown at *Lysis* 212a; “...whereas I am very far from acquiring such a thing, that I do not even know in what way one becomes a friend to another, and I must ask you about this very point, because you have experience [ἐμπειρον].” In his typical fashion, Socrates is inquiring into Menexenus’ encounter with Lysis as a lived experience, what is his opinion of φιλία. Socrates is not seeking advice from Menexenus but rather uses this opportunity to disrupt his pre-reflective understanding of φιλία. In the discussion that follows, Socrates puts Menexenus through the elenctic process of how to become a friend. And although the questioning does not result in a positive result, this is not the point. Rather, it is successful in its “failing.” It opens both Menexenus and Socrates to the question-worthy status of φιλία, showing the former that he does not know what it is and reminding the latter not to fall victim of certainty.

<sup>24</sup> See Reshtko, “Plato’s *Lysis*: A Socratic Treatise on Desire and Attraction,” p.16.

<sup>25</sup> Socrates employs an intentional ambiguity. “Ἀλλήοις” is a reciprocal pronoun meaning simultaneously “each other” and “yourselves.” The boundary between the self and other is breeched. The ambiguity shows the individuality of each of the boys by not uncovering each other. The both remain in the world and experience a resistance, defending a place of dwelling, an οἶκος, that is closed to each other except through an act of φιλία. There is no strict predelineated boundary between φίλοι. Such individuals are thrown or abandoned in the space of ἀπορία, that space in which we must admit of due to our own non-knowledge concerning our own experience.

<sup>26</sup> This is different from the opposition between non-instrumentalist and instrumentalist interpretation found in “*The Lysis Puzzles*.” There Adams writes “a non-instrumental conception of friendship, the better two friends become, the more secure their friendship can become: they have fuller and deeper reasons for caring for each other. On the instrumentalist conception, however, the better the friends become, the less secure their friendship becomes: they need the mutually useful relationship less and less,” p.12. By emphasizing the aporetic nature of the dialogue the two individuals would not find “security” in the φιλία they share, given the waylessness in which they find themselves. Nor would their deepening movement into ἀπορία reveal that they do not require one another, but would in fact reinforce it.

<sup>27</sup> Laszlo Versenyi in his article “Plato’s ‘Lysis,’ pp.185-198, reminds us that “Those that are deficient desire, love, hold dear that in which they are deficient, and what they are deficient in is what is *phusei oikeion*, what by nature belongs to them but is as yet unobtained and unpossessed,” p.188. I believe that what we lack by nature is, in my language, prophetic, since it is that which is always yet unobtained and always unpossessed.

<sup>28</sup> At 205e, Socrates states “Most certainly, I replied, it is *you to whom* these songs refer.” Hippothales is praising himself as if Lysis were a mere object to be acquired. Referring Lysis back upon himself forces Hippothales to lay claim to attributes that he does not yet possess. Eugene Garver notes, “It is easy to see why I describe an absence in terms of what *I* am missing, and so be led inadvertently into self-reference. Therefore Socrates’ initial suggestion that I can talk about love after conquering the beloved, not before, is turned on its head, since only I talk about what I am missing. After the conquest, I no longer love, since I possess the thing” (“The Rhetoric of Friendship in Plato’s ‘Lysis,’” p.143). And focusing on himself he is liable to ask what use is Lysis for him. Vanity has taken hold of Hippothales, which can only be cured if he abandons the pursuit of Lysis as an object and thus guaranteeing his own being. The vanity he displays not only affects Hippothales but Lysis as well, possibly making the latter “haughty.” Already coming to the relationship with certitude of one’s being, destroys the possibility of discovering each other in the ongoing and never ending phenomenon that is φιλία. It forecloses, for both parties, the experience of ἀπορία that is so central to φιλία.

And yet, the human strives to gain certainty within the world. One way of achieving this is to make the beloved an object of perfection. In the beginning of the *Lysis*, such a drive is demonstrated by Hippothales, who sings the praises of Lysis. He speaks of nothing which is private or personal [ἴδιον] but rather of that which “the whole city already knows” (*Ly.* 205b-c). Consequently, Hippothales has placed Lysis within the social hierarchy of economy and exchange. And as a result, Hippothales believes Lysis to be a φίλον, but undoubtedly he cannot recognize Lysis as *his* φίλον, for he implicitly admits that Lysis belongs to the city and not to himself. Accordingly, Lysis not only belongs to the social structure but is reduced to the status of a use-object.



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<sup>29</sup> “Desire ceases when it attains its object. For this sort of love to last, it has to continue discussing to postpone consummation” see Garver, “The Rhetoric of Friendship in Plato's *Lysis*” ppp. 127-146, p.135.

<sup>30</sup> Again, this is reflected in the ambiguous language in *Lysis* 211e.

<sup>31</sup> *Plato's Dialogue on Friendship: An Interpretation of the Lysis with a New Translation*, p.187.

## How to Speak *Kata Phusin*: Magico-religious Speech in Heraclitus

While it has become commonplace to recognize the Stoic and Aristotelian influence on historical readings of Heraclitus, the full significance of anachronistically projecting rationality onto his thought, especially in his use of the term *logos*, has been largely unappreciated.<sup>1</sup> Coupled with the fact that Heraclitus' intricate linguistic strategies have only received careful attention from scholars in the last fifty years or so, a serious and careful revision of interpretation is called for if we are to approach Heraclitus' philosophy with fresh eyes. Several perceptive readers over the years have argued that Heraclitus' oracular style does not deliberately create obscurity for its own sake, rather, Heraclitus strategically employs this enigmatic linguistic style because it is most suited to the paradoxical nature of his subject.<sup>2</sup> Despite these recognitions, the complexity of Heraclitus' poetic strategies was not comprehensively applied to his philosophical message until Charles Kahn's *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (1979), where Kahn emphasized the crucial significance of Heraclitus' linguistic art in approaching the structure and meaning of the fragments, though he still reads Heraclitus' *logos* as an appeal to rational discourse.<sup>3</sup>

While the ambiguity of Heraclitus' text has been repeatedly noted in scholarship, Serge Mouraviev demonstrates the radical manner in which many Heraclitus fragments can be read in multiple, equally legitimate ways; for example, he gives an alarming eighteen possible constructions for fragment 32, all of them grammatically sound and plausible.<sup>4</sup> In this paper, I will argue that the persistent and anachronistic reading of Heraclitus as a proto-rationalist obscures the literary context of his teaching and consequently his philosophical message. Heraclitus' text, I will demonstrate, is better understood in the context of the poetic and

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<sup>1</sup> For Aristotelian influence: Struck (2004) and Cherniss (1964); for Stoics, see Kahn (1979) especially pp. 154-7.

<sup>2</sup> See Hussey: "the fact seems to be that Heraclitus believed his style of utterance to be uniquely suitable to his subject matter" p. 34 (1972); Holscher "Paradox, Simile, and Gnostic Utterance in Heraclitus" (1974); Peter Struck *The Birth of the Symbol* (2004); Prier (1976) is particularly sensitive to Heraclitus' strategic poetic methods, referring to these strategies in Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Empedocles as "archaic logic."

<sup>3</sup> Examples are littered throughout Kahn's text; he interprets all of Heraclitus' major concepts *logos*, *psyche*, and *kosmos* as rational principles: "the deepest thought of *xynos logos*, more fully expressed in XXX [DK 114], is that what unites men is their rationality" (102); "this [DK 107] is apparently the first time in extant literature that the word *psyche* 'soul' is used for the power of rational thought" (107); "*psyche* in XVI [DK 107] is identified as the cognitive or rational element in human beings" (127); in discussing *Dike* in Heraclitus: "human law is conceived as the unifying principle of the political community, and thus grounded in the rational order or nature which unifies the cosmos" (15); "by its rational structure and its public function in bringing men into a community, language becomes a symbol for the unifying structure of the world" (131); "the *gnosis* that Heraclitus has in mind [in DK 22, 18, 35, and 123] is rational *knowledge*" (italics in original); "Heraclitus' doctrine of opposites can thus be seen as one specific articulation of a general feature of rational discourse" (300).

<sup>4</sup> Fragment 32: "The wise is one alone, unwilling and willing to be called by the name of *Xenos*." (Kahn's translation). Mouraviev writes, of the deliberately ambiguous structure of fragment 32: "[P]ractically it means that the words 'One', 'Wise', 'Sole' or their referents, taken together or separately, on one pole, and the word combination 'the name of Zeus' on the other are torn apart by opposite tendencies which incite them to repulse each other, but also to attract each other, and that these mutual repulsions and attractions act both inside the first pole and between it and the second pole. These attractions and repulsions seem to concern first and foremost the relation between the name and what is named." Mouraviev, p. 162-3 (1996).

mythological tradition that preceded him rather than through the paradigms of rationality that followed.<sup>5</sup>

Heraclitus' text contains several elements of what Detienne calls magico-religious speech, which he describes as atemporal, efficacious, and "a living thing, a natural reality that develops and grows."<sup>6</sup> One particular aspect of this magico-religious speech is especially relevant to Heraclitus' text: Detienne points out that "such speech is indistinguishable from action."<sup>7</sup> Heraclitus' explicit reference to his own 'words and works' in fragment 1, a common Homeric formula, signals this dimension of his *logos* and indicates that his teaching is experiential rather than rational in the Platonic, Stoic, or Aristotelian sense. The fragment numbered 1 by Diels-Kranz is a legitimate place to begin because, as many scholars have noted, it seems likely that this fragment was intended as an introduction to Heraclitus' teaching.<sup>8</sup> Kahn argues, citing examples, "we know that when Heraclitus begins his poem with a reference to his own *logos* he is following a literary tradition well established among early prose authors."<sup>9</sup> While Heraclitus' first fragment mimics this formulaic introduction, the dense ambiguity of his statement belies this traditional stance and complicates passive reception of it. Rather than enumerate his findings, as other authors did in their texts, Heraclitus challenges the listener with multiple paradoxical and ambiguous tricks that (dis)orient her reception of his teaching.

### **Fragment 1: Down the Rabbit Hole**

"Although this *logos* holds forever men are forever uncomprehending (*axunetoi*) both before hearing it and once they have heard. Although all things happen in accordance with this *logos*, men are like the untried (*apeiroisin*) when they try such words and works as I set forth, distinguishing each thing according to its nature (*kata phusin*) and telling how it is. But other men are oblivious (*lanthanoi*) of what they do awake just as what they do asleep escapes (*epilanthanontai*) them."<sup>10</sup> DK 1

While Heraclitus is deliberately identifying his *logos* in the traditional Milesian fashion, to indicate his words and his teaching, he also includes the word forever (*aei*) ambiguously placed

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<sup>5</sup> An important caveat to this remark: Especially in the case of Plato, I am referring to the rationalistic tradition of *scholarship*; Plato himself may also be less of a rationalist than often supposed. See especially Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul* (1995) for the sharp contrasts among Neoplatonist readings.

<sup>6</sup> Detienne, 71 (1996). "Magico-religious speech is above all efficacious, but its particular kind of religious power comprises other aspects as well. First, such speech is indistinguishable from action; at this level nothing separates speech from action. Furthermore, magico-religious religious speech is not subject to temporality", p. 74.

<sup>7</sup> Detienne, 74.

<sup>8</sup> Kirk, Raven, Schofield argue that fragment 1 is "a structurally complicated sentence which looks very well like a written introduction to a book", p. 184 (1983). Robinson reminds us that Aristotle identifies fragment 1 at the beginning of Heraclitus' book and further remarks that "it was standard for Ionian prose authors of the day to refer at the outset to the *logos* of which their book was going to treat", p. 74 (1987).

<sup>9</sup> Kahn, 97.

<sup>10</sup> All fragments in this paper are numbered according to Diels-Kranz (DK). This translation of fragment 1 is my own and indebted to Kahn's translation and the suggestions of Peter Manchester, a very careful and critical reader of the Presocratic texts (see his *The Syntax of Time: the Phenomenology of Time in Greek Physics and Speculative Logic from Iamblichus to Anaximander* (2005). Fragment 1: τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδε ἐόντος αἰεὶ ἀξύνετοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι καὶ πρόσθεν ἢ ἀκοῦσαι καὶ ἀκούσαντες τὸ πρῶτον· γινομένων γὰρ πάντων κατὰ τὸν λόγον τόνδε ἀπίροισιν εἰκόσι πειρώμενοι καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων τοιούτων ὁκοίων ἐγὼ διηγέσθαι κατὰ φύσιν διαίρεών ἕκαστον καὶ φράζων ὅπως ἔχει· τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους λανθάνει ὁκόσα ἐγερεθέντες ποιοῦσιν ὅκωσπερ ὁκόσα εὐδοντες ἐπλανθάνονται

between the first possible referent, this *logos*, or the second possible referent, the men who fail to comprehend.<sup>11</sup> As Kahn has pointed out, this deliberate syntactical ambiguity implies that “the *logos* can be his ‘meaning’ only in the objective sense: the structure that his words intend or point at, which is the structure of the world itself (and not the intensional structure of his *thought* about the world).”<sup>12</sup> Slightly amending Kahn’s statement, I suggest that Heraclitus’ words do not merely indicate the world as referent, which assumes a representational structure of *mimesis* that did not exist before Plato, but are designed to *perform* or embody the structure of the world.<sup>13</sup> This first line in fragment 1 demonstrates Heraclitus’ trademark use of ambiguity in pronouncing multiple things at once, especially contradictory things: how could his discrete or as we might now call it, subjective, account be immortal, as the term *aei* implies?

This distinction between the private (*idion*) world of each human being in epistemic isolation and the shared (*xynon*) world of *logos* is the crucial borderland of Heraclitus’ teaching. In fragments 1 and even more explicitly in fragment 50, Heraclitus is announcing that his *logos*, contained in these words as his teaching, is in accord with the *logos* that directs all things.<sup>14</sup> His teaching, then, is a practice of attunement to the structure of *logos*, which is both visible and audible but accessible only with effort and careful observation.<sup>15</sup> The experiential understanding that Heraclitus aims to teach is the recognition that what appears as two worlds, whether expressed as private/shared or any other binary set he mentions, is actually one shared world. As he chides Hesiod in fragment 57, “it is him they know as knowing most, who did not recognize day and night are one.”<sup>16</sup> Wisdom is repeatedly described, throughout the fragments, as the ability to recognize unity between contradictory and/or multiple things; perhaps most explicitly in fragment 10: “*Syllapseis*: wholes and not wholes, convergent divergent, consonant dissonant, from all things one and from one thing all.”<sup>17</sup> This strange word, *syllapseis*, means ‘taking together’ and also ‘apprehending, seizing, or laying hold of’ in its archaic usage and especially refers to *sounds*, whether musical notes or syllables.<sup>18</sup> Heraclitus’ teaching as *logos* is an exercise in this ‘taking together’; the student learns to recognize unity within the fragments. Since

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<sup>11</sup> In this translation I have simply repeated ‘forever’ to indicate this ambiguity, which cannot be easily reproduced in English translation.

<sup>12</sup> Kahn, 98.

<sup>13</sup> In his essay “The Birth of Images” (1991), J.P. Vernant demonstrates that the paradigm of *mimesis* as original and copy, as it appears in Plato’s texts, is a shift from the earlier Homeric understanding of *mimesis* where the image (*eidolon*) is not a copy but a *double*: closer to a phantasm or ghost than a duplicate and signaling a paradoxical presence and absence simultaneously. Note that this accords with Heraclitus’ understanding of the ‘self-differing’ thing in fragment 51, discussed below.

<sup>14</sup> Fragment 50: Listening not to me, but to *logos*, it is wise to agree (*homolegein*) that all things are one.” (Kahn’s translation).

<sup>15</sup> While Heraclitus often uses the metaphor of hearing when describing human incomprehension of *logos*, as in fragment 1, *logos* is also visible. Fragment 107 tells us “eyes and ears are poor witnesses for men if their souls don’t speak the language” (literally: having barbarian souls, i.e. not speaking Greek); fragment 55: “whatever comes from sight, hearing, learning from experience: this I prefer”; fragment 54 “the invisible harmony is better than the visible one” implies that sight is necessary but not sufficient condition for comprehension. Fragments 21 and 26 are even more enigmatic about the efficacy of sight: 21: “death is all things we see awake; all we see asleep is sleep.” 26: “A man kindles (*haptetai*) a light for himself in the night when his sight is extinguished. Living, he touches (*haptetai*) the dead in his sleep; waking, he touches (*haptetai*) the sleeper.” All translations Kahn’s.

<sup>16</sup> Kahn’s translation (1979).

<sup>17</sup> Other fragments that identify wisdom as the ability to recognize unity: “the wise is one alone” (32) “this *logos* is shared” (2) “what is wise set apart from all” (108) “what is shared by all” (114) “all things are one” (50) “obey the counsel of one” (33) “it gets named according to the pleasure of each one” (67).

<sup>18</sup> H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon with a Revised Supplement*, Oxford, 1996.

Heraclitus' *logos* embodies the structure of both *psyche* and *kosmos*, the student can then apply her observations of unity to both the world and her experience of *psyche*.

If Heraclitus' teaching is designed to produce the awareness necessary for efficacious speech (like his *logos*), this awareness cannot be experienced in a state of epistemic isolation, which is compared throughout the fragments to the state of sleep. How do human beings escape their private worlds and "think things in the way they encounter them" rather than "imagine for themselves", as fragment 17 complains?<sup>19</sup> The practice of Heraclitus' teaching is identified in the first fragment, where he dubs his approach *kata phusin*: he will distinguish each thing according to its nature and tell how it is. If the structure of things is a paradoxical tension, then Heraclitus' own speech must embody this tension in order to communicate it. If all things are in flux and self-differing, then Heraclitus' *logos* must perform this movement.<sup>20</sup>

Few Heraclitus fragments make such explicit reference to his own technique as fragment 1's direct statement of his words and works as *kata phusin*, but fragment 93 offers a performative example: "The Lord whose oracle is at Delphi neither declares nor conceals but gives a sign." In employing an epithet of Apollo rather than his name, Heraclitus cleverly offers a 'sign' of what it means to "neither declare nor conceal." In addition to this methodological performance, Heraclitus aligning his words and works with those of the oracle implies a specific reception for his pronouncements; oracular speech is a particular kind of efficacious speech. Detienne observes "oracular speech does not reflect an event that has already occurred; it is part of its realization [*kranei*]." <sup>21</sup> Heraclitus' words *do* something to his listener if she attends to the text in this manner: his teaching holds a mirror up to the initiate's own processes of thinking and perceiving and demonstrates how the movement and patterns she sees in this mirror (the activity of her *psyche*) are in fact the movements and patterns of the *kosmos*, a flux governed by the structuring authority of *logos*.

Heraclitus' word for sign in fragment 93 is *semenai*, which means 'to give a sign.'<sup>22</sup> His method will be, then, to offer signs (like seeds) in the form of speech.<sup>23</sup> The way in which his teaching grows is through the exercise of following those signs from fragment to fragment and allowing them to germinate as the fragments are committed to memory and begin to amplify one another through the process of association. In demonstrating how this method does *not* conform to paradigms of rationality, Freud's observations about the radical distinction between conscious and unconscious processes is enlightening. Freud argues that conscious thinking is directed by standards of rationality such as the law of non-contradiction, temporality and recognition of negation while unconscious processes are instead governed by associative logic and are atemporal.<sup>24</sup> Condensation, a concept Freud develops in his *Interpretation of Dreams*, refers to

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<sup>19</sup> Fragment 17: "Most men do not think things in the way they encounter them, nor do they recognize their own experience, but imagine for themselves" (Kahn's translation).

<sup>20</sup> Fragment 51: "they do not comprehend how a thing agrees at variance with itself; it is a *harmonie* turning back on itself, like that of the bow or the lyre." (Kahn's translation). Derrida discusses the significance of Heraclitus' phrase *hen diapheron heautoi* in his essay "Differance", arguing that what he calls the metaphysics of presence occludes the ambiguity of this self-differing thing in Heraclitus: "Perhaps this is why the Heraclitean play of the *hen diapheron heautoi*, of the one differing from itself, the one in difference with itself, already is lost like a trace in the determination of *diapheron* as ontological difference." p. 22 (2006).

<sup>21</sup> Detienne, 73. The importance of 'realization' (*kranei*) will become clear in the conclusion of this paper.

<sup>22</sup> Liddel Scott Lexicon.

<sup>23</sup> This fragment in particular demonstrates the performative context of Heraclitus' fragments as 'speech-acts.'

<sup>24</sup> In his essay "The Unconscious", Freud outlines "special characteristics of the system Ucs [unconscious]", which he enumerates as follows: "exemption from mutual contradiction, primary process (mobility of cathexis),

the unconscious logic of dream content, where multiple referents are condensed into one image.<sup>25</sup> The signs that Heraclitus plants in his sayings are highly condensed contents of this type, and the logic necessary for comprehending them is not rational in the sense of analysis, or breaking things down into their discrete parts; rather, these signs are *generative* in that they are associative and experiential.

Kahn notices two techniques in Heraclitus, which he names ‘linguistic density’ and ‘resonance’: resonance refers to the manner in which words, sounds, or images are repeated throughout the fragments and amplify one another, while linguistic density is essentially condensation, in the Freudian sense.<sup>26</sup> Heraclitus’ use of condensation, or linguistic density, means that his fragments are always multiply determined; there is rarely a single referent or meaning. The experiential effect of these techniques is best described by Socrates when he says of Heraclitus’ text: “it takes a Delian diver to get to the bottom of it.”<sup>27</sup> The ‘signs’ that Heraclitus plants lead to multiple other fragments, and the experience of following these paths is like falling down multiple rabbit holes at once, or into a fractal structure; a dense matrix of associative connections grows outward from the ‘signs’ in each fragment and reinforces all the others like vines growing together on a trellis or the intricate weavings of a spiderweb.

This growth is the manner in which the *logos* belonging to *psyche* can ‘increase’, as fragment 115 tells us: “to *psyche* belongs a *logos* that increases itself.”<sup>28</sup> Detienne observes that magico-religious speech “is truly conceived as a natural reality, a part of *physis*. A man’s *logos* may grow, just as it may shrink and shrivel away.”<sup>29</sup> Heraclitus’ text provides the medium through which the initiate may experience this movement and growth: each time she attempts to focus her attention on any discrete piece of his textual puzzle, the piece under examination activates multiple other pieces with which it shares resonance.<sup>30</sup> This motion is the aspect of Heraclitus’ teaching captured in his designation (by Plato and others) as a philosopher of flux—his text, like the world it attempts to disclose, is a living jigsaw puzzle of moving parts.

The awareness necessary to recognize the unity of these moving parts is *associative* logic, contrasted with rational logic that demands a choice between contradictory pairs such as day/night. This preference for receptivity to paradox, as opposed to rational non-contradiction, is precisely what Mitchell Miller identifies as a key teaching of Parmenides’ poem. Miller argues that the ambiguities in the poem are deliberate and intended as an exercise in thinking *both/and* instead of *either/or* when approaching the pairs of opposites presented in the poem, and furthermore, that this experiential exercise is necessary orientation for comprehending the relation between the ‘way of truth’ and the ‘*doxa*’ portions of Parmenides’ poem.<sup>31</sup> Heraclitus’

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timelessness, and substitution of psychic for external reality”, p. 130. The last designation is especially interesting in light of Heraclitus’ seeming equivalence of psychic and cosmic processes.

<sup>25</sup> In his *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud discusses the concept of condensation at length; Chapter VI entitled “The Dream Work” carefully outlines the processes of condensation using examples.

<sup>26</sup> Kahn defines linguistic density as “the phenomenon by which a multiplicity of ideas are expressed in a single word or phrase”, p. 89.

<sup>27</sup> According to Diogenes Laertius; Cited in Kahn, p. 95; D.L. II.22

<sup>28</sup> Kahn’s translation.

<sup>29</sup> Detienne, 72.

<sup>30</sup> My reading here, which focuses closely on fragment 1, is intended as an example of this process.

<sup>31</sup> Miller discusses three ambiguities he identifies in the poem: where the *koros* is being carried (to the *apeiron* or the underworld), the chasm as *achanes*: either yawning, or reading as an alpha privative ‘unyawning’, and the way that the doors swing open (either together at once or one at a time alternately). In analyzing the ambiguities, Miller writes “one’s first response [to the ambiguities] will be, almost surely, to turn away from these as obstacles to

teaching is similarly experiential in that the student must observe the movement of her *psyche* (perception/thought) and experience the unity between discrete fragments not as a logical assertion, but as a perception or state of awareness. As Heraclitus frequently appeals to imagery to express his meaning, I offer an image as example: imagine a choir of bells, where each bell is connected to several others such that, when rung, it rings all of the other bells to which it is bound. Thus ringing any individual bell inevitably causes all the bells to chime together, creating one sound out of many. This one sound is what the listener is able to hear as *logos* when she recognizes the paradoxical unity inherent in seemingly disparate things.

This unity, which Heraclitus sees as inherent within the structure of the world (whether described as *kosmos*, *psyche*, or *logos*) is reproduced<sup>32</sup> in the *experience* of engaging with his text—this is the radical manner in which ‘his’ *logos* is immortal. As Kahn remarks, the use of the Homeric phrase *eontos aei* (‘being forever’) is unsettling because of its connotation of immortal life, like that of the gods: “when the primary sense of *logos* and ‘is forever’ are combined, they give: ‘this discourse is forever alive, is immortal’—a reading on the face of it so strange that it *obliges* us to go deeper.”<sup>33</sup> Heraclitus’ *logos* is alive in that it is kindled again in each student’s *psyche*, if she commits his *logos* to memory and attends to it in the associative manner here outlined. His use of fire as a symbol is relevant in this regard, as fire is ‘everliving’ yet oscillates between kindling and extinguishing (as in fragment 30); the motion of *kosmos* and the motion of *psyche* are the same.<sup>34</sup>

Heraclitus explicitly signals the experiential character of his teaching in the first fragment with his use of *apeiroisin*, translated here as ‘untried’; human beings lack experience of *logos* despite its ever-present character. His teaching is designed to provide this experience, and the final line of fragment 1 guides the student toward the practice necessary for attaining the wisdom Heraclitus intends to communicate: *memory* is the critical foundation for the associative processes to function. As Detienne observed, in the tradition of poetry and *mythos*: “Truth is thus established by the deployment of magico-religious speech and is based on memory and complemented by oblivion.”<sup>35</sup> Heraclitus signals the necessity of memory for his teaching in the final line of fragment 1: “but other men are oblivious of what they do awake just as what they do asleep escapes them.”<sup>36</sup> The problem we are confronted with is how to navigate the crucial

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understanding...But, remarkably, these ambiguities are, *even as obstacles*, also constitutive of the way to the experience of the emergence of the ‘...is’”, p. 18 (2006).

<sup>32</sup> I use the term ‘reproduced’ to emphasize the associative connection to generation and seeds, discussed in the context of fragment 93’s term *semenai*. *Logos* is immortal because it is continually reproduced, just as plants and animals reproduce themselves through a process of seeding.

<sup>33</sup> Kahn, 94.

<sup>34</sup> Fragment 30: “*Kosmos*: the same for all no man or god has made but fire everliving kindled in measures and in measures extinguished”. Fragment 26 explicitly links human perception or cognition with fire: “A man kindles (*haptetai*) a light for himself in the night when his sight is extinguished. Living, he touches (*haptetai*) the dead in his sleep. Waking, he touches (*haptetai*) the sleeper.” Both translations are Kahn’s, with my amended translation of *haptetai* in line 2 of fragment 26 to emphasize the repetition.

<sup>35</sup> Detienne, 75. He continues, “But the configuration of *Aletheia*, expressed by the fundamental opposition between memory and oblivion, also involves the contribution of other powers, including *Dike*, *Pistis*, and *Peitho*. Justice, like *Aletheia*, is a modality of magico-religious speech, for *Dike* has the power to ‘realize’ [*kranei*].” Heraclitus’ repeated references to *Dike* (Justice) in his fragments demonstrate his alignment with the perspective Detienne describes here; in fragment 28B Heraclitus says “Justice will catch up (*katalepsetai*) with those who invent lies and those who swear to them” and in fragment 94, he notes that “if the sun transgresses his measures, the Furies, ministers of Justice, will find him out.” Both 28B and 94 are Kahn’s translations.

<sup>36</sup> In this line, both ‘oblivious’ and ‘escapes’ are cognate with *lethe*, forgetting: *lanthanoi* (oblivious) and (*epilanthanontai*) (escapes).

borderland of Heraclitus' teaching: how to bridge the two worlds of waking and sleeping, in other words, how to escape the epistemic isolation diagnosed in fragment 1 and learn to speak *kata phusin* in accordance with *logos*? The deliberate and repeated emphasis on forgetting in this last line of fragment 1 indicates the source of human alienation from *logos*: our forgetting is like a state of sleep. The remedy, then, for epistemic isolation must include the activity of memory, an observation that strongly supports reading Heraclitus' teaching as magico-religious speech.

Heraclitus' fragments notably lack dogmatic content; his use of ambiguity ensures this. His text is experiential as his teaching is designed to evoke first hand observation of physical and perceptual processes, the movement and structure of which are reproduced in the experience of his *logos*. The psychic motion the student experiences (the multiple rabbit hole effect I have attempted to reproduce in this close study of fragment 1) is shared by *kosmos*, and Heraclitus is careful to suggest that this motion (and the corresponding structure of *logos* that patterns it) is present in *all* things, no matter how microcosmic or macrocosmic.<sup>37</sup> His teaching requires the student to commit his words to memory and allow the associative connections to illustrate this structure and movement. Presumably, if this teaching is successful, the student will recognize that, as Kahn expresses it, "*all* of Heraclitus' fragments have only one single meaning, which is in fact the full semantic structure of his thought as a whole."<sup>38</sup>

The consequence of this realization (in the active sense of *kranei*) produces an intractable paradox with regard to language: each fragment 'says the same' (*homolegein*, as in fragment 50) and yet each appears as a discrete fragment? This precise problem of language arises in fragment 8 of Parmenides' poem, when the goddess pronounces of the unnamed 'it' she has been describing: "its name shall be everything: every single name mortals have invented convinced they are all true."<sup>39</sup> As Parmenides has already told us that non-being is impossible and cannot be named, this implies that there is only one possible referent: being.<sup>40</sup> Every name, and the corresponding discrete concept of the thing named, has the same referent. While mortals may believe in separation because of their acts of naming (such as naming 'birth' and 'death'), Parmenides tells us throughout his poem that "there is no way you will manage to cut being off from clinging fast to being."<sup>41</sup>

Once the student has committed all of Heraclitus' fragments to memory and experienced their associative effects in full, she recognizes, as Kahn remarks, that his fragments all 'speak the same' (*homolegein*). As the culmination of Heraclitus' teaching, this insight into *logos* is the most radical condensation imaginable—all names have the same referent—and is startlingly remote from any familiar notions of rationality.<sup>42</sup> While it is far more obvious that Parmenides is describing unity in his poem (expressed most directly in the image of the sphere), Heraclitus'

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<sup>37</sup> Fragment 124: "*kosmos* is a heap of random sweepings"—the most random collection of seemingly insignificant rubbish shares the same structure as *kosmos*, the most beautiful ordering. Kahn's translation.

<sup>38</sup> Kahn, 95.

<sup>39</sup> DK 8 line 37-38, Kingsley's translation, reading τῷ πάντ' ὄνομα[α] ἔσται rather than τῷ πάντ' ὄνομασται. Kingsley has demonstrated that this phrase is an echo of a naming ceremony, citing an obvious precedent in Hesiod's *Hymn to Aphrodite* p. 575-576, (2003). For controversy over the text, see Kingsley (2003).

<sup>40</sup> Parmenides, DK 2 lines 5-8: "As for the other [route], that is not and is necessary not to be: this, I can tell you, is a path from which no news returns. For there is no way you can recognize what is not—there is no traveling that path—or tell anything about it" (Kingsley's translation, 2003).

<sup>41</sup> DK 4 line 2, Kingsley's translation (2003).

<sup>42</sup> In this regard, Heraclitus' philosophical understanding of language bears a striking resemblance to the preoccupations and insights of Wittgenstein.



emphasis on unity is often overlooked because of his designation as a philosopher of flux; however, his *logos* consistently identifies wisdom as the ability to recognize unity.<sup>43</sup> Like Parmenides, Heraclitus frequently points out the impossibility of mortal naming; in Heraclitus' cosmos of flux, names cannot ever contain nor pin down the thing named because things are self-differing and always in motion.<sup>44</sup> The state of epistemic isolation, where human beings are out of sync with *logos*, will not be escaped through rationality; it is a *symptom* of rationality—our use of static names and binary concepts projected onto a *kosmos* in flux.

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<sup>43</sup> This observation complicates the simple categorization of Presocratic thinkers into monists vs. pluralists, as Aristotle attempts to do; see Graham (2006) for an extended discussion of this problem. Heraclitus cannot be a thinker of pure flux because *logos*, which is everliving, structures the movement of flux.

<sup>44</sup> Heraclitus addresses the problem of naming in several fragments: 48: "the name of the bow is life, its work is death"; 67: "the god: day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, satiety and hunger. It alters, as when mingled with perfumes it gets named according to the pleasure of each one" and most explicitly, 32: "the wise is one alone, unwilling and willing to be called by the name of *Zenos*" [archaic name for Zeus and a homonym of *Xenos*, also 'life']. In each of these fragments, the act of naming fails to capture the nature of the thing named. All translations Kahn's.

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## Heraclitus and the Riddle of Nature

Always one to challenge traditional notions, Heraclitus finds prevailing notions of nature among his contemporaries to be woefully insufficient and in need of radical redefinition. Ever the enigmatic thinker, Heraclitus instead presents nature as a “self-concealed concealer” when he famously observes that “nature loves to hide” (B123).<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere he plays up this notion of hiddenness when he cautions his reader against relying too much on what is readily apparent, observing that, “The hidden attunement is better than the obvious one” (B54).<sup>2</sup> If nature is indeed a riddle, then one must be trained in the art of riddles, the art of paradox, to begin to untangle and “see through” the riddle. In short, a new understanding of nature requires a corresponding new approach. In what follows, I argue that Heraclitus understands φύσις as this “hidden attunement” and that the paradoxical qualities of Heraclitean fragments are intended as training in how to see through the riddle of nature. Emphasizing the epistemological features of φύσις, I show that Heraclitus develops the idea of the nature of individual things *as the unity of fundamental opposites*. Understanding φύσις in this way allows Heraclitus to better account for unity and plurality in the cosmos while also expanding the range of phenomena that the concept of nature can explain to include those experiences and events firmly grounded in the human realm.

Although scholars debate whether common conceptual threads do in fact tie his fragments together, it can hardly be denied that Heraclitus’ quotable yet perplexing style is

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<sup>1</sup>For an argument against the standard translation of the verb φιλεῖ as “loves”, see Daniel Graham, “Does Nature Love to Hide? Heraclitus B123 DK,” *Classical Philology* 98 (2003): 175-179. Using a series of passages from Herodotus to clarify the “nuances” of the Ionic dialect surrounding this term, Graham argues that *philein* + infinitive is an idiomatic expression that refers to what is customary or usual and has nothing to do with “love” as an emotion. See also Pierre Hadot, *Veil of Isis: An Essay on the History of the Idea of Nature* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> See Charles H. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 65, (hereafter *ATH*). I generally follow Kahn’s translations of Heraclitus’ fragments, unless otherwise noted. See also T.M. Robinson, *Heraclitus: Fragments*, p. 39, and G.S. Kirk *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments*, 2nd ed., (Cambridge, 1962), p. 222, (hereafter *HCF*). Both translate ἀρμονία as “connection,” while Graham opts for “structure,” *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy: The Complete Fragments and Selected Testimonies of the Major Presocratics*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), at 161, (hereafter *TEGP*).

intended as a deliberate provocation to his reader. But provoke the reader to what, exactly? The most immediate answer: to learn to *listen well*. Striking a scornful tone, Heraclitus admonishes the many when he says, “Having heard without comprehension they are like the deaf; this saying bears witness to them: present they are absent” (B34).<sup>3</sup> Foolishly accepting a shallow version of reality, mere sounds without meaning, the many are unable to connect what they experience with what matters most. Everything is, in effect, the same for them: sound without comprehension. Worse yet are those among the many who listen *too much*, that is, without the proper discernment: “A stupid person tends to become all worked up over every statement (he hears)” (B87).<sup>4</sup> These individuals are equally hopeless, though in a different way. Blown with the prevailing winds, they lack the wherewithal to commit to a particular account. What then is one to be listening for, precisely? The attunement that can be found in the nature of things. Heraclitus’ play on ἀρμονία as an “attunement” is intentional, though he does not mean it solely in the musical sense attributed to him by Plato.<sup>5</sup> As an attunement, ἀρμονία requires that things be “fitted together” properly.

Many Heraclitean fragments are themselves carefully constructed to model a very precise attunement. In B54, for example, Heraclitus uses the principle of fitting together opposites to literally forge the connection: ἀρμονία ἀφανῆς φανερῆς κρείττων.<sup>6</sup> Using an array of literary techniques to cultivate proper discernment through listening well for what fits together, the subtle attunement in the fragments aims to condition the listener to see precisely these sorts of connections in nature itself. In effect, Heraclitus teaches a new way to discover nature by

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<sup>3</sup> Graham translation, *TEGP*, p. 145.

<sup>4</sup> Robinson translation, *Heraclitus: Fragments*, p. 53.

<sup>5</sup> See *Symposium* 187a; Kirk judges Plato guilty of misinterpreting Heraclitus because the “technical musical meaning” of ἀρμονία does not exist during Heraclitus’ time, *HCF*, p. 204. Kahn views the musical application as just one of three meanings for Heraclitus, see *ATH*, p. 203.

<sup>6</sup> Kahn calls B 54 “one of the shortest and most beautifully designed fragments,” *ATH*, p. 202.

attuning ourselves to the *unapparent* connections in things.<sup>7</sup> It is not enough simply to announce that there are powerful, hidden realities, as the Milesians do; the Heraclitean student of nature must move beyond what is obvious in the same way that someone first grasps sounds and then moves to meaning. Although commentators have occasionally bemoaned the numerous, vastly divergent interpretations that arise from Heraclitus' method, this open-endedness is entirely by design, in a way that fits with the object of inquiry. In other words, the method of investigation and discourse necessarily reflects the hidden, enigmatic quality of nature itself.<sup>8</sup> When it comes to reading Heraclitus, then, one should be wary of explicit subjects and overt connections, instead listening carefully in order to seek after the less obvious, even obscure connections. One may only approach nature by learning the *language* of nature, or as Heraclitus says, "Eyes and ears are poor witnesses for men if their souls do not understand the language" (B107).<sup>9</sup>

In an adaptation of a common tale from the *Lives of Homer*, Heraclitus presents a riddle that offers clues on how to understand the language of "ever-hidden" nature: "Men are deceived in the recognition of what is obvious, like Homer who was wisest of all Greeks. For he was deceived by boys killing lice, who said: what we see and catch we leave behind; what we neither

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<sup>7</sup> Glenn Most points to the poetic quality, and intentional shrouding of truth, found in many of Heraclitus' aphorisms in suggesting that the form of his philosophy itself demands close attention and interpretation from the listener, see "The Poetics of Early Greek Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*, ed. A.A. Long (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 332-362, at pp. 357-359.

<sup>8</sup> Guthrie bemoans the breadth of possible interpretations of Heraclitus as "discouraging," but admits that "one can only give one's own," *HGP*, vol. 1, p. 427. Barnes is somewhat more poetic in expressing the point when he says, "The truth is that Heraclitus attracts exegetes as an empty jampot wasps; and each new wasp discerns traces of his own favourite flavor," *The Presocratic Philosophers*, volume 1 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 57, (hereafter *PP*).

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Graham, "Heraclitus: Flux, Order, and Knowledge" in *The Oxford Handbook of Presocratic Philosophy*, ed. Patricia Curd and Daniel W. Graham (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 169-188, at 177. The connection between knowledge of the cosmos and the idea of learning a language is a generally accepted insight in Heraclitean studies. See also Kahn, *ATH*, p. 107, Kahn, "New Look at Heraclitus," p. 192, and Leshner, "Heraclitus' Epistemological Vocabulary," *Hermes* 111.2 (1983): 155-170 at 167. My claim goes one step further: Heraclitus aims to teach his discerning reader to speak the language of nature through carefully constructed aphorisms. This language of nature mimics the operation of *physis*, the hidden fitting-together of opposites that creates meaning.

see nor catch we carry away” (B56).<sup>10</sup> Opening with the paradox of the “deceptiveness of knowledge,” Heraclitus presents a riddle that shows that “the things closest to us are what we do not know,” and that “nature as *physis*, the true being of things as self-unfolding, loves to hide.”<sup>11</sup> As Serge Mouraviev has keenly pointed out, B123 contains a reverse anagram

ΦΥΣΙΣ ΚΡΥΠΤΕΣΘΑΙ ΦΙΛΕΙ<sup>12</sup>

such that the enigmatic φύσις is “escaping precisely in its striking self-exhibition.”<sup>13</sup> As a “classic riddle,” the very idea of φύσις is one in which “the immediate expectation or surface meaning of terms and situations must be seen through for the riddle to be solved.”<sup>14</sup>

Connecting the λόγος to what men fail to adequately “hear,” Heraclitus famously begins his book, saying

Although this account holds forever, men ever fail to comprehend both before hearing it and once they have heard. Although all things come to pass in accordance with this account, men are like the untried when they try such words and works as I set forth, distinguishing each according to its nature and telling how it is. But other men are oblivious of what they do awake, just as they are forgetful of what they do asleep. (B1)

Linking the task and value of the pursuer of wisdom explicitly with the notion of φύσις, Heraclitus shifts philosophical inquiry to include “how humans react to the world.”<sup>15</sup> The ability

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<sup>10</sup> The point of B56 is easy to miss, as when Kahn wonders, “Why does Heraclitus find the story significant?” *ATH*, p. 111. For a thorough interpretation of the significance of this fragment as it reveals key Heraclitean ideas, see Robert Rethy, “Heraclitus, Fragment 56: The Deceptiveness of the Apparent,” *Ancient Philosophy* 7 (1987): 1-7. The interpretation presented here is heavily indebted to Rethy’s reading. For a more recent account that defends the crucial importance of B56 for a proper understanding of Heraclitus’ thought, see Roman Dilcher, “How Not to Conceive Heraclitean Harmony,” in *Doctrine and Doxography: Studies in Heraclitus and Pythagoras*, ed. David Sider and Dirk Obbink (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), pp. 263-280.

