

*A Philosophical Study of Tyranny in
Plato, Sophocles, and
Aristophanes*

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Plato's interlocutors discuss at length about psychology, politics, poetry, cosmology, education, nature, and the gods, in short, about the things that inscribe the transcendent and the grounding poles of human life. It stands to reason that what we wish to glean from Plato's thinking will show itself more readily if we remain attentive to the self-undermining and the subversive elements of the dialogues.

I call the interpretation, which follows the shape- and, hence, meaning-shifting structure of Plato's writing, "paradigmatic procedure." By this I do not mean that we ought to find, explain, and then interpretively apply to the whole of Plato's thought any particular passages from the *Republic*, the *Timaeus*, or the *Statesman*, which mention paradigms. However, I, following Benardete, propose that "Plato must have learned from poets"¹ who produced epos, tragedy, comedy, and myth. This means that Plato borrows these poetic elements and form when he writes the philosophical dialogues.

Paradigmatic method of interpretation is conscious of the dramatic form. It situates and analyzes the arguments made both through speeches and through actions as these arise out of the play of literary images. The latter, in their turn, are made up of the

¹ Benardete, *Encounters and Reflections* 126

tripartite convergence between the dialogical characters, their speeches, and their deeds. Depending on the colorations that the three impart to one another, the images of Plato are comic, tragic, or, which is most often the case, they are tragicomic. The dramatic tone of a given image, once it is detected, reflects back onto the dialogical discussion or account and presents the argument in this newly discovered light. It often happens that the difference between the initial and the paradigmatic reading is so drastic that the straightforward meaning of the studied passage is undone as Plato's writing begins to show its self-undermining nature. This does not mean that Plato's philosophizing, also, is undone. On the contrary, when we begin to think together with and through Plato's subversive writing, instead of retrofitting our lives to some systems that may arise out of it and instead of forcing it to substantiate our views, then we begin to get a sense for the liberating force of Plato's philosophy.

In chapter one, I explain the relationship between paradigms and the tragicomic character of Plato's writing. Consequently, I offer a reading of select passages from the *Timaeus* and from the *Republic*. My discoveries showcase how paradigms inform and how the paradigmatic reading uncovers the tragic dimension of the *Timaeus*. I show how comedy shines through the, seemingly, most serious passages in the *Republic*. Plato's dialogues do not strictly divide into the tragic, comic, epic, mythic, sophistic, or pre-Socratic ones, but rather, most are woven out of all of these orientations. Nonetheless, it is safe to say that within parts or passages, such as those from the *Republic*, for example, a given form and theme is most pronounced.

I turn to the examination of tragedy in the second chapter. There, I first argue that Sophocles' Oedipus is a tyrant and then I expose the relationship between the

psychopathology of tyranny, tragedy, and poetry in books VIII and IX of the *Republic*. The third chapter carries on the exploration of pathology and offers an examination of tyranny and the soul in the *Timaeus*. Paradigmatic analysis plays up the theatricality of the *Timaeus* and identifies several axes around which the dialogical accounts revolve. The three main horizons are made up of nous, necessity, and dream or choric logic. These are fleshed out by the distention given to the dialogical arguments through the enmeshment of φύσις, μῦθος, and πόλις. The fourth kind of emphasis, senselessness, ushers the dialogue's grotesquely humorous ending and prepares the readers for the considerations of comedy in the fourth chapter of the present work.

The comedy of divisions, mythic tall tales, the halving and the fitting cuts, with which Plato's *Statesman* is woven through and through, reveal statesmanship's sinister underbelly. If it were not for the comedic tone, the fourth chapter argues, the monstrosity of tyranny, which is interred in all of the paradigms entertained as models of rule in the *Statesman*, would have remained unseen. Attunement to the comical passages and references, in the *Statesman*, is made expedient by an analysis of tyranny in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. The fifth and final chapter sees to the convergence of the speciously opposite forms and themes. Tragedy is brought together with comedy, poetry with philosophy, and theater with ordinary life under the auspices of the twice-born god, Dionysus. The Dionysian, duplicitously evasive, nature is shown to be contemporaneous with the double-edged nature of shame. The contemplation of shame in Sophocles' *Oedipus* and Aristophanes' *Clouds*, aids the investigation of the humanity preserving and the corrupting role of shame in Plato's *Gorgias*. The findings of the final chapter serve to

locate the pressure points of pathology and tyranny as these recede into the tragicomic dramas of our lives.

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In *The Four Loves*, C. S. Lewis says about friendship that it is “unnecessary, like philosophy, like art, like the universe itself . . . it has no survival value; rather it is one of those things that give value to survival.”² He prefaces this phrase by expressing a hope that his reader “will not misunderstand” him. I have not been wounded in battle. Lewis has been. I did not survive a war. Lewis did. Lewis is a literary giant. It is more than likely that I, despite the issued warning, misunderstand C. S. Lewis when I say that without my friends here, at Boston College, I would not have survived. Dissertation writing is a messy business. My husband, colleague, and my friend, Kevin Marren, has suffered through it with me. I thank Kevin for that.

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² Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace & Company Publishing (1958), 71.

~~~*To My Grandparents*~~~

~~ Although the masters make the rules  
For the wise men and the fools  
I got nothing, Ma, to live up to [...] it's life, and life only ~~

Bob Dylan, "It's Alright Ma" 1964

## INTRODUCTION

In the sixty fourth year of the First Century AD, Rome burns and Saul of Tarsus is beheaded by Emperor Nero. In the following year, Pedanius Dioscorides, a physician with Nero's army and a practitioner at Tarsus, completes his work, *Περὶ ὕλης ἰατρικῆς* (*De Materia Medica*). Dioscorides is a new-age Θεωρός. He is an avid traveler, who looks for minerals, plants, and animals—medicinal and deadly—things to study and then record as his findings. The oldest, Byzantine, copy of the manuscript travels much farther than its author. It is reordered and, thereafter, copied many times. The surviving version of the work bears amendments not only in Latin, but also in Arabic, Turkish, Hebrew, and French. Translations note the names of plants and annotate Dioscorides' careful accounts, which in the Byzantine, illuminated manuscript, are supplemented by drawings. The decision to add illustrations is understandable. A poisonous taproot, like hemlock, looks very much like the edible wild carrot, after all. Dioscorides' own supplement consists of five poems about fishing, herbs, and birds. Two of the poems are Dioscorides' incomplete paraphrases. The other two are straight recordings of someone else's paraphrase, and one is an anonymous poem from the third century BC.

Ἀλεξιφάρμακα, Euctenius' paraphrase of Nicander's second century BC poem, describes the looks and properties of the twenty one φάρμακα of vegetable, mineral, and

animal kind. The poem relates their effects and their antidotes. Copied by Dioscorides at the time of Nero's tyranny, Ἀλεξιφάρμακα offers no remedies to counteract the aberrant power's poison. It does not say how to heal the passion, which is called "tyrannical eros"—a phrase coined some half a millennia earlier by the philosopher, Plato. One of Plato's dialogical characters, Socrates, makes this passion accountable for the lawless and anarchical life (ἀναρχία καὶ ἀνομία ζῶν).<sup>3</sup> The men of medicine think in terms of balance. The disorderly does not need to be eradicated. Instead, that nature, wherein disorder has arisen, has to be restored to previous harmony. It has to be brought back to a balanced state and, thereby, to former order.

Dioscorides' third century BC namesake, an epigrammatic poet, coins the term that describes the action of returning to the old principles or order. Dioscorides' poetic license changes ἀναρχία into ἀναρχαΐζω.<sup>4</sup> Meant as a metaphor or, maybe, as a pun, the latter term dissolves the pains caused by unprincipled violence. It aims to bring things back to the good old ways. The coinage, although playful, is not meaningless or aphasiac. The word, carried over to us, as nearly a malapropism, expresses serious intent. Given the main subjects of the poet's writings, which are eros, literature, theater, and music,<sup>5</sup> as well as the context in which the term appears; namely, praise of Sophocles' art,

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<sup>3</sup> *Republic*, book IX 575a. The passage, which I am paraphrasing, reads, ἀλλὰ τυραννικῶς ἐν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἔρως ἐν πάσῃ ἀναρχίᾳ καὶ ἀνομίᾳ ζῶν. Where translation differs from Allan Bloom's *The Republic of Plato* (New York, NY: Basic Books Publishing, 1991), I use my own translation of the text. The ancient Greek language copy that I use throughout is the Loeb Classical Library edition *Plato, Republic Volume I: Books 1 – 5*. Emlyn-Jones, C. and Preddy, W. trans. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> *The Greek Anthology, Volume II*. Paton, R. W. trans., Tueller, A. M. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 7.707.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Marshall Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1985), 1.596 – 97, 1.606, 2.843, n. 320.

ἀναρχαῖζω places the great tragedies of Sophocles as the standard on the basis of which the state of Hellenic drama and the public taste can be examined. Dioscorides sets his two contemporaries, Sositheus and Machon (a comedian), alongside Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Thespis.<sup>6</sup> However, any mention of Euripides' tragedies is absent. Dioscorides makes the same choice that Aristophanes' Dionysus made in the *Frogs* when he left Euripides behind in Hades and brought back Aeschylus. Aeschylus and not Euripides, as the comedy relates, is better suited to save Athenian tragic art from imminent demise.

Dioscorides, when he celebrates the art dedicated to Dionysus, chooses Sophocles as the poet who can be trusted to bring drama back to its magnificent beginnings.<sup>7</sup> Aristophanes makes many jokes at Euripides' expense in the *Thesmophoriazousae* and in the *Frogs*, for instance. Neither does Aeschylus, although victorious with Dionysus of the *Frogs*, escape Aristophanes' ridicule. Even the winners' deeds are undermined and scoffed at in comedy. However, there is little to evince subversion, at least as far as Sophocles' work is concerned, in Dioscorides' literary epigrams.<sup>8</sup> Dioscorides appears to intend that we take his neologism, as well as the poetic past to which ἀναρχαῖζω appeals, quite seriously. The dissolution of the principles on which great drama rests, ἀναρχία in art, as far as Dioscorides is concerned, is counterbalanced by ἀναρχαῖζω—by a revival of or a return to the revered forms and rules according to which the tragic and the comic

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<sup>6</sup> Jerry Clack, *Dioscorides and Antipater of Sidon: The Poems* (Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy Carducci Publishers, 2001), 4.

<sup>7</sup> *The Greek Anthology*, 7.707 and 7.37. The two epigrams make up a pair. Cf. Dimitrios Iordanoglou's "Literary Loves: Interpretations of Dioscorides 1 – 5 and 7 G – P" (Dissertation Presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Greek, Uppsala University, 2003), 65.

<sup>8</sup> On the subject of Dioscorides' possible epigrammatic attacks against the kind of presentation of erotic love and eros in poetry, as is discussed in Plato's *Ion*, *Laws*, and *Republic*, consult the third chapter of Iordanoglou's "Literary Loves."

compositions are shaped. Thus, a negative term, which relates an undesirable state of things (ἀναρχία), is transformed into a hopeful word that promises a restoration of order (ἀναρχαίζω).

The term's inverted counterpart suffers the exact opposite transformation.

Τύραννος, the word that travels to ancient Greece from the southwestern Balkan Peninsula, in the mid-seventh century BC, is an equivalent to βασιλεύς.<sup>9</sup> Initially, τύραννος differs from βασιλεύς, the word, which describes hereditary kingship, only in this—the tyrant seizes power, but does not inherit it. First used in Greece by Archilochus, whose poetic character, carpenter Charon, rejects the wealth and tyranny, wielded by the Lydian king, Gyges, tyranny has a positive meaning, at best; and, at most, an ambivalent one.<sup>10</sup> A century later, by the time that Solon is composing, the term is aligned with violence directed against the people under the tyrant's power as well as with that violence, which the deposed tyrant eventually suffers. The connection between lowly birth and the tyrant's illegitimate ascension to power is established and tyranny receives the unambiguously negative connotation. At the time that Sophocles presents his *Oedipus* to Athens, tyranny is identified with hubris and with terror.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Victor Parker, "Τύραννος. The Semantics of a Political Concepts from Archilochus to Aristotle." *Hermes*. 1998. 126(2): 145 – 72.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 152

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 160 – 61. Sophocles' *Oedipus*, line 799, ὕβρις φυτεύει τύραννον, can be translated as "hubris begets a tyrant." I use the ancient Greek language copy of the Loeb Classical Library edition. *Sophocles, Volume I. Ajax. Electra. Oedipus Tyrannus. (Loeb Classical Library No. 20)* Lloyd-Jones, H. trans. (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library Publishing, 1994). The English language version of the text that I follow is Meineck and Woodruff's, *Oedipus Tyrannos*. Meineck, P. and Woodruff, P. trans. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2000). I also give my



## The Guiding Question

Plato's *Republic*, books VIII and IX, traces the changes in the communal life shared by the rulers and the people in order to show how "tyranny grows naturally out of the root of leadership" (565d).<sup>12</sup> In Plato's work, it is no longer questionable if tyranny transformed from being benign to designating an abhorrent kind of rule. The question is: Which kinds of transformations do persons and cities suffer such that this malignant growth—tyranny—arises? The search for an answer to this question or, at least, an axial triangulation thereof, is the primary drive of the present study. The method is: conversational philosophizing. The method suits the subject matter because it refrains from reenacting the tyrannical motifs of authoritarian, finalistic, and dogmatically definitive answers or prescriptions. Instead, engaging Plato's dialogues discursively, this text draws on tragedy, comedy, epos, pre-Socratic thought, and sophistic postulates to situate Plato's own use thereof and, from that, to tease out accounts of tyranny. Plato's poetic philosophy does not prescribe, as do manuals and manifestos. It unfolds, like a theatrical performance. The reversal of meaning, which Aristotle's *Poetics* marks as one of the essentials components of a good tragedy, is always underway in the dialogues of Plato. Miss this—miss Plato's jokes, dismiss his myth-making and poetizing—and you miss out on another foundational dramatic device, which is recognition. To fail to

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own translations of the Greek. Where translation differs from Meineck's and Woodruff's text, assume that the English is my translation unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>12</sup> φύηται τύραννος, ἐκ προστατικῆς ρίζης

recognize, what the reversal in the meaning of Plato's dialogical passages indicates, is to miss much of Plato's thinking.

The dialogues speak in the polyphonic and multidimensional terms. They are tuned to sustain the tension inherent in the power of rhetoric, dialectic, and poetic metaphor, which are able to deliver, by means of the same passages and procedure, the diametrically opposite conclusions. About rhetoric and dialectic Aristotle argues that it is not by mistake, but by their capacity, that the two arts simultaneously entertain contrarily positioned views and eventualities.<sup>13</sup> Hence, to be aware of and to follow the overflowing estuaries of Plato's compositional contraposition is not to be mistaken or misled.

The mistake is when you take the details of the dialogue as a constant modification of the themes of the dialogue. But the consequence is that nothing really changes. [...] Maybe you always have to do something like what happens in the *Republic*, where you make the move to the invention of the perfect city only in order to step back from it. Benardete, *Encounters and Reflections* 125 – 26<sup>14</sup>

In this case, the contradictory character of many dialogical developments is iterating the incongruities of life. *Αναρχία* develops into its opposite, *ἀναρχαῖζω*, and tyranny, similarly, undergoes a complete reversal in meaning. The ways of life that give rise to the new use of language are formed by these usages, in their turn. Domains of the human community—which are comprised of the elements that are as definitive of shared life as are the loci of political power and the scapes of cultural beliefs, shaped by religion, poetry, and myth—remain what they are at the very same time as they undermine

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<sup>13</sup> *Rhetoric* 1355a35 in *The Works of Aristotle, Volume II*. Roberts, R. W. trans. (Chicago, IL: William Benton Publishing, 1952)

<sup>14</sup> *Encounters and Reflections: Conversations With Seth Benardete* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002)

themselves. Only in writing do particular regimes, religions, and cultures survive. In life, every imaginable human communal arrangement stands subject to being transformed and, often, the nascent state is that, which is most readily perceived to be the former arrangement's opposite.

Folio 64V, in the Byzantine manuscript of Dioscorides' work, displays a "deadly" carrot. The plant is harmful to camels, but has medicinal and purgative qualities for human beings.<sup>15</sup> Hemlock is drawn on folio 76R. It is best known as a poison. The two plants—one most often used to cure and another, usually, used to kill—look very much alike. Despite the visual resemblance, there is no sense in changing one into the other. Even if it is possible to impart the properties and the look of hemlock to a carrot, the transformation will be then successful when it is complete. However, if it is, then there is no carrot left, but a poisonous plant. If one is substituted for the other, the two are not preserved in one, but one of the two is destroyed, vanished, gone. Unlike the plant life, the human life accepts of and necessitates substitutions, eradications, and transpositions in some such of its grounding moments as language, politics, culture, psychology, and the various modes of thought. We partake in and influence these developments. However, this does not presuppose that humans can securely know how to bring about any desired changes. It is only certain that the transformations do occur.

The notes to this text are many and most abundant in the first third of the work. I was once advised to "be less like Rousseau and more like Plato" in this regard and to

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<sup>15</sup> *Thapsia garganica* is presently studied in cancer treatment research.

abstain from providing an annotated commentary on my own writing. I do not seek to mimic either Plato or Rousseau. The notes are there to witness the many conversations with the texts and ideas of the philosophers, classicists, and literary authors from whom I learned a great deal and who have shaped my own thinking about Plato and ancient Greek poetry.

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*A Philosophical Study of Tyranny in Plato, Sophocles, and
Aristophanes*

I. PLATO'S DRAMATIC TECHNIQUE

~Nature spoken of as genesis is the path to nature~
(Ἐτι δ' ἡ φύσις ἡ λεγομένη ὡς γένεσις ὁδὸς ἐστὶν εἰς φύσιν)
Aristotle, *Physics* B1.193b14 – 15

1. The Role of Paradigms

The characters of Plato's dialogues weave together philosophy and drama.¹⁶ Their speeches present us with mythic and poetic images. We find no straightforward answer to

¹⁶ Leo Strauss compares the dialogues to Shakespeare's plays when he admits the difficulty we face in interpreting Plato. He writes, "No doubt it is paradoxical to say that an utterance of the Platonic Socrates is no more revealing of Plato's thought than the quoted utterance of Macbeth is of the thought of Shakespeare" (*The Origins of Political Science and the Problem of Socrates*, "Interpretation," Winter 1996. 23(2):129 – 206), 180. In the same text, Strauss notes that the "poets possess genuine knowledge of the soul ... poetry is *psychologia kai psychagogia*, understanding of the soul and guiding of the soul, just as philosophy itself ... just as Platonic philosophy itself, for not every philosophy is psychology in the Platonic sense" (202). Bernard Freydberg addresses the foolishness of an attempt to separate out the myths that appear in Plato's dialogues and disregard these in favor of privileging the remaining philosophical content. Freydberg calls attention to the importance of understanding the role that images and characters play in the dialogues. He stresses the need to interpret "both rational and non-rational elements ... understood in their unity" (*The Play of the Platonic Dialogues*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 1997), 23 – 38.

Discussing the importance of speeches (λόγοι) in relation to images, John Sallis warns that "Socrates vehemently denies that searching for the truth of things in λόγοι is tantamount to looking at them in images" (*Logic of Imagination: The Expanse of the Elemental*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), 10. Following Sallis's analysis, I do not privilege images, nor equate images with speeches. Instead, I study the manner in which the dialogical speeches and the actions give rise to the images. I then analyze the triad in order to give voice and force to the mythic poetry of Plato's philosophy.

For a careful examination of proximity between tales told as myths and accounts given as speeches, see Seth Benardete's "Protagoras's Myth and Logos." *The Argument of the Action: Essays on Greek Poetry and Philosophy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 186 – 197. Benardete notes that the "difference between Socrates and Protagoras involves from the first the difference between the Socratic claim that the logos can never be told apart from the myth, and the Protagorean claim that it can. For Socrates, the presentation of *philosophia* is always *muthologia*" (186). Sallis shows that if we hope to have access to either logos or to image, the

the question: “Why did Plato write dramatic dialogues and not, for instance, prosaic expositions?”¹⁷ Nor do we find a univocal response to the following question: “Why do the dialogical characters, which themselves are personae or types, of sorts, invoke the images from poetry and myth?” However, we must ask all the same, if we wish to attend to the structure of Plato’s dialogues and study it with care. The question is also an observation; it points out the manner in which the multi-vocal world of Plato’s thinking can be outlined. Interpretation of a Platonic dialogue necessitates attentive listening just as much as it calls for imaginative seeing.¹⁸ A thinking that neglects either one of these

two should not be equated. Benardete stresses that “Protagoras is mistaken about a possibility of an immediate access to the logos” (186). Consequently, to deal intelligently with myth, logos, or image in the dialogues, it is necessary to consider the mutual colorings or contaminations and relations that the triad forms.

Benardete also shows how closely the ancient Greek poetic and philosophic traditions are interwoven and how much Plato’s dialogues owe to the poetic works. Consult his *The Bow and the Lyre: A Platonic Reading of the Odyssey* (Baltimore, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing, 2008).

Conceding the multidimensionality of Plato’s writings, Thomas Taylor remarks that “Olympiodorus justly observes, that the writings of Plato like those of Homer, are to be considered physically, ethically, theologically, and in short, multifariously; and that he who does not consider them, will in vain attempt to unfold the latent meaning they contain” (*The Commentaries of Proclus on the Timaeus of Plato: Containing a Treasury of Pythagoric and Platonic Physiology*. Alberta, CA: Theophania Publishing, 2012), 7.

¹⁷ Offering a provocative insight, Sallis contends that “*Plato never says anything*” (*Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues*, Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 1996), 2. In other words, Plato lets his dialogical characters speak and act, but never stand in for the exact view, position, or theory of his own. Sallis reinforces the suggestion that none of Plato’s writings can be simply equated with Plato’s ideas in an observation that Plato’s letters, which are written in the first person, are questionable on “purely philological grounds” and do not express Plato’s “really serious thoughts” (*Being and Logos*, 2). The said thoughts, presumably, can be sighted when the interpreter pays as careful attention to the myths, poetic turns, and actions as to the speeches of Plato’s dialogues. In respect to the commentators, who hold that Plato busied himself with arguing for various theories and for the “theory of Forms” or the “theory of Ideas,” in particular, see Drew A. Hyland’s excellent dismantling of such views in chapter seven of *The Finitude and Transcendence in Platonic Dialogues* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 165 – 195.

¹⁸ The bifurcation of one’s attention that careful reading of Plato’s dialogues calls for is described by Jacques Derrida during his dialogic exchange with himself. Derrida asks: “Shall I just listen?

falls short of understanding the philosophical implications of the dialogues. Instead of speaking in the first person, Plato writes works of dramatic (from the ancient Greek word “ἔργον,” deed or action) philosophizing. Instead of giving us his own views, Plato creates literary events with which we can engage, but the significance of which we miss entirely if we take the text literally or if we forget that Plato is not any of his characters.

To trace, instead of confining, the philosophical events that arise from Plato’s dialogues, means to realize that while reading a dialogue, one listens not to Plato, nor to Socrates, nor to any of the indicated interlocutors, but to the artistic instantiations thereof, that is, to Plato’s characters.¹⁹ One listens to images.²⁰ These images say something about

Or observe?” He also answers: “Both, once again, or rather between the two. I’ll have you observe that *reading proceeds in no other way. It listens in watching*” (Emphasis mine. *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*. Pascale-Anne, B. & Naas, M. trans. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 21.

¹⁹ Heraclitus’ fragment D-K 50, beginning with “Listening not to me but to the λόγος,” οὐκ ἔμοῦ, ἀλλὰ τοῦ λόγου ἀκούσαντας, captures the spirit of attentive reading, which Plato’s dialogues require. This reading privileges not the authority of the writer’s alleged opinions, but the sense that can be made of the text. Hyland’s unpublished paper on Heraclitus offers an analysis of the passage. Hyland shows that an attuned reading includes an act of listening to the speeches. He describes it as the “λόγος of the soul [which] is not something permanent and stable.” The paper entitled “Wakeful Living: Heraclitus,” which underscores, also, the importance of the active dimension that belongs to wisdom and to philosophy, was presented at the 2012 meeting of *Collegium Phaenomenologicum*.

Although I disagree with Nicole Loraux’s remarks about Plato’s work, she offers interesting observations about Heraclitus’ thinking. See *The Divided City: On Memory and Forgetting in Ancient Athens* (Fort, J. and Pache, C. trans. Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books Publishing), 2006.

²⁰ The kind of attitude, which allows someone to enter into the dramatic dimension of a play, for instance (and into Plato’s dialogues, which are works of drama as much as they are works of brilliant philosophizing), is eloquently described by Michael Davis in his book on *The Poetry of Philosophy: On Aristotle’s Poetics* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 1999). Davis analyzes the double role that we fulfill “as spectators [and] ... as participants” (39). Both of these roles are important to keep in mind when cultivating our capacity for imaginative and attuned reading. Plato’s dramatic dialogues require that we constantly pay attention to and make sense of the “mixture of the utterly real and the utterly unreal, of *dran* [action or deed] and *drama*” (Ibid.). Listening to images or reading imaginatively, we “enter into the perspective of the

human beings and their appearances. If understood as living, that is, as active images—as portrayals which are not confined to one and the same view,²¹ but which enliven the dialogical meaning in the same manner that the dramatic characters²² express the

character ... they [the characters] can only affect us as images if we are aware of their unreality; this distance allows us to separate ourselves from the plight of the character” (Ibid.). The excellent advice that Davis gives shows what it means to be taken up, but not misled by the imagined dimension of dramatic works. This advice should be followed closely by the readers of Plato’s dialogues. Instead of succumbing, all too quickly, to the views that the dialogical exchanges present, we should remember that we are dealing with stylized characters and images, which are indispensable to thinking, but which must not be equated with Plato’s thoughts.

²¹ See Sallis’s *Logic of Imagination: The Expanse of the Elemental* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2012) for an explanation of imagination’s capacity to give ever-renewed and, heretofore unthought-of, appearances and meanings to things. Sallis makes an especially compelling case for the role of images. His study presents images as being essential to the “truth of things” (22). Sallis shows that it is careless to think that images are mere copies or the “sensible ... appearance of the intelligible” (Ibid.). Sallis’s interpretation of imagination and of images in the chapter entitled “Precursions” grounds my study of the power and function that images have in Plato’s dialogues. Note that Sallis distinguishes the truth-disclosive power of images from the fleetingness and duplicity of the “mere sense-image” (129). The latter, although essential for perception, has to first be “installed within a configuration of self-showing ... that serves to stabilize the image and open it beyond itself, to objectify it” (129). For other discussions of sense-image, see *Logic of Imagination* pages 178 – 79.

²² Aristotle’s *On Poetics* (Benardete, S. and Davis, M. trans. South Bend, IN: St. Augustine Press, 2002) is instructive on the subject of philosophical significance and compositional importance of characters. In section six of the Benardete and Davis translation of the work, we read:

1. “Story [μῦθος], then, is the first principle [ἀρχή] and like [οἶον] the soul [ψυχή] of tragedy, and characters are second” (1450a38).

2. “The story [μῦθος] is the imitation of the action [πράξεως] and, thought [διάνοια] and character [ἦθος] are by nature the two causes of actions” (1450a3).

3. “Tragedy is an imitation, not of human beings, but of actions [πράξεων] and life [βίου]” (1450a16) and “Therefore, they do not act in order to imitate characters [ἦθη], but they include [or put together συμπεριλαμβάνουσιν] characters because of actions” (1450a21).

Analyzing these passages and then putting the three passages together, we get the following: story, in being likened to the soul, is the moving principle of the tragic work. Indeed, Aristotle states that ψυχαγωγεῖ ἡ τραγωδία τοῦ μύθου “through story tragedy leads the soul” (1450a34). Davis comments that ψυχαγωγεῖ “referred originally to the leading of souls into or out of Hades” (Benardete & Davis, 22, note 61), that is, to and from the invisible realm. Characters are images through which otherwise invisible actions and thoughts are made apparent and are woven into the story, which both moves the spectators and is the moving principle of the tragic work. Although secondary, and even dispensable (*On Poetics* 1450a25), characters disclose the work of imitation or imaging (of actions and thoughts) that the soul of tragedy—the story—accomplishes. Characters, then, are images within an imitation. They are those images by means of which we are both implanted into the imitative work and are brought closer to the possibility of

meaning of a comedic or a tragic play—the images, which arise out of Plato’s dialogues, give voice to invisible psychic movements. Thrasymachus’ famous anger²³ and his silent blushing,²⁴ Socrates’ reflective pauses,²⁵ the characters’ comedic²⁶ jests and the menacing, albeit not always immediately recognizable, appearances of tragic personae²⁷ portray that which cannot simply be explained away or talked about directly. The acts, the moods, the movements of the soul are not subject to simple description. These must be understood by tracing both the words and the actions of the characters back to the dialogical scene and to the context of the setting, which prompts an appearance of a given image. The images, in turn, retrace the paradigms²⁸ from which they issue. Like musical

“recognition” (Benardete & Davis, 22, note 62) whether we are considering the events of tragedy or the circumstances of life.

Cf. excellent note on Aristotle’s innovative use of μῦθος (Benardete & Davis, 19, note 53).

²³ *Republic* 336b

²⁴ 350d

²⁵ *Phaedo* 95e and *Symposium* 175a – c

²⁶ Consider: 1. *Symposium* 189a – 89b where “laughter” occurs five times; 2. *Republic* 451d – 457b where the comedy of naked communal exercises of men and women is acted out; 3. *Phaedo* 66a, 66c, and *Republic* 432b where the interlocutors engage in a comical hot pursuit (the first person singular of the word, which Plato uses in both passages is translated as “I hunt” θηρεύω) of absolute, pure, and invisible notions.

²⁷ In the *Timaeus*, tragedy is played out at 47b, when the eponymous interlocutor becomes a mouthpiece for Euripides’ Oedipus (*Phoenician Women* 1762). A tragic poet, Sophocles, is mentioned at *Republic* 329b – d. Tragedy is also afoot in book VIII of the *Republic*, in the framework of the discussions of tyranny, where at line 568b Euripides’ lines are recited and then later, in book IX at 577b, where reference to the “tragic gear” is made. Tragedy is underway at *Republic* 572b, where Sophocles’ Oedipus makes a disguised appearance when Socrates speaks a line from *Oedipus Tyrannus* 980.

²⁸ The ancient Greek word, παράδειγμα, means “example,” “pattern,” and “model.” Consult pages 1307 – 08 of the *Greek-English Lexicon*. (Liddell, G. H. and Scott, R. eds. Oxford, UK: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1953). As a present, active verb in the first singular indicative, the root of the word, δείκνυμι, means to “point out,” and to “bring to light,” as well as to “exhibit” and to “display.” The noun, to which the prefix παρά (from/at/to the side of) is added, then, rendered crudely, signifies something that shows from itself or that by means of which something else is exhibited.

My understanding of how paradigms operate in Plato is indebted to Seth Benardete’s descriptions thereof in the *Encounters and Reflections* 120 – 128.

keys,²⁹ they attune the reader to the structure of the dialogues. The paradigmatic structure of Plato's dialogues accounts for their inexhaustible richness.³⁰ It is the kind of structure that only comes to life if the reading is reflective in the original, ancient Greek sense of the term θεωρεῖν. The term denotes an immersive practice that engages the senses and the mind. In its original meaning, reflection is both speculative and spectatorial. It is both conceptual and imaginative. Inviting a reflective reading, the dialogues also provide for misguided interpretations. The paradigmatic function is responsible for the insights and the confusions alike.

The function of the paradigm is to condition the way in which things exist and appear. Although paradigms condition that which appears, they are not opposed to the existing things, nor do they take absolute priority over the sensible. The paradigmatic operation, rather, corresponds to the moment of apperception, assembling the definitive,

²⁹ In his discussion of the interdependence that obtains between the contents, the speeches, the form, and the composition of Plato's dialogues, Friedrich Schleiermacher attributes particular importance to the relationship between the composition and the musicality of Plato's works. He suggests that we adopt the following procedure when deciding whether a given dialogue is authentically Plato's:

wir weder vom Inhalt allein noch von der Sprache allein urtheilen dürfen, sondern auf ein drittes und sicherers sehen müssen, in welchem sich auch jene beide vereinigen, nämlich auf die Forme und Composition im Ganzen. Denn auch was in der Sprache am meisten beweiset, sind nicht Einzelheiten, sondern der ganze Ton und die eigenthümliche Farbe derselben, welche schon mit der Composition in dem genauesten Verhältnis steht.

Das Platonbild: Zehn Beiträge zum Platonverständnis, „Einleitung“ (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1969), 24.

³⁰ Consider the *Phaedrus*, which shapes the 1. neo-Platonic, 2. continental, and 3. philological fields of study. Cf. 1. Plotinus, *Enneads* I.6.5 and IV.7.10 in critical edition by Henry, and Schwyzer, H-R. (Vol. I and Vol. II, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1964 and 1977); 2. Derrida, J. *Dissemination*, Johnson, B., trans. (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2004); 3. Greene, C. W., “The Spirit of Comedy in Plato,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920) (31): 63 – 123.

but disparate, kinds.³¹ The gathering function of the paradigms runs through the kinds that, in their turn, delimit the appearances.³² A kind (understood not only as ideation, but also as a determination grounded in the immediacy of sense) is a definitive look or an εἶδος,³³ which makes appearances recognizable and which allows the multiplicity of

³¹ Paradigm gathers both the arithmetic or the self-contained unrelated kinds and the primary or the non-arithmetic kinds such as sameness and difference, rest and motion, and being and nonbeing. The difference between the kinds like the arithmetic ones—the kinds that do not have an intrinsic interrelation—and the kinds that are mutually definitive, that is, the kinds that are inclusive of their seeming opposites is discussed by Seth Benardete in his commentary on the *Sophist* in *The Being of the Beautiful: Plato's Theaetetus, Sophist, and Statesman* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006), II.120 – 154.

Sallis also holds that the

very identity of rest involves its relationship to difference—from other kinds—and from motion. Because of their participation in difference, the relation of kinds [such as rest and motion] is different from external units that can be counted. [Primary] kinds exhibit a more interwoven, intimate, and complex relationality than the units that are external to one another and that would refer themselves to counting.

The quotation is taken from Sallis's Fall 2014 Boston College Lecture Course on Plato's *Statesman*, September 16, 2014.

³² My explanation of the paradigmatic operation is largely, but not entirely, dependent on a reiteration of the chapter “On the Schematism of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding” from Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (Guyer, P. and Wood W. A. trans. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Perhaps, that which I describe as an assemblage of kinds, in Kant's language, is the work accomplished by the “transcendental synthesis of the imagination” (B151) and the schemata thereby produced. In my descriptions of synthesis or paradigmatic formation responsible for the appearance of real, palpable world, I want to follow Sallis as closely as possible. This means, I wish to avoid prioritization of intellectual over sensible, of objective over subjective, and of agency that molds something entirely passive. Sallis is especially clear about the repercussions of such thinking when he shows that Kant's unification of the faculties by means of imaginative synthesis is still indebted to history of separation between sensible and intelligible (*Logic of Imagination*, 15).

³³ My description of the work that εἶδος performs relies on Jacob Klein's analysis of number. See chapter six, “The Concept of *Arithmos*” in Klein's *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1992). Klein, for example, shows how “[o]nly through membership in an *eidos* ‘derivable’ from ... ‘sources’ (*ἀρχαί*) does the being of a number become intelligible as determinate, i. e., as *delimited*, number, as *one* assemblage of just so and so many monads” (56). Conceptuality of an arithmetic εἶδος is correlative with that which conditions appearances. The arithmetic εἶδος groups the many things into a countable kind. It brings the

things to be comprehended. Whereas, Aristotle in *Metaphysics* Beta, denies an independent, eternal existence to εἶδη (997b10 – 15) and proceeds to render εἶδος as species (998b22 – 28 and 998a2 – 10). I, agreeing with Aristotle about the first, do not follow his second articulation of the meaning of εἶδος. My primary reason for this is that I seek to retain the generative or engendering potency of the term in addition to its special, conceptual coloration. The terms, ιδέα or εἶδος, mean just as readily a “look” or a “visible shape” of things, as they do “idea” and “form.” The word, when spoken by Plato’s characters, sounds both the sensible and the ideated. It is possible to read the dialogues in only one of these two registers and take Plato to be appropriating something like the Pythagorean view that “the world and its bodies had been built ‘out of numbers’.”³⁴ It is possible to assume that Plato is furthering this Pythagorean conception to the point of separating out the realm of pure noetic units from the sensible instantiations thereof. However, this reading is remiss on at least two counts. First, it fails to recognize the dialectical tension between the sentiments of the Pythagorean characters of Plato (Simmias and Cebes in the *Phaedo*, for example)—the sentiments, which, among

many into one, thus repeating the work of the εἶδος, which accounts for the possibility of appearances. In order to be perceived and to appear *as* something, a thing must refer back to and be conditioned by a definitive look or a kind that marks out its limits. In an arithmetic operation, a thing again becomes not a self-same unitary something, but an instantiation of a countable multiplicity. Εἶδος, then, gathers the disparate multitude back into a determinable unity. My analysis of the “look” takes as the point of departure Sallis’s account of the meaning of “look” in *The Logic of Imagination* (127 – 141). I deviate from Sallis’s consequent discussion of the relationship that obtains between εἶδος and the elementals. I hold on to the notion of “kind” whereas, Sallis, in his discussion of εἶδος and the “elementals,” suggests that the latter not only cannot be “accommodated by the frame defined by the opposition between intelligible and sensible” (146), but also the elementals are “of an entirely different kind (without, in the most rigorous terms, being a kind at all)” (146). Since I am not developing the problem of elementality, but rather of the relationship between characters, kinds, elements, and paradigms my, analysis stops short of following Sallis’s lead.