<sup>11</sup> Rethy, “Heraclitus, Fragment 56: The Deceptiveness of the Apparent,” p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Serge Mouraviev’s striking claim can be found in *Heraclitea*, III.3.A (Sankt Augustin: Academia, 2002). See Hülsz Piccone, “Heraclitus on Φύσις,” for a brief analysis of the claim as it fits into Heraclitus’ broader approach to φύσις, p. 185.

<sup>13</sup> Rethy, “Heraclitus, Fragment 56: The Deceptiveness of the Apparent,” p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1. Rethy briefly notes some of the adaptations Heraclitus makes to the classic tale, namely the replacement of fishing boys with children and catching with “seeing and grasping.” For an account which situates Heraclitus’ take on the riddle more thoroughly in antiquity, see Kirk, *HCF*, pp. 158-160.

<sup>15</sup> Graham, “Heraclitus: Flux, Order, and Knowledge,” p. 170.

to recognize an underlying reality by “distinguishing each according to its nature” and ultimately giving an account is what produces knowledge of this λόγος, the “higher law” of the cosmos to which only few have access.<sup>16</sup> Knowledge of nature is, in short, what separates the wise from the untried. Yet for the enigmatic sage, the pursuit of the hidden truth of things is not about mere accumulation of knowledge but is itself a way of life. In fact the failure by the many “to grasp the underlying connection between things,” can take several forms.<sup>17</sup> Many people often fail to get beyond their own private thoughts: “Most men do not think things in the way they encounter them, nor do they recognize what they experience, but believe their own opinions” (B17). Others, often considered wise, confuse learning as amassing facts or information with comprehension: “Much learning does not teach understanding. For it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, and also Xenophanes and Hecataeus” (B40). The awareness of the λόγος *through* the pursuit and articulation of the φύσις of things differentiates what Heraclitus comprehends from what others believe about the world. More importantly, perhaps, this awareness also differentiates how the sage lives from the way other men blindly go about their lives. Such obliviousness may be traced to the inability to understand and properly apply the idea of nature.<sup>18</sup>

Heraclitus strengthens the connection between nature and how one ought to live when he tells us that “Thinking well is the greatest excellence and wisdom: to act and speak what is true,

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<sup>16</sup> This reading may be controversial given that there is little consensus around the precise sense of λόγος in the Heraclitean fragments. Two basic camps emerge, only to see deeper fissions within them. On the one hand, we have the “minimalists” who understand λόγος to refer to only to Heraclitus’ words, see M.L. West *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 124. Jonathan Barnes adopts a similar view, claiming that “it is wasted labor to seek Heraclitus’ secret in the sense of logos,” *PP*, p. 59. The other camp is much larger and takes Heraclitean λόγος to refer to something more universal and metaphysical. This camp is deeply divided, however, on the precise meaning of this universal λόγος such that any sort of agreement is generally only derived from suggesting what λόγος is not: restricted to Heraclitus’ words.

<sup>17</sup> Patricia Curd, “Knowledge and Unity in Heraclitus,” *The Monist* 74.4 (1991): 531-549, at 532.

<sup>18</sup> Thus the warning in B71-73: “Men forget where the way leads...And they are at odds with that which they most constantly associate. And what they meet with every day seems strange to them...We should not act and speak like men asleep.”

perceiving things according to their nature” (B112). Drawing together the important concepts of the pursuit and articulation of knowledge with virtue into a vision of the best life, this fragment works backward from the ultimate goal of σωφρονεῖν to the way in which this excellence is produced.<sup>19</sup> Without the ability to properly perceive the nature of individual things, humans cannot effectively know or choose. Heraclitus not only moves philosophical investigation from cosmology to human affairs, he moves the concept of φύσις from one that concerns natural phenomena to one that is integral to *all* human endeavors. Thus, in addition to knowledge of how things come to be, Heraclitus also understands that “moral virtue is deeply rooted in φύσις.”<sup>20</sup> As Heraclitus suggests in a separate fragment: “It belongs to all men to know themselves and to think well” (B116).

But in order to think well, one must discover *how* to think. Heraclitus, like Xenophanes, challenges the traditional mode of learning by targeting Hesiod, saying, “The teacher of most is Hesiod. It is him they know as knowing most, who did not recognize day and night: they are one” (B57). Hesiod’s real error is that he “counted some days as good, others as bad, because he did not recognize that the nature (φύσις) of every day is one and the same” (B106). In Hesiod’s *Theogony*, Day and Night are personified as characters, distinctly separate from one another with Night giving birth to Day (*Theogony* 748-757). But, as Nietzsche points out, night and day are “unthinkable separated” precisely because they are “opposites sides of one and the same

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<sup>19</sup> Kahn weighs in on the authenticity debate surrounding this fragment, saying, “If [B112] is not his, Heraclitus has nothing really original to say on *sophrosyne*, the paramount virtue of his age. But if it belongs to Heraclitus, [B112] is his most interesting utterance as a moral philosopher,” *ATH*, p. 120. Though some have certainly raised plausible doubts as to authenticity, Kahn appropriately claims that “the burden of proof falls on those who would deny authenticity.” Nevertheless, the real and underappreciated significance of this fragment is the connection it forges between Heraclitus’ moral philosophy and the endeavor of the natural philosopher to properly grasp things according to their φύσις. Heraclitus is often singled-out as the earliest Presocratic philosopher concerned with ethical questions, but rarely do commentators connect these with his developing theory of φύσις.

<sup>20</sup> Hülsz, “Heraclitus on Φύσις,” p. 184.



relationship.”<sup>21</sup> Heraclitus challenges Hesiod’s authority by undermining the idea of φύσις as something that serves solely as a means of differentiation. The nature of something, anything, must be a unity. Assigning value where none exists, Hesiod’s failure to understand φύσις and the true unity of things means that he has ultimately failed to grasp the *meaning* of existence.<sup>22</sup>

Unmistakably woven throughout many of Heraclitus’ fragments, φύσις is thus intimately connected with questions of what humans can know and how they should live. His understanding of φύσις as an unapparent ἁρμονίη is reflected in the precise composition of his aphoristic fragments that entice the intelligent reader beyond the obvious. For Heraclitus, one must be rigorously prepared to go beyond simple experience in order to grasp the secret structure of things by means of the riddle. But all this for the sake of what truths, what insight? What then *is* φύσις for Heraclitus? As he indicates in B1, φύσις is a means of distinguishing individual things in a way that ultimately allows access to the λόγος. Although λόγος plays the role of cosmic unifier, Heraclitus connects φύσις with unity even more explicitly in B106, where he indicts Hesiod for his failure to understand true unity, namely that “the nature (φύσις) of every day is one and the same.” For Heraclitus, the movement beyond earlier versions of φύσις, whether poetic or philosophic conceptions, comes through recognizing that φύσις is a unification of opposites *within the things themselves*. Heraclitus thus establishes a new way to think of φύσις as a unity, specifically a unity in opposites.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Nietzsche, *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, p. 57.

<sup>22</sup> See Kirk on the connection between λόγος and meaning for Heraclitus, *HCF*, p. 37. Kahn provides a brief discussion concerning meaning and Heraclitus’ use of the ideas of his predecessors in the development of his own theories, maintaining that “men like Xenophanes and Pythagoras failed to see the true meaning of their own knowledge,” “A New Look at Heraclitus,” p. 191.

<sup>23</sup> Although some have suggested such a link in passing, or alluded to a comparison rather vaguely, the connection has not been fully appreciated and properly defended as a revolutionary articulation of φύσις in the early Greek period. See Michael C. Stokes, *One and Many in Presocratic Philosophy* (Washington, D.C.: The Center for Hellenic Studies, 1971), pp. 89-90, for a brief discussion of the novelty of such an idea in antiquity. Pierre Hadot suggests the possibility of connecting φύσις in Heraclitus with the idea of contraries through an analysis of B123 (φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ). He arrives at a rather unorthodox conclusion that “reality is such that within each thing

The unity of opposites in Heraclitus has been a source of considerable debate.<sup>24</sup> Aristotle takes Heraclitus to mean that opposites are identical, not merely unified in some way, and concludes that Heraclitus perhaps was not serious about such an obvious absurdity.<sup>25</sup> But identity is only one possible way to think of the sort of “sameness” that Heraclitus has in mind.<sup>26</sup> Rather than understand unity as the Milesians do, Heraclitus is far more concerned with unity as it relates to the “requirements for an object of knowledge.”<sup>27</sup> Understanding and explaining what something is requires an account of what makes some entity a *unified thing*. Heraclitus fashions a new notion of unity by synthesizing the ideas of his predecessors into a description of both the unity and difference that describes the fundamental reality of existence. By importing the philosophical notion of unity at the level of individual entities, Heraclitus gives a way to understand both identity and change, unity and differentiation.

The unity is difficult to “grasp” given the apparent prevalence of contrary movements or opposing traits: “Graspings: wholes and not wholes, convergent divergent, consonant dissonant, from all things one and from one things all” (B10). Such unity may in fact be hidden behind what we too casually take to be opposite states: “The same...: living and dead, and the waking

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there are two aspects that destroy each other mutually,” *Veil of Isis*, p. 10. As previously quoted, Hussey may suggest a parallel between ἁρμονίη, φύσις, and the unity of opposites when he says “the finding of the ‘latent structure’ of the ‘nature’ of things, is solving the riddle,” but he offers no substantive explanation or argument regarding this claim, “Heraclitus,” p. 91.

<sup>24</sup> For classic accounts of the “Unity of Opposites” in Heraclitus, see Kirk, *HCF*, pp. 166-201 and Kahn, *ATH*, pp. 185-204. Other accounts include C.J. Emlyn-Jones “Heraclitus and the Identity of Opposites,” *Phronesis* 21 (1976): 89-114; M.M. Mackenzie “Heraclitus and the Art of Paradox,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 6 (1988): 1-37; and Stokes, *One and Many in Presocratic Philosophy*, pp 89-100. For a more recent account that provides a broad but accessible framework, see Edward Hussey, “Heraclitus,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*, ed. A.A. Long (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 88-112. Hussey argues that Heraclitus’ tripartite strategy is to 1) compile examples that “draw attention to the unity-in-opposites pattern”, then 2) generalize to state the pattern, and finally 3) “apply the pattern in the construction of theories,” pp. 93-98. Hussey’s formula is a more specific version of Mackenzie’s pattern that involves “the opposition of unity and the unity of opposites” as “counterparts,” “Heraclitus and the Art of Paradox”, p. 9. For a synopsis of the problems in attributing a “unity of opposites” theory to Heraclitus, see Dilcher “How Not to Conceive Heraclitean Harmony,” pp. 263-265.

<sup>25</sup> See *Metaphysics* 1005b17-26 and Emlyn-Jones, “Heraclitus and the Identity of Opposites,” p. 90.

<sup>26</sup> Graham’s account of this idea in *Explaining the Cosmos* is helpful in understanding the range of possibilities of “sameness”, among which identity is merely one option, see pp. 122-129.

<sup>27</sup> Curd, “Knowledge and Unity in Heraclitus,” p. 532.

and the sleeping, and young and old. For these transposed are those, and those transposed again are these” (B88). Among the Heraclitean fragments then one finds not a single version of unity but rather different kinds of unity of opposites. Unsurprisingly, commentators offer all manner of schema for connecting the various fragments that deal with opposites.<sup>28</sup> For our purposes, it is enough to illustrate a few examples. When Heraclitus contends that “Beginning is together with end [on a circle] (B103), the paradox here is that the opposites are “logically indistinguishable.”<sup>29</sup> In other cases, the opposites may be unified in the form of a continuum, as in those fragments that assert that Night and Day are really one. Elsewhere, Heraclitus highlights the way two opposites are said simultaneously of the same thing: “A road up and down is one and the same” (B60).<sup>30</sup> The perception of unity may be a matter of perspective. Here it depends on the perspective taken on the entity in question, suggesting an affinity with those fragments that suggest a relevance problem: “The sea is the purest and foulest water: for fish drinkable and life-sustaining; for men undrinkable and deadly” (B61). Unity, it turns out for Heraclitus, is said in many ways, and the specific role opposites play in generating or revealing that unity differ. Yet in each case the specific unity of particular opposites is what reveals the nature of the thing. A circle is the kind of thing in which the beginning and end are one and the same. A road is the kind of thing that simultaneously travels in opposite directions. Sea water is, at the same time, poisonous and nourishing.

Heraclitus reveals more about the nature of this unity in opposites as a specific pattern when he describes it as an attunement when he says: “They do not comprehend how a thing

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<sup>28</sup> Kahn divides the fragments dealing with unity in opposites between anthropocentric and cosmic subjects, *ATH*, p. 185ff. Stokes starts with the “easiest kind of unity first” and progresses through what he takes to be increasingly complex varieties, *One and Many in Presocratic Philosophy*, pp. 90-100. Mackenzie develops a scheme that embraces, in true Heraclitean fashion, reciprocal concepts of the unity of opposites and the opposition of unity, “Heraclitus and the Art of Paradox,” pp. 7-12.

<sup>29</sup> Stokes, *One and Many in Presocratic Philosophy*, p. 90.

<sup>30</sup> Graham translation, *TEGP*, p. 157.

agrees at variance with itself; it is an attunement turning back on itself, like that of the bow and the lyre” (B51). In these situations, the attunement is internal and it is this unification of conflicting forces or features that makes a thing what it is. In other words, the φύσις of the thing as a unity is *generated* by the opposition. Without the tension, the conflicting pull in opposite directions, neither the bow nor the lyre would exist as such.<sup>31</sup> In stark contrast to the traditional Greek notion of φύσις as the “essential character” of a thing with an eye toward the obvious, outwardly visible quality, Heraclitean φύσις presents particular opposites as the essential features of a thing.<sup>32</sup> In his usual paradoxical way, Heraclitus repeatedly points to individual objects “characterized by contradictory properties”: the road, the circle, and “the path of the carding wheels is straight and crooked” (B59).<sup>33</sup> In many cases, the opposites are not cosmic opposites, but within the individual entity. As such, opposition in general allows us to “structure and find our way about so much of our experience.”<sup>34</sup> That is to say, the opposites give us a starting place to begin to properly “distinguish each according to its nature” (B1), but true recognition of the φύσις of any individual thing (being able to “tell how it is”) requires grasping how this opposition generates a unity.

The unapparent ἀρμονίη is not only a “principle of reconciliation between opponents” but a process that connects several of Heraclitus’ key ideas into a cogent whole: “The counter-thrust brings together, and from tones at variance comes perfect attunement, and all things come to pass through conflict” (B8). It is in this process of ἀρμονίη that the Heraclitean notion of unity

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<sup>31</sup> Graham carries the opposition even further by suggesting an intentionally juxtaposed symbolism of the bow as an object of war and the lyre as an object of peace, unified as simultaneous representations of Apollo, “Heraclitus: Flux, Order, and Knowledge,” p. 178.

<sup>32</sup> Dilcher alleges that the instances of opposites in the fragments are so “diverse” as to make any notion of unity so elastic that it is nearly meaningless, “How Not to Conceive Heraclitean Harmony,” p. 264.

<sup>33</sup> See Mackenzie, “Heraclitus and the Art of Paradox,” pp. 14-17.

<sup>34</sup> Hussey, “Heraclitus,” p. 94.

“performs its essential function” that “unites, controls, and gives meaning to the opposites.”<sup>35</sup> This “hidden unity of warring opposites” may only be perceived, however, through “coming-to-be and passing away, in change and transmutation.”<sup>36</sup> In perhaps his most famous fragment, Heraclitus claims that, “We step and do not step into the same rivers; we are and are not” (B49a). Rather than an enigmatic reference to the inevitability of change, the flux of all things, Heraclitus’ river fragments present the paradox of φύσις. In this case, “it is the very essence of...any river, to be composed of moving waters that are renewed constantly.”<sup>37</sup> The nature of anything is thus fixed and changing at the same time, making the elusive interplay of change and permanence another way in which nature hides. Expanding this idea to all things when he says, “While changing it rests” (B84a), φύσις as a ἄρμονίη is both the constant process by which the opposites “fit together” and the structure of the unified entity.

For Heraclitus, then, it is variety in kinds of unity, specifically in the more precise nature of attunements, that constitutes the φύσις of things as a kind of common pattern and yet uniquely discernible in individual things. The particular opposites in a thing and their specific attunement is what Heraclitus’ is able to distinguish that others are not. Able to recognize the kind of unity that exists for a particular individual thing, Heraclitus thus grasps the unapparent ἄρμονίη by means of the measured process of change. Insofar as Heraclitus is concerned with what constitutes an “object of knowledge,” it is the φύσις of the thing that demands his attention and necessitates going beyond the “outward appearance” of a thing. In doing so, Heraclitus sees possibility and complexity that opens up the world of experience. A road may seem one directional to most based on individual vantage point; likewise, one may fail to see that the end of a circle, or a journey, also must be a new beginning. Rather than distinct opposites, one ought

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>36</sup> Seligmann, *The Apeiron of Anaximander*, p. 52

<sup>37</sup> Graham, “Heraclitus: Flux, Order, and Knowledge,” p. 174.

to understand that night and day are “really two facets of a single process; this, indeed, is their φύσις.”<sup>38</sup> The uncovering of greater possibilities for conceptions of the cosmos and human life unlocks the λόγος as the “unifying principle that guides and steers all things, a single account of how things are, and the object of genuine knowledge.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Kirk, *HCF*, p. 230.

<sup>39</sup> Curd, “Parmenides and After: Unity and Plurality,” p. 36.

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## Anaximander and Epictetus on Death and Return

Babette Babich  
*Fordham University, NYC*

### Introduction

I focus in what follows on Anaximander's notion of genesis and destruction 'to frame'<sup>i</sup> a reading of Epictetus' *Enchiridion* on death less as loss than as restoration or 'return.'

Commonly, we speak of the first fragment of philosophy as Anaximander's although, just as traditionally, Thales is credited as first philosopher. Thus "all is water," 'quiddity is liquidity,' summarizes Thales' views without corresponding to any 'fragment,' as such<sup>ii</sup> — not even one described, according to Simplicius, as 'rather poetic.'<sup>iii</sup>

Anaximander's fragment is similarly famously, quintessentially, 'gnomic.' In addition to the challenges of simply delimiting the fragment as such, i.e., what does and does not belong to the fragment,<sup>iv</sup> there is the language used, not merely the matter of poetry, not only the content or substance of what is said, but the etymology of terms, beginning with τὸ ἄπειρον.<sup>v</sup>

At the same time, even in Simplicius, the language if evocative is also fairly straightforward: "And the source of coming-to-be for existing things, is that into which destruction, too, happens," ἐξ ὧν δὲ ἡ γένεσις ἐστί τοῖς οὖσι, καὶ τὴν φθορὰν.<sup>vi</sup>

Martin Heidegger observes in 1946 that philology hasn't been as useful as one might have hoped in deciding matters and sixty years on, Heidegger seems to have had a point: terms are difficult to translate to everyone's satisfaction, and Heidegger's argument likewise holds, as other commentators also have argued, that efforts to dispute certain words as not proper to Anaximander recur later in the fragment and, further, that distinguishing the fragment from

proto-science also excludes legal or ethical renderings in the process. The result of so much dispute makes it unclear how to read the fragment itself and the tradition of commentary. This is the point of departure for Charles Kahn's 1960 discussion, *Anaximander and the Origins of Cosmology*<sup>vii</sup> and may be argued as the overarching inspiration for Catherine Osborne's reflection on the philosophical fragment in her study dedicated to the determining of what we do and do not take to be the thinker's words, as opposed to the (supposedly) lesser genre of commentary and which (just given Simplicius or, in Osborne's case, Hippolytus) is inseparable from any discussion of the fragments themselves.<sup>viii</sup>

The theme here is limited to Anaximander's account of the *genesis* (this too is disputed, although the word is clear enough)<sup>ix</sup> of what is ('existing things') and, apart from pointing to current scholarship (in notes and such), I shall not seek to define the ἄπειρον, qua physical origination of this heterogeneity, ἀλλ' ἑτέραν τινὰ φύσιν ἄπειρον, that is the unbounded or boundless, infinite, unlimited, the "incompassable" as Gottschalk writes,<sup>x</sup> where the same *apeiron* (as already suggested, this is disputed), as that out of which<sup>xi</sup> same unbounded, once again, everything that is is adjudged as rightfully (this is not in dispute) returning or perishing (this is disputed).<sup>xii</sup>

## **Epictetus**

Epictetus seems to exemplify<sup>xiii</sup> what some rebuke (or praise: two sides of the same coin) as Stoic 'hard-heartedness,' unmovedness, *ataraxia*, as Nietzsche invokes the Stoic disposition of *adiaphora*.

Epictetus urges us to meditate upon the nature of things, especially the things we love, whether because they give us delight or else, in a very Aristotelian spirit of loving things, owing to their utility for us:

With regard to whatever objects give you delight, are useful, or are deeply loved, remember to tell yourself of what general nature they are, beginning from the most insignificant things. (Epictetus, *Enchiridion* §3)

This reading can be informed by Heidegger's reflections on *Brauch*,<sup>xiv</sup> or what is meet as Heidegger glosses Anaximander's fragment, emphasizing that this rendering is a dare or a risk:<sup>xv</sup>

But usage, enjoining order and so limiting what is present, distributes boundaries. As τὸ χρεῶν its essence consists in sending boundaries of the while to whatever lingers awhile in presence.<sup>xvi</sup>

Here I am concerned to reflect on what we may call a rather less cosmological or ordinarily ontic reflection in Epictetus, here in the Heideggerian language of 'sending boundaries of the while' as Epictetus reflects on things we may favor or cherish. Faced with a loss of an object, a broken cup, one can reflect that one is disposed less to the object as such than toward a specific type of thing (and insurance companies and the law depend on this as do online dating services: we look for certain 'types'):<sup>xvii</sup>

If, for example, you are fond of a specific ceramic cup, remind yourself that it is only ceramic cups in general of which you are fond. Then, if it breaks, you will not be disturbed. (Epictetus, *Enchiridion* §3)<sup>xviii</sup>

This corrective attention is the *prosoché* Hadot details in his own general discussion,<sup>xix</sup> focused to be sure on the Stoic tradition in general and illustrated here as a reminder of the nature of things with which one has to do and so too as a reflection on the nature of attachment. In a context of measure and balance, Epictetus goes on to make what can seem to be a dissonantly insensitive parallel:

If you kiss your child, or your wife, say that you only kiss things which are human, and thus you will not be disturbed if either of them dies. (Epictetus, *Enchiridion* §3)

The parallel continues, two aphorisms later, with Epictetus' meditation on death as something about which we have only prejudgments and conclusions, with a reference to the need to live one's life with death in anticipation rather than inconsideration as is the general wont:

Men are disturbed, not by things, but by the principles and notions which they form concerning things. Death, for instance, is not terrible, else it would have appeared so to Socrates. But the terror consists in our notion of death that it is terrible. When therefore we are hindered, or disturbed, or grieved, let us never attribute it to others, but to ourselves; that is, to our own principles. An uninstructed person will lay the fault of his own bad condition upon others. Someone just starting instruction will lay the fault on himself. Some one who is perfectly instructed will place blame neither on others nor on himself. (Epictetus, *Enchiridion* §5)

This sentiment informs what Nietzsche names "Epictetus's ear," a broken or severed attunement contra the commonplace along with an ideal of freedom which Nietzsche names the "innocence of becoming." Thus we read, and note the quotes included in the text here in Nietzsche's *Human, All-too-Human*:

"So long as one always lays the blame on others one still belongs to the mob, when one always assumes responsibility oneself one is on the path of wisdom; but the wise man blames no one, neither himself nor others"<sup>xx</sup>

Later Nietzsche draws on Epictetus on "*The Thought of Death*" to the extent that, as Nietzsche writes, "nothing is further from" our minds as he says, as he reflects in the third aphorism at the start of the last book of the first edition of *The Gay Science*,<sup>xxi</sup> which ends in an almost Anaximandrian spirit with the eternal return.<sup>xxii</sup> Here we may listen for echoes of Epictetus in Nietzsche and to be sure we will also hear some of the other Stoics as well, and just a slight illumination in the tones of Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*, as we recall David Hume's own favorite reading at the end of his life:<sup>xxiii</sup>

How his shadow stands even now behind everyone, as his dark fellow traveler! It is always like the last moment before the departure of an emigrant's ship: people have more to say to each other than ever, the hour is late, and the ocean and its desolate

silence are waiting impatiently behind all this noise — so covetous and certain of their prey. (GS §278)

Epictetus' own argument offers less an appeal to authority as such ("Death, for instance, is not terrible, else it would have appeared so to Socrates." Ench. §5), than to the argument explicated: "Men are disturbed, not by things, but by the principles and notions which they form concerning things." (§5) Thus the fear or terror we have in the face of the prospect of death "consists in our notion of death that it is terrible." (§5)

Two aphorisms ahead in Epictetus inspire Nietzsche's aphorism *The Thought of Death*:

Consider when, on a voyage, your ship is anchored; if you go on shore to get water you may along the way amuse yourself with picking up a shellfish, or an onion. However, your thoughts and continual attention ought to be bent towards the ship, waiting for the captain to call on board; you must then immediately leave all these things, otherwise you will be thrown into the ship, bound neck and feet like a sheep. (Epictetus, *Enchiridion* §7)

Recall again in Epictetus as we noted above, two aphorisms prior to §5, we encountered a contrast (§3) between a favorite earthen or clay vessel qua useful or loved, and one's child or one's spouse which two aphorisms after §5, on attachment, shifts to temporal sojourning rather than a reflection on an object, an activity of whiling, now in §7, taking time ashore and gathering shellfish or onions.<sup>xxiv</sup>

The metaphor of life activities, as punctuated by death now echoes, complete with references to shellfish and prestige, i.e., and also the smells of the kitchen (in the case of onions and cooking), including an allusion to wealth (the ancients were very conscious of this, the blood of a very particular shellfish, as we read in Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*), as metaphors for life as well as an allegory for mortal attachments as estimations or valuations. The voyage, the anchored ship, and not less the notion of shore leave, all temporary affairs, are likewise metaphors for life.

Reading Lucian to illuminate Nietzsche, these are the elements of Lucian's dialogue, *Kataplous*, the *Downward Journey*, traditionally rendered as the *Journey into Port*, or *Journey to Hell*. The alternate title of this 'dialogue of the dead' is unambiguous: *Or the Tyrant*. Lucian's Menippean satire adds to the redolence of kitchen smells and the prestige of the wealthy, tyrant class, what Nietzsche names the "mocking" exposition of the consequences of *not returning* gladly or lightly when called, and being caught in consequence to any resistance and bound, to be dragged to Charon's boat by Hermes<sup>xxv</sup> — the parallel with Epictetus is direct as one is bound "neck and feet" (hogtied so to say) and tossed into the hold "like a sheep."

Having nothing to which he was attached, Lucian's shoemaker, Mycillus was an exemplary passenger from life to death, eager to be called and to leave this life for the next and thus affirming the cycling of birth and rebirth.

This too can be compared to Heidegger's reflection on tarrying in being:

According to the fragment the αὐτὰ (τὰ ἐόντα), those beings that linger awhile in presence, stand in disorder. As they linger awhile, they tarry. They hang on. For they advance hesitantly through their while, in transition from arrival to departure. They hang on; they cling to themselves. When what lingers awhile delays, it stubbornly follows the inclination to persist in hanging on, and indeed to insist on persisting; it aims at everlasting continuance and no longer bothers about δίκη, the order of the while.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Recall that Epictetus' aphorism §7 parallels the theme foregrounded above in aphorism §3:

So it is with life. If, instead of an onion or a shellfish, you are given a wife or child, that is fine. But if the captain calls, you must run to the ship, leaving them, and regarding none of them. But if you are old, never go far from the ship: lest, when you are called, you should be unable to come in time. (Epictetus, *Enchiridion* §7)

Four aphorisms later, the parallel recurs:

Never say of anything, "I have lost it"; but, "I have returned it." Is your child dead? It is returned. Is your wife dead? She is returned. Is your estate taken away? Well,

and is not that likewise returned? “But he who took it away is a bad man.” What difference is it to you who the giver assigns to take it back? While he gives it to you to possess, take care of it; but don’t view it as your own, just as travelers view a hotel. (Epictetus, *Enchiridion* §11)

We began our reading of Epictetus with the loss of a cup, why not call it a kylix to avoid Christianizing it as an earthen vessel.<sup>xxvii</sup> Losing such a cup it can seem reasonable to say, *easy come, easy go*, given both the arbitrariness of acquisition *and* loss.

As Epictetus writes: “Never say of anything, ‘I have lost it’; but, ‘I have returned it.’ We noted that he takes the point to include the loss of the beings closest to us: “Is your child dead? It is returned.”<sup>xxviii</sup>

For Epictetus, the language of loss is what is problematic. Thus he recommends substituting having returned (restored) what never properly belonged to us to begin with in place of saying: “I have lost it.” For I cannot lose what was never properly my own.

And what is my own? This question takes us back to the very beginning of the *Enchiridion*. What is in my power, what is properly mine, and what is not? What is it to own anything, a kylix, child, spouse, or even one’s life? To say “I have returned it” underscores that what we have *comes to us* and is thus apart from our control. Things we have are not properly owned or property acquired by right —what right? Why is a price set as it is? Why do we happen to have the resources permitting us to pay that price? Why do we happen upon an item such that we can ‘find it’? — they are gifts, dispensations: sent to us.

The list of things not in our power thus includes, just as Epictetus details at the start of the *Enchiridion*: “body, property, reputation, command.” (Ench. §1) For his part, Heidegger will echo this same point with the language of thrownness [*Geworfenheit*] along with the all-too-human tendency to live our own lives in a fashion that is largely *not our own*, where making it

our own always modifies this fundamental inauthenticity, unownedness —  
*Uneigentlichkeit...*<sup>xxix</sup>

I conclude here by returning to Anaximander on return.

## II. Anaximander

For all kinds of reasons, not least that of time this morning, I here limit rhwaw reflections to Epictetus' notion of "return" together with the Anaximandrian notion of τὸ ἄπειρον.

To quote the 'extant fragment as we have it, let us begin again by citing this fragment in its traditional rendering following Diels *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* as we do:

[Fr.] **111.** ... some other apeiron nature, from which come into being all the heavens and the worlds in them. And the source of coming-to-be for existing things is that into which destruction, too, happens 'according to necessity; for they pay penalty and retribution to each other for their injustice according to the assessment of Time', as he describes it in these rather poetical terms.<sup>xxx</sup>

Elsewhere I have emphasized Hermann Usener's original plan to tap both Friedrich Nietzsche, given the former's specialization in Diogenes Laertius, along with Hermann Diels, given Diels' own specialization in commentaries on Aristotle (and thereby the doxographic tradition), to collaborate on the original project for what would however become solely Diels' *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Here we note that 1903, as Heidegger emphasizes, corresponds to both the year in which Diels' critical *Fragments of the Presocratics* was published as well as the year in which "Nietzsche's essay on the Preplatonic philosophers first became known."<sup>xxxiii</sup> Here it is worth emphasizing, contra historical fact, the difference this 'would have made' to what we call the Presocratic philosophers had the standard, i.e., DK edition been, as it is not, a Diels-Nietzsche edition rather



than a Diels-Kranz edition. Thus, I underline that so far from being an accidental philologist, Nietzsche was a philologist's philologist, as a theorist of quantitative rhythm (I have argued that Nietzsche's work gives us the basis for Ancient Greek prosody) as well as a specialist on Ancient Greek Lyric (of which the tragic poets are a part), including lecture notes for courses offered over a decade at the University of Basel, along with, as Heidegger emphasizes at the outset of his 1946 essay, a study of the *Pre-Platonic Philosophers*<sup>xxxiii</sup> (as Nietzsche preferred to name them in significant contrast with Diels' 'Presocratics') in addition to his more well-known *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

In a related context, I refer to the Lucian who, perhaps not at all accidentally just about the time that the tradition of philosophical reflection on the Presocratic thinkers was formed by way of the Diels edition, would be displaced from a centrality of reception, significant in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century, but shifting at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> to foregrounding the ultimate origin of such satire in the name of Menippus, despite the absence of written record, cognate here with the case of Socrates on Plato's authority, where, just like Menippus, Socrates leaves no words of his own and thus precluding, like Thales, any certain judgment of his thought apart from the tradition of transmission most notably in Plato (and likewise, Menippus, *ceteris paribus*, in Lucian).

I began by citing Heidegger's Anaximander and it is worth quoting, as Heidegger himself quotes Nietzsche's Anaximander as alternative to the standard rendering (Diels) rendering given above as Kirk/Raven/Shofield follow Diels. For Nietzsche,

Whence things have their origin, there they must also pass away according to necessity; for they must pay penalty and be judged for their injustice, according to the ordinance of time.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Reading Anaximander as one of the first natural philosophers, concerned with cosmogenesis and not less with cosmodicy, *to apeiron*, the boundless, unlimited, non-differentiated, is violated by

every coming to be. The *apeiron* is the “whence” from which “things have their origin,” and the *apeiron* is the “thence” to which “they must also pass away according to necessity.” The key is what transpires in time and always. What is at issue is what Heidegger speaks of as whiling or tarrying. Here what is crucial is the ethico-reflective as Nietzsche also tells us that Anaximander may thus be accounted as the first ‘ethical’ philosopher: “for they must pay penalty and be judged for their injustice, according to the ordinance of time.”

At issue is one’s right to existence, as to body and to possessions: life as such. Existence in this sense, specifically delimited existence, the existence that is always, as Heidegger says, *in each case mine*, is here opposed to any other aspect or form of being, as what for Anaximander borrows against, infringes upon, transgresses each and every other possibility. And some traditionally regard the *apeiron* as the realm in which there is neither mine nor thine.

The notion of return in Epictetus is clear: “it is returned.” The thought of cyclical time likewise, “just as travelers view a hotel” refers as much to possessions as it refers to one’s child, one’s wife, and indeed one’s own body.

Epictetus thus invites us to leave aside our traditional assumption of privilege — as Nietzsche reflects in a Schopenhauerian mood: “What is your existence worth? And if it is worthless, why are you here? Your guilt, I see, causes you to tarry in your existence.”<sup>xxxvi</sup>

In a Judeo-Christian schema, qua *ens creatum*, we are qua created, made *imago dei*: our existence is anything but worthless but much beyond estimation, beyond price. As such, we do not suppose that it is our “guilt” that induces us to ‘whiling,’ to use Heidegger’s language, that is to tarry as we do wish to tarry in existence. Rather it is our guilt that occasions our dying,

inasmuch as we are ‘created’ in the likeness of the deathless. “Death,” and inevitably, as regarded from a Judeo-Christian perspective, “comes from outside the frame.”<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Utterly within the frame, by contrast, Epictetus exemplifies, as we recall Hadot’s constant “vigilance,” the value of meditation on death as on other execrable or terrible things:

Let death and exile, and all other things which appear terrible be daily before your eyes, but chiefly death, and you will never entertain any abject thought, nor too eagerly covet anything. (*Ench.* §27)<sup>xxxviii</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> I will return to the notion of frame at the end.

<sup>ii</sup> It is important to consider just from the start as we shall also see below by the expedient of reading Friedrich Nietzsche together with Hermann Diels, Catherine Osborne, *Rethinking Early Greek Philosophy: Hippolytus of Rome and the Presocratics* (London: Duckworth, 1987). See too, in this context, Han Baltussen, *Philosophy and Exegesis in Simplicius: The Methodology of a Commentator* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008), esp. his second chapter, “Rethinking Early Greek Philosophy? Origins of Ancient Wisdom,” pp. 54-106.

<sup>iii</sup> Compare the discussion of Thales in G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, & M. Schofield, eds. *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) with Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* and *The Preplatonic Philosophers*. To say this is not to say there is no basis for thinking of Thales as the first philosopher as the ancients give him this accord. It is also essential to consider Thales as foremost among the ancient *physiologoi*, that is as having an understanding in a very Epictetan sense, as it were, of the “nature” of things, in the case of Thales, this is water.

<sup>iv</sup> As Heidegger writes, the text „from Simplicius’ commentary on the Physics is traditionally accepted as the Anaximander fragment. However, the commentary does not cite the fragment so clearly that we can ascertain with certainty where Anaximander’s saying begins and where it ends.” Martin Heidegger, “The Anaximander Fragment,” in Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, David Krell and Frank Capuzzi, trans. (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), pp. 13-58.

<sup>v</sup> Thus Couprie and Kočandrle summarize: “ἄπειρος has two meanings: (1) ‘infinite’, ‘without end’, and (2) ‘inexperienced’, ‘not acquainted with’. The second meaning has hardly ever been taken seriously in connection with Anaximander. In the first meaning, the words ἄπειρος and ἀπείρων were also associated with the description of nets, fetters or rings. Usually, the meaning ‘infinite’ is brought into relation with πέρας, ‘end’, ‘limit’. Kahn suggests a connection with the verbal root per, as in πείρω, περάω, περαίνω. Then the meaning of ἄπειρος is not nominal, but verbal: ‘what cannot be passed over or traversed from end to end’.” Dirk L. Couprie and Radim Kočandrle, “Anaximander’s ‘Boundless Nature’,” *Peitho / Examina Antiqua*, 1/4 (2013): 63-91, here p. 66.

<sup>vi</sup> Kirk, G. S.; Raven, J. E. & Schofield, M. (2003). *The Presocratic Philosophers*. Cambridge University Press. p. 118. Simplicius, *Comments on Aristotle’s Physics*, 24, 13. It hardly helps matters that Aristotle begins what becomes a very typical move in philosophical analysis, by declaring its referent contradictory and hence impossible.

<sup>vii</sup> Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Cosmology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960).

<sup>viii</sup> See again, Osborne, *Rethinking Early Greek Philosophy*.

<sup>ix</sup> Not, to be sure, for Heidegger, see his reflections, “The Anaximander Fragment,” pp. 30ff.

<sup>x</sup> See H. B. Gottschalk, “Anaximander’s Apeiron,” *Phronesis*, 10/1 (1965): 37-53.

<sup>xi</sup> Elizabeth Asmis summarizes some of the different definitions in her essay, “What is Anaximander’s Apeiron?,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Volume 19, Number 3 (July 1981): 279-297. As Asmis begins by noting, Burnet uses the language of the “boundless” to characterize a reserve or “stock from which the waste of existence is

continually made good,” in John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1930), p. 53. Frances M. Cornford locates this “outside the world as the 'eternal' background of the cycle of change and becoming” in Cornford, *Principiura Sapientiae* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), p. 171. Kahn describes the *apeiron* as “primarily a huge, inexhaustible mass, stretching away endlessly in every direction” in Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*, p. 233.

<sup>xii</sup> Whence things have their origin, / Thence also their destruction happens, / According to necessity;

For they give to each other justice and recompense / For their injustice / In conformity with the ordinance of Time. Anaximander. But as R. J Hankinson, reminds us in his *Cause and Explanation in Ancient Greek Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), quoting Simplicius to do so, what comes into being is not owing to “alteration of the element but by the separating off (*apokrinesthai*) of the opposites by the eternal motion. (Simplicius, On the ‘Physics’ 1. 2. 24. 17–25 = 12 A 9 DK = 101 a KRS)”, p. 18. And likewise, there seems to be a balance and a return built into the same cyclic generation and destruction: to quote Hankinson quoting Anaximander: “And the things from which existing things are generated are also those into which they are destroyed.”

<sup>xiii</sup> Epictetus, *The Discourses as Reported by Arrian, Books I–II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998) and Epictetus. *Discourses Books III-IV, The Encheiridion*, Tr. W. A. Oldfather (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928). There are many specific commentaries on Epictetus. Here as my discussion is a general one, I refer the reader to Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), overall.

<sup>xiv</sup> “Usage delivers what is present to its presencing, i.e. to its lingering. Usage dispenses to what is present the portion of its while. The while apportioned in each case to what lingers rests in the jointure, which joins what is present in the transition between twofold absence (arrival and departure). The jointure of the while bounds and confines what is present as such. That which lingers awhile in presence, *τὰ ἐόντα*, comes to presence within bounds (*πέρας*).” Heidegger, “The Anaximander Fragment,” p. 53.

<sup>xv</sup> Heidegger takes pages to get to this rendering, initially leaving the term untranslated, Heidegger, “The Anaximander Fragment,” p. 48ff.

<sup>xvi</sup> Heidegger, “The Anaximander Fragment,” p. 54.

<sup>xvii</sup> Recollecting that one is enamored of a specific type of thing means that one can regard the thing as substitutable whereby what is at issue is not merely the identity of similar things that is relevant but the nature of fondness, of love as such as Plato speaks of this (see his discussions of our delight in or love for certain types). Recall the discussion in the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* and so too the *Republic*.

<sup>xviii</sup> Epictetus, *The Enchiridion*. I cite here, for ease of access, the online version by Elizabeth Carter which follows, as does Oldfather, George Long.

<sup>xix</sup> Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, p. 13ff.

<sup>xx</sup> Volume Two of Nietzsche’s *Human, All too Human* is entitled “Assorted Opinions and Maxims,” and looks, arguably to the reception of tradition as such: “not everything gets forgotten.” HH, II, §386.

<sup>xxi</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, GS §278.

<sup>xxii</sup> Nietzsche writes in an antique mode so utterly contemporary that it called to Susan Sontag, as her son Philip Rieff reports. Phillip Rieff, *Swimming in a Sea of Death*.

<sup>xxiii</sup> I note this context in note xix below.

<sup>xxiv</sup> With reference to onions and shellfish, given this collecting and conspicuously culinary combination, the reader is urged to consider the allusion to both life and the erotic in the lovely study by James Davidson, *Courtesans and Fishcakes: The Consuming Passions of Classical Athens* (New York: Harper, 1997).

<sup>xxv</sup> The ‘good’ shoemaker Mycillus’s reflections on his what he imagined in life to have been the good life of the supposed “higher man” the overman [*hyperanthropos*], the tyrant. I have argued that this parodic notion of the higher, very ‘over’ man by contrast with the underworld of the afterlife is key to Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*, for which notion, along with Goethe (likewise himself influenced), Lucian’s *Kataplous* was a source. Lucian’s specifically didactical minded dialogue of the dead may be translated as *The Downward Journey* but it is also, owing to the relevance of the ship in the context of life and death (the characters in addition to the shoemaker include Hermes and Charon), sometimes translated as the *Ship comes into Port*. It was a favorite of Erasmus and Thomas More, as well as Nietzsche, owing to, among its other charms (the Greek is famously readable) its salutary thematic, salutary here taken in the Stoic sense of the term, and David Hume famously read just this dialogue on his deathbed. See on Lucian and Hume, Annette Baier, *Death and Character: Further Reflections on Hume* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008). See on Lucian and Nietzsche, Babich, “Nietzsche’s Zarathustra and Parodic Style: On Lucian’s *Hyperanthropos* and Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*,” *Diogenes*, 58, 4 (March 2013): 58-74.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Heidegger, “The Anaximander Fragment,” p. 45.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Epictetus has thus traditionally been read as promulgating a Judeo-Christian way of thinking: the Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away. See Gilles Boileau, *Epictetus his morals: with Simplicius his comment von Epictetus, Simplicius (of Cilicia.)*, Made English from the Greek by George Stanhope (London: Printed for Richard Sare, 1700), pp. 306-307.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Epictetus, *Enchiridion* §11.

<sup>xxix</sup> Epictetus draws on Plato's account of Cephalus' invocation of Themistocles' reply to a Seriphian, concerning the volatility of the advantages that accrue to one depending upon the gifts of birth (and location). Talking about the vanities of our position or rank in life was already mentioned with reference to Lucian's dialogue, *Kataplous*.

<sup>xxx</sup> Kirk, Raven, Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, p. 118. Cf. Hermann Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, ed. Walther Kranz, (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1931 [1903]), p. 89. Note that Diels who stresses "In direkter Rede" does not include the comment on poetic terminology and see too Charles Kahn's *Anaximander and the Origins of Cosmology* (New York: Columbia University Press). Cf. "The things that are perish into the things out of which they come to be, according to necessity, for they pay penalty and retribution to each other for their injustice [*adikias*] in accordance with the ordering of time [*chronou*], as [Anaximander] says in rather poetical language."

<sup>xxxi</sup> Cf. Wolfgang Roßler, „Hermann Diels und die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker“ in: Annette M. Bertschi and Colin G. King, eds., *Die modernen Vater der Antike. die Entwicklung der Altertumswissenschaften an Akademie und Universitaet in Berlin des 19. jahrhunderts* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), pp. 369-396, esp. pp. 374ff and Jaap Mansfeld and David T. Runia, *Aietiana: The Method and Intellectual Context of a Doxographer: The Sources. Volume I* (Amsterdam: Brill, 1997), pp. 93ff. Diels would not publish this until 1903 and we know this standard collection in the edition with Diels' student, Walther Kranz. See further, Babich, "Friedrich Nietzsche" in Niall Keane and Chris Lawn, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2016), pp. 366-367.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Heidegger, "The Anaximander Fragment," p. 13.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Nietzsche, *Pre-Platonic Philosophers*.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*

<sup>xxxv</sup> Ibid. In German: „Woher die Dinge ihre Entstehung haben, dorthin müssen sie auch zu Grunde gehen, nach der Nothwendigkeit; denn sie müssen Buße zahlen und für ihre Ungerechtigkeiten gerichtet werden, gemäß der Ordnung der Zeit.“ Nietzsche, *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*, in Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, Vol. 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), p. 818.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, p. 49.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> I owe this phrase to Tracy B. Strong.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Author's Note: Babette Babich has taught at Boston College, Stony Brook University, Marquette University, Georgetown University, the University of Tübingen, the University of California at San Diego, and the Humboldt University in Berlin. She is currently Professor of Philosophy at Fordham University in New York City. Author of more than eight books, and editor of more than eight book collections, she is also executive editor of *New Nietzsche Studies*.

## The Other Euthyphro Problem

Plato's *Euthyphro* famously identifies a stock dilemma. At 10a Socrates asks: "Is that which is holy loved by the gods because it is holy, or is it holy because it is loved by the gods?" In standard treatments, the former is said to impose constraints upon the divine, subordinating God to an independently existing moral reality. The latter is said to render morality arbitrary, making right and wrong radically dependent upon the exercise of divine will. So, either God has to bend a divine knee in humble submission to what is right; or God can decide, as though by a deft flip of the divine finger upon a moral switch, to reverse the polarities of right and wrong. The issues embedded within the dilemma have been taken up by medieval thinkers including Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham. Descartes, Hobbes, and Leibniz stake out their own positions vis-à-vis the dilemma, and so do James, Wittgenstein, and Swinburne. Since the fourth century B.C., the Euthyphro problem has served as grist for the philosophical mill.

I do not deny the philosophical interest of the Euthyphro problem. However, it does not give us the best interpretive leverage upon Plato's dialogue. Notwithstanding the dilemma's historical and philosophical significance, I want to reclaim the dialogue from a dilemma that overshadows it. When we make the dilemma the fulcrum against which to gain interpretive leverage on the dialogue, we fail to gain the "mechanical advantage" of superior leverage points elsewhere to be found in the text.

Methodologically following Julia Annas, Kenneth Sayre, and Gerald Press—for whom Plato's dialogues demand the uniting of literary and logical readings—I maintain that the "other" Euthyphro problem is rooted in the flawed eponymous *character* of the dialogue more than in his faulty *concepts* of holiness or piety. The incongruity of Euthyphro's character with any philosophically explored concept of holiness is the real problem that, with exquisite, playful, and tragicomic drama, unfolds over the course of the dialogue. Give attention with me, then, to three things in turn: the dialogue's dramatic context, characters, and plot.

First, recall several features of the dramatic context of the *Euthyphro*. Socrates, a man devoted to a lifelong quest for wisdom concerning the care and improvement of the soul, has been formally charged by Meletus, Anytus, and Lycon with impiety. For Socrates, who regards himself as discharging a divinely-sanctioned philosophical mission, the charge is perplexing. It is legally perplexing because Socrates has done his dead-level best to honor the gods in word and deed. On this point we do not have to rely only on Socrates' self-conception and testimony, although we have good reason to accept them as trustworthy. Xenophon provides third-party testimony in his *Apology*:

It is a marvel to me how the Athenians came to be persuaded that Socrates fell short of sober-mindedness as touching the gods. A man who never ventured one impious word or deed against the gods we worship, but whose whole language concerning them, and his every act, closely coincided, word for word, and deed for deed, with all we deem distinctive of devoutest piety.

When Socrates encounters Euthyphro outside the city courts, he is thus perplexed by an unwelcome legal difficulty. More substantially, the charges against Socrates, on reflection, arouse philosophical perplexity because they occasion his consideration of what holiness is and entails; being well-inclined to self-examination, Socrates finds himself amazed at the moral complexities of human-divine relationship.

Euthyphro, like Socrates, is concerned with a legal case involving impiety. Unlike Socrates, Euthyphro is not defending himself against charges of impiety, but rather prosecuting another. Unlike Socrates, he expresses *no perplexity at all* about either the legal issues in which he is entangled or the nature of holiness itself. Euthyphro to the contrary exudes (1) confident judgment about his legal cause and (2) self-assured understanding of the ways of the gods. Regarding the former, he seeks sanction against his own father for an alleged crime more akin to involuntary manslaughter or simple negligence than the charge of murder that Euthyphro levels against him. Despite a conspicuously vulnerable, thoroughly defeasible position, one that has garnered the shocked rebuke of his relatives, Euthyphro's insular, self-prefering judgment dismisses criticism out of hand. Regarding his knowledge of the divine, Euthyphro similarly boasts of his superiority "to the majority of men" and his "accurate knowledge of all such things" (5a). Others are beset by errors, but Euthyphro knows "surprising things, of which the majority has no knowledge" (6b).

So, Socrates and Euthyphro appear before the Athenian court under broadly similar circumstances: they each are addressing legal disputes involving a question of piety. However, the particular differences between the two could not be more pronounced. One is a defendant, the other an accuser. One is perplexed, the other unperturbed. One is possessed of self-doubt, the other of self-assurance. One appeals to publicly available argument, the other retreats into obfuscation and claims of esoteric expertise. And not least of all, one is called impious when he isn't; the other calls himself pious when *he* isn't.

We must hold in view another matter of historical and literary context. We know as readers that Socrates will be tried and executed for his alleged impiety, that his manifold virtue shines more brightly following his philosophical martyrdom, and that the Athenians come quickly to rue the tragic day on which they executed "a man who," as Phaedo puts it, "was of all those we have known, the best, and also the wisest and the most upright" (*Phaedo* 118a). Plato is later able to write without controversy of Athens having acquired "the reputation and the guilt, in the eyes of those who want to denigrate the city, of having killed Socrates" (*Apology* 38c). Early readers of the *Euthyphro* knew these things too, and as a result they had no doubt about Socrates' heroic status. Long separated from events vividly and shamefully recalled by Plato's first readers, we might entertain critical skepticism about Socrates' character, good will, truthfulness, or irony. Neither Plato nor his audience would have done so. Socrates is the exemplar of a new kind of hero; he is Plato's artful and compelling reconceptualization of traditional Homeric heroes like Achilles and Odysseus, a hero whose glory lies in his costly, courageous sacrifices for the love of wisdom. To read the *Euthyphro* in doubt of the text's dramatic and philosophical endorsement of its protagonist is to be astonishingly unaware of the dialogue's early reception.

So much for context. I turn now, secondly, to the matter of character. I already have intimated things about the characters. And by the characters I mean both Socrates and

Euthyphro, the *dramatis personae*. I also mean their characters, the more or less settled dispositions they evince by way of long-settled habit in the direction of virtue and vice.

In general terms we know that Socrates laments his ignorance of the virtues. He denies his understanding and possession of wisdom in the *Apology*; he makes similar claims about temperance in the *Charmides*, justice in the *Republic*, and courage in the *Laches*. Yet at the same time, the virtues about which Socrates claims ignorance were ascribed to him by those that knew his character best. In the *Symposium* Alcibiades' portrait makes clear Socrates' possession of wisdom, temperance, justice, and courage, notwithstanding Socrates' protestations to the contrary. Alcibiades gives examples and provides a touching portrait of a man like none other in virtue. With the *Euthyphro* particularly in view, then, I have some warrant for saying that Plato gives us a Socrates whose character exemplifies piety. The key thing to examine is what Socrates *shows* of the virtue. What he says is important, to be sure, but it is less in the saying and more in the showing on which the dialogue swings in getting at holiness.

Supposing Socrates is given to piety, where do we see it in the dialogue's characterization of him? *First*, he confesses its extraordinary value. With it he "would be better (*ameinon*, comp. of *agathos*) for the rest of my life" (16a). *Second*, he acknowledges recurrent religious experience in the form of encounters with a daimon that confronts him with a divine sign (3b). *Third*, Socrates speaks not with swagger, but in subdued measure about his divine encounters. He does not name the daimon or affiliate it with the innumerable Greek gods and goddesses, and he certainly does not anthropomize it. "I find it hard to accept things like that being said about the gods," he complains at 6a. His reticence derives from his confession that he has no knowledge (*eidenai*, from *oida*, to know, especially from having seen or perceived) of the gods (6b). *Fourth*, he adopts a posture of reverential submission and genuine wonder at the mystery he encounters in experiencing the divine sign of his daimon. These four qualities do not exhaust the character of piety, but they are constitutive of it.

What about Euthyphro? As Socrates exemplifies piety, so Euthyphro counter-exemplifies it. *First*, like Socrates, Euthyphro values piety. However, his interest lies not in an intrinsically valuable or morally laudable aspect of piety. Euthyphro values piety because of its usefulness. Without piety he "should be of no use" and "would not be superior to the majority of men" (5a—"superior to" = *diapheroi*, lit. to carry/bear over, and here "to be different from a person: generally, in point of excess, surpass, excel him," and thus akin to *pleonexia*). He values piety, or at least the appearance of it, because it enables him to outdo or surpass others. Euthyphro thus shares the same vicious penchant for *pleonexia* as Thrasymachus in the *Republic* and Callicles in the *Gorgias*. He wants to get more, secure greater honor, and best others (3c, 4b, 5c, 5e, 14b). *Second*, while Socrates' religious experience is evidently unprompted and serendipitous, Euthyphro's ostensible religious experience is manufactured through esoteric practical knowledge. He "knows how to say and do what is pleasing to the gods at prayer and sacrifice" (14b), and thus to control or manipulate divine power, for by way of his knowledge of what to say and do he can "preserve both private houses and public affairs of state" (14b). Socrates' daimon comes unbidden; Euthyphro labors to summon the gods for his own purposes. *Third*, where Socrates is reticent to pronounce Euthyphro boasts freely of his knowledge. He speaks in the assembly (3c), he endorses what everyone commonly says of the gods (6c), and he professes marvels unimagined by the many (6b) and guaranteed to amaze Socrates (6c). Where Socrates



inclines toward what Paul Griffiths calls a “studious stammer” before the divine, Euthyphro is loquacious. And *fourth*, the reverence that typifies Socrates is nowhere to be found in Euthyphro. For Euthyphro piety does not involve knee-bending, awe-struck wonder before the divine, conjoined with a way of life that forswears pretense and practices righteousness. It instead involves knowledge of the closely guarded, complex occult arts claimed by pagan prophets and priests. By virtue of such alleged occult skills, Euthyphro believes he can get ahead in life and help others do the same. Piety for Euthyphro, in short, entails a gnostic power of manipulating the divine.

Together with the dramatic context and study of character I have sketched, let me lastly turn to the plot, with special focus on the meaning of *Euthyphro* 10a, where the dilemma arises, within the plot.

The best description I can offer of the plot is to envision it as a self-enclosed figure, indeed as a circle. The dialogue itself invites the image, for right at the very heart of it Euthyphro complains that “whatever proposition we put forward goes around” (11c). With a circle in mind, envision, then, each of the five definitions of holiness in the dialogue are points distributed around the circumference of the circle. They mark significant moments in the unfolding of Plato’s plot. In the circular plot of the dialogue, Euthyphro and Socrates in one respect both end precisely where they begin; outside the court preoccupied with questions of piety and impiety. In another respect, however, Euthyphro and Socrates end in radically different places. This is because while Socrates moves around the circle, giving attention to the “care and improvement of his soul” as he reflects on each proffered definition, Euthyphro by contrast stays put as the definitions move past him and leave him untouched, unchanged, unmoved. Euthyphro grumbles that each definition “refuses to stay put where we establish it” (11b). He faults Socrates and expresses little enthusiasm for running after them. Yet Socrates is willing—indeed insistent—that they track down the truth and take up the chase lest holiness get away. Socrates says “I would rather have your statements to me remain unmoved than possess the wealth of Tantalus as well as the cleverness of Daedalus” (11d) and “I . . . do not give up” (11e). Socrates himself thus moves around the circle, as a hunter after his prey, and even though he does not catch hold of what he seeks, he is different. Unlike Euthyphro, who ends stuck the same ignorance with which he began, Socrates ends having left at least some of his ignorance behind, even if he hasn’t yet “acquired wisdom in divine matters” (15e).

With that general sense of the plot in mind, return now to the dilemma: “Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods” (10a)? The “other” dilemma is not a choice between divine limitation or divine voluntarism. Dramatically considered, the real dilemma is the one Euthyphro faces personally. There are at least two ways in which this is so. First and most obviously, either horn of the dilemma requires him to reflect upon a transcendent order far distant from his fixation upon immediate, practical matters. Because he has no genuine interest in theology, he follows Socrates’ inquiry with difficulty, he quickly wearies, and he expresses emphatic impatience with Socrates’ persistence. Euthyphro simply does not care about the *nature* of holiness or divine love, he does not entertain questions about what is worthy of worship, and puzzles concerning the metaphysics of morals never occur to him. Euthyphro’s obsessive fascination with *praxis* precludes the disciplined and self-critical *reflection* needed in order to follow Socrates around the plot points of the circle he traces.

Secondly, Euthyphro's struggle runs far more deeply than disinterest in things not reducible to practical usefulness. Each of Euthyphro's responses to Socrates, from the beginning to the end of the dialogue, are self-justifying. His first definition—holiness is what I'm doing—is patently self-justifying in character. When Euthyphro volunteers his second definition of piety at 7a—holiness is what the gods love—he does so once again for self-justifying reasons. Given the number and variety of gods, one or another god will doubtless love and therefore be available as an authority to which he may appeal to ratify whatever predetermined course he sets upon. When Euthyphro accepts a Socratic emendation as his third definition at 9d—holiness is what all of the gods love—he quickly finds himself stymied. It's in the midst of exploring this definition that the dilemma is raised, and it's at this point that Euthyphro's quandary becomes most pronounced.

On the one hand, if the gods love what is pious because it's pious, then Euthyphro's ostensible expertise as a prophet becomes peripheral instead of central. Why consult the mantic arts about piety if the pious holds independent status from esoteric knowledge the gods? If the pious is pious whether or not the gods acknowledge it, then in that case no one needs the Euthyphros of the world. Or if that's too strong, Euthyphro at least faces a demotion in professional standing and no longer can lay claim to superiority. On the other hand, if the pious is pious because the gods love it, then Euthyphro faces a different crisis. Recall the dubious charges he is bringing against his father. If he accepts this horn of the dilemma, he'll have to make a case that the gods love what he is doing. And he'll need not just one preferred witness from among the gods, but all the gods. But of course he can't make a case that all the gods love what he's doing. Cronus may approve of assaulting a father, as he did Ouranos, but Ouranos doesn't favor children desecrating fathers and usurping their authority. And given that Cronus' son Zeus does the same thing to him that he did to Ouranos, he may not love the idea of children rendering fathers impotent either. It's abundantly evident that not all the gods love what Euthyphro proposes doing to his father; this horn of the dilemma renders his position false. So, he can either admit there is a higher art than his prophetic art and accept a diminished professional status outside the first ranks of men, or he can admit that the dubious case he's bringing against his father can't be justified on the grounds he's offered, namely by divine imprimatur. Neither option is palatable. He's stuck. Here is the other Euthyphro problem.

In short, to consider piety in the way Socrates invites requires philosophical theology, moves toward determinate judgments about one's duties, and raises the prospect of costly sacrifices. For a man like Euthyphro whose ambition is to get more and to do better than others, herein lie two blind corners from which to flee. Euthyphro does precisely that, but not until Socrates confronts him with a knee- and mind-bending question about God. That Euthyphro dodges the question and lets it pass him by constitutes the real problem. Thereafter, he persists until the end of the dialogue in preferring practically useful notions of holiness, ones amenable to justifying the life he already lives, not to "living a better life" such as Socrates aspires to live. The uncritical self-assurance of a religious authority whose flawed character and aversion to self-examination generates a disastrous decision is the "other" Euthyphro problem.

## The Woman Question in Plato's *Republic* V

Plato composed two separate attempts to solve the conundrum of the woman question: what to do about the role of women in civil society? The most famous is Socrates' attempt in the *Republic*, where he anoints the women of the ruling class as philosopher-queens, albeit as weaker than the men. But while Socrates does his best to avoid discussing the question at all, his counterpart, the Athenian Stranger of the *Laws*, is forthright about the pressing nature of the problem: the customary practice of leaving women unregulated by law, without public standing, and so with no public stake in public well-being, is a grave error.<sup>1</sup> The Stranger's own solution is relatively moderate, and mostly ignored by commentators, proposing partial share in rulership, and some shared education. But while Socrates' solution pleases no one, it remains the more vivid and even appealing of the two, perhaps equally from its scope and limitations. It tends to be thought of as Plato's answer simply. But the majority of attempts to understand what Socrates is saying about the woman question lift his words out of the fabric of the *Republic*'s drama. In doing so, they fall short of a serious attempt to understand the meaning.

Furthermore, Socratic irony volatilizes our relation to the drama: to what extent do we even know what Socrates is ultimately proposing? And while, as Kierkegaard notes, the opposite of what is said is the weakest form of irony, there still remains this problem, that by his strange plans, Socrates might well have been pointing to real problems with the attempt to rearrange the position of women in the polis.<sup>2</sup> Much of the scholarship that takes Socratic drama and Socratic irony seriously tends to consider that instead of suggesting women rule as philosopher-queens, Socrates intends to laugh to scorn any alteration in the customary place of women. But this treats the woman question as separate from the immediately following proposal of philosopher-kings, sinking the women while letting irony go lightly on philosophy itself. I propose to show the link in dramatic action between Socrates' proposals for women and for philosophy, and speak to the dramatic reason for the emphasis on women's relative weakness. Socrates' answer to the woman question is much richer and more aporetic than many imagine.

### A. The Female Drama

The project of the conversation of Plato's *Republic* is to describe a city in speech, in order to behold perfect justice, without regard for consequences, writ large in its details, thus offering hope for a final end to human miseries. In the midst of a large number of provisions, Socrates notes in passing that in their city, women and children will be held in common—dropping that in, as though the details will be easy to arrange.<sup>3</sup> Fortunately, before he can change the subject, he's asked for more detail.

But instead of immediately addressing the demand of his audience, Socrates insists that the city-building must start again from the beginning; an adequate address to the woman question will require thorough measures. Socrates begins his attempt with three proposals,

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<sup>1</sup> *Laws* 780e-781a.

<sup>2</sup> Søren Kierkegaard calls the opposite of what is said “finite” irony (*The Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates*, in *Kierkegaard's Writings*, trans. and ed. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, vol.2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 248. Socrates' irony, by contrast, is infinite (*Concept*, 127).

<sup>3</sup> 424a.

known in scholarly shorthand as the Three Waves, in honor of the waves of laughter Socrates anticipates they will be met with. The first proposal or Wave is that women should join with the men of the guardian class in all their pursuits, and do everything in common with them; Socrates adds they will even exercise naked together. The second Wave is even more amusing; the guardians will be carefully bred together by a rigged lottery, and children will be raised by all in ignorance of their parents. Finally, under the guise of answering the woman question, Socrates institutes the civic arrangements he is most famous for, which he fears will provoke not only laughter but death-threats as well: the third Wave announces the rule of philosophers as the final authority in the city, with all the new provisions for their philosophic education in Books V-VII to follow. The kingship of philosophers is his final attempt to describe a city that is most perfectly just, for their rule will guarantee it, and as much as possible, make such a city possible to be.

But again, while many find the comedy of the first two Waves enough to dismiss the substance of their proposals as undesirable and impossible, the comedy of the third Wave is neglected.<sup>4</sup> Leo Strauss, for instance, finds no essential reason why the philosopher couldn't rule the city well; rather, it's the attempt to enact perfect justice upon women and the family that shows the undesirability of justice without consequences.<sup>5</sup> But this reading artificially separates the first two Waves from the third, and softens the irony for the non-female-related alone.<sup>6</sup> After all, any city that calmly disposes of everyone over the age of ten to begin anew, is not without its problems.<sup>7</sup>

Consider Socrates's many descriptions of the connections between the parts of this argument. Before embarking on his trio of proposals, Socrates remarks that since now the mannish or manly (*ἀνδρεῖον*) drama of the preceding books has been completely finished, it is appropriate to turn the ladylike (*γυναικεῖον*) drama in turn.<sup>8</sup> The manly drama, therefore, comprises the education of the ruling, "guardian" class in music and gymnastic, and justice seen as each class of the city and of the soul minding their own business. This adjective *gynaikeion*, which introduces the new plan, has a range of meanings, from "ladylike" or "womanly" in a good or neutral sense, to "womanish" or "effeminate" in the bad. Later on, Socrates speaks of the whole argument inaugurated by the Waves and completed by the new philosophic education, as an argument that would otherwise "have slipped past us, as in a veil," in the clothing of women.<sup>9</sup> Although these comparisons are unexpected, in some sense the discussion of the next few books starting from Book V, which talks largely of philosophy and philosophers, is supposed to

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<sup>4</sup> Bloom's account is not the highest regarded, but perhaps the most read, given that it accompanies his translation. See "Interpretive Essay," in *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Alan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1968), cited here as "IE."

<sup>5</sup> Strauss remarks: "The just city is against nature because the equality of the sexes and absolute communism is against nature" ("On Plato's *Republic*," in *The City and Man* ((Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964)), 127); cited here as "CM."

<sup>6</sup> Notably, Stanley Rosen argues that philosophy is satirized here too. Yet for him, the satire of women's limitations is more just and all encompassing, whereas only one aspect of philosophy is justly on the chopping block, its mathematical, quasi-analytic side. See Rosen, *Plato's Republic: A Study* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 178, 229; cited here as "PRS."

<sup>7</sup> 451c. See "Plato, Strauss, and Political Philosophy: An Interview with Stanley Rosen," *Diotima* II, no. 1 (Spring 2001): <http://college.holycross.edu/diotima/n1v2/rosen.htm> (accessed November 15th, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> 451c.

<sup>9</sup> 503a.

constitute this womanish drama. In his mind, Socrates sees the woman question and what the rule of philosophy requires as one total argument.

In the Platonic dialogues, Socrates compares different sorts of dramas on three occasions: in the *Apology*, he speaks scornfully of those who would parade their families on stage, in order to escape a harsh sentence: the men who enact these pitiable scenes are no different from women.<sup>10</sup> In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates notes that while the midwives have their drama, Socrates' own act is better, since it deals with souls.<sup>11</sup> In each of these passages there is some distinction between a manly and womanly drama. In the first instance, Socrates distances himself from it entirely. In the second, he appropriates the art and turns it toward a different kind of victim. In the *Republic*, considering the *gynaikeion* drama contains some of the most beautiful descriptions of philosophical activity in Plato's writing, we can at least assume he is not speaking *simply* pejoratively of his act. In fact, for once, the female drama takes pride of place.

But in the *Republic*, who or what is Socrates dramatizing? In Book VI, Socrates gives us a piteous scene to behold after all. There, he speaks of philosophy as an orphaned virgin, unwed and abandoned by her friends; she is at the mercy of any suitor who notices her, even if it should be a bald blacksmith.<sup>12</sup> Here is pathos indeed, at the customary position of women, which does not allow them much scope for their *eros*. Just like women, philosophy does not get to pick its lovers under customary arrangements, and is left, dangerously, to be pursued by anyone, however unworthy. It looks like such arrangements for both women and philosophy leave much to be desired—in much the same respect. With this image, Socrates draws out a sympathy for both.<sup>13</sup>

## B. The Action of the Argument

But this sort of pathos is only the most obvious kind of drama. "Drama" in the Greek is also more simply an "act" or "deed." What is the action of Socrates' argument, with respect to women? Again, the notion that women would share in all the tasks of the guardians as partners is very far from the early-childhood arrangements requested by his audience; and likewise as far from "women in common" as harem-style daydream. No one asked for rule-sharing; it wasn't on anyone's mind; Socrates introduced it out of the blue on his own authority. While Socrates includes separate arrangements for marriage and children as the act of the second Wave, the practical upshot of the first affects women in their own right: the best of the women will be educated and share in the rule.

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<sup>10</sup> 35b.

<sup>11</sup> *Theaetetus* 150a.

<sup>12</sup> 495c.

<sup>13</sup> While many interpreters tend to identify the presence of women as a sign of the needed yet concealed *eros* that true philosophy possesses, my argument begins by identifying the similarity in political position, rather than internal quality of soul. Likewise, while plenty see the obvious connection between erotic trickery and erotic philosophizing, women tend to get reduced as the impotent model for male activity, whereas on my account, it's the womanly act that brings women themselves into the official study of philosophy. See Bloom, IE, 384; Rosen, PRS, 167; Seth Benardete, *Socrates' Second Sailing: On Plato's Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 114; and Arlene Saxenhouse, "The Philosopher and the Female in the Political Thought of Plato," in *Feminist Interpretations of Plato*, ed. Nancy Tuana (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 67-85).

While shared education is explicit in the First Wave, we're left to deduce from the final statement that since they will "share in war and all the rest of the guardianship connected with the city," they will also rule.<sup>14</sup> Since rule is the reason for the guardians' education, the deduction seems reasonable. Later passages make this explicit: at the end of the discussion of the philosophic education, Socrates adds that everything previous will apply to "ruling women" (τὰς ἀρχούσας) as well.<sup>15</sup> The act of Socrates can be stated thus: he has drawn the best and only the best of the women out of the dangers of their customarily private state, right into the center of public civic life, and has secured for them rule and education. This is his deed, what his argument accomplishes.

But this is precisely what Socrates also does for philosophy. Just as in the case of women, there was no request from the audience for talk about philosophers. Rather, it's on his own authority that Socrates introduces the subject. It's this act alone that justifies a new discussion of education and allows for the images of Cave, Divided Line, and the Good as Sun; Socrates has taken the shape of the argument into his hands in a big way. Likewise, this act allows him to tailor all the arrangements of the city for philosophy's good: he offers the pick of the best students of either sex, his secret breeding project will perpetuate the good genes; all the focus of the city is to make sure that the education of the guardians goes off perfectly.<sup>16</sup> Not only does Socrates liken the precariousness of the customary position of women to that of philosophers, his solution is the same: give them the best education, and put them in charge. In short, the action of Socrates' argument with respect to women and to philosophy is the same: and it's this action that he calls womanish. As in *Odyssey* XI.437, where the "womanly designs" of Clytemnestra are decried, such womanly scheming speaks to Socrates' cleverness in neatly introducing what was no one's priority but his own.

But what about the most controversial aspect of Socrates' plans for women, that in all the tasks the guardians do together, the men will be taken as stronger and women as weaker? This is the passage that loses the friendship of many current readers; on the other hand, for many this aspect of the law seems to void the action into meaninglessness. Seth Benardete says "that [women] are on the whole weaker than men should entail that in a sex-blind test for admission into the city, most would not pass . . ."<sup>17</sup> Bloom goes further, remarking it is "highly improbable that any women will even be considered for membership in the higher classes."<sup>18</sup> The importance of these quotations is to show just how much is at stake in the First Wave of the *Republic*: not only whether there is some final solution to the woman question in general, but whether women are capable of the highest things—that is, of philosophy.

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<sup>14</sup> 457a.

<sup>15</sup> This inclusion is often overlooked, but Socrates can't be more explicit: "And ruling women (τὰς ἀρχούσας), too, Glaucon," I said. "Don't suppose that what I have said applies any more to men than to women, all those who are born among them with sufficient natures (540c)." See also 543a. Whatever the final status of the city in speech, whether it itself is possible and under what conditions, the law for women that is promulgated is their rule and education.

<sup>16</sup> See Strauss, CM, 125. Likewise Bloom, IE, 468.

<sup>17</sup> Bloom, IE, 383.

<sup>18</sup> Benardete, *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 113.

### C. Glaucon's Principle of Weakness and Strength

The crucial thing to notice is that the principle of men-as-stronger is initially Glaucon's idea. Socrates begins the *Wave* by describing the partnership of men and women as a common hunt, noting how foolish it would be to leave the lady dogs inactive most of the year, as if they were incapacitated by giving birth to puppies; he recommends rather that they do all in common, and share all the hard work.<sup>19</sup> This being good sense to any dog breeder, Glaucon responds, "sure: except that we use the females as weaker, the males as stronger."<sup>20</sup> But Socrates ignores his statement, instead taking Glaucon through a different argument, concluding men and women will have the same education, which Glaucon is happy to accede to. He notes that shared naked exercise will raise some eyebrows, but gets a very strong agreement from Glaucon that customs change, and moves on.<sup>21</sup> But then things start to get rough: Socrates gets Glaucon to admit that he thinks women's natures differ from men, then asks, how on earth can we give the same education to people with different natures? Socrates points out at length that Glaucon has been contradicting himself: "Will you be able to make any defense against yourself, you amazing man?" Glaucon responds with a dignified request for help; Socrates shoots back that it will not be easy. It is as though, he says, they have fallen into a sea, and only a lucky rescue, perhaps from a passing dolphin, will save them now.<sup>22</sup>

It's not usually recognized that this is one of the most lively and heated arguments of the book. The comedy of naked exercise tends to garner the most attention, but the real plot of the section is the shaming of Glaucon, which he receives in this moment of *aporia*, and its subsequent resolution. Glaucon is willing to concede education, but not similarity in nature to women, and Socrates makes him pay.

Socrates points out that for any real discussion about the precise difference of men and women, eristic, or contentiousness, is to be avoided and dialectic sought—and then reintroduces Glaucon's principle of the superior strength of men. He takes it far, claiming that in every pursuit men surpass that of women, giving as his examples of men's superiority, weaving and baking. Glaucon happily agrees.<sup>23</sup> Two points: Socrates' examples are obviously absurd, he picked two things women customarily excel at, and he leaves out the most absurd, namely childbirth, at which it is impossible that men should excel.<sup>24</sup> The contentiousness of his examples shows Socrates' awareness of the weakness of the principle. But once Glaucon's initial caveat to common partnership is granted, Glaucon immediately relaxes, offering the magnanimous statement that of course many women exceed many men at many things—though on the whole, it is as Socrates says.<sup>25</sup> After this peak of the argument, Glaucon is happy to go along with Socrates, offering women full participation in all the duties of the male guardians, agreeing that the best women and men are obviously best for the city.<sup>26</sup> And so, after all, Socrates manages to get his way, the very thing he attempted to set up in his opening statement: all education common and a

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<sup>19</sup> 451d.

<sup>20</sup> 451e.

<sup>21</sup> 451e.

<sup>22</sup> 453c.

<sup>23</sup> 455d.

<sup>24</sup> Many readers notice this oddity; I would add that since Socrates refers to women's ability to bear at 454e, the suggestion stands as absurd even within the logic of this section.

<sup>25</sup> 455d.

<sup>26</sup> 456e.

share in the rule. Rather than destroying the action of the wave, Socrates' adoption of Glaucon's principle is precisely what makes it possible: by means of this concession, rule and education for the best of the women remains on the books. This, too, is a *gynaikeion* act.

It's important to notice that Glaucon is not upset on behalf of the common good. Others, such as Adeimantus and Polemarchus, would be worried about what women as rulers would do to traditional arrangements for children; it's their concern that prompts Socrates to return to the question of marriage and child-rearing.<sup>27</sup> Rather, Glaucon's own clannish wish is to reserve the highest place for his *genos*, from natural pride of place—a clannishness not limited to either sex. But Glaucon's strongest concern is this caveat, that men still basically win out in the end; granted this, he is content. Glaucon's principle is the dolphin rescue, the one Socrates insisted was their only hope. Rather than showing Socrates' secret commitment to leaving women out of the realms of the best, such as rescue shows Socrates' last-ditch attempt to get the women in, even at a cost. His careful drawing out of Glaucon's hesitations is a display of an important barrier to a public place for women: *thumos*, already up in arms with its fellow male rivals, is even more irritated when a whole other swathe of competitors arrives on the scene.<sup>28</sup> Socrates remarks in Book VI that he hesitated to raise the subject of the three Waves, because the topics are invidious (*επίφθονός*): likely to cause jealousy.<sup>29</sup>

#### D. Final Thoughts

The dramatic link between Socrates' proposals for women and philosophy is the necessary framework to understand the irony involved in Socrates' attempt to ameliorate the problems of the customary position of each. The final, unresolved question left is: given that the problem and the solution are the same, is there a shared tragic flaw within the shared solution?

One possibility: why *does* Socrates introduce philosophy as ruler into the argument? And why is he willing to raze the fabric of ordinary human life, the family, marriages, etc., hunt down all the female students to be found, in order to give philosophy all the good things that public political pride of place can offer? Perhaps Socrates is trying to dramatize himself, indulging in his private wish to save philosophy from its customary dishonor by giving it the highest honors—while also showing us, by the comedy which ensues, that such a city is inevitably troubling, despite our wish to hand over the human problem of justice to the wise.

Yet Socrates' willingness to similarly attempt to rescue the best of the women, while announcing this action as womanly, rings as an invitation to the contemplation of philosopher-queens and philosophy as womanly, beyond the peculiarities of the city in speech. As in Socrates' final word on the best city, said to be a pattern laid up in heaven for us to follow in our own soul if we can, the reader is invited to consider the study of philosophy by women themselves, whatever regime they inhabit, no matter how repugnant the idea.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> 449b. See Carl Page, "The Truth about Lies in Plato's *Republic*," *Ancient Philosophy* 11, no.1 (1991): 26.

<sup>28</sup> I will note that laughter at naked exercise doesn't alter Socrates' action either; he raises it as a problem and offers specific measures that he insists will solve it. These measures might still be problematic, and offer a clue to the whole, but they don't change the action, nor are they the substance of the action.

<sup>29</sup> 503a.

<sup>30</sup> 592b.



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## The Platonic Phrase “*palin ex archēs*”: Structural Use and Philosophical Significance

For some time, Platonic scholarship, particularly its Anglophone denomination, has been relearning what has been staring us directly in the face all along: in Platonic dialogues, dramatic form and organizational structure *are* philosophical content.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, to abuse Gilbert Ryle’s famous distinction, knowing that this is true is one thing, knowing how dialogue structure conveys Plato’s teaching, is something else. As a contribution to the latter knowledge, I focus here on an unmistakable, but mostly overlooked, feature of that structure: Plato’s repeated use of the phrase *palin ex archēs*, “back again to the beginning” and its closely related forms. We could also render this as “back again to the source or first principle”, a fertile ambiguity, as we shall discover. The phrase appears numerous times in Plato (at least 40 by my count), sometimes more than once in the space of a few lines. Is it merely a ‘tic’, a formulaic indicator of textual transitions, like *meta de tauta* (“After these things...”) ? Or is it, as I suspect, meant for heavier lifting? And if so, what kind?

While there is no reason to expect a rigidly mechanical deployment of a phrase like *palin ex archēs* in a writer like Plato, there are patterns within the multiplicity, here as elsewhere in his literary art.<sup>2</sup> Understanding their significance requires that we follow Socrates’ “logographic necessity” all the way down to the particularities of Plato’s linguistic usage and ask what exactly this *archē* is, to which one must return. Answering this question proves more problematic than it seems – as always in Plato, an auspicious starting point.

<sup>1</sup> As Diskin Clay writes, “Platonic dialogues speak to their readers in their organization...” Clay (2000), 113. Cf., Ausland (1997), 377.

<sup>2</sup> Studies of this kind come with clear occupational hazards. Each Platonic dialogue is a different creature. *Laches* is not *Theaetetus*, *Theaetetus* is not the *Republic*, and none of them resembles the *Parmenides* or the *Timaeus*. In tackling so many dialogues, I cannot do justice to the literary and argumentative intricacy of each, to say nothing of the vast and sophisticated literature that has accumulated around them. I can only say that I am trying to see whether a usage that appears in almost all dialogues might be one of those threads that binds them into one philosophic *kosmos*. For two exemplary philosophical studies of Platonic usage, see Benardete (1963): 54-62 and (1965), 285-298.

## I.

We must begin by clearing away some initially plausible, but actually misleading, assumptions. While *palin ex archēs* in Socratic dialogues is certainly a transitional device, it cannot only be that. In many transitions *palin ex archēs* does not appear, though it will do so later in the same work. The *Hippias Major*, for example, displays an intricate argumentative structure, unusually full of reversals and new beginnings considering its relative brevity. Hippias tries three different answers to the *Leitfrage* ("What is the beautiful?"), each of which fails, and then Socrates floats three more. We thus return again to the initial question numerous times. Only during the final attempt, however, does Socrates drag Hippias back to *archē*.<sup>3</sup>

It is also true that the phrase can highlight a decisive moment of *aporia* or even a complete breakdown of communication,<sup>4</sup> but by no means does it always do so. At *Charmides* 167a9-b1, it seems to highlight the reverse: that after several attempts (and not a little wrangling) Socrates and Critias have finally reached clear sailing with a mutually acceptable definition of *sōphrosunē* and are now read to move on to examine its consequences.<sup>5</sup> Most significantly, *palin ex archēs* rarely returns us to an unambiguous chronological beginning of the conversation or even to a clear and mutually agreed first

<sup>3</sup> *Hippias Major*, 302c8 and 303d11. A similar situation obtains in the *Euthyphro*, where the transitions at 6d9-e10, 9a1, and 10a1, all seem ripe for a return to first principles, and yet none of these new beginnings are marked by our phrase. Cf. *Meno*, 77a5 *et seq.*, which marks Meno's third attempt at a definition of virtue, coming after a long Socratic example of how to define properly using the term *schēma*. This would seem to be a classic juncture at which the interlocutor, having seen a *paradeigma* of what Socrates wants, is asked to start all over again. Such a request is not forthcoming here, but only later at 79c3. In this study, translations from Greek are my own unless stated otherwise. I rely on the standard Burnet (1900-1907) editions of the dialogues with the exception of (i) the *Republic*, in which the Slings edition is used and (ii) dialogues from *Tomus I*, which rely on the edition by Duke, Hicken, *et al.*

<sup>4</sup> As it does, for example at *Euthyphro* 15c11, *Meno* 79e5, *Protagoras* 33d3 and the above-mentioned *Hippias Major* 303d11).

<sup>5</sup> Socrates even hints that they are at an auspicious moment in the conversation by invoking the traditional third libation to Zeus *Sōtēr*, the propitious high point of any banquet.

principle.<sup>6</sup> Sometimes, the beginning returned to is one that Socrates chooses for his rhetorical or pedagogic purposes. There is a thought provoking example of this in Socrates' final proof for the immortality of the soul at *Phaedo* 105b9, where Socrates recalls Cebes to the *archē* which is not the hypothesis of Form set forth in the second sailing, but a more "sophisticated" (*kompsoieran*) version of it from which Socrates proceeds to his final proof. Not only is it unclear if the proof he constructs is at all demonstrative, it is unclear how it is related to its true, its most fundamental, *archē* – the hypothesis of Form. Needless to say, as any review of Socrates' uses of the term reveals, *kompsoieran* is a deeply ambivalent adjective.<sup>7</sup> Cebes and Socrates indeed return to a beginning, then, but not to one that is first either in time or in fundamentality. It is first because *serviceable* for the task at hand: conquering the fear of death.

## II.

How, then, to explain the ambiguities, and get a better sense of the patterns, underlying Plato's deployment of *palin ex archēs*? It is, I think, to the nature of conversation, and especially Plato's choice to present philosophy almost exclusively in a conversational medium, that we must look for understanding. In his essay, "Why Plato Wrote Dialogues", Charles Griswold writes that "...the origination of philosophy itself out of the medium of opinion is

<sup>6</sup> H.R. Wohlraapp opens the English preface to his *The Concept of Argument: A Philosophical Foundation*, with: "Once more from the beginning (*palin ex archēs*) the Platonic Socrates says, whenever a dialogue has become so contradictory and confusing that it is no longer possible for anyone to get their bearings. Then the matter is traced back to its beginnings, aims are ascertained anew, attempted answers are examined once more, and ultimately the participants try to determine whether it is possible to identify certain basic concepts or thoughts for a new beginning." This description certainly contains elements of the truth, but it is tinged with an altogether unjustified optimism about the clarity of the beginnings to which Socrates usually traces matters. Wohlraapp (2014), v.

<sup>7</sup> Grube translates it as "more sophisticated" but this, I fear, might not fully transmit the ambivalence. More suitable is Eva Brann's choice of "fancier". See *Phaedo* 101c8 and cf. with *Theaetetus*, 171a6 and 202d10, *Republic*, 405d4, 558a4, 572c6 and Phaedrus' eminently questionable praise of Lysias' speech at *Phaedrus*, 227c5-7.