³⁴ Klein, *Greek Mathematical Thought*, 68.

other things, take the joining of the noetic with the sensible to be the sign of soul's mortal nature—and Socrates' ingenious, but disingenuous, attempts at disabusing them of that view. In other words, the position fails to account for the fact that Plato pens both the Pythagorean and the Socratic positions in such a way that both are, ultimately, dissatisfactory. Second, the view, which claims that, for Plato, the ideated serves to account for the existence of all of the things in the sensible world, does not stand up to Aristotle's criticism. Aristotle's own assessment of the matter is most illuminating when we take it to be directed not at Plato, but at the speeches about εἶδος made by Plato's characters.

In the *Physics*, Aristotle marks a clear distinction between the warranted and the unwarranted assumptions about the relationship between the eidetic and the physical. We read,

Physicists, astronomers, and mathematicians, then, all have to deal with lines, figures and the rest. But the mathematician is not concerned with these concepts qua boundaries of natural bodies (φυσικοῦ σώματος), nor with their properties as manifested in such bodies. Therefore he abstracts (χωρίζει) them from physical conditions; for they are capable of being considered in the mind in separation from the motions of the bodies to which they pertain, and such abstraction does not affect the validity of the reasoning or lead to any false conclusions (χωριστὰ γὰρ τῇ νοήσει κινήσεώς ἐστι, καὶ οὐδὲν διαφέρει, οὐδὲ γίνεται ψεῦδος χωριζόντων). Now the exponents of the philosophy of 'Ideas' (οἱ τὰς ιδέας λέγοντες) also make abstractions, but in doing so they fall unawares into error; for they abstract physical entities, which are not really susceptible to the process as mathematical entities are. 193b32 – 194a3³⁵

Thus, when we recognize that we deal with abstraction—with something that is not responsible for and can be safely separated from the world of sensible beings—then

³⁵ *The Physics, Books I-IV* (Cornford, M. F. and Wicksteed, H. P. trans. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), Book II, chapter 2.

attribution of eidetic actuality³⁶ to these abstracted entities is valid. Moreover, when we abstract, we are mindful of what we do. As mathematicians, we remember that we work with models, but we do not say that these models are reckoned with before we are born, that they guarantee existence of sensible things, or the immortality of the soul. Note that Aristotle forbids us to “abstract physical entities.” In effect, he bids us to keep in mind that the sensible and the ideated are not as neatly separable when it comes to the world of things, as the Platonic Form theorists³⁷ would have us believe. My exposition of εἶδος is sensitive to this inseparability. I do not offer a substitution of one term “εἶδος” for another “kind,” as much as I seek to reinvigorate εἶδος and to bring it into the framework of thinking about paradigms. Thereby, I accord to εἶδος a formative and a generative capacity that is not solely mathematical, nor strictly ideational. Accordingly, εἶδος works itself out as a kind of an unfolding of life; regardless of whether the stress is on unfolding as it is enacted or as it is acted out in the literary mode. The rendition of εἶδος as a situational unfolding is closer to Aristotle’s descriptions of building in *Physics* III.1.

The paradigm thematizes the εἶδη or the eidetic-generative structure of events and invokes their unity. This unification contextualizes the kinds, creates their background and relates the kinds to it, bringing the many kinds into an integrated manifold, while keeping their individuality in focus. Paradigmatic synthesis is always at work. The

³⁶ I agree with Sallis that interpolation of “such words as ‘real’ and ‘actual,’ amounts to a prejudicing of ... Latin derivatives” (*Being and Logos* 144, nt. 27). However, I am more hopeful about the interpretive possibilities, which arise out of my recourse to these terms. Hence, I am less strict about their use.

³⁷ Notably, Ross, William, *Plato’s Theory of Ideas* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1966) and Burnet, John, *Plato’s Phaedo* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1963), 51.

individual appearances of things, situations, and phenomena are compared and instantiated by means of paradigms that serve as a background and as integrative agents, which structure the experience of perceptible world. Because paradigms do not exist in the same manner as tangible things do, they cannot be identified or duplicated with the same certainty as the things that are conditioned by them. One cannot see a paradigm as one sees a tree, a book, or a person. The nature of paradigms is not reiterated in concepts. Paradigms are not perfect models of speeches or actions. Instead, situating, relating, and guiding the play of speeches and deeds, paradigmatic structures set the stage for unravelling, comprehending, and making sense of the dialogical events.

In the *Republic*, Socrates convinces Glaucon that it is in the “nature of acting to attain to less truth than speaking” (473a).³⁸ Although Glaucon’s acceptance of this belief sets the stage for the dialectical move by which Socrates convinces Glaucon that a special, perfect status must be attributed to philosophy and a kingly one to those eager to philosophize, the hierarchical gradation between deeds and speeches proves to be erroneous. Truth is not detected by means of a neat separation of the ideal from the actual. Instead, truth transpires when words are put into play with actions and when the latter are allowed to speak and even to deliver arguments, while the former are free to portray the situation as it unfolds into a comprehensible unity. Because of the necessary unity of the deeds and the speeches, the paradigmatic cannot be relegated to either the

³⁸ Cf. Strauss, who reverses this and says, “This much can we say safely, that the distinction between speeches and deeds, and the implication that the deeds are more trustworthy than the speeches, is basic for the understanding of works like the Platonic dialogues” (“Origin of Political Science” 179).

actual or to the ideal, but must be understood as the navel by which the two are bound. It often appears to us that the union³⁹ between deeds and speeches and between experience and language could be dissolved. It can be fully divided by a mental act, but in fact, this union remains intact and underlies all human expression.⁴⁰ The expressive paradigmatic procedure is as much at work in the world as it is in the dialogues of Plato.

Paradigms partially pre-structure the dialogical events. This partial structure is formative, but not completely restrictive. That is to say, a dialogical meaning unfolds along the lines of interpretation given to a paradigm. The meaning of the dialogue is dependent on how the paradigmatic structure is understood and the way in which it guides one's interpretation. Paradigms do not prescribe definitive conceptual frameworks by means of which the dialogues ought to be interpreted, but rather give the interpreters a

³⁹ In chapter one of *Being and Logos*, Sallis suggests the manner in which speeches and deeds are equally expressive and revealing. Sallis says that speeches "let something become manifest in something ... the way that a deed, itself unfolding before our eyes, makes manifest something about the soul of the man responsible for the deed" (*Being and Logos* 43). Both words and actions are capable of revealing the work of the soul. Neither one can pin down the soul or give a direct description of it. However, both vociferate and give color to the psychic movements.

³⁹ Analysis or separation of the sensible from the intelligible elements of experience happens after the synthesis that yields a coherent, perceptible world. The unity of the two is at the heart of life. So is the unity of the said and the acted out dimensions of Plato's dialogues. The deeds, too, can be and should be analyzed on par with the speeches, but if the two are completely separated out, the dialogical unity crumbles; the structure and life of Plato's writing falls. Benardete warns that "the disjunctive and the conjunctive modes of interpretation should yield to an understanding of the double practice of (*sunkrisis* and *diakrisis*)—of collection and division—whose single name is dialectic" ("On Plato's *Symposium*" in *The Argument of the Action*), 67. On the question of how putting together and setting apart relates to the unity of life (dramatic and actual), see Davis, "Structure of Action" in *The Poetry of Philosophy*, (65 – 97).

⁴⁰ Here I am closely following Sallis's insight into and explanations of the fact that to work with the distinction between the sensible and the intelligible or the particular and the universal is to reinscribe and—to an extent—uphold it (*Logic of Imagination* 14). Sallis's study of imagination shows how a movement past the restrictive character of this distinction can be made. The logic of this movement "does not close upon itself ... it leaves open the spaces through which it turns and holds out the prospect of turning ever again, ever further" (25).

place in the dialogical action. Paradigms always attune. The question is: How is it possible and what does it mean that the same paradigms attune differently? An answer to this question must come from an analysis of the way in which the dialogical paradigm is generated.

I offer an analysis of the paradigmatic structuring of the relationships between images, speeches, and actions in Plato's *Statesman*.⁴¹

In a conversation about reading and learning, the Eleatic Stranger tells young Socrates⁴² that learning commences when the pupils “perceive adequately each of the elements [τῶν στοιχείων] in the shortest and easiest of syllables [τῶν συλλαβῶν], and they prove capable of pointing out the truth about them” (277e). The relationship between the formative and the elemental, in this example, coincides with the relationship between properly perceived (ικανῶς διαισθάνονται) and truthfully described (τάληθῇ φράζειν). Both pairs of relations, in turn, are constitutive of learning (ἐμπειροὶ γίνωνται). The

⁴¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all references are to Seth Benardete's translation of the text. Plato, *Statesman* in *The Being of the Beautiful*.

Hyland gives a very helpful dramatic ordering of the dialogues that begin with the *Theaetetus* and end with the *Phaedo*. See his article entitled “Strange Encounters: Theaetetus, Theodorus, Socrates, and the Eleatic Stranger” (*Boston Area Colloquium for Ancient Philosophy Proceedings*, Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill Publishing), 30 (2014): 103 – 117. Hyland concludes that “about a quarter of Plato's dramatic output [is] occurring dramatically in the last month or so of Socrates' life!” (105).

In the fall 2014 lectures on the *Statesman*, Sallis offers the following dramatic ordering of the dialogues: *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and then *Apology*, *Crito*, *Phaedo*. Since there is a promise made in the *Statesman* to produce not only the “statesman [but also] ... the philosopher” (257a), Sallis extrapolates that either Socrates' defense of his practices in the *Apology* or his reflections on what it means to philosophize and make music in the *Phaedo* qualify as candidates for the dialogue about the philosopher's way. Hence, the second trilogy develops the subject hinted at in the first. As to the dramatic joining of the first trilogy, Sallis notes that “Theodorus of the *Statesman* is present throughout the entire conversation that begins on the first day with *Theaetetus* and then goes on through *Sophist* and *Statesman* on second day.”

⁴² See my extensive treatment of both characters in chapter four.

passage shows that there are conditions under which the perception of an image, and the accompanying description thereof in speech, generate not just any kind of experience, but the specific experience of learning. The passage further suggests that the act of learning is related to the formation of the elements. Neither the syllable—the unity which is formed out of several elements—nor the element (στοιχεῖον)⁴³—gain priority in the process of learning.

It is true that learning how to read and write requires that we first learn the elements or the letters of the alphabet and then we learn how to compose writings out of

⁴³ This word, στοιχεῖον, has a history of telling meanings. Consider Sallis's explanation of the term and its predecessor in *The Logic of Imagination* 147.

See Timothy J. Crowley's article "On the Use of *Stoicheion* in the Sense of 'Element'" in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, XXIX (Winter 2005):367 – 394. The word designates a member of a series and, more originally, "measures or units of a sun dial" (374, note 26). Crowley warns that this use of στοιχεῖον is unusual, but "it may offer the best clue to the original meaning of the term" (Ibid.). To be more precise, στοιχεῖον refers to the shadow that the central pole of the sundial, the gnomon, casts onto the sundial's baseplate. The sundial, according to Herodotus, is a time measuring device borrowed by the Greeks from Babylon. Find the passages that discuss this in *The History* (Green, D. trans. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988), II.109. The sense of element, as στοιχεῖον, has systematic designation. Imagine the shadow moving over the incisions on the baseplate. As the shadow falls onto the sequential marks it, as if, picks out the parts of the system; playing up one of its elements first and then, in definite movement, the next. Although the sundial's divisions are determined in their meaning, their readings are dependent on the shadow which, in its turn, is dependent on the celestial source of light. The system is non-operational, the time cannot be read, unless the light enables the casting of the shadow and the appearance of an element. This relationship with and dependence on the naturally occurring phenomena is weakened when στοιχεῖον is used to describe elements of the written language. The term, which originates from the systematicity of charting celestially bound time, soon becomes a referent of alphabetic notation. It transforms to represent an element that is no longer governed by the natural phenomena, but which denotes an ever-present part of a linguistic (and so natural only by extension) system.

Another consideration is given to στοιχεῖον by Benardete in *The Tragedy and Comedy of Life: Plato's Philebus* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 122 – 123.

Klein mentions gnomon in "The Concept of Number in Greek Mathematics and Philosophy" (*Lectures and Essays*. Williamson, B. R. and Zuckerman, E. ed. Baltimore, MD: St. John's Press, 1985). He says that a "'gnomon' is a configuration of dots (or of lines) which added to a figure of dots (or of lines) produces a *similar* figure" (46 – 7).

them. However, speaking does not presuppose the knowledge of the alphabet. Learning how to speak does not require that one start by learning the indivisible elements of the written language.

An analysis of formations, to which the indivisible linguistic elements give rise, yields an understanding of the basic process by which learning proceeds. This process involves recognizing both the composite unity, that is the syllable, and the elements out of which the unity is formed, namely the letters, on the basis of distinguishing between the two at the very same time as they come together into one. The significance of the fact that element “b” and element “a” can be separated out or distinguished from their composite unity “ba” is not that the syllable can be dissolved into its letters, but rather that this separability engenders an understanding of other syllabic composites. Recognizing “b” and “a” as different from, but constitutive of “ba” is learning about the function of an element in a syllable as much as it is a learning about the formative force of syllabic—composed—unities.⁴⁴ Neither the composite syllabic unity, nor the elements into which it can be dissolved is sufficient by itself. This is so because a syllable, when not perceived as dissolvable into its elements, has the same effect as a letter. It is a simple unity. The letter, when not combined with another one, is a recognizable unity. It is a

⁴⁴ Book Z (1035a9 – 24 and 1041b11 – 34) of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* (Hope, R. trans. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Ann Arbor Press, 1990) discusses the relationship between the syllable and its elements. It is peculiar that the Greek, in both passages, consistently uses the various forms of συλλαβή and στοιχείον to refer to what in the English translation designates not only syllables and elements, but also letters. Discussion of syllable and elements also takes place in the *On Poetics* (1456b20 – 39). There, elements of the syllable are divided into “the vowel, the semi-vowel, and the mute” (1456b25 – 26). This distinction is not present in the *Metaphysics*. Benardete and Davis translation of the *On Poetics* uses “letter” consistently to translate στοιχείον.

unity which can be perceived and accounted for, but which does not admit of combination, separation, transposition, formation, or dissolution *within* itself. It is the formative function or the process of synthesis that is learned when the element is distinguished from its syllable on the basis of belonging to that syllabic composite.

The learner gains an understanding of the synthesis by way of an analysis. The learner considers or analyzes not the formative process itself, but rather the resulting synthetic formation. When the learner sees the difference between the element and its instantiation in a formed composite—in a syllable—an essential image⁴⁵ is perceived by that learner. It is an image because the perceived difference solidifies the relationship between the element and its function in the syllable into a model that aids comprehension. This model holds the relationship between unity and difference and it is interpretively applied to all syllabic unities. An essential image first arises when a particular syllable is comprehended, but it is not confined to that syllable. An essential image is called up by the learner for the purpose of recognizing other, heretofore unseen, elemental composites. When two different elements—“b” and “a”—are perceived as “ba,” the composite—the formed unit—prescribes a function to both elements. The composite unity of a particular syllable is impossible without the individual elemental

⁴⁵ “Image,” as I mean it here, is not an exact replica of some extant thing. It is not the kind of image for which Jacques Derrida criticizes Saussure in *Of Grammatology* (Spivak, C. G. trans. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) when he writes that “one must ... challenge ... the Saussurian definition of writing as ‘image’ ... as natural symbol—of language” (45). Image, as I mean it, is rather an imaging, a process or a happening of unification; a forming of unity, which takes on a function of interpretive lens with regard to the consequent unity and meaning formations. Regarded as essential, image is a synthesis. It is a recognition-enabling agent.

letters that make it up. In this sense, the composite does not completely negate the separate and individual unity of each of the elements. However, the unity that arises out of the composition dictates how the elements, occurring together in the particular way, will be interpreted or perceived henceforth. The Stranger connects perception of such essential images to truth.

Truth is not a correspondence between a memorized element “a” and its appearance and recognition in the syllable “ba.” Truth is the genesis of understanding that the syllable is a formed unity, which admits of differentiation, and of having this understanding inform interpretation of other elemental composites. Because the essential image, which appears truthfully, is a model of a general formative principle, but not an image of every possible particular formation, this image does not secure absolute knowing or complete truth.

Stranger: “on being in doubt about these same elements in different syllables, they [the boys] once more are deceived both in opinion and in speech” (ταῦτα δέ γε ταῦτα ἐν ἄλλαις ἀμφιγνοοῦντες πάλιν δόξῃ τε ψεύδονται καὶ λόγῳ, 278a).

The initial action, by which one perceives and recognizes, is substituted with doubt and deception. If truth had to do solely with a perception of an image of a particular syllable and with recognition of its particular elements, but not with an appearance of an essential formative image, then each syllabic composite would have to be learned separately, like the letters of the alphabet. Instead, a paradigmatic action, which encompasses images and

speech, engenders a truthful perception or a “true opinion” (ἀληθῆ δόξαν, 278c) about the heretofore unrecognized unities.

The Stranger stresses that the restoration of the truthful opinion depends on being led up (ἀναγαγόντας 278a) to the essential image through which the first formed unity is recognized. The action of learning retraces the steps, so to speak, and recovers the initial insight. The paradigmatic action, by which the learners first comprehended the formation of unities, is reduplicated in an attempt to dispel ignorance and deception. On the basis of remembrance and comparison new elements are differentiated into formed unities. The difference between and the joint operation of the elements and their syllabic composites (that initially ignites understanding) is now repeated in reference to unknown syllables. The work of understanding shows that “the same similarity and nature are in both weavings” (τὴν αὐτὴν ὁμοιότητα καὶ φύσιν ἐν ἀμφοτέραις οὔσαν ταῖς συμπλοκαῖς, 278b). That is, not between two different syllables, but rather between the formative synthesis that comprehends the simple composite unity and the understanding, which is engaged in a similar synthetic manner when it interprets new syllabic composites. Synthetic and interpretive function of understanding recognizes and unfolds networks of relations on the basis of recollection of an essential formed unity in an image. The synthesis of understanding is both the paradigmatic action and the “coming-into-being of

a paradigm” (παραδείγματός ... γένεσις, 278c), through which truth shines, and it is the synthesis by which truthful opinion can be called up.⁴⁶

However, this interpretation of the paradigm, which presents it as a cognitive synthesis, namely, as a function of understanding, is in danger of turning the elements of the syllable into purely mental kinds. Instead of showing its generative power, the interpretation saps the paradigmatic operation of its significance, and renders it as a blueprint for a mechanical procedure. The analyzed passage limits the interpretation of paradigms to learning how to read. Although the passage holds together the relationship between perception, description, and their fortunate coincidence in learning (277e), the thematic orientation of the passage is: *reading*. Understanding how paradigms work in reading ends up privileging the work of understanding and its synthesizing capacity. Since paradigms thematically unify, embed, or orient the many apparent kinds—kinds which cannot arise otherwise than when understanding is already actively at work—it cannot be that the production of a synthetic understanding is the same as the work of paradigms. The passage does not yield an explanation of a paradigm that does not privilege understanding. Perhaps the reason for this privileging lies in the transgressive tendency that understanding exhibits when it comes to learning in general, and, especially, when it comes to learning how to read.

⁴⁶ The possibility of arriving at truth through the paradigmatic synthesis is not a once and for all securement thereof. Because understanding works synthetically, falsehood becomes a more likely possibility when understanding is at work. The synthesis or the putting together and its relationship to falsehood is discussed by Aristotle in his book *On the Soul*, III.3.

First set out within the limits of learning how to read, the “coming-into-being of a paradigm” (278c) strangely transgresses these limits immediately after the meaning of the paradigm is determined. The paradigmatic operation, which shows how elements of *written language*⁴⁷ come together into a comprehensible unity, discloses the formative work of understanding, which interprets, synthesizes, analyzes, and structures appearing elements once the essential image of their uniform appearing is grasped. As far as comprehension of the written speech goes, the paradigm, which expresses the unity of the elements, discloses the truth. This is the case because the disclosure weaves together three mutually informative moments: speeches, actions, and opinions that have to do with appearances of written elemental unities. While one learns the basics of reading, one listens to and speaks with those who instruct. One strives to recognize and comprehend what is being learned. Thus, in so far as genuine learning happens, one has a true opinion about the things learned.

Transgressing⁴⁸ the paradigmatic presentation of learning how to read, the Eleatic Stranger questions whether we would be “full of wonder,”⁴⁹ if the paradigm of reading

⁴⁷ Stressing that written language is not at all like and cannot be simply made to stand in for the spoken word, let alone living or inanimate things, Derrida warns against the kind of thinking, which takes writing to be corruptive (*Of Grammatology* 39 – 45). The image of insidious debilitation at the heart of writing, of a capacity to confine the phenomena to restrictive looks, definitions, and memories is a hobgoblin. Derrida insists that writing cannot be solely responsible for the “aberration [or an] ... usurpation” (40) of nature. In fact, “nature is affected—from without—by an overturning which modifies it in its interior, denatures it and obliges it to be separated from itself” (41). Nature, corruption of nature, and writing have to be thought together. All three, as far as the interpretation of the written texts is concerned, are together from the beginning. So is the formation of elemental unities or paradigms by means of which the events of nature and of writing are interpreted, recorded, and understood.

⁴⁸ In view of the passage’s transgressive movement, it is important to remember that the passage is held captive—on both sides—to dreams. Cf. 277d and 278e. At the beginning, the relationship

could be extended to an understanding of nature at large.⁵⁰ Instead of reading written letters, “our soul ... affected by nature ... with regard to the elements of all” (ἡμῶν ἡ ψυχὴ ... φύσει περὶ τὰ τῶν πάντων στοιχεῖα πεπονθυῖα, 278c – d) reads in “syllables of things” (τὰς τῶν πραγμάτων ... συλλαβὰς, 278d). Whereas, learning how to read presupposes learning from someone—from a teacher, who instructs through speeches and is capable of verifying the correctness of opinions that students form—learning the “mixtures” (συγκράσεων, 278d) of nature is unaided by a knowing guide. How does one

between dreams and waking life is indefinite. It appears as if sometimes we have dream-like knowledge and then it vanishes in our waking life (277d). On the basis of insertion of knowing into a dream state, it is not clear whether we have knowledge at all and, if we do, what it has to do with our life when we are awake. At the end, the relationship between dreams and waking life is determined in favor of dismissing the dream state (278e). But how are we to have any knowledge at all, if we hold that knowing comes in dreams and evaporates when dreams dissolve? My interpretation of the relationship between wakefulness, dream, paradigms, knowledge, and transgression, differs from James Risser’s account of the significance that paradigm has for dreams, wakefulness, and knowledge. See Risser’s “The Art of the Example in Plato’s *Statesman*” in *Plato’s Statesman: Dialectic, Myth, and Politics*. Sallis, J. ed. (New York, NY: SUNY Press Publishing, 2007), 171 – 82.

⁴⁹ At *Statesman* 278c, θαυμάζοιμεν, the present optative active verb, which here appears as a part of a conditional statement, in its indicative mood means simply: “to wonder” or “to marvel.” The same verb is used in a somewhat facetious address that Socrates makes to Theaetetus in the eponymous dialogue (*Theaetetus* 155c – 155d). There the verb indicates the state in which philosophy begins.

⁵⁰ The problem of superimposing the paradigmatic manner in which we learn to read onto the way in which we come to an understanding of the world is multifaceted. In its first moment, the problem yields a positive outcome. This is so if we realize that by way of understanding the paradigmatic function we gain insights into the synthetic work of understanding. If we remain insensitive to the capacity of paradigms to structure both the sensible images and our opinions about the world at large, then we remain poor readers in general and, specifically, we are not good interpreters of nature. Thus, interpretation of paradigms is a fruitful task. It lets us see how reading can proceed differently, that is, more self-reflectively engaging understanding from the point of view of the possibilities, which paradigm interpretation holds, rather than from the point of view of unexamined examples that expedite comprehension, but that restrict imagination and thought. However, in its more negative moments, the paradigm interpretation is forgetful of the fact that reading a text and working out the synthetic function of paradigms in a written work cannot be equated with an understanding of the world at large. A simple superimposition of the meaning that writing holds onto the meaning that is at play in the interpretation of the world leads to a misunderstanding of both the world and of writing.

know that one discerns the elements of things correctly? Who will assure the learner that the paradigmatic image of an elemental unity, in so far as it relates to things and not to written words, is truthful?⁵¹ Interaction between speeches, actions, and opinions, which presents us with views about the world and forms the images through which we see things, does not attain to a kind of certainty that is offered by the system of alphabetical notation. It is not problematic *per se*, that the combinations of elements in nature yield exceedingly greater numbers of formed unities than do the elements of written language. The issue, rather, has to do with the recursive character of natural paradigms, which continually dismantle themselves and recede into oblivion, leaving behind images that can mislead just as readily as they can lead to truth.⁵² Understanding tries to grasp the movements of nature, the causes of things, and the nature of situations by means of the same paradigmatic procedure of synthetic structuring that interprets the alphabetic unities. It retraces the way in which comprehension of images and formation of opinions gives rise to a perception of the world, in order to represent and give meaning to the newly arrived appearances of things. Working on the elemental rhythms of nature in the same manner as it works on the ever present elements of the written language,

⁵¹ I am not disagreeing with either Sallis's analyses of writing in the *Logic of Imagination* and in *Being and Logos*, nor with Benardete's presentation of the matter in "On Plato's *Symposium*." Sallis interprets "Socrates' second sailing [and] ... a turn to λόγος" (*Logic of Imagination* 94) as an essential turn, which enables the study of otherwise inaccessible nature. As speech and as writing, λόγος can disclose the truth of things. In issuing a warning, I aim to account for mistaken confluences of words with things. These confluences—among other things—amount to poor reading. They diminish the disclosive power of language.

⁵² Benardete, in his analysis of Plato's *Timaeus*, gives the following description of elemental formations: "At any moment in any cycle of transformations, each element comprises what it was and what it will be as well as what it appears to be but is not. Every element is a phantom image of itself, but it appears as what it is ... The elements are as apparitionally distinct as they are dianoetically, but they never are entirely either one" (*The Argument of the Action* 390).

understanding is bound—every now and again—to be off beat. And yet, the Stranger assures us that we “would not be striking any false note” (οὐδὲν δὴ πλημμελοῖμεν, 278e)⁵³ if we applied the orthographic paradigm to the natural kind.⁵⁴

The Stranger suggests that our understanding of the relations between natural unities is ignited and proceeds in the same manner as does our understanding of the basic linguistic unities. Although the suggestion is not troublesome in its own right, issues arise when the world is seen through the prism of the written language. We should note that the latter is not the same as seeing by means of accounts or through logos. The capacity of language—written language included—to heal and to lead to sightings of truth is not being undermined here. However, the attitude, which diminishes written language to a perfect system or to a framework retrofitted to guarantee simple navigation of the world, restricts the positive acts both of the written and of the spoken language. To equate reading with correct apperception of the world is to be mistaken. In effect, when such an equation is made, both the sense of reading and of apperception is lost. To equate

⁵³ The analysis of the *Statesman* that is offered in chapter four of the present work confirms that what is at stake in the dialogue is a recalibration or refashioning of nature according to the precepts and possibilities of craft or art. The echoes of the pre-Socratic thinking on the elemental formations, which I draw out and comment on in chapter four, are commented on by Aristotle in *Physics* III.IV.

⁵⁴ The presence of unities, which make up written alphabets is persistent and infallible only by comparison to nature and to the world at large. Even this comparative infallibility applies not to the written words, but to the elements which make them up or to letters. A “cat” calls something to mind. An animal, a creature that lives in the world. By contrast, “a” does not have the same world-recalling effect. However, the abstractness of “a,” its dissolution into the word “cat,” is one side of its, otherwise, more certain permanence. In context, “Cat” can become a name or an abbreviation. The letter “a” remains itself. An example of exception would be an attribution of value to “a” in an equation, a formula, or when “a” functions as an article. On the relationship between abstract character and the representative capacity of the phonetic alphabetic notion, see Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* (299 – 300).

combinative power of written notation with the actual power of natural elements means to see past words, things, and generative paradigms, and to do away with careful reading for the sake of immoderate precision.⁵⁵

The superimposition of the written onto the natural and the substitution of the elements of nature (ρίζώματα) with the linguistic elements (στοιχεῖα), to put it in the words of John Sallis, is a “decisive moment.”⁵⁶ Although the precise moment of substitution is a point of contention,⁵⁷ the centrality of the transformation that our thinking about the natural elements undergoes lies within Plato’s dialogues.⁵⁸ The connection, between our ordinary understanding and use of paradigms and the superimposition of the linguistic elements unto the natural ones, is evident in the *Statesman*.⁵⁹ There, not only does the word, στοιχεῖα,⁶⁰ which designates the elements as

⁵⁵ In “Interpreting Plato’s *Charmides*,” Benardete makes a similar point about the condition in which one is “too exacting to be moderate” (*The Argument of the Action* 250).

⁵⁶ Fall 2014 Boston College Lecture Course on Plato’s *Statesman*, November 11, 2014.

⁵⁷ Crowley offers a thorough discussion of the subject in his article “On the Use of *Stoicheion* in the Sense of ‘Element’” (367 – 394).

⁵⁸ Cf. *Theaetetus* 201e – 202b, *Timaeus* 48b – c, and *Sophist* 252b

⁵⁹ Stanley Rosen’s interpretation of paradigm and elements in the *Theaetetus* (205a – 207b), for example, offers, precisely, the kind of understanding of the elemental that I am arguing against. Rosen sees the alphabetic “letters [as instances that] provide us with the initial example of elements” (*Plato’s Sophist: The Drama of Original and Image*. Carthage, MO: Carthage Press, 1999), 252 – 255. This view holds if the dialogical exchanges are taken at face value, but if the radical difference between the character of alphabetic and natural unities is observed, the analogy—between *stoicheia* as letters and *stoicheia* as “primitive elements” (Rosen, 253)—breaks down. Another discussion of *stoicheia* as the elements that designate what Rosen refers to as the “possibility of intelligible discourse” (252) begins in the *Sophist* at 252b.

⁶⁰ Here, the meanings of στοιχεῖα and transformations thereof are retraced: 1. στοιχεῖον designates a “one [or a member] in a row” (*Greek-English Lexicon* 1647), that is a one that comes successively after another. 2. στοιχεῖον marks the segments, as those of a sun dial. 3. στοιχεῖον also means an element of speech, which in its negative character can be taken for a metaphor of a shadow or a segment of the world and positively for elemental unities of a relational notation system.

they are regarded by systems of human making, replace ριζώματα, the word that, more originally, signifies the roots or elements of natural things, but also the concept of elementality is taken to be primarily or, now, paradigmatically linguistic and natural only by likeness. The conversation in the *Timaeus* (48b – c), for instance, although it offers the same name for the natural elements as does the passage from the *Statesman* (277e – 278e), nonetheless, underscores the difference between the “principles themselves that we posit as the elements of the all” (48b) and the “syllable kind” (ἀρχὰς αὐτὰ τιθέμενοι στοιχεῖα τοῦ παντός, προσῆκον αὐτοῖς οὐδ’ ἂν ὥς ἐν συλλαβῇς εἶδεσιν).⁶¹ The discussed conversation in the *Statesman*, on the contrary, denies that there is a difference between elements, their relations, and the paradigmatic work that understanding does when interpreting the elemental unities “of all things” (*Statesman* 278d) as opposed to the “elements in all the syllables” (278b) of the written language. For the Stranger in the *Statesman*, the fabric of nature shows the same relational, logical, discursive pattern as the one discerned by means of analyzing morphological structure of documented speech. But nature is not a document. Even if we grant that nature can be seen as if it were a text neither nature, nor a given document, can be understood by means of isolating their morphological elements. The whole of meaning, in this case, does not amount to the grasping of the sum of parts. The elements of nature certainly cannot be understood by

⁶¹ This is my translation of the passage. Unless indicated otherwise, I use the translation by Peter Kalkavage (*Plato’s Timaeus*. Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2001). In the passage under consideration, Kalkavage inserts “or letters” after “elements” and obfuscates the distinction that is being made between elements and syllables in the *Timaeus*.

being distilled into “pure or ‘atomic’”⁶² entities. Nature’s elements are “for mortal men most hard to uproot [ὀρύσσειν] from the earth.”⁶³

The sense of rootedness and hiddenness of the elemental in nature is preserved in Homer’s⁶⁴ *Odyssey*. Hermes⁶⁵ discloses to Odysseus the secret, which preserves Odysseus’s human nature from being transformed into a monstrous kind.⁶⁶

The Slayer of Argus⁶⁷ uprooted a magic

⁶² Rosen, *Plato’s Sophist* 253

⁶³ Homer, *Odyssey* (Biran Kembell-Cook, trans. New York, NY: Calliope Press, 1993), X.306.

⁶⁴ Consider *Encounters and Reflections*, page 164, where Benardete gives his reading of the passage. In his book on the *Odyssey*, Benardete sees how “Plato had learned from the poets” (*The Bow and the Lyre*), xi. In particular, Homer’s characters appear in the *Republic*, in *Ion*, and in the *Apology*. Curiously, Plato preserves Homer-like ambiguity with regard to his works. The dialogical form distances Plato’s take on things from the readers’ understanding of what is said and done by the dialogues’ interlocutors. The epic form places numerous bards and their renditions of the poems between Homer and our current versions of the *Odyssey* and in the *Iliad*. Cf. Christopher Fry’s preface to the Biran Kembell-Cook’s translation of the *Odyssey*. Fry stresses the distance between the composition of the *Odyssey* “during the 12th Century B.C.” (the introduction is printed on reverse side of the cover page) and the time at which it was “written down during the 8th Century B.C.” (Ibid.).

⁶⁵ “Hermes the psychopomp” (*The Argument of the Action*, 193; and in *Odyssey* XXIV.99 – 100), as Benardete calls the god, is the carrier of souls into the realm of the unseen and the carrier of gods’ words from the unreachable divine realm. Ἑρμῆς, whose name is now invoked to interpret (ἐρμηνεύω) texts, to practice hermeneutics, aids Odysseus. Hermes bids Calypso to release Odysseus (*Odyssey* V.20 – 148) and then he reveals to Odysseus the secret of how to resist Circe’s dehumanizing spell (X.277 – 307). Hermes, in his mythic and his poetic guise, has nothing to do with analytic derivation of systems of meaning. Keeping this in mind, my approach to hermeneutics follows closely the encounters with the (explicit and implicit) images of the god handed down by the poetic, the mythical, and the philosophical tradition.

⁶⁶ It is unclear whether monstrosity of Odysseus’s companions is there prior to Circe’s having her way with them. The men are inarguably monstrous after their transformation into pigs (*Odyssey* X.238 – 243) is completed. The reason why the men are monstrous is not because they become animals, but because a discrepancy between the human inside and the animal outside—the mind of men and the look of pigs—is accentuated by being unified into individual creatures; into pig-men. The part-pig, part-human mixture causes Odysseus’s companions much discomfort. The men “had assumed the bodies and heads and bristles and voices/Proper to pigs [σῶν]; however their human sense [νοῦς] was unaltered. So they were penned there weeping” (X.239 – 240).

⁶⁷ Ἀργεῖφόντης or Slayer of Argus, Hermes’s epithet, which occurs eight times in the *Odyssey* (V.145, V.43, V.75, V.94, VIII.338, X. 302, X. 331, XXIV.99) brings to mind stories of transformations. Argus, the hundred-eyed monster, is killed by Hermes. Argus’s many-eyed

Plant from the earth (for this was his charm) and showed me its nature.
Black is the root [ρίζη] of this magic plant and its flower is milk-white.
Known to the gods by the name of Moly, the plant is for mortal
Men most hard to uproot from the earth, but the gods can do all things.

ὥς ἄρα φωνήσας πόρε φάρμακον ἀργεῖφόντης
ἐκ γαίης ἐρύσας, καί μοι φύσιν αὐτοῦ ἔδειξε.