*the most comprehensive theme in Plato's dialogues.*"<sup>8</sup> If Platonic dialogues are mimetic representations of the emergence of philosophy from out of everyday life – and I think they are – transitional devices shed on light on this process of emergence, one which involves speech becoming progressively more aware of itself and its own proper *telos*.

In the only full length philological study of Plato's "art of transition", Grace H. Billings opens her discussion of "the commonest of the conventional forms of transition" as follows,

Most numerous of all is that type in which the transition is made by some *explicit reference* to the discussion. This may take the form of a command to investigate, an exhortation to joint activity, a statement of the need for inquiry, a brief prothetic declaration of intention or a detailed description of the method and purpose of the subsequent discussion.<sup>9</sup>

Among such explicitly referential devices she numbers Socrates' oft-repeated exhortations to look (*horaō*), examine (*skeptō*), consider (*ennoeō*), etc., and also *palin ex archēs*, a "resumptive formula" as she terms it. A closer look at Billings' many examples reveals that these transitional devices often accompany appeals to, or questions about either (i) the relationship between parts and wholes,<sup>10</sup> or (ii) the interlocutor's everyday understanding or unexamined opinions and convictions,<sup>11</sup> which Socrates will then use in restarting or refocusing the conversation.

This is the sense in which transitional moments are "referential", then; they are occasions for renewed reflection on specific kinds of themes which have emerged during the discussion; and *palin ex archēs* is an amplification of this general tendency. The conversation will often need to be resumed because it has revealed some inability to account, in one

<sup>8</sup> Griswold (1988), 153.

<sup>9</sup> Billings (1979), 53. The emphasis is mine.

<sup>10</sup> *Euthyphro*, 12d5; *Meno*, 77a-b; *Philebus*, 29b3; *Phaedrus*, 264c7; *Republic*, 486a1.

<sup>11</sup> *Theaetetus*, 147a-b; *Cratylus*, 392c6; *Meno*, 73d6 and 93b6; *Philebus*, 39e8-11; *Phaedo*, 73b3-5, 74a9, 80a; *Phaedrus*, 268a5.

example, for the relationship between a particular virtue and virtue as a whole. Alternatively, in restarting a conversation, Socrates will often reframe it in such a way as to cause the interlocutor to reveal, in speech or deed, something of his basic intuitions about normative hierarchies of value or about himself as a rational thinker and agent. This revelation will then be a lever by which the interlocutor is forced into aporia. In the fuller version of this paper, I discuss many such cases in depth. Here I must restrict myself to several representative examples.

(a) *Laches* 189d4-198a2: Socrates invokes *palin ex archēs* when it becomes clear that, although he and Nicias began from an unproblematic assumption that virtue is a differentiated whole of which courage is a part, Nicias proves unable to delineate properly the relationship of courage, wisdom and virtue. When Socrates asks Nicias to begin again from the beginning (197e10-198a2), he makes this fact thematic by pointing out that on Nicias' understanding courage is not a part of virtue, but has become virtue entire (*sumpasa aretē*).<sup>12</sup>

(b) *Hippias* 302c8-303d11: the phrase appears only during Socrates' final definition of the beautiful as, "whatever makes us feel enjoyment, not at every sort of pleasure, but whatever does so through hearing and sight."<sup>13</sup> While Hippias accepts this definition, he cannot explain how beauty thus defined applies equally to objects of sight and hearing together and to each of them singly (since that which is pleasant through sight is not pleasant through hearing and vice versa). That is, he cannot explain the very conundrum which Socrates confronted in the *Phaedo*: how can an attribute (like duality) apply to two

<sup>12</sup> 197e10-198a2.

<sup>13</sup> *Hippias Major*, 297e5-6.

things when they are together and yet apply to neither of them singly?<sup>14</sup> How, in other words, can internally differentiated wholes have intelligible properties not shared by their parts and how can parts have properties not present in the whole? Hippias responds with some pique, claiming that Socrates is chopping up things like the Beautiful, whose nature is to be “unbroken” (301b2-7). Hippias, we note, *does* assume that there is an intelligible wholeness to beauty, whatever the variety of its manifestations. For him, that is simply its ‘nature’ and hence unproblematic. This very incapacity to see why wholeness should be problematic at all, will become important for our later discussion.<sup>15</sup>

(c) *Meno* 79b4-e5 – Meno’s third definition of virtue (rejoicing in, or desiring, beautiful things and being able to obtain them),<sup>16</sup> proved circular since he meant obtaining good or beautiful things not in any old way, but justly or piously. Justice and piety, however, were already affirmed by him to be parts of virtue. Meno, too, assumes virtue is a whole, but he cannot define it without a question-begging appeal to its parts. Once again, then, the ambiguous status of wholeness is highlighted: Meno does not really know what virtue is, and yet its wholeness is somehow present throughout, since without it even the unsatisfactory discussion he and Socrates are now having would be impossible.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Phaedo*, 96e6-97a6.

<sup>15</sup> An incapacity evidenced by Hippias’ final remarks at 304a4 *et seq.*: “But really, Socrates, what do you think it all comes to? Just scraps and shreds of arguments (*knēsmata...kai peritmēmata tōn logōn*), as I just said, taken apart into little bits...”

<sup>16</sup> *Meno*, 77b2-5.

<sup>17</sup> Socrates complains that this is the case at 79b7-c2. Cf. with 79d5-e6: “Therefore, best of men, while what virtue is as a whole is still being sought (*eti zētoumenēs*), do not suppose that in answering through its parts you will make it any clearer...Answer again from the beginning, what do you say virtue is, you and your comrade?” Cf. Klein (1965), 168. For another example of this dynamic, see *Charmides*, 163d7 and context, where Socrates’ *palin ex archēs* restarts the discussion of what *sōphrosunē* provides us, by shifting from Critias’ mentions of *kalōs* and *ōphelimōs* (at c3) to the more encompassing term *agathon*, of which beauty and benefit are parts. Here too, Socrates is trying to move Critias to a higher level of generality. There is a fine discussion of this in Tuozzo (2011), 177-178. Interestingly, the connection between *palin ex archēs* and the whole-part dynamic is also found in dialogues in which Socrates is silent or absent. At *Laws* 632d9, the Athenian Stranger exhorts his interlocutors to begin *ex archēs palin* in order to show how legislation in the city aims not at a particular virtue like courage, but at *aretēs pasēs*.

(d) *Protagoras* 333d3: When asked whether the relation between virtue and particular virtues resembles what obtains between a block of gold and bits of gold or between a face and its mouth, nose, and eyes, Protagoras answers that the problem is easy.<sup>18</sup> Virtue is a differentiated structure, like a face. Ultimately, though, he cannot explain this (nor, like Hippias, does he see why it is an important problem), and thus is at a loss when Socrates asks whether, if moderation and justice really are distinct and separate, one can be moderate while committing *injustice*. To this “distasteful” conclusion, Protagoras is ashamed to agree.<sup>19</sup> His shame is doubly revealing. First, because Protagoras’ inability to explain the relationship between virtues casts a long shadow over his claim to professional competence in teaching virtue. Second, however, his shame about the possibility of moderate injustice – the behavior of a sober and calculating gangster, say – points to his awareness that moderation in the service of injustice is moderation in name only, like Aristotle’s proverbial hand that has been severed from the living body. Protagoras presents the instructive spectacle of a specialist in the dazzling manipulation variety and multiplicity,<sup>20</sup> who nevertheless cannot substantiate *his own* awareness about the integral inter-dependence of true virtue.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Prot.* 329c6-d8.

<sup>19</sup> “Now at first Protagoras put on a pretty show of reluctance for us – he alleged that the argument was distasteful (*duscherē*) – but eventually agreed to answer: ‘Come then,’ I said, ‘answer me from the beginning.’ Does it seem to you that some people are moderate in committing injustice? ‘Let it be so’, he said.” (Trans. Sachs)

<sup>20</sup> An ability amply on display in his next peroration, from 334a3 to c6, about the varied and multifarious (*poikilon...kai pantodapon*) character of the good.

<sup>21</sup> Socrates’ treatment of Protagoras should be compared with the exchange with Thrasymachus in *Republic I*. The lines at 344d-e would seem to be a fitting point to mark a new beginning with *palin ex archēs*, since Socrates has just elicited from Thrasymachus a new, and more daring, statement of his position. Instead, the phrase appears only later, at 348b8, beginning an argument that will lead quickly to Thrasymachus’ blushing. In that argument, Socrates forces Thrasymachus to admit that only those with knowledge can be prudent and wise, and only the wise can be good. Thrasymachus, a knowledge-merchant himself, simply cannot allow himself to be heard denying any link between knowledge, prudence, and excellence. The result is that he is compelled to contradict his earlier shocking definition of the just man. The *archē* to which the conversation returns here is not the fundamental nature of justice, but the nature of Thrasymachus.



(e) *Gorgias* 474c4-5: Socrates' conversation with Polus focused largely on the distinction between seeming good (or just) and actually being so. In their conversation heretofore, "good" was identified with benefit and "bad" with harm while Polus remained stoutly unmoved by Socrates' demonstrations that one can act for the sake of what *seems* good and be gravely mistaken. Even such a person, Polus insists, is happy because he freely does whatever he wants without incurring punishment. And furthermore this is what everyone else would say, Socrates' pious *niaiserie* notwithstanding.

But in returning to the *archē* at 474c5, Socrates asks Polus not only whether committing or suffering injustice is "worse" (*kakion*), but also which is *uglier* (or more shameful, *aischion*). This inserts a new consideration, nobility and baseness, which had not been thematic when the focus of the conversation was on whether justice was beneficial to the agent or not.<sup>22</sup> Polus' answers reveal that he too cannot help but recognize nobility and baseness as motivating factors, although he is unable to account for them. As Callicles later complains, Polus, like Gorgias, is done in by shame.<sup>23</sup> But shame about what, exactly? According to Callicles (and most commentators), Polus is ashamed of saying what he really thinks (*aischuntheis ha enoei eipein*)(482e2): namely that, by nature, suffering injustice is both worse *and* uglier than committing it. That is, Polus is ashamed only because *nomos* and *doxa* prevent him from stating his true view, not because he recognizes any independent standing for nobility or baseness. Richard McKim has shown, convincingly in my view, that this standard interpretation of what has happened to Polus is radically mistaken. In fact, Plato points several times during the Socrates-Polus exchange to the fact that what they are arguing about is "whether all men *already believe* [my emphasis] what Socrates says they do

<sup>22</sup> *Gorgias*, 474c5.

<sup>23</sup> 482c4-d8.

[about preferring the suffering of injustice to doing it] or what Polus says they do.”<sup>24</sup> McKim continues,

In fact...Socrates' implicit view of the relationship between shame and belief is the exact opposite of Callicles'. Whereas shame is for Callicles an unnatural feeling that inhibits our real preference for vice, Socrates believes on the contrary, on my reading, that our shame about vice is a natural sign that deep down we really prefer virtue...Socrates does not purport to expose inconsistencies within anti-conventional morality but rather exploits our sense of shame to reveal that we do not really believe in it, despite the fact that we may say or even think we do.<sup>25</sup>

In other words, Polus' undoing is his recognition that nobility and baseness are independent standards of judgments after all.<sup>26</sup>

(f) *Theaetetus* 164c1: Socrates “tests” Theaetetus' first offspring, his identification of knowledge with perception, by means of three arguments that show how this definition contradicts Theaetetus' own deeply held intellectual convictions and his basic experiences of memory or perception. According to the second of the three arguments, for example, if we previously came to know something through perceiving it, we cannot know that same thing when we remember it with our eyes closed since, after all, we are then no longer seeing (perceiving) it (163d1-e13). More important than the question of whether or not these arguments are strictly convincing, is Theaetetus' reaction to them. He calls such conclusions a monster (*teras*), dreadful (*deinon*), and impossible (*adunaton*).<sup>27</sup> In this passage, *palin ex archēs* heralds, not a new definition (which only appears much later, with another invocation of *palin ex archēs*, at 187a9-b8) but Theaetetus' deepening realization of the radical nature of

<sup>24</sup> McKim (1988), 37.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-40.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. with Socrates' later treatment of Callicles at *Gorgias*, 488b2. Socrates takes Callicles back to the *archē*, namely the question of who exactly Callicles intends when he says that those who are superior (*beltion*) by nature should rule. Is superior simply to be equated with stronger (*ischuteron*) so that a multitude, even a motley collection of slaves, could be greater (because certainly physically stronger) than a single person? Callicles' agreement to this leads him to recoil from its consequence. He is, it would seem, groping in vain for a substantive conception of superiority that could coherently encompass his radical reinterpretation of nature, his ambitions as a democratic politician and his aristocratic disdain for the vulgar. See Kahn (1996), 76.

<sup>27</sup> See *Theaetetus* 163d6, e13 and 164b8.

his definition, which, as Socrates' Protagorean speech later demonstrates, would entail a complete upheaval in Theaetetus' assumptions even about his own temporally persisting identity to say nothing of the objective validity of mathematics.<sup>28</sup>

In commenting on this passage, Paul Stern notes something with applicability to many uses of *palin ex arches* we have studied, and to Plato's transitional formulae in general:

Returning to the beginning...is not to begin *de novo*. Precisely because the call is to begin *again*, such a beginning is a self-conscious act...Returning to the beginning with such self-awareness must also involve reflection on what that beginning should involve.<sup>29</sup>

Stern is quite right that beginning again is a different, more self-aware, kind of beginning. But what should such a beginning involve? Stern goes on to argue that Theaetetus is being asked to take up, into the new beginning, the lessons to be gleaned from the "monstrous", or unacceptable, results of the previous line of argument. Those results are monstrous and impossible because they do violence to our common experience. For example, while memory and perception are indeed not the same thing, a memory can be *of the same thing* we perceived and hence knew at some point. Their content can be the same although they themselves are not, and thus memory can be a storehouse of knowledge.<sup>30</sup> In taking up the consequences of an impossible conclusion, Theaetetus is being asked to start

<sup>28</sup> Note especially how blithely Socrates' Protagoras is willingly to surrender any concept of unified, enduring personal identity (*Theaetetus*, 166b-c). Cf. Socrates' treatment of Theaetetus here with the actual beginning of the second definition in the dialogue ("knowledge is true opinion") at 187a9 *et seq.* There, Socrates and Theaetetus conclude that perception cannot be knowledge because knowledge requires "touching" on being and truth, something which is the work of the soul "whenever it alone by itself deals with the things which are" (187a1-6). Then, Theaetetus is told: "Wipe out everything before [my emphasis], and now, *palin ex archēs*, look and see whether you can spy out any better, having come so far. Say again whatever is knowledge." Theaetetus follows suit and separates opinion entirely from perception, attaching it to knowledge. From an identification of knowledge with perception, Theaetetus has rebounded to the other extreme. Now perception will have no role whatsoever in knowledge. As Stern points out (208-210), however, Socrates' instruction to wipe the slate clean is highly dubious, since it is not clear that he himself accepts such a radical dichotomy between perception and opinion. He seems to be playing to Theaetetus' preference for strict distinctions and unadulterated knowledge.

<sup>29</sup> Stern (2008), 133.

<sup>30</sup> And also, of course, of error, but this is only to say that memory can preserve, correctly *or* incorrectly, the content of what we once perceived or learned.

again with keener awareness that a proper definition would be more sensitive to his everyday experience of himself. Stated otherwise, he must begin again with a greater awareness of the difference between explaining experience and explaining it away.

Indeed, as we have now seen at length, a common feature of many occurrences of *palin ex archēs*, is the appeal to certain elements of the interlocutor's everyday experience and assumptions about that experience. First, is the assumption that things are identifiable because they are coherent, because parts somehow cohere into integral wholes, which by and large constitute our experience of a world that is not a heap but an articulated order. Socrates' interlocutors often assume that virtue, even where they are entirely unable to define it, must be such an integral whole having various parts (like justice, moderation, etc.), the inter-relation of which allows us to identify the truly good man and distinguish him from the con artist.<sup>31</sup>

The second element is the sense in which Socratic interlocutors see *themselves* as such coherent, integral wholes that act on, and hence cannot help but recognize, distinctions of better and worse, of *kalos* and *aischros*. Polus may be an unusually dim bulb who fancies himself a hard-nosed man of the world, but he does not – indeed, he simply *cannot*, I think – conceive of himself except as a being who responds to normative distinctions. Only because of this self-conception is he even open to being shamed at advocating a position that cannot account for his own normative intuitions. In the final analysis, this proves true even of

<sup>31</sup> Obviously, making that distinction might be difficult in the extreme. It might require a keen eye for character, the long apprenticeship of trial and error, etc. Nevertheless, Meno's breezy agreement that justice is an indispensable part of virtue, and Protagoras' reluctance to separate moderation and justice, both imply that they recognize that there is a mutually implicating relationship among forms of human excellence that constitutes the "real thing".

Callicles.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, an intuition of the distinction between, and the motivating power of, nobility and baseness can be said to be the enabling condition of almost all articulate speech and hence of the conversations depicted in the dialogues.<sup>33</sup> We speak and explain because of a conviction that the world is, to some degree, explainable and because we are beings who think it *good* to understand and be understood.

What, then, is the reason for this link between transitions or resumptions, on the one hand, and these intimately familiar, if often quite inchoate, assumptions of ordinary life – especially given the fact that in so many dialogues, these assumptions or self-conceptions are left unclear? Sometimes, as in the *Euthyphro*, *palin ex arches* simply stops the discussion dead in its tracks.<sup>34</sup> In other cases, a new argument does begin only to crash back onto its own launch pad, as happens in the *Laches*, which quickly degenerates into mudslinging match between Laches and Nicias.<sup>35</sup> Elsewhere, the topics of coherence and wholeness appear only to sink out of sight again, as in the second half of the *Meno*.<sup>36</sup> Let us restate our question: why should *palin ex archēs* repeatedly point not to *terra firma*, to some indubitable

<sup>32</sup> Gordon (1999), 31: "Socrates' questions....do not address any modern 'field' or 'discipline'. They address *entire lives* [my emphasis] and ways of living." Cf. with Kahn (1996), 88 on the "incoherence" of Callicles' life.

<sup>33</sup> According to Michael Frede (1996), 3 *et seq.*, the Platonic-Aristotelian notion of reason was a philosophical construct and not a datum of ordinary life. One of the distinctive features of this construct is "the assumption...that reason is at least in part constituted by a basic knowledge and understanding of things without which we could not even begin to do anything which is worthy of the name 'thinking' or 'reasoning', without which we cannot even begin to think of 'reason' or 'rationality' (p.6)." If this notion of reason is a construct, however, it is one which emerges from the ordinary course assumption that the world is ordered, and not a mere blur. Seen this way, the gap between the everyday thinking and its mimetic representation in the dialogues is not a chasm. If it were, the dialogues would be utterly unintelligible, in Plato's age or any other.

first principle on which to make a renewed stand, but rather to assumptions that are inescapably familiar to us and yet stubbornly unclear and indistinct?<sup>37</sup>

I suggest that we can take some steps toward an answer by reflecting on the connection between *palin ex archēs* and one of Socrates' mythical portrayals of the encompassing context of philosophy.<sup>38</sup> To go back *again* means, of course, to return somewhere we have already been. The activity of *dialegethai*, as Plato chose to represent it, involves a kind of return, often only dimly understood and imperfectly carried through by its participants. In this it shares something of the character of his deep (and deeply puzzling) identification of learning with *anamnēsis*. Delineating this shared character more precisely is our next task.

### III.

I begin by noting three salient aspects of Socrates' accounts of recollection (in *Meno*, *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*):

1. ***Supra-temporal content***: Recollection is of intelligible *noēta* which truly are, and as such, are timeless.<sup>39</sup>
2. ***Psychē and the Noēta***: The *noēta* are *familiar*.<sup>40</sup> We have some intimate relation to them through thought and memory (*Phaedrus* 249b5-c5), but more fundamentally because the whole of nature shares a certain "kinship" to which soul is receptive by virtue of *its own nature*.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup> There is an excellent formulation of this predicament in a recent essay by Gregory Kirk: "...we are ourselves, as wholes, hidden from ourselves. There is a reservoir of ignorance underlying the basic certainties of everyday decisions and actions." Kirk (2016), 304.

<sup>38</sup> In other words, *palin ex archēs* addresses two audiences: the participants in the conversation, and the kind of reader who not only follows the text, but philosophizes *along with* it. Cf. with Gordon (1999), 20: "The mode in which Socratic dialectic is intended to function with respect to the interlocutors is mimicked or echoed in the relationship between Plato's text and his reader." See also Miller (1980), xii-xviii and Miller (1986), 4-9.

<sup>39</sup> *Phaedo*, 75d2, and *Phaedrus*, 249c3-4.

<sup>40</sup> They are the objects of our "familiar knowledge", *oikeian epistēmēn*, at *Phaedo*, 75e5-6.

<sup>41</sup> *Meno* 81c9-d3. And cf. *Phaedrus*, 248b5-c1. The reason the souls are so eager to get to the "Plain of Truth" (*to alētheias pedion*) is that the food there is most suitable (*prosēkousa*) for the best part of the soul.

3. *Noetic Inter-relation*: Here, in full, is the passage from the *Meno* about kinship: “For since the whole of nature is akin (*sungenous*) and the soul has learned all things, nothing prevents someone who recollects one thing – which people call learning – from discovering all other things”. Recollection in the highest sense is our access, not to a grab bag of things, but to their coherently structured *wholeness*.

Now there is a fourth, related, aspect here which generally receives far less notice, and that is the relationship between true opinion and knowledge. In the *Meno*, Socrates’ mythical account of *anamnēsis* is followed by an equally ambiguous “exhibition” (*epideixis*, 82b2), in which a slave boy is shown recollecting geometrical knowledge that Meno is sure he was never taught. Beginning at 85b8, Socrates turns to Meno in order to ask him, but actually to interpret *for* him, what the exhibition seems to have demonstrated: namely, that the slave was recollecting knowledge not acquired in this life.

Several features of Socrates’ “color commentary” are particularly noteworthy. First, he takes pains to emphasize the *interiority* of recollection. The true opinions are *in* the slave boy (85c2 and 86a7), and he will take up the knowledge “out of himself” (*autos ex autou*) (85d4), if “the truth of beings is always in our soul” (*ei aei hē alētheia hēmin tōn ontōn estin en tēi psychei*) (86b1-2). Knowledge really is ‘our own’ (*oikeian*), just as the *Phaedo* asserts.<sup>42</sup> Second, is this new emphasis on opinion, which was absent in the myth itself. There Socrates spoke of a soul which had “seen” and “learned” all things, but not of *doxa* which, in the slave boy example, becomes an intermediate step in the process. Someone who does not know may nevertheless have correct opinions about those things which he does not know

<sup>42</sup> One of the most penetrating recent studies of the intimate relation between *noēsis* and *noēta* is found in Perl (2014), esp. 140-144. He sees very clearly that “the real point of recollection...is not literal, temporal pre-existence but rather interiority: we do not take in the divine, intelligible being from the outside, but find it within ourselves.” (144). It is precisely this interiority that makes *re*-collection of something which is ours, but forgotten, a particularly apt metaphor for learning (143).

(85c6-7) and it is on these that the process of recollection does its work.<sup>43</sup> Third, is the theme of dreaming and wakefulness. In order for the boy to access the truth in those “dream-like” opinions in his soul, they must be stirred up (*anakekinētai*)(85c9-10), or woken up (*epegertheisai*) under the impact of questioning. Only in this way do they “become knowledge” (86a7-8).

This passage is a crucial reminder that an overly narrow focus on Socratic refutation can be misleading. Plato’s Socrates is actually at work in two ways. One, better known to be sure, is the expulsion of false opinions.<sup>44</sup> But Socratic conversation also transforms our relation to the *true*, but unexamined, opinions that arise in us through our everyday commerce with the world. By means of such a transformation, we gain a clarity or precision by which those opinions become precise knowledge (*akribōs epistēsetai*)(85c11-d1). For this reason, too, *palin ex archēs* cannot be properly understood only as part of the rhythm of refutation. It also plays a role in the “elicitative” transformation of our relationship to true opinions.

This is to say that Socrates’ interlocutor will be summoned back to the *archē* not only to point out a contradiction or absurdity in the argument, but in order to confront him with the fact that the argument, as currently stated, cannot do justice to his own familiar experience of himself as rational and normatively responsive actor in a world that is, at the very least, not mere anarchy. The imperative to “save” this experience is thus a standard of measure, a check on the course of conversation. In this important sense, then, the *archē* in *palin ex archēs* is ultimately *oneself*. I mean by this not one’s idiosyncratic personality, but

<sup>43</sup> See the repeated emphasis on *doxai* at *Meno*, 85a8, c4, c6, c10, e7, 86a7.

<sup>44</sup> *Theaetetus*, 151c2-7, and cf. the description at *Sophist*, 230b1-d4, of the noble form of sophistry as the “expulsion of opinion” (*tēs doxēs ekbolē*).



rather our sense of our theoretical and practical rationality – what Charles Kahn mentions in invoking what Vlastos once called: “...the ‘deposit of truth’ in every human being, a common human grasp of moral truth that is somehow reflected in the premises which an interlocutor will accept and which lead him to the denial of any false or immoral thesis.”<sup>45</sup> This deposit, continues Kahn, “will be some recognition in all of us of what is truly good”.<sup>46</sup> It is present in the basic assumptions about normative valence *and* about intelligibility that constitute our ordinary experience and to which Socrates often appeals, whether implicitly or explicitly. The return of the conversation to its *archē*, then, is *anamnēsis* in a temporal register, or the *anamnēsis* before *anamnēsis*: a re-encounter, not with the timeless structure of intelligibility, but with those most familiar, but unexamined, pre-philosophical experiences from which the search for timeless structure emerges.

Of course, this does not mean that pre-philosophical experience as such is a criterion sufficient unto itself. Quite to the contrary, it is *not* yet fully awake, since it needs explanation and grounding. This is amply evidenced by the fact that assumptions about the whole-part relation of the virtues (in the *Laches* or *Meno*), a sense for the “ugliness” of injustice (in the *Gorgias*), or even the coherent integrity of our perceptual and cognitive experience through time (in the Protagorean sections of the *Theaetetus*) can easily be become perverted or utterly disoriented in the course of an argument. This is the ground of the possibility of eristic and sophistry, after all. Ordinary experience is indeed familiar, but familiarity is neither firm grasp nor clear understanding.

<sup>45</sup> Kahn (1996), 85.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

And this brings us to the second sense in which philosophical conversation can be an agent of the kind of awakening mentioned in the *Meno*. The repeated experience of aporia, with its need to start all over again, not only reminds us of the phenomena of ordinary life which this or that argument has obfuscated, they awaken us to the fact that we lack a grounding logos of those very phenomena even though they are the preconditions for our partaking in logos at all. Socrates' conversation can then stir up a search for that grounding logos by means of which our "deposit" of true opinions is transformed into comprehensive, and comprehending, knowledge.<sup>47</sup>

*Palin ex archēs* then, is a nexus: both a transitional device *within* the conversation, and a marker of the philosophical task that lies *beyond* any particular conversation by being common to all of them.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the search for grounds, taken up in full wakefulness, or self-awareness, is a task to which Socrates' interlocutors are almost uniformly unequal. For this reason, when Socrates does speak thematically of the grounds of intelligibility and value, he does so largely in monologues or in the mythical and allegorical language which we find in the Sun, Line and Cave Images, the *anamnēsis* myth, or the

<sup>47</sup> Jacob Klein remarks on an illuminating similarity between the structure of Platonic dialogues and the so-called analytic method in mathematics. In that method, "what is sought, *to zētoumenon* (the 'unknown'), is taken as something agreed upon, as a *homologoumenon* (as if it were 'given'), and then followed up through necessary consecutive steps until something previously agreed upon as true (something 'given') is reached." Klein (1965), 83. In Socratic dialogues, too, we begin by treating something unknown – a particular virtue, say – *as if* it is known, since we inevitably begin from our opinion about it. As Klein writes (84), "In a Platonic dialogue...that which is being investigated, the *zētoumenon* (be it excellence, piety, courage, prudence, or justice), is considered from the point of view of various and varying opinions...To hold an opinion about that which is under consideration means to take – or, at worst, to pretend to take – the *zētoumenon*, the "unknown" as if it were "known." What I have called the background assumptions of everyday rationality that constitute our deposit of truth, are the *homologoumenon par excellence*, so deeply embedded (even in the thought of resolute anti-philosophers like Callicles) that their uninvestigated status is effectively invisible. The broader goal of Socratic conversation, hinted at but rarely achieved in the dialogues, is not to demolish this most comprehensive *homologoumenon*, but to become aware of its merely given, viz., not yet examined, status, thus *transforming it back into a zētoumenon*.

Palinode. Plato does not create a conversation between philosophical equals which rotates back to its most truly fundamental *archē* and makes thematic the nature and inter-relation of the noetic elements which ultimately explain our ordinary experience of coherence and of better and worse. This, perhaps, would have been the content of that promised, but unwritten dialogue, the *Philosopher* (alluded to in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*), or of a conversation between Socrates and Plato, had Plato chosen to depict it. He did not depict it, however, and so I must close with speculation.

A fully wakeful, philosophical investigation of the conditions for the very possibility of theoretical and practical rationality would be one that achieved a progressively more luminous articulation of one crucial point which is simply asserted in the recollection myth in the *Meno*: namely, that the whole of nature is akin (*sungenous*) and it is by virtue of *this* kinship that the soul can learn the intelligible whole. This kinship, this *sungeneia*, it seems to me, is the sought for ground of everyday life, hiding within, and therefore taken for granted by, the true opinions which populate that life. In this sense, it can be said to be “forgotten”, awaiting recollection through the good offices of a kind of *dialogos* that can maintain an acute and persisting awareness of its origins.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> In *De Memoria*, Aristotle is careful to distinguish recollection from memory, learning for the first time, re-learning something anew. He writes, “...it is possible for the same person to learn or discover the same thing twice. It is necessary, then, that recollecting differ from this, and a source must be present within (*enousēs pleionos archēs*), beyond that by which one learns, in order to recollect” (*De Memoria*, 451b7-10). Recollection, in other words, requires *wanting* to recollect (*anamimnēskesthai boulētai*), and one wants to recollect when one realizes that one has forgotten something (Ibid, 451b30). In constantly redirecting a conversation back to its familiar but unexamined origins, *palin ex archēs* also redirects the interlocutor to that “source within”, the *archē kineseōs*, unique to recollection, by virtue of which Aristotle tells us that, “one will be able in some way *on one’s own* (*pōs di’ autou*) to be moved along to what follows...” (Ibid, 451b28-452a6).

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## Natural Tensions In The Forms of Life of the *Polis*

Aristotle regards the *polis* – the self-sufficient community aiming at accomplishing the good life – to be a whole that provides the necessary context for the kind of life that is naturally distinctive for human beings. He presents as evidence for this claim the fact that individual human beings are not self-sufficient (I.2 1253a25-28). The *polis* is the register of society at which human nature can realize its potential. Though Aristotle recognizes the natural needs we have for family, and for a broader community of familiars, he regards these as social institutions functioning best within the wider context of a healthy *polis* (I.2). In this paper I emphasize the significance of the fact that Aristotle's *polis* is made of many parts, and that these parts are explicitly presented to be analogous to the organs of a biological organism. I claim that, insofar as individual human beings are, so to speak, the tissue that constitutes the organs of the *polis*, and insofar as each organ performs a distinct function, the *polis necessarily* generates distinct forms of life. Some of these forms of life provide a context much more likely to cultivate human virtue than others. Indeed, those other forms of life tend to *inhibit* the cultivation of human virtue. These distinct differences in forms of life – i.e. those that foster and those that inhibit virtues – moreover, will tend to generate tensions between members of different organs of the *polis*. The only possible dissolution of this tension is in members of the *polis* recognizing what each distinct organ contributes to the *polis's* maintenance. It is a distinctive feature missing from the modern city, but potentially present in the Greek *polis*, for members of the political community to perceive the roles played by the different organs of political life. This need for shared recognition of the mutually interdependent performance of functions in the life of the *polis*, in other words, is a distinctive feature lacking in the modern city. I conclude by arguing that the virtues of citizenship are inhibited in the modern world to the extent that we lack shared, sensuous recognition of the diversity of parts needed to maintain the life of our political reality.

### 1. *Polis* as Organic Unity

In Book IV, chapter 4 of the *Politics*, Aristotle claims that every *polis* consists not of one, but of many parts (IV.4 1290b24). To illustrate in what sense it is made of parts, Aristotle draws an analogy to biological organisms. The *polis* is like an animal, in that it, like an animal, has various organs that perform distinct roles in the maintenance of its “life”. When we seek to understand how an animal naturally maintains its life, says Aristotle, we look at the animal's organs, determine what function each organ performs, and determine which are essential. In animals, we would seek out the organs of sense, nutrition, and locomotion (IV.4 1290b25-27). Aristotle claims that the diversity of the animal kingdom can be accounted for by observing the different ways in which these organic functions are combined in different animals (IV.4 1290b30-32). That is, the essential functions *qua* animality and *qua* life, will be present in all animals, though they will be configured differently, thereby generating the diversity of animal life. Correspondingly, Aristotle's analogy suggests that we can infer that the different forms of government – democracy, polity, oligarchy, aristocracy, monarchy – will vary according to the way in which the different *political* organs determined to be essential to the life of the *polis* are configured.

What remains consistent throughout the various forms of political organization will be the presence of these organs.

Using this analogy as a foundation, Aristotle then goes on to produce a list of the organs needed for any *polis* to function as a *polis*. Before reviewing Aristotle's list, let us spend a moment developing Aristotle's discussion of the relationship between the *polis* and the other registers of human community. Aristotle draws a distinction between the different registers of social organization according to what each element accomplishes. The *Politics* opens by presenting the three registers of society that are natural to human beings. The first register is that of the family (*oikos*), which is essential for the production of life. The second register is the village (*kōmē*), which is essential for "something more than the supply of daily needs" (I.2 1252b15-16). We can imagine that this more developed social organization contributes to protection and to the more efficient production of common needs (food, shelter, clothing, etc.). The third register is the *polis*, which originates "in the bare needs of life" but which continues "for the sake of a good life" (1252b28-30). The higher register of life within the *polis* contains the more basic elements, though in a manner transformed by the higher powers. For example, in Aristotle's analysis of the three registers of society, the family continues to perform essential functions within the *polis*, though its needs are in an important sense subordinated to the needs of the *polis* itself.

Aristotle's analysis here and indeed throughout his corpus aims at finding the proper register of generality at which to attribute the element of the particular entity under discussion. Hence, human beings have reproduction insofar as they are living organisms, not insofar as they are human, and similarly the *polis* includes the raising of children insofar as it includes families providing for the essentials of life (and therefore being charged with the raising of children) and not insofar as it seeks to provide the conditions for the good life. It is therefore consistent with this method of analysis that when Aristotle presents the essential organs for the proper functioning of the *polis*, he distinguishes between those organs required for its bare survival, and those organs essential for its proper thriving. Seemingly to this end, Aristotle conspicuously divides his list of the organs of the *polis* into two parts. Let us now turn to consider this list of essential organs.

## 2. The Organs Essential to the Life of the *Polis*

The first four organs presented by Aristotle are those that are essential to the basic maintenance of the life of the *polis*.<sup>1</sup> First is the class of people that produce food, specifically those that till the soil (*geōrgoi*). Second is the class of artisans.<sup>2</sup> Among the artisans, some produce the crafts without which a *polis* cannot exist in the first place, and others provide luxurious items, or items contributing to "luxury or the beautiful life" (*truphēn ē to kalōs zēn*) (1291a4). Third is the class of traders, which is to say, those involved in buying and selling, both in large-scale commercial enterprise, and in retail trade

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<sup>1</sup> Note that Aristotle draws a distinction between the parts of *polis* that "minister to the necessities of life" and those that are "more essential to the state" (1291a28-29). He does not *explicitly* designate the first four elements from those that he goes on to describe according to these terms, but it is certainly reasonable to infer this division from his account.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that Aristotle further divides this second class into two, and in a manner that suggests only *part* of this class belongs to the lowest register of the life of the *polis*, i.e. that which provides the needs of bare life.

in the marketplace. Fourth is the class of laborers hired to do the essential though menial unskilled work.

Aristotle characterizes the first four organs as constituting the body of the *polis*. Next is the military. This is the organ of the *polis* essential to making it self-sufficient in the sense of liberating it from dependence on others for its defense. In addition to these organs, Aristotle adds organs that constitute the soul of the *polis* (IV.4 1291a24-29). The first of these organs consists of “those that would dispense justice” and the deliberative body. The second consists of those who own and are therefore responsible for maintaining property, and third are those members of the public service in charge of administering the functions of the city.

Thus, for Aristotle, the organs essential to the “life” of any *polis* include farmers, artisans, traders, laborers, the military, deliberators concerning matters of justice and policy, landowners, and administrators. Aristotle notes that within this organic unity of distinct parts, some will inevitably be rich, and others poor (1291b8-9). Moreover, members of the wealthy and poor classes appear to antagonize each other, the results of that antagonism producing either oligarchy or democracy, depending on which faction prevails (1291b9-13). Additionally, members of certain organs of the *polis* will have no leisure (1291b25-28). We will return to this issue in a moment.

My purpose here is not to defend Aristotle’s candidates for the list of essential organs of the *polis*. Rather, I take it to be the case, regardless of the organs designated to be essential, that there are essential features of a political community, and that these features imply that the *polis* is *naturally* diverse with respect to the forms of life demanded by its needs. I take it, moreover, to be the case that these different organs will tend to produce a stratification of quality of life. It is this issue that I want to focus on now.

### 3. The Essential Diversity of Forms of Life Produced by the Organs of the *Polis*

I mentioned a moment ago that there are kinds of life necessary to the *polis* that do not admit of leisure. Leisure, for Aristotle, is the necessary condition for the life of contemplation, a life that he considered to be the best possible life for human beings (*Nicomachean Ethics* X.7-8). There are lives natural to the *polis* whose necessary character will tend to inhibit the possibility of developing the contemplative life; there are lives, in other words, naturally essential to the functioning of the *polis* that will, *in the appropriate performance of their function*, fail to develop the capacity most natural to a human being *qua* human being. More importantly for our purposes, though, by the performance of their function, members of each of these organs need not grasp how their role within the *polis* contributes to its “life.” It is not difficult to imagine in what respects such lives would be constrained in this way. The daily working lives of laborers, for example, tend toward limited exposure to the social and political environment that they help to maintain. Marx powerfully articulates this in his essay “Wage Labor and Capital:”

[T]he worker... does he consider [his] twelve hours' weaving, spinning, boring, drilling... as a manifestation of life, as life? On the contrary, life begins for him where this activity ceases, at table, in the public house, in bed. The twelve hours' labor, on the other hand, has no meaning for him as weaving,



spinning, drilling, etc., but as earnings, which bring him to the table, to the public house, into bed.<sup>3</sup>

In order to perform their function within the *polis*, they will be required to follow the minimum necessary instructions to use the body to manipulate objects according to the designs of someone else. Only the privately motivated initiative of the unskilled laborer – initiative *inessential* to the task – would indicate to the laborer how that task contributes to the wellbeing or maintenance of the *polis*. The work itself requires no such vision.

Because of this tendency of unskilled labor to require no sense of its place within the whole, this organ perhaps inevitably habituates a way of life that tends toward primary preoccupation with self-interest, either with individual self-interest, or with the interests of the particular organ that such individuals are a part of. One might be invested in the community of laborers, or in oneself and one's family, but the necessity of labor – on its own terms – does not *require* recognition of the role played by the organ one participates in within the *polis* as a whole. This is not the case with other organs of the *polis*.

In contrast to the conditions of life of the laborer, the conditions of life characteristic of those who participate in the deliberation and governance of the *polis* will require those participants to be *exposed* to its various elements, such that members of this organ have within their very function the means by which to identify how the organs of the *polis* fit together to sustain its "life." Participation in the organ of governance facilitates rather than inhibiting the accomplishment of the political perspective, i.e. the ability to understand how the various apparently disparate parts contribute to the life of the *polis*.

This is not to say that one is, in principle, unable to develop a perspective on the interdependence of the various organs of the *polis* when one becomes a participant in labor. Nor is it to say that participation in governance guarantees insight. Human beings both transcend the limitations of, and fail to live up to the basic demands of, their conditions. Nonetheless, we must acknowledge realities about these different forms of life within the *polis*. First, those that participate excellently in unskilled labor *require* no insight into the various other organs needed to maintain the health of the *polis*, whereas, the excellence of the deliberators and governors *does* require such insight. Second, when the demand to understand how it is that the *polis* is properly maintained is not made explicit in one's working life, such conditions conspire *against* going out of one's way to educate oneself about the functioning of the *polis*.

This lack of explicit demand to understand the proper functioning of the *polis* and therefore to know how one's own life fits within that larger whole inhibits the accomplishment of the virtue of citizenship. While Aristotle insists that the virtues peculiar to each organ of the *polis* will naturally differ from one another (III.4 1277a-10-14), and therefore that what it is that makes the laborer a good citizen will be naturally distinct from what it is that makes the governor a good citizen, I take him to mean that *qua* laborer or *qua* governor, the expectations of citizenship differ from one another. By contrast, the good citizen (*ton politēn ton agathon*) with respect to *citizenship itself* must be capable of both ruling well, and being ruled well. Aristotle explicitly emphasizes the differences between these two virtues, but what is importantly common to ruling and being ruled is being capable of identifying what is necessary for the *polis* to function well. To be ruled well consists not merely in unquestioning obedience, but also in recognizing how one's

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<sup>3</sup> Marx, "Wage Labor and Capital," in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 276.

obedience to this or that particular authority contributes to the effective working of the *polis*. Correspondingly, to rule well is to determine what serves the interest of creating a *polis* that contributes to the good life. In each case, performing the function of giving or following instructions *well* requires knowing to what purpose the instructions are directed.

There is a tension, and if we are compelled by Aristotle's analogy to naturally occurring animal organisms, a *natural* tension, within the proper functioning of the *polis*. Specifically, for the *polis* to work properly, on the one hand, for some members to perform their laboring functions excellently, insofar as they are laborers, they need not fully grasp how their function fits into the whole. On the other hand, to participate excellently *as citizens*, which is to say, in the role that they share in common with litigators, landowners, members of the military, etc., they *must* have a sense of the whole of the *polis*, due to the fact that excellence in citizenship is defined by knowing both how to rule and how to be ruled.