ρίζη μὲν μέλαν ἔσκε, γάλακτι δὲ εἴκελον ἄνθος·
μῶλυ δέ μιν καλέουσι θεοί· χαλεπὸν δέ τ' ὀρύσσειν
ἀνδράσι γε θνητοῖσι, θεοὶ δέ τε πάντα δύνανται.⁶⁸ *Odyssey*, X.302 – 306

watchfulness is changed into the sleep of death. The death is dealt to him by Hermes. Edith Hamilton writes that in order to kill Argus, Hermes himself transforms, laying “aside everything that marks him as a god” (*Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Company Publishing, 1969), 77. Assuming a look of “of a country fellow [and], playing very sweetly upon a pipe of reeds” (Ibid.), Hermes lulls Argus’ watchful eyes to sleep by telling him a tale about a transformation of a nymph, Syrinx, into a “shepherd’s pipe Of reeds” (Ibid.). The nymph suffers this transformation at the hands of Pan, when she, unwilling to succumb to Pan’s advances, flees and is changed into “a tuft of reeds by her sister nymphs” (Ibid.). Hermes’s clustered transformation stories, which shed sinister light on Hermes’s own look, as Argus is watching him play, do not provoke any unease in Argos. They put him to sleep.

⁶⁸ The lines can also be translated as follows:

Thus having spoken, the Argus Slayer furnished the drug
having drawn it from the earth and showed the nature of it to me.
Though the root was black, white like milk was the flower.
The gods call it Moly. Though, for mortal men, it is hard to unearth
Gods are able to do all things.

This fascinating and difficult passage brings (at least) three themes into focus. The first is the theme of concealment. Earth’s darkness is juxtaposed to light. The description of essential opposition between earth and world’s light, presented here is taken from Martin Heidegger’s *Origin of the Work of Art* (*Martin Heidegger Basic Writings*. Krell, D. trans. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishing, 2008), 149. This opposition of the two elements is a requirement for the existence of either. The second central theme, reflected in the passage, is the theme of nature. It is, in the manner of presentation, dependent on the theme of essential opposition. According to Benardete, what Hermes shows to Odysseus is that “*moly* in itself is irrelevant. What is important is that it has a nature ... To dig up the *moly* is to expose to the light its flower and its root; they belong together regardless of the contrariety of their colors. It is this exposure and understanding of things that is difficult but not impossible for men” (*The Bow and the Lyre* 86). Benardete goes on to explain that Odysseus’s knowledge that things and men have natures saves him from Circe’s curse. Circe turns the rest of his companions into pigs, breaking the belonging of human looks with human sensibility. Lastly, the passage raises question of limits. Whereas, when Hermes reveals the nature of the situation to Odysseus, he saves the πολύτροπος man from a monstrous transformation, Oedipus’s striving to know his origin, leads to “crimes [that] seem to have uncovered the undifferentiated beginnings of man” (*The Argument of the Action* 81). In case of Oedipus’s hubristic defiance of the divine, the “sacred [that] must bind together and keep apart the public (light) and the private (earth)” (82) is violated. Violation of the limits that mark and

The “charm,”⁶⁹ in this passage, is not the plant itself. It is Hermes’s action of uprooting [ἐρύω] and revealing to Odysseus the nature of the situation otherwise concealed from human eyes. Instead of overcoming the difficulty of unearthing the elemental (as it is situated in nature) by means of arranging the elements so as to make them yield a coherent interpretive structure—or, to put it more simply, instead of retrofitting the natural to accommodate the logical—Homer’s poetic passage observes that the disclosure of nature entails a displacement or uprooting [ἐρύω] of its elements. The disclosive uprooting is always a happening. It is an unfolding of a situation. However, no matter how careful, or even divinely guided, the interpretation of the revealed nature, is always a charm, a temporary remedy at best.⁷⁰ If we heed to the fluidity of natural relations⁷¹ and

define the realms of humanity and divinity, of public openness and private protection, of proximity and distance ends up annihilating Oedipus’s belonging to the human world.

⁶⁹ Kembell-Cook translates φάρμακον as a “magic plant” that is also a “charm.” Since φάρμακος is a magician and φάρμακον can be used to transform grief into tranquility (*Odyssey*, IV.219 – 227) and to prevent someone from harming themselves (*Republic* 382c), but also to turn a human being into a corpse (*Phaedo* 57a), the ambivalent character of the term warrants the understanding of it as a “charm.” Helen’s potions in the fourth book of the *Odyssey* are described as φάρμακα, πολλὰ μὲν ἐσθλὰ μεμιγμένα πολλὰ δὲ λυγρά (many drugs, once mixed, are good, but many are baneful), which suggests that φάρμακον can be used as a drug. It looks like the action of φάρμακον—its harmful, healing, or magical property—is dependent on the character or the role of the situation in which it is administered. This reading of φάρμακον as having ambiguous power is supported by Derrida’s take on Plato’s *Phaedrus*. See Derrida’s discussion of the Egyptian Thoth, who introduced writing (the invention, which in Plato’s dialogue is referred to as φάρμακον). Derrida likens Thoth to the “absolute passage between opposites” (96). He compares this movement to Hermes’s penchant for trickery and prestidigitation (Derrida’s text discussed here is “Plato’s Pharmacy.” *Dissemination*).

⁷⁰ The sense of malleability and evasiveness that characterizes the disclosure of the elemental states is intimated by Friedrich W. J. Schelling. The meaning, which I wish to relate when I describe the volatility of such states, is expressed by Schelling as follows:

every meaning in mythology is merely potential ... but without therefore allowing itself to be limited and particularized. As soon as one attempts this, the appearance is deformed, even destroyed. If one permits the meaning to be as it is in it, and rejoices to

to the constant weaving and unweaving of the elemental states, we can resist the drive to stabilize and make concrete the images of nature by means of systemic shackles.⁷² That kind of restriction offers a promise of perfect intelligibility and unshakable truth. However, it ends up mistaking models of thought for thinking and it does away, also, with the distinction between ways of knowing or “sciences ... as practical [as opposed to] ... cognitive” (258d).⁷³

Taking seriously the transgression,⁷⁴ which 1. untethering or uprooting the natural 2. sequences it through the morphological and 3. uses this specific paradigm to account for the actual state of things, I study Plato’s dialogues with an eye on the limits marked out by the transgression. To be sure, reading, especially of Platonic dialogues, is an

himself about this infinity of possible relationships, then one has the proper attunement to grasp mythology. *Historical-critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* (Richey, M. and Wirth, M. J. trans. New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), 14.

The attunement to which Schelling calls, I suggest, is as important in thinking about mythology, as it is in understanding what is at stake in our attempts to disclose, grasp, and form the natural relations. What happens when a given meaning gives up its potency and manifests as an accepted state of things that also shapes how our lives unfold? When we fail to let go of the familiar certainty that the accepted meanings of things give to the world, do we fail also at thinking and being mythically, that is, poetically?

⁷¹ Peter Hanley situates the question of nature and metaphoricity in his unpublished, 2013 dissertation entitled: *Figuring the Between: An Essay on Heidegger and Novalis*.

⁷² Heidegger explains that the transformations in richness of perceptual experience—the transformations, which deplete this richness—account, also, for the ossification of understanding. Cf. *Grundfragen der Philosophie: Ausgewählte “Probleme” der “Logik,”* vol. 45 of *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1984), 129 – 141.

⁷³ Klein writes about the desire that drives the amalgamation of the theoretical and the practical arts and about our, consequently, mistaken understanding of the two. Cf. Klein’s *Greek Mathematical Thought*, 124 – 125. The possibility of this mistake is already prefigured in Plato’s *Timaeus* 47a – c. One thing that happens in the passage is the privileging of abstraction that is, nonetheless, seen as being primarily useful for optimal ordering of practical life.

⁷⁴ Sallis complicates the notion of transgression and extends it to the positive and necessary modes of transgressing (*The Logic of Imagination* 184).

interpreting.⁷⁵ The *Statesman* shows that interpretation relies on paradigmatic examples and is confined to them when the interpreter mistakes the paradigms for the nature of things. Put otherwise, misinterpretation has to do with mistaking the paradigm for truth.⁷⁶

I suggest that paradigms help recognize the proximity of falsehood, which is always a possibility and closely traces the truth. Paradigms show how speeches and actions are woven together to yield an image or a character; be it speculative, mythical, or poetic. Understanding the function of a given paradigm amounts to understanding the

⁷⁵ Consult Sean Kirkland's proposal about the mode of interpretation appropriate for Plato's dialogues. *The Ontology of Socratic Questioning in Plato's Early Dialogues* (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012), xv - xxiii.

⁷⁶ Here, it is useful to turn again to Davis's work *On Aristotle's Poetics*.

For something to stand apart from the ordinary things of our experience so as to be able to be a representation of them, for us to be able to say that "this" is "that," it is necessary for artificial boundaries to be placed around the thing so as to make it discontinuous with reality. To be something else, it must itself come to sight as a whole. But nothing in the real world possesses this sort of splendid isolation. 39

In this passage, Davis is discussing an act of imitation in drama. In what follows I will extend the implications of this passage to comment on the incompleteness, mimetic character, and drama or action of life. The reason why, I think, the step is warranted, is because what Davis calls an identification of "'this' [as] ... 'that'," or a recognition of something as something else in a dramatic performance, is a phenomenon that obtains of non-stylized experiences. In effect, calling something by its name or identifying a person for who she is would be better described as recognizing "this" as "that" and not "this" as "this." An excellent example of such seemingly tautological thinking is given by Aristotle in his discussion of *καθ' αὐτὸ* predication in *Posterior Analytics* (73A25 – 73b5).

If Davis's description is understood to account not only for the world of the stage and theater, but also for the theater of the world, it is impossible to account for something with certainty and not to misrepresent this something at the same time. In other words, there is no perfect accounting for things. Nonetheless, accounts must be and are given. Many of them are extraordinarily useful. Many are simply necessary. We cannot attain perfect understanding of the world, but neither can we exit the world, so to speak, and render it in absolute terms from some fantastical outside. One of the remaining possibilities is to keep in mind that an identification of something as something, or even a perception of a person, of a thing, of oneself, however limited, can be altered. A change of focus, a receding into a limit has its own blinding effects. Yet, this process, simultaneously, exposes the previous limiting conditions of perception.

“logographic necessity”⁷⁷ at work. For my purposes, interpretation of speeches, actions, and images to which these give rise, aims at finding an attunement or at noticing a discord between all three and deriving understanding of the text on the basis of these findings, rather than by virtue of enforcing stylistically appealing, but interpretively false unity onto the passages in question. Let reading be always ready for an attentive rereading. Let interpretation serve to show how we can render our understanding malleable and subject to a reinterpretation. Attuned interpretation preserves the text as living for those who might want to be enlivened by its words.

I trace the paradigmatic movements of the dialogues by weaving together the dramatic and the dialogical images. I place the images from Aristophanes’ comedy and Sophocles’ drama (as well as those from mythic, epic, and the pre-Socratic thought) in conversation with the dialogical passages in order that the recognition⁷⁸—an enlivened interpretation—might arise from their interaction.⁷⁹ Who does not know Oedipus? And yet again, how do we know him? Has it ever been about Oedipus at all? As much as knowing has to do with detecting and interpreting words and actions it also has to do with

⁷⁷ Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 53, 54, 60.

⁷⁸ My thinking about recognition as both an element of drama and of textual interpretation, relies on Aristotle’s accounts of recognition in *On Poetics* 1450a35; 1452a20 – 1452b15; 1454b19 – 1455b24.

⁷⁹ Drawing an analogy between action and poetry, Davis writes, “it is the distinctive feature of human action that whenever we choose what to do we imagine an action for ourselves as though we were inspecting it from the outside. Intentions are nothing more than imagined actions—internalizings of the external. All action is therefore imitation of action; it is poetic” (*The Poetry of Philosophy*, 9). However arguable the legitimacy of this derivation, Davis is pointing out a very important relationship between: conjuring up of the image, imitation thereof, and action. If life is as poetic, that is, if it is as given to the play of images and to acting out of the imagined, as Davis claims, then interpretation of Plato’s dialogues (of the weaving that is made up of dramatic and philosophical elements) holds *ever-recurring* possibilities for decisive insights into the unfolding of life.

poetic completion and prefiguring of the actual in the paradigmatic.⁸⁰ If knowing is attuned to its own poetic or formatively active nature, then it does not amount to an interpretive reduction, which merely retrofits the implications from an analysis of the mythic and poetic elements to the philosophical nature of the dialogues.⁸¹ Neither does reflective knowing interpret the works by means of a linear correspondence, that is, by offering a perfect mapping of the dramatic plays onto the philosophic accounts of the dialogues.⁸² Instead, knowing how to give interpretive consideration to the poetic fabric

⁸⁰ Falsehood—interpretations that steer astray—always remain a possibility. So does truthful discernment. The latter is all the more likely if the paradigms at work as well as their limits—the limits that paradigms necessarily impose on interpretation—are kept in view. What I mean by the relationship between limits, paradigms, and actuality resonates with Sallis’s analyses of “psychology [and] ... and the difference between real and ideal Being” (*Logos of Imagination* 88). Sallis’s analysis of Husserl’s and Heidegger’s takes on the role of phenomenology shows that there is a determinate, but non-hierarchical dependence between the three terms. Similarly, I hold that the triad of the actual, the paradigmatic, and the limited is always in play when one of the terms is considered, but not in such a way that either one of the terms can be given absolute priority.

In other words, knowledge relies on formations that are surreal or supra-real. These formations are necessary elements of actuality not only as hypothetical, but also the elements that structure the actions of life. Again in Davis we find the description of the relationship that obtains between illusion, idealization, and reality.

A beautiful illusion remains beautiful even after we have become aware of its illusory nature. Poetry, as mimesis, is necessarily connected to beauty in this sense. Even when not beautiful in any obvious way, in representing, it is an idealization of that which it represents. It distills reality so as to be a purer version of the real. Even a poem meant only as a “slice of life,” by being sliced from the continuum of life, becomes paradigmatic—an idealization of the ordinary. Life does not come in slices. *The Poetry of Philosophy* 40

⁸¹ See, for example, Walter Hirsch, *Platons Weg zum Mythos* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971). Also, David Hernández de la Fuente, “Mythische Vorbilder des sakralen Gesetzgebers bei Platon (Nomoi I-II)” (*Zeitschrift für Religions und Geistesgeschichte*, 2010), 62(2): 105 – 25. Such interpretation completely bars any serious philosophical access, yielding only a superficial understanding of Plato and of myth.

⁸² See, for example, Helmut Kuhn, “The True Tragedy: On the Relationship between Greek Tragedy and Plato” (*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 1941 and 1942) (52, 53): 37 – 88. Such interpretive approach has scholarly value, but it limits the philosophic potential of the poets.

of Plato's dialogues entails being prepared for even a reversal of the meaning,⁸³ suggested by a straightforward reading. Reading the poetry of the dialogues with care amounts to a poetic reading—to a kind of reading that acts on the reader—reversing the locus of agency, inviting the reader to be like a character.

2. The Place of Tragedy

Plato's compositional tactic, which I refer to as "tragicomedy,"⁸⁴ is an example of interpretive reversal. The locus of attention is shifted away from the dialogical characters and is focused on the character, predispositions, and presuppositions of the reader. By means of this technique, which turns both the sober mood of the speeches or the seriousness of the subject under discussion, as well as the lighthearted exchanges on their head, the reader is prompted to notice the discontinuity between the initial sense of the

⁸³ See Sallis's *Logic of Imagination* for the description of the procedure, which "enacts the self-vitiating character of speech that takes away, on the one side, what it declares, on the other" (30).

⁸⁴ There are several works that develop the notion of comedy in Plato. Hyland, *The Finitude and Transcendence in Platonic Dialogues* (111 – 138). Note that Hyland warns against distilling from the dialogues some kind of "Plato's theory of comedy" (131). Instead, Hyland urges us to "look ... closely at the dialogues themselves, at the way comedy arises within them and the way they portray the philosophic life as comic" (Ibid.). Freydborg, *Philosophy and Comedy: Aristophanes, Logos, and Eros* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008). Freydborg, *The Play of the Platonic Dialogues (Literature and the Sciences of Man)* (New York: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 1997). Richard Patterson, "The Platonic Art of Comedy and Tragedy" (*Philosophy and Literature*, 1982), 6(1).

Analysis of Plato's inheritance of the tragic tradition is offered by Sallis in the *Platonic Legacies* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004). Significance of tragedy in relation to philosophical thinking is studied by Dennis Schmidt in his *On Germans and Other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001).

passage in question and the understanding of the passage that ensues when the discomfiting reaction to the reversal in meaning subsides.

There are no obvious signs of tragedy, nor any explicit suggestions that the meaning of the passage is ambiguous, when Timaeus⁸⁵ names vision as well as a “kind of philosophy ... a god-given gift” (47b).

[S]ight has come to be the cause of the greatest benefit for us, since none of the accounts we’re now giving about the all would ever have been uttered if we had seen neither the stars nor the Sun nor heaven. But as it is now, day and night, once seen, and the months and the circuits of the years, and the equinoxes and solstices, have contrived number and gave us notion of time and the inquiry into the nature of the all, from which we derived for ourselves a kind of philosophy, than which no greater good either came or ever will come to the mortal kind as a god-given gift. Now this, I say, is the greatest good of eyes. As for the other, lesser goods, why should we sing their praises? The non-philosopher, if made blind to them, “would, in lamenting, sing his dirge in vain.” No, for our part let it be said that this is the cause and these the reasons for which god discovered vision and gave it to us as a gift: in order that, by observing the circuits of intellect in heaven, we might use them for the orbits of the thinking within us ... by having thoroughly learned them and partaken of the natural correctness in their calculations, thus imitating the utterly unwandering circuits of the god. 47a – c⁸⁶

⁸⁵ I offer explanatory remarks about Timaeus’s character in the third chapter.

⁸⁶ It is striking how much of this passage is contained in the following lines from Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound*: “All their work was without thought,/until I taught them to see/what had been hard to see:/where and when the stars rise and set./What’s more, for them I invented/NUMBER: wisdom/above all other./And the painstaking,/putting together of/LETTERS: to be their memory/of everything” (Scully, J. and Herington, J. trans. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1989), 455 – 60. The final line of this quotation, which references letters and memory harkens us back to the beginning of the *Timaeus* and, specifically, to Critias’s narration of the story that Solon heard from an old Egyptian priest (21b – 26e). The mention of the inception of writing also recalls the passages about letters and the elements of nature in the *Statesman* (278c – d).

A schematic outline of the *Timaeus* passage presents the exchange of two paradigms.⁸⁷

The first paradigm presents the observation of the visible changes in nature as the means of arriving at conclusions about the state of things in the world. The observation of the “Sun,” for instance, attunes the humans to the “notion of time.”⁸⁸ The second paradigm of “observing the circuits of intellect in heaven” (47b) suggests that vision is to be so oriented, as to effect a change in the manner of our thinking. The observation, which must be done in order to bring about an inner stillness—a change “of the thinking within us”⁸⁹ that would help make a leap toward greatest intellectual inquiries—cannot be a direct seeing, but has to be an imitative act. Whereas, in the case of the observation of the “stars [and] ... the Sun” the observed phenomena are accessible to vision, “observation” is meant metaphorically when it comes to “observing the circuits of intellect in heaven.”

Envisioning or imitation is a necessary substitute for sight and a supplement to empirical

Prometheus himself makes an appearance in the myth narrated by the Eleatic Stranger and is said, along with Hephaestus and Athena, to “have ... bestowed on us ... the necessary (indispensable) instruction and education” (274c).

⁸⁷ The word, παράδειγμα, does not appear in the passage. I rely on previous analyses of the way in which paradigms structure dialogical exchanges in order to explain how an appearance of a paradigmatically tragic character reshapes the meaning of Timaeus’s, otherwise, enthusiastic speech. At *Timaeus* 28a and *Republic* 500e, paradigm is relied on and wielded by a demiurge (δημιουργός) and by painters (ζωγράφοι), respectively.

⁸⁸ The passage that describes the arrival of the temporal awareness reads in Greek: ἡμέρα τε καὶ νύξ ὁφθεῖσαι μῆνές τε καὶ ἐνιαυτῶν περίοδοι καὶ ἡμερίαι καὶ τροπαὶ μεμηχάνηται μὲν ἀριθμόν, χρόνου δὲ ἔννοιαν περὶ τε τῆς τοῦ παντὸς φύσεως ζήτησιν ἔδοσαν. It can be translated also as: Day and night, [as they] had been seen, built up to months and the circular revolutions of the years. Equinoxes and solstices temporalized thinking and contrived number and gave [us] the searches into the nature of the all (47a).

The line relates a noticeable passivity on the part of the human beings. It is as if vision, given by the gods, was passive until ignited by the apparent phenomena. These phenomena, in turn, (sometimes regarded as divinities, although not marked so in the passage) bestow upon humans time-sensibility, understanding of number, and a penchant to study nature.

⁸⁹ ἐν οὐρανῷ τοῦ νοῦ κατιδόντες περιόδους (47b). The aorist active participle (κατιδόντες), which is translated as “observing,” has a strong sense of to “look down,” (from κατεῖδον) which is peculiar, given that what is observed is, supposedly, in heaven.

knowing. What is imitated is not of a human or earth-bound nature. This account of imitative knowing, a kind knowing that reaches out to the regions, which are inaccessible to vision, is interjected by blindness.

Invisible to those unfamiliar with the tragic plays, Oedipus is invoked by Timaeus at the exact point where the paradigm of immediate seeing is about to be substituted with a metaphorical or a mimetic kind of sight. Timeus ventriloquizes a speech by Euripides' Oedipus and splits his own account in two. He mourns or, perhaps, mocks the fate of the non-philosophers, who are blind even to the visible gifts of the god. Timaeus, in the words borrowed from Euripides' tragedy, describes the non-philosophers who are unable to exercise the gift of vision properly and “in lamenting, sing [their] dirge in vain” (47b).⁹⁰ Timaeus's own shortsightedness is striking. As if possessed by the spirit of the fabled knowledge seeker, the one whose searches paved the way of his disastrous fate, Timaeus mouths, but does not seem to be moved by, Oedipus's ominous words. It is as if instead of learning from Oedipus's blindness, Timaeus is setting out to repeat it, insisting on the absolute power of sight.

Both vision and blindness operate on a dual—imaged and vocalized—plane. In this passage about the power of sight, the announced blindness of non-philosophers is placed beside the implied blindness of the tragic figure. The non-philosopher (the one who has not grasped the “greatest good”) grieves in vain. The reason for this is that the goods that would be taken away from him, if his vision was to be extinguished are

⁹⁰ ἀλλὰ γὰρ τί ταῦτα θρηνῶ καὶ μάτην ὀδύρομαι is 1762, as it appears in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* 1762.

insignificantly small. The non-philosopher's lamentation is also futile because, unable to exercise the gift of vision properly, he does not grasp the full benefit of the "lesser goods." On both readings, the insignificance of the non-philosopher is indicated by not-knowing the reason for the proper lamenting. However, the passage that Timaeus quotes does not have to do with not-knowing, but, on the contrary, with having full knowledge of the horrific events. Timaeus's recitation brings to mind not so much the figurative blindness, understood as a lack of, or even an incapacity for, thinking and knowing, but, rather, the tragedy that blinded Oedipus has come to know.⁹¹

Oedipus's line that immediately follows the one at which Timaeus stops reciting, says: "For I must, being mortal, bear the necessities from gods" (*Phoenician Women* 1763).⁹² Oedipus can no longer see. He is blind not in the metaphorical but in the literal sense. He cannot change the terrible events. Oedipus must abide by the awful deaths in his family. He is mortal. There are limits, which he cannot transgress.

Concealed, in Timaeus's praise of the "god-given gift"⁹³ and his dismissal of those unable to engage in certain kinds of thinking, are the limits imposed on mortal men by the divine necessities. The distance that Timaeus wants to bridge—the turn from what

⁹¹ Cf. Benardete's "Oedipus Tyrannus" in *The Argument of the Action* (71 – 84), where the reasons are given as to why Oedipus's (albeit Sophocles' and not Euripides') knowledge is ruinous and what this kind of knowing has to do with transgressing against and into the divine realm.

⁹² τὰς γὰρ ἐκ θεῶν ἀνάγκας θνητὸν ὄντα δεῖ φέρειν, can be translated, also, as: For, being mortal, I must bear the necessities [that come] from the gods. Cf. note 66 on page 78 of Kalkavage's text. It relates the tragic events prompting Oedipus's speech.

⁹³ The divine gift-giving echoes the Promethean myth and the punishments that Aeschylus' Prometheus suffers for meddling with humans. Consult Benardete's "Protagoras's Myth and Logos" on the subject of the relation between Prometheus' gifts, awareness of time, and the arts (*The Argument of the Action* 193).

he praises as the greatest earthly benefit, granted by the power of vision, to the imitative vision, which purports to elevate man's thinking to the imitation of god's—has a blind spot. Timaeus's speech, in the examined passage, operates in blindness to the limit of paradigms. The hopeful, if not mystical, tone of the passage betrays it. So do the implications of the change in the register of vision necessary for the advances in thinking and the promises of the sight developed by the mind—the sight that searches into the “nature of the all” (τῆς τοῦ παντὸς φύσεως, 47a – b). The paradigm of illumination is forgetful of darkness to which it is bound. Timaeus, too, is forgetful. Moreover, he is oblivious to the tragic tone of his ventriloquism. Plato injects Timaeus's hopeful mysticism with darkly tragic undertones and, thereby, leads us to question Timaeus's Pythagorean affinities. Like the later Pythagoreans, Timaeus appears to have adopted the belief in psychic purification. For the Pythagoreans, the purification, upon which the soul could be released from its bodily incarnations, was to be attained through the practice of θεωρία. As Francis MacDonald Cornford informs us, “Pythagoras gave a new meaning to *theoria*; he interpreted it as the passionless contemplation of rational, unchanging truth.”⁹⁴ Timaeus wants to follow the advice, which turns contemplation into a practice that is supposed to still or quiet the wonder-stricken movement of the mind. Although later in the dialogue, Timaeus's account is anything but coolly rational or sapped of wonder, at this point, when tragedy is introduced, Timaeus is led astray by all too neat a presentation of how human life can be made to correspond, if not coincide, with the

⁹⁴ *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study in the Origins of Western Speculation* (New York, NY: Cosimo Publishing Company, 2009), 200.

divine. Oedipus's image evokes the motif of transgression of the human limits. It signifies to us that something has gone awry and that, here, the *Timaeus* presents us with its own image of hubris.

Oedipus's blindness, if taken as a paradigmatic third (of the first two paradigms of vision), reinstalls the ties between darkness and light. It does not rid the passage of its belonging to the limits traced out by the visual paradigms. Mindfulness of the blindness, which always accompanies sight, be it the act of vision or the act of thinking (thinking that is, here, metaphorically expressed as a kind of sight), does not dissolve the blind spots. Instead, it rearranges the paradigmatic structure and helps to locate the places of tension within the passage. The implications of Timaeus's excitement about the matters of divine gift-giving are dependent on how we articulate the meaning of those necessities or limitations to which humans are forever bound. Chapter three offers a thorough treatment of this dependence.

3. Comedic Reversals

Plato's use of comedic characters such as overzealous, but not particularly bright, Apollodorus, the Phalerian in the *Symposium*, or the frustrated, but self-important, Clitophon in the *Cleitophon*, alternates with the employment of comedic sketches. Plato resorts to a dramatically and philosophically significant use of comedy in the *Republic*,

the *Cratylus*,⁹⁵ and the *Charmides*. Comedy is mentioned in relation to self-knowledge in the *Philebus*.⁹⁶ Aristophanes, the comic poet, “tells a funny story with a tragic message”⁹⁷ in the *Symposium*. Aristophanes is also mentioned, albeit in the somber context of the charges mounted against Socrates, in the *Apology*. Both in the *Symposium* and in the *Apology* the ridiculous and the grave are superimposed onto each other. The layering of comedy and tragedy leads the reader toward a realization that there is a problem with being held captive to either. What happens when the tragic and the comic are aligned in order to produce a third; an intermediary, but also a decisively different kind? A playfulness that is disruptive, witty, and, at least for a time, disorienting follows suit. Both the overtly didactic and the naively idealistic speeches (such as those that prescribe the banishing of the poets in the *Republic* (379b – 394c, for example) begin to come apart when comedy shines through the solemn surface and the meaning that rests on this surface is disrupted.

The *Republic* is a plentiful source of Plato’s use of comedy. How can the passages about absolute equality of the sexes—that is, about the kind of equality that also equalizes or dismisses the obvious differences of the body—be read straightforwardly?! For the sake of an experiment, let us say that they can be. In this case, their meaning prescribes the dissolution of physical sexual difference and a return to an “original” androgynous state described by Aristophanes in the *Symposium* (189d – 190c). If taken

⁹⁵ See Sallis’s chapter, “Logos and its Parts: *Cratylus*,” in *Being and Logos*. In particular, pages 217 – 262.

⁹⁶ Plato, *Philebus*. *The Tragedy and Comedy of Life* 48c.

⁹⁷ Benardete, “On Plato’s *Symposium*” in *The Argument of the Action* 175.

literally, this condition is a tragic illusion.⁹⁸ The return to a perfect union, which would render a human being complete, relies on a duplication of what would be one's sexual partner and an inclusion thereof into one's self. Aristophanes describes the double male, double female and male-female beings as perfect, self-contained unities, which are self-sufficient to the point of being unerotic. Even if entertained as an option for the biotechnologically enhanced future, an image conjured up by the straightforward reading of the passage, harkens the reader back to the spellbound origins of tragedy. This image seeks to recover an impossible, ideal state of things, as if it were a solid foundation of human life. The unrealistic image also calls to mind Aristophanes' comedies and the scathing ridicule of outlandish ideas such as those lampooned in the *Clouds*.

Should we, then, in the spirit of nostalgic simplicity, follow Socrates' imperative "to be serious" (452c) and legislate that "the women [should be] exercising naked with the men" (452a)? Or should we see the *Republic* passages as an opportunity to think about the meaning of Socrates' imperative, which states that "we mustn't be afraid of all the jokes" (452b)? Put negatively, this excessive fearlessness is rash and thoughtless. If no joke is alarming, are we even capable of distinguishing between that which is laughable and that which is not? In a positive sense, the line suggests that we should set fear aside also then, if not especially, when the joke is at our own expense. Excessive fearlessness in the face of being found out for a subject of comedy turns out to be the courage required for thinking about both the dialogical incongruities and those incongruities we find in ourselves. Attentiveness to Plato's comedy helps one to take note

⁹⁸ Ibid., 172 – 75.

of and to accept the incongruous. This is especially pertinent when the unpleasant idiosyncrasies are covered over by the promises of perfection—whether it be a promise of perfect equality, perfect knowledge, or a perfect image of oneself.

What would a courageous reading of the *Republic* look like? Are we confident enough to entertain the possibility that the dialogue is often, if not most of the time, read too literally, too seriously, too self-assuredly, that is, too tragically? Consider the passage, which punctures (and if not deflates, then qualifies or reroutes) the speeches about the famous ascent to the Good (507a – 509c).⁹⁹

At the precise point, which is traditionally interpreted as one of the *Republic's* dialogical ascents (at lines 509a – 509c), the action of the speeches between Socrates and Glaucon undermines their high-minded tenor. At 508e – 509a, Socrates solicits from Glaucon his view of what is great about the Good. Glaucon thinks that that which places the good beyond knowledge and truth, making it greater than and condition for both, is pleasure (509a). Upon hearing Glaucon's response, Socrates hushes Glaucon (ἐνδφήμει, 509b1). He sets Glaucon back for exhibiting an almost juvenile excitement about pleasure.

⁹⁹ Notably, at 506d, with the words: "You're not going to withdraw when you are, as it were, at the end" Glaucon takes over the conversation that Socrates was having with Adeimantus. Glaucon's and Socrates' previous conversation ended with Glaucon's agreement that ruling in the city should be secured for the one who is "by nature a rememberer, a good learner, magnificent, charming, and a friend and kinsman of truth, justice, courage, and moderation" (*Republic* 487a). Benardete's explanation of the function of the ascent to the good supports the idea that if it is read straightforwardly, it remains misunderstood. Benardete writes that the "sixth and seventh books bear to Socratic philosophizing the same relation the city in speech bore to the dialogic city. They represent this rival account of philosophy and at the same time contain Socrates' refutation of it" (*The Second Sailing: On Plato's Republic*. Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 140.

Why is this exchange between the dialogical characters of the *Republic* comical? Why is it funny? Because, whereas Glaucon thinks he finally holds the key to understanding Socrates' account about the Good, the fact of the matter is: Glaucon is as far from getting it as ever. Socrates instructs Glaucon to consider truth, knowledge, and the good. Instead, Glaucon still has his mind set on pleasure. Glaucon's own predilections, his unexamined desires, skew his understanding. Aristophanes' Strepsiades is in a similar position in the *Clouds*, where lack of self-knowledge renders him ridiculous (815 – 830) and his actions—misguided (1114, 1454 – 1461) and laughable (364 – 438). Glaucon does not simply privilege the pleasurable things in life. He masks his preference for pleasure by aligning pleasure with beauty. Here is how he does it: “‘You speak of an overwhelming beauty ... if it provides knowledge and truth but is itself beyond them in beauty. You surely don't mean it is pleasure.’ ‘Hush ... Glaucon ... consider its image still further’” (*Republic* 509a). The Greek text, which begins with: “ἀμήχανον κάλλος ... λέγεις” (509a5) can also be translated as: “you speak of an uncontrived beauty.” Glaucon's focus on beauty is noticeable. Whereas, Socrates does not mention beauty at all (at least not in the preceding eighteen lines, the most recent mention of it occurring at 491b), Glaucon uses the word twice when he tries to guess the subject to which Socrates attributes “μειζόνως τιμητέον” (509a4) that is, great honor. Glaucon guesses wrong. His mind is on “ἡδονήν” (509a6) or pleasure and he is promptly hushed by Socrates.

Socrates' “εὐφήμει” (509a7) means both “speak well” and “hush.” Whatever the preferred translation, it is an imperative to be mindful of what is being expressed. But

what is being expressed by Glaucon? Taken schematically, Glaucon's expression equates whatever is most honorable with that which is most beautiful and places pleasure above both. Given the clues that Glaucon misses, notably the suggestion that terms such as: "Good," "Beautiful," "Truth," and "Knowledge" cannot simply be equated or substituted for one another, it is unlikely that Glaucon's understanding of a beautiful whole is synonymous with Aristotle's meaning in the *Poetics*¹⁰⁰ or that Glaucon's relationship with pleasure is as meaningful as Aristotle's articulation thereof at the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.¹⁰¹ Presumably, it is not the anachronistic application of the philosopher's thinking to Glaucon's ideas that is to blame for the fact that the depth of the latter is wanting. The conversations about knowledge and truth, the kind of conversations that Glaucon and Socrates are having in the sixth book of the *Republic*, are intensely pleasurable from Aristotle's point of view. Yet, Glaucon does not comment on the pleasurable character of the exchanges with Socrates, but aims at securing some other pleasure outside of or above his dialogical dealings.

The unexamined desire, which surfaces as Glaucon's excitement about pleasure, comically undermines the ascending structure of the speeches about the Good (509a – 509c). If the pursuit of knowledge and truth as well as the conversations about the Good are carried out for the sake of securing the construction of and the ascent to the just regime, then Glaucon's view of pleasure's supremacy places this ascent on a rather

¹⁰⁰ See Davis's analysis of the subject in *The Poetry of Philosophy* 39 – 40.

¹⁰¹ See Ronna Burger's discussion of the relationship between pleasure and good in *Aristotle's Dialogue With Socrates: On the Nicomachean Ethics* 154 – 158. See also Benardete's conclusions about pleasure and self-aware thinking in "Aristotle, 'De Anima' III.3-5." *The Review of Metaphysics*. 1975, 28 (4): 611 – 622.

questionable foundation. Howland observes that it is nothing other, but “Gygean pleasures and honors that make Glaucon extremely eager to know how to bring the regime into being.”¹⁰²

Plato’s brother Glaucon is not yet seen by Plato’s contemporaries as either historical or literary Glaucon. He is simply remembered as the man who fought at

¹⁰² “Glaucon’s Fate: Plato’s *Republic* and the Drama of the Soul.” *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium for Ancient Philosophy*. 2014, 29 (1): 113 – 146, 14.

Consider Benardete’s remarks about Lysis in *The Argument of the Action*. Benardete notes that “It is through wisdom, Socrates tells Lysis, that Lysis could be universally loved and at the same time gain the freedom to do as he liked” (199). This describes Glaucon equally well. Giving yet another description of Glaucon and his misunderstanding of the dialogical developments, Benardete writes, “Glaucon’s demand that the good city in speech be realized measures exactly the degree to which he has not understood the *Republic*. That he speaks of the regime’s feasibility and not the city’s, shows that he has in mind the transformation of an actual city (471c7, e2)” (*The Second Sailing* 123). Later on, in the same work, Benardete describes Glaucon’s lack of understanding of the dialogical city in view of what the reader is meant to glean from Glaucon’s shortsightedness.

We have the measure of the difference between the *Republic* and the movement of *logos* itself when we consider that Socrates will prove to Glaucon that the just man is happy without ever showing him even his opinion of the good (533a1 – 7). Glaucon will be satisfied before it is reasonable for him to be convinced that the rulers of the city he helped to found can know what Socrates says is indispensable if they are to rule. The good for Glaucon is as fragmentary as his understanding, but all the same it is complete. It is this notion of the good as good for something that is missing from Socrates’ description of intellection. It is *logos* without the soul that moves so easily from start to finish. 171

And, again, later in relation to the ascent from the cave, Benardete suggests that

It was Glaucon, then, who in his objection to Socrates’ refutation of Thrasymachus, had stopped in his ascent from the cave at the artifacts outside the wall and mistaken them for the real and his own liberation as complete. Glaucon had taken the prevailing opinion about justice and brought it to the highest degree of Thrasymachean precision. He claimed that it was an image of justice itself and asked Socrates to dispute about that intentional image as if it were the real thing. Glaucon had presented the impossible as the image of the truly real, and Socrates was to prove that a lifeless being was happy and the wholly imaginary was good. 178 – 79

Megara (the possible dates of the battle in question are discussed by Debra Nails)¹⁰³ and was a lover of tyrannically minded, Critias the IV. Benardete holds that the “manly and erotic”¹⁰⁴ Glaucon picks up, modifies, and develops “Thrasymachus’s account.”¹⁰⁵ This means that Glaucon’s character is one of the dialogical vehicles by means of which Plato sets up the relationship between tyranny and the analysis of the Good.¹⁰⁶ Howland’s interpretation offers a direct link between Glaucon’s character and tyranny,

the internal evidence of the *Republic* ... all points in the same direction: Glaucon actively supported the Thirty, and most likely met his end at Munychia, somewhere near the place where a group from the Piraeus stops his ascent to Athens in the dialogue’s opening scene. If I am right, Plato’s first readers would naturally have regarded the dialogue as a high-stakes philosophical drama—the tragedy of Socrates’ unsuccessful struggle to save Glaucon from the corrupting influence of his family and his city.¹⁰⁷

The tragic drama presents Glaucon as wavering between his predilection for the kinds of pleasures that are accessible to the powerful member of the polis and the benefit of searching for knowledge and truth. The enjoyment of financial support from the polis and the pleasure of receiving the many and choicest erotic partners are presented in the guise of the guardians’ blessed life in Book V at 464c and 468c. Despite Socrates’ consequent attempt at redirecting Glaucon’s desire away from such pleasures and toward wisdom (475b), it is still pleasure that Glaucon places above knowledge and truth. If Glaucon is

¹⁰³ *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002), 115.

¹⁰⁴ *The Argument of the Action* 380

¹⁰⁵ *Encounters and Reflections* 130

¹⁰⁶ See also Benardete’s discussion of the connection between understanding of tyranny and understanding of the “political life” (*Encounters and Reflections* 132).

¹⁰⁷ “Glaucon’s Fate” 13

supposed to be transformed in the course of his conversation with Socrates, the transformation does not take place at the time that the ascent to the Good is accomplished.

Why, then, does Glaucon bother with the construction of the just city and with figuring out what kind of citizen ought to be at the top? Stanley Rosen explains that Glaucon's concern with being ahead is a result of Glaucon's character as a citizen. For Rosen, Glaucon is 'someone who aspires to political prominence.'¹⁰⁸ Rosen supports his view of the character as someone who covets power in the polis by citing from Xenophon's *Memorabilia*.¹⁰⁹ An aspiration to be foremost in the city is not problematic in its own right, but it turns out that, in Glaucon's case, it prevents him from understanding the multivalent implications of the exchanges that he has with Socrates. Glaucon is blinded by too lively an interest in coming out on top.

These comedic turns reveal Glaucon's tragedy. He does not find pleasure in the activity of learning, but in that of spectating. According to Glaucon, "[a]ll the lovers of sights are ... what they are because they enjoy learning; and the lovers of hearing ... who ... run around to every chorus at Dionysia" (475d). In Glaucon's opinion, spectatorship and enjoyment of shows is indicative of the pleasures that learning brings. One can, indeed, enjoy and learn from the performances of drama. However, Socrates denies this, saying that those who yearn for pleasures of entertainment are not the true learners. They are not the "lovers of the sight of the truth" (475e). Glaucon agrees. Yet, notice the

¹⁰⁸ *Plato's Republic: A Study* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 62

¹⁰⁹ *Plato's Republic* 14

strangeness of this proposition. Either there is, in fact, nothing educational about the arts mentioned or Glaucon is someone who is predisposed to being simply entertained by instead of learning from the spectacle. I insist on the latter alternative, which accounts for Socrates' consequent divisions that separate out the true philosophers (476a – b) and distill the opinion-free pedigree of the knowledge they seek (476c – 478d). The ascent, in which book VI of the *Republic* ends, then, is rather a descent or—minimally—it is an enterprise that undoes itself, for Glaucon, in the process of its unfolding.¹¹⁰

The signs of this tragicomedy, in which Glaucon (and, perhaps, the readers of the *Republic*) play key parts—the glimpses of the self-undermining dynamic at play in the seemingly most hopeful, most secure, and most important images that the dialogue offers—appear early. The trajectory, which terminates in the search for education as a power that will allow Glaucon to revel in pleasure, is set out in book II. Unsatisfied with the simple or, what Rosen refers to as the “true city,”¹¹¹ Glaucon calls for a life that does not exclude “relishes” (*Republic* 372c, 372d.).¹¹² Toying with Glaucon, Socrates at first offers the literal relishes, the kinds of things that would go well with hearty, simple food.

¹¹⁰ See a somewhat different take on what prompts the excision of spectacles and separation of these from true knowledge in Waller R. Newell, *On Tyranny: A New Interpretation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 102. Newell also comments on the questionable character, as far as it pertains to ruling, of the ascent to the good in the *Republic* (102).

¹¹¹ *Plato's Republic* 80

¹¹² The word translated as “relish” is ὄψον, which designates a cooked item. The verbal form, “to boil” is ἔψω. The *Greek-English Lexicon* confirms the sense of ὄψον as a ‘cooked or otherwise prepared dish’ (Liddell and R. Scott 1283). The term introduces the “city ... gorged with a bulky mass of things [and with] ... need of ... relish-makers and cooks” (ὀψοποιῶν τε καὶ μαγείρων) in the immediately following discussion at *Republic* 373b – c. Note, also, that when Glaucon mounts the complaint against the unadorned simplicity of the simple city, he is especially concerned about the fate of men. The term that Glaucon uses at 372c is “ἄνδρας,” which is a plural of ἀνὴρ, not of the generic “ἄνθρωπος.”

In his impatience, Glaucon identifies the simple city as the “city of sows” (*Republic* 372d).¹¹³ The relishes that Glaucon has in mind are not “salt, olives, cheese ... and onions” (372c) but the “conventional” (372d) sophistications, like “perfume, ... courtesans, ... poets, ... actors, ... beauticians, ... relish-makers and cooks” (373a – c) that intensify the pleasurable character and (sometimes truly, but oftentimes only seemingly) dignify human life. In response to Glaucon’s request, Socrates continues to poke fun at him. That Socrates’ remarks are comic is evident not only from the tone of Plato’s writing, but also in view of the fact that hunger, voraciousness, cuisine predilections, in short, things related to food are some of the favorite subjects of ancient Greek comedy. Topic of food preparation even informs the style of comedic presentation. Tracing appearances of food in Astydamas’ *Hercules*, Rebecca Lämmle observes how the ‘art of writing cooks up a metaphorical verse, which presents the poet serving his play to the audience as if it were a rich meal’¹¹⁴ Socrates, too, spreads in front of Glaucon a feast to fall for. How could there be a city without relishes?! Even the simple city, which Socrates first describes, has wine. Is Glaucon so off point when he calls for sophistications and when he goes along with Socrates’ metaphorically gastronomic innovations, which transform the proposed city into an enflamed, if not a corrupt, one? If Glaucon is misled, then how and what does his confusion signify?

¹¹³ Compare the point at which the construction of the ὕων πόλιν or the “city of pigs” begins to the promised finish line in the *Statesman*, which is reached by the slowest things that arrive last, ὕστατα ἀφικνεῖσθαι τὰ βραδύτατα (266c). See also Benardete’s note on the *Statesman* passage, “[T]he word for ‘last’ (*hustaton*) puns on the word for ‘pig’ (*hus*)” (*The Being of the Beautiful* III.151, note 14).

¹¹⁴ *Poetik des Satyrspiels* (Winter Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 2013). Translation mine.

Glaucon interrupts Socrates' description of a life in a simple city. He punctures the narrative. He gives a new beginning, or at least a new turn to the conversation. Glaucon's demand for a different image of a city originates from a disappointment. It is a negative impulse that urges Glaucon on. Glaucon does not want to be "without relishes" (372b) nor does he want to talk about an unsophisticated existence of non-humans. Glaucon does not want to be seen nor live as a pig. However, it is Glaucon's view of what sophisticated human life looks like that ends up quickly terminating in the kind of existence that he is trying to avoid. "[T]here was no need" (373c) Socrates declares, for "swineherds ... in our earlier city" (373c). There is such a need in Glaucon's. There are, then, actual pigs (and those who enjoy the animals' flesh in abundance) as well as Circe's pigs¹¹⁵ in cities precisely because of Glaucon's strong resistance to providing for a city that houses the animal and because of what prevents him from noticing that relishes, sophistications, and conventional pleasures, for which he calls, dehumanize just as well.

It is not the case that poetry or theater, introduced in book II (373b – c), are intrinsically dehumanizing,¹¹⁶ neither are any of the sophistications proposed. It is, rather, the case that any of them can be depraving and depraved, if considered as completely free from the potential to be corruptive pleasures. The question of the relationship between pleasure and organization of the polis is at the forefront of the conversations in the *Laws*

¹¹⁵ I am referring to the passage from Homer's *Odyssey* in which Odysseus's companions, by means of Circe's magic, are made to look like pigs, while "their human sense was unaltered" (X.240). The question is, of course, whether Circe's magic should be seen as capable of masking or, rather, revealing the true appearances of things.

¹¹⁶ It is rather the case that the 'bestialization of man belongs together with the civilization of man,' as Benardete observes in *The Argument of the Action* 194.

(636e – 637e). In the *Republic*, the sustained discussion of the necessary and the “unnecessary and useless pleasures” serves as the fold for the presentation of multifarious and dangerous inclinations of a democratic citizen (558d – 561d). Food, which is a pleasurable necessity, when misused serves as an example of degradation. The sense of the reversed relationship between food and its consumption, in Glaucon’s luxurious city, is clearer in the Greek, where “τῶν ἄλλων βοσκημάτων παμπόλλων” (373c) is a metaphor that speaks “of the many fattened fed” creatures and identifies the function of the many as that thing which is being fed.¹¹⁷ It is, then, as if the many (be it the many human beings or the many beasts) exist for the sake of being stuffed with food, in the luxurious city, instead of food being sought out for the sake of sustaining the wellbeing of the many.

Glaucon understands the sophistication of human beings to be dependent on enjoyment derived from consumption of food stuffs and services without which, according to him, humans are pig-like. It is this view of the relationship between access to pleasures and sophistication that quickly swells the city with ills. The purification of the city described here (372c – 374d) is necessitated by Glaucon’s unwillingness to belong to the class of those whom he considers to be unsophisticated or lowly. The need to distill philosophizing from the impurities of spectatorship-learning (476a – b) arises because of Glaucon’s opinions about the kinds of pleasures that are available to those who make it to the top. Glaucon’s demands initiate the transformations that end up in beastly existence of human beings. In the light of this configuration of the dialogical

¹¹⁷ Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* 322

beginning and with an eye on the discrepancy between Glaucon's averred and veiled desires, how are we to interpret the exchanges about the ascent to the Good?

If the paradigm that establishes the strict divisions between what is ugly and what is fair (506c – d), what is generated and what is “beyond being” (509b), as well as between darkness and light (508d)—the sublime or sublimating¹¹⁸ paradigm—is allowed to be tested by the very speeches that it structures, most especially, by references to pleasure, then a shift in meaning occurs. The comedy, which is acted out by a pleasure enthusiast and by a didact (by Glaucon and by Socrates), shows that sublimation (of a desire for pleasure, for instance) is never fully successful at extinguishing the said desire. A pursuit of perfection, no matter how sublime, always aims at a more or less particular look of things. This look itself ends up being telling. It includes the founding desire and that which is sublimated in the course of the pursuit. The interpretation that welcomes tragicomedy of Plato's writing holds at bay the tendency to overlook the incongruities in dialogical and actual characters and speeches. This reading takes a note of and holds in tension the desire for perfection, which propels the ascent to the Good, with its grounding impetus, which is Glaucon's ravenous desire for pleasure. Attunement to the comic moments that grow out of the said tension allows us to observe the tragic overtones as well.¹¹⁹ The tragicomedy situates and animates the dialogical philosophizing (the

¹¹⁸ My understanding of “sublimation” is informed by Sigmund Freud's meaning. Cf. his *Civilization and Its Discontents* (*Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*. Berlin. Europäischer Literaturverlag, 2015), 21 – 22 and note 8 on page 22).

¹¹⁹ Sallis begins his chapter on the *Republic* by issuing a warning. He writes, “[t]o undertake to read the *Republic* carefully and thoughtfully is to place ourselves under the demand for the most severe self-restraint and for the most evocative play” (*Being and Logos* 312). The former is

thinking that probes and pokes fun at the reader's own prejudices, desires, and beliefs) with which Plato's writing is alive.

We enter into the dialogue with the characters and images of the *Republic*. We observe that the sophisticated, the “luxurious” (*Republic* 372e)¹²⁰ or the “feverish city” (372e)—not the simple one—is the actual city. At least in terms of what is often considered as both necessary and pleasurable, it is closer to ancient Athens as well as to our own cities. The problematic character of what constitutes the actual city, as Rosen puts it, is the “innate defect in human cities.”¹²¹ Our cities are “destroyed by their most attractive features.”¹²² Whether the particular defectiveness of actual cities is something to be overcome is not a question, because the insufficiency of the “city of sows” (*Republic* 372d) already answered this question in the negative. The idyllic sow city

required so that the interpretation does not end up being another reiteration of dogma into which many of the dialogical passages are turned. The latter serves to attune the reader to the self-undermining character built into some of the key arguments and images of the dialogue. A playful reading, that is, a kind of reading that considers the dialogue as a performance, discerns the poetic and the mythic elements. These elements, in turn, qualify the dialogical exchanges. The enthusiastic ascent of the middle books is taken out of its context, if we fail to notice that the “*Republic* begins with *Socrates' descent into Hades*” (*Being and Logos* 316). Glaucon's felicitous acceptance of the speeches about the Good is misunderstood if these are uprooted from their doubly dark impetus. The reduplication of Glaucon's dim origins, as Seth Benardete explains, has to do with the fact that Glaucon does not quite know what he is talking about (i. e., Glaucon is not so bright, at least not at the outset of the *Republic*). Another indication of Glaucon's negative characteristic is that he is willing to amplify the sentiments of tyrannically minded Thrasymachus (which means that Glaucon is traversing a psychological darkness or darkness of character). Cf. Benardete's *Encounters and Reflections* (128 – 34).

The ascending and the seemingly revelatory speeches are enmeshed with their grounding and seemingly obscuring counterparts. Freydberg insists, in his chapter on “Play and Activity of Philosophy” (*The Play of the Platonic Dialogues* 11 – 65), that also the tragic and the comic elements are ever present in the dialogues. Consider the tragicomic implications suggested by Freydberg's analysis of the *Republic's* many cities (82 – 83).

¹²⁰ Τρυφῶσαν is a participial form of τρυφᾶω. The adjective, τρυφῶν, also means “effeminate” (*Greek-English Lexicon* 1851).

¹²¹ Rosen, *Plato's Republic* 80.

¹²² Ibid.

cannot be a human city, but actual human cities are precariously founded. The undoing of the city is inscribed in the impetus that constitutes its creation. We are drawn to the beckoning, irresistible, promising images—to the attractive features, to use Rosen’s language—that propel our impetus to create. The destructive power waxes when the city and its originating impetus perniciously unfold into inflated phantoms of themselves. And yet, the initial attractive force and the destructive power are inseparably joined. Human city, because it is a city founded in response to an image-driven desire, stretches¹²³ always “beyond [our] ... means” (*Republic* 372b). The sighting of the destructive potential, described by the examined dialogical exchanges, relies on taking Plato’s comedy seriously. It is a curious thing—the monstrous is more likely to show itself in the guise of the laughable.¹²⁴

¹²³ Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* opens with a clear indication of the instinctual or, better, fundamental and ineradicable desire that reaches or stretches ever further. The first line reads, πάντες ἄνθρωποι τοῦ εἰδέναι ὀρέγονται φύσει (980a). The verb, ὀρέγονται, that is usually translated as “desire” means to “reach, stretch, stretch out” (*Greek Lexicon* 1246).

¹²⁴ Cf. Aristotle’s *On Poetics* at 1449a33 – 38 and the discussion of comedy in relation to what is ugly (αἰσχροῦς) and shameful (αἰσχρός), but not painful (ἀνώδυνος) because masked (πρόσωπον).

II. THE PARADIGM OF TYRANT IN SOPHOCLES' *OEDIPUS* AND PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*

~ Can you pull in Leviathan with a fishhook? [...] If you lay a hand on it,
you will remember the struggle and never do it again! [...] Nothing on earth
is its equal—
a creature without fear. It looks down on all that are haughty;
it is king over all that are proud.~
The Old Testament, Job 41:1, 8, 33 – 34

Part One: *Oedipus*

1. Sketches of Oedipus in Sophocles' Play about Tyranny

In Sophocles' *Oedipus*, the comic elements are few and far in between. Perhaps this tragic guise is the reason why *Oedipus* is seldom seen as a play that presents us with images of tyrannical monstrosity. I offer a philosophical analysis of the philological, historical, and dramatic dimensions of Sophocles' tragedy in order to show how an image of tyranny grows out of the play. Oedipus's metaphorical blindness to the repercussions of his own actions, I argue, is not dissolved (as is commonly assumed), but sealed at the end of the play, when Oedipus deprives himself of sight. I make the case that Oedipus is a tyrant, and argue for the validity of this interpretation from the point of view of the ancient Athenians. I also show its significance for the contemporary reader.

A survey of the secondary sources on Sophocles' play makes it apparent that insufficiently careful consideration has been given to the historical and the artistic dimensions of the piece. Such lack of attentiveness to the tone and setting of the work leads to presenting a caricature of Oedipus. Consider the strangely ingrained view,

espoused by Paul Woodruff, that *Oedipus* is about a “brave man ... bent on avoiding evil [...], a restless intellect, devoted at all costs to self-knowledge.”¹²⁵ The idea that the “modern readers are attracted to Oedipus also because he is a ruler devoted to the welfare of his people, whom he sees as his children”¹²⁶ is even more disturbing in its implicit agreement with the notion that to be ruled is to be parented. Equally strange is the interpretation taken up by authors like Bernhardt Zimmermann¹²⁷ and Bernard Knox,¹²⁸ who suggest that, as the play unfolds, Oedipus gains genuine knowledge of himself.

In regard to the question of self-knowledge in *Oedipus*, I follow Seth Benardete (2000), who sees Oedipus’s defiance strengthened and his capacity to know himself proportionally undermined, as the play draws to an end. I analyze the relationship between Sophocles’ artistic imagery and Oedipus’s tyranny in consultation with commentaries by Walter Burkert (2000) and Jean-Pierre Vernant (1996). Although my conclusion about Oedipus’s capacity to understand himself differs from Bernard Knox’s, I am in agreement with Knox’s view that Oedipus’s tyranny is a commentary on the tyranny of Athens (1998, 61). Psychologically astute artistic appropriations of the piece by André Gide (*Œdipe*) and Jean Cocteau (*La Machine infernale*) also emphasize the question of tyranny. These pieces attune the reader to the variations on the tyrannical motif voiced in Sophocles’ original. Perhaps, it is owing to the fact that *Oedipus* is, most

¹²⁵ See Woodruff’s 1999 introduction to Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannos* xxii.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ “Sein und Schein im König Oidipus des Sophokles.” *Freiburg Universitätsblätter*. 2000. 48

(1). The translations of the German language literature that I cite in this chapter are my own.

¹²⁸ *Oedipus at Thebes*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998

of all, a play—a theatrical performance—that Ortrud Gutjahr,¹²⁹ who researches literature and drama, offers an especially insightful commentary on the masterpiece.¹³⁰

2. Painting the Background: Philology, Semantics, History

The title, *Oedipus Tyrannos*, is first given to the play at the Library at Alexandria long after Sophocles' time, between the third and second century BC.¹³¹ This way the play could be differentiated from *Oedipus at Colonus*. It came down to us in a Latinate translation as *Oedipus Rex*, the king. The title, which was meant to expedite indexing, became convention. In the play, Oedipus is referred to as a tyrant on several occasions. I recognize that *tyrannos* does not necessarily have the same negative connotation for the archaic Greeks as “tyrant” does for us. However, as Victor Parker argues, *tyrannos* does refer to an unjust ruler by the time that Sophocles is composing.¹³² I take this designation as a key to prove one thing: king Oedipus is a tyrant. Tiresias says about Oedipus that he is in τυραννῆς (the word appears at line 408 and is a verbal form of τυραννος)—referring to his ruling power over Thebes. Oedipus's own earlier tirade against Tiresias exhorts us to long for τυραννί, for a power over others for which, Oedipus thinks, he is being envied

¹²⁹ *Ödipus, Tyrann von Sophokles*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Newmann Verlag, 2010

¹³⁰ It is plausible that authors other than those trained in drama studies have seen *Oedipus* performed and are capable of commenting on the play's theatricality. However, the scholars of drama and theater are trained to intuit, notice, and relate things in a manner that gives these interpreters an edge when working out the questions and themes of a dramatic performance.

¹³¹ On explanations of how Alexandrian Library handled the ancient Greek materials, including Sophocles' plays, see Seán Sheehan's *Sophocles' "Oedipus the King": the Reader's Guide* (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012), 1, 115 – 18.

¹³² “Τύραννος. The Semantics of a Political Concepts from Archilochus to Aristotle.”

(380).¹³³ In an exchange with Creon, suspecting him of treason, Oedipus recants desiring τυραννίδα (541), a friendless and aidless tyranny. Creon, too, his subsequent poetic history notwithstanding,¹³⁴ claims disinterest in being a τύραννος (588).

Oedipus, whether ruling in Thebes or being offered the throne of Corinth (940), rightly looks like a tyrant to the Corinthian messenger (925). To him, Oedipus would be a tyrant in both cities. The Corinthian is certain that Oedipus is neither a son of Merope and Polybus of Corinth, nor of Laius and Jocasta of Thebes. Oedipus is a babe off Mount Cithaeron (1026) or, to put it in the language of another tyrant, a “bastard from the basket.”¹³⁵ The Corinthian messenger thinks that Oedipus does not belong to the illustrious kingly lineage of either polis. The custom calls the outsider who rises to power (whether he is welcomed by the citizenry or not) “*tyrannos*.” Thus, the Corinthian’s motive in calling Oedipus a tyrant is benign. Oedipus’s intention in saying that Laius, whose royal lineage in Thebes unbrokenly descends from Cadmus, had ruled by τυραννίδος (128),¹³⁶ is unclear. The chorus’s meaning in their description of Oedipus’s character—ὑβρις φυτεύει τύραννον—at line 873, could not be more condemning: “Hubris begets a tyrant.”¹³⁷

¹³³ ὦ πλοῦτε καὶ τυραννὶ καὶ τέχνῃ τέχνης/ὑπερφέρουσα τῷ πολυζήλῳ βίῳ. The line can also be translated as, “O wealth, and tyranny, and supreme skill/these are exceedingly envied in life.”

¹³⁴ Consider Creon’s character and actions in Sophocles’ *Antigone* and his *Oedipus at Colonus*.

¹³⁵ This is how Daniel Plainview refers to his adopted son H. W. at the end of *There Will Be Blood*. (Anderson, T. P. Paramount Vantage and Miramax Films, 2007).

¹³⁶ At line 799 Oedipus calls Laius τύραννον and at line 1043 Oedipus, again, refers to Laius as τυράννου.

¹³⁷ Meineck and Woodruff translate the line as “hubris grows from tyranny.” This reverses the order of generation, making out hubris to be the offspring of tyranny and not the other way around. In the original, ὑβρις can be read as being a feminine noun that appears either in the nominative singular or in the accusative plural. The verb, φυτεύει, is in the third singular present

This play of meanings, revealed by the term ‘*tyrannos*,’ happens both at the level of Sophocles’ play and in the history of the word’s use. As to the former, the stylized form of Sophocles’ art vitiates both precipitous and final judgments passed on the meaning of the play. The context, the exchanges, the puns¹³⁸ and metaphors,¹³⁹ the characters and their moods—all these things matter in figuring out the place of tyranny in the *Oedipus*. So do the other customary terms for rule—ἀρχή (rule) and βασιλεὺς (king)—to both of which the characters resort. The instances of βασιλεὺς, a name used to reference hereditary kingly rule, are sparse. The first occurrence of βασιλεὺς is at line 257, where Oedipus is speaking of Laius as ἀρίστου βασιλέως or “noble king.” The term appears once more at 1202 when the chorus, reminiscing about Oedipus’s rise to power in Thebes, calls him βασιλεύς.¹⁴⁰ Various forms of ἀρχή, on the other hand, come up

indicative active, and τύραννον is in the singular masculine accusative. Since the latter cannot be a nominative subject, it is more likely that τύραννον is an object of ὕβρις, and not the other way around.

¹³⁸ One of the play’s many puns occurs at line 924. Given the context, Oedipus’s name can be understood to mean “see” or “know—where.” Oedipus—Οἰδίπους—contains οἶδα, which is the perfect tense of the aorist εἶδω. Both verbs are related to ὁράω used in present active sense of seeing or looking. The meaning of the verb changes from “to see” in the aorist, to “to know” (in the sense of “having already seen”) in the perfect tense (Liddell and Scott 1953, 483, 817). John Sallis notes that “in Classical Greek, εἶδω was obsolete in the present active and was replaced by ὁράω” (*Logic of Imagination* 134 note 8).

Seth Benardete comments on the lines 924 – 26 and says that Oedipus is “an *oide-pous* (knows—a foot)” (*The Argument of the Action* 76). Benardete goes on to connect the more common interpretation of Oedipus’s name—swollen foot—to “hubris [which] makes man rise to heights he cannot maintain and hence plunges him into sheer compulsion, ‘where he wields a useless foot’ (873 – 79). The swollen foot that is Oedipus finally trips him up” (77).

¹³⁹ Davis in the *The Poetry of Philosophy* describes tragedy as a “metaphorical analysis of a metaphor [during which ... t]hings that at first look accidental in retrospect become absolutely necessary” (93).

¹⁴⁰ I found no occurrences of δεσπότης in the play. In view of this exclusion, the triad of ἥρχον, βασιλεία, and ὤναξ, which is operative in the *Oedipus*, can be understood philosophically as a reflection on the two ways in which power grows and develops from its origin—from its ἀρχή. One of these developments is a kingly rule—a rule that attends to the necessary principles (ἀρχαί)

more often (lines 259, 585, 627, and 628, to name a few). An especially interesting juxtaposition of governance and tyranny (ἥρχον and τυραννίς) happens at lines 591 – 92.¹⁴¹ At that point, Creon questions anyone’s incentive for desiring tyranny (τυραννίς) in view of the restraints that governing (ἥρχον) places on one’s personal wishes and affairs. We learn from Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Antigone* exactly how unfit Creon’s unbending character is for rule. Once he ascends to the Theban throne,¹⁴² Creon, too, is tyrannical in his actions. The term, *wanax*, which designates kingship for Mycenaeans (1600 – 1100BC) and is appropriated by the Homeric Greeks as ἄναξ, occurs also in the *Oedipus* at line 80. There, not a mortal, but a divine power is invoked by Oedipus himself when he calls on ὦναξ Ἄπολλον (lord Apollo).

Although Sophocles’ play describes the form of rule that is commonplace in archaic Greece (the power concentrated in the hands of a single individual), Sophocles’ own world is governed by the decrees of a democratic assembly. Sophocles’ choice to refer to Oedipus’s reign as that of a *tyrannos* bespeaks the author’s concerns about the fate of the Athenian polis. We should recall, also, that Athens bore the strain of Hippias’ tyrannical cruelty only thirty years prior to Sophocles’ birth.

of governance. Another is tyranny (τυραννίς), which is a corruption or a dangerous deviation from the necessary principles and origins of ruling.

¹⁴¹ εἰ δ’ αὐτὸς ἥρχον, πολλὰ κἂν ἄκων ἔδρων./πῶς δῆτ’ ἐμοὶ τυραννὶς ἡδίω ἔχειν. I translate this line as follows, “If I am myself a ruler, I would have to do many things against my will./Why should tyranny be to my liking?”

¹⁴² I am presenting here a simplified understanding of Creon’s character. Although Creon’s own tyrannical tendencies can be traced in plays that Sophocles composes, these tendencies are better understood if each play (*Antigone*, *Oedipus*, and *Oedipus at Colonus*) and Creon’s role in it is considered individually. The simplified presentation of Creon that I am offering here supports my analysis of tyranny in *Oedipus*.

Outside of Sophocles' play, the historical meaning of *tyrannos* is well accounted for by Parker's philological study of the word.¹⁴³ Parker shows that *tyrannos* did not always carry a sinister connotation. He insists that its first appearances in literature, in Simonides, for example, simply refer to non-hereditary, but by no means illegitimate, rule. By the time Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides write their tragedies, the meaning of the word changes to signify the corrupt and unjust actions that we, today, readily understand as being tyrannical. Since the three tragedians are composing at the time when the term is no longer identified with righteous rule of an ἄναξ or βασιλεύς, Sophocles' choice to call Oedipus a *tyrannos* (on more than a few occasions) is all the more telling.

Sophocles' language does not fail to speak, among other things, about the poet's own times and history. Sophocles, a general himself, saw Athens expand its influence during the early days of the first Peloponnesian war (460 – 445 BC) just as well as he could see the signs of Athens' demise.¹⁴⁴ The final battles of the Peloponnesian war against the alliance led by the Spartans (431 – 404 BC) significantly weakened the Athenian polis. A posthumous recipient of cultic recognition,¹⁴⁵ Sophocles did not live to

¹⁴³ “Τύραννος. The Semantics of a Political Concepts from Archilochus to Aristotle.”

¹⁴⁴ Both the conflicts within the Athenian state and the growing success of the anti-Athenian Peloponnesian allies are crippling Athens' strength toward the end of the war (circa 407 – 406BC). Cf., Zimmermann (*Die Griechische Tragödie*. Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 2005), 65.

¹⁴⁵ Woodruff reports that Sophocles was venerated as a hero and associated with Asclepius's cult (*Oedipus Tyrannos* x note 4). On the history of Asclepius's arrival to Athens, see Burkert, W. *Kulte des Altertums: Biologische Grundlagen der Religion* (München: C. H. Beck Verlag, 1998), 139, 155. Whereas Burkert places the arrival of the cult immediately following the events of the plague in 429BC, Bronwen L. Wickkiser cites 419 – 420BC as the date of cult's acceptance in Athens (*Asclepius, Medicine, and the Politics of Healing in Fifth Century Greece: Between Craft and Cult*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 36, 62. Burkert himself cites

witness the aftermath of that war, nor an Athens under the tyranny of the Thirty, but he witnessed and put up on stage an image of a thirst for power. Sophocles' *Oedipus* is a paradigm of tyrannical blindness, which is as much attributable to the main character of the play, as it is to the expansionist desires of the Athenian leaders.¹⁴⁶ The first performance of the *Oedipus* play, hypothesized to be between 428 – 425 BC,¹⁴⁷ follows closely the dissolution of the peace treaty between Athens and Sparta and the first year of the war, 431 BC, that proved ruinous to Athens.

420BC in the English language version of the text entitled : *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 114. Lowel Edmunds corroborates the later date by indicating the year 420BC as Asclepius's introduction to Athens (*Theatrical Space and Historical Place in Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1996), 163.

¹⁴⁶ After Cimones, the advocate for peace with Sparta, dies in 450BC, the land allotments are made and Athenian cleruchies are "set up on Carystus, Naxos, Andros, Lemnos, Imbros, and in the Chersonese" (Kagan, D. "The Athenian Empire. Lecture 13, The Delian League." *Introduction to Ancient Greek History*. Open Yale Courses. http://oyc.yale.edu/sites/default/files/08athenianempire_3.pdf. Accessed on November 3, 2016), 7. The colonies are extended to Imbros, Chalcis, and Eretria after 447BC Pericles' expedition to Thracian Chersonese (8). "Athenian colony Oreos [is] founded on site of Euboean Hestiaea, after the expulsion of the Hestiaeans" (Ibid.) in 446 – 45BC. In 440BC, following democratization of Samos and Samians' oligarch's attempts at overthrowing democracy, Pericles heads a punitive mission to Samos. He enlists Sophocles as a general (Ibid.). In 428BC Cleon attempts to persuade the Athenians that the punishment administered to Lesbos for the attempt to revolt should amount to an execution of all of the Mytilenian men and the consequent enslavement of the rest of the citizens. In the aftermath, only the leaders of the revolt are executed.

¹⁴⁷ Zimmermann contests both the date of the play, placing its production between 436 and 433, as well as the possible reflection of the Athenian disaster in Sophocles' drama. However, he does not give a reason for his choice of thinking that the plague, which terrorizes Thebes, is simply a familiar trope, like the one used in Homer's *Iliad* (*Die Griechische Tragödie* 66). I follow Woodruff in his dating of the play (*Oedipus Tyrannos* 10 and note 3).

3. Analysis of Characters' Actions: Theme 1. Vision and Blindness

The 2015 Freiburg Theater performance of *Oedipus Tyrannus* begins before the Sophoclean beginning.¹⁴⁸ It starts by showing to the audience the image of Oedipus's monstrosity. A grown man appears. Patches of film cover his eyes. All that the man is wearing is a piece of white linen wrapped around his hips. He descends a flight of stairs, then stumbles and falls to the ground. His convulsive movements and helplessness bring to mind some kind of sickness, some physical or psychological ailment. The convulsing body is picked up by a stalwart man, who carries the afflicted. The infirm man looks as if he is disfigured or disabled while several other characters cover up his nakedness with clothing. Now a woman, tiptoeing, approaches the dressed and no longer weakened man. She focuses our attention on his sightless face, which intermittently invokes antipathy and pity. She removes the film that hinders his eyesight. She is Jocasta, and now Oedipus can see. Now Oedipus can see the hall and audience before him. To him we are a multitude in darkness; the many mono-gendered, helpless Thebans of the feeble age.¹⁴⁹ Now Oedipus can see, and yet ... he is still sightless. Once more, much later in the play,

¹⁴⁸ Brucker, Felicitas. *Ödipus*. Premiere on October 3, 2015 at *Theater Freiburg*. Freiburg, Germany.

¹⁴⁹ Benardete makes a terrific observation about the ages and the physical state of Oedipus's supplicants. He comments on lines 16 – 19:

Children incapable of going far, priests weighed down with age, and a group of unmarried men stand before him. Oedipus is the only man (*anēr*), in the strict sense, who is present. Two of the groups are weak, the other is strong. Together they represent an anomalous and defective answer to the riddle of the Sphinx, for the aged appear as priests, and the two-footed men appear as bachelors. The supplicants of the city are either below or beyond generation: the children have not yet reached puberty, the youths have not yet become fathers, and the priests are presumably impotent. *The Argument of the Action*, 71 – 72.

Jocasta's figure, then revealed to us as a mother-bride, will shock Oedipus into another sighting. It will be a show of ugliness, disease, and weakness of none other than Oedipus himself—that which he has always been and still is. Oedipus, then, will impale his eyes leaving himself to “gaze in darkness on forbidden faces” (*Oedipus Tyrannos* 1243 – 44). He will deny himself eyesight in order to continue exerting his command over the seen and the unseen; as if seeing or refusing to see invests us with a real power over the visible things. By mouthing the perverse punishment and bidding himself to look at that which is forbidden,¹⁵⁰ Oedipus hopes to, but does not, regain the power over the horrible circumstances of his life.