The means by which the common interest to produce excellent citizens is accomplished, to the extent that it can be accomplished, is in the manifest, visible presence of the relationships between the different organs *within* the day-to-day operations of the *polis*. This is something that distinguishes Aristotle's *polis* from the modern political community, namely, the fact that modern political communities are alienated from the whole of the process by which that political community is maintained. Let us now turn briefly to a discussion of what distinguishes the political conditions of Aristotle's world from our own, and to the claim that the modern city conspires against excellence in citizenship.

#### 4. The Alienated Character of the Modern City

The Greek *polis* that Aristotle studies shares in common with the modern city the fact that it is, for most citizens, the domain of visible human activity. One manner in which the *polis* differs from the modern city is in the fact that the *polis* is self-sufficient; all of the parts needed for the everyday functioning of the *polis* co-exist within it. By contrast, this is not the case in the modern city. The modern city is marked by the fact that it typically fails to provide the food needed to feed its citizens, rather having to import food to feed those who live there. It exists within borders typically much wider than those of the city itself, thereby commonly existing without the conspicuous presence of the military. It is beholden to the political authority of people who do not live there, or who nominally retain an address within the city without actually spending time there. It commonly consists of a poor labor class that cannot afford to participate in the cultural activity of the city, while functioning as an invisible necessary condition of those cultural activities. It commonly has landowners who profit financially from the wealth generated by that property, spending that wealth as likely outside the city as within it. Its tools essential for the productive activity of the city are typically produced elsewhere, and not by artisans but rather by machines. There is much to criticize, from Aristotle's standpoint, about these and other aspects of the functioning of the modern city. One such criticism might be that, in the modern city, there exists a dramatically diminished visible presence of the elements that make the city function. The needs for the proper functioning of the modern city are undoubtedly available to us to study, and therefore to know. They are not, though, available sensuously in our daily activity. Consequently, the forms of life of the members of the

political community tend not to be comprehensible to each other. We can make judgments about each other, and, strikingly, can make judgments about those who fail to live well, without recognizing the conditions that generated that failure. We can do so without recognizing the debt owed to the sacrifices made by those operating within a political organ that all depend upon, and that none recognize.

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## On the Ontological Primacy of Nouns

To begin, a comment Aristotle makes in *De Interpretatione*:

ἐπεὶ δηλοῦσί γέ τι καὶ οἱ ἀγράμματοι ψόφοι, οἷον θηρίων, ὧν οὐδέν ἐστιν ὄνομα (16a28-29).

“...although even inarticulate sounds, such as those made by beasts, indicate something, no one of them is a noun.”<sup>1</sup>

Earlier in this text he defined a “noun” as,

φωνὴ σημαντικὴ κατὰ συνθήκην, ἄνευ χρόνου, ἧς μηδὲν μέρος ἐστὶ σημαντικόν κεχωρισμένον (16a19-20).<sup>2</sup>

“...a voiced sound that is significant by convention, without time, no part of which is significant when separated.”

Immediately following this line (which will be discussed below), Aristotle addresses the question of why compound nouns such as “Kallippos,” whose two parts, *καλός* and *ἵππος* (16a21), are significant in themselves, do not violate the stricture implied by the last clause of the definition. This passage is perplexing, but fortunately not relevant for the purpose of this paper. What is at issue here is why Aristotle asserts that none of the sounds that animals vocalize are nouns.

The noun is the minimal unit of significant discourse. Simply by itself it means or signifies something. As such, it is a necessary part of a “sentence” (*λόγος*), which Aristotle defines as,

φωνὴ σημαντικὴ, ἧς τῶν μερῶν τι σημαντικόν ἐστὶ κεχωρισμένον (16b26).

“A significant voiced sound, a part of which is significant when separated.”

Given the above, it follows that because the sounds animals vocalize do not include nouns, and because nouns are the minimal unit of significant discourse, animals, however effectively they can “indicate” (δηλοῦσι) something to one another—that is, communicate—do not vocalize “significant” or “semantic” sound. This is odd because, first, animals do seem to vocalize significant sound and, second, Aristotle says as much in *De Anima* II.8. Here, in his treatment of hearing, he discusses “voice” (φωνή). It is, he says, “a sound produced by a living being” (ψόφος τίς ἐστὶν ἐμψύχου: 420b5-6). Soon he elaborates: “voice is a significant sound” (σημαντικὸς ... τίς ψόφος: 420b32).<sup>3</sup>

Much of Aristotle’s discussion of voice in *DA* II.8 addresses anatomical issues, such as the role of the tongue. About this he says that, just as “nature uses” (καταχρῆται ἢ φύσις) air to perform two tasks in (some) animals, respiration and the production of voiced sound,

...καθάπερ τῇ γλώττῃ ἐπὶ τε τὴν γεῦσιν καὶ τὴν διάλεκτον, ὧν ἡ μὲν γεῦσις ἀναγκαῖον (διὸ καὶ πλείοσιν ὑπάρχει), ἡ δ’ **ἐρμηνεία** ἔνεκα τοῦ εὔ (420b17-20).

“...so too [does nature use] the tongue for both taste and articulation. Of these taste is necessary, and so belongs to more animals, while **interpretation** (ἐρμηνεία) is for the sake of living well.”

The striking word here is ἐρμηνεία, which forms the title of the treatise that has come down to us as *De Interpretatione*. In the line cited above, it refers to the capacity to hear or process a sound as a message that signifies something other than the sound itself. (Ἐρμῆς was the messenger of the gods and his name supplies the root of ἐρμηνεία.) So, for example, the croaking of the male frog occurs “whenever they are calling females to breeding” (*Historia Animalium* IV.ix.536a12).<sup>4</sup> The females hear the call and “understand” what it means.

A similar view of animal voice is found in *Politics* I.2:

ἡ μὲν οὖν φωνὴ τοῦ λυπηροῦ καὶ ἠδέος ἐστὶ σημεῖον, διὸ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὑπάρχει ζῳοῖς (μέχρι γὰρ τούτου ἡ φύσις αὐτῶν ἐλήλυθε, τοῦ ἔχειν αἰσθησιν λυπηροῦ καὶ ἠδέος καὶ ταῦτα σημαίνειν ἀλλήλοις) (1253a10-15).<sup>5</sup>

“Voice is a sign of pain and pleasure, and so belongs to other [non-human] animals. For their nature has reached this point; namely, having an awareness of pain and pleasure and being able to signify these things to each other.”

It is in this context that Aristotle famously says that “of the animals only human beings have language” (λόγον: 1253a9-10), a line to be discussed shortly. For now simply note that here, just as in *DA* II.8, he grants that animals have the capacity “to signify” (σημαίνειν) or vocalize significant sound. Again, this seems to be at odds with *De Int.* 16a, where he denies that animal sounds include nouns, which implies that, because the noun is the minimal unit of significant discourse, animals do not σημαίνειν.

Discrepancies such as this are hardly uncommon in Aristotle’s corpus, and there are several of ways of explaining (or defusing) them. In the interest of time I will only assert, rather than defend, my own. Simply put, the meanings of many Aristotelian terms vary with context. Alternatively stated, Aristotle does not consistently deploy a technical vocabulary, one whose terms have rigidly stipulated definitions. An example has already been alluded to. At *De Int.* 16b26 λόγος means “sentence,” while at *Politics* 1253a9 its meaning is far broader; “language” perhaps.<sup>6</sup> Even though it is difficult to identify it precisely, the subject matter of the former—the rudiments of significant discourse, the nature of truth bearing propositions, the relationship between universal propositions—is narrower than that of the latter, which studies human beings as political animals. There is good reason, therefore, to consider the possibility that the meaning of λόγος varies in these different treatises.

Another example of this sort of variation is found in the strangely narrow characterization of λόγος found in *Politics* I.2.

ὁ δὲ λόγος ἐπὶ τῷ δηλοῦν<sup>7</sup> ἐστὶ τὸ συμφέρον καὶ τὸ βλαβερόν, ὥστε καὶ τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ἀδίκον· τοῦτο γὰρ πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα ζῶα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἴδιον, τὸ μόνον ἀγαθοῦ καὶ κακοῦ καὶ δικαίου καὶ ἀδίκου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων αἴσθησιν ἔχειν· ἡ δὲ τούτων κοινωνία ποιεῖ οἰκίαν καὶ πόλιν (1253a14-18).

“Language is for indicating the advantageous and the harmful, and as a result, the just and the unjust. For compared to the other animals, this is unique to human beings. For they alone have an awareness of good and bad, and just and unjust, and all the rest. And it is community in these that makes a household and a city.”

In other texts, Aristotle characterizes the work of λόγος as articulating the truth, rather than indicating values. So, for example, in *NE* I.7 Aristotle identifies the “unique” (ἴδιον: 1097b34) “function (ἐργόν: 1097b25) of human being as “a certain activity of that which possesses λόγος” (1098a4). He then divides “that which possesses λόγος” into two parts: that which “is obedient (ἐπιπειθὲς) to λόγος” and that which “has it and thinks (διανοοῦμενον)” (1098a4-5). In *NE* VI.1 he divides the latter into two parts: “that by which we study (θεωροῦμεν) those sorts of beings that do not admit of being otherwise, and that by which we study those beings that do admit of being otherwise” (1139a6-8). Both modalities of “studying” are, he says, ways of “truthing” (ἀληθεύειν: 1139b12). In other words, here the work of λόγος is said to be attaining the truth and is not limited, as it seems to be in *Politics* I.2, to indicating or discussing values.

Again, this apparent conflict can be defused by noting the different contexts in which these passages appear. The *Nicomachean Ethics* is concerned with human excellence in its totality; that is, in both its “intellectual” (διανοητικῆς) and “ethical” (ἠθικῆς) dimensions (1103a14-15). The *Politics* is narrower: it strictly concerns the practical.

The apparent conflict between σημαίνειν as used in *De Int.*, where animals are denied it, and *DA* II.8, where they are granted it, can be similarly defused. The subject matter of the former

is narrower than the latter. As a result, the meaning of σημαίνειν in it is also narrower. If this is the case, then Aristotle’s statement that animals “indicate” (δηλοῦσι) in *De Int.* likely is equivalent to what he says about their capacity to “signify” (σημαίνειν) in *DA II.8*. What appears to be a potentially troubling conflict between the two treatises is not really that.

Whatever its precise relationship to *DA II.8* might be, the *De Int.* passage is interesting on its own, for it suggests an important difference between human language and the voiced sounds made by non-human animals. However expressive and effectively communicative they may be, animals do not use nouns. This implies that they cannot engage in λόγος, in any of its three senses mentioned above. They cannot voice a “sentence” (*De Int.*), discuss values (*Politics*) or engage in “truthing” (*NE*). Their inability to use nouns is decisive in distinguishing them from us.

Now, recall Aristotle’s definition of a noun: “a voiced sound that is significant **by convention, without time**, no part of which is significant when separated.” The highlighted phrases suggest why animals cannot vocalize nouns. First, the sounds they make are natural rather than conventional. Exactly what this means is terribly hard to unpack, but the point, at least from Aristotle’s perspective, is relatively straightforward. He explains at the very beginning of *De Int.*:

Ἔστι μὲν οὖν τὰ ἐν τῇ φωνῇ τῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ παθημάτων σύμβολα (16a3-4).

“Voiced sounds are symbols of affections of the soul.”

What “affections of the soul” means here is not obvious. Perhaps it refers to sense perceptions or mental impressions of a more general sort. Whatever exactly it means, voiced sounds, or words, are “symbols” of them. In its original sense, the σύμβολον was a bone or coin



broken into two parts, each of which was kept by two partners as a token of the binding nature of their agreement. The “symbol,” then, is paradigmatically conventional, for the significance of the bone or coin must be stipulated by the partners in the agreement. Because words are symbols, their meanings too are likewise conventional. As such, they are not “the same for all” (16a5). The English “dog” and the Italian “*cane*” are different. Nonetheless, they are both linguistic “symbols” of the same “affection of the soul:” the perception or recognition of a specific being that exists in the world. Such “affections of the soul,” Aristotle says, are “the same for all” (16a6). So too are the “beings” (πράγματα: 16a7) in the world, like the dog, that is responsible for the πάθημα. While spoken language is a strictly conventional matter—if a community of speakers agreed, “cat” could signify what we now take to be a dog—beings in the world and the way they affect the human being’s perceptual and mental apparatus are natural.<sup>8</sup> In other words, while there is only one world, and while the human animals that inhabit it, because they are of one species, are largely similar in their experience of it, there are many different languages. For language is a radically conventional affair. Therefore, animals, whose vocalizations are entirely natural, do not partake in it.

Second, and for the purpose of this paper more important, Aristotle says that a noun is “without time.” By contrast,

Ῥῆμα δέ ἐστι τὸ προσσημαίνον χρόνον, οὐ μέρος οὐδὲν σημαίνει χωρὶς (16b6-7).

“A verb is what signifies time in addition, and no part of it is significant in isolation.”

It is possible to translate χρόνον here as “tense.” This is plausible if *De Int.* 1-6 is taken as a proto-grammatical treatise. A verb must have tense for it signifies an action that necessarily takes place in time. The man is running now, or will run tomorrow, or ran yesterday. Still,

despite the temptation of “tense,” for reasons that will become clear shortly, ἄνευ χρόνου will be translated literally in this paper: “without time.”

Given Aristotle’s definitions of noun and verb, it would seem that the (natural) sounds animals make are more like verbs. For they signify or indicate an action taking place in time; more specifically in the future. The male frog’s croak conveys a message to the female: come here and we shall breed. The bird’s shriek warns the flock that a predator is approaching. By contrast, what animals cannot do is vocalize something analogous to a noun. For a noun is a voiced sound whose significance is “without time.” It answers the question, what (not when) is it? Animals are not able to do this. Therefore, they do not engage in λόγος, which requires nouns as its minimal units of significance. Thus, even if animals effectively communicate with one another, and their vocalizations are counted as instances of σημαίνειν (as they are in *De Anima*), and even if some of those vocalizations are analogous to verbs, they cannot voice a sound analogous to a noun; that is, “without time.” I propose that it is precisely this *timelessness of nouns* that makes λόγος, and by extension the human species, unique. We are the animals that by nature use nouns. We are the animals whose language somehow tokens the timeless. To explain (all too briefly), I turn to a passage from *Metaphysics Z.1*.

Here Aristotle argues for the ontological priority of “substance” or οὐσία on the basis of certain linguistic considerations. The passage begins with the assertion that, Τὸ ὄν λέγεται πολλαχῶς (1028a10); “Being is said in many ways.” There are many “categories” or elemental forms of predication. Fundamental among these ways is the τί ἐστὶ καὶ τόδε τι (1028a15); the “what it is” and the “this something.” They correspond to the category of “substance,” of οὐσία (1028a15). And a substance is signified by a noun such as ἄνθρωπον ἢ θεόν, “human being or god.” All predication depends on precisely on this essentially stratified categorial scheme.

The ontological primacy of substances, and of the nouns signifying them, is so fundamental that Aristotle says,

...ἀπορήσειεν τις πότερον τὸ βαδίζειν καὶ τὸ ὑγιαίνειν καὶ τὸ καθῆσθαι ἕκαστον αὐτῶν ὃν σημαίνει...οὐδὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν ἐστὶν οὔτε καθ' αὐτὸ πεφυκὸς οὔτε χωρίζεσθαι δυνατόν τῆς οὐσίας, ἀλλὰ μάλλον, εἴπερ, τὸ βαδίζον τῶν ὄντων τι... (1028a20-25)

“...someone might wonder whether each of the following, ‘walking’ and ‘being healthy’ and ‘sitting,’ signify being...for no one of them is either by nature on its own nor is when separated from substance. Rather, if anything, what walks is some one of the things that are.”

In short, what today we would call the other “parts of speech”—verbs and adjectives, for example—signify a derivative or secondary sense of being. Just as the noun is the minimal unit of significant discourse, so too are substances, beings such as “animals and plants and their parts...as well as natural bodies such as fire, water, earth and other such elements, and however many things are either parts of these or are composed from these...such as the stars, moon and sun” (1028b8-12), the primary entities of Aristotle’s ontology. Nouns, without referring to a temporal frame, without identifying a when, signify just what a substance is; in other words, its essence (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι); its “what it is to be.” And an essence is “without time:” “it does not become nor of it is there becoming” (οὐ γίγνεται οὐδ’ ἔστιν αὐτοῦ γένεσις; *Metaphysics* 1033b6-7).

Substances and essences, named by nouns, constitute the permanent and intelligible structure of the world. They are the objects of definitions, which in turn are among the first principles of demonstrative science. Decisively, it is epistemic access to essences that makes human beings a distinctive species. For, as Aristotle says in the first line of the *Metaphysics*, “all human beings by nature have an urge to understand.” And we act upon this urge by asking all sorts of questions, including, most fundamentally, “what is it?” And what something is, is its

essence, signified by a noun that is “without time.” Our nature, then, would be equally well described by the statement that (as stated in the *Politics*), we are the animals that have λόγος, that use sentences (whose minimal unit of significance is the noun), which in turn prompt us to ask “what is it?”, and thereby to inquire into the essences of things.

To conclude: Aristotle is second to none in his admiration of non-human animals. And many indeed communicate with one another and exhibit a wonderful intelligence in coping with their immediate environment. None, however, can vocalize nouns. As such, they are incapable of inquiring into, and then learning about, the intelligible structure of the world. This is a fundamental limitation and the decisive boundary point between us and them. For we are the beings with λογός. We utter sentences that have subjects and predicates, we discuss values, we seek the truth about essences. And nouns are the primary linguistic resource for our doing so. All other parts of speech depend upon them, just as all other categories of being (quality, quantity, and so on) depend upon substances, which are named by nouns.

In *Nicomachean Ethics* X.7, Aristotle says this:

Οὐ χρὴ δὲ κατὰ τοὺς παραινοῦντας ἀνθρώπινα φρονεῖν ἄνθρωπον ὄντα οὐδὲ θνητὰ τὸν θνητόν, ἀλλ’ ἐφ’ ὅσον ἐνδέχεται ἀθανατίζειν...(1177b31-34).

“For one should not heed those who recommend that, because one is human, one should think human things, or because one is mortal one should think mortal things. Instead, one must strive as much as possible to become immortal...”

The most basic way in which we can heed Aristotle’s advice—to strive to become immortal—is by means of exercising our intelligence; that is, by engaging in theoretical inquiry. And this means that we must inquire into substances and essences, the permanent and intelligible beings of the world. By thinking them we make contact with them and so, however briefly, we take ourselves out of the flow of time. In turn, theoretical inquiry is dependent upon the maximal exercise of our capacity for λόγος, which, as stated more than once, is fundamentally dependent

upon nouns. Only through theoretical activity is complete happiness (or εὐδαιμονία) available to the human race. By contrast, non-human animals, however marvelous they may be, can neither cannot engage in theoretical activity nor, as a consequence, attain happiness. As Aristotle puts it,

Τῶν δ' ἄλλων ζῴων οὐδὲν εὐδαιμονεῖ, ἐπειδὴ οὐδαμῆ κοινώνει θεωρίας (1178b27-28).

“None of the other animals are happy since in no way do they have a share in theoretical activity.”

And this is because they cannot vocalize nouns, those minimal units of significant discourse that are “without time.”

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The Greek text of *De Interpretatione* is that of L. Minio-Paluello (Oxford: 1966).

<sup>2</sup> Compare *Poetics* 1457a10-11: ὄνομα δ' ἐστὶ φωνὴ συνθετὴ σημαντικὴ, ἄνευ χρόνου, ἧς μέρος οὐδέν ἐστι καθ' αὐτὸ σημαντικόν.

<sup>3</sup> The Greek text of *De Anima* is that of W.D. Ross (Oxford: 1963).

<sup>4</sup> The Greek text of *Historia Animalium* is that of A. L. Peck (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

<sup>5</sup> The Greek text of the *Politics* is that of W.D. Ross (Oxford: 1988).

<sup>6</sup> Consider also *Poetics* 1475a24-27 where Aristotle allows λόγος to include even “the definition of a human being,” which would not include a verb.

<sup>7</sup> Note that δηλοῦν is the same verb used in *De Int.* 16a28 to describe what animal vocalizations can do.

<sup>8</sup> It is possible that in *De Int.* Aristotle is concerned with rebutting the claim found in Plato's *Cratylus* that “there is a correct name (ὀνόμασι) by nature for each of the things that is. And this name is not that which people call a thing by agreement” (383a).

## The Furthest Reaches of Community: *The Stoics on Justice for Humans and for Animals*

To fishes, savage beasts, and birds, devoid  
of justice, Jove to devour each other  
granted; but justice to mankind he gave.

- Hesiod (*Op. et Di. Lib. I.v.275*)

Richard Sorabji claims that the ancient debate concerning the proper treatment of animals “came to turn on whether animals were rational.”<sup>1</sup> Only the Stoics seem to be a case in point,<sup>2</sup> since they say that justice “should extend only to beings like us and therefore rule out irrational animals” (*De Abts. III.1.187*). Yet by Sorabji’s own admission, he does not succeed in identifying a faculty of mind such that the Stoics could have reasonably inferred, from the absence of that faculty in animals, that animals were without a claim to

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals: The Origins of the Western Debate* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), 116; cf. 208, 209.

<sup>2</sup> The book’s claim seems unwarranted in this respect, since few of the ancient philosophers it discusses argue for a direct correlation between animals’ inborn faculties and the way they ought to be treated. For example, the Epicureans do not consider animals’ inborn capacity for reason or autonomy as important for determining how they ought to be treated as the question of whether they have been educated in human customs (115). See *On Nature* 34.25 ln. 22-34. Aristotle meanwhile sees the question of whether we share common interests with animals, and whether they are intended for human use, as more relevant to the questions of how they should be treated (118). See *Nic Eth.* 1161b2 and *Pol.* 1256b15. Of course, it is because he thinks this generalization applies at least to the Stoics, that Sorabji baldly asserts that the ancient debate “came to turn on whether animals were rational.” Richard Sorabji, *Animals Minds and Human Morals*, 116.

be treated justly.<sup>3</sup> One begins to wonder what the Stoics' position on the animals question was.<sup>4</sup>

We cannot understand under what circumstances the Stoics think they are beholden to accord others justice—and why they think we are not beholden to accord animals justice—without understanding the circumstances under which, according to them, humans have an inclination to treat others with justice. This is because, for them, there can be no moral imperative to treat another justly where a natural inclination to do so is lacking. What inclines us to justice is the real possibility of creating and maintaining community, since “the good of a rational being is community.”<sup>5</sup> Hence, the purpose of

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<sup>3</sup> Sorabji says that it would “violate intuition” for Stoics and Epicureans to tie justice either to the faculty of desire, of emotion, of speech, or to the faculty reason in general (118). The subject is broached for the first time in Part II in *Animals Minds and Human Morals*, when, after Sorabji has explained the rational faculties possessed by animals in Part I, he finally turns to the question of how this might have reflected on the question of their proper treatment (116-119). For the question of rationality, “also concerned the question of whether justice was owed to animals, and whether there could be such a thing as being unjust to them” (116). This transition is not altogether smooth because Sorabji gives no clear example of the way the question of reason was connected to the question of justice, promising that his claim will be borne out in later chapters, when he turns to the two schools that advanced “rationalistic theories of justice,” the Stoics and Epicureans (118, 121). In the meantime, Sorabji explains that he sees no intuitive connection between rationality and the right to justice and is not sure where ancient philosophers, given their conception of justice, could have found one: “One might have thought justice was owed to all conscious beings, with rationality being relevant only at the margins” (116). Sorabji then discusses the capacities of reason that contemporary philosophers consider relevant to the question of whether animals deserve justice: the capacity to speak, to have interests, to have a sense of self, to form contracts, to have moral agency (117). But he never argues, either here or in the remainder of the book, that any of these capacities were considered relevant, for the Stoics, to the question of whether animals deserved justice. Sorabji even goes so far as to argue that we should not think the Stoics saw any connection between, for instance, animals' incapacity for morality or voluntary action and their disenfranchisement (119-121, 128-129). Richard Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals*.

<sup>4</sup> In Sorabji's brief account, the Stoics simply assume that human beings extend justice to beings who have the *specific* set of faculties possessed by human beings—that they extend it to beings like themselves—rather than to beings who have different set of faculties. Sorabji accounts for humans' apparent inclination to treat beings made in their own image this way by attributing it to their predisposition to extend *oikeiōsis* to the members of their own species: “rational beings like ourselves can extend *oikeiōsis* (and hence justice only to other rational beings).” Now, *oikeiōsis* is an impulse (*D.L.* 7.85: *L.S.* 57A: *S.V.F.* III.178.); and since impulses explain themselves, no further explanation for this impulse is offered. Therefore, Sorabji simply accounts for humans' favoritism toward the members of their own species by attributing to them an impulse to favor the members of their own species. Richard Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals*, 124-127.

<sup>5</sup> *Med.* V.16: *L.S.* 63K. Initially, this approach might seem to be premised on a misunderstanding, since the Stoics see justice and virtue as ends in themselves (*Stob. Ecl.* 6e11-15: *S.V.F.* III.16). If we approached the question in the same manner as Sorabji, we would offer no explanation for humans' tendency to treat each other justly. For in the context of asking “what would be the goal or *telos* of the good Stoic in his dealing with his fellow humans,” Sorabji replies that his goal is virtue itself, or happiness itself, though he also acknowledges that virtues are means as well as ends. (*Stob. Ecl.* 5h19-24: *S.V.F.* III.106). Richard Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals*, 139. Diogenes however tells us “among external goods is having a good country or a good friend and the prosperity of such...” meanwhile, “among evils are to have a foolish country or a foolish friend and the unhappiness if such” (τὰ δ' ἐκτὸς τὸ τε σπουδαίαν ἔχειν πατρίδα καὶ σπουδαῖον φίλον καὶ τὴν τούτων εὐδαιμονίαν... τὰ δ' ἐκτὸς τὸ ἄφρονα πατρίδα ἔχειν καὶ ἄφρονα φίλον καὶ τὴν τούτων κακοδαιμονίαν: *D.L.* vii.95; cf. *Stob. Ecl.* 5h20). Stobaeus also counts honor, goodwill, friendship, and harmony, not among indifferents but goods, and in particular, not among those goods whose



this essay: to show that the Stoics' position on the animal question is shaped more by their conception of community (*koinonia, communitas*), than by their belief that animals suffer a defect of reason *serious enough to automatically disbar them from being the proper recipients of justice*.

*Oikeiōsis* is the name the Stoics give to a living thing's "tendency to preserve itself, its life and body, and to reject anything that seems likely to harm them, seeking and procuring everything necessary for life" (*De Off.* I.ii.11-12).<sup>6</sup> *Oikeiōsis* is not unique to human beings. It also occurs in animals, and just as it is intended to explain the fact that human beings form relationships with one another, it is also intended to explain the fact that animals do the same.<sup>7</sup> Cicero will mention mussels, crabs, bees, ants, and storks. These animals, not only care for their offspring, but form partnerships with the members their own, and other species, and "do certain things for others besides themselves" (*De Fin.* III.xix.63).<sup>8</sup> At first glance, nothing seems to tell against animals' ability to, like human beings, treat and be treated justly. But this similarity between humans and animals seems to be merely apparent because, while the Stoics hold that *oikeiōsis* is common to animals and human beings, they also hold that it takes unique form in humans. While *oikeiōsis* lies at the *archē*, the *initium*, the very 'root and source' of all relationships, human or animal, it only takes full flower in human beings, among whom it blossoms into relationships characterized by justice.<sup>9</sup> This gives rise to the common complaint about the Stoics that, "while they postulate that love of one's offspring is the very foundation of our community and of justice (κοινωνία καὶ δικαιοσύνης), and observe that animals possess such love in very marked degree, yet they assert and hold that animals have no part in justice (οὐδ' ἀξιοῦσι μετεῖναι δικαιοσύνης)."<sup>10</sup>

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goodness lies in themselves, but among those goods whose goodness resides in their relation to something outside themselves. *Stob. Ecl.* 5116; cf. *Stob. Ecl.* 11c25, 5e1; *De Fin.* III.55.

<sup>6</sup> Except where noted otherwise, translations of Cicero will be drawn, with emendation in most cases, from Loeb editions. Translations of *De Abstinence* will be taken, also with emendation, from Clark. See Porphyry, *On Abstinence from Killing Animals*, translated by Gillian Clark (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Further reading on the subject of *oikeiōsis* can be found in: Jacques Brunschwig, "The Cradle Argument" in *The Norms of Nature*, eds. Schofield and Striker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 113-144; Gretchen Reydams-Schils, "Human Bonding and *Oikeiōsis* in Roman Stoicism," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 22 (2002): 221-251. Troels Engber-Pederson, *The Stoic Theory of Oikeiosis: Moral Development and Social Interaction in Early Stoic Philosophy* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1990). Simon Pembroke, "Oikeiōsis." In *Problems in Stoicism*, edited by Anthony Long (London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1971), 114-49. Gisela Striker, "The Role of *Oikeiosis* in Stoic Ethics." *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 1 (1983): 145-67.

<sup>8</sup> See also *Nat. Deor.* II.xlviii.123.

<sup>9</sup> *Nat. Deor.* II.lxii.154; *De Fin.* III.xx.67; *De Leg.* I.xii.33; *De Abst.* III.22.216; *De Abst.* III.19.209, III.26.223; *Anonymous Commentary on Plato's Theaetetus* 5.18: L.S. 57H.

<sup>10</sup> *De Soll.* 962b1. Trans. mod.

It is best to begin then with what seems to be the best attested difference between humans and animals: “animals have no part in justice.”<sup>11</sup> The first question is then, “What is the justice unique to human beings?”

Porphry takes it for granted that the Stoics would agree that to treat animals justly would mean “sparing them and not harming them” (φειδόμενός τε καὶ μὴ βλάπτων: *De Abst.* I.4.89). For to say that something must be treated justly is to say that it should *never* be harmed under any circumstances. Exception is made of course for destructive creatures that cause harm to *us*. To be more specific then, “justice lies in restraint and in harmlessness (τῷ ἀφεκτικῷ καὶ ἀβλαβεῖ) toward anything that does not do harm” (III.26.224). Indeed, Porphyry takes it as a matter of common opinion that “justice consists in not harming” (τῷ ἀβλαβεῖ: III.26.224). Porphyry indeed correctly attributes to the Stoics the idea that justice precludes unprovoked harm. Stobaeus, for example, writes that the man who is not virtuous is as a “harmful man” (βλαπτικὸν ἄνθρωπον),<sup>12</sup> and that “it is never justly done to deceive, to use violence, or to rob...”<sup>13</sup>

Cicero explains the prohibition on harm at length,<sup>14</sup> and if we want to understand in what context justice should apply and to whom, we can do no better than to look at an instance in which, according to Cicero, it *ought* to apply, but does not. Cicero gives the example of a person who should refrain from harming others, but does not. He becomes akin to a tumor in the body that tries to thrive at the expense of other parts and organs. As Cicero points out, “the whole body would be enfeebled and die, so, if each one of us should seize upon the property of his neighbors, and take from each what he could appropriate to his own use, the bonds of human society must be inevitably annihilated” (*De Off.* III.iv.22). Notice that, according to the analogy, individuals are like body parts, members of a whole whose parts already work toward the attainment of a collective aim or aims. If the whole fails, the individual fails to attain his ends, both his own and those

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<sup>11</sup> *Soll.* 962b1; cf. *Nat. Deor.* II.Ixii.154; *De Fin.* III.xx.67; *De Leg.* I.xii.33; *De Abst.* III.22.216.

<sup>12</sup> Stob. *Ecl.* 11k7: *S.V.F.* III.677. A virtuous person meanwhile, is described as a person who, “neither being able harm nor to be harmed” (οὔτε βλάπτειν οἷός τε ὄντας οὔτε βλάπτεσθαι. Stob. *Ecl.* 11i5: *S.V.F.* III.587). He lives his life “neither doing harm to another nor suffering harm from anyone else” (Stob. *Ecl.* 11g30: *S.V.F.* II.567).

<sup>13</sup> *Proclus in Plat. Alcib.* *S.V.F.* III.347. As we can see, there can be no doubt that the harm the Stoic is prohibited from inflicting includes physical and material harm. For Cicero for instance, “for a man to take something from his neighbour and to profit by his neighbour’s loss is more contrary to nature than is death or poverty or pain or anything else that can affect our person or property” (*De Off.* III.iv.v). The corresponding benefits we are enjoined to confer on others are no less material. Robin Weiss, “Stoic Utopia: The Use of Friendship in Creating the Ideal Society,” *Apeiron* 49 (2016): 193-228.

<sup>14</sup> Although Cicero says little more about justice in *De Finibus*, it is of course from him that we can learn most about justice, at least as it was understood by the middle Stoics Panaetius. It is in *De Officiis* that Cicero explicitly discusses justice, a virtue that he equates, like Porphyry, with never harming anyone except in order to prevent harm or to seek retribution for a harm already inflicted (*ut ne cui quis noceat nisi lacessitus iniuria: De Off.* I.vii.20). In discussing the finer points of this prohibition on harm, which all humans ought to instinctively obey, Cicero repeatedly claims to hew closely to Stoic doctrine. He also explicitly tells us that the prohibition he is discussing is Stoic in origin here and in *De Finibus* (*De Off.* I.ii.6: III.iv.20; *De Fin.* III.i.71). We can therefore be confident that that Cicero accurately relays the reasons for which the Stoics considered the prohibition on harm absolute where his remarks are consistent with those of other Stoic authors.

he shares with the collective. Similar passages recur in other Stoic authors.<sup>15</sup> Cicero is also clear that this applies no less with respect to the universal community of which all humans are considered members,<sup>16</sup> a fact reinforced by the Stoics' habit of referring to humans and gods as members of the same *koinonia, sustêma, oikêtêrion*—the same 'community,' 'system,' 'household.'<sup>17</sup> In the first instance then, we see that the people we are to refrain from harming, and thus to treat justly, *are always regarded as members of a community*. They are *dêmotas kai politas*— 'fellow citizens and residents.'<sup>18</sup>

Now precisely what makes a *polis*, or 'city,' a city—what makes it *asteion*, 'civilized'—according to Cleanthes, is the fact that, within in its walls, there is justice: literally, one can "give justice and get justice" (ἔστι δίκην δοῦναι καὶ λαβεῖν). This is to say, it is possible to "give justice" by paying the price for injustice, and to "take justice" by making others pay the price for injustice. Thus, Cleanthes says, "If the city is an arrangement for dwelling having sought safety in which, it is possible for people to give and get justice, then isn't the city civilized? But it is in fact such a dwelling place? So the city is civilized."<sup>19</sup> As in Cicero, the members of the community all gather together, submit to a prohibition on injustice, and thus refrain from injustice or pay the penalty.

Now, according to Katja Vogt, it is human beings' common adherence to the same *nomos* or 'law' that makes them members of the same community.<sup>20</sup> However, since the law in question prescribes that we treat other community members justly, it would be more precise to say that it is one's ability to adhere to justice that makes one a community member. For instance, Cicero remarks, that "among those for whom there is common law, there is common justice, and among those for whom these things are

<sup>15</sup> *De Fin* III.63-4; *Ep.* xc.52; *De Ben.* IV.xviii.2; Rufus, *Lectures* 14.3. Here too, the Stoics are in accord with Aristotle, for whom the political community is prior to the individual citizen—just as the whole body is prior to any of its parts. The whole thus makes life possible for its parts, and even makes the *good* life possible for them (*Pol.* 1253a18–29).

<sup>16</sup> Cicero tells us that the world is "a city or state of which both men and gods are members, and each of us is a part of the world, from which it is a natural consequence that we should prefer the general good to our own" (*De Fin.* III.xix.63. cf. *D.L.* 7.33: *S.V.F.* I.222).

<sup>17</sup> Arius Didymus, ap. Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 15.15.3–5; *S.V.F.* II.528; *L.S.* 67L. Here, we presume some general continuity between the order that Cicero expects to govern individual communities and states and that which governs the world community. If as Vogt has argued at great length, the city of which we should all aspire to become citizens, the so-called "city of sages," is identical with the world community, then individual communities can be expected to reflect the order of that community. Natural law, or right reason, orders the world community (*De Leg.* I.vii.23). It should therefore be reflected in individual communities as well, and just as people become true citizens of the world community by following natural law, they also become true citizens of their own local communities by following that same law (I.xiii.37). Katja Vogt, *Law, Reason, and the Cosmic City: Political Philosophy in the Early Stoa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Chapter Two.

<sup>18</sup> Plutarch, *De Alex. Fort.* 329a–b; *S.V.F.* 1.262; *LS* 67A.

<sup>19</sup> Πόλις μὲν <ει> ἔστιν οἰκητήριον κατασκευάσμα, εἰς ὃ καταφεύγοντας ἔστι δίκην δοῦναι καὶ λαβεῖν, οὐκ ἀστεῖον δὴ πόλις ἐστίν; ἀλλὰ μὴν τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν ἢ πόλις οἰκητήριον· ἀστεῖον ἄρ' ἔστιν ἢ πόλις. *Stob. Ecl.* 11i35-5; *L.S.* 67I; *S.V.F.* I.587.

<sup>20</sup> Katja Vogt, *Law, Reason, and the Cosmic City*, 65 n.1, 85, 105. See Dio Chrystostom: "The [the Stoics] say that a city is a group of people living in the same place and administered by law." Dio Chrysostom 36.20; *L.S.* 67J; *S.V.F.* III.329. The same sentiment is repeated in Arius Didymus: "They are members of a community because of their participation in reason, which is natural law..." Arius Didymus, ap. Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 15.15.3–5; *S.V.F.* II.528.

common must be considered members of the same state” (*De Leg.* I.vii.23).<sup>21</sup> Thus, humans’ adherence to the same law, the law that forbids them from harming others, makes them members of the same community to the extent that this adherence creates the conditions under which they all enjoy the very justice, or in Zeno’s words, *sôtêria*, or ‘safety,’<sup>22</sup> that defines the community. It is thus the justice humans communally share and communally promote that makes them community members. For the community exists where justice does and its boundaries stop where justice does. What’s more, if the law of justice by which we abide is a source of mutual benefit to us. If we are nourished together, as one text puts it, by the same *nomos*, or ‘law,’ then we share a common good: the law and the justice it fosters.<sup>23</sup>

A human who does not act justly is not perceived as a genuine member of the community and is instead considered a *phugas*, or ‘exile.’<sup>24</sup> He can be treated as a member, with all the attendant privileges and obligations, *at most*, only on the strength of his *potential* to begin acting the part.<sup>25</sup> Obviously then, the question of whether animals are to be treated justly will come to turn on the question of whether *we* are capable of seeing them as—at the very least—*potential* members of our communities. Having now established what community life requires, let us now turn to the question of why humans are able to see each other *as at least potentially* fit for both justice and community life.

If Porphyry reports that the Stoics deny that animals can *dikaiopragein*, or ‘do justice,’<sup>26</sup> this must be because the Stoics deny that animals can act in ways that suggest that they have the virtue of justice, the stable disposition from which an action would have to arise before it could be called a *katôrthoma*, a ‘perfected action.’<sup>27</sup> The Stoics indeed

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<sup>21</sup> *Inter quos porro est communio legis, inter eos communio iuris est, quibus autem haec sunt inter eos communia, ei civitatis eiusdem habendi sunt.*

<sup>22</sup> Athenaeus 561c: *S.V.F.* I.263: *L.S.* 67D.

<sup>23</sup> Quoting Zeno, there should be, for all of us, “one way of life and order, like that of a flock flocking together, partaking together of a common law, or pasture” (βίος ἢ καὶ κόσμος, ὥσπερ ἀγέλης συννόμου μῶμ κοινῷ συντρεφομένης). Plutarch, *De Alex. Fort.* 329a–b: *S.V.F.* I.262: *L.S.* 67A.

<sup>24</sup> *Stob. Ecl.* 11i30: *S.V.F.* III.328.

<sup>25</sup> We seem compelled to accept the premise that it is the *potential* for perfect rationality that makes one a member of the human community, although there are texts that suggest that this one will not become a member of the community in the fullest sense until one’s rational faculties have been perfected. In some instances, all those who contain this potential are members of the human are considered members of the community by default, while in others, they cannot be called members until they begin to act as such. Plutarch can complain that, on the one hand, Zeno deems all human beings (*pantas anthrôpous*) fellow citizens, while on the other hand, he treats only the good (*tous agathous*) as fellow citizens (Plutarch, *De Alex. Fort.* 329a–c: *S.V.F.* I.262: *L.S.* 67A). These and similar passages are discussed by Katja Vogt. She conjectures on the basis of a text from Stobaeus that the Stoics allow for varying degrees of rationality and thus varying degrees of membership in the community of gods and humankind, writing “while there is one community of all participating in reason, there is also a community of all those who are perfectly reasonable” (92). Arius Didymus, ap. *Eusebius, Praep. Evang.* 15.15.3–5: *S.V.F.* II.528: *L.S.* 67L.

<sup>26</sup> The Stoics reportedly say, “We cannot act unjustly towards creatures which cannot act justly towards us” (οἷς δὲ οὐκ ἔστι τὸ δικαιοπραγεῖν πρὸς ἡμᾶς, οὐδὲ ἡμῖν πρὸς ἐκεῖνα γίνεται τὸ ἀδικεῖν: *De Abst.* I.6.89).

<sup>27</sup> “Perfected actions are activations in accord with virtue (τα κατ’ ἀρετὴν ενεργήματα), such as being intelligent and acting justly.” *Stob. Ecl.* 8.8.

assimilate justice to the other virtues which all require the kind of *constantia* or ‘consistency’ of which animals are incapable.<sup>28</sup> Because all virtues depend upon consistency, there will be no virtue of justice where there is no consistency, so there will be no virtue of justice where one does not *unfailingly and consistently* spare fellow community members harm.<sup>29</sup>

Consistency is of course especially important when it comes to justice because the good it promotes is that of a stable community, and where there is no consistency, there is no community at all. In Stobaeus, where the virtues associated with friendship and community life are closely associated, we find that friendship “cannot exist apart from trust and stability (*chôris pisteôs kai bebaiotêtos*).<sup>30</sup> It is precisely the vicious person, Stobaeus says, that will “do cruel, violent, and lawless acts” *kairôn epilabomenon*, ‘when opportunities arise.’<sup>31</sup> He lacks consistency in his ability to refrain from harm. It is fully to be expected then when Stobaeus says that such a person is an *agroikos* ‘a rustic,’ and *theriôdês* ‘savage’: he cannot do anything *koinôs*, or ‘in community.’<sup>32</sup> As we can see, a community in the true sense of the word demands a great deal of its members—it demands that they be just in the true sense of the word.<sup>33</sup>

Now the fitness for community is sometimes traced to the capacity or justice,

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<sup>28</sup> As Cicero lays out the virtues, whose purpose it is to “procure and conserve whatever is required for the activities of life, in order both to preserve the fellowship and bonding between men...and in acquiring benefits for oneself and those dear to one,” he emphasizes that all these are associated with *ordo autem et constantia et moderatio*—with ‘order and constancy and moderation.’ *De Off.* I.v.17.