Sophocles' genius will repeat this metaphor, so well enacted by the Freiburg troupe, over and over again, turning the question about human capacity to see into a maddening, persistent idea. What kind of a joke is it? What kind of a bizarre aberration? To have the capacity to see and yet to fail to see the truth of most important things? To see the figure of a woman, but not what guides and moves her, not her dreams nor her intentions. To see a man, but not his loves and not his pains. To see an animal, yet not to see its life—never to penetrate by means of sight and grasp the essence of its being. To see all things lifeless and alive. *Only* to see, but not to know them.¹⁵¹ Is this our predicament? Is this the predicament of human sight—to glide over surfaces and always

¹⁵⁰ Both Herodotus in his *Histories* Book I.8 – 16 and Plato in his *Republic* Book II.359c – 360b describe adventures of a certain Gyges and an ancestor of Gyges, respectively. Both Gygi are mentioned in relation to the transgressive modes of visibility and invisibility.

¹⁵¹ Seeing and (or as) knowledge is a trope that recurs in ancient Greek drama. William Wians examines the relationship between knowledge, ignorance, sight, and lack thereof in his article “The Agamemnon and Human Knowledge.” *Logos and Muthos: Philosophical Essays in Greek Literature* (New York, NY: SUNY Press, 2009).

past whatever depth that these bespeak? Or is it Oedipus's only? The capacity to see, does it necessitate the potential to become Oedipus-like, to develop a resistance to even an attempt at seeing things for what they are? Do we, like Oedipus, prefer to see the world and all the beings in it for their surface appearances only—for those surfaces, which with such expedient delight (itself but a desire of a viewer) hold images projected unto them?

4. Analysis of Characters' Actions: Theme 2. Power and Weakness

Oedipus desires to see the Theban supplicants as powerless children (59),¹⁵² Tiresias and Creon as ill meaning conspirators (535),¹⁵³ Jocasta as a haughty blue-blood (1062 –

¹⁵² The invocation: ὦ τέκνα, which means children, deeds, or progeny, appears at line 1 and: ὦ παῖδες οἰκτροί, pitiable children or pitiable youth, is the phrase that Oedipus applies to his subjects in line 59. In some contexts the word, παῖδες, is also used to refer to servants or slaves.

Contemporary political history offers chilling examples of rulers, who sap the strength and political maturity of the citizenry by propagandizing their father-figure power. Reciting the biography of Joseph Stalin (pseudonyms: “Soso” and then “Koba” Jughashvili) Edward Radsinski makes a sinister remark: “we all were, to some extent, his children” (*Сталин Радзинского: Загадки Сталина Версии Биографии*. NCnews, 2013. Translation from Russian is my own). Radsinski observes that Stalin's early pseudonym, Koba, is borrowed from an 1882 novel by Alexander Kazbegi entitled: *The Patricide*. Stalin is hardly the first tyrant to cultivate his patronizing image. Russian Tsars were most commonly referred to as царь батюшка or “tsar, the father.”

In ancient Greek literature, the idea of shepherding, rather than fatherhood is at work in the communal political imagination. See Benardete's analysis of shepherding in “The Plan of Plato's *Statesman*” (*The Argument of the Action* 354 – 75). Benardete offsets the peculiarity of Plato's recourse to the notion of ruling as shepherding with the remark that the “notion of king as shepherd of his people (*poimena laōn*) is almost confined to the Homeric epics; indeed in the *Odyssey* it is applied to the last representatives of the former generation” (367).

Also the contemporary cinematographic imagination portrays the terrors of tyrannical, father-like ruling figures. Consider the character of Colonel Kurtz in Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (Omni Zoetrope Production, 1979). Kurtz is a rogue, deranged, vicious tyrant. Yet, his sheltered subjects think Kurtz to be divine and are treated in the film as “his children” (2:30). Curiously, the lyrics for the film's theme song, “The End,” were written by Jim Morrison

63),¹⁵⁴ himself as an offspring of a goddess Fortune, being born to embody the course of the waxing and the waning moon (1080 – 84).¹⁵⁵ Those around him, Oedipus sees as either completely powerless or as challenging his power. Oedipus's desire to see himself as an all-powerful force of nature is fueled by an incapacity to admit his own powerlessness. In the face of the Theban misfortunes, Oedipus has no power. He cannot stop the plague. Oedipus's "own reason for driving out [the] ... infection [is] ... the killer [who] ... could kill again" (138 – 9). Oedipus says, "As I serve this cause, so I serve myself" (141).¹⁵⁶ Of course, it is in serving himself that Oedipus is most ineffective. Whether it is his fear, his anger, his despair and anxiety, his suspiciousness or arrogance that drive Oedipus out of the Corinthian land, and set in motion the events predicted by

in an attempt at poetizing and re-instantiating the Oedipus myth. See John Densmore's explanation of Morrison's understanding of what is at stake in the myth in *Riders on the Storm. My Life with Jim Morrison and the Doors* (New York, NY: Random House Publishing, 2009), 88.

¹⁵³ ξυμφυτεῦσαι τοῦργον εἰργάσθαι, "to have labored planting this deed along" (347); ληστής τ' ἐναργῆς τῆς ἐμῆς τυραννίδος, "an obvious thief of my tyranny" (535).

¹⁵⁴ θάρσει: σὺ μὲν γὰρ οὐδ' ἐὰν τρίτης ἐγὼ/μητρὸς φανῶ τρίδουλος, ἐκφανεῖ κακῇ, "you, take courage, though I discover my mother to be thrice enslaved, you will not be revealed as base."

¹⁵⁵ ἐγὼ δ' ἐμαυτὸν παῖδα τῆς Τύχης νέμων/τῆς εὖ διδούσης οὐκ ἀτιμασθήσομαι./τῆς γὰρ πέφυκα μητρός: οἱ δὲ συγγενεῖς/μῆνές με μικρὸν καὶ μέγαν διώρισαν. τοιόσδε δ' ἐκφύς, "I am myself a child of Fortune, dispensing good and giving, will not be dishonored. I come from that mother. The months, my siblings, mark the waxing and the waning [moon]. Such is also I, by origin and nature." Woodruff, in his introduction to *Oedipus Tyrannus*, comments on Oedipus's super-human status. Woodruff stresses that in the opening stanzas, the "Elder treats him [Oedipus] ... like a god" (xviii).

Given the examples from the anthropological history (Egyptian pharaohs, shamanism), community leader's identification with the supernatural forces or with the forces of nature is not obviously or necessarily deplorable. However, both such identification as well as the utter disregard for the divine, sometimes, point to the malignancy of character. Consider the Persian tyrant Cambyses and the Roman tyrant Caligula. Their tyrannical traits manifest, in part, as a desire to control the uncontrollable and to embody divine power.

¹⁵⁶ See also Xenophon's *Hiero*, III.10 – 13 in *Xenophon Scripta Minora VII* (Marchant C. E. and Bowersock W. G. trans. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925). The work postdates Sophocles' play. However, Xenophon's insistence on the fact that tyrant lives in constant fear for his own life retrospectively illumines Oedipus's concern for his wellbeing.

the oracle at Delphi, but was he capable of taking pause and overpowering the excess of his own emotions (777 – 78),¹⁵⁷ there would have been no scheming phantoms to combat, no killer to track down, no monster to dismantle. Oedipus’s human origin makes him powerless in seeing through the ages back to the moment of his birth—a moment that would verify the place and parents to which he was born. A considerably more grave impotence is Oedipus’s lack of strength sufficient to see past the passing insult of a drunk (779). Why not reign in anxiety and anger? Why not make peace with what has happened, with his (adopted) parents, and with himself? Terrible, though the prophecy might be, why take it to mean one thing only? After all, the oracles are known to speak in riddles.¹⁵⁸ Here issues one of Sophocles’ warnings: it is not what we know, not even what we (granted the genius of innovation) *can* know, it is how we react to as well as what we do with things that we find out about that matters.

¹⁵⁷ θαυμάσαι μὲν ἀξία./σπουδῆς γε μέντοι τῆς ἐμῆς οὐκ ἀξία, “[that] was worthy of wonder, however, of my anxiety it was not” or “[that] was worthy of wonder, but it did not warrant how my mind then raced.”

¹⁵⁸ Knox offers an interpretation of the oracular pronouncements in (*Oedipus at Thebes* 34 – 38, 44 – 45). Herodotus’ *Histories* gives an excellent example of Croesus, the Lydian, misunderstanding the oracles given to him and accelerating his country’s downfall by acting on his misinterpretation of the prophecies (*The Landmark Herodotus: The Histories*. Strassler, B. R. ed. New York, NY: Pantheon Books Publishing, 2007), I.47 – 56, 77 – 92.

Both Oedipus and Jocasta take the oracular pronouncements given to them too literally and apply them selectively. Oedipus could have taken the first oracle given to him together with the insult from the drunken guest to posit that it is, in fact, impossible for him to sleep with his mother in Corinth, because not only Polybus’s but also Merope’s identity as his parent is questionable. Oedipus does not pursue this line of thought. Jocasta waits for her son to come back, announce himself as the descendant of the Theban throne, and then kill Laius. Since this does not happen in the exact sequence, she dismisses Apollo’s prophesy on the grounds of it being false (*Oedipus Tyrannos* 720 – 23). Jocasta and Oedipus lack the interpretive imagination necessary to put together the events of which they have knowledge with the fulfilled prophecies (with the occurrences, which they have experienced, but not recognized for what they are) into a plausible picture of true happenings.

The arc of Oedipus's overzealousness about power, which issues from the kind of powerlessness that we, too, being human, share with him, for Oedipus, defines the way in which events unfold. Even at the very end, when blinded and cast out, Oedipus is in the presence of his sibling-children, he has to be held back by Creon from an attempt to "take control of everything" (1522).¹⁵⁹ The final scene of *Oedipus* presents to us another Sophoclean wisdom: realization of the truth that there are things, which human beings cannot control, often stirs up the desire to negate the fundamental weakness and to act as if one were a limitless, inhuman being.¹⁶⁰ Perhaps it is this weakness about which the chorus grieves: "Oh, what a wretched breed/We mortals are:/Our lives add up to nothing ... Does anyone harvest more of happiness/Than a vacant image ... Oedipus, your misery teaches me/To call no mortal blessed" (1186 – 96).

5. Analysis of Characters' Actions: Theme 3. Humanity, Divinity, Monstrosity

A woman or a man, no matter the attempts at running from oneself, denying mortal limits, or seeking to control all else, in lieu of being resolute toward oneself, cannot be god, immortal and all-mighty. However, when the limits of humanity are transgressed,¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ πάντα μὴ βούλου κρατεῖν, "you wish to [take] power [over] everything."

¹⁶⁰ See lines 964 – 69 where Oedipus denies the need to pay heed to the divine oracles, and lines 1080 – 85 where he claims to have supernatural powers and identifies as an offspring of a divinity.

¹⁶¹ Despite referring to Oedipus as "wise" in *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music*, Friedrich Nietzsche observes that it is an "unnatural abomination" to be as "wise" as Oedipus (*Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. Kaufmann, W. trans. New York, NY: Random House Publishing, 2000), 68. Nietzsche's question: "How else could one compel nature to surrender her secrets if not by triumphantly resisting her, that is, by means of something unnatural?" (68 – 69)

we can be monstrous. Among the gods of ancient Greece incest and patricide are common.¹⁶² But human beings are not gods. It may well have been that to preserve a line of kingship familial ties were turned into amorous ones. It is likely that Nietzsche's insight into the ancient Greeks' relationship with their gods is valid.¹⁶³ It could be the case that, for ancient Greeks, mortal transgression is absolved in divine misdoings. Nonetheless, both the myth about Oedipus, and Sophocles' play that draws on it, press hard on the point of tension, which shows the incongruity of grafting back onto a man (even if he is a king) the being and the deeds of gods. If in an effort to relieve the psyche of its guilt not only an incestuous Pantheon is generated, but also the human being is identified with that of the divine (as Oedipus does at least on one occasion, 1080 – 1085), then the distinction between gods and humans loses its integrity.

The myth that Sophocles' play enacts, the myth which tells of incest and of patricide, stands in for a metaphor of absolute, and therefore impossible, inhuman power. Killing Laius, his biological father, and taking his place when having children with Jocasta, his biological mother, Oedipus in his fantastical, mythical act seeks to negate

gives away the answer, which hinges on an understanding of Oedipus's character as being transgressive, hubristic, and defiant in the face of the natural as well as of the human limits.

¹⁶² See Vernant's discussion of incest in relation to the play in *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece* (Lloyd, J. trans. New York, NY: Zone Books, 1996), 95. See also Burkert's comments (pages 13 and 14) on incest in Near Eastern religions (*Creation of the Sacred* 7 – 20). For a general discussion of oriental influences on the ancient Greek mythic and religious consciousness, see Burkert's *Die Orientalisierende Epoche in der griechischen Religion und Literatur* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1984). Burkert's remarks about the purification rights are especially interesting (57 – 65).

¹⁶³ I am referring to Nietzsche's description of the "Olympian world" in chapter three of the *Birth of Tragedy* (*Basic Writings* 43). Consider also Vernant's explanation of the difference between approved and prohibited incestual relationships among the ancient Greeks (*Myth and Tragedy* 100).

nature's truth and with it the way by which all human beings come to be not from themselves, but from other humans. To rewind the biological time, to be one's own progenitor is not a possibility. That is a permutation of a monstrous dream to have absolute control over one's life.¹⁶⁴ A nightmare. An irony is that, attempting to avoid this nightmare, Oedipus also shows that his parents mean to him precious little. Unless, by parenthood he understands just that: a biological connection, a blood line reeling him closer in towards the Corinthian throne.

Oedipus is terrified of the oracular pronouncement (788 – 94). Does this terror account for Oedipus's failure to pay his dues to Merope and Polybus? Does being afraid explain Oedipus's all but gloating at Polybus's death (970 – 74)? Oedipus's actions, guided by fear, show how strange his character is, when it comes to matters of familial affection. There is something sinister about Oedipus's being callous on account of Polybus's death, no matter the excuse of being relieved at not having killed him. Oedipus is not weeping for the dead. The deaths come as a "great comfort" (987) to him. It is the "living that scare [him]" (987).¹⁶⁵ It is only out of fear for his life that Oedipus pays respect to gods. Once fear is abated, he all but scorns the divinities. "Why? Why, dear wife, should we observe the oracle/At Delphi, or strain to see signs from birds screeching/In the sky?" (964 – 66) rejoices Oedipus when he thinks that Polybus, who is

¹⁶⁴ Gutjahr, tracing Oedipus's controlling impulse, relates it to Hölderlin's view of the play. Gutjahr explains that on Hölderlin's account Oedipus "places his knowledge as absolute and, thus, trespasses into the region of God's knowledge. In this transgression he [Oedipus] negates his human existence, which, for Hölderlin, constitutes Oedipus's hubris" (*Ödipus* 81).

¹⁶⁵ Compare this line to Xenophon's (430 – 354BC) *Hiero* II.20, where Hiero is convinced that a tyrant's worries do not subside with the deaths of those whom he fears.

announced dead, is his true father. If we could ask Oedipus: Why, up until now, did you listen to the oracular pronouncements and believe the gods? He would respond “fear misguided me” (975). It turns out that Oedipus’s impetus for trusting the divinities and their forewarnings is—fear.

Once Oedipus’s fear of what could be, is replaced with terror in the face of certainty, Oedipus blames the god for everything, but his physical blindness. “Apollo! It was Apollo, my friends./Agony after agony, he brought them on. But I did this/By my own hand./Why should I have eyes/When there is nothing sweet to see?” (1330 – 35). Oedipus cannot bear to look at what he had done. He plucks his eyes out defiantly. He cannot accept that his own agency (and not only Apollo’s or fate’s) transpires in the abominable actions. Oedipus’s defiance is quick to turn into anger. There is something perverse about Oedipus’s anger at dismayed Jocasta (1255 – 67). The parting words that Oedipus speaks to his daughters are unsavory (1490 – 1503). The anger and the terror are mixed for him with sensual sentiment. Without these he would remain incapable of feeling intimate with others. Despite the ravaging anger,¹⁶⁶ which fuels both Oedipus’s flight and his searches, he is helpless to resolve the strange contradiction that he is.¹⁶⁷

What is he? Oedipus is an intimate outsider—a newcomer to Thebes, though he is its

¹⁶⁶ Compare Oedipus’s rage to Daniel Plainview’s self-professed misanthropy in *There Will be Blood*: “Are you an angry man, Henry ... I hate most people.”

¹⁶⁷ Benardete describes Oedipus’s anger as a “passion for homogeneity” (*The Argument of the Action* 78). Despite this passion, this blind and blinding impulse, the abyssal contradictions in Oedipus’s life do not get erased. They deepen. The resolution is not—cannot—be attained by means of “*thumos*” (82). Although, Benardete continues, “Oedipus cannot stand opposition [and] ... must overcome everything that resists him (cf. 1522 – 23)” (78), such passion only plants more seeds of dissension, leading to Oedipus’s paranoia and perversion. Oedipus’s passion demands, as Benardete puts it, that “everything ... be reduced to the same level or eliminated until he alone as the city remains” (78).

citizen by birth. Oedipus thinks himself to be a benevolent stranger (219 – 220),¹⁶⁸ yet he—a cast out polluter—ends up being most abominably estranged.¹⁶⁹ He is a blood heir of the throne, who usurps the power—a king’s legitimate son, who murders his father (451 – 62). Both in the polis and inside the home, in life of psyche and in public life (1319 – 20), Oedipus is a contradiction and he is blind to himself. He is, paradigmatically, a tyrant.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ ἄγῳ ξένος μὲν τοῦ λόγου τοῦδ’ ἐξερῶ/ξένος δὲ τοῦ πραχθέντος, “[T]his I will speak, although a stranger/stranger to that which has come to pass.”

¹⁶⁹ Although in Homer’s *Iliad*, XXIII.678 – 80, Oedipus dies in Thebes (Lattimore, R. trans. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 2011).

¹⁷⁰ I am following Benardete, who argues that Oedipus embodies the “movement ... from the question of who killed Laius to that of who generated Oedipus [as the movement] ... that goes more deeply into the family [at the same time as it] ... goes more deeply into the city as well. Oedipus violates equally the public and the private with a single crime. He is the paradigm of the tyrant” (*The Argument of the Action* 73). It is unclear to me why Knox chooses to deny Oedipus the “classic pattern of *tyrannos*” (*Oedipus at Thebes* 59). In support of his claim Knox writes, “He does not defy ancestral laws, outrage women, or put men to death without trial” (*Ibid.*). Knox is wrong. Oedipus does all of these things. Oedipus commits incest, drives Jocasta to suicide, and murders Laius, taking his place as a ruler of Thebes. Arguably, although less obviously, Oedipus does also “plunder his subjects, distrust the good and delight in the bad [and] lives in fear of his people” (*Oedipus at Thebes* 60). The famine of the Theban plague can be seen as the result of the first; Oedipus’s paranoid and megalomaniac tendencies—as that of the second; and the supplicants’ excessive obsequiousness and pusillanimity can be interpreted as the upshot of the third of Oedipus’s transgressions. Oedipus, indeed, “is not equipped with [the] ... armed bodyguard which is the hallmark of the *tyrannos*” (*Ibid.*). But all the other signs of tyranny, of which Knox absolves Oedipus, are applicable to Sophocles’ character. Most tellingly, Oedipus’s life takes a turn for the worse in a manner described by Herodotus as he considers tyranny in Croesus’s life (in books I.32 and I.86 – 89 of the *Histories*). Croesus is the direct descendant of the proto-tyrannical figure, Gyges, the Lydian.

6. Analysis of Characters' Actions: Theme 4. The Sphinx

As an assassin of the Sphinx,¹⁷¹ Oedipus faces the tyranny, which he is incapable of seeing in himself. The Sphinx is the figure of the foreboding power of the feminine, which, if violated, can erupt and take its monstrous form. It does turn into a monstrous force for Oedipus, for a man besieged by the quest for power. Oedipus annihilates the Sphinx. Nonetheless, the victory only serves to bind Oedipus to the fate from which he flees. The Sphinx is gone and Oedipus finds his way to Thebes—his mother's bed—thus helping to forge another chain of his own enslavement to the promised horror. Even as Oedipus delivers retribution to the monster, he etches in the contours of his own future pain. Perhaps Creon is right about Oedipus's punitive "justice—[when Creon cries out:] ... you [, Oedipus,] hurt yourself the most" (675)!

If Oedipus's anger had not gotten the better of him on the road to Thebes and if Laius had not then been killed by Oedipus, would there have been the tyranny of the Sphinx? Could it be that Oedipus's action of murdering the stranger and keeping the event of murder to himself brought the songbird monster up from Hades and commenced the reign of her pestilence in Thebes?¹⁷² Would Oedipus have been as dear to the city, if

¹⁷¹ Sphinx appears at lines: 35 ἀοιδού or "of singer"; 130 Σφίγξ; 391 ἡ ῥαψῶδός ... κύων or "that singing bitch"; 507 περόεσς' ... κόρα or "the winged girl"; 1199 – 1200 γαμψώνυχα παρθένον χρησμοφδόν or "prophetic girl with crooked talons."

¹⁷² I admit that this is a daring interpretation. The play, itself, does not forbid it. The distance from Daulis (which is where the roads to Thebes, Delphi, and Corinth meet) to Thebes is about 63 kilometers, which is, roughly, a third of the length that Oedipus traveled to get from Corinth to Delphi. It could take a weary traveler several days to cover the distance. Although it seems that Sphinx's terror lasted a while before Oedipus arrived, the fact that no one before Oedipus was able to solve a fairly simple riddle supports the conjecture that only a few have tried. One view to the contrary of my conjecture holds that Laius's rape of Chrysippus is to blame for the Sphinx's

it were not for his annihilation of the monster? Would he have been given kingly throne and wife, the queen Jocasta, to go with it, if Thebes was not downtrodden, terrorized, and in despair over the Sphinx?

The Sphinx, which translates from ancient Egyptian as a “living image,”¹⁷³ remains for Oedipus a picture of his debilitating blindness, not of his “enlightening knowledge” (γνώμη κυρήσας, 398).¹⁷⁴ Oedipus transfers his condition—an untimely three-eggedness¹⁷⁵ or an evening darkness that descends at noon¹⁷⁶—onto the Sphinx’s

terror (Dynes, R. W. & Donaldson, S. eds. *Homosexuality in the Ancient World*. New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 1992), 133. Apollodorus’s report of the events accompanying Sphinx’s reign undoes my view that only several men have tried to overrun the monster. See his recounting of the myth in *The Library of Greek Mythology (Volume I)*. Frazer, G. J. trans. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921).

¹⁷³ Abeer el-Shahawy gives this description of the monster in his *Das Ägyptische Museum von Kairo. Ein Streifzug durch das Alte Ägypten*. (Egypt: Farid Atiya Press, 2005), 117. The author’s text translates “Sphinx” as “lebendiges Abbild,” which I, in turn, translate as the “living image.”

¹⁷⁴ Oedipus’s self-assured attack against the blind Tiresias is misguided. We could read back into Oedipus’s speech, here, the repercussion of the following saying: “Boy, I got vision, and the rest of the world wears bifocals” (Hill, G. R. *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. 20th Century Fox Film, 1968). Oedipus’s foresight, however, is prodigiously ineffective.

¹⁷⁵ I am indebted to Benardete for his insight that Oedipus solved the riddle not by means of applying his extraordinary mental powers of detection, but simply (and perhaps unwittingly) by transferring his own condition onto the conditions of the riddle (*Encounters and Reflections* 75). Oedipus’s solution, then, is not metaphorical, nor poetic, but literal and simplistic. Moreover, Oedipus’s answer is not a work of foresight and deliberation (as Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* understands the term), but of the confluence of circumstances, i. e., of chance.

¹⁷⁶ Not only Oedipus’s physical state and look, but also the image that his name evokes, two-footed (δίπους) is a giveaway to the solution of the fairly straightforward riddle of the Sphinx. I take the riddle’s simplicity to be an indication of another metaphorical role that the Sphinx plays—she is there as an indicator of Oedipus’s uniqueness, that much is true, but this uniqueness does not have a positive character. That nobody else but Oedipus guesses the riddle establishes a special link between him, the Sphinx, and the riddle. Sphinx could be in Thebes because of Oedipus’s actions. If so, then Oedipus should be the one to see it perish. If there are heroic undertones in Oedipus’s so called “victory” over the monster, they are tinted by the unsavory connection between the monstrosity of the Sphinx and that of Oedipus. Cf. André Gide. *Two Legends: Oedipus and Theseus* (Russell, J. trans. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1961).

riddle¹⁷⁷ and gets the answer right. For Oedipus, human life is defined by impaired movement, by escape, and, at the same time, by a human being's birth right to the physical dominion and lordship over the bearing earth. Having conceived of the world in his own image, and then, having drawn this image over the Sphinx's riddle, Oedipus guesses the answer. But does he understand the implication of the Sphinx's question that asks about the relationship between human weakness and need and the support provided by the earth?¹⁷⁸ The question asks: "What is it, which has one voice and is four-legged, two-legged, and three-legged?"¹⁷⁹ The answer that Oedipus gives is: "human being" (ἄνθρωπος).¹⁸⁰

Yet, does Oedipus know the kind of being that he is? Can he tell the difference between himself and other human beings? "I know you are all in pain; every one of you/Feels it, but at least that pain is only yours ... I grieve not only for myself/But for the whole city, for everyone, for you" (61 – 2)—that is what Oedipus proclaims as he amalgamates himself with the Thebans. Oedipus fantasizes that he can feel for others; that he can feel another's pain and do so more intensely than the grieving human being

Gide offers a similar understanding of Oedipus's monstrous murder of Laius and the relationship between the murder and the appearance of the Sphinx.

¹⁷⁷ See a succinct description of the riddle and the Sphinx's possible genealogies in John Edward Zimmerman's *Dictionary of Classical Mythology* (New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishing, 1966).

¹⁷⁸ Benardete understands Oedipus's confrontation with the Sphinx differently. He sees in it Oedipus's failure to guess "not the *eidos* of man, which the Sphinx had posed as a riddle, but his *genesis* [which is] the riddle of man" (*The Argument of the Action* 81).

¹⁷⁹ τί ἐστὶν ὃ μίαν ἔχον φωνὴν τετράπους καὶ δίπους καὶ τρίπους, (Apollodorus 346).

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 348

herself. This fantasy leaves Oedipus bound to blindness.¹⁸¹ He does not see the monstrous Sphinx for that riddle, which she is *for him*.¹⁸² For all of Oedipus's flights,¹⁸³ his thinking remains unaltered.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Oedipus's blindness, understood as his incapacity to accept himself for who he is and to see other human beings in their uniqueness and particularity, sets into motion and perpetuates what I refer to as "tyrannical necessity." It may not be by choice, in a robust sense of the word, that Oedipus remains blind to the repercussions of his desires, fears, and actions. However, it is by means of the sum of his choices and passions—on account of the deeds peculiar to his character—that he is blind. My view of the tyrannical necessity that is at work in *Oedipus* differs from Sean Kirkland's position on necessity, freedom, and fate.

In his study of *Antigone*, entitled "Speed and Tragedy in Cocteau and Sophocles," Kirkland writes: "the crucial distinction here [between fate and necessity is] ... that it [fate] works *through, not merely upon, the human being*, or through his or her own decisions and actions" (*Interrogating Antigone in Postmodern Philosophy and Criticism*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), 317. In a note supporting his claim, Kirkland cites Paul Tillich, who holds that necessity restrictively obtains of physical objects (317, note 10). Of course, human beings, too, are physical objects—we have physical bodies. However, this does not mean that either our bodies or other physical bodies are, in essence, governed by necessity. Rather, this means, that contingencies, which obtain of physical bodies are organized by means of necessary relations. The interactions of physical bodies are analyzed and understood through our view of necessary laws. The necessity we find there is a mechanical necessity. It appears that both Kirkland and Tillich hold that there is a strict divide between the world of mechanical interactions and the world of ends. Human beings are capable of choosing—often freely—the ends of their actions. Hence, mechanical necessity fails to obtain in the human realm. This view presents massive problems: What of the teleology at work in the physical universe? Where does one draw the line between entities capable of exerting influence on their world and those completely bound by it? If it is only the human being that is free, because it is the only being that deliberates about and chooses the desired ends, then why is a comparison with "physical objects," which cannot deliberate and choose, meaningful? Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Sachs, J. trans. Boston, MA: Focus Publishing, 2002), gives several causes "responsible for things" (1112a30). These are: "nature, necessity, and chance, and also intelligence, and everything that is due to a human being" (φύσις καὶ ἀνάγκη καὶ τύχη, ἔτι δὲ νοῦς καὶ πᾶν τὸ δι' ἀνθρώπου). Aristotle distinguishes these causes, but he does not divide up their spheres of influence in a way that would forever exclude one of them, necessity, for instance, from interacting with a group of beings in the world. It is more sensible to assume that all of the causes mentioned obtain of all events, objects, and beings, but in different measures and in different combinations.

¹⁸² Although I disagree with Gutjahr's (*Ödipus* 60) presentation of Sphinx as an amalgam of both Laius's and Oedipus's transgression, it is Gutjahr's text that suggested to me the idea that the Sphinx could be seen as an image of Oedipus's own monstrosity.

¹⁸³ See Knox's descriptions of Oedipus's "speed of action" (*Oedipus at Thebes* 16 – 17). Regardless of Oedipus's swiftness or, perhaps, because of it (because of the swiftness of his facile

7. Analysis of Characters' Actions: Theme 5. Knowledge, Reflection, and Self-Knowledge

Of course, the search for self, especially for knowledge of the self (incomplete though it forever will be), has to start somewhere. But, for Oedipus, this seeking does not get far off the ground and only starts when Oedipus is startled by his fear of not belonging to a place, a house, a family he thought was his. What sets Oedipus on his ill-fated flight from Corinth? Is it his own desire to learn about who he is? Not quite. That sends him to the oracle, which gives no answer to the question about Oedipus's origin and past. A drunken guest of Merope's and Polybus's blurts out an insult when he says that Oedipus is "not [his] father's son" (πλαστὸς ὡς εἶην πατρί, 780). Whether or not Oedipus descends from Polybus, it is the Corinthian family that raised him. Shocking though the prospect may be, even if Oedipus is not their son by blood, he is still their adopted son. However, to Oedipus, the power granted by the blood relation to the king is all that matters. If Oedipus is not Polybus's offspring, then kingship does not have to go to him by the hereditary right. Oedipus might no longer be "held in highest esteem [and be as] ... prominent [a] man"¹⁸⁵ in the eyes of others. If he is not a rightful son of Polybus, then he cannot be rightful βασιλεὺς, either.¹⁸⁶ Oedipus runs from being a τύραννος in Corinth, only to

conclusions, decisions, ideas, and actions) Oedipus remains unskilled in the task of thoughtful reflection and, thus, he remains fundamentally unchanged or unmoved.

¹⁸⁴ Sallis, in his discussion of Plato's *Meno*, gives examples and explanations of epistemic obstinacy. See his *Being and Logos* (90 – 91, 95). Both Sallis's analysis of the *Meno* as well as analyses of *Oedipus* presented here, show that incapacity to be moved toward genuine knowledge has to do with characters' literalness or their simplistic attitude toward images and metaphors.

¹⁸⁵ ἡγόμην δ' ἀνὴρ/ἄστῶν μέγιστος τῶν ἐκεῖ. The phrase can also be translated as, "I carried [myself] as a great man among the townsfolk there" (775 – 76).

¹⁸⁶ Vernant comments on Oedipus's unease in the face of his possibly lowly origins and on the significance of Oedipus's initial inability to accept that he is not the blood relation of Polybus and

become one in Thebes. But while in Corinth Oedipus's tyranny would have been simply a result of his adoption, in Thebes, he is a tyrant not because his bloodline deviates from Laius's, but because he kills the rightful king, marries his wife, and brings the plague as punishment to the tormented city that helped him rise to power.

Oedipus's so called search for self-knowledge is in name only. It goes no deeper than his attempt to remove a sting of an offense. Oedipus does not stay with his Corinthian parents. He chooses not to turn to them for their advice and their judgment. Oedipus, being who he is, flees from what he knows to be his homeland. This flight sets into motion the monstrous unfolding of his life's events. As a mutilated child, Oedipus had no choice but to be saved by the Theban shepherd and be delivered to the court at Corinth. But as a man, he has a choice¹⁸⁷ not to close out the circle that the prophecy has drawn into his life. Oedipus does not have to flee, but he can and he does. What he

Merope (*Myth and Tragedy* 106 – 107). Knox observes that “Oedipus's misgivings about his birth express themselves as a fantasy that he is in one sense or another of the line of Laius” (*Oedipus at Thebes* 56).

¹⁸⁷ I am agreeing with Knox that *Oedipus* is not a “tragedy of fate” (*Oedipus at Thebes* 3). This is too simplistic and hasty an interpretation. It labels the play instead of understanding what is at stake in it. However, Knox's claim that “‘fate’ plays no part at all” (6) is leaning too heavily in the direction of seeing human agency as perfectly autonomous. This latter view does not coincide with the ancient Greek understanding of the world and human beings' place in it. If fate is interpreted, rather, as an essential passivity and receptivity at heart of human nature, then the interaction of active and passive forces in Sophocles' play can be put into its proper context. Knox's remark that “Sophocles has chosen to present Oedipus's actions not as determined but only as predicted, and [that] he has made no reference to the relation between the predicted destiny and the divine will” (38) is helpful in thinking about the role of fate in Sophocles' play and in our lives.

cannot do is face his strange and cruel fortune, his fears, and his anger—he cannot find the strength to face himself. Not even at the end.¹⁸⁸

The closer that Oedipus gets to being told exactly what he did and being shown that the path he took to manifest the prophecy is complete, the more reluctant Oedipus is to accept the fairly apparent truth. “A terrifying thought/What if the blind prophet can see?” (747 – 48)—an inkling of a realization is replaced quickly by denial: “Laius was killed by several thieves/Then I could not have killed him/How can one be the same as many?” (843 – 45). Oedipus should know better. He is the man, who answered “human being”—one and the same—to the Sphinx’s question, which also asks: How can one (voice) be many (four- and two- and three-legged)? Oedipus has already admitted to Jocasta that he has killed a traveler and his retinue on the road to Thebes. Why is it, then, that he refuses to put the two and two together? Will Oedipus be known for his murder of an unknown and unimportant man or will he be revealed as a killer of his own father and, thus, as a slayer of the king? Precisely that from which he ran, that which he was most afraid of, befalls Oedipus, but when it does, he cannot recognize the happening. Oedipus keeps evading, instead of facing, the horror and its truth.

Oedipus shuns Tiresias’ interpretation of the oracle related by Creon and suspects that Creon and Tiresias conspire against him (705). Oedipus has reasons to question the

¹⁸⁸ Benardete confirms this view of Oedipus’s incapacity to change (*The Argument of the Action* 80 – 81).

truth of oracles.¹⁸⁹ However, note that before Oedipus has done anyone any harm, he trusts the oracle, which prophesies his gruesome fate as a patricidal, incestuous tyrant. Once he has become one, Oedipus refuses to figure out how and why it is no other but himself from whom Apollo means to free the citizens of Thebes. It could be that the years spent in power over the city, which was “handed” (δωρητόν or “freely gifted,” 384) to him, taught Oedipus to favor suspicion, hubris (964 – 65), “prosperity, tyranny, and outstanding prowess” (πλοῦτε καὶ τυραννὶ καὶ τέχνῃ τέχνης, 380) over trust and clarity of mind. It is obvious from Oedipus’s reaction to Tiresias’ words that, for all of his self-professedly mindful knowledge (γνώμη, 399), Oedipus’s thoughts are paranoid, his reactions are overbearing, and his denial¹⁹⁰ is only suspended when his kingly lineage is at stake. “Even if I find my mother was a slave/Descended from slaves, you would still be noble” (1061 – 62) he jests with Jocasta. And shortly gives another paranoid response: “however low my birth/That woman with her feminine conceit/Is ashamed of my humble origins” (1077 – 79). Oedipus senses Jocasta’s shame, but cannot see the horrible truth

¹⁸⁹ Oedipus has grounds to suspect the veracity of what is being related to him by Creon. Herodotus, in explaining why the people of Lydia accepted Gyges as their ruler despite his despotic rise to power, writes in book I.8 of the *Histories* about the magnificent sacrifices and gifts that Gyges sent to the Delphic oracle. The oracle “pronounced Gyges king of Lydia” (*The Landmark Herodotus* 8), but warned that the fourth generation of Gyges’ descendants would suffer in retribution.

That the oracular pronouncements in the ancient Greek world may have been swayed by the sacrificial gifts is corroborated by Burkert, who writes, “[P]rivate worship [of a sanctuary] could bring considerable income to a priest through offerings and sacrifices, and with some luck or through the grace of particular god, a flourishing enterprise could come into being” (*Ancient Mystery Cults*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 31 – 32.

¹⁹⁰ Knox makes a very interesting point about “Oedipus’s deep-seated feeling of inadequacy in the matter of birth” and him feeling “legitimized by [the] ... connection” to Laius (*Oedipus at Thebes* 56). Knox cites lines 258 – 68, where Oedipus first remarks that Laius’s wife and bed are now his and then says that he will fight for Laius “as if” (265) he were Oedipus’s own father. In these lines, Oedipus, effectively, is saying that he is sleeping with his mother. Believing that he shares Laius’s cause, Oedipus is in denial about the identity of his father’s murderer.

that causes it. Jocasta's plea to stop the investigation (1060 – 61), which, she knows, will devastate Oedipus, is left unanswered. Oedipus presses on. The tyrant's last resort is to threaten torture (1153) in exchange for truth about his birth.

Even when he is given all of the puzzle pieces, Oedipus fails to put them into the true picture of events. He seeks to hear the solution to the mystery from someone else. He is no longer a self-reliant solver of the Sphinx's riddle (of course, he never has been one, only having transposed his look and state onto the question of the Sphinx). He is an anxious, angry man, who flirts with terror, sometimes believing that the end is near, sometimes behaving as if it is impossible that he is guilty of the dreaded deeds. Instead of facing himself, Oedipus is still running from the answers. Instead of figuring out the truth on his own, he leaves the revelation to be delivered by an eyewitness (755 – 65) to that event, which Oedipus himself has seen and in which he himself took part and action.

How can one be blind to that, which one has done and witnessed?¹⁹¹ How can one fail to recognize oneself? Still, is it not the case that oftentimes we do not realize the import of our own words and actions? Is it not the case that recognition of ourselves as unfair, cruel, weak, but also as happy, caring, and giving takes time to manifest? Does Oedipus realize the possibility of seeing who he is or is it rather the case that his arrival at the point of being witnessed—being discovered for his deeds through eyes and memory

¹⁹¹ The reason for Oedipus's peculiar, untreatable spiritual blindness has to do with Benardete's diagnosis: "Oedipus ... does not regard *nous* as a third faculty distinct from hearing and sight" (*The Argument of the Action* 81).

of others¹⁹²—serves as the continuation of his ceaseless flight, marking his entrance into utter blindness? “From now on you must gaze in darkness/On forbidden faces” (ἀλλ’ ἐν σκότῳ τὸ λοιπὸν οὗς μὲν οὐκ ἔδει/ὀψοίαθ’, οὗς δ’ ἔχρηζεν οὐ γνωσοίατο, 1273 – 74) Oedipus tells himself. The faces of Jocasta, of Laius, of his sibling-children are the images of people from whom Oedipus will not ask forgiveness. Instead, he will seek mastery: “If I could stem the stream of sound [...] Sweet oblivion, where the mind/Exists beyond the bounds of grief” (ἀλλ’ εἰ τῆς ἀκουούσης ἔτ’ ἦν/πηγῆς δι’ ὧτων φραγμός ... τὸ γὰρ/τὴν φροντίδ’ ἔξω τῶν κακῶν οἰκεῖν γλυκύ, 1386 and 1388 – 90). Is this acceptance of his wretchedness? It may look like Oedipus is making peace with his abominable fate, but it is a false image.

Oedipus is his own judge, he deals out his punishment. The self-inflicted blindness, the exile, even the castigation of himself as a criminal—all this is Oedipus’s own decree (223 – 25)¹⁹³ by which he readily abides. Fantastically, he rounds out the

¹⁹² Even the non-human others are invoked by Oedipus for their capacity to remember. Consider the following line from the play, ὦ τρεῖς κέλευθοι ... ἄρά μου μέμνησθ’ or “o three paths ... do you remember me?” (1398 – 1401).

¹⁹³ See also Gutjahr’s explanation according to which

Oedipus appears as a tyrant, who measures his thoughts and deeds by himself alone. He, thus, shows himself as being reckless in both the divine and the human perspective. As a statesman, he bears a double responsibility: on the one hand, he must respect the divine ordinance given in the form of religious commandments and mores, on the other hand, his duty is also to care for the maintenance of the political order and the welfare of the citizens. ... Oedipus ignores both of these principles. *Ödipus* 82 – 83

Benardete corroborates this view:

His anger now expresses his private devotion to public justice, though the same anger once brought him to kill Laius and his retinue (807). Oedipus cannot strand opposition. He must overcome everything that resists him (cf. 15 – 23). He fails to see any difference

whole that has to be forever incomplete, if our being is to remain human. Desire not to see the horror come to pass—that horror, which was only looming at the outset, but which became the truth of Oedipus’s life because he could not suffer himself to face the possibility of terror. Desire not to see the stranger as a fellow man or his own deformity (both physical and psychic) in the Sphinx’s riddle—that is what guides Oedipus. Desire not to see—the Thebans as anything but children or that the ones he wronged are capable of being forgiving. Desire *not to see*—that is Oedipus’s driving force, not, as has been strangely argued, a quest for knowledge.¹⁹⁴ Unless by “knowledge” we mean ideas and views that arise from the impetus, which bids us to deny a genuine knowledge of ourselves. Knowing one’s progenitors, knowing about one’s misdoings, does that amount to self-knowledge? Hardly. Reflection, recognition, interpretation, and acceptance of that which has happened, this—in his defiance and denial—Oedipus will not suffer.

between his indignation at an injury to himself and one to the city (629, 624 – 43). *The Argument of the Action* 78

¹⁹⁴ Sophocles’ *Oedipus* is a play about the dangers of thinking that one has absolute knowledge or that knowing simply resolves the tensions, incongruities, and ambivalences at the heart of human existence. Thus, I disagree, for example, both with Zimmermann and with Knox when the former claims that Oedipus is capable of self-knowledge through the gradual revelation of oracular pronouncements (“Sein und Schein” 27 – 28) and when the latter states that “careful reflection and deliberation [or] ... great intelligence” (*Oedipus at Thebes* 17, 18) are attributable to Oedipus’s character.

Aristotle, in his remarks on vice, excellence, and deliberation helps to clear up the confusion. See *Nicomachean Ethics* Book VI where Aristotle states that “deliberation is not rightness in every sense. For someone who lacks self-restraint [like Oedipus does,] or someone of bad character [like Oedipus] will, as a result of reasoning, hit upon what he proposes that he ought to do, so that he will have deliberated rightly, despite the fact that he gets something extremely bad” (1042b20). The thinking process might make sense and look intelligent, but if the dispositions and character are lacking in excellence, the attained result will not be good. In addition, I find questionable even Oedipus’s capacity to deliberate well.

8. Analysis of Characters' Actions: Theme 6. Passivity, Receptivity, and the Role of Fate

It is not up to Oedipus to know everything about the causes of his life's events, let alone use this knowledge to master chance and fate.¹⁹⁵ Neither us, nor Oedipus; the human being does not command omnipotence. Self-knowledge is not the same as knowledge of the whole. The former is, at bottom, incomplete. The latter is impossible for a human being.

In his denial and in his fear, Oedipus (as also, sometimes, we in ours) strives to master the incomplete, dependent, and passive parts of our nature.¹⁹⁶ The desire to excise that which makes us human, prepares Oedipus's soul for a transformation from a "could be" tyrant into an actually monstrous character. Oedipus undergoes the change (from being suspicious, 778, to being paranoid, 573 – 74 and 618 – 19; from being angry, 781, to being hate-filled, 671 – 73), but does not suffer it in such a way as to allow himself a possibility of being freed from his enslavement to the tyrannical dreams and visions. His paranoia turns into a willful delusion as he extinguishes his sight, desiring to see nothing

¹⁹⁵ See Karl Reinhardt's discussion of fate in the play. He presents fate not as a deterministic trajectory of one's life, but as a sudden, unpredictable agent, which points to the non-coincidence between being and appearance and the tragic incongruities that result from this non-coinciding (*Sophokles*. Frankfurt am Mein: Vittorio Klostermann, 1933), 110 – 12. See also Zimmermann's discussion of the play between being and appearance in *Oedipus* ("Sein und Schein" 21 – 34). Consider, further, Kirkland's note to Dodds's argument that the contemporary understanding of determinism does not correspond to the ancient Greek view of freedom and necessity ("Tragic Time." *The Returns of Antigone: Interdisciplinary Essays*. New York, NY: SUNY Press, 2014), 65, note 2.

¹⁹⁶ Davis makes a similar point in his *Ancient Tragedy and the Origins of Modern Science* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 4. I am indebted to Professor Gary Gurtler, who recommended to me Davis's text on *Poetry of Philosophy* and pressed on when questioning my understanding of the relationship between tyranny and passivity in human nature.

that his actions have not already brought about. Even as he suffers the closing of the circle of his fate, Oedipus yearns to shake off the passivity, which undergirds each act of undergoing. He strives to be the one who not only acts and undergoes (which is applicable to all of us), but also the one who, himself, inflicts and suffers all of his troubles. When Oedipus cannot wed reality to his dream of dominating it, he blames the god for terrors that befall him (1330 – 32). Himself a rising tyrant, Creon sees that too: “Your submission is as painful as your rage. It’s in your/nature” (763 – 64). At the outset of the play, Oedipus’s pain is not his own. According to him, it is not an emotion to which a human being can relate. Instead, it is an inflated universal pathos: “My poor children ... I know you are all in pain ... but at least that pain is only yours./None of you can know the anguish that I feel” (57 – 61). Also at the end, its character cannot be shared: “no one but me is able to endure my pain” (1415).

Is Oedipus as singular in his professed capacity to embody the universal as he makes it out to be? Is he the sole cause of what befalls him? No. Oedipus’s curse is the same one that is shared and partially caused by Laius. Can Oedipus dispel the hateful curse by denying, that is, by running away from it? He did not succeed at that. Oedipus’s and Laius’s lives are entwined and, strangely, the harder that either one of them tries to bring about the separation, the tighter is the knot that binds the father and the son. When Oedipus is born to Laius, a son is born unto a king, who was forewarned that he should have no male offspring. Laius should have no sons because of what he did to another king’s male child. While seeking refuge at the court of king Pelops, Laius, in his

lascivious desire, rapes a boy—the son of Pelops.¹⁹⁷ The price that Laius has to pay for breaking the vow of guest-friendship and for violating a child is to have no male offspring or to die at his own son’s hands. But Laius did enjoy Jocasta. She did bear him a boy.

Jocasta. She is a bereaved mother. Jocasta is the queen, who seeks to save her kingdom at the expense of her own son’s life—at the expense of Oedipus, the child, whom she agrees to expose. Jocasta. How is it that she does not know? How is it that she fails to see that the man she sleeps with looks much like the one who could be her son? “And our son?/He did not last three days./Laius yoked his feet and had him thrown away” (717 – 18). Does she not see grown Oedipus’s ankles? Oedipus asks her: “Tell me what Laius/Looked like. How old was he?” (740 – 41). She replies: “He was dark, about your size” (742) and yet she dares not to question whether the physical signs point to blood relation. Instead, Jocasta preserves her place at the Theban throne by marrying a man young enough to be her offspring.¹⁹⁸ “But this is spectacular—your father’s dead!” (987), she yells out to Oedipus when Polybus’s death is announced. Does this befit a queen? Is this humane? Jocasta is rejoicing at the death of her husband’s father. Is this not very odd? Although, it is no stranger than her insistence that “many a man has slept with his

¹⁹⁷ Dethroned by Antiope’s sons, Amphion and Zethus, Laius flees to Phrygia and finds shelter at the court of king Pelops. Laius rapes Pelops’s son Chrysippus (*Homosexuality in the Ancient World* 133). This act, undoubtedly, is enough to hold Laius in contempt of the guest–friendship custom as well as of Zeus, who was the god of xenia. Pelops, the father of accursed Thyestes and Atreus, himself has a violent history. He was killed by Tantalus who, being Pelops’s father, tried feeding the dead boy to the gods. Pelops is later restored to life by Zeus. Pelops’s physical loss was but a shoulder, which was eaten by distressed Demeter. Pelops is given an ivory shoulder replacement by Zeus (*Dictionary of Classical Mythology* 197).

¹⁹⁸ Xenophon’s Hiero guesses that some partners in royal, especially in despotic families, entered marriages for the sake of distinction and power, not out of love (I.33 – 34).

own mother/In a dream. But these things mean nothing” (981 – 82).¹⁹⁹ She pacifies her husband ... with this assertion?! Whereas Oedipus seeks to master all events in life by fleeing from the terror that constitutes his being, instead of facing it; Jocasta lets things be: “Why be afraid? Chance governs human life,/And we can never know what is to come./Live day by day, as best you can./You must not fear this marriage to your mother” (977 – 80). But her indifference is as self-contradictory as Oedipus’s mastery.²⁰⁰ She only speaks of letting things go, but what she does is to hold on. She makes sure to remain in Thebes—with Laius or with Oedipus—but to hold on to power.

9. *Oedipus and Ancient Athens*

Is the setting, Thebes—a foreign place, all too familiar—a warning against hubris, a “monstrous waste” (πολλῶν ὑπερπλησθῆ μάταν 874) issued to the Athenians at war?²⁰¹ Or is it an encouragement to war-bound Athens? Although it is, historically, an ally of Sparta, Thebes is not simply a poetic copy of the Spartan polis. As rendered by the poet,

¹⁹⁹ Zimmermann is also perplexed by Jocasta’s “argumentation acrobatics” (“Sein und Schein” 26).

²⁰⁰ See Gutjahr’s explanation of the way in which our awareness of Oedipus’s and Jocasta’s dark “family secrets” (*Ödipus* 59) pivot the analysis of the play.

²⁰¹ Sophocles’ Thebes is a poetic and a mythical rendition of the actual Thebes. Burkert says as much in his “Mythen um Oedipus” (8 – 9). The ancient Greek Thebes should not be confused with the ancient Egyptian Thebes. Both cities appear in Homer’s *Iliad* Books IV.406 and IX.383, respectively.

Consult Nails’s “Tragedy Off-Stage,” where she gives a rundown of the kinds of changes to the legal system and the kinds of atrocities that befall Athens in the aftermath of the Peloponnesian engagement (*Plato’s Symposium: Issues in Interpretation and Reception*. Leshner, H. J., Nails, D. and Sheffield, C. C. F. eds. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006, 179 – 207)), 206. Nails connects the rewritten laws and, what she refers to as, the “religious hysteria” (200) to Socrates’ trial and execution.

Thebes is not a particular image of a historical city. Instead, it is a reflection on the universally recognizable ugliness of tyranny and hubris, which both foster war as easily as they proliferate therein.

The universal themes expressed in a poetic paradigm are bound to evoke responses that are as enthused with patriotism (if the play is understood as inciting pro-Athenian moods) as they are with readiness for conquest (if it is seen as an anti-Spartan piece). Yet, if *Oedipus* is understood as a reflection on the dangerous, self and state-undermining character of domestic and political tyranny, the tragedy can also be interpreted as a piece that questions both the excessively patriotic and the expansionist ambitions.²⁰² Knox warns that the “play could not have been an attack on *tyrannis* as an institution, for not only was *tyrannis* universally detested, it was also, by the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, a dead issue.”²⁰³ I disagree. I propose that the metaphors and images of tyranny in Sophocles’ piece make it all the more pertinent to the Athenian viewers. The citizens of a state that believes itself to be a democracy, while being regarded by some of its own as well as by the foreign individuals as a tyrannical empire headed for expansion, are given *Oedipus*. The tragedy invites them to consider tyranny in all of its apparent and incipient horror.²⁰⁴

²⁰² Knox’s careful discussion of the play in relation to the Athenian political situation is offered in the second chapter of his *Oedipus at Thebes* (53 – 106).

²⁰³ *Oedipus at Thebes* 58

²⁰⁴ See Knox’s references to Thucydides’ recitation of speeches by Pericles, Plutarch, Cleon, as well as of those by the Corinthian enemies of Athens, who make it “clear ... that the idea of Athens as the *polis tyrannos* was a commonplace both at Athens and elsewhere in the second half of the fifth century” (*Oedipus at Thebes* 60 – 61). Knox concludes, “Oedipus’s peculiar *tyrannis* is a reference to Athens itself” (61). Earlier, Knox points out the “identification of the [Theban]

The opening scene of *Oedipus*—an image of a city downtrodden by plague²⁰⁵—would have been all too familiar to the Athenians who were themselves the plague survivors. The outbreaks of the Athenian plague began in 430BC. The plague came back again a year later and again in 427 – 426BC. Dating Sophocles’ play between 428 – 425BC makes the opening stanzas all the more poignant; they would have brought to mind recent events. “Some furious god hurls pestilence and plague” (*Oedipus Tyrannos* 28)—this would have been the refrain transposable from the dramatic Thebes right into war-bound Athens. Whereas, the memory of the plague that the first scene evokes is recent, the myth of Oedipus, which guides the plot, indeed, is old. Odysseus sees Epicaste (Homer’s Jocasta) as a ghost in Hades.²⁰⁶ Thus, Oedipus-myth does not exclusively relate to the Athenian audience in 5th century BC. However, it serves as a reminder of the swift and terrible change of fortune that can befall a city and its leaders.

Sophocles’ iteration of the myth portrays the inevitable failure of the ruling family, which has dark secrets (be it Oedipus’s murder of a stranger on the road to Thebes or Jocata’s compliance with Laius’s plan to expose their baby), yet delays to confront them. The price that the city pays for the failures of its rulers is a terrifying

plague with Ares” (9). The divinity’s wrath calls to mind the terrors and pestilence of war in general, as well as of the Athenian war and plague about which Thucydides writes in the *History of the Peloponnesian War* II.17 and II.34 – 37 (*The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*. Strassler B. R. ed. New York, NY: Touchstone Publishing, 1998).

²⁰⁵ This opening scene presents Oedipus ruling over the dying and the dead and thus doing the opposite of what Achilles advises Odysseus to do in the eleventh books of the *Odyssey* (11.489 – 91).

²⁰⁶ *Odyssey* 11.271 – 80

plague.²⁰⁷ We are not sure at the end of *Oedipus* if the plague's curse is lifted. At the end of the play, is the calamity resolved? The chorus sings, "Amazing horror!" (1297), casting doubt on our hopes that the fate of Thebes will turn for better. What of Athens? It did not. What about ours?

10. The Import of Sophocles' Play for the Contemporary Audience

If *Oedipus* is as dark a play as I have argued here, then how is it tragic? If Oedipus is simply wicked and that is his character's failure, then what happens to him is "neither pitiable nor fearful" (1053a5). However, Sophocles' play does not portray Oedipus as a monster. It is the analysis of the play that shows the monstrosity of Oedipus's choices and actions.

In *On Poetics*, which offers Aristotle's sustained analyses of tragedy, we read: "tragedy is an imitation, not of human beings, but of actions and of life ... they [tragedies] include characters because of actions [and] ... without action, tragedy could not come to be."²⁰⁸ If we pay attention to the characters of tragedy, it is because through these

²⁰⁷ Socrates' remarks about Diotima in the *Symposium* should be consulted in the context of the unsavory erotic dealings and the plague. If Diotima "when the Athenians made once a sacrifice before the plague ... caused the onset of the disease to be delayed ten years" (*The Being of the Beautiful* 201d) then the onset of the postponed disaster would have weakened the Athenian forces at the very beginning of the Peloponnesian war. The connection between *eros*' dark power (not its generative, but its maddening and ravaging force, like the one that appears in Euripides' *Bacchae* in the figure of violent Dionysus), war, and disaster is fascinating and should be pursued further.

²⁰⁸ ἡ γὰρ τραγωδία μίμησις ἐστὶν οὐκ ἀνθρώπων ἀλλὰ πράξεων καὶ βίου ... ἀλλὰ τὰ ἥθη. συμπεριλαμβάνουσιν διὰ τὰς πράξεις ... ἄνευ μὲν πράξεως οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο τραγωδία (450a16 – 26).

stylized, paradigmatic images of human beings, we are drawn to accounts of their (and hopefully our) actions. Characters are dispensable. A tragedy, like a good detective story, relies on putting together into a plot, which moves or “guides [our] ... soul” (ψυχᾶγωγεῖ, *On Poetics* 1450a34) that which has happened. On these grounds, Davis speculates that an alternative title of Aristotle’s work could be: *On the Art of Action*.²⁰⁹ Davis goes on to weave together theater and life saying that “actors and acting ... have something to do with action; poetry ... somehow [is] ... at the center of human life” (xiii). The study of tragedy is the study of paradigmatically rendered human action. This study leads, by way of a meditation on the plot, which Aristotle says is “like the soul of tragedy” (οἷον ψυχὴ ὁ μῦθος τῆς τραγωδίας, *On Poetics* 1450a40) to the detection of ethos or a way of life, which transpires in our actions, in the things we say²¹⁰—in the deeds and speeches that outline the contours of our souls.

It would appear that Sophocles’ work, in all of its metamorphoses,²¹¹ itself a changeling born from myth, continues to command our attention because it is a tragedy *for us*. It is our tragedy. It is a tragedy of not realizing the import of our actions—not least because each action is set in a certain context by the next. It is the tragedy of having to

²⁰⁹ *On Poetics* xiii

²¹⁰ This recognition, according to Davis, is accessible to us, but not to Oedipus (*The Poetry of Philosophy* 69).

²¹¹ See, for example, renditions of the play and of the myth by Seneca (*Oedipus*), Jean Corneille (*Edip*), Voltaire (*Edip*), Friedrich Schiller (*Die Braut von Messina*), Heinrich von Kleist (*Der zerbrochne Krug*), August von Platen (*Der romantische Ödipus*), Hugo von Hoffmansthal (*Ödipus und die Sphinx*), Rudolf Pannwitz (*Die Befreiung des Ödipus*), André Gide (*Edip*), Jean Cocteau (*La Machine infernale*), and T. S. Eliot (*The Elder Statesman*).

act despite the often fragile ground²¹² of deliberation and decision. It is the tragedy of being blinded by our passions; the tragedy that jests: “He was perfect [...] He only had to live.”²¹³ Even if, upon reflection, Oedipus appears to us as being despicable, *that* he is so, is tragic. It is tragic that there is such blindness like Oedipus’s, which is a permutation, albeit monstrous, of the necessary human finitude and the resulting shortsightedness. It is tragic that Oedipus’s destructive blindness, which rises in defiance of being finite, has come and will still come to pass.

We suffer, then, with Oedipus and with Jocasta. We are affected by their dark transformations.²¹⁴ We accept this undergoing, so that Sophocles’ poetic logos—the “story [which is] ... like the soul of tragedy” (1450a40)—can find its way into and live on in our souls. At first we are like those “who are being initiated into the mysteries [. We are] ... expected not to learn anything but to suffer some change, to be put into a certain condition, i.e. to be fitted for some purpose.”²¹⁵ What is this purpose? Maybe it is to see. Maybe it is to keep repeating the refrain with which the human being resounds. The rhyme we sing is—to see, to have seen, and to know, even if this knowing forgoes

²¹² Vernant confirms that also the Athenian audience of Sophocles’ times saw in *Oedipus* the fundamental lack of the complete determinability of actions (*Myth and Tragedy* 88 – 90).

²¹³ Seneca. *Oedipus*. trans. Hughes, T. adapt. London, UK: Faber and Faber Publishing, 1983), 17 – 18.

²¹⁴ Aeschylus’ famous saying—πάθει μάθος—which appears in his *Agamemnon*, and means learning by undergoing, by experiencing, or through suffering, partially describes what I have in mind. In order for learning to take place, we have to reflect upon the experience or the suffering that shaped our view of the play. It is this initial informative experience that I describe here.

²¹⁵ *The Philosophy Collection 97 Books* (Smith, A. J. and Ross, D. W. eds. Catholic Way Publishing, 2015), 48

attempts at a return to and a seeing of oneself.²¹⁶ As we look at Oedipus, do we not desire to be intoxicated by the realization of our own capacity to know?²¹⁷ If we take *Oedipus* to be a tragedy of fate and if we see Oedipus, the man, as a great ruler, do we not affirm our own lust for power? In this affirmation, do we not fall for Oedipus-like blindness?

Yet, can *Oedipus* be understood unless the blindness of the characters is taken on by us as ours? For Oedipus, the transformation is complete. For him, the self and other (let alone another self), private and public, particular and general are all comingled into an amorphous sameness. Because there is no poetry and all is literal²¹⁸ for him, for Oedipus, there is no knowing, there is no learning, and there is no loving. These come about by means of distancing and through a recognition of the metaphorical dimension of

²¹⁶ Contrary to the superficial “knowing” is contemplative knowing and seeing of the world. The robust, contemplative knowing is incipient when we return to ourselves in a movement of reflection. An example of the return to oneself that is needed for the reflective knowing occurs in the *Phaedo*. Plato describes Socrates’ reflective silence. Socrates, we read, is looking “back to himself” (Brann, E., Kalkavage, P., and Salem, E., trans. Boston, MA: Focus Classical Library, 1998), 95e. In his reflection, “Socrates paused for a long time and within himself considered something” (Ὁ οὖν Σωκράτης συγχόν χρόνον ἐπισχὼν καὶ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν τι σκεψάμενος, 95e).

²¹⁷ Nietzsche often makes it seem that at bottom of our searches, including the search for knowledge, is a “will to power” (*Basic Writings* 326, 289). A fruitful comparison can be made between Nietzsche’s understanding of knowledge as a will to power and Aristotle’s discussions of knowledge, deliberation, thinking, and reflection. For Aristotle’s analyses, see *Nicomachean Ethics* Books III, Book VI.9 – 11, and Book IX.8 – 11.

²¹⁸ Benardete says about Oedipus that “the ordinary imprecision of speech always betrays Oedipus. Speech in his presence becomes literal and as univocal as mathematical definitions. [...] He is the wholly unpoetic man, and hence it seems not accidental that in *Oedipus Tyrannus* alone of the seven plays we have of Sophocles the word *muthos* (speech, tale, false tale) never occurs” (*The Argument of the Action* 74, 75). Also Reinhardt comments on the peculiarity of Oedipus’s speeches. Reinhardt holds that the multivalent character of Oedipus’s speeches is available for the interpretation of the viewer or the reader, but it is not accessible to Oedipus himself (*Sophokles* 117 – 18). The blind literalness of the protagonist’s speeches, from the audience’s perspective, is transformed into what Vernant refers to as the “tragic consciousness” (*Myth and Tragedy* 114, 117).

life. The change of state, for Oedipus, remains impossible. The moment that the difference comes in “It all comes clear! ... I am exposed” (1182 – 84), Oedipus folds it back into the oblivious sameness: “Light, let me look at you *one last time* (1183, italics mine). Oedipus is unchangeable. Yet, the meaning and the import of the play promises a metamorphosis. *Oedipus* holds a possibility of change that can take place for us.

Part Two: The *Republic*

1. Oedipus’s Shadow in Plato’s *Republic* VIII and IX

The analysis of Sophocles’ *Oedipus* attunes the interpretation of Books VIII and IX of Plato’s *Republic*. The study of characters’ actions in the play provides the look or image of Oedipus’s tyranny. I weave the image of Oedipus’s tyranny, and the excessive anger that drives it, together with the speeches about tyranny and the perverse eroticism²¹⁹ from which tyranny stems in the *Republic*. This weaving is the paradigmatic operation by means of which my analyses of tyranny gain their focus and their aim, which is to provide an account of the fundamental, pathological changes in the constitution of the tyrant’s soul.

²¹⁹ By “perversion” I do not mean specific deviations from the “norm,” such as Freud, for example, indicated in his 1905 work: *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Strachey, J. and Eastford. trans. (CT: Martino Fine Books, 2011). Instead, intensification of pleasure by means of self- and other-destructive, degrading, harming, and pain inducing tendencies are generally considered to be perverse for the purposes of my analyses. Interestingly, in the 1917 lecture on the “General Theory of Neurosis” Freud himself describes manifestations of perversion in adults as a “well-organized tyranny” (*Gesammelte Werke*. Albury, UK: Imago Publishing, 1991), 11 (XXIV): 392 – 406.

The image of Oedipus, traced in its relation to Plato's *Republic*,²²⁰ allows us to see through the conjured and the conjectured (the mythical and the discursive) elements of the dialogue to its treatment of the nature of tyranny. In order to allow for such a seeing, the paradigm of a tyrant, operative in the *Republic*, has to be analyzed in terms of the development of the tyrannical character. The traceable, but not confinable movements of the dialogical meaning and of the tyrannical soul have to be located and voiced within certain descriptions of Oedipus-like actions, speeches, and passions in Plato's work. By means of this echolocation²²¹ the kinds of transformations, which end up in pathological and tyrannical formations of the psyche, will be given their shape.

Oedipus's image, when put into play with the actions and the speeches in the *Republic*, performs a function that is similar to the one which the souls of the dead, the shadows in Homer's *Odyssey*,²²² perform for the bard's narrative.²²³ Through these

²²⁰ Now that the conversation is focused on the examination of the two books from Plato's *Republic* and on Oedipus's image in relation to the discussions of tyranny, it should be remembered that Plato calls this dialogue *Πολιτεία*. *Politeia*, an arrangement of the polis, a way of life in a community of people, relates the sense of living or being alive together in a particular manner. Perhaps it is this vitality that leads Benardete to observe that it makes sense for "Aristotle [to] ... say that the *politeia* is the soul of the city" (transcription of the Spring 1993 lectures on Aristotle's *De Anima*).

²²¹ The cognates for "echo," ἐπηχοῦντες, 492c and ἠχώ, 515b, occur in the passages that have to do with theaters and assemblies, where the people are often persuaded by the loudly voiced, but disingenuous opinions. Both passages point to a later development. At 564c – 65e, the democratic many are swayed by the vicious agitators and the transformation from democracy to tyranny ensues. When I use the term "echolocation" I do not have in mind the desensitizing effects of an uproar. Instead, I refer to the technique of indirect observation, which makes possible the detection and the determination of the location and form of the phenomenon in question.

²²² Radcliffe G. Edmonds III writes about the different conceptions that the ancient Greeks had about the soul and its journeys to netherworlds in his article on "A Lively Afterlife and Beyond: The Soul in Homer, Plato, and the Orphica" (*Etude Platoniciennes*, Platon et la *psyche*. 2014, 11. <http://etudesplatoniciennes.revues.org/517>). Accessed December 14, 2015

²²³ Odysseus's visit to Hades is described in the *Odyssey* XI.20 – 636 and, in the *Republic*, Odysseus appears in a "demonic place" (614c) where Hades is also found (619a).

shadowy images, the listeners of the epic narration and the readers of the *Odyssey* are advised about the nature of those actions, which take place on earth. Their nature is unseen. It only shows itself partially, when the actions are accounted for fully in retrospective consideration.²²⁴ We can say of Odysseus, after his visitation to Hades,²²⁵ that he has, so to speak, seen the truth about how best to live his life. But, having seen it, did Odysseus understand it? Homer describes Odysseus's conversation with Achilles's soul. The two characters talk about the differences between the private life and the life of the ruler. Odysseus is given clues as to which kind of life is best, but does that mean that, in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus acts on that knowledge? Benardete seems to think that he does. Benardete says about

²²⁴ Since human beings are incapable of seeing the future in its fullness, nor of predicting the outcome of any situation with absolute accuracy, human actions can only be fully understood or considered in their completeness after we have acted. Odysseus is advised about the unaccountable dimension of action, as well as about how to act best, by the soul of the dead Achilles. It turns out that the souls of the dead are also able to give their advice to us, if we consider this metaphor—the dead are accessible to us not in some other world, but in this one. Their advice is in the works that they leave behind for us. Their afterlife, as far as we are concerned, is here, in our world. They live on through us. In the context of the discussion of afterlife, understood as the heritage of deeds, words, and memories, which we leave on earth after we pass away, consider Michel de Montaigne's essay "Of Experience" in *Complete Essays of Montaigne* (Frame, M. D. trans. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1965).

²²⁵ The work entitled *Delimitations: Phenomenology and the End of Metaphysics* has a chapter on "Hades" where Sallis explains how "souls comport themselves in accord with Hades" (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 189. Sallis understands Hades as representing a phenomenal state of living men. He defines this state or "comportment [as being] ... determined by concealment" (192), which is the same as what the ancient Greeks describe as "λήθη." The latter means forgetfulness or oblivion. Transposing the mythical place, Hades, into the phenomenal world and analyzing the implications of this metaphorical transposition, Sallis writes, "souls comport themselves in Hades ... insofar as they are engaged in and by concealment. What is at issue ... is ... living man's engagement with λήθη" (190). The living are always influenced by λήθη—by the forgetfulness of themselves, of others, of the world and by the concealment of that forgetfulness. The myth about the dead, in Sallis's interpretation, is a metaphor for describing the reality of the living.

Odysseus's choice [that it] ... seems to point not so much to home as to mortality. Odysseus chooses to be human and remain incomplete; or he understands there to be a completeness in the incompleteness of a certain kind of human life that is preferable to either the fixity of memory or the everlastingness of divinity.²²⁶

On Benardete's account, Odysseus refuses absolute predictability and chooses to keep returning, to keep examining, and to keep living. But Benardete leaves out the fact that Odysseus also chooses to continue killing. At the end of the *Odyssey*, the suitors are dead with Odysseus standing over them. His power is restored and the Ithacan throne is returned to him. Odysseus's choice of mortality is not for the sake of a peaceful rustic life. Odysseus does not choose that life which Achilles says is the best.

Also Plato's Socrates tells a myth in which Odysseus selects the professedly better one of the two lives (620c – d). In Plato's myth, which can be crudely understood as yet another one of Socrates' ruses or as another "noble lie" (413c), Odysseus's soul accepts Achilles's advice and chooses "the life of a private man who minds his own business" (βίον ἀνδρὸς ιδιώτου ἀπράγμονος 620c). How are we to understand this choice in view of Plato's descriptions of tyranny? How are we to attend to the insights offered in the *Republic*—the insights about tyrannic rule, private life, and choice—in such a way that the foresight of and deliberation on our own prospective actions will not be limited to sound analysis alone, but will translate into robust, reflective knowing? The trip to Hades, in some way, is the same as the literary, imaginative, conceptual voyages we take when we read Homer and Plato on the afterlife. We read them and live after them and seek the insights that may help guide our lives. Taking the analysis of Oedipus's tyranny as our

²²⁶ *The Bow and the Lyre* 4.

guide, we turn to the examination of the exchanges about tyranny in books VIII and IX of the *Republic*.

2. The Ground and Function of Oedipus's Unhinged Desire and its Implications for the *Republic*

The speeches that lead up to the discussion of tyranny (558d – 562c) happen between Socrates and Adeimantus.²²⁷ Glaucon takes over the conversation at 576b, where the nature of tyranny and tyrannical life are aligned with rule.²²⁸ The preparatory conversation (558 – 562c) is cast in terms of desire and need. It harkens the reader back to the discussions of the city of needs (369a – 371e), the city of pigs (372a – 372d), and the luxurious or feverish city of relishes (372d – 373e) in book II. The last city, given its excessive needs, quickly finds itself at war with its neighbors.

Reintroducing the needs of luxurious cities and reiterating the theme of the desire for relishes, the exchanges between Socrates and Adeimantus in book VIII begin by Socrates' performative demonstration of what he will later describe as the role and the activity of the aggressive “drones” (564b, 572e – 573a). The drones are equipped with the capacity to excite and draw out “terrible ... desires” (572b). Socrates evokes

²²⁷ Nails reports that Plato's brother, Adeimantus, “fought at Megara ... in 409, and was eulogized for it” (*The People of Plato* 3). Despite this attribution to Adeimantus of military bravery, Strauss gives him a characteristic that bespeaks his intellectual cowardice. See Strauss's *The City and Man* 133. We should keep in mind Strauss's description of Adeimantus when reading the *Republic*. It qualifies Socrates' remark at 368a and gives an important frame to Adeimantus's speeches as well as those dialogical themes, which get underway when Adeimantus has a say in the conversation.

²²⁸ γίγνεται ὅς ἂν τυραννικώτατος φύσει ὢν μοναρχήσῃ, καὶ ὅσῳ ἂν πλείω χρόνον ἐν τυραννίδι βιώῃ

Adeimantus's desirous nature when he asks: ““So that we don't discuss in the dark, ... do you want [βούλει] to define the necessary and the unnecessary desires?’ ... ‘Yes [Adeimantus] ... ’ said, ‘that’s what I want [βούλομαι]’” (558d). Adeimantus does not want to be taken for a simpleton. He does not want to remain in the dark. His agreement to being enlightened has to do with his fear of remaining crude. Socrates plants the fear and plays on it to incite desire. The goal in analyzing this exchange is not to conclude that Adeimantus's character is fundamentally flawed or that Socrates' is vicious. Rather, the goal is to trace the fundamental forms of the psyche—the shapes that emerge from the movements of the dialogical events.