<sup>29</sup> This must be part of the reason Seneca says that animals’ impulses fall short of virtue because they are *inordinatos ac turbidos*, ‘irregular and disordered,’ meaning they arise from a disposition which, under different circumstances, could give rise to impulses inconsistent with virtue. *Ep.* cxxiv.18-19. This might also explain why Porphyry mocks the Stoics for denying animals virtue simply “for not being pure and perfected in relation to virtue” (III.22.216).

<sup>30</sup> Stob. *Ecl.* 11b5; *S.V.F.* III.625; *L.S.* 60P. Note that the same qualities that make one a good friend also make one a good citizen and community member. *D.L.* 7.33; *L.S.* 67A; *S.V.F.* I.222.

<sup>31</sup> Stob. *Ecl.* 11k17; *S.V.F.* III.677. In Cicero, justice is described as “truth and consistency in what is said and agreed” (*dictorum conventorumque constantia et veritas: De Off.* I.vii.23). This seems to apply even where agreements are tacit.

<sup>32</sup> Also, he “does not do anything in community or with friendship (*μήτε κοινῶς τι ποιεῖν μήτε φιλικῶς*).” Hence also the well known adage that “no friendship exists among the inferior, and no inferior man has a friend.” *D.L.* 7.124; *S.V.F.* III.631; *L.S.* 67P.

<sup>33</sup> Contra Sorabji. As Sorabji as observes, we find few instances in which Stoics say animals are fundamentally incapable of justice, and therefore excluded from justice. He claims to find only one passage that directly supports the suggestion that justice mattered to the Stoics: Plutarch, *Soll.* 946b-c (120, 129). But Sorabji explains, “the point here is more one about a lack of reciprocity than a sense of justice” (120). The fact that the Stoics seem to point to no specific defect of reason in animals that rules out the possibility of justice in them, should not lead us to conclude, however, as it does Sorabji, that the Stoics’ reasons for depriving animals of justice has nothing to do with whether they are capable of justice or not, or that “the Greeks did not on the whole share the view...that we are not required to give strict justice to animals who lack a sense of justice” (119). Why, if the Stoics cared so little about whether animals were just or not, would Porphyry adduce so many examples of justice in animals, in order to disabuse us of the view that “animals which are not in our society are savage and unjust” (*De Abst.* III.12.201)? Sorabji nevertheless claims that it was not animals’ capacity for justice or morality that mattered. It was their capacity for reason. Nor was it their capacity for reason insofar as it denoted a capacity for justice, but their capacity for reason alone. In short, “the Stoics are more interested in rationality than moral agency” (129). See further, Richard Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals*, 119-121; 128-130.

which is traced in turn to reason<sup>34</sup>: “now all men have received reason, therefore all men have received justice” (*et omnibus ratio; ius igitur datum est omnibus: De Leg. I.xii.33*).<sup>35</sup> But the question is, more specifically: *Is there a rational faculty humans possess, the lack of which in animals would irrevocably rule out the possibility of animals’ ability to act justly?*

Recall Cicero’s words: Cicero says that humans—at least virtuous ones—will not peruse their ends by harming other community members because they understand that this will endanger the integrity of the community, which will in turn make it more difficult for them to pursue their own ends in communion with others and without being thwarted by others.<sup>36</sup> Thus in order to account for humans’ ability to practice justice, the Stoics attribute this to nothing more than humans’ enlightened self-interest and their ability to comprehend the consequences of justice and injustice. This suspicion is confirmed when Cicero, attempting to isolate the ability human beings possess, which makes them fit for community life, traces it to their ability to see present events in light of future consequences<sup>37</sup>: he says a human is able, “by seeing with ease the whole course of life, to prepare whatever is necessary for living it” (*De Off. I.ii.11*).

<sup>34</sup> Humans and gods, we are told, “are members of a community because of their participation in reason.” Arius Didymus, ap. Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 15.15.3–5: *S.V.F.* II.528: *L.S.* 67L.

<sup>35</sup> The passage reads as follows: The next point, then, is that we are so constituted by nature to receive justice as to share in the sense of justice with one another and to pass it on to all men...But if the judgments of men were in agreement with nature, so that, as the poet says, they ‘considered ‘nothing alien to them which concerns mankind,’ then justice would be equally observed by all. For those creatures who have received the gift of reason from nature have also received right reason (*recta ratio*), and therefore they have also received the gift of law (*lex*), which is right reason applied to command and prohibition. And if they have received the law, then they have received justice (*ius*). And if they have received the law, they have received justice also.” *De Leg. I.xii.33*, trans. Keyes. Another passage reads: “And reason, when it is full grown and perfected, is rightly called wisdom. Therefore, since there is nothing better than reason, and since it exists in man and god, the first common possession of man and god is reason (*prima homini cum deo rationis societas*). But those who have reason in common, must also have right reason in common (*inter quos autem ratio, inter eosdem etiam recta ratio comunus est*). And since right reason is law, we must believe that men have law also in common with the gods (*que cum sit lex, lege quoque consociati homines cum dis putandi sumus*).” *De Leg. I.vii.22-23*, trans. Keyes.

<sup>36</sup> As Epictetus reminds us, a human being cannot pursue his or her ends while endangering the common good because, “Zeus has so constituted the nature of rational animal that he can attain none of his proper goods without contributing to the common good” (ἵνα μηδενὸς τῶν ἰδίων ἀγαθῶν δύνηται τυγχάνειν, ἂν μὴ τι εἰς τὸ κοινὸν ὠφέλιμον προσφέρηται: Epictetus, *Dis.* I.19, 12-15, trans. mod.). It is always the case that men and gods “do everything primarily for themselves.” Damascius, *Commentary upon the Phaedon*, 32: *S.V.F.* II.1118.3. In deriving justice from self-interest, Cicero mentions Socrates, who “rightly used to curse the person who was the first to spate justice from utility.” *De Leg. xii.33-34*.

<sup>37</sup> Cicero certainly could be alluding here to one particular faculty of mind that we know the Stoics ascribed to human beings, and completely denied to animals—the ability to draw inferences from signs. Sextus, *Math.* VIII.275-6; VIII.270. According to the Stoics, although a bird may confusedly associate day with light, the bird does not have a concept of *akolouthia*, of one thing ‘following’ upon another, that would allow it to take something present as a *sêmeion* of something, the impression of which has not yet been materially triggered in it. The example of the bird is taken from Plutarch, and seems to give voice to the Stoic position without being expressly identified as such. Plutarch, *On the Oracle at Delphi* 386f-387a. Where human thought is distinguished from animal thought, it seems to be more precisely because animals are incapable, not of propositional reasoning *per se*, but of inferential reasoning by signs. They do not have impressions that arise from inference and combination. The Stoics’ justifications for depriving animals of this faculty are fraught with difficulties. For example, it is not clear why the Stoics believe all inferences

Here, we must not jump to the same conclusion as Porphyry—that the Stoics must have completely deprived animals of a faculty of mind, without which they could *never possibly* become just.<sup>38</sup> Certainly, human beings have the greatest ability to see the future, but the Stoics never specify one faculty in a particular, the absence of which in animals would be sufficient to rule out the possibility of their achieving justice.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, even lacking faculties such as assent does not seem to prevent animals from remembering the past and anticipating the future, in their own way, so that, for all practical purposes, they are capable of performing what we would call “just actions.”<sup>40</sup> Indeed, animals are explicitly said to perform the *kathêkon*, or ‘appropriate act.’<sup>41</sup> Hierocles even speaks of animals as making *anokha*, ‘truces,’ and ‘agreements,’ when it serves their interests.<sup>42</sup> If

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from signs must take the form of ‘if...then’ judgments, or why, if animals were incapable of ‘if...then’ judgments they would also be incapable of inferences from signs. It is not our intention however, to enter into these matters here, but to lay out what must have been the general outlines of the Stoics’ argument. Richard Sorabji, “Perceptual Content in the Stoics,” *Phronesis* 35 (1990), 313.

<sup>38</sup> Porphyry, at the beginning of Book III of *De Abstinentia*, disclaims knowledge of the specific kind of *logos* the Stoics consider animals to lack, which they would have to have in order to qualify as “rational,” and to be subject to justice. Porphyry attributes to the Stoics the view that *he* considers it most reasonable for them to hold, the view that Plutarch had previously ascribed to them when he attacked them for implicitly characterizing animals’ deficiency as an “absence of reason rather than as its imperfection or weakness” (*De Soll.* 962c5). Porphyry casually conjectures that the Stoics *seem* “to predicate of animals the complete lack of *logos*” (τὴν παντελῆ στέρησιν αὐτῶν κατηγορεῖν), and then says the Stoics must believe that the *logos* that animals lack is “*logos* in all respects” (ἀπλῶς δὲ τοῦ λόγου: III.2.187).

<sup>39</sup> For example, when in *De Officiis*, it is the author’s explicit aim to list the inborn capacities that make humans especially fit for community life, he says only this: “Man, however, is a sharer in reason, this enables him to perceive consequences, to see the causes of things, to understand the rise and progress of events, so to speak; to compare similarities and to link and combine future with present events; and by seeing with ease the whole course of life, to prepare whatever is necessary for living it” (*De Off.* I.ii.11-12). In *De Legibus*, the list of faculties that account for humans’ sociality is also long and imprecise: the human animal is “endowed with foresight and quick intelligence, complex, keen, possessing memory, full of reason and prudence” (I.vii.22).

<sup>40</sup> In Plutarch, we encounter the question of whether animals can remember events from the past and adjust their behavior accordingly. What is it in animals, Plutarch asks, that “remembers and fears the painful and longs for the beneficial, contriving, if that is not present, to secure its presence among them, preparing lairs and refuges, and again traps for prey and escape routes from attackers?” (*Soll.* 961c). According to Plutarch, the Stoics do not allow animals to engage in these activities in the strict sense: they say “the bee only ‘as-if’ (*hôsanei*) remembers, and the swallow ‘as if’ prepares and the lion is ‘as-if’ angry, and the deer ‘as-if’ afraid” (*Soll.* 961e-f). Sorabji speculates, that in order to engage in these activities in the strict sense they had to arise from assent and rational impulse. Richard Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals*, 52-54. See also *De Abst.* III.22.

<sup>41</sup> “The *kathêkon* is defined as the consistent in life, which when carried out has a reasonable defense... This extends even to the irrational among creatures, for they also act in a particular respect consistently with their nature.” Stob. *Ecl.* 8.5; cf. *D.L.* vi.107: *S.V.F.* III.493. Seneca also admits, “a certain sort of virtue will be found in a dumb animal...” (*Ep.* cxxiv.20). Seneca however, cites as explanation for the fact that animals cannot possess *perfectae naturae bonum*, the ‘good of perfect nature’ the fact that animals recollect the past “only when they are confronted with present reminders,” and “the future does not come within the ken of dumb beasts” (*Ep.* xvii.16-18).

<sup>42</sup> Hierocles, *Berliner Klassikertexte* 4 (Berlin: 1906): 3, 19ff. A bull perceives that its horns are for fighting, the bird that its wings are for flying, and thus the respect in which these instruments can be used to its own ends (*Ep.* cxxi.18-20; *Diog.* VII.85). Why not then suppose that the animal perceives it is to some useful end, and to its own benefit, to assist the other members of its species? Richard Sorabji, “Perceptual Content in the Stoics,” *Phronesis* 35 (1990), 307.

animals can perform individual acts of justice, they still seem unlikely to achieve a stable disposition toward justice—although this possibility is never definitively ruled out.

Indeed, in none of our sources do the Stoics seem to directly tie the capacity for justice to a specific faculty of mind and argue on this basis (1.) that the ability for justice is exclusive to human beings, or (2.) that since animals lack this faculty, they can never be just. Instead, they seem to make a series of arguments: (i.) animals have not yet given us sufficient evidence to believe they are *theoretically* capable of achieving the disposition required of a community member,<sup>43</sup> (ii.) too many *practical* obstacles stand between animals and the achievement of this disposition.<sup>44</sup> Further, (iii.) even if animals

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<sup>43</sup> It seems obvious to the Stoics that humans and gods are uniquely created for community and society (*nata esse... causa... communitatis et societatis suae: De Fin. III.xx.66*). Thus, they would probably say that the fact that animals do not display the civic virtue necessary for community life is self-evident. From this fact, they might say, we can infer that animals must not have the faculties required for community life although we do not necessarily have to point to one defect in particular that is responsible. To Porphyry, this argument seems circular: since we do not see animals engaged in the requisite kind of virtue, they must not be rational. On the other hand, the reason we know that they don't have the requisite virtue, but a semblance thereof, is that they are not sufficiently rational. In other words, when the Stoics defend the claim that animals lack virtue, they point to the fact that they lack reason (II.11.201, III.13.202), and then when they defend the claim that animals lack reason, they point to the fact that they lack virtue (III.13.202). First, the very fact that Porphyry can accuse them of circularity, seems to speak to the fact that the Stoics did not provide a "better" argument by pointing to an incapacitating defect in animal reason. Second, Porphyry's complaint seems to have some basis in fact: the Stoics must have said the "virtue" animals have is not virtue in the strict sense, and if they sought to defend this claim at all, they must have done so on the grounds that this so-called virtue did not possess the signs of true virtue. For virtue in the true sense "can exist only in that which has reason," since otherwise it displays a false consistency, guided as it is by impulses that are *inordinatos ac turbidos*, 'irregular and disordered,' as compared with rational impulses, which are always consistent and orderly. *Ep. cxxiv.18-19*. This is apparently because having ordered impulses requires one to know *quare, quatenus, quemadmodum*, 'why, by how much, and by what means.'<sup>43</sup> But again, Seneca cites no further reason for animals inability to achieve the consistency of action that virtue requires. Further, what Porphyry considers a circular argument, the Stoics considered a tautology: if animals lack virtue in the true sense of the term, then by definition they lack reason in the true sense of the term, and vice versa. Here, all the Stoics thought they needed to do was to point to animal's self-evident lack of virtue, since this was all they meant in denying them reason as well.

<sup>44</sup> Cicero writes:

But it seems we must trace back to their ultimate sources the principles of fellowship and society that nature has established among men (*sed quae naturae principia sint comunitatis et societatis humanae, repetendum videtur altius*); the first principle is that which is discerned in the community between all members of the human race (*cernitur in universi generis humani societate*); and that bond of connection is reason and speech (*eius autem vinculum est ratio et oratio*), which by the process of teaching an learning, of communicating, discussing and reasoning associate men together and unite them in a sort of natural community (*quae docendo, discendo, communicando, disceptando, iudicando conciliat inter se omnes coniungitque naturali quadam societate*). In no other particular are we further removed from the nature of beasts; for we admit that they may have courage (horses and lions, for example); but we do not say that they have justice, equity, and goodness (*iustitiam, aequitatem, bonitatem*); for they are not endowed with reason or speech. This, then is the most comprehensive bond that unites men together as men and all to all. (*De Off. I.xvi.50-51*).

Notice that here Cicero places the origins of human community in rationality and speech. He also stresses that it is "by the power of reason" (*vi rationis*) that humans are brought "to the community of speech and life" (*ad orationis et ad vitae societatem: De Off. I.iii.iv*). Augustine too says, probably referring to a Stoic



could, *in theory*, achieve this disposition with each other, they could not maintain such a disposition in their dealings *with us*.<sup>45</sup> Finally—and this is point we will focus upon—failing all of the above, (iv.) it would be, *practically speaking*, impossible for *us* to treat *them* as community members. As we can see, the Stoics’ argument seems to be directed less at definitively ruling out the theoretical possibility of justice in animals and more at undermining the *practical possibility of establishing a community of justice between humans and animals*.

The details can be found in Porphyry’s *De Abstinencia*, where he reports the Stoics’ claim that if we extend justice to animals, there will be two possible results: One possibility is that, in being just to animals, and sparing them harm, “we act unjustly by sparing them.” In other words, we will do injustice to other human beings, and this will require acting against our social instincts. The second possibility is that “if we spare, and do not employ them, that it will be impossible for us to live” (I.4.87-88). That is to say, sparing animals and plants will require stifling our most basic survival instincts. Further, we will “live the life of brutes, if we reject the use of which they are capable of affording” (I.4.87-88).<sup>46</sup>

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argument, that animals are not “brought into community with us by reason” (*nobis ratione sociantur: Civ. Dei. I.xx.*). Here, Cicero and Augustine conceive of reason as the *means* by which a community is formed. Describing reason expressible in language as the very *vinculum*, ‘bond,’ which binds mankind together, Cicero says that the reason animals have none of the civic virtues, chief among them justice, is that they cannot teach, learn, or discuss their affairs with one another. This is to say, animals’ inability to discuss the ends for the sake of which they might gather together and unite around a common cause or causes, will prevent them from establishing ties and relations of the same strength as human beings, and thus, they will be left without sufficient reason to refrain from injustice and practice justice. The argument here, insofar as it is one, does not attempt to draw a necessary connection between language and justice. But it does strongly suggest that, without language, animals are unlikely to practice justice.

<sup>45</sup> Here, it must be remembered that that human communities exist not just for the purposes of safeguarding human beings from harm, as though this were an end in itself. Once folded into a community together, human beings’ interests are protected, but the conditions are also created under which they may seek their ends and enlist the help of others in doing so. We see evidence of this in Stoic texts. The human community, identical to the city of sages, is associated with friendship, and friendship, which is itself a kind of *koinonia biou*, a ‘community or partnership in life,’ is further associated with the joint pursuit of *koina agathata*, or ‘common ends’ (Stob. Ecl.11b5; S.V.F. III.625). Chief among these ends is virtue, which according to the Stoics, friendships and communities, as *poietika agatha*, are unique among externals in fostering (*D.L. vii.95-97*). How then can animals be expected to join with us in community life, if they have not even the means to discuss with us, much less comprehend, the specifically human ends for the sake of which the community is preserved and justice is practiced? It may have been for this that reason the Stoics conclude that animals “have no relation with us” (τὰ μηδὲν ἡμῖν προσήκοντα: I.4.87). We need not interpret this to mean that we have no blood relation with animals, only that there is, so to speak “nothing between us”—we have no common interests.

<sup>46</sup> The relevant passage reads as follows:

Our opponents [the Peripatetics and the Stoics] therefore say, in the first place, that if we extend (τείνωμεν) what is just, not only to the rational, but also to the irrational (τὸ ἄλογον), conceiving that not only gods and men pertain to us (πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἡγούμενοι οικείως), but that there is likewise an alliance between us and brutes, who have no relation with us (τὰ μηδὲν ἡμῖν προσήκοντα)—and if we do not employ some of them for work, and use others for food, from a conviction that the association which is between us and them is the same as that of a polity, and

Not coincidentally, the first contemporary environmental ethicists to propose that animals be considered members of an ethical community were forced to respond to a similar objection. Loggers without other means of employment, the objection went, could never rise above their self-interested instincts if they were asked to vote on the fate of owls inhabiting a forest. If a person were one of the loggers' blood relations, Varner added, she would feel a much stronger impulse to serve family in the industry than to hasten to the owls' aid.<sup>47</sup> This is the Stoics' position. They add, however, that when faced with a conflict of this kind, we are faced with the choice either of reneging on our promise to treat animals justly, or, of breaking the very ties of mutual aid and support between human beings, which it is the purpose of justice to foster.<sup>48</sup> Thus, "imposing on justice that which it cannot bear (προσάπτων τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ ὃ μὴ δύναται φέρειν), both destroys its power (καὶ τὸ δυνατόν αὐτῆς ἀπόλλυσι)"—destroys, that is, the ties of mutual benefit among human beings—"and destroys that which is appropriate, by what is foreign (καὶ διαφθείρει τῷ ἀλλοτρίῳ τὸ οἰκείον)"—destroys, that is, what is 'near and dear' by what is 'foreign and unfamiliar' (I.4.87; cf. III.26.223).

Yet the argument here is not simply that we should not be just to animals *at all* because we can't *always* be just to them. The argument is that humans can only be expected to be just to those with whom they have the real, live possibility of forming and maintaining a genuine community. Now, since a community member is someone whom one *completely* refrains from harming, and who *completely* refrains from harming oneself, it would be impossible for human beings to consider all animals potential community members, since humans would be aware of the possibility that, at some future moment, animals may harm them, or they may harm animals. Humans know in advance, in other words, that the bonds of justice between them and animals will never be absolute. They know in advance that they and animals will be unlikely to form a stable community

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that it is strange and dishonorable to the community (ἔκφυλα καὶ ἄτιμα τῆς κοινωνίας καθάπερ πολιτείας νομίζοντες)—then justice will be confounded, and things immovable be moved (τὴν δικαιοσύνην συγχέεισθαι καὶ τὰ ἀκίνητα κινεῖσθαι). Someone who deals with such creatures as if they were human beings, sparing them and not harming them, imposing on justice that which it cannot bear (προσάπτων τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ ὃ μὴ δύναται φέρειν), both destroys its power, and corrupts that which is appropriate, by what is foreign (καὶ τὸ δυνατόν αὐτῆς ἀπόλλυσι καὶ διαφθείρει τῷ ἀλλοτρίῳ τὸ οἰκείον). For it necessarily follows, either that we act unjustly by sparing them, or if we spare, and do not employ them (γίγνεται γὰρ ἢ τὸ ἀδικεῖν ἀναγκαῖον ἢ μὴ ἀφειδοῦσιν), that it will be impossible for us to live (τὸ ζῆν ἀδύνατον καὶ ἄπορον). We shall, in a sense, live the life of beasts by rejecting the use of beasts. (*De Abst.* I.4.87-88)

<sup>47</sup> G.E. Varner, "No Holism Without Pluralism," *Environmental Ethics* 19 (1991): 176. See further: J. Baird Callicott, "The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic," in *Companion to A Sand County Almanac* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1987). J. Baird Callicott, "Holistic Environmental Ethics and the Problem of Ecofascism," in *Beyond the Land Ethic: More Essays in Environmental Philosophy*. State University of New York Press (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999).

<sup>48</sup> Justice is defined by Cicero as "the skill to treat with consideration and wisdom those with whom we are associated, in order that we may, through their cooperation have our wants supplied in full and overflowing measure..." (*De Off.* II.v.18).

together—not just because animals could prove incapable of playing the part of community members, *but because humans could too*.

If we cannot even imagine members of the animal kingdom as potential or future members of our community, then it makes no sense to speak of any obligation to treat all animals, as a class, justly. Further, the Stoics would argue that we can only see animals as potential members of our community at the cost of completely altering our conception of what it means to be a “community member.” Since, technically speaking, a “community member” is someone who is to be absolutely and categorically safeguarded from harm, we could only consider animals “community members” by drastically altering our conception of the same, so that it would become possible to conceive a “community member” who could be harmed without injustice—a blatant contradiction in terms, for the Stoics. It should be clear however, that the Stoics’ position on the animal question *has more to do with their conception of community than with animals’ irrationality*.

## Finding the Definition of Soul in Aristotle's *De Anima*

Things aren't always what they seem. For example, Aristotle says early in *De Anima* that soul is the "form of a natural body having life potentially"<sup>1</sup> or "the first actuality of a natural, instrumental body."<sup>2</sup> These statements look like they could be an Aristotelian definition of soul, since they use terminology that is central to his philosophy—'form', 'actuality', 'nature'—and it would make sense for him to define soul at the beginning of his treatise on that subject. However, despite their language and location, commentators point out difficulties with this understanding of these statements.<sup>3</sup> The problems arise because soon after he gives this account of soul, Aristotle indicates that his presentation is unfinished, saying that what he has given so far has been sketched in outline.<sup>4</sup> He then immediately declares that he will go over soul again and in doing so he will follow the proper way to define.<sup>5</sup> It seems, then, that we must look elsewhere for Aristotle's real definition of soul.

But as I said, things aren't always what they seem. In this paper I will argue that these initial statements that look like a definition are in fact that—Aristotle's considered definition of soul. What is potentially misleading, and what has misled the majority of commentators, is the transitional material that follows. I will focus here on explaining this transition, arguing that Aristotle does not intend by it to reject or qualify the definition he initially gives. In the end, finding Aristotle's definition of soul is not a matter of searching. When the context is clarified, his definition turns out to be right where it looks like it is.

The transition in view is split into two parts, one looking forward and one looking back. The retrospective part comes at the end of 2.1, the chapter where Aristotle first presents his account of soul and gives the definitions above. He concludes this chapter by indicating that his presentation has been provisional in some way: "So then, let soul be defined and sketched like this in outline (τύπω)."<sup>6</sup> Immediately following this, he begins 2.2 by expressing his intent to start afresh and giving some requirements for a definition.

Since what is clear and more known with respect to reason (κατὰ τὸν λόγον) comes to be from what is unclear but more evident (φανερωτέρων), it is necessary to try to go over the soul again in this way, for the defining account (τὸν ὀριστικὸν λόγον) must not only show what is the case (τὸ ὄτι), as most of the definitions do, but it must contain and make evident the cause (τὴν αἰτίαν). But nowadays the accounts of definitions are like conclusions.<sup>7</sup>

The main question about the transition is how the forward-looking statements about methodology and definitions relate to the discussion of soul in 2.1 and the retrospective

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<sup>1</sup> 2.1, 412<sup>a</sup>20-21. All translations from *De Anima* are my own, unless otherwise noted, based on W. D. Ross, ed., *Aristotle, De Anima*, with an introduction and commentary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961; repr., London: Sandpiper Books Ltd., 1999).

<sup>2</sup> 2.1, 412<sup>b</sup>5-6. Aristotle presents the definitions as being the same, and I take them to be synonymous, but I will not argue for that here. For a different view, see, for example Robert Bolton, "Aristotle's Definitions of the Soul: 'De Anima' ii, 1-3," *Phronesis* 23.3 (1978).

<sup>3</sup> Philoponus, Averroes, Owens, Bolton, Sprague, Menn, Johnston, Johansen, Diamond, and Shields all find the account in 2.1 to be in some way inadequate as a definition. Aquinas could also be seen as finding the account inadequate in a sense, but the inadequacy found is relatively minor. See below for an explanation of these positions.

<sup>4</sup> 413<sup>a</sup>9-10.

<sup>5</sup> 413<sup>a</sup>11-16.

<sup>6</sup> 413<sup>a</sup>9-10.

<sup>7</sup> 413<sup>a</sup>11-16.

statement about it in the transition. Most commentators take the definition of soul in 2.1 to be, in the terms of the transition, a definition like a conclusion.<sup>8</sup> However, I will be arguing otherwise. It is the definition showing the cause.<sup>9</sup> In order to make the case for this, I will first look at the two kinds of definition—what it means to be a definition that shows the cause or that is like a conclusion. Then I will examine what it means for the account of 2.1 to be “in outline.” Explaining these aspects of the transition will clarify its meaning and the nature of the discussion of soul in 2.1.

Here Aristotle lists two features to look for in his fresh account. First, he will start from what is unclear but more evident to us and proceed to what is more known with respect to reason or nature. By beginning with the familiar, one can work up to the principles that actually articulate the world. Second, the definition given will do more than just show the facts. It will state the explanation for those facts. Aristotle goes on to clarify this last point, giving both an example of a definition that only says what is the case and the corresponding improved definition that shows the cause.

For example, what is squaring? An equilateral rectangle being equal to an oblong. But such a definition is a statement of the conclusion. The one who says that squaring is finding the mean proportional states the cause of the thing.<sup>10</sup>

Squaring is in fact making a square that is equal in area to a given rectangle. This is the definition available even to someone with a rudimentary grasp of geometry. It is common knowledge. However, if this is all I can say about squaring, I don't actually know what the process of squaring *is*, because I don't know how to get from the rectangle to the square. I know the conclusion of the process, but I don't know the explanation for why squaring takes place. If I become a geometer, then I know that the process of squaring is finding the mean proportional. A mean proportional is a quantity  $x$  that stands in magnitude between two other quantities  $a$  and  $b$ , such that  $a/x = x/b$ . When these quantities are related in this way, the rectangle with sides of length  $a$  and  $b$  is equal in area to the square with a side of length  $x$ . Thus, finding the mean

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<sup>8</sup> While they differ as to what this means, the following commentators all say that the definition in 2.1 is like a conclusion: Philoponus, *On Aristotle's On the Soul 2.1-6*, trans. William Charlton (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 27 (225,34-226,6); Averroes (Ibn Rushd) of Cordoba, *Long Commentary on the De Anima of Aristotle*, trans. Richard C. Taylor, subed. Thérèse-Anne Druart (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 121-122; Joseph Owens, “Aristotle's Definition of Soul,” in *Aristotle: The Collected Papers of Joseph Owens*, ed. John R. Catan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 114; Bolton, 259; Rosamond Kent Sprague, “A Missing Middle Term: ‘De Anima’ II,2,” *Phronesis* 41.1 (1996): 104; Stephen Menn, “Aristotle's Definition of Soul and the Programme of the *De Anima*,” *Oxford studies in Ancient Philosophy* 22 (2002): 103-104; Rebekah Johnston, “Aristotle's *De Anima*: On Why the Soul is Not a Set of Capacities,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 19.2 (2011): 194-195; Eli Diamond, *Mortal Imitations of Divine Life: The Nature of the Soul in Aristotle's De Anima* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015), 51; Christopher Shields, ed. and trans., *Aristotle, De Anima* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2016), 182-183. Aquinas also says that the definition in 2.1 is a conclusion (119), but this is because he thinks that while it is better known unconditionally, it is arrived at by what is better known to us (134, 136). Thomas Aquinas, *A Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima*, trans. Robert Pasnau (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> A few commentators agree with me that the definition in 2.1 is not like a conclusion. They differ with each other as to why, and they also differ with my account by having, at minimum, a different view of why Aristotle calls the definition an outline. Simplicius, *On Aristotle's On the Soul 1.1-2.4*, trans. J. O. Urmson, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 129 (96,17-20), 131 (97,29-98,5); Ronald Polansky, *Aristotle's De Anima* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 145, 186; Thomas Kjeller Johansen, *The Powers of Aristotle's Soul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 34, 36-37.

<sup>10</sup> 413<sup>a</sup>17-20.

proportional between  $a$  and  $b$  is the explanation for why the rectangle formed from them is equal to the square produced. The definition that states this shows the cause and is what is more known with respect to reason, while the definition of squaring as making a square that is equal to a rectangle only states the conclusion and is what is more evident to us.<sup>11</sup>

Aristotle illustrates the two kinds definition even more clearly in an example from *Posterior Analytics*. There he gives various definitions of thunder, one of which he says is like a conclusion: “Again, a definition of thunder is noise in the clouds; and this is a conclusion of the demonstration of what it is.”<sup>12</sup> This is, of course, the familiar definition of thunder, the one that is evident to us. He also gives the definition which shows the cause—“a noise of fire being extinguished in the clouds.”<sup>13</sup> This second definition includes the information about the cause of the thing being defined. Thunder is a noise in the clouds because it is an extinction of fire there, and such extinctions produce noise. Or, put into a demonstration of which the first definition is the conclusion:

1) Extinction of fire belongs to the clouds.

2) Noise belongs to the extinction of fire.

Therefore: Noise belongs to the clouds.<sup>14</sup>

‘Extinction of fire’ is the middle term—the term that appears in both premises—and consequently it is the cause. Knowing this cause, that thunder is due to an extinction of fire, is a scientific achievement (assuming it is true), and is therefore what is known by nature rather than what is known to the individual.

Given this explanation of the two kinds of definition, one expects Aristotle to go on and give a definition of soul that shows the cause, and given the first, retrospective part of the transition—which declares the definition in 2.1 to be sketched in outline—it is natural to assume that the definition there will be the corresponding definition that is like a conclusion. As I noted earlier, this is in fact the view of many commentators. If it is correct then Aristotle’s ultimate definition of soul is not to be found in 2.1 but must be sought elsewhere.

Despite the common acceptance and plausibility of this position, however, it is not the best way to view what Aristotle is doing. An immediate problem is raised by Thomas Johansen. He observes that even when just looking at the account of 2.1 it is problematic to call the statement there merely a conclusion. Unlike the examples of thunder as a sound in the clouds and squaring as finding an equilateral rectangle equal to an oblong, to say that soul is the substance as form of a body having life potentially is to give a definition that is already quite theoretically

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<sup>11</sup> What I have just described is the majority position on the passage, since the following all see the second definition as explaining why the squaring happens: Simplicius, 131 (97,18-26); Joe Sachs, trans., *Aristotle’s On the Soul and On Memory and Recollection*, second printing with minor revisions (Santa Fe: Green Lion Press, 2004), 84n 2; Polansky, 172; Johansen, 35; Shields, 183. There are two notable alternatives. Bolton proposes that the first definition is deficient because it only gives a sufficient condition for squaring, not a necessary one (268-269).

Diamond argues that the cause missing from the first definition is a cause for the sake of which; in this case Aristotle is not thinking of a proof that uses the mean proportional to construct a square, as above, but he has in mind the reverse, a proof that constructs a square of equal area to the rectangle in order to determine the mean proportional (50-51). Neither alternative fits as well as the majority position with parallel definitions of thunder I discuss next.

<sup>12</sup> *Post. An.* 2.10, 94<sup>a</sup>7-9, Barnes translation. Jonathan Barnes, ed. and trans., *Aristotle, Posterior Analytics*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

<sup>13</sup> 2.10, 94<sup>a</sup>5, Barnes translation.

<sup>14</sup> This is based on the reconstruction of David Charles, *Aristotle on Meaning and Essence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 43.

informed.<sup>15</sup> He argues that when Aristotle criticizes definitions for being like conclusions in the transition, it is best to read him as having his predecessors in mind, not the accounts he gave in 2.1.<sup>16</sup> While Johansen takes a major step away from the traditional view of the transition, he still argues that the definition in 2.1 is lacking and the ultimate definition must be sought elsewhere.<sup>17</sup> I will argue that his position still does not go far enough. The definition in 2.1 is not a definition as conclusion, but neither is it merely preliminary. It is the more important causal definition.

In order to see this, it is important to turn to the retrospective part of the transition and ask what Aristotle means by labeling the account of 2.1 ‘in outline’ (τύπω). Clearly this means that the account given is lacking in some way, but the question is in what way. The meaning of this term is best determined by looking at Aristotle’s use of it elsewhere, and I will begin with passages that have been used to argue for the traditional view of the transition. Robert Bolton discusses the term in depth while arguing that the definition in 2.1 is only a nominal definition, the kind that serves as a conclusion.<sup>18</sup> He says that “an account ‘in outline’ (τύπω) is, according to the *Topics*, a general (καθόλου) account which does not give an ‘accurate definition’ (ἀκριβὴς λόγος) but which does permit us to know (γνωρίζειν) the thing described in some way.”<sup>19</sup> He then ties this to the distinction between an account that references what is more known to us and one that appeals to what is known by nature. The account appealing to what is intelligible in itself will be the accurate one, while the account that relies on what is closer to us is the one in outline. He gives support to this view by referencing *History of Animals* 491<sup>a</sup>7-14, which “further describes an account ‘in outline’ as one which gives derivative facts (τὰ συμβεβηκότα) about something in contrast to giving the theoretical principles (αἰτίαι) by reference to which such facts are explained.”<sup>20</sup>

While these are good passages to examine in order to determine the meaning of τύπω, they do not support Bolton’s position as strongly as he argues. The passage from *History of Animals* contains, as Bolton points out, two linked contrasts: between an account in outline (τύπω) and one that is detailed (δι’ ἀκριβείας), and between collecting facts and finding causes.

What has just been said has been stated thus by way of outline (τύπω), so as to give a foretaste of the matters and subjects which we have to examine; detailed (δι’ ἀκριβείας) statements will follow later; our object being to determine first of all the differences that

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<sup>15</sup> Johansen, 36.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>17</sup> He argues that the initial statements answer two questions raised in the first book of *De Anima*: Under what category does soul fall? Does soul exist potentially or actually? (*DA* 1.1, 402<sup>a</sup>23-26.) The outline in 2.1 establishes that soul is a substance and an actuality (Johansen, 34). He goes on to explain that because the account of 2.1 is not a definition, 2.2 will need to supply the definition that is like a conclusion in addition to giving the definition that shows the cause. Johansen takes the first to be the statement “We say that the ensouled (τὸ ἐμψυχόν) is distinguished from the unensouled by life” (413<sup>a</sup>20-22), and the causal definition to be one that explains why ensouled things are alive (Johansen, 37). There are many ways for a thing to be alive, however, so this means that there are going to be multiple accounts of the cause of this life. The definition of soul, then, will ultimately be the accounts of each of the capacities that *De Anima* goes on to provide (39-40).

<sup>18</sup> In fact, Bolton sees four separate definitions in this chapter, and finds these definitions to have significant differences from each other (260-262). The upshot of his argument is that we should recognize the limited scope of these definitions and that doing so will eliminate some of the traditional problems that arise with respect to them (264-266).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 259. The passage in view is 101<sup>a</sup>18-24.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 259.

exist and the actual facts in the case (τὰ συμβεβηκότα) of all of them. Having done this, we must attempt to discover the causes (τὰς αἰτίας).<sup>21</sup>

Here the contrast between facts and causes clarifies the contrast between an outline and a detailed account. Aristotle only spoke in outline because he was just giving facts, not going deeper and uncovering causes. However, the other passage discussed by Bolton illustrates that this is not a necessary feature of an outline. This passage from *Topics* also contrasts an account τύπῳ with one that is ἀκριβῆ, but there is no implication that the first account leaves out the cause.

In general, as regards all those [kinds of reasoning] already mentioned and to be mentioned hereafter, let this much (τοσοῦτον) distinction suffice for us, since we do not propose to give the detailed definition (τὸν ἀκριβῆ λόγον) of any of them but merely wish to describe them in outline (τύπῳ), considering it quite enough, in accordance with the method which we have set before us, to be able to recognize each of them in some way or other.<sup>22</sup>

Here Aristotle omits any mention of facts and causes, but when describing the outline account he has given, he uses quantitative language, saying that ‘this much’ (τοσοῦτον) distinction will suffice. He only gave enough in the outline account so that the things described could be recognized. There is more that he could say about each, but to say it would be to give a detailed account, one that is unnecessary for the purposes at hand.

That τύπῳ often has a solely quantitative sense is further illustrated by two passages from *Generation of Animals*. Each uses the antonym ‘detailed’ (δι’ ἀκριβείας) in the way just described, and in addition, they distance the meaning of ‘in outline’ from the distinction between factual and causal, because in each of these passages the outline account already discusses the cause. The first comes after a discussion of the occurrence or absence of a menstrual discharge in a few kinds of animals, when Aristotle says, “A detailed (δι’ ἀκριβείας) account of this matter, as it concerns every sort of animal, is to be found in the *Researches upon Animals*.”<sup>23</sup> Not only does he here specify that the detailed account will concern all the animals—a quantitative change—but in the discussion immediately preceding he explains the cause of certain animals lacking a discharge. The detailed account is only giving more information, not a better kind. Similarly, when discussing eggs later on, Aristotle explains why the yolk and the white are separate from each other—the cause—and then says, “For a detailed (δι’ ἀκριβείας) account of how these stand to one another both at the beginning of the process of generation and during the process of the young animals’ formation, ... what is written in the *Researches* should be studied.”<sup>24</sup> Again, the detailed account is just adding more information.<sup>25</sup>

If τύπῳ is understood in these quantitative terms—if it is truly understood to mean ‘in outline’ as it is usually translated—then this helps to explain several features of the chapters in

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<sup>21</sup> *HA* 1.6, 491<sup>a</sup>7-11, Peck translation. A. L. Peck, trans., *Aristotle, History of Animals, Books I-III* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965).

<sup>22</sup> *Top.* 1.1, 101<sup>a</sup>18-24, Forster translation, modified by substituting ‘detailed’ for ‘exact’. E. S. Forster, trans., *Aristotle, Posterior Analytics and Topica* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).

<sup>23</sup> *GA* 1.20, 728<sup>b</sup>12-14, Peck translation, modified by substituting ‘detailed’ for ‘exact’. A. L. Peck, trans., *Aristotle, Generation of Animals* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942).

<sup>24</sup> *GA* 3.2, 753<sup>b</sup>14-17, Peck translation, modified by substituting ‘detailed’ for ‘exact’.

<sup>25</sup> I do not intend to argue that ἀκριβής and ἀκριβεία always speak solely in quantitative terms. Aristotle may use them in other ways, too. I just want to illustrate that he does use them to discuss quantity and that τύπῳ can be an antonym to this sense.



*De Anima* on either side of the transition. First, if Aristotle does not mean to say that the definition in 2.1 is qualitatively deficient, then the problem raised by Johansen does not arise, because he is not saying that the definition is like a conclusion. Second, it would explain why there are some notable omissions in the account of 2.1: Aristotle never argues that soul is a substance,<sup>26</sup> and he assumes that nourishing is a relevant activity to discuss when examining soul, despite the fact that this goes against the accounts of his predecessors.<sup>27</sup> Both of these omissions are remedied in 2.2 when Aristotle fills in the outline.<sup>28</sup> The τῦπε, then, is not qualifying the definition in 2.1, but the whole account there. That account presents Aristotle's considered definition and is his ultimate account of what soul is, but it is just a sketch of this view. The sketch is filled out in 2.2 and beyond.

Finally, it would explain why the definition in 2.1 is so similar to the one found at the end of 2.2.<sup>29</sup> The definition in 2.2 is not an improvement upon the one in 2.1. Instead, it is a restatement of the original definition in the context of showing that it is the definition of soul that displays the cause, as the prospective part of the transition requires. This is shown through an argument proceeding by induction, going from what is more evident to what is known by reason.<sup>30</sup> What is evident, granted by everyone, is that soul is the primary cause of life. In other cases, that which is the primary cause of an activity—knowing or being healthy, for example—is the form. Therefore, soul is a form. Reversing the inductive argument, and bringing back in the information that the ensouled body is a natural one, we get the deductive argument sought in the transition.

- 1) Form belongs to a natural body.
- 2) The primary cause of life belongs to form.

Therefore: The primary cause of life belongs to a natural body.

The conclusion of this argument is the common definition of soul, as it should be: soul is the primary cause of life in a natural body. The middle term—the cause of the conclusion—is 'form'. Therefore, just as the common definition of thunder is "a noise in the clouds" and the definition showing the cause is "a noise of fire being extinguished in the clouds", the proper definition of soul also incorporates all three terms: soul is the cause of life as the form of a

<sup>26</sup> Commentators offer different explanations for this omission. Pre-modern commentators tend to see no need for an argument that soul is a substance: it was established earlier in *De Anima* or is a fundamental principle. Simplicius, 77 (53,15-21), 81 (56,26-32), summarized at 112 (81,3-4); Philoponus, 7 (207,19-33); Averroes, 107. Polansky takes the view that Aristotle merely assumes soul to be a substance, although he thinks this position is lent justification by the sorts of features that the pre-modern commentators point to (147). Hicks (307) and Shields (166-168) both see Aristotle as providing no argument for the view that soul is a substance, and they find this problematic.

<sup>27</sup> In book one he said that in their accounts of soul his predecessors primarily sought to explain moving and perceiving (1.2, 403<sup>b</sup>25-27), and he only brings up any activities related to nourishing at the end of the book when discussing whether different activities belong to different parts of soul, suggesting that his predecessors did not discuss it much (growing and decaying: 1.5, 411<sup>a</sup>30; 'life', probably in the sense of 'nourishing': 411<sup>b</sup>2). The book ends with a statement that the principle in plants seems to be a kind of soul (1.5, 411<sup>b</sup>27-28), but at the beginning of 2.1 Aristotle addresses the issue again, implying that he had not yet settled it (413<sup>a</sup>25-31). At the end of book one, then, how nourishing relates to soul is still a live question.

<sup>28</sup> He argues by induction that soul is a form—a kind of substance—at 414<sup>a</sup>4-14. Regarding nutritive soul, he argues that plants are also living at 413<sup>a</sup>25-31. Just like other living things, they perform activities—those of growing and nourishing—and they do so based on some internal principle. Thus, the discussion of soul must account for more than just moving and perceiving, the activities on which his opponents tended to focus.

<sup>29</sup> Diamond, for example, notes this as a paradoxical feature of Aristotle's argument in *DA* 2.1-3, one that calls for explanation (37).

<sup>30</sup> This is the argument at 2.2, 414<sup>a</sup>4-14, with the definition appearing at 414<sup>a</sup>27-28.

natural body. But a natural body having the cause of life is one having life potentially. Thus, soul is the form of a natural body having life potentially. We are led back to the definition of 2.1, then, as we should be. It is the definition showing the cause, the final definition of soul. If we want to understand Aristotle's account of soul, we need to return there and examine the formulations he gives of the definition. Now that Aristotle's definition of soul is found, this sets up the potentially bigger project—understanding what his definition means.

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## What Dialogues Disclose About Cyrus the Great

The *Cyropaedia* is one of the few works of classical political philosophy that is approvingly cited by modern political philosophers, from Machiavelli to Bacon, Montesquieu, and Rousseau, and by lesser modern thinkers like Philip Sidney, Ben Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson.

Xenophon recounts in it not only the education of Cyrus but the life that followed his incomplete education in Medea and Persia. And while men like James the First and Sir Phillip Sidney considered the work a guide for the upright and gentlemanly prince, there is reason to think, as Machiavelli did, and as some of our contemporary admirers of Machiavelli do,<sup>1</sup> that the *Cyropaedia* is better understood as a sly guide to foxy, tyrannical rule, achieved above all by “armed prophecy,” that is, by the pretense of serving divine justice.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the only problem with the work, according to this Machiavellian reading, is that it was too sly, too indirect in its tyrannical instruction. Its surface presentation ended up *misleading* men like Scipio Africanus to think, as Machiavelli puts it in the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of *The Prince*, that they, like Cyrus, should be all “chastity, affability, humanity, liberality,” and mercifulness, so that they had to be rescued by more reasonable and ruthless men.<sup>3</sup> And this result serves to justify Machiavelli’s greater frankness about the need for cruelty, dishonesty, rapacity, and so on as a merely *rhetorical* corrective of Xenophon’s work.

Anyone arguing *against* this Machiavellian reading, as I am going to do today, runs the risk of appearing naïvely to recommit the errors of Scipio. Naivety is sometimes a virtue in reading. To help combat the charge, though, I would like first to strengthen the Machiavellian argument by calling attention to a subtle and therefore ignored aspect of it: the Cyrus of Machiavelli’s *Prince* is not simply drawn from Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*. Especially when he

introduces Cyrus in ch. 6 of the *Prince*, Machiavelli is, without saying so, using *Herodotus'* account of the rise of Cyrus' empire, which takes up much of the second book of his *Inquiries*. When Machiavelli refers explicitly to Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* and to Scipio's emulation of Cyrus, in chs. 13 and 14 of the *Prince*, he is showing us that Xenophon has given a much more gussied up or ennobled version of Cyrus than what we receive from Herodotus. And Machiavelli is not the first writer to call attention to these two quite different accounts of Cyrus. That distinction belongs to Xenophon himself. With an amusing cross-reference to Herodotus' work in Book Seven of the *Cyropaedia*, Xenophon nudges his reader to compare and contrast the two works and note his adornments. So by calling attention to the fact that Xenophon has gussied up or ennobled his account of Cyrus over and against that of Herodotus, Machiavelli is pointing to something that Xenophon himself indicates to us. The only question is: to what end has Xenophon ennobled his version? What did Xenophon think his best readers would learn from his, as opposed to Herodotus', type of account?

The evidence that could be marshaled to support the Machiavellian answer, that Xenophon wished to instruct careful readers in the ways of tyranny while hiding these instructions from all others, is ample.<sup>4</sup> I would add, though, that it can be readily seen by any modestly careful reader of the work. Less clearly seen, or more prone to be overlooked, is another important, non-Herodotean element of Xenophon's work: it is rich in *dialogues*, and these dialogues disclose more to us about the characters than any record of forensic speech or deed could possibly do. Not surprisingly, the Socratic Xenophon even includes two 'Socratic' dialogues in his *Cyropaedia*—one between Cyrus and his Socratic father Cambyses and one between Cyrus and Tygranes, who was trained in his youth by an Armenian Socrates. And these lay bare not a mere *pretense* of justice on Cyrus' part, but a genuine if poorly developed or

thought-through desire to benefit others by being a noble instrument of divine justice (*themis*). I'd like to turn now to examine some key parts of the first of these two Socratic dialogues, the exchange between Cyrus and his father Cambyses, to see that, and why, Xenophon does this.

This dialogue marks the end of the incomplete education of Cyrus, and it is made the more intriguing by the fact that many of the things said by Cambyses resemble or echo things that are said by Socrates—the other pole of Xenophon's thought—in the *Memorabilia*. This is especially true of what lies at the heart of the exchange: a far-reaching examination of the justice that has been central to Cyrus' education and on the basis of which he considers himself prepared for and called to a public life of rule. That examination takes on greater importance when we note that Xenophon not only presents Cyrus as a genuinely pious man, but has the exchange begin and end with a discussion of the gods and prophecy. The examination of justice is thus framed by discussions of the gods in whom Cyrus trusts. As it seems to me, in its attention to justice, especially to divine law, the exchange shows us what a fuller or truer education of Cyrus would have entailed.

Cambyses, we learn immediately, taught Cyrus how to read sacrificial victims as well as omens. He did this so that Cyrus would not be dependent on prophets who might deceive him. Cambyses does not trust purported messengers of the gods. His statements suggest, moreover, that successfully “obeying” the gods requires *understanding*; piety is knowledge. The piety that he has taught Cyrus is therefore remarkably rationalist. It attributes to the gods what one might be inclined to attribute to natural consequences: the gods have granted that those who *learn* fare better than those who do not understand, that *workers* fare better than idlers, and that the *careful* fare better than those off their guard. Friendship with these same gods is necessary when knowledge, hard work, and an alert disposition do not suffice.

Cyrus agrees emphatically with his father in this matter, but his response (at 6) actually indicates a broad potential *disagreement* with Cambyses. He says that he not only remembers “hearing” such remarks from Cambyses, but that (in this particular case) it was “necessary to obey the *logos*,” because it was in agreement with *themis*, divine law. It is Cyrus’ devotion to *themis*, moreover, that lies behind his first explicit *disagreement* with Cambyses, over the wisdom of taking on rule rather than remaining a private citizen (8). Cyrus declares that ruling over others “*used to seem to be a very great work to me.*” But he no longer calculates its greatness by “examining rule itself;” he instead considers it by “looking at human beings,” that is, at the existing lazy, self-indulgent, *unjust* rulers. It troubles Cyrus that these rulers “endure in their rule;” he holds that it would be “very shameful” not to overthrow or displace them. The labors of rule “by themselves” would be unattractive to Cyrus were they not seen and taken up by Cyrus as part of a divine call, an invitation to redress the manifest lack of respect for or attention to *themis* among current rulers.

Cambyses attempts to pull Cyrus away from such thinking and back to the “matters themselves,” that is, to the mundane everyday business of securing provisions for an army. He brings out a rather astounding weakness in Cyrus’s thinking: Cyrus has accepted at face value Cyaxares’ promise to provide for however many troops Cyrus brings with him to Media, without limit. Cyrus trusts—where Cambyses does not—not only in Cyaxares’ good will, but in a great bountifulness that will now be made available to him. It seems that Cyrus’ trust in *themis* includes a trust in the gods’ benevolent bounty for human beings who are engaged in just enterprises—a bounty that Cyrus need only redistribute to the genuinely worthy in order to fulfill *themis*. Cyrus has not for a moment considered the limits that may be set to that bounty. And as

Cambyes now makes clear (9), Cyrus's trust of Cyaxares is quite foolish. Cyrus, however, simply asks his father to point out some *other* source of revenue.

Cambyes explains that Cyrus' infantry and cavalry will itself be the source of revenue. Cambyes and Cyrus have before now, it turns out, discussed the matter of his rule over and provision for his army. Cyrus recounts Cambyes's (Socratic) cross-examination of him about what Cyrus learned from a man whom Cyrus paid to teach him generalship. We are shown that from this new teacher Cyrus had learned next to nothing. In particular, Cyrus had not learned household management for the provision of his soldiers, nor how to ensure health or bodily strength, nor any arts that improve works of war, nor how to inculcate in an army enthusiasm for its work, nor how to make an army obedient. All that he learned, in fact, was "tactics," which Cyrus admitted, would be of no benefit without these other five things. Cyrus had asked Cambyes himself to teach him any of the things needed for generalship, but Cambyes had instead advised him to consult those held to be skilled in the art of generalship. But Cyrus didn't take Cambyes' advice; he consulted only himself. And what Cyrus claims to have known in each of the five areas remained deficient, as the exchange demonstrates.

The most revealing of these five provisions turns out to be the fifth, "making the soldiers obedient" (20). What Cyrus claims to know about this matter is, as he now eagerly and proudly lets out, has been gained from his own experience since youth: his Persian education has been in this very thing, *obedience*; and the education has been conducted by means of compulsion to obedience, by his father and then by his teacher and then by the rigorous ruler over all of the youth. The majority of the *laws*, too, he declares, do the same, teaching one "to rule and be ruled." Cyrus claims to have reflected on this—his harsh republican education in obedience—and to have arrived at a conclusion: What incites to obedience, he says, is "praise and honor of

the one who obeys” but also “the dishonoring and punishing of the one who disobeys.” He is rather easily satisfied that the training or habituation through compulsion, reward and punishment, that he has received is a genuine education. Cambyses will call into question the adequacy of such an education.

Cambyses agrees that what Cyrus has described is the road to obedience “by compulsion” (21). That is, classifying praise and blame no less than punishment as a compulsion, Cambyses suggests thereby a disagreement with Cyrus on what constitutes true education. And in fact he now sketches “another” and “shorter” road to take to the much better outcome of having men obey “willingly” (*ekontas*): have them consider *you*, he says, to be “more prudent about their own advantage.” He then gives examples of men who obey those who appear more prudent about their advantage: the sick enthusiastically obey doctors, sailors enthusiastically obey pilots, and some obey those whom they hold to “know the roads better.” If on the other hand people think that they will incur *any harm* by obeying, he says, they are not very willing to yield to punishments nor ready to be seduced “by gifts,” that is, of praise. “For *no one* is willing to receive even gifts when they bring *harm*.” Cambyses all but states that what all human beings look to is their own advantage, even in doing what are considered noble or risky deeds. He thus presents a picture that seems distorted—as if among the soldiers are no men wishing to pursue what is praiseworthy even at some cost or risk to themselves.

Cambyses’ more fundamental claim—that the advantageous is different from and more attractive to men than is the praiseworthy—would seem to be something of which Cyrus is already fully aware. He has after all delivered a revolutionary or corrupting speech to the Persian peers (esp. 1.5.7-8), in which he convinces them that their virtue must be a means to good things or it is shamefully mistaken. So it might seem to be surprising if Cyrus were actually learning



anything now from Cambyses on this important matter. Or does Cyrus perhaps still find achieving what is *praiseworthy* to be the means to one's truest advantage? His response to Cambyses' advice (at 22) certainly indicates an abiding if quiet disagreement with his father. "You are saying, father," he declares, "that for having obedient subjects, nothing is more effectual than to seem to be more prudent than they." That is, Cyrus agrees that winning his subjects' obedience is, as Cambyses has presented it, a matter of demonstrating *prudence* to them, and Cyrus appears to agree with Cambyses on the need for prudent rule over subjects. But there is still light between the two: their agreement rests on Cyrus limiting the import of Cambyses' statement to what is most "effectual" rather than being (as Cambyses intended it) a statement about what is best in all ways or simply. It rests, in addition, on Cyrus' omission of Cambyses' claim that the ruler must appear to the subjects more prudent "about *their* advantage than they." To Cyrus the reference to "their advantage" would be superfluous because to Cyrus *prudence always* includes prudence about the subjects' advantage. That is, Cyrus is disinclined to think that serving his subjects' advantage might not be to his own advantage—disinclined to think that the praiseworthy bestowing of advantages on his subjects may entail the loss of his own advantage.

Finally, as is suggested by Cyrus' next question to Cambyses—how can one *as quickly as possible* acquire a reputation for this prudence?—Cyrus's anxiety to take advantage of his present opportunity to acquire rule, for which he has been patiently waiting for some time, is driving him to overlook key aspects of Cambyses' responses. Cambyses has, it is true, to some extent provoked Cyrus' present question with his promise (at 21) of "another road" to having subjects become obedient "that is shorter"—shorter, that is, than through a long education in praise and blame, punishment and reward. But Cyrus' laser focus on this promise shows his

impatience to get on with his project—a project motivated, as we have seen, by his desire to shine by adhering to and manifesting *themis*.

Cambyes now delivers sobering news, however: there is no shorter route to appearing prudent (on behalf of others) than actually *becoming* so (22). Cambyes uses as examples of such prudence the actions of the farmer, horseman, doctor, and flute player. One can, he states, acquire noble or beautiful accoutrements and deceive men for a moment—the beautiful or noble is deceptive—but one will eventually be “openly refuted and exposed as a boaster.” This shameful prospect moves Cyrus to ask his most serious question of the exchange (23): how then could someone really become prudent about what is going to be advantageous?

Has Cyrus really never considered this question? Or rather, isn't it the case that even now, as the exchange makes clear, Cyrus raises this question only as a means to learning how to obtain a sound reputation for being advantageous *to others*? That is, the decisive question—what *is* genuinely advantageous for a human being, what *will* genuinely make one happy—is one to which Cyrus has already closed himself, believing as does that being perceived as advantageous to others is what is genuinely most advantageous to oneself. But what emerges by the end of the *Cyropaedia* is—as a consequence of this unexamined conviction—a figure desperately emasculating all of the virtuous men over whom he rules.

What, then, is Cambyes's answer to Cyrus's question about how one can become prudent concerning what is advantageous? It is by learning, Cambyes states (23), what is possible to learn. As for the rest—what is *impossible* to learn—there is *prophecy*, and Cyrus “would be more prudent than others by inquiring from the gods by prophecy.” The “others” to whom Cambyes here refers would be those who (boastfully) pretend to know what it is actually *impossible* to know; engaging in prophecy would be more prudent than such pretension or

boastfulness. We note that Cambyses does not say that it would be prudent *simply*. Besides, as he adds, one must *do* what one knows (*episteme*) to be better once it is done, that is one must attend as soon as possible to what one knows is necessary. The attention of prudence is to the necessary. And there is an obvious tension between such prudence, on one hand, and prophecy, i.e., the reliance on what the gods declare should be done, on the other. Cyrus makes no response.

With the original five points on how to rule an army now covered, Cambyses turns (24) to a sixth, related point which the exchange has shown to be of great interest to Cyrus: how can one be *loved* by one's subjects? The answer Cambyses gives to his own question is: do the same as you would if you wished to be loved by friends, that is, do "evident" *good things* for your subjects. Cambyses adds (with understatement) that it is difficult always to be able to be evidently doing good for them. One must therefore, as a second best, be evidently sympathetic to the passionate ups and downs of their lives (1.6.25). And with the previous exchange having set the stage, he now brings out dramatically the problematic nature of what Cyrus desires. He tells Cyrus, in a startling formulation, that the ruler "must be greedy [*pleonekteo*] for the greatest share" of heat in summer, cold in winter, and labors in time of toils, all of which contribute to being "loved by one's subjects." Cyrus for his part clearly appears, from his reformulation of what his father says—"you are saying that the ruler must have more *endurance* against everything than his subjects"—to have found his father's formulation to be odd, as indeed it is. For "greed" is of course usually used with reference to a desire for more than one's share of a *good* thing, rather than with reference to a desire for the obviously bad or unpleasant things that Cambyses mentions. By Cambyses' odd use of the verb "to be greedy" calls attention to the fact that the deeds Cyrus would endure are *not* simply endured, as a *sacrifice*, by the ruler, but rather

are prices eagerly paid, as the path to something deemed to be good for oneself. That Cyrus wishes to see them instead as something to be *endured*, or as *sacrifices*, is evident from his reformulation of the statement, which preserves the deeds' laborious and therefore praiseworthy or admirable character.

Cambyes lets Cyrus' re-formulation stand, but he turns Cyrus' attention to the difference between the way labors affect the "bodies" of rulers, on one hand, and of the ruled, on the other. He turns, that is, to an explanation of *why* it is that Cyrus is so enthusiastic for bodily labors that he can easily endure them. This represents an open return to the consideration of the wisdom of desiring to rule (cf. 7-8). It comes after a long interval that has disclosed to us a number of things about Cyrus: his devotion to *themis*, his lack of preparation for the campaign, his hopefulness, his impatience to begin, and his desire to be loved by his subjects. In the earlier consideration, we recall, Cyrus had indicated that rule considered "by itself" was not attractive, but that it became so when he considered that it would be shameful not to contend against the present rulers who violate *themis* by indulging in pleasures and freedom from labor. Cyrus' enthusiastic "love of labor," that is, was shown there to be emphatically tied to his devotion to *themis* (cf. 6), which in turn depended on his holding the gods to be beneficent or to be his friends (cf. 4). Here, Cambyes discloses his opinion that the ruler's enthusiasm for labors stems from the ruler's expectation of "honor," which makes the labors "a bit lighter" and, he adds, from the ruler's "very knowing that his acts do not go unnoticed" (25). Cambyes claims, that is, that a ruler's endurance of pain and toil is affected by his hope of having his deeds noticed and honored—by the hope of enjoying a great good for himself on account of the hardships endured, a great good to be bestowed by witnesses of those hard deeds. Given what Cyrus has indicated about *themis*, it seems reasonable to gather that in alluding to witnesses, Cambyes has not only the ruler's

subjects but also the gods in mind. But then the difficulty just indicated by Cambyses, concerning the non-sacrificial character of the labors, would necessarily apply in this case as well.

As Cyrus' response (26) to Cambyses's disturbing line of inquiry makes clear, he has no heart for it. Instead, after reviewing all six points of generalship Cyrus says that he wishes to know whether someone who has achieved all of them and who "wishes to contend against his enemies as soon as possible," would seem "to be moderate." That is, Cyrus is both still eager to move to action and is at the same time eager to be held "moderate" rather than hubristic by his father. And by "moderate" Cyrus appears to mean taking all the steps that the gods would require one to have taken if one is to reasonably ask their aid in the pursuit of success. Cyrus is at least aware, however, that the standard by which Cambyses measures him is not justice, but moderation.

Cambyses now makes a final attempt to secure that moderation. His reply to Cyrus—an emphatic "Yes, by Zeus"—confirms that moderation is indeed his standard of judgment. But he clarifies what this moderation entails by adding, "at least if one were going to get an advantage." That is, if the actions that Cyrus would undertake are *noble* but *not* advantageous, Cambyses questions their moderation, and calls instead for guarding the good things that Cyrus already has. The advice is firmly against sacrificing oneself or one's army in a noble cause—say, for friendship's sake. Cyrus, however, has no interest in merely guarding the good things he has, and asks Cambyses how one is "especially able to get an advantage over one's enemies." His question moves Cambyses to speak now in a remarkably frank manner.

Cambyses spells out how to gain advantage over one's enemies (27). "Be assured," he says, "that the one who is going to do this must be a plotter, a dissembler, wily, a cheat, a thief,

rapacious, and the sort who takes advantage of his enemies in everything.”<sup>1</sup> This statement of the need for practicing injustice against enemies is so shocking, so contrary to public decency and to everything Cyrus has been taught, as to provoke *laughter* in him. Swearing by Herakles, who famously took the hard road of virtue rather than the easy road of vice, he asks what sort of man Cambyses is saying he must “become.” Cyrus clearly wishes to believe himself *above* such things. And so the answer that Cambyses provides is genuinely perplexing to him. But in his reply Cambyses does not even acknowledge that what he is asking would entail any real change in Cyrus: “Being” (not “becoming”) such a sort, he states, “you would be a man both most just and most lawful.” This strange reply prompts Cyrus to ask why then Cambyses taught “us” the *opposite* of this when “we” were boys, that is, during the common education of the peers—when they were taught never to cheat, steal, dissemble, etc. Cambyses points out that that is indeed, “by Zeus,” what is taught to the youth with regard to “friends and citizens,” but the doing of unjust deeds has *also* all along been taught them, through training in the hunting of animals: “ways of cheating, deceptions, and ways of getting the advantage.” But that, Cyrus exclaims, was with wild animals! If he even *seemed* to wish to deceive a human being, he declares or complains, he was beaten (28-29).

Cambyses answers this complaint by explaining why deception was taught to the youths with respect to wild animals but not humans: just as the Persian rulers did not permit the youths “to shoot a human being with your bows or spears...so that you might not...do harm to your friends,” so they did not teach the deception and cheating of human beings. A categorical line was drawn, in other words, between wild animals and human beings. Both deception and killing were permitted against wild animals, but proscribed against human beings, lest the youth should

<sup>1</sup> At 27; compare *Memorabilia* 4.2.11-20, and *Republic* 334a-b.

think that it is permitted to harm their friends. The wily, unjust ways by which the youth learned to overcome wild animals must, however, *now* be used by them, as grown men, against *human* enemies. What Cambyses has now brought into the open, however, by disclosing the *temporary*, artificial character of the education's allegedly categorical line between wild beasts and humans, is the contradictory character of the justice that the peers are to practice. For how indeed can one be most just and most lawful by being a cheat, a dissembler, a liar, etc?

Cyrus, perplexed to the point of incredulity by the disclosures that Cambyses has used in order to provoke this very question, does not wish to think his way out of this perplexity by any ruthless self-examination. Instead, he now finds in his father's statement a means by which he can avoid this very question. He latches on to the matter of harming (any) other human beings rather than addressing the matter of doing *unjust just deeds*. That is, Cyrus criticizes, on the basis of (common) utility, the *timing* of the regime's teaching of the need to harm human beings. If, he protests, "it is genuinely useful to know how to do both good and harm to human beings, you ought to have taught both *with human beings*" and not one with humans, one with animals (30). Now Cyrus himself has, as his father well knows, already killed human beings, in a cavalry charge against an Assyrian raiding party in Media (1.4.19-25). And Cyrus surely knows that, in going to war with his new army, he will be inflicting harm *on human beings*. But Cyrus has *not* hitherto inflicted harm by stealth or deception or any of the unjust ways mentioned by his father. Nor does Cyrus consider the harm that is now to be done against the same "unjust" Assyrians (cf. 1.5.15) to be "taking advantage" of them. Given these facts, it is likely that Cyrus has a long-standing objection to the regime on the matter of harming unjust human enemies, and Cambyses's statement affords him a chance, or prompts him, to raise that objection while at the

same time avoiding attention to the much more inherently troubling matter of justly acting unjustly.

But in Cambyses' reply—his defense of the education of Cyrus—he does not let Cyrus off the hook of attending to this vital matter. He instead brings out more clearly the difficulty. A teacher of boys “among our ancestors,” Cambyses claims, actually taught precisely what Cyrus now protests should have been taught in the education of youth. Or as Cambyses puts it, this ancestor taught “justice” in the way that “you,” Cyrus, insist (31). For the old teacher taught “both to lie and not to lie, to deceive and not to deceive, to slander and not to slander, to take advantage and not to do so.” Now this ancestral teacher did distinguish between things that were to be done to friends and things that were to be done to enemies. But he even taught how to deceive and steal from friends, *if* such stealing were for a good [result], just as the Greeks, he adds, teach cheating in wrestling. It is noteworthy that Cambyses does *not* present this further, final step of the ancestral teacher—stealing from friends for a good result—as different in kind from the other steps that the ancestral teacher had already taken, or as constituting a wrong turn that the ancestral teacher took in an otherwise acceptable education. On the contrary, this step is perfectly consistent with the others—with teaching unjust ways that are to be used against enemies. For deceiving and cheating enemies already implies that just ends do *not* require just means. And if justice is something that can in this way be set aside in the accomplishment of just ends—something that can be ignored until after the just end is safely accomplished, then it follows that one can likewise use unjust means against friends for just ends. But what, then, does the justice of those just ends amount to, other than the collective, selfish good of those who are deemed “friends”? (Think of the 1993 film “Indecent Proposal,” in which a millionaire offers a million dollars to a young couple in exchange for a night of sex with the wife.) The collective



good that does not include the cultivation of justice as good in itself, that is, but good only as a *means* that may or may not be deemed choice worthy in a given situation, does not differ from the collective good obtainable by piracy or any other unjust or degraded way of life. In other words, when justice does not impose what would later be called “categorical imperatives,” or laws that are simply binding, regardless of circumstance, but instead *changes* to include unjust means, then justice clearly is not held to be desirable for its own sake, but to be desirable only when it accords with or at least does not interfere with a perceived good; it is binding only when or insofar as it serves that good.

If we have followed the intimations of Cambyses, his account of the final stage of education for the youth under the ancestral teacher’s tutelage will come as no surprise:

Some, then, having natural gifts for both deceiving and getting the advantage, and perhaps also not lacking in a natural gift for love of gain, did not abstain from trying to take advantage even of their friends. (32)

If there is nothing *malum in se*, if justice is a mere means to good things, then why should justice be followed when one can, as the strong can, obtain good things by unjust means? This is what the strong or gifted did. Cambyses’s description of this final state of the ancestral education is remarkable for its complete lack of indignation or blame of the strong, clever, cheating boys. So far is it from presenting such boys as *lacking* something in their souls, in fact—such as a conscience or a sense of shame—that it suggests they are superior to their peers in certain “natural gifts.” The decree that subsequently “arose”—somehow—for reform of the boys’ education (33) comes to sight, therefore, as designed to cut down this natural superiority, to stifle nature’s gifts, for the sake of making what Cambyses calls “tamer” citizens, through habituation to laws that admit of no exceptions. When Cambyses adds that the decree was intended to teach the strong youths (temporarily) exactly what is taught to “servants” (permanently) in their

behavior “towards us,” it becomes clear that the categorical justice aimed at in the boys’ education is designed to protect the interests of the weak from the naturally strong or gifted, and in fact to make the strong or gifted the servants of the weak—though Cambyses is careful to abstain from saying this directly.

Contrary to the surface impression, in other words, the problem inherent in the ancestor’s teaching was not at bottom merely one of *timing*—of *when* in the youths’ lives their need to deceive and harm enemies could best be taught. The problem is, rather, one in the nature of justice itself. For in pretending to present the problem as merely one of *timing*, Cambyses is implicitly stating that the ancestral teacher’s teachings were actually *true*, but prematurely delivered. The Persians now *deceive* their youths about justice, Cambyses is implying, until the same youths’ nature has been tamed or weakened, and habitual respect for one another has been established (through beatings). It is certainly no more for the good of the naturally gifted than it is for the good of the peers’ servants to abide by the new education in justice. In fact, since it makes human beings “tamer citizens” rather than “wild citizens,” and since—at least to the young Cyrus—wild animals appear “more beautiful even when dead” than do the tamer ones in a park (cf. 1.4.11), the decree and hence the whole attempt of the education can be said to aim at taming rather than improving the citizens. Nothing, certainly, is said or suggested by Cambyses to the effect that the law makes the citizens genuinely *better*, or perfects their nature. Instead Cambyses makes clear that once the boys have been raised in mutual respect, the nasty but *true* business of what is “lawful toward enemies” must be taught to them.

Cambyses’s conclusion (34), moreover, dispels none of these troubling reflections. In it, he likens what is done with respect to the teaching of justice to what is done with respect to the teaching of sexual matters. There is *no* conversing about such matters with those who are too

young, he says, “lest when license is added to strong desire, the young might indulge this desire without measure.” Not talking to young boys about deceiving and cheating and otherwise harming enemies, then—that is, about practicing injustice against enemies—is equivalent to not talking to young boys about sexual matters. Proscribing conversation about both matters represents a conscious decision to refrain from acknowledging that the matters exist at all. Just as talking about sexual matters freely would give license to strong desire simply by acknowledging it, making it publicly acceptable to talk about it without shame, so too does talking about the use of deceptions to gain an advantage give license to a strong desire to gain an advantage for oneself by deceptions. This, then, is why the Persian education withholds the truth in this matter. Stated differently, to produce adult men whose sexual desire stays within measure is the desired outcome of the early educational silence about sexual matters, and so too is producing adult men who gain their own advantage *within measure* the desired outcome of the early silence about using injustice against enemies. When the boys are older, they can hear talk of sex and will pursue sexual desire within measure; when the boys are older, they can hear the truth about justice to friends and enemies and pursue their own advantage within measure, i.e., against “enemies” of the collective rather than against each other.

As the sequel demonstrates, Cyrus does not grasp all of what Cambyses has argued. Swearing again by Zeus, he simply pleads that since he is a late learner of these ways, Cambyses should not be sparing but teach him how to gain the advantage “over my enemies” (35). While this use of “my” suggests a certain small movement on Cyrus’ part toward Cambyses’s understanding, his statement also shows that Cyrus has missed the radical critique that Cambyses has just presented of the *themis* to which Cyrus remains devoted. To Cyrus’ plea for belated help, Cambyses offers this simple advice: catch the enemy when he is *disordered* and you are ordered,

*unarmed* while you are armed, sleeping while you are awake, visible to you while you are invisible, on bad ground while you wait in a strong position. The ways Cambyses suggests entail craftiness, deception, and generally base means of victory, achieved through attention to necessities (like eating, sleeping, etc.). They are the opposite of Marquis of Queensbury rules. Not surprisingly, therefore, Cyrus expresses disappointment with them (37). “Aren’t there,” he asks, “other ways” to get the advantage? Cambyses indicates that there are: *everybody* takes precautions, he says, about these things; what you need to do is to be *doubly* deceptive: deceive the enemy into overconfidence by having him think that you have taken no such precautions.

The key deception, that is, is causing the enemy to think you innocent or naive, in your apparent failure to engage in deceptions, and so hope easily to take advantage of you. Cambyses invites Cyrus to become, therefore, not only the lover of learning in tactics that he is now but a “poet of stratagems” against the enemy. Just as poets write new poems that are better able to deceive listeners because they excite fresh *hopes*, he argues, so Cyrus will inspire his enemies with fresh (but misleading) hopes. What poetry and the muses in general are best at, Cambyses here suggests, is deceiving human beings, by hope, about the bleakness of their general or ultimate situation, just as Cyrus himself deceived hunted small animals—birds and hares (39-40)—when he was “educating” the birds to serve his advantage, as Cambyses intriguingly puts it. Cambyses makes clear that such deception of enemies in hope is the best path to victory: only if compelled, in fact, should one ever do battle on a level playing field, in the open, with both sides armed. Should that happen, of course, then the well-exercised bodies of soldiers and their well-whetted souls, along with their military arts, will (have to) be powerful. Cyrus, whose only experience of fighting and killing other human beings has been in open, frank combat, makes no

answer to this strong suggestion that “education,” at least of the sort that he himself is used to, is a hope-filled deception.

Cambyes then returns (42) to the matter of obedience, and to his former advice: those whom you expect to obey, he states, “will expect in return that you make plans on their behalf.” He advises Cyrus therefore “never [to] be unthinking.” Cyrus will need to be working night and day on behalf of those whom he expects to obey him. And the way that Cambyes spells this out could make Cyrus’ desire to rule seem quite misguided. “At night consider in advance what your subjects will do for you when day comes,” he says, “and in the day how things will be noblest for the night.” The day belongs to Cyrus, insofar as the subjects will then be serving him, while the night belongs to the troops or subjects, for whom the day’s work is followed by an evening’s relaxation and pleasures prepared by Cyrus. But Cyrus himself will spend his nights thinking of the next day, and his days thinking—on behalf of his subjects—of the night. We suspect that Cyrus, who makes no reply to this argument, does not like the suggestion that the evenings’ enjoyments he will have to offer his soldiers are no more than a clever means of making them more obedient during the day, nor that he himself will have no respite from trouble.

Cambyes then turns to how to organize an army for battle, or how to lead it during day or night (43). Yet after presenting a long list of military matters, he admits that spelling out its details would be superfluous, since in these matters Cyrus has not been negligent nor is ignorant, and so Cambyes simply tells Cyrus to use these things as seems to accord with his (own) advantage. We can add military tactics, then, to the other things that Cambyes had bade Cyrus learn from others but that Cambyes himself could have taught Cyrus. But in this case Cyrus has “not been negligent” of such matters, has heard them “often,” and so has indeed already learned them from others. We are thereby reminded that there are (other) things that Cyrus has *not* been

eager to learn or has neglected, things heard perhaps only a few times from Cambyses. It is noteworthy in this regard that Cambyses mentions “retreat” here for the first time. In fact, his list is largely about retreating and guarding rather than advancing. This may be meant to call our attention to what Cambyses is now about to do, or is now undertaking: a retreat from the argument about the problem of justice that he has raised. Against the fortress of Cyrus’ soul Cambyses’ words have availed nothing, and so he retreats.

Finally, Cambyses bids Cyrus learn from him “the most important things” (44). But this now turns out to be: “never run a risk contrary to the sacrifices and auguries.” So he returns to where he began, with the sacrifices. But why are such sacrifices needed? Because, explains Cambyses, from the “events themselves” one can see that the good that human beings conjecture that they will achieve when they act, they do *not* achieve. He gives five examples of such events or outcomes: (A) Many apparently wise or wisest men have persuaded cities to undertake wars, and the persuaded were destroyed. (B) Many have elevated many private men and cities; after they were elected, these men then suffered “the greatest evils” at the hands of the many. (C) Many who might have treated some as friends, “benefitting and being benefitted,” instead treated them as slaves, and “have been punished by these same persons.” (D) Many have not found it acceptable to live pleasantly with their share, but desiring to be lords over all, have lost even what they had. (E) Many have acquired “much wished for gold” and “been destroyed because of it.”

Cambyses draws the following conclusion from this five-fold list: “human wisdom no more knows what is the best (*to ariston*) than does doing things by casting lots.” But is this not a very odd conclusion to draw from these five examples? True, the fifth example presents a successful acquisition (of gold) as having an unexpectedly bad result, but even in this example,

and much more clearly in the other four, an *overstepping*, a desire for more, a dissatisfaction with one's modest share, a rising too high, is suggested as the cause of ruin. The examples, that is, would seem to point to living within one's "share," justly or at least moderately and privately, as what is best. They certainly do *not* point to the existence of a cosmic lottery about what is best. The concluding claim about such a lottery would make sense only if Cambyses had here also provided examples of men who either lived privately within modest means and lost everything or were destroyed, or men who acted unjustly or hubristically and were not destroyed, or both. Why then does Cambyses draw his erroneous conclusion?

The conclusion permits him to end the entire exchange, as he had begun, with a discussion of the gods and of prophecy. In apparent contrast to human ignorance about what is best, the gods, "being eternal, know all that has come to be, all that is, and what will result from each of these things." The gods know what will be, knowing what has been; their knowledge rests, then, on a grasp of causes, of necessities. Such knowledge would seem, however, to doom all things, including the human, to a fated or necessary chain of events; it could not genuinely support *justice*. Cambyses saves the possibility of practicing devotion to the gods, however, by saying that these same knowing gods may be propitious to human beings who seek their counsel, supplying humans with signs about what we ought and ought not to do (in order to obtain what we already know we want). The gods in this way provide knowledge, then, about the human good. Yet there is no "necessity" for them to do so, and so they do not always do so. They or their signs would then seem to be beings as capricious as chance. Such gods would be the only kind who could possibly exist, it seems, given the critique of justice and hence of *themis*, divine justice, that Cambyses has shown us.

In light of Cyrus's failure to grasp Cambyses's arguments during this, the conclusion of his education, it is not surprising that Cyrus maintained his attachment to what he considered both noble and good, especially in warfare (see e.g., 2.1.15, 17), as well as his faith in *themis*. Even on his deathbed he was content to believe, quite incoherently, that if there is an afterlife, he had served the gods and men justly and would be rewarded in it, and if there is not, he had served his own happiness and thus enjoyed the best life (8.7.6-9, 11-12, 17-22, 25-27). Even the light brought on by imminent death, that is, failed to illuminate for Cyrus the contradictory character of the virtue imparted to him by the education he had received in the Persian republic.

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Christopher Nadon, *Xenophon's Prince* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> See *The Prince*, ch. 6.

<sup>3</sup> See *The Prince*, chs. 14 fin. and 17 fin.

<sup>4</sup> For example, the initial speech by which Cyrus wins the Persian Peers over to his plan of imperial conquest presents virtue not as an end but as a means to other, genuinely good, things. Cyrus makes the prescribed sacrifices to the gods before his battles, but we never see him asking them for forgiveness or feeling remorse, as does, for example his son Cyaxares in Herodotus' account. He is moved to invade Assyrian territory not, as the reader is first told, because the Assyrian king is plotting against him, but for purely prudential reasons arising from the domestic situation he has created, one of restless troops who are jealous of one another and looking for rewards. Cyrus uses his fiercely disciplined troops to achieve leonine conquests, and sometimes sees the need to issue bloody orders. As for foxiness, examples of it, too, abound. He keeps his word to Gobryas, but he makes sure and doubly sure that he is not being trapped by him. He forms a Persian cavalry not, as he tells his Hyrcanian allies, so that they will not have to do all the work, but rather, as he tells his own men, so that he and his men will be reaping the spoils of war. He uses planted questions during deliberative assemblies, stooping in this way even to the level known to be employed today at faculty meetings. He takes pains to remember the names of each and every officer in his service, but as he explains, even craftsmen know the names of the "tools" they will use (V.iii. 46-50). Once the empire is taken, he encourages among his men competition in virtue, but it is to maintain a suspiciousness of one another among his men. He turns everyone into an informant, creating thereby 10,000 eyes and ears of the king. He appears to be much more eager to give than to receive, until we see him with Croesus in Book Eight, exclaiming that all the friends to whom he has given things are money.



## Retracing Plato's *Republic* in Cicero's Dream of Scipio

Cicero's *Republic* concludes with perhaps the most influential philosophical imagery from the ancient world, the 'Dream of Scipio'. Through its effect upon Vergil's *Aeneid* book VI, and through Macrobius' commentary on the 'Dream', and the commentaries of Servius and others on *Aeneid*, it might actually be said to have encapsulated Roman civilization and saved it to become the education of the West for a thousand years, continuing even into the Renaissance. So it is with a certain sheepishness that we admit our ignorance about where some of the ideas in Cicero's 'Dream' originate, and in what relation it stands to Plato's *Republic* and its equally enigmatic 'Myth of Er'. The modern consensus is that Cicero's 'Dream' is vaguely Platonic, and probably owes more to commonplaces in *Phaedrus* and *Phaedo* than to *Republic*. But this was not the view of scholars prior to the modern period, and this paper will present new evidence to suggest that Cicero's model actually was Plato's *Republic*. Not *Quellenforschung per se*, but rather an analysis of how Cicero is imitating Plato's imagery scene by scene.

There are clear parallels between the endings of the *Republics* by Cicero and Plato: The harmony of the eight spheres in Cicero's 'Dream' recalls the music produced by Plato's eight Sirens on the spinning whorls of Necessity in 'Myth of Er'. Macrobius tells us that the Dream of Scipio is an 'imitation' which differs from Plato's *Republic* in treating a real state rather than an imaginary one, and using a dream in place of Er's death and resurrection, but that 'Dream of Scipio' also 'preserves a very great similarity to Plato's work' in treating the theme of the soul's existence outside its bodily limitations.<sup>1</sup> Cicero acknowledges the 'Myth of Er' as a model for Scipio's dream in fragments quoted by Favonius and Macrobius, but Powell says, 'of the content of the Myth of Er, Cicero retained virtually nothing'.<sup>2</sup> Zetzel concludes that 'the ideals which they represent are antithetical'.<sup>3</sup> Juan Luis Vives, the 16th century author of the *Somnium et Vigilia in Somnium Scipionis*, on the other hand, said that Cicero emulated Plato 'practically everywhere and transferred Plato's philosophy with exactly equivalent expressions into his own... his work is entirely Platonic, save when he discusses the heavens'.<sup>4</sup> What is less clear, however, is whether Vives means that Cicero's source was 'Platonic doctrine', which he might have gotten from *Phaedrus*, to which most commentators like Zetzel and Boyancé point,<sup>5</sup> or that Cicero was representing *Republic* in some exact way, as I will argue.

There are actual philosophical differences between the two texts, e.g., concerning the duty to participate in politics, and apparent ones that could be real if we take Plato seriously, such as concerning the importance of poets and reincarnation. In the structure of the imagery, however, these differences fade to insignificance as we will see Cicero offer a hidden running

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<sup>1</sup> *Comm. in Somn. Scip.* 1.1-2. in hoc tamen uel maxime operis similitudinem seruauit imitatio quod, cum Plato in uoluminis conclusione a quodam uitae reddito quam reliquisse uidebatur indicari faciat qui sit exutarum corporibus status animarum, adiecta quadam sphaerarum uel siderum non otiosa descriptione, rerum facies non dissimilia significans a Tulliano Scipione per quietem sibi ingesta narratur.