To do so, we introduce Oedipus. We weave analyses of Sophocles' play with speeches in the *Republic* and locate the junctures at which the philosophical understanding of the tyrant's soul emerges. Oedipus's desires, like Adeimantus's desire, are negatively determined. When something is chosen not on its own merit, but rather because it is preferred to another feared, undesirable thing, the desired something takes in or carries with it the fear of the unwanted. In Oedipus's case, there is an immediate connection between his viciousness and the harmful impulse at work in his choices and desires. In the *Republic*, the connection between negatively determined desires and viciousness quickly, and by necessity (562c), traces the path to the darkness of tyranny—the darkness that is different from, and more dangerous than the darkness of crudity that Adeimantus is so eager to avoid. The psychological darkness that we find in Oedipus informs the following dialogical formation in the *Republic*: 1. desire is determined by fear (558d – 59b). 2. The negatively determined understanding of desire elicits a

conviction that there are desires that should be tabooed (or checked, *κολαζομένη*, 559b – c). 3. The tabooed desires are labeled as unnecessary (559c – d). 4. The rigid differentiation between the desires that are shameful and taboo and the ones that are not is now available and a revaluation of the taboo in respect to both becomes a possibility (560c – 61a). 5. The distinction gives rise to the prospect of being seduced by the tabooed desires (559d). 6. The redefinition of good and bad desires is complete and now a desiring subject is again under consideration. This human being is but a semblance of a purposeful man, who, in fact, is turned every which way by his uprooted (because, at bottom), negatively determined desires (561c – d). The phantom of purposefulness, the masquerade of interests, and the hollowness of choices does not stand the test of being probed or of having their veracity challenged. A licentious human being fears that what he desires will be tested. Lacking a positive foundation, desires are unhinged. They reach past their objects and are no longer successfully bound by them. This overreaching is the mechanism that is at work in the so-called “corruption of regimes,” when the change from oligarchy to democracy takes place (562b – c).²²⁹ Enactment of the transgression accomplished by excessive and sporadically aimed desires necessitates a subversion of the limits essential for the preservation of the psyche’s capacity to be moved by

²²⁹ The changes of the two final regimes (democracy and tyranny) are offset from the other two (oligarchy and timocracy) by two things. The first is the modified role of the father-son relationship, and the second is the introduction and the function of the drones (552b). Whereas, oligarchically-minded son sees his honor-loving father as pursuing useless matters, democratic son equates his role and his stature with that of his father. The tyrannic man, in turn, simply does not see his parents as his progenitors. The democratic and the tyrannic man do not simply treat their fathers worse than the oligarchic man does, but break the familial relationship. This break refigures the role of the family. It also, retrospectively, sheds the light on the communal living necessary for the formation of aristocracy (543a – c, 544e).

positively determined desires (562b – c). Freedom—that which is appropriately dependent on the limitations of human nature—gives way to a phantom freedom. Desire for the latter, which is fantastical or “insatiable” (ἀπληστία 562c) and which, therefore, cannot be attained, rises out of the many fruitless desires and in response to the fear of having these desires be challenged.

If seduction of Adeimantus, the eliciting of his fearful desire, informs this downward spiraling dialogical development, then why does Socrates fail to test Adeimantus’s desire (558d)? Or does he fail to do so? Is Adeimantus’s desire *not* to remain in the dark as dangerous as my analysis suggests? Is Oedipus’s? Particular—literary characters and human beings—are driven just by these kinds of desires. We are often moved by a desire *not* to be seen in a particular light, or *not* to do a given thing, or *not* to have something happen to us. It would be preposterous to suggest that just because there are things we do not want, we are on our way to becoming tyrannical. Our finitude, the non-omnipotence of human nature, will always have us act on things that we *do not want*. “Not wanting” is already there where “wanting” is. This is essential. The problem, then, as Oedipus has shown us, is with desiring to suppress and to deny the marks and pressures left on us by the pull and push of the desire-bound world. To want to have the absolute control over that which presents itself as desire; not to differentiate between what is and what is not taboo (which is, in a rigorous sense, impossible once “taboo” becomes recognizable as a notion); to want to overcome and to negate all that we do not want; to want to have and not to have desires at one’s whim; to want to master (instead of to confront, work through, and question) all desire—that is what Socrates’ description of

the “insatiable desire of this [freedom]” (562c) means. That is the kind of blind desire that did, for Oedipus, and will in the *Republic* “prepare the need for tyranny” (562c).

3. Oedipus’s Powerlessness—a Key to Understanding Why Ultimate Freedom Terminates in Tyranny

Just as in Sophocles’ play, so also in the *Republic*, the need for excessive, tyrannical power stems from powerlessness and from an inability to confront it. Afraid and unwilling to question the mettle and worth of our predilections, we insist on having the arbitrary freedom to get whatever we happen to want. Sometimes, perhaps, we all act in such an impulsive manner, but the youth in Plato’s democratic city acts in this manner always (562d – e).²³⁰ Both Sophocles’ and Plato’s works are rendered artistically, which

²³⁰ Strauss thinks that Socrates presents a “deliberately exaggerated blame of democracy [and ...] adapting himself to the subject matter, he abandons all restraint when speaking about the regime which loathes restraint” (*The City and Man* 133, 134). Following this apt observation about the need to ameliorate or, at least, dramatically frame the discussions of democracy in the *Republic*, Strauss also points to the oddness of a failure to attribute to the regime a more violent character. Thus, he notes, “Plato writes as if the Athenian democracy had not carried out Socrates’ execution, and Socrates speaks as if the Athenian democracy had not engaged in an orgy of bloody persecution of guilty and innocent alike when the Hermae statues were mutilated at the beginning of the Sicilian expedition” (132). Taken together, these observations are both an exaggeration and an understatement. Perhaps, the exaggeration is meant to make us take stock of what is not mentioned in the text, but present in despotism-bound Athens.

Another way to question tyranny (both political tyranny and the tyranny of disastrous circumstances) as it surfaces in Athens and affects the mores, customs, and rituals of the democratic polis is by turning to Thucydides’ descriptions of the Athenian plague in the *History of the Peloponnesian War*. In book II.VII Thucydides describes the iniquities (starting with the mention of the forbidden dwelling in the sacred temples and ending with the casting aside of honor and regard for laws divine and human) that surfaced during the plague, which began in Egypt, settled in Piraeus, and ravaged Athens in 429BC. These plague-induced transgressions are reminiscent not only of the scenes that portray the plague in *Oedipus*, but also of the havoc wrought by the licentious thirst for freedom from all restraint by the democratic state in the *Republic*. Specifically, the enjoyment of democracy in the dialogue is meant to coincide with

means that some notions and characters are stressed, stylized, exaggerated, while others are subdued. Accentuating the image of a city bound for tyranny, Plato plays up the problematic character of phantom freedom (562c – d). If embraced, the fantastical freedom allows us to avoid reckoning with the origins and meaning of our desires. Those things that limit our capacity to act upon our desires are disregarded. Whether the boundaries come in the form of rule (562d), of custom (562e), or of education (563a) they are evaded and dismissed.²³¹ Not only the potential tyrant of the *Republic*, but also the actual one, of Sophocles' play, is dismissive of laws private and public. Oedipus disregards his duty to the Thebans (he treats them as children in need of parenting, not as

precisely the kinds of dismissals of mores and laws that Thucydides says afflicts the Athenian polis along with the plague.

²³¹ The passage that runs from 563b – c discusses equality of slaves and masters as well as that of men and women. We want to ask, today: What is wrong with retiring the master/slave distinction? I suggest that it should remain. If only for the purposes of preserving the memory of historical injustices and so that the current maltreatment of human beings does not remain unaddressed just because the jargon for this maltreatment has become less offensive, more legally acceptable, and, hence, easier to stomach. The “third world” country, the “underprivileged” population, the “illegal” immigration are examples of such more palatable synonyms of mistreatment of human dignity. Are there no economic benefits of employing the individuals (comprising the grossly underpaid workforce) who are in fear of being thrown out of the United States of America? What exactly is illegal—the entry into the country, where a trespassing person without the proper resident permit will be exploited for her labor, or the system of loopholes that allows for and perpetuates such exploitation? Is it illegal to cross into the US without proper documents? Yes. Is it legal to exploit the individual who has done so? No. But why does such exploitation keep happening? In name the master/slave distinction is abolished. Is it in fact?

The absolute equality between men and women is advised as a necessary, positive feature of the guardian education at the beginning of Book V, 452a – 453a. Book VIII presents the equality between the sexes as an undeniably negative development. A more nuanced reading of book V, suggests that there, too, the absolute equality between women and men, while it is being explicitly advocated, implicitly, is put into question. The implicit criticism is presented in the form of a joke, which I discuss earlier, in the section on “Comedic Reversals.” Absolute equality can be entertained in theory, but it is impossible in practice and, therefore, an attempt to bring it about is either ridiculous or dangerous or both. Plato's *Republic* often presents ideal, stringently theoretical, and, therefore, if applied to life, exaggerated images of things. The actions of the text—the dialogical developments—offer arguments that undermine these fantastical ideals by showing their practical impossibility and ridiculousness.

subjects capable of benefiting from being ruled) and to his Corinthian parents. He casts aside those lessons that both divinity and experience bestow upon him.

Both in the *Republic* and in Sophocles' play, the tyrannical soul follows the same pattern of contempt. Rebellion as such is not the problem—we do and we should continue to probe the soundness of our laws, of our familial customs, and of our education. This is not contested. But how should we test them? The mode and attitude of questioning is as important as the fact that we do question. The problem is the rebellion that does not aim at finessing the challenging, formative aspects, which experience offers, but at doing away with these out of fear, for example. Neither is it beneficial to simply cling to the particular ways of doing things and imposing these onto others in lieu of examination. We do not act in such a destructively dismissive manner at all times, but when we do, we repeat the pattern that ends up in what Socrates calls “ultimate ... freedom” (ἔσχατον ... τῆς ἐλευθερίας, 563b).

The paradox—that ultimate freedom ends up in tyranny, in enslavement (564a)²³²—is only a seeming paradox. Oedipus's pursuit of absolute power is driven by his powerlessness to control his passions. Desire for ultimate freedom originates in one's incapacity to free oneself from the confusion about which desires and pursuits are genuine and which are hollow. Oedipus wants to leave Corinth because he is afraid that he might sleep with Merope and kill Polybus. He leaves because he is afraid he might become the monster which Apollo says he is. Unquestioned, fled from, Oedipus's fear of

²³² Compare this to Xenophon's *Hiero* IV.19, where the life of the tyrant is described in terms of neediness, indigence, and enslavement, instead of in terms of freedom to do and to have anything whatsoever.

his own desire for illegitimate power festers as his desire for power grows. It drives Oedipus to paranoia and delusion, which is how we find him at the beginning of the play—delusional and paranoid.

Oedipus does not have to act in such a way as to fulfill what was foretold. It is through his defiance that Oedipus becomes an agent of his ruin. Through Oedipus, through Laius, through Jocasta we see the circumstances in which particular characters become the vessels (not fully responsible and active vehicular forces, though not completely passive victims either) by means of which the terrible and tragic events take shape. In the coincidence (by which we do not mean strictly fate, but rather a nexus of a given person's actions and decisions in a given situation) of characters and circumstances—in Laius' rape of Chrysippus, Oedipus's flight from Corinth, Jocasta's marriage to a man uncannily resembling her former husband—in view of the alignment between events and persons, the prophecies come true. These characters do not bother to question their ways and their desires any more than Oedipus questions whether his fear of the oracle warrants his consequent flight from Corinth.

4. The Image of the Lycaean Wolf and the Meaning of Tyrannical Transformation

The transformation which, like a gradual fulfillment of a curse, turns an individual into a frenzied, corrupt monster does not have to take place. This much has been established. The question is: What happens when it does? Socrates gives us a metaphor. He gives us a

description of a point of no return; a point after which not only the tyrannical necessity is at work, but also the perversion of the character is irreversible.²³³

What is the beginning of the transformation from leader to tyrant? Or is it plainly when the leader begins to act out the tale that is told in connection with the temple of Lycaean Zeus in Arcadia ... The man who tastes of the single morsel of human inwards (*sic*) [σπλάγχχνου] cut up with those of other sacrificial victims must necessarily become a wolf.²³⁴

By tracing out the connection between tyranny and power Socrates sketches the image of the monstrous transformation.²³⁵ The leader, entrusted with the wellbeing of other human beings, haughtily and recklessly transgresses the limits that enclose humanity. This is not an unwilling transgression.

²³³ There are, of course, purification rites that aid in dissolution of the effects of transgression. Both Burkert in *Die Orientalisierende Epoche in der griechischen Religion und Literatur* and Robert Parker in *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1983) describe the conditions under which purification can be performed. However, not every transgression is as grave as the next. Hence, not everything is subject to being purified and even if it is, purification is not full-proof against consequent mishaps. Herodotus' Adrastus, for instance, even though purified, ends up killing his host's, king Croesus's, son and then committing suicide (*The Histories*, Book I.35 and I.41 – 43). The gravity of Orestes's transgression is not, at least from the divine perspective, of the same weight as that of Tantalus's. The former is absolved of his matricide and freed from Erinyes's persecution. The latter is condemned to ceaseless suffering in Hades and—through the curse placed on his offspring—to damnation on earth. The question of whether there are unforgivable transgressions is reconsidered with the arrival of the notion of Christian repentance, atonement, rebirth, and forgiveness. For the ancients, there seem to be crimes that are irreversible. These crimes corrupt the character and set a human being on a trajectory of destructively self-undermining actions.

²³⁴ τίς ἀρχὴ οὖν μεταβολῆς ἐκ προστάτου ἐπὶ τύραννον; ἢ δῆλον ὅτι ἐπειδὴν ταῦτόν ἄρξεται δρᾶν ὁ προστάτης τῷ ἐν τῷ μύθῳ ὃς περὶ τὸ ἐν Ἀρκαδίᾳ τὸ τοῦ Διὸς τοῦ Λυκαίου ἱερὸν λέγεται; ... ὥς ἄρα ὁ γευσάμενος τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου σπλάγχχνου, ἐν ἄλλοις ἄλλων ἱερείων ἐνὸς ἐγκατατετμημένου, ἀνάγκη δὴ
Republic, 565d – e.

²³⁵ Note that Benardete rejects Socrates' description of the tyrannical transformation in favor of a wolf coming "from a dog who originally protected the flock of artisans from strangers and had to be educated to refrain from devouring his fellow-citizens" (*Socrates' Second Sailing* 204).

The man who, according to the mythic tale, took the Theban throne from Oedipus's father Laius, the character named Lykos or Wolf,²³⁶ the namesake of the Lycaean wolf, holds the thread that leads to tales of callous misdoings. The myth about Lykos's ascent to power does not absolve those whom Lykos had wronged of further wrongdoing. Antiope and her sons, Amphion and Zethus, retribute Lykos's cruelty by cruel means. Lykos's royal predecessor, Laius's father Labdacus, dismissive of the god Dionysus, is torn apart by Bacchic women. The thread that runs through the mythic history of the royal families of Thebes in every case ends in terror. The dehumanizing actions of the Theban rulers, about which the mythic tradition tells, fill out Socrates'²³⁷ sketch and show the kinds of things that those in power do when they cease to rule rightly and turn to tyranny. The tale that Socrates picks so as to conjure up an image of corruption also speaks about transgression. Several versions of the story say that Lycaon of the *Republic*, like Tantalus, murders his son²³⁸ and serves the child's flesh to the gods, to test their omniscience. The hero, who founds the sanctuary of Lycaean Zeus in Arcadia,²³⁹ is also a monster,²⁴⁰ who is abhorred by the divine and banished from the

²³⁶ Cf. *The Classical Review*, Volume 5. (London, UK: Richard Clay and Sons Limited, 1891), 124. Cf. *Homosexuality in the Ancient World* 133. For thorough discussions of the relationship between tyranny and the figure of the wolf in ancient Greece, see Elizabeth Irwin's *Solon and Early Greek Poetry: The Politics of Exhortation* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

²³⁷ Aristotle remarks that the well-known stories of royal families are centerpieces of many ancient Greek dramas (*On Poetics* 1454a9 – 14). In view of Aristotle's remark, it is not surprising that Plato portrays Socrates as continuously retelling and reinterpreting these stories.

²³⁸ Consult the list of authors, who report that the king murdered his own son, the boy Nyctimus. See *Apollodorus The Library*, Volume I (Bk. 3.8.1, page 391, note 1).

²³⁹ Bloom, *Republic* 469, note 26. Bloom reports that the legendary commemoration of the gruesome event entails a priest turning into a wolf every nine years and being banished "until the next sacrifice" (*Ibid.*). The fact that the priest must take on the form of the monster (not simply a wolf, but the man who was turned into a wolf after serving human flesh to the gods) so as to

human world. Either endowed or invested with a greater power over human beings than that allotted to an ordinary mortal, a ruler is closer to the limit that separates the human from the monstrous being. The hero and the ruler wield a power that should be used, as Socrates insists, to care for those ruled (342e and 487e – 89b). The ruler becomes the tyrant when this power is directed at recklessly defying the divine or at treating the human beings like cattle meant for slaughter.

Socrates borrows a tale in which a hero serves human flesh to gods. The tale is altered to have the corrupt ruler also be the cannibal. In Socrates' version, the tyrant is a willing monster. In a fight, a warrior might bite into an enemy's flesh and taste of it unwillingly, i.e., without an intent to feed on a human being. Unseemly accidents aside, the innards of another person cannot be tasted unless one means to feed on or to serve human flesh. The innards are those morsels, which a would-be wolf-man savors willingly. In anger, Oedipus willingly kills Laius, threatens Creon and dismisses Tiresias's warning. In anger, he picks up a sword to deal death to an already dead Jocasta.²⁴¹ His anger speeds him to the oracle and casts him out of Thebes. The raging monster—the creature, which is out of place among the beasts, the humans, and the gods—that, too, is Oedipus. He is like those tyrants, who, Socrates says “live their whole life without ever being friends of anyone” (576a). How could a monster be a friend?

complete the ritual is especially interesting if the meaning of this transformation has to do with the purification, which is meant to keep the wrath of gods at bay. The number of years during which the priest wonders about as a wolf also raises curiosity. This number is nine, which is the same number attributed to the tyrannical life in the *Phaedrus* at 248e.

²⁴⁰ See Xenophon's *Hiero* part III.8 – 10, where the tyrant's sacrilegious deeds are described in connection with the citizens' distrust of the tyrannical ruler.

²⁴¹ *Oedipus Tyrannus*, lines 1255 – 62.

5. Eros and Thumos: Psychopathology of Tyranny

Anger is at bottom of Oedipus's tyrannical actions; a kind of love (ἔρωτα, 572e) guides those of the tyrant in the Republic. Oedipus's anger is excessive. It outgrows itself and passes into rage. Likewise the love that is called "a great winged drone" (ὑπόπτερον καὶ μέγαν κηφῆνά, 572e) presses against and breaks through the limits that define a look of caring and humane love.

Excess. Unnecessary and destructive excess is a mark of tyranny. This excess outwardly appears as the "tyrannic pomp set up as a façade" (577a)—as Oedipus's victory over the Sphinx and the Thebans' admiration of this victory, for instance. Inwardly, the surging to the surface of the limitless passions is bound to devastate the soul. The tyrannical soul seeks to embrace, to manifest, and to embody those drives that make up the essential, concealed ground from which emotions grow to entwine with intentions and pass into actions. In the *Republic*, the "tyrant is *Eros* incarnate."²⁴² Sophocles makes out Oedipus's "overriding passion [to be his] ... anger."²⁴³ Together, the two: *eros* and *thumos*,²⁴⁴ in their relation to pleasure and pain, make up the ground of tyranny. This tyrannical ground is perverse because, from the point of view of one's fundamental psychic constitution, it becomes the totalizing surface. The common

²⁴² Strauss, *The City and Man* 133.

²⁴³ Benardete, *The Argument of the Action* 77.

²⁴⁴ For a detailed study of *eros* in Greek literature, see Paul W. Ludwig's text entitled, *Eros and Polis: Desire and Community in Greek Political Theory* (Boston, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Consider also Davis's remark that "in Homeric Greek, *erōs* may mean something as neutral as desire. Only later does it come to mean exclusively sexual love. The real transformation ... points to a real transformation in the meaning of erotic love" (*The Soul of the Greeks: An Inquiry*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 194.

emotions, and their surface expression, are taken over by *eros* and *thumos* surging to the fore. *Eros* and *thumos*,²⁴⁵ the grounding drives that animate the psychic life, intensify in their upsurge in the tyrant,²⁴⁶ and in uprooting other emotions, overshadow these. *Eros* and *thumos* that are definitive of human beings, that are essential to the activity of our soul, become pathological in the tyrant. The tyrant embodies these. In a tyrannical character, both are intensified and they drone out all other emotions and states of mind. The two unhinged drives permeate every thought, every perception, and guide all action, of the tyrannical being. This is the root of pathology. This is perversion.

In books VIII and IX, the tyrannical soul is described in terms of its unbridled, debilitating eroticism. Socrates' succinct verdict on the tyrannical change in the soul states that "a man becomes tyrannic in a precise sense when, either by nature or by his practices or both, he has become drunken, erotic, and melancholic (άνήρ άκριβώς γίνεται, όταν ή φύσει ή έπιτηδεύμασιν ή άμφοτέροις μεθυστικός τε και έρωτικός και μελαγχολικός γένηται, 573c).²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ It is essential to see that the erotic and the *thumatic* are both engaged in the upsurge of the tyrannical. When this is overlooked, and *eros* alone is considered to be the culprit of the dangerously unbalanced relationship to the world, then we are faced with such one-sided interpretations of the tyrant in the *Republic* as the one made by Steffen Graefe in his *Der gespaltene Eros—Platons Trieb zur »Weisheit«* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1989), especially pages 70 – 72.

²⁴⁶ A peculiar blending of eroticism and anger in the tyrant is observed by Strauss when he writes, "what Hiero enjoys most in his sexual relations are the quarrels with the beloved one" (*On Tyranny*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 94. This cruelty (both to oneself and to others) that seeks pleasure in pain and that does not allow for the enjoyment of the more humane pleasures is characteristic of the unbalanced relationship between the *thumatic* and the erotic drives.

²⁴⁷ Fyodor Dostoyevsky's masterful descriptions of psychological darkness and corruption (especially those that portray the manifestations of depravity in Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov and

These natural processes, to which Socrates refers as the ones liable to terminate in tyranny, do not have to be understood solely in terms of a hereditary predisposition. Age, for example, is one natural development that affects a person's psyche and that can affect it in unseemly ways. It is erroneous to suppose that just because *eros* has the power to unhinge the wits of both the old and the young, that age has nothing to do with erotic love. It is mistaken, for example, to opine that because young Phaedrus is beside himself at the sight of pleasure,²⁴⁸ the difference in age between him and the Trojan elders who see Helen and delight in her beauty makes no difference.²⁴⁹ Rather, it is the case that the dangers of being seduced by the Siren-song of violent pleasure,²⁵⁰ the prospect of "forgetting food and drink"²⁵¹ and dying²⁵² to the world of humane pleasures, looms over the likes of Phaedrus when they are young and over those who are like Antenor²⁵³ when they are old. In other words, young Antenor, while still capable of being stirred by *thumos*, would have been preoccupied with being an honorable warrior, with being a man.²⁵⁴ Old Antenor's great delight at the sight of Helen and his fear in the face of *eros*, evoked by her image, are unchecked by his waning manliness. Young Phaedrus, in conversation with Socrates, is warned against being like old Antenor, against ending up

in his eldest son, Dimitri) in *Brothers Karamazov* resonate with this description of the tyrant's dissolute state.

²⁴⁸ *Phaedrus* 259a – b, in the *Plato: Complete Works* (Nehamas, A. and Woodruff, P. trans. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1997).

²⁴⁹ *Iliad* III.121 – 80

²⁵⁰ *Phaedrus* 259a

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 259c

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ *Iliad* III.121 – 81

²⁵⁴ See Benardete's *The Argument of the Action* 71 – 2, where he discusses the pertinence of being a "man (*anēr*), in a strict sense" (72) to the question of tyranny.

like him, against turning into a witless chatter-box; into a spiritless cicada.^{255, 256} Young Phaedrus is like old Antenor, but young Antenor could not have been like the young Phaedrus. The hope is that young Phaedrus, when he ages, will not be like the old Antenor. It is then, not independent of age that pathological attitudes to pleasure, *eros*, pain, or *thumos* develop, but rather, age, when it is considered in respect to the particular individual, is one of the ways in which nature influences character and actions. It is by nature that we are born and that we age. Whether it is an inborn characteristic, whether it is by nature, that some of us age in such a way as to become tyrannical is a wrong question. A better question is: What do nature-dependent processes like aging, developing impassioned or apathetic attitudes, and feeling a great deal or relatively little of pleasure and pain, have to do with psychological sickness and with tyranny?

The pathological erotic passion soars in paroxysms of intoxicated stupor. Eros must grow in intensity to overcome the drunken loss of feeling and to deliver to the tyrant at least a modicum of sensation without which the melancholic languishing sets in. At times completely rid of the capacity to be affected, at other times excited by the slightest touch of passion, the tyrant's soul becomes unhinged, beset by feverish imaginings, and

²⁵⁵ *Phaedrus* 259a – d

²⁵⁶ Neither Antenor, nor the *Iliad* are mentioned in this passage, but the reference to the cicadas' chatter and their delight or stupor at the sight of pleasure that Muses bring, is echoing Homer's description of the Trojan elders' delight at seeing Helen—the erotic muse of war. Another story about erotic longing and a consequent transformation of a very old man into a cicada is told in the myth about Eos and Tithonus. Cf. Daniel S. Werner's chapter on the Cicadas (133 – 152) in *Myth and Philosophy in Plato's Phaedrus* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Werner claims that the "history of the cicadas is a cautionary tale that depicts a problematic psychological and intellectual state" (147).

then drawn to perverse desires.²⁵⁷ If *eros* is what drives the tyrant in Plato's *Republic*, then what does tyranny have to do with *thumos*? The opening book of the text and the picture of a tyranny-aficionado painted there, the image of Thrasymachus,²⁵⁸ hold the answer. Socrates reports that both he and Polemarchus, a man whose name indicates his warlike character, were frightened by Thrasymachus when in his anger, "hunched up like a wild beast [θηρίον], he flung himself at us [Socrates and Polemarchus] as if to tear us to pieces" (336b). Thrasymachus is marked and marred by his anger. He loses the argument to Socrates. He cannot keep his thoughts straight—that is how angry he is at Socrates for entertaining an idea that any other form of rule but tyranny is best (344a – c). Sallis thinks "that Thrasymachus is a wolf,"²⁵⁹ which means that Thrasymachus, at the

²⁵⁷ Offering a conjecture as to the reason why the tyrant's erotic desires are perverse, Strauss writes: "of nothing is Hiero more convinced than of this, that precisely as regards the pleasures of sex, tyrants are most evidently worse off than private men" (*On Tyranny* 51). This conviction is likely to be the result of insatiability of the tyrannical *eros*. Hiero grieves about the "tyrant's lack of the sweetest pleasures of homosexual love" (51). For the tyrant of the *Republic* access to the homosexual or to any other kinds of sexual exploits is readily available. However, the effect of these is at once too overwhelming (as far as the intensity of the erotic desire is concerned) and insufficient (in terms of the satisfaction). If satisfaction is attained, with it also come lethargic melancholy, emptiness, and boredom. These three set the tyrant on a search for new extraordinary sexual endeavors and render sex with the same lover bleak. The perceived bleakness of the tyrant's rather piebald life and the great need for the intensification of the erotic experiences are at the root of the tyrant's dissatisfaction with the "pleasures of sex."

²⁵⁸ Thrasymachus, "a rhetorician of some note [...] is eager to make money" (*The People of Plato* 289). Benardete comments on this mercenary proclivity of the volatile Chalcedonian, suggesting that it generates an *aporia* (*Encounters and Reflections* 132). Thrasymachus is correct about the centrality of the tyrant to the analysis of the city, and yet he fails to see that despite the thirst for money (and other advantages) the tyrant "has no goods" (132). It is likely that Thrasymachus pays a visit to Athens during "negotiations held in 407, after Chalcedon had mounted an unsuccessful revolt against imperial Athens" (*The People of Plato* 289). Given this conjecture, it makes sense to see Thrasymachus's character in the *Republic* as both a kind of mirror of the Athenian despotic tendencies as well as a failure to generate a careful understanding of tyranny and violence. In step with this civic failure, Thrasymachus's presentation of best rule ends up taking on the features of a violent regime.

²⁵⁹ *Being and Logos* 317.

beginning of the dialogue, is as monstrous as Socrates' tyrant—the ferocious wolf-man of Lycaea. Although “Socrates has tamed Thrasymachus,”²⁶⁰ the theme of the relationship between anger and tyranny is picked up by Glaucon²⁶¹ and “driven straight through the dialogue.”²⁶²

The notion of anger, *thumos*, in its relation to tyranny, is developed by Plato. Davis notes that “*thumos* is a word dying out of the language when Plato rehabilitates it in the *Republic*, where the importance of the phenomenon of anger is made especially clear.”²⁶³ Unable to do what Odysseus does, when he lies in wait to take his revenge on the suitors²⁶⁴—incapable of restraining or redirecting his anger and turning it against himself in any other manner but the one that insures psychic destruction²⁶⁵—the tyrant is as overwhelmed and overtaken by *thumos* as he is by *eros*.

The tyrant sees no rest. He even falls “asleep with his spirit aroused because there are some he got angry at” (572a). It is ridiculous to assume that every time someone goes off to sleep angry, her psyche is turning tyrannical. However, it is not ridiculous to attempt to understand what is the relationship between the uncontrollable, seething anger,

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Benardete, *Encounters and Reflections* 130 and 132.

²⁶² Ibid., 129

²⁶³ Davis *Ancient Tragedy* 161, note 7.

²⁶⁴ *Odyssey* XX.17 and *Republic* 441b

²⁶⁵ I am giving a more complex interpretation to the passage (441a – 41c), which is commonly understood to mean that the calculative part restrains the *thumotic*. I see in it, through the passage from the *Odyssey*, which Plato chooses as an example of restraint, the indication of the passion's (*thumos*'s) capacity to turn against itself. On my interpretation, which was suggested to me by Professor Stuart Warner, Odysseus restrains himself not by calculation, but by turning his anger against himself. Instead of allowing his anger to rise up there and then against the suitors, Odysseus uses the anger to press hard on and challenge itself.

delusional or dream-like wakefulness,²⁶⁶ and tyranny? How do these terminate in a state where a person is “overflowing with convulsions and pains” (579e)? Oedipus’s anger, which Benardete calls “his passion for homogeneity”²⁶⁷ dictates that “he must overcome everything that resists him. ... Everything must be reduced to the same level or eliminated until he alone as the city remains.”²⁶⁸ The tyrant of Plato’s *Republic* is “always ... stirring up war” (567a) in order that his weak, plagued subjects, just as Oedipus’s, “be in need of a leader” (566e).²⁶⁹ Socrates says that “when a tyrant grows naturally, he sprouts from a root of leadership and from nowhere else” (ὅτανπερ φύηται τύραννος, ἐκ προστατικῆς ρίζης καὶ οὐκ ἄλλοθεν ἐκβλαστάνει, 565d). A ruthless usurper, Oedipus shuns nothing in his quest for power. This cruelty is what Oedipus’s character symbolically represents. Rightfully so, Oedipus is usually understood to be unwilling to bring about his despicable fate. Incorrectly, this unwillingness is then interpreted as proving Oedipus’s righteousness. Does Oedipus want to be a tyrant? Not necessarily. He becomes one because, instead of thinking about what would be good for him to do and want, he is preoccupied with stamping out that for which he does not want to be seen and taken. He makes the phantom mark—his being a cast out polluter—impress into and transpire as the truth of his life. Unwillingness to be tested for his courage in the face of the divine pronouncement, unwillingness to be questioned by his Corinthian family and subjects, unwillingness to be discovered for the man who has committed crimes, makes Oedipus

²⁶⁶ *Republic* 572b, 574e, 576b

²⁶⁷ *The Argument of the Action* 78

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁹ On the subject of the relationship between tyrannical rule and war, see also Xenophon’s *Hiero*, II.7 – 11.

into a willing actor in the events that seal his fate. Oedipus's raging *thumatic* attitude is the state in which he yearns to manifest a passion, to become it; as a madman dreams²⁷⁰ that he becomes a violent god or a wild force of nature. Adopting the same attitude, Socrates' tyrant "must gradually do away with all of them [the manliest citizens] ... until he has left neither friend nor enemy of any worth whatsoever" (567b).²⁷¹ Both Oedipus and the tyrant, whom Socrates describes, "stick at no terrible murder, or food [allegorically speaking], or deed" (574e). The reason why Socrates says that the tyrant "rid of, all shame and prudence ... doesn't shrink from attempting intercourse ... with a mother ... or attempting any foul murder" which are, of course, the deeds that Oedipus has done, is because the relationships and entertainments that the pathological soul seeks must evoke increasingly intensified emotions. Oedipus is not entertained, *per se*, by the murder on the road, but his retelling of it to Jocasta suggests he is not ashamed of it either. It seems that he killed to appease his pride.²⁷² The relationship with the queen Jocasta, although he does not know she is his mother, also excites the sense of Oedipus's self-worth. Oedipus does not marry out of love. He kills to prove a point. But he will not admit to either of the hubris-driven actions.

²⁷⁰ In this context of tyrannical delusion, consider, also, the cases of psychotic subjects. I do not recommend that we align psychosis with depravity. I simply suggest that we consider the known features of psychological and mental disorders when studying tyranny. For concrete case studies of subjects who lost their own identity and took on that of a god or a demon, see Françoise Davoine and Jean-Max Gaudillière's 2004 volume on *History Beyond Trauma* (Fairfield, S. trans. New York, NY: Other Press), 30. See also my analyses of psychotic delusion in "Temporality in Psychosis: Loss of Lived Time in an Alien World" and the discussions of the peculiar sense in which insanity deprives an afflicted person of a capacity to differentiate between reality and something imagined or dreamt up (*The Humanistic Psychologist*, May 2015), 43(2): 151 – 53.

²⁷¹ These lines recall the ones spoken by Xenophon's *Hiero* in part V.1 – 5.

²⁷² *Oedipus Tyrannus* 802 – 13

6. Delusion: Tyranny and Cognition

Oedipus lives in a kind of denial, in a kind of merging of reality and dream that makes up tyrannical existence. If one is perverse, if one sleeps with one's mother, can he see her for who she is? Oedipus cannot. He is, on the straightforward reading, ignorant of Jocasta's identity. Metaphorically, this means that Oedipus is unwilling and incapable to truly know the woman that is his wife. This is the meaning of his ignorance. This is also the mechanism of perversion in Socrates' tyrant. A mother is not a mother to a tyrant. A concubine is not a human being. An animal is an erotic object too (571c – d). The proto-tyrant Lycaon (565d) does not shun equating human beings with cattle, nor his own son with the sacrificial victim. Vestiges of familial affection and humane relationships remain only so as to intensify the exciting effects of the unwholesome actions. A tyrant "violates the public and the private with a single crime."²⁷³ Things, people, beasts, gods—all is mixed up to satisfy the "tyrant love" (573d), which is the vicious and insatiable drive to pursue "many terrible and very needy desires" (573d). It is a love of desire. It is a wanting to want whatever presents itself as capable of intensifying desire, and a wanting not to want whatever might put a stop to the feverish masquerade of hollow wants. To be a master of desire so as to feel its limitless intensity—this is the mad dream of the *Republic's* tyrant. This is why the "tyrannic man [is] maddened by desires and loves" (578a). This false mastery is madness, because it is impossible for us, finite human

²⁷³ *The Argument of the Action* 73.

beings, to be as limitless as those forces, which constitute our psychic movements. It is madness because it is no mastery at all. It is enslavement to delusion.²⁷⁴

The peculiar merging of reality and dream, which makes up a tyrant's life, terminates in a nightmarish existence. Of course, our life, too, is interwoven with dreams, hopes, and imaginings. Imagination is always at work²⁷⁵ both in lucid and in wistful states. However, the comingling of reality and dream, to the point at which they become indistinguishable, signals impairing transformations in cognition.²⁷⁶ The tyrant is not only unwilling to figure out the place of dreams in their relation to reality, but, on the contrary, desires to erase the boundary between the two. Oedipus says about himself that he cannot be awakened because he is sleepless.²⁷⁷ His sleeplessness²⁷⁸ is not a wakefulness of a self-aware man, who does not shun self-examination. It is an agitated stupor of an insomniac in which lucidity is but a momentary, unintentional occurrence.

²⁷⁴ Benardete confirms this insight when he says about books VIII and IX of the *Republic* that “when dreaming has become fully realized, it has become tyranny” (*Socrates’ Second Sailing* 199). Later in the same work (205 – 6), Benardete offers remarks about the connection between dream, reality, and law and the difference between what he calls the “translegal” (205) and unnatural desires (*Ibid.*).

²⁷⁵ Consider Kant’s explanations of the role that the productive imagination plays in cognition in the *First Critique*.