<sup>2</sup> Fav. *Eulog.* p.1 (= *Rep.* VI.3 Ziegler); Macr. *SS* 1.2.1 (= *Rep.* VI.7 Ziegler), cited by J.G.F. Powell, *Cicero: Laelius, On Friendship & The Dream of Scipio*. Warminster: Aris & Phillips 1990.

<sup>3</sup> James Zetzel, *Cicero. De re publica. Selections*. New York: Cambridge University Press 1995: 15. For full bibliography of the *Quellenforschung* of 'Dream of Scipio', see Peter Schmidt. 1972. 'Cicero *De re publica*: Die Forschung der letzten fünf dezentennien' *ANRW* 1.4: 307-314.

<sup>4</sup> *Praefatio* to the 1521 edition, 13; cited by Edward V. George ed. and trans., *J.L. Vives, Somnium et Vigilia in Somnium Scipionis (Commentary on the Dream of Scipio)*. edited with an introduction, translation and notes. Greenwood: Attic Press, 1989 lvii.

<sup>5</sup> Zetzel 1995: 224. Pierre Boyancé. 1970. 'Études sur l'humanisme cicéronien' *Collection Latomus* 121: 276-93.

commentary on Plato's *Republic* X. Contrary to everything one would expect, the imagery of the 'Dream' follows *Republic* X until just before the 'Myth of Er' where it stops. How Plato's myth fits into Cicero's 'Dream,' I will suggest at the end. Hereafter I refer to Plato's work as *Rep.* and Cicero's as *DRP*.

Cicero begins (VI.9) with allusions to the situation at the start of *Rep.* X: Scipio Aemilianus is visiting the court of Numidian King Massinissa who helped Africanus sack Carthage in 202 BC, and who now (149 BC) invites its destruction – Africanus envisions the fallen city at VI.11; the Platonic *kallipolis* has implicitly fallen at the end of *Rep.* IX with its descent into tyranny. Cicero then makes a grammatically overt point of Scipio's going to 'bed' by using the supine, *cubitum*, and Scipio compares his dream vision to the way Homer used to appear to Ennius (VI.10); Plato begins *Rep.* X with an account of *mimesis* illustrated with themes appropriate to Glaucon's appetites, including, famously 'bedness', as part of his introduction to why Homer and the tragedians must be banned. Cicero plays on the theme of *mimesis* at length: first as Massinissa feels the presence of Africanus by the mere name of Scipio (VI.9); then by the comparison of dreams to literature implicit in the reference to Ennius and Homer; then by Scipio's 'recollection' of Africanus from his appearance preserved in his funeral mask, (a copy of his appearance). This last leads to Cicero's thoughtful interpretation of Plato's point, when he has Aemilianus both learn from and imitate Africanus as an *exemplum*, from which we see the Hellenistic theory of how *mimetic* art, far from being the enemy of reason and philosophy, has been recognized for its superior didactic value. A thoughtful reading of Plato's *Republic* can suggest the same theory, if we take Plato's diatribe against the poets to be designed, like the rest of *Republic*, to be rejected by Glaucon, and instead to prompt him to draw opposite conclusions, including a recognition that interpretation is vital to progress in philosophical knowledge by dialectic. That is, Glaucon, like Odysseus in the choice of lots at the end of the 'Myth of Er' (620c-d), is meant to stop worrying about the censorship of poetry and instead to start learning how to interpret: first his own nature; then the world around him and his place in it, beginning with the question of whether he is suited to politics. And this is the theme of the 'Dream of Scipio' also: like Glaucon, whose excessive political appetites might have made him a tyrant (Xen. *Mem.* 3.6), Scipio is to understand that his lust for fame and glory is misdirected *eros*, and that he should instead come to recognize his true place in the universe as seen from the heavenly perspective of divine reason.

After arguing that the painter's bed is an imitation of an imitation, Plato asks whether Homer has made any real-world contributions to wars, commanding armies, politics, and education, and in particular whether any city is better governed because of him (599c-d); Africanus tells Aemilianus that after conquering Carthage, it will be his duty to shine as a statesman in Rome at a time of civil unrest, in which the survival and welfare of the state will depend on him (*in quo nitatur ciuitatis salus*, VI.12). Africanus makes an odd reference to the young Scipio's fate as splitting into two paths (*ancipitem uideo quasi fatorum uiam*, VI.12) – one to live, and the other to be assassinated by his family in 129 BC, the eve of the dramatic date of the dialogue. The two paths are alluding to the Pythagorean Y representing two roads of life (Serv. *Aen.* 6.136; Pers. *Sat.* 3.56), often conceived as Prodicus' Choice of Herakles between virtue and vice (Xen. *Mem.* 2.1.21-34). Both Cicero and Plato organize their works around imagery of the journey of the soul and metempsychosis (*DRP* VI.9 *migro, recreor*, 10 *de uia fessum*, and the allusion to Homer in Ennius [where he is reincarnated as a peacock]; Plato begins the opening frame of *Rep.* 327 with Socrates retracing his journey, and 'Myth of Er' features two paths into the heavens and under the earth 614d-616a; there are also many rings in

the argument,<sup>6</sup> and the philosopher's return to the cave in book VII<sup>7</sup>). Plato then asks whether Homer created a model way of life such as Pythagoras did, or invented a system of education like the famous sophists Protagoras and Prodicus, and if he did why his followers would have allowed him to 'wander' as a rhapsode (600a-d). Socrates introduces an element of humor when he says that Creophylus was even 'more laughable than his name' (side of beef?) because he totally neglected his companion Homer (600b). This is the same point in Cicero's dialogue when humor oddly interrupts the dream: Africanus had suggested that Scipio might need to make himself dictator; Laelius cries out, the others groan audibly, and Scipio just smiles and says 'don't wake me from my dream' (VI.12). Scipio then closes out the Pythagorean theme of the cyclic journey of the soul by arguing that the souls of great statesmen have been sent down from heaven and will return there (VI.13).

The Platonic argument proceeds to indict poets for possessing neither knowledge of the things they write about, nor even the right opinion that craftsmen have (601d-602a), 'yet nevertheless the poet will imitate...the kind of thing that seems fine to the many who know nothing' (602b). Cicero portrays this theme of human ignorance about reality in a moving scene in which Scipio asks Africanus whether those whom we consider dead are really dead. He tells Scipio that people have it all backwards: the dead inhabit the real world of the spirit in heaven and truly live, while we who are imprisoned in the body live a kind of death. As proof, Aemilianus' birth father Aemilius Paulus then appears and embraces him. In the corresponding section of *Republic*, Socrates says that the imitative poet covers up his ignorance with the charm of meter, rhythm and harmony (601a), which makes his imitation a kind of childish play (*παιδιά*, 602b). Scipio then behaves like a child, asking his father (who abandoned him to be adopted at the tender age of seven) whether he cannot join him now in heaven. Aemilius Paulus explains that men have a duty to live until released by god.

Socrates next argues that the imitative arts act not upon reason, but upon the irrational parts of the soul that are susceptible to being deceived by *trompe l'oeil* effects such as objects that appear bent in water. He compares the deceptive effects of perspective in scene paintings and the tricks in magic shows (602c-d). Scipio now beholds the dazzling marvel of the Milky Way (*omnia mirabilia uidebantur*, VI.16). As he does so, he emphasizes how there are stars and planets that we never see and that they appear much larger than one would have conceived, and that the earth and moon, by contrast, appear very small and insignificant. Socrates argues that opposed to these false appearances of the irrational faculty, reason measures, calculates, and weighs to reveal which are larger, which smaller, and which are the same size (602d). He calls the irrational part *φᾶνλον*, and says that 'imitation, being inferior, mingling with the inferior, begets the inferior' (603b). In laying out the orbits of the planets, Cicero plays upon Plato's *φᾶνλον* when describing the moon as in the 'lowest / most inferior' orbit (*infimoque orbe*) and

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<sup>6</sup> From the end of IV to the middle of VI on the 'three waves' (common education of men and women as guardians, community of wives and children, and philosopher kings); from the end of IV to the start of VIII when we return to the five types of constitution; from the start of III to the start of X on censorship and the role of poets; from the withholding of reputation from justice in II until it is restored like Glaucus without his barnacles in X; from the descent into the chasm in II to find the ring until the descent below the earth in the Myth of Er; from the torch relay race in I to the race of the just and unjust man in X; and in the journeys and dream imagery in the outer surrounding frame, among many others, I am sure.

<sup>7</sup> Altman argues (2016: 211) that 'it is the application of the Divided Line to the methods of the Shorter and Longer Ways that justifies the dialogue's opening word: Socrates's initial "I went down" situates the Cave at the dialogue's center because (true) Justice—the philosopher's decision to return to the shadows after ascending to the Good—is only discovered by those who follow the Longer Way.'

describes everything below it as ‘mortal and subject to fall’ (*mortale et caducum*); and he closes by using *infima* again of earth, as the lowest planet (VI.17). Scipio then hears the harmonious sound created by spheres rotating in different orbits at different speeds: the earth, motionless in the center, makes no sound; the moon in the first orbit produces a sound an octave lower than the heavens in the outermost orbit (*caelum*, VI.18). Immediately after mentioning Pythagoras, Socrates had introduced the element of music (601a-b); and when illustrating how craftsmen at least have right opinion because of their interactions with those who use what they make, he brings in the example of the flute-player instructing the flute-maker (601d-e). Then when discussing how imitative arts affect the listener, Socrates asks whether the battle of opposite impressions between reason and the inferior faculties that govern emotion do not produce an effect like civil war (*ἔστασίαζεν*, 603d). As Africanus explains how the musical harmonies are produced, he explains the role of measure and calculation in the pleasing ‘tempering of opposite sounds’ that produces musical harmony (*acuta cum grauibus temperans*, VI.18). Cicero says that poets have earned a return to heaven by imitating this divine harmony on the lyre, and philosophers by their cultivation of *diuina studia*. He ends the allusion to Plato’s treatment of music by returning to the theme of how our perceptions are fooled by such imitations: like those who live beneath the Cataracts of the Nile (the *Catadupa*), our senses are dulled by the deafening sound (VI.19).

As Scipio keeps ‘turning his mind back to’ Rome and the earthly temple of Jupiter, away from the heavenly *templum*, Africanus responds as if he recognizes a certain sadness in Scipio, ‘I perceive that you are even now contemplating the seat of men and gods; if it seems as small to you as it actually is, fix your gaze permanently upon these heavenly sights and have done with those human things’ (VI.20). As Socrates next considers the effect of tragic *mimesis* upon the emotions of an audience, he asks whether it is not the irrational part of man that ‘leads us back toward’ the recollection of suffering and sadness, and cannot get its fill of them (604d). For Scipio, Rome signifies fame and glory. Africanus asks him to consider how limited is the space for fame to operate when earth is divided into zones with vast uninhabited spaces between them (*uastas solitudines interiectas*, VI.20). Socrates indicts tragic *mimesis* for making images that are ‘separated at a great distance’ from the truth (*πόρρω πάνυ ἀφεστῶτα*, 605c). Africanus then mocks fame from the talk of men who will be born later, when we can never be talked about by those born before who were better men (VI.23). Socrates brings up the ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy, and mocks poetry as ‘the dog yelping at the master’ and ‘great in the empty talk of men with no sense’ (607b-c). Africanus’ final argument against earthly fame (i.e., the talk of men) is that it cannot endure even a single year measured by the orbit of the stars in the so-called ‘great year’ (VI.24). Socrates asks whether an immortal thing like virtue ought to be concerned with a short period of time and not rather with the whole of time (608c-d). Africanus then commends virtue to Scipio as the means of return to the heavens (VI.25).

The dialogue concludes with two famous images, the first an argument from *Phaedrus* (245c-e) on the immortality of the soul (VI.27-28); the second, borrowed from *Phaedo* (64a-68b, 80e), that the soul will fly away to heaven more ‘quickly’ if it has practiced living outside the body as much as possible in this life; and that the souls of those who have given themselves over to the pleasures of the body ‘flit about the very earth and do not return to heaven until they have been forced to wander for many ages’ (VI.29). These correspond in *Republic* to the big reveal of the immortality of the soul as the sea-monster Glaucus without its barnacles (611c-d), and the comparison of the unjust to runners who start off fast but finish as a laughing stock with ears about their shoulders who ‘run home uncrowned’ (613b-c).

It is unnerving that the sequential imitation of Plato's imagery seems to match up the end of the 'Dream of Scipio' with the scene immediately before the 'Myth of Er'. We are supposed to conclude, I think, that the content of 'Dream of Scipio' somehow also represents the 'Myth of Er'. The main elements of the latter are:

- Er on his bier, dreaming and taken for dead (cf. Scipio's 'deeper than usual' sleep, *artior quam solebat*, and his vision *in somno*, VI.10);
- two openings in the heavens, and two in the earth, and the journeys of men to and from the plane of judgement (cf. Cicero's the journey to the Milky Way, from which they gaze down upon two cities, Carthage and Rome, VI.11, and compare the fate of Scipio to a 'two-headed' path through the heavens (*sed eius temporis ancipitem video quasi fatorum viam*, VI.12);
- injustices paid ten times over (cf. the murder plot against Scipio by *impias manus*, VI.12), and good deeds rewarded ten times over (statesmen are assured a return to heaven, VI.13);
- reunion in the plane of judgement (cf. the reunification of Scipio and Aemilius Paulus, his birth father, VI.14); the threatened eruption of Ardiaeus, the wicked tyrant (Scipio asks why he remains alive and does not rather join his father, VI.15); the math of the journey to the 'whorls' and the intervals of the 'whorls' to make music (harmony of the spheres, VI.17-19);
- Lachesis orders men to choose lots of lives and proclaims that virtue and vice are up to us (Africanus tells Scipio to look to the heavenly things, *haec caelestia semper spectato*, VI.20);
- the task of rejecting the 'temptations' of wealth, poverty, beauty, power etc., and the choices of the lots of life – the first a tyranny (Africanus' discussion of the 'vanity' of earthly fame, power and kingdoms destroyed by fire and floods, VI.21-25);
- the immortality of the soul and Odysseus' choice of an a-political life (Africanus' admonition on the immortality of the soul from *Phaedrus* that Scipio is not what his outward form declares, but rather *mens*, VI.26-27);
- the *envoi* – the soul can endure every evil and every good ('busy yourself in the best pursuits / pursuit of virtue' *hanc tu exerce optimis in rebus*, VI.29);
- the journey back (I awoke).

This literary analysis suggests previously unappreciated parallels between the texts that disproves the prevailing view that Cicero's *Republic* does not follow Plato's as a close model. The many conclusions that may be drawn from this evidence must wait for a longer study, but the literary method by which the imitation can be seen reminds us of the value of approaching ancient philosophical texts and problems with methods from a variety of disciplines. Or put another way, as the master discipline, all the arts must serve philosophy.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Focusing his attention on the Epicureans and the Stoics, Pierre Hadot brilliantly unpacked the structural analogy underlying the Hellenistic “experience of time,” i.e. that despite their profound differences, each school argued that happiness can only be found in the present moment and cannot be delayed for some other time.<sup>1</sup> Remarkably, Neoplatonists like Plotinus and Proclus similarly praised the value of the present moment for conditioning human happiness. In the spirit of expanding upon Hadot’s thesis,<sup>2</sup> this essay shall explore how despite their metaphysical incompatibility, i.e. the Neoplatonists decisively reject Epicurean and Stoic materialism, they still affirm, with Hellenistic fervor, the significance of the present moment for happiness. Yet, in opposition to Stoic and Epicurean insistence on human finitude and corporeality, the Neoplatonic tradition, in the spirit of Socrates’ remarks in the *Theaetetus*, heralded the idea that human happiness lay in “assimilating oneself to god as far as possible.”<sup>3</sup> Put otherwise, the human good lies in its ability to become self-moved and self-gathered, constituting its immateriality, indivisibility and immortality. This good resides in the reality of the present moment, therein drawing this more otherworldly tradition into closer proximity with the practical ways of life more often associated with the Hellenistic philosophers. This said, the Neoplatonists themselves differ in their understanding of the concrete value

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<sup>1</sup> Hadot, “‘Only the Present is our Happiness’: The Value of the Present Instant in Goethe and Ancient Philosophy” in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Blackwell Publishing: Malden, MA, 1995, pp. 217-237. Hadot (1995) argued for the following parallels in Epicurean and Stoic valorization of the present moment:

- 1) Each school privileged the present at the detriment of the past and, more importantly, the future.
- 2) Both schools of thought paradoxically suggested that one instant of happiness is equal to an eternity of happiness, i.e. happiness “does not depend upon duration.”
- 3) The third moment of contact, for Hadot, demanded a reevaluation of the present instant, leading to a transformation in one’s comportment to death.
- 4) Finally, the most important aspect in their shared experience of time, for Hadot, is that both schools emphasized that its members come to a radical conversion in their way of life.

For the purposes of this paper, we shall focus on the ethical implications of living in the present moment. As such, we shall pass over the historical debates concerning the reality of the present moment and therein questions regarding whether this reality is divided and consists of parts, e.g. past, present and future and whether these are further divisible. For reference though we should know that the Epicureans would argue that time can only be divided in to minima or concrete indivisible elements or moments. While the Stoic, in keeping with their basic philosophical worldview, would argue that time is infinitely divisible. The Neoplatonist on the whole would argue for time’s depiction as the life of the soul in contrast to the life of the Intellect. For a thorough discussion of these issues see R. Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum: Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. The University of Chicago Press, 1983.

<sup>2</sup> To be sure, Hadot himself rejects the idea that Goethe’s *Faust* has any points of contact with Neoplatonic conceptions of transcendent eternity. Rather, he strikingly insists that Goethe’s influence is entirely Epicurean and Stoic insofar as the Goethean notion of the present instant relies on 1) the instant is equivalent to eternity and 2) an instant contains the totality of the cosmos. Nevertheless, as we shall soon see, these two traits are decisively imbedded in the Neoplatonic valorization of the present moment, rendering it entirely possible that Goethe’s *Faust* was influenced by this tradition.

<sup>3</sup> See *Theaetetus* 175e-176b. Cf. *Phaedrus* 237a-b, *Symposium* 220d, *Phaedo* 117c. For further references to the familiar Platonic concept of *homoiōsis theō* (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν) see also *Republic* 613b1 and *Timaeus* 90d.

of the present moment. As we shall see, in Plotinian terms, the soul's well-being in the present moment resides in its capacity to transcend its position in time, to escape the world of process altogether by uniting with the eternal, the wholly real, which is not coming-to-be but always "is." While in opposition to this conception of the human good, Proclus argued that the soul's good comes in its own temporal acts, which reveal the value of the flux of time itself.

To understand this important difference from within the Neoplatonic tradition, we shall concentrate in the first half of this essay on Plotinus' analysis of the well-being of the soul in the present moment, which eternally "is." The second part of this paper will examine Proclus' novel attempt to justify a way of life that was not merely contemplation, but a way of life that redeemed all moments in time regardless of whether one was composing lyrical hymns to the gods, enacting sound laws for one's city or lecturing before students. What will matter in Proclus' understanding of the value of the present moment is that the soul's intellectual existence and providential will are made manifest in the temporal now, a manifestation which results not simply from contemplation but, rather, the productive activities of the erotic striving soul.

## II. PLOTINUS AND THE VALUE OF THE PRESENT MOMENT

First, observers of the *Enneads* can easily see how Plotinus clearly valued the present moment at the detriment of the past and future. How so? Principally, as most Neoplatonic scholars are readily familiar, Plotinus' understanding of time is heavily indebted to his reading of Plato's *Timaeus* where time is defined as the "moving image of eternity."<sup>4</sup> Utilizing this definition, Plotinus conceives of time as the *life* of the soul while eternity is the *life* of that which always "is," the life of the divine Intellect.<sup>5</sup> In opposition to time, eternity is defined in the following terms: "[A] life that abides in the same, and always has the all present to it, [...] not now some things, and then again others, but partless completion, [...]" Eternity is the life, then, which belongs to that which exists "and is in being, altogether and full, completely without extension or interval [...]"<sup>6</sup>

Time in contrast to eternity is "[T]he life (ζωή) of soul in a movement of passage from one way of life to another [...]"<sup>7</sup> and "as an image of eternity" it is the unfolding or succession of being versus the complete and immediate veracity of being. Time, in the end, "runs around" its center "letting some things go and attending to others [...]. For around soul things come one after another: now Socrates, now a horse, always some one particular reality; but Intellect is all things."<sup>8</sup> Eternity is the life of absolute being,

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<sup>4</sup> Plato, *Timaeus* 37d.

<sup>5</sup> See Sorabji (1083: 138) who notes the influence of Philo, *de Mut. Nom.* 47, 267. It is important to clarify here that while time will be the life of the soul, eternity the life of Intellect, neither of these two terms will be applicable to the One. This, of course, is despite the fact that the One is sometimes described as 'everlasting' or 'always.'

<sup>6</sup> *Enneads*, III. 7 [45] 3. 12-39. The edition and translation used in the following essay comes from Armstrong, A.-H., Plotinus, *Enneads*. Loeb editions. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1966-1988. See also W. Beierwaltes, *Plotin über Ewigkeit und Zeit*, Frankfurt 1967 (text of *Enneads* III 7 with German translation, introduction and commentary).

<sup>7</sup> *Enneads*, III. 7 [45] 11, 43-44.

<sup>8</sup> *Enneads*, V I [10] 4, 15-26: "[Intellect's] blessedness is not something acquired, but all things are in

undivided and unextended. Time, on the other hand, is the life of the soul that moves, lives and thinks successively from one distinct moment to another, never truly possessing or uniting with the object of its thought, absolute real being or the good from which it sprung. Plotinus writes the “extension of time means the dispersal of a single present” and so it must think, be, and live in succession, in parts.<sup>9</sup> It contemplates not all at once but incrementally and thus the life of the soul is erotic.<sup>10</sup> It is an “always on the way to being,”; it becomes but never “is” insofar as its being or life must be made manifest in time. The life of the soul is a constant seeking versus a having of being, an always anticipatory heralding of that which it hopes to be—absolute being as opposed to temporal being. In the soul’s longing for being, it projects itself into the future, always desiring eternal versus temporal life, eager to achieve well-being or true being for always. It is this transcendent or divine state that the soul truly desires, not its own temporal life that never truly “is.” In contrast, Plotinus believes that “the real longing (ἔφεσις) [of the soul] is for that which is better than itself. When that is present, it is fulfilled and at rest, and this is the truly willed (βουλητὸς) life.”<sup>11</sup> Further describing the soul’s desire for absolute life not found in time but only in eternity, Plotinus valorizes the prominence of the present moment, writing:

[T]he desire of life seeks existence, it will be the desire of the present, if existence is in the present. Even if it does want the future and what comes after, it wants what is has and what it is, not what it has been or is going to be; it wants what is already to exist; it is not seeking for the everlasting but wants what is present now to exist now.<sup>12</sup>

Overall, for Plotinus, time tempts the human soul into a sea of dispersion, into a never-ending series of discrete nows admitting of destruction, a future ‘no longer.’<sup>13</sup> Insofar as we desire happiness and well-being and well-being is identified with absolutely real being, Plotinus argues that “[happiness or well-being] must not be counted by time but by

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eternity, and the true eternity, which time copies, running round the soul, letting some things go and attending to others. For around Soul things come one after another: now Socrates, now a horse, always some one particular reality; but Intellect is all things. It has therefore everything at rest in the same place, and it only is, and its “is” is for ever, and there is no place for the future for then too it is—or for the past—for nothing there has passed away—but all things remain stationary for ever, since they are the same, as if they are satisfied with themselves for being so.” For more information on the relation between the soul’s life activity, time and the world of coming-into-being see D. Majumdar, *Plotinus on the Appearance of Time and the World of Sense*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2007 and A. Smith, A. “Eternity and Time,” in (ed.) L. Gerson, *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 196-216.

<sup>9</sup> *Enneads*, I 5 [36] 7, 14-15: Ὅλως δὲ τοῦ χρόνου τὸ πλεόν σκέδασιν βούλεται ἐνός τινος ἐν τῷ παρόντι ὄντος

<sup>10</sup> For a brilliant analysis on the erotic nature of Plotinus’ soul in relation to time see José Carlos Barakat, “Soul’s Desire and the Origin of Time in the Philosophy of Plotinus,” in Phillips, J. and Finamore, J.. (eds.). *Literary, Philosophical, and Religious Studies in the Platonic Tradition*. Sankt Augustin, 2013, p. 25-42.

<sup>11</sup> *Enneads*, I 4 [46] 6, 17-19. See L. Gerson, “Plotinus on Happiness” in *Journal of Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 6, no. 1, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> *Enneads*, I 5 [36] 2.10-15: Ἡ δ’ ἐφεσις τοῦ ζῆν τὸ εἶναι ζητοῦσα τοῦ παρόντος ἂν εἴη, εἰ τὸ εἶναι ἐν τῷ παρόντι. Εἰ δὲ τὸ μέλλον καὶ τὸ ἐφεξῆς θέλοι, ὃ ἔχει θέλει καὶ ὃ ἐστίν, οὐχ ὃ παρελήλυθεν οὐδ’ ὃ μέλλει, ἀλλ’ ὃ ἤδη ἐστὶ τοῦτο εἶναι, οὐ τὸ εἰσαεὶ ζητοῦσα, ἀλλὰ τὸ παρὸν ἤδη εἶναι ἤδη.

<sup>13</sup> *Enneads*, I 5 [36] 7.11-12.



eternity; and this is neither more nor less nor of any extension, but is a “this here” unextended and timeless.”<sup>14</sup> Put otherwise, we do not come into contact with real being in the past or the future but only right now as active intellectual contemplation occurs in the indivisible immediacy of the present, in the immediacy that always “is.”<sup>15</sup>

Plotinus also argues that present well-being is equal to an infinite amount of happiness in time, reminding his readers that happiness is not a mere feeling or state of the soul but an unhindered *activity* of the soul,<sup>16</sup> it is the soul in its *actuality*. For Plotinus, once the soul has achieved the intellectual vision then it need not more time. To explain, Plotinus draws an analogy to seeing a particular object: “If in the longer time he gained a more accurate knowledge of it, then the time would have done something more for him. But if he knows it just the same all the time, the man who has seen it once has as much.”<sup>17</sup> He emphasizes that longer lasting happiness does not exist as “any moment only has what is present; past pleasure is gone and done with” and future pleasure has not yet come.<sup>18</sup> For Plotinus, “One ought not really to talk about ‘longer’ at all, because it means reckoning that which does not exist any longer with that which does. But as regards well-being it has a boundary and limit and is always the same.”<sup>19</sup> The boundary of well-being is an unqualified noetic vision which is not increased with more time. Insofar as one would measure the complete or absolute by an infinite sequence of partiality, an unlimited amount of time would still only be an always-on-the-way to being which never quite grasps the object of its desire. In other words, more time, regardless of its length, would be of lesser worth than the fullness of the unextended present.<sup>20</sup>

Plotinus’ understanding of the levels of the soul, i.e. the lower soul, the rational soul and the intellectual soul, the last of which remains “undescended” or above at the hypostasis of Intellect is also integral for understanding the value of the present moment.<sup>21</sup> Overall, regardless of the goings-on of the body-soul composite or even the consciousness of rationality, the soul that remains above is only disinterestedly aware of the world of process below.<sup>22</sup> In noetic contemplation, then, the soul is ultimately identical with the divine Intellect, thinking its contents as itself, becoming a god who

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<sup>14</sup> *Enneads*, I 5 [36]7.25-30.

<sup>15</sup> *Enneads*, I 5 [36] 7.8

<sup>16</sup> *Enneads*, I 5 [36] 4. 4. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VII, 14. 1153b 10-12.

<sup>17</sup> *Enneads*, I 5 [36] 3.3-5: Τί οὖν τὸ «πλείονα χρόνον εὐδαιμόνησε καὶ πλείονα χρόνον εἶδε τοῖς ὄμμασι τὸ αὐτό»; Εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἐν τῷ πλείονι τὸ ἀκριβέστερον εἶδε, πλέον ἂν τι ὁ χρόνος αὐτῷ εἰργάσατο· εἰ δὲ ὁμοίως διὰ παντὸς εἶδε, τὸ ἴσον καὶ ὁ ἅπαξ θεασάμενος ἔχει.

<sup>18</sup> *Enneads*, I 5 [36] 4. 5-6.

<sup>19</sup> *Enneads*, I 5 [36] 6. 17-20: Τὸ δὲ πλεῖον ἴσον οὐχ ἅμα ἐστὶν οὐδὲ δὴ πλεῖον ὅλως λεκτέον τὸ μηκέτι ὄν τῷ ὄντι συναριθμοῦντα. Τὸ δὲ τῆς εὐδαιμονίας ὄρον τε καὶ πέρας ἔχει καὶ ταῦτόν ἀεί.

<sup>20</sup> Here it may also be interesting to note that Damascius argues against the idea that the present moment ever ceases, i.e. that since time is a flow of that which comes to be, it is pointless to try and measure the moment from its beginning and end as such a point does not exist. *Simpl. in Phys.*, 799, 30-5.

<sup>21</sup> For the doctrine of the undescended soul see *Enneads*, IV 8 [6] 8. 1-3. See also *Enneads* I 5 [36] 9. 23-26 where Plotinus even argues that the good man is happy or enjoying well-being even while asleep as the activity of the intellect is unhindered. See Armstrong, A. H., “Plotinus” in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge, 1967, 195-268. For the classic arguments of the later Neoplatonic rejection of Plotinus’ psychology see Carlos Steel, *The Changing Self: A Study on the Soul in Later Neoplatonism*, Paleis der Academien, Brussels, 1978.

<sup>22</sup> See *Enneads*, I 4 [46] 4.6-19 and I 4 [46] 8.9-30. See also J. Dillon, “An Ethic for the Late Antique Sage,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge, 1996, 315-35. Here Dillon famously imagined Plotinus’ sage as one who would be indifferent to helping an old lady cross the street.

patiently awaits unification with the One, a state that Plotinus reportedly achieved four times.<sup>23</sup> This new vantage point, where “each one of us is an intelligible universe”,<sup>24</sup> helps reinforce the soul’s superiority to the world of process. The soul at this level is untouched and unscathed by corporeality, and the imperfection and misfortunes of temporal life. In other words, there is a point for Plotinus in which the soul’s desire for being is sated and is eternally at rest in Intellect. Due to this we discover that all temporal strivings of the soul, its restless longing to obtain absolute being and its corresponding projects in time, are merely futile and, perhaps, pitiful images of what one already unknowingly possessed. As such we are invited to distance ourselves from our imperfect, striving selves and to become aware of the god in us, the undescended, impassible soul that remains in an eternal embrace with its cause. This is the opportunity that the present moment allots to us, i.e. the recognition that we are already eternally happy.

Ultimately, this concept of achieving well-being and happiness via noetic contemplation and, eventually, unity with the One, brings Plotinus to insist that his followers don the philosopher’s cloak, devoting themselves to quiet contemplation “in the flight of the alone to the Alone,”<sup>25</sup> awaiting the grace of the One as one would for a sunrise.<sup>26</sup> For Plotinus, the true sage will escape this temporal world, enacting his well being in coming to think and therein reunite with absolute, active, eternal life available to us in the reality of the present moment.

### III. PROCLUS AND THE GOOD OF TEMPORAL LIFE

From the outset it should be clear that Proclus’ position on the well being of the soul and its relationship to the present moment suggests a fundamentally different comportment to temporality than that taken by Plotinus. As Neoplatonic scholars are all well aware, in opposition to Plotinus, Proclus argued that the soul has fully descended,<sup>27</sup> and therein definitively rejects the idea that the soul’s well being would reside in the life of Intellect, i.e. eternity. As Proclus rhetorically wonders: “If the best part of our being is perfect, then the whole of our being must be well-off. But in that case, why are we humans at this very moment not all of us well-off, if the summit of ourselves indulges in perpetual intellection and is constantly in the presence of gods.”<sup>28</sup>

Proclus’ own account of the good of the present moment begins by first recalling the Neoplatonic doctrine of *sympatheia* where all participatory beings from the first, i.e. Intellect, to the last, i.e. particular bodies, partake in the kinship or likeness that constitutes the possibility of communion, or contact with the originative cause of all

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<sup>23</sup> Porphyry, *Vita Plot.*, 23, 15-17.

<sup>24</sup> *Enneads*, III 4 [15] 3.22.

<sup>25</sup> *Enneads*, VI 9 [9] 11.50

<sup>26</sup> *Enneads*, V 5 [32] 8.3-7: “So one should not chase after [unity with the One], but await quietly until it appears, preparing oneself to contemplate it, as the eye awaits the rising of the sun; and the sun rising over the horizon [...] gives itself to the eye to see.”

<sup>27</sup> Proclus, *Elements of Theology* (=ET) §211 where he writes: “Every particular soul, when it descends into the realm of generation, descends completely; it is not the case that there is a part of it that remains above and a part that descends.” Cf. Iamblichus, *De anima* I 6 and I 7. See further Steel (1978) for the implications of this thesis for the later Neoplatonists.

<sup>28</sup> Proclus, *in Tim.*, III 334.10-14.

things. As Proclus argues in the *Elements of Theology* prop. 129, “The divine character penetrates even to the last terms of the participant series, but always through the mediation of terms akin to itself.” In short, then, since the procession of creation moves from like to like,<sup>29</sup> souls regardless of their full descent (their not abiding or remain in Intellect) are not entirely lost insofar as “the divine does not stand aloof from anything, but is present for all things alike.”<sup>30</sup>

Now relating this schema to Proclus’ account of the soul’s temporality and its own well-being, we should stress the soul’s place as the intermediary between the eternal and the temporal. Proclus sees the soul as the link of likeness between these two disparate forms of life and, as such, the soul, for Proclus, is eternal in one respect but temporal in another. As he defines in prop. 191, the soul is that which has an “eternal existence but a temporal activity.”<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, then, the soul, by virtue of its *being*, is like its cause, imitating eternal nature in its immortality, self-movement and self-constitution. Here, we should recall that as self-constituted the immortal soul resembles its cause in its essential completeness and as such it too will have a *life* that “proceed[s] to generate those things which it is capable of producing, imitating in its turn the originative principle of the universe.”<sup>32</sup> In other words, like its proximate and originative causes, the Intellect and the Good, the soul too will become a cause, creating effects that resemble itself, while also being distinct from itself.

For Proclus, the life or activity of the soul must be distinct from its being as otherwise there would be nothing preventing the soul from being Intellect itself, whose being and activity are, indeed, identical.<sup>33</sup> In other words, unlike Plotinus, the soul’s life or activity will belong not to eternity but, rather, to the unfolding of its being in time. Consequently, the vital part of the soul’s good will be diffused and extended in temporal processes, in such acts as discursive rational thought. Yet, here is the key to the soul’s activity or life: in such temporal and successive forms of thinking and acting, the good or divine soul ultimately reveals itself as subject neither to “was” nor “will be,” neither to the past nor to the future. Rather, it unfolds in its temporal acts its “always”, its being, not, as Plotinus argued, by escaping to some other world, but by creating or revealing the good in the temporal world here and now, the good of the realm of process and coming-into-being. To do this souls must make manifest in their temporal accounts and projects the good of process itself, the good of not abiding in absolute being; for, this is the good of the Intellect. Like the divine causes themselves, the soul which is to be happy must willingly descend. In this the soul sees the very good in its own longing for being that is never sated, the good of being otherwise than being. In other words, the soul must value its own self-alienation, its rupture from being as it lives in time. It is in seeing the good in descent, in alienation that a bond of *sympathia* is established or uncovered,

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<sup>29</sup> *ET* §28, §29 and §32.

<sup>30</sup> *In Tim.*, 209.20-26

<sup>31</sup> *ET* §191: Πᾶσα ψυχή μεθεκτὴ τὴν μὲν οὐσίαν αἰώνιον ἔχει, τὴνδὲ ἐνέργειαν κατὰ χρόνον. See further §192 and §55.

<sup>32</sup> *ET* §25 and §27

<sup>33</sup> See *ET* §191 where Proclus argues that “Soul cannot have both eternal existence and act otherwise it would be undivided Being and intellectual; it would no longer be self-moved but unmoved. It cannot have both in time otherwise it would be a thing of process and not self-moved or constituted, its good would not be from itself.”

linking the world of process to the divine.<sup>34</sup> Consequently, then, it will be in the soul's projects, in its temporal activities that it shall disclose both its own being via thinking intellectually but also reveal its own good/activity residing in temporal and insatiable coming-to-be, in in willingly extending themselves to all that is below it, to all that fails to actually be but can only become. Due to this willingly descent, such souls become, as Proclus insists, providers of the good for others.<sup>35</sup> Such activities are the accomplishments of heroes who have the uncanny ability in their temporal projects paradoxically to bare, as Diotima insisted in the *Symposium*,<sup>36</sup> the divine and the eternal in the present moment, continuously and repeatedly revealing the good of their own tragic and insatiable energies.

As "souls on high," they revert to the divine but also descend toward the human, enacting the love for both superior and inferior realities.<sup>37</sup> Due to their erotic nature they are extended both upward toward the love of the intelligible and, as good, this love is also extended toward the temporal, therein linking the two and allowing for their true contact, a contact that does not subsume one into the other, but reveals the good of both in their own propriety. These are the divine souls<sup>38</sup> who become paradigms for the value of the striving, the seeking, the vital wanting of the good, the beautiful, the true or the just that is never sated but always seeks to progress, because souls, as temporal beings in contact

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<sup>34</sup> Here we should note, that Proclus does not think of the soul as the creator of time but insists in accord with Plato's *Timaeus* that it is the Demiurge who, as an Intellect, creates time as the moving an image of eternity. See in *Tim.*, III 3.32-4.6. As Chlup (2012: 139) explains, "Due to this there is an unparticipated monad of Time which is atemporal and in which all temporal activities of the soul participate." This view, of course, follows Iamblichus' account as recorded by Simplicius: "It looks then as if in these words Iamblichus is postulating one ungenerated now before the things which participate in it, and then [nows] which are transmitted from this one to the participants. Just as with now, so also with time. There is one time before temporal things, and there are several times which come into being in what participates, so that in them one time is past, one future, one present." *In Phys.* 793, 3-7. In fact, as Sorabji argues (1983: 37-38), it appears that Iamblichus is advancing the thesis that there are a plurality of nows where the superior now is static and above the lower flowing now dependent upon other times for its existence. In fact it appears that the lower form of time, the flow, is due things which participate in time "as they are always coming into being and cannot take on the stable being of time without changing but touch that being with ever different parts of themselves." *In Phys.* 787, 17-20. Sorabji also highlights how the later Neoplatonist, Damascius, would argue that the division of time into past, present and future is relative to us as it is essentially flowing.

<sup>35</sup> *Prov.* §7.

<sup>36</sup> Plato, *Symposium* 206b.

<sup>37</sup> Proclus, *de malorum substantia*, §15.

<sup>38</sup> For the relationship between such divine, erotic souls and the Neoplatonic category of the hero see [edited for blind review] as well as G. Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995) p.132-133 and E. Butler "Time and the Heroes," *Walking the Worlds: A Biannual Journal of Polytheism and Spiritwork*, vol. 1, no. 1, (Winter 2014), pp. 23-44. We should keep in mind that Proclus seemed to suggest three levels of participated souls, where the first seems to parallel our "great individual" who can ascend and descend the ladder: 1) Divine souls who are gods upon the psychic level (as they do not transcend their station as souls); 2) intellectual souls who participate in intellectual attendance and who are perpetually attendant upon gods and 3) the average soul who sometimes and sometimes not attendant upon the gods (*ET* §185). See also §201 which argues that all divine souls have a threefold activity in their capacity as souls, as recipients of divine intelligence and as that which is derived from the gods: "As gods they exercise providence towards the universe, in virtue of their intellectual life they know all things, and in virtue of the self-movement proper to their being they impart motion to bodies."

with the world of process, can *always* progress, *always* stretch out toward the good.<sup>39</sup> To be sure, in this moment souls will never fully reveal or make manifest the object of their longing; we can only reach for it, extend ourselves toward are beloved. Yet, this is the strange and beautiful lot of soul, a lot given to it by the divine itself. For Proclus, it is due to the gods' good will, their caring for us by establishing chains of likeness, that we long or desire the gods and therein stretch out toward them,<sup>40</sup> revealing in our unique activities (e.g. our articulations, projects, our work) what we are to others in this temporal world of process: erotic souls extending ourselves toward the good in the present moment. It is in the present moment that souls reveal paradoxically the divinity, i.e. the being, of erotic activity.

In conclusion, the Procline understanding of the value of the present moment is not as Plotinus would have liked, the satiating of the soul's desire by uniting it with the eternal outside of time. Rather, more in tune with the Hellenistic existential/Nietzschean "yes" to the temporal corporeal world that Hadot described, Proclus affirms with resounding clarity the value of the erotic soul in its vital temporality. For Proclus, the present moment bears witness to the beauty and good of the soul's longing for the divine both there and here, right now and for always.

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<sup>39</sup> Sorabji (1983: 150) notes this similar experience of time in the Christian philosopher Gregory of Nyssa. Sorabji's exegesis and quotes of Gregory are worthwhile enough to reproduce here: "[Gregory] viewed mystical experience of God, not as something static, but as a perpetual discovery. Since the distance between the soul and God is infinite, there will always be more to understand, and the more we understand, the more we recognize that God is incomprehensible. But we will never feel satiety, because we can always progress. Thus he describes the soul as: 'conforming itself to that which is always being apprehended and discovered.' Again, [Gregory] describes the beatific vision as follows: Then, when the soul has partake of as many beautiful things as it has room for, the Word draws it afresh, as if it had not yet partaken in the beautiful things, drawing it to share in the supreme beauty. Thus its desire is increased in proportion as it progresses towards that which is always shinning forth, and because of the excess of good things which are all the time being discovered in that which is supreme, the soul seems to be touching the ascent for the first time." *On the Soul and Resurrection* PG46 and *On the Song of Songs* 5, PG44.

<sup>40</sup> Proclus, in *Parm.*, 807.23-30: "Soul has not been granted thoughts that are established on the level of eternity, but she aims at grasping the full actuality of Intellect; and in her striving for this perfection and for the form of comprehension that belongs to that one and simple being she circles around Intellect as in a dance, and as she shifts her attention from point to point, she divides the undivided mass of Forms, looking separately at the Form of Beauty, and separately at the Form of Justice, and separately at each of the others, thinking them individually and not together."