²⁷⁶ Consider the impaired cognitive states of psychotic patients described by Eugène Minkowski in *Lived Time: Phenomenological and Psychological Studies* (Metzel, N. trans. Chicago, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 294. Here, too, I do not claim that psychological disturbances, accompanied by changes in cognitive aptness, are indicative of perversion or psychic pathology. That these disturbances are present in tyrannical and perverse individuals does not necessitate the fact that the opposite correlation holds, i. e., that all psychotic patients are depraved.

²⁷⁷ *Oedipus Tyrannus* 65

²⁷⁸ In *On Tyranny*, Strauss says about Hiero, the tyrant, that considering “the pleasures of private men of which the tyrant is deprived [...] ... Hiero speaks in the strongest terms of the difference between tyrants and private men in regard to the enjoyment of sleep” (118, note 3).

The oxymoron, obvious at the level of expression, the seeming contradiction of the state in which one is both lethargic and aroused holds at the level of analysis. This is the description that is given by Socrates to someone who is “tyrannic in a precise sense” (573c). Appearing as self-contradicting, the description pierces through the seeming stability, coherence, and power with which a tyrant is endowed, and reaches to the inner state of disparity and torment. Because the tyrant strives to do what a human being cannot do, namely, to embody and to become a limitless power, be it desire, anger, or divine omnipotence, the psychic forces engage in a destructive conflict. Their unbound and unhinged play engenders confusion about what is desired (577e), or feared, or hated and why. The tyrant is perpetually restless.

Having means to be anywhere, the tyrant is pent up in his land or, even more restrictively, inside his home.²⁷⁹ This is the case both for the tyrant described in the *Republic* and for Oedipus, who refuses to travel outside of Thebes.²⁸⁰ Being more powerful than their subjects, neither Oedipus, nor the tyrant whom Socrates presents (579d – e), are able to get that which they most desire nor avoid that which they do not want. Whereas, in terms of outward effects and deeds as well as in terms of inward psychological formations, the mark of tyranny is excess; the logic of tyranny is—destructive contradiction. Taken together, the pathologically excessive psychic drives and the phenomenal or factual contradiction (of feelings, affects, intentions, and reactions)

²⁷⁹ Cf. *Republic* 579b – c and *Encounters and Reflections* 131. Also Xenophon’s Hiero expresses a concern about the tyrant’s incapacity to leave his palace out of fear that the throne will be usurped in his absence (I.21).

²⁸⁰ *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1005 – 7

that arise from the unhinged roaming of these drives, terminate in the tyrant's delusional existence.

To be calm, reflective, and lucid, one also ought to rest well. This is something a tyrant cannot afford.²⁸¹ “Caught in the grip of great travail and anguish” (574a), the tyrant is always looking how to ameliorate the psychic pain by an attempt to satisfy the more strange and the more ferocious desires. Suppression of shame (571c), necessary for attainment of exotic pleasures, unleashes *eros* which, when expressed as “terrible ... desires” (573d), makes reckoning with “acts of ... shamelessness” (571d) exceedingly painful. This pain, felt as an onset of the melancholic languor, instead of being faced by the tyrant, is, again, suppressed or drowned in more perverse desires or in intoxicated oblivion.²⁸² The latter, for the tyrant, for someone pathologically invested in excessive *erotic* and *thumatic* drives, is not simply substituted with sobriety. States of lucidity become dangerous for the tyrant because at times of halcyon releasement from ferocious passions, the tyrannical individual is reminded about the terror of the perverse acts done. Fortified by the surging *thumos*, *eros* cannot be satisfied by being directed at affectionate, caring sensuality that brings repose without pain. *Thumatic eros* makes one

²⁸¹ Strauss says as much about Xenophon's Hiero when he writes “that which is always pleasant for them [men] is sleep—which the tyrant, haunted by fears of all kinds, must strive to avoid” (*On Tyranny* 49).

²⁸² In a passage that runs from 584b – c, Socrates moves quickly from an example of pleasures that are not accompanied by pain to the “so-called pleasures stretched through the body and soul [of which] ... the greatest ones ... are kinds of relief from pains.” The tyrant seeks those “so-called” pain-rooted pleasures that intensify the pains which, in their turn, allow for the greater pleasurable reliefs or releasements. Socrates' description of the “anticipatory pleasures and pains arising from expectation of pleasures and pains that are going to be” (584c) is the ground for thinking about the perverse modes of fantastical, anticipatory excitement. The latter can be seen as the core notion in Montaigne's analyses of *cruelty* in an eponymous essay.

anxious to seek out pleasure in pain and in those things that, otherwise, appear repulsive. The tyrant seeks cruelty, because the tyrant is incapable of finding satisfaction otherwise. The tyrannical person longs for that which will excessively excite.

Oedipus's worry satisfies the demand of excessive excitation. Whether or not he wants his mother is irrelevant, because this is too literal a question to ask of Sophocles' play. That he sleeps with her and that he never stops fearing he might sleep with his mother while sleeping with Jocasta, means that Socrates' description of the tyrant, of the "worst man [who] ... is awake ... what we described the dreaming man to be" (576b) aptly fits Oedipus. Jocasta asks him "not [to] fear this marriage to your mother [because]:/Many a [mortal] man has slept with his own mother/In a dream" (σὺ δ' εἰς τὰ μητρὸς μὴ φοβοῦ νυμφεύματα:/πολλοὶ γὰρ ἤδη κὰν ὀνειράσιν βροτῶν/μητρὶ ξυνηυνάσθησαν, 980 – 82). But Oedipus sleeps with his mother when he is awake. His dream or his nightmare is his reality and both are anxious. Even Thebes, with its unburied corpses, with its barren mothers, and dying crops²⁸³ is echoing the unnaturalness of Oedipus's nightmarish existence; unnaturalness, which Oedipus is led to see in the city,²⁸⁴ but which he cannot see in himself. The same contrariety to the nature of rule, which dictates that the man endowed with power ought to see to the wellbeing of his subjects, instead of perpetuating the suffering of those he rules, is true of Socrates' tyrant (565e – 566a). "What he had rarely been in dreams, he became continuously while

²⁸³ *Oedipus Tyrannus* 22 – 30. Benardete observes that "they [the Thebans] didn't bury the corpses from the plague" (*Encounters and Reflections* 122).

²⁸⁴ The Theban elder invites Oedipus to "see for himself" (καὶ αὐτὸς εἰσορᾷς, 22) the images of death and suffering in the city, as if without being pointed to it, Oedipus is unable to notice the horrible pain.

awake” (οἷος ὀλιγάκις ἐγίγνετο ὄναρ, ὅπαρ τοιοῦτος ἀεὶ γενόμενος, 574e). Living out the tale of Glaucon’s Gyges (359b – 360b),²⁸⁵ invisible to the naked eye, the monstrosity of the tyrannical soul, announces its presence in tyrannical actions. Committing abominable acts, neither Oedipus, nor the tyrant of the *Republic*, is capable of seeing through to the vileness of his deeds. If he could, if he took himself, his emotions and actions, for what they are, he would have been incapable of going on. Oedipus blinds himself. He finds the way to continue reveling in his perversion by making sure that the painfully sensual visions of his misdoings continue to populate his world.

The non-coincidence between claiming benevolence while doing harm is one mark of tyrannical incongruity. Another one is the fissure between how love presents itself and how the tyrant sees love. This crevice breaks apart the human erotic desire that seeks to be fulfilled and the tyrant’s attempt at embodying the perpetuity of *eros*. The disparity also arises between the role of anger in righteous indignation and the unbounded *thumos* of the tyrant. The dislocation of perception, which presents one’s countryman not as a fellow citizen worthy of a fair treatment, but as an image of a senseless child, unfit for independent thought—is still another dislodgement that indicates the movements of the tyrannical soul. All of these fractures are true of Oedipus’s character. And “all of *Oedipus* is in the ninth book of the *Republic* [which is], about the dream world and the

²⁸⁵ In this context, consider Benardete’s remarks about book IX of the *Republic*, book I of Herodotus’ *The Histories*, and Sophocles’ *Oedipus* in *Encounters and Reflections* 100 and 120 – 28.

tyrant.”²⁸⁶ The tyrannical dream-world is the world of delusion. Socrates calls this delusion madness (μανίας, 573b).²⁸⁷

7. Tragic Tyranny and the Poetry of Philosophy

The mad tyrant is monstrous. But does this mean that all looks of monstrosity point to the pathological formations of the soul? Presumably, not all that appears monstrous is also simply vicious.²⁸⁸ In the *Phaedrus*, an image of Socrates—an image of his character’s function in Plato’s dialogues—is cast against the shape of a “wild beast more twisted and in spirit more furious than Typhon” (θηρίον ὃν ... Τυφῶνος πολυπλοκώτερον καὶ μᾶλλον ἐπιτεθυμμένον, *Phaedrus* 230a).²⁸⁹ This image is framed by Socrates’ questioning of himself. The reason why the monster appears is because Socrates “cannot yet, according to the Delphic inscription, know” (οὐ δύναμαί πω κατὰ τὸ Δελφικὸν γράμμα γινῶναι [ἐμᾶντόν], 229e) himself and tell whether he is monstrous or whether his is a “tame and simple animal, partaking in the divine and modest part [in life] by nature” (ἡμερώτερόν τε καὶ ἀπλούστερον ζῷον, θείας τινὸς καὶ ἀτύφου μοίρας φύσει μετέχον, 230a). Charles Griswold, considering the question of *Self-Knowledge in Plato’s Phaedrus*,²⁹⁰ observes

²⁸⁶ *Encounters and Reflections* 126.

²⁸⁷ Of course, madness does not restrictively qualify the delusional world of the tyrant. In the *Phaedrus* (244a – 245c), for instance, four kinds of madness are discussed. The second of the four kinds that Socrates mentions includes a capacity to purify exactly the kinds of familial transgressions, which can be ascribed to the Labdacid.

²⁸⁸ In this context, see Sallis’s discussion of monstrosity in *The Logic of Imagination* 149 and 202.

²⁸⁹ Here, and in the following lines from the *Phaedrus*, I give my own translations of the Greek.

²⁹⁰ Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 1996 (40 – 42)

that there are two extremes—the Typhonic and the divine—between which Socrates places the questioning of his own soul. Sometimes Socrates talks about his relationship to the divine or about his δαίμων.²⁹¹ Since, in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates also compares himself to a Typhon, the πολύπλοκος—to the twisted, entangled, or complex monster—Griswold decides that

[t]he ability to ask questions about oneself ... already seems to indicate that one has a complex nature; in this sense perhaps only a monstrous being could say what Socrates does here. And yet the desire to ask these questions also signals a relatively untyphonic desire to find one's boundaries. ... Might Socrates be tame *and* complex? Or even complex and *both* tame and hubristic?²⁹²

Joining Typhon with the nature of a tame animal, Griswold gets Socrates. Commenting on Typhon's violent and unstable character, Griswold “wonders whether such a beast could be said to have a ‘soul’.”²⁹³ Typhon's hubris and volatility are supported by purposeful, albeit tame, stabilizing nature to yield someone who is capable of “self-controlled”²⁹⁴ questioning. It is a strange conglomerate—the unruly, crazy beast is married off to a submissive inquirer to yield a philosopher. This could not be a genuine look of Socrates. Instead, this must be one of Socrates' jokes, which shows that a simple superimposition of the characters, soul-types, arguments, or opinions that Socrates

²⁹¹ See *Apology* 31d and 40a – c, *Phaedrus* 242b – c, *Republic* 496c, *Theaetetus* 151a, *Theages* 128d. In the *Phaedo*, a dream (ἐνύπνιον) instead of a daemon appears to Socrates and exhorts him (60e – 61a). Not the daemon but gods (θεοί) are mentioned in relation to being awake and being asleep in the *Symposium* (203a).

²⁹² *Self-Knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus* (Philadelphia, PN: Pennsylvania University Press, 2007), 41

²⁹³ Ibid. 40

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 42

ventriloquizes (Griswold himself talks about²⁹⁵ Socrates' ventriloquy) in the dialogues does not grant us access to "Socrates himself." Substituting this initially attractive, but inaccurate, portrayal of Socrates with a more plausible account, Griswold writes,

Socrates' use of the Typhon image ... implicitly raises the problem of the relationship between complex hubristic madness ... and simplistic *sophrosyne* ... between unintelligible and ungovernable eros and law-abiding reasonableness; [...] Socrates' use of the Typhon image implies that his character, whatever it is, will have to be understood relative to some larger context of which he is one part.²⁹⁶

If, as Griswold's explanation states, Typhon corresponds to "hubristic madness [and] ... ungovernable eros," then *sophrosyne* has to be attributed to what Socrates calls a "tame and simple animal." Although it is still not clear why Griswold aligns "sophrosyne [and] ... reasonableness" with having a nature of a compliant animal, it is clear that the function of the figure of Typhon serves to upset a one-dimensional view of Socrates' character, of the dialogical events, and of monstrosity.

Socrates' choice of Typhon is telling. The latter is a progenitor (along with Echidna) of several remarkably monstrous creatures. Hesiod reports that Typhon fathered Cerberus, Lernean Hydra, and Chimera.²⁹⁷ The Nemean lion and the Sphinx are offspring of Orthus and Echidna, according to Hesiod, but Apollodorus writes that Typhon and Echidna beget the Sphinx.²⁹⁸ Socrates presents himself as being uncertain, at least while speaking with Phaedrus, about his own nature. He could be tame and simple, but he could also be hubristic and even more rapacious than Typhon. It is certain that Socrates is

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 40

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 42

²⁹⁷ Hesiod, *Theogony. Works and Days. Testimonia* (Loeb Classical Library, No. 57N). Mosst, W. G. trans. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 304 – 336.

²⁹⁸ Apollodorus, *The Library, Volume I* (3.5.8).

ambiguous about the nature and character of his eros and the fruits of its labor. Moreover, the matter of his nature as well as his (and ours) knowledge thereof is so far from being settled, that Socrates finds it necessary to alert Phaedrus to its dangerous possibilities. There is a hubristic, tyrannical monstrosity that looks a lot like a Thyponic monstrosity, which, in turn, points to the monstrous complexity of Socrates' character.

In view of these images of the monstrous, one is well advised not to discount them as being in each way and necessarily bad, that is, destructive, vicious, harmfully unnatural, when one comes upon their appearances in Plato's dialogues or in life. The monstrosity of tyranny does not necessarily stem from Socrates-like complexity. Nonetheless, if the tyrannical characters are labeled "bad" and left unstudied, then we ourselves become the vehicles of narrow-minded confusion. We take on the character of Adiemantus,²⁹⁹ who drives the unquestioned distinctions between the necessary and tabooed desires (*Republic*, 558d – 562c) to their termination in the masquerade of the unhinged movements of the soul. Rather, to seek to see both the complex and the twisted possibilities of our own souls is what both the Socratic Typhon and the tyrant of the *Republic* call on us to do. The attitude that one assumes when embarking on the soul searches is important. In questioning oneself, in pressing against the limits that trace a human nature, one is in a position to discover, also, what those limits are. Seeing where and how one would become monstrous if one were to desecrate a certain boundary is not the same as simply abiding by the established moral standards of the day. Nor is it an act of setting aside, avoiding, or repressing the uncomfortable limits. There is a promise of

²⁹⁹ See Strauss's description of the "austere Adeimantus" in *The City and Man* 133.

guidance and a call to probe one's depths as well as one's shallowness in the study of the many-figured movements of Plato's dialogues. There is a chance to reckon with what is most one's own. To do that one must also face what seems to be most foreign to oneself. One has to look at the design that could be one's particular, own monster.

The monstrous pathos of the tyrant is decisively different from an undergoing that a careful thinking about tyranny effects. The latter asks: Where do those limits that preserve humane existence lie? How do they change? The tyrant's soul, instead, attempting to move past the human limits and embody the limitlessness of the fundamental psychic drives, becomes pathological. Strangely, we begin to resemble the tyrannical attitude when we deny ourselves the chance to think through tyranny and reckon with, although not to defy, our limits. When we dismiss tyranny blindly, as if the supposed knowledge that it is not a way to live gave us also the knowledge of the reasons why and the way how to live differently, we expose ourselves to transgressing the unprobed and unlocated boundaries that mark our humanity.

The probing of the limits proceeds poetically, experientially, metaphorically, reflectively, and thoughtfully. A tyrant like Oedipus, on the other hand, to quote Benardete, is the "wholly unpoetic man."³⁰⁰ He does not impart to his words or actions a complex meaning, which does not mean that, in their poetic context, Oedipus's speeches and deeds are as one-dimensional as he is. "There is nothing latent in him [Oedipus]."³⁰¹ This lack of depth, the lack of metaphoric and imaginative dimension, makes it especially easy for the theatrical Oedipus as well as for the public tyrants to enchant us into

³⁰⁰ *The Argument of the Action* 75

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

believing that what is being said by them is the truth. Transgressive merging of the tyrant's public and private worlds³⁰² translates into an enigmatic persuasiveness. It is as if the tyrant spoke in universally convincing terms about those things that are dearest to each of us. Oedipus tries to do just that when he identifies his pain with that of Thebans' anguish and claims to feel it as "if it were ... the union of the public and the private" pain.³⁰³ The tyrant believes he has internalized each individual's deep passion into a collective feeling of his own. Like Oedipus, the tyrant does not feel *with* the others, he believes he is capable of feeling *for* them. In this delusion, the tyrant is persuaded by his dreamt-up emotions which, in turn, are liable to impress the fantastical notions and emotions onto the public's psyche. Unless they are questioned, the make-belief passions and ideas take root, also, in our soul. It is up to us to put the words in context of the deeds and situation. It is up to us to see through the parade of tyrants' speeches to the truth about tyranny. Socrates, in the *Republic*, calls for such a seeing. One can detect the tyrant when he is "stripped of the tragic gear" (γυμνὸς ... τῆς τραγικῆς σκευῆς, 577b), that is, of pathos, which covers up the tyrant's, otherwise, one-dimensional and delusional being. To do so, the tyrant's and our own private and public worlds³⁰⁴ have to be delimited. An example of such a delimitation is given in Plato's *Symposium*.

³⁰² Ibid., 74 and 78

³⁰³ Ibid., 73. An eerily similar merging of what is appropriately one's own and private with that which is public occurs in the *Republic* (462c – 64b). It is referred to as a "community of pleasures and pains" (λύπης τε καὶ ἡδονῆς ... κοινωνίαν, 464a).

³⁰⁴ See this passage at *Republic* 577a – b, where Socrates advises that one should be able to "witness ... his [tyrant's] actions at home ... and ... in public." I extrapolate that the sighting of the tyrannical soul entails a further differentiation between both the tyrant's and our own private and public existence.

In the performance following his victory at the recently held drama festival, tragedian Agathon³⁰⁵ sings praises to *eros* (*Symposium* 195a – 198a). The gathering of the *Symposium* is occasioned by the celebration of Agathon's triumphant play. Agathon's play is praised by the "many" (194c) whom he thinks to be the "many fools" (194b). On the day following his public triumph, he wants to be admired also, in privacy of his home, by "a few who are sensible" (194b). This double standard (with regard to the perceptive capacity of the audience), to which Agathon holds his own work, discloses something about Agathon's compositions—namely, that they are thought to be good by the foolish, but could well be poor in the opinion of the astute. Despite the dubious quality of his work, Agathon does not shy away from offering it to public judgment. Agathon would rather be appreciated by the fools for possibly mediocre plays than not be known at all—that is the extent of his *eros* for being recognized and loved. Socrates, on two occasions (one of which precedes and one of which follows Agathon's praise of *eros*), expresses a worry that this lust or *eros* for being loved, in the case of the likes of Agathon, amounts to the exchange of something inadequate for the recognition of those who are seen as fools. Nearly redirecting the course of the evening's conversation and turning it away from the praises of *eros* to the discussion of shame, Socrates delimits the boundaries of Agathon's public acts and private encounters. Invoking shame, Socrates asks Agathon to differentiate between the effects of both the disgraceful actions and the

³⁰⁵ My analysis of Agathon's speech and of his character in the *Symposium* is contrary to Nails's remark that "Plato's representation of Agathon is on the whole positive" (*The People of Plato* 9). Perhaps, Nails owes her overly optimistic view of Agathon to a failure to take seriously comedic portrayals of Agathon and a consequent failure to notice that, in Plato's comedy, Agathon is playing a role of a rampant, that is, a ravenous Dionysus (10).

bombastic, senseless speeches when these are witnessed by a few wise men, as opposed to, when they are performed for the unwitting multitude. Agathon agrees that if his disgrace is discovered by the wise, he will be ashamed (194c). We do not hear Agathon's response to whether he "would be ashamed before the many" (194c) also. However, given Agathon's attitude about his public viewers (194b), we guess that he would have responded in the negative.

Performing for the multitude, Agathon, literally and figuratively speaking, wears his "tragic gear" (*Republic* 577b). The problem with his costumed appearance is that he is not only an actor in a poor play, which audience is led to like, but he is also the author of the subpar drama. Socrates detects the inherently blinding element in Agathon's persuasiveness and its power over the many public viewers. The blindness goes both ways, making both the spectators and the producer of the spectacle less likely to be thoughtful, less capable of seeing things for what they are, or of opining correctly³⁰⁶

³⁰⁶ The vital status of opinion is questioned in the *Meno*, when Socrates says "I certainly do not think I am guessing that right opinion is a different thing from knowledge. If I claim to know anything else—and I would make that claim about few things—I would put this down as one of the things I know" (*Plato: Complete Works*. Grube, A. M. G. trans.), 98a. Whereas in the *Meno*, Socrates is invested into the practice of distinguishing between knowledge and right opinion, he claims, in the *Symposium*, to "have expert knowledge of nothing but erotics" (*Plato's Symposium*. Benardete, S. trans. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 177d – e. It is plausible that *erotics*—the master-craft, which Socrates truly knows about—entails a sharpening of a capacity to distinguish between the modes of knowing and opining. In that case, an investigation and a questioning of cognition and of perception as the elements pertinent to Socrates' understanding of the erotic craft, is not out of place. Such an investigation could set sail along the lines of Socrates' own path, which unites questioning his own nature (as in the *Phaedrus*, for instance) with the questioning of eros (as in the *Symposium*) and the questioning of the self (as in the *Apology*).

about what appears.³⁰⁷ Still, at the time, Agathon can be made aware of his shortcomings and of the disgraceful character of his pathos-infused speeches.

A tyrant, like Oedipus, cannot be made to see his limitations. However, it is in every case up to us to be attentive to the shameful and disgraceful displays of pathos. It is up to us to take note of seemingly very persuasive things said and done which, when carefully considered, make us feel ashamed or treated as a senseless, faceless crowd. Since the tyrant's psyche gets a hold of ours when we fail to observe the actual incongruity of his fantastical speeches and deeds and since this observation has to do with being able to delimit the tyrant's place in our world, we are well advised, first, to take care and delimit ours. Delimitation,³⁰⁸ in this case, does not constitute an encasement or a stifling limiting. Rather, it allows us to find those limits, which hold at bay the movement into perversion, cruelty, excessive anger, dangerous eroticism, in short, into the darkness of the soul. The tyrant will not embark on this journey of reckoning with the essential (because definitive of human nature) limits. But what does this reckoning look like? Are there genuine as well as insincere attempts at coming up against one's finitude?

³⁰⁷ The opening line of the *Symposium* begins with: "Δοκῶ μοι," which is alternatively translated as "I believe" (*Plato's Symposium* 172a) or "In my opinion" (172a). There is a continuity in the Greek between "belief," "opinion," and "seeing" (as is shown by Sallis in the Fall 2011 lectures on the *Symposium*). Taking into account a suggestion made by Sallis about "Δοκῶ" as signifying the way something appears in sight, "opinion" can be understood to have a power equal to that of the force of a sensible representation. In a way that a bridge, for instance, is seen as an actual thing appearing before one's eyes, one's opinion or belief, once accepted, attains to the immediate and undeniable character of a representation. Agathon's speech engages the spectators in such a way that their perceptive capacity is distorted. Things do not cease to appear to the audience, but what appears—what is believed—is misleading.

³⁰⁸ I borrow this term and the kind of thinking that the notion of delimitation entails from Sallis's *Delimitations*.

Is talking about one's death, which is a kind of limit for the finite human being, enough to face it or does the *how* of the conversation—the attitude in which one is approaching death—matter? Does Cephalus³⁰⁹ of the *Republic* who, Sallis thinks, is “little more than a head without a body,”³¹⁰ come up against his own mortality? Speaking metaphorically, how could a bodiless, legless head come up against anything? The answer is: it could not. Old Cephalus is chattering away about death (330d – 31c) and his sacrifices to the gods (331d) because he fears punishment in the afterlife (330d – e). His fear does not pierce through to the questioning of his life, but stops at justifying it (331a – b). If the man whom Cephalus describes to Socrates is anything like Cephalus himself, the “man who finds many unjust deeds in his life [who] often wakes from his sleep in a fright ... and lives in anticipation of evil” (330e), then Cephalus is only interested in buying himself out (like Herodotus' Gyges³¹¹) of the vile deeds, instead of reckoning with his misdoings. On Cephalus's part, there is no genuine reflection about his actions, about mortality, about divine power or about human limits. Even *eros* is repressed or gladly set aside by Cephalus.

Sallis observes that Cephalus's speeches, which make up “the first part of the conversation of the *Republic* is an *open attack* on *eros*.”³¹² Cephalus wants *not to have*

³⁰⁹ Nails writes that Cephalus is a Syracusan, who resettled in Athens, where he “lived ... for thirty years, having established a successful shield factory that had over a hundred slaves by 404” (*The People of Plato* 84). Nails stresses that the conversation of the *Republic* takes place not at the house of Cephalus, but at that of Polemarchus.

³¹⁰ *Being and Logos* 324. See also Sallis's note 15 and his discussion of the pertinence of Cephalus's name to the themes developed at this point in the dialogue.

³¹¹ *The Histories* I.13 – 14

³¹² *Being and Logos* 324

erotic desires. He claims he is rejoiced at being freed from them by his old age (329c – d). It is in this context of seeing all erotic longing as if it were a “frenzied and savage master” (λυττῶντά τινα καὶ ἄγριον δεσπότην, 329c) that through a dramatist—through Cephalus’s reference to Sophocles—a tragic view of *eros* is invoked. Those who bewail the loss of erotic vigor and “lament, longing for pleasures of youth” (329a) are tyrannized by the visions of what they can no longer have. The inconsolable state of these wailers indicates that they may have been in their youth, but certainly are in their old age, crazed by *eros*; that they are excessively erotic. At a seemingly opposite end of erotic infatuation are those to whom Cephalus is likening himself. They take *eros* to be one of the “many mad masters” (δεσποτῶν πάνυ πολλῶν ἐστι καὶ μαινομένων, 329d) and are happy to be set free from it. The reason why the opposition between the first and second groups is in name only is because to want to be free from all erotic desire is, curiously, itself an excessive desire.

Would Cephalus want to be free from *eros*, unless he, too, was capable of greatly suffering from it?³¹³ The mad or monstrous *eros*, its tragic (what will become also its tyrannical) form is expressed by Cephalus and suppressed through Cephalus’s invocation

³¹³ In *Being and Logos*, Sallis says that “Cephalus is himself the most unerotic character in the *Republic*” (326). I want to qualify this claim in a manner that will turn it on its head. Cephalus can only be seen as “unerotic” because he—Cephalus—wants to be freed from *eros*. However, this *desire* stems from Cephalus’s excessive susceptibility to the pangs and pulls of the erotic drive. Cephalus wants to be freed from *eros* and claims that, like Sophocles, he has been so released. However, this is not the case. The case is rather that Cephalus is successful not in being liberated from *eros*, but in repressing it. I also want to press, in the direction of questioning, Sallis’s description of Cephalus’s “distinctive balance [, which] ... in terms of Socrates’ remark, [is] an *unerotic* balance ... derived from Cephalus’s lack of *eros*” (326). If, as I suggest, Cephalus’s eroticism is repressed (and since an attempt at repressing as fundamental feature of humanity as *eros* makes one rather lopsided), then there is nothing balanced—as far as *eros*-related things go—about this character.

of Sphocles. Both Benardete and Sallis note that “from the beginning *eros* has been suppressed”³¹⁴ or that this suppression takes a form in the beginning of the *Republic* of an “open attack on *eros*.”³¹⁵ The suppression and the attack end up in a tyrannically engorged,³¹⁶ raging *thumos* and rampant *eros*. In other words, attempted suppression does not get resolved, but brings about an explosion of excessive passions in a twisted, pathological soul and in the perverse being of a tyrant.

Benardete thinks that in the concluding books of the *Republic*, as the regimes degenerate, “it must be *thumos* gaining over *eros*.”³¹⁷ He turns the play of the two drives into a question of “being [and] ... individuality”³¹⁸ where the object of *thumos* is the self³¹⁹ and where the non-pathologically directed *eros* is “not the celebration of the individual [but, instead] ... the individual manifesting himself in the celebration of something else.”³²⁰ In other words, when not expressed pathologically, *eros* is the drive that seeks out others and otherness, while *thumos* is the recursive, self-affirming drive. Although attractive, this take on the developments of the play between *eros* and *thumos* in the *Republic* is very close to what Freud describes as the object-directed and the ego-

³¹⁴ *Encounters and Reflections* 170

³¹⁵ *Being and Logos* 324

³¹⁶ Bloom connects Cephalus’s chatter about old age and the verses from Pindar that Cephalus recites (331a) with the way in which old age is weighted by tyranny (569b). See page 469, note 32 in Bloom’s translation of the *Republic*.

³¹⁷ *Encounters and Reflections* 170

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ *Ibid.* This line of the conversations about tyranny, *eros*, and *thumos*, in the *Republic*, recorded in *Encounters and Reflections*, is spoken by Michael Davis.

preserving drives in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.³²¹ Analysis of Freud's take on *eros* and *thumos* shows that what Benardete thinks is the role of *thumos*, Freud sees as the work of *thantos*—the recursive drive that aims at keeping the ego intact or at carving out and preserving one's individuality. *Eros*, then, in both (Freud's and Benardete's) accounts is usually directed away from oneself and toward the world of engagements and objects. *Eros* becomes pathological when, it begins to look as if it were “the [entirety of the] individual,”³²² as if it were incarnate. The problem with Benardete's view that in the discussions of tyranny “it must be *thumos* gaining over *eros*” is the same as the problem with entertaining the opposite assumption, held, for example, by Allan Bloom.³²³ Bloom thinks that it is, instead, *eros* that overpowers the *thumatic* drive. These views aim at mimicking Socrates' presentation of tyranny, where one psychic force (be it *eros* or *thumos* or not as clearly apparent, but operative in the discussions of tyranny, *phobos* or fear³²⁴) leads the way. If we take our guidance from Plato's composition, to which Benardete pays heed when he says that “the whole of the *Republic* shows that one [poetic *eros*] infects the other [the philosophical *eros*] to ... an extraordinary degree,”³²⁵ we see that we need to look for poetic, dramatic, and mythical figures that represent the kind of *thumos* and the kind of *eros* about which the closing books of the *Republic* speak.

³²¹ Strachey, James, trans. New York, NY: Norton and Company Publishing, 1961 (30 – 37 and 44 – 51).

³²² Ibid.

³²³ *Republic*, “Interpretive Essay” 425.

³²⁴ The presence of fear in the *Republic*'s tyrant can be amplified through references to Xenophon's *Hiero* VI.1 – 8.

³²⁵ *Encounters and Reflections* 169

Suppressed *eros* and the *thumatic* response to this suppression—taken together—are the volatile two that are united in a divinity. This god, the mythic figure, and the character of dramatic plays, is Dionysus. The image, which the tyrant wants to, but cannot, embody the dream, the phantom that takes over the tyrannical soul and that casts its shadow on the discussions of tyranny in Books VIII and IX is the double-born and two-natured—the terrible and the sensual—god. Also in tragedy, the return of Dionysus to Thebes,³²⁶ the death of the god-defiant tyrant Pentheus, and the Bacchic frenzy are the images of disalignment between *thumos* and *eros*. This disalignment is destructive for a human being, but it is the core principle of Dionysus. The Dionysian images point out the poetic clusters that Plato assembles in his work even as he presents us with the most un-poetic characters like the tyrant or like Cephalus, the aged talking-head.

Instead of taking Sophoclean tragedy for its poetic, metaphoric, imaginative power Cephalus wants to take Sophocles literally, for his supposedly immediate, direct advice about life. Extreme in his attitude toward *eros*, Cephalus is also extreme in his view of the dramatic art. Its poetry does not reach Cephalus, who sees in it proverbial platitudes. Cephalus's simplistic view of poetry ends up in a tragic (because, for him,

³²⁶ Euripides' *Bacchae* describes the occasion of Dionysus's return to Thebes. In books VII of the *Republic*, a verse from Euripides' *The Trojan Women* occurs at 568b. Also in book VIII, as Bloom notes, an allusion to the Eleusinian Mysteries is made (560d – e). Bloom links the reference to the beginning of the *Republic* and the “all-but-forgotten torch race” (469 note 21). Most importantly, Bloom notes that the image in Book VIII is reminiscent of the “spectacular torchlight procession leading the god Iacchus (Dionysus) from Athens back to Eleusis” (469 note 21). The forgotten torch race and the suppression of *eros*, at the beginning of the *Republic*, terminate in a return of rampant tyrannical eroticism; a return made through the *Republic's* unsavory mysterious rituals that cast a dark shadow over the rites of Dionysus. Benardete, too, sees “tragedy, the highest form of Dionysiac celebration” in the passages with which Book VIII concludes (specifically, 568a – d), (*Socrates' Second Sailing* 204).

irreparable) take on life. The outlook, further, terminates in the *Republic's* final books about tyranny. The proto-tyrannical Cephalean attitude, which takes the dramatic passions at their face value, fails to see the problematic enmeshment of theater with life. Although he recites poetry (331a), Cephalus does not make much of it. His character remains insensitive to the weaving of the poetical and the philosophical with the erotic expressions of life. Developing this sensitivity, we put the image of Sophocles' Oedipus in play with Plato's philosophical dialogue on tyranny. We question the ways in which poetry informs actuality and lets us see our humanity and its limits.

The reason why no didactic case is made in the present work for introducing the analysis of Sophocles' *Oedipus* into Plato's writings on tyranny is because that kind of thetic introduction insists on a "one for one" correspondence between Oedipus and the *Republic's* tyrant. The shortcoming of such a method is that it labels analogical lines present in both works, but does not tell us any particularly revealing things about tyranny. Contrary to the restricting analysis, the search for Oedipus-like deeds, passions, and necessities frees the interpretation. Instead of showing that Oedipus is the same as the tyrant of the *Republic*, I follow the traces of tyranny and show the movements of the pathological soul with the help of the findings about passions and actions that are like Oedipus's, but that are not him. One might object to this that also the citations from Euripides and Aeschylus (550c, 562c, 568b) that are in book VIII could be studied with the same purpose in mind. Why not analyze those instead of introducing Sophocles' character? I answer that the danger of the reading, which tries to track down all of the poetic lines, but which stops at their surface, is that it has a negatively limiting potential.

Bloom, for example, instead of accounting for the phenomena described in the conversations, dismisses the fabric of the text—the context, the mood, and the action performed by the speeches. He takes Adeimantus’s quotation from Euripides about the life of a tyrant as being “equal to that of a god” (568b)³²⁷ to directly support Socrates’ conclusion that “because the tragic poets are wise, they pardon us ... for not admitting them into the regime” (568b). Bloom concludes that “the quarrel with tragedy [as such is] ... the absence in it of any knowledge of the true aristocracy and ... the consequent inclination to take the desires and passions too seriously.”³²⁸

Why does Bloom equate Euripides’ lines about the glory of tyranny with tragedy as such? Why is the “most questionable parallelism”³²⁹ between the regimes and the passions sufficient for denying to the tragic genre the aristocratic composure? What warrants the claim that all of the spectators of tragic performances (in democratic and in tyrannical cities)³³⁰ are swayed by the passions in a destabilizing manner, that is, in a manner, which has no effect, whatsoever, on thoughtfulness and reflection? First thing to note, in order to respond to these questions and, in so doing, to refute Bloom’s conclusions, is that the context here is: the speeches about tyranny. Whatever is meant by “the regime” is qualified by this context. The proclaimed preferability of “the regime,” from which certain poets are banished as well as the possibility and the validity of such regime itself, have to be questioned in view of tyrannical context. After all, Socrates time

³²⁷ The line is borrowed from Euripides’ *The Trojan Women* 1169.

³²⁸ *Republic*, “Interpretive Essay” 422.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 412

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 422. However, see pages 384 – 86, where Bloom offers comparisons between Oedipus’s messy family and the (best) city in speech of the *Republic*.

and again recites poets and myths, and makes up tales of his own. Instead of understanding poetry as secondary in relation to “the regime,” rather, the talk of the made up (with the exclusion of the “Cretan and Laconian” 544c) regimes has to be understood from the point of view of the power and omnipresence of the poetic, creative element in life; an element from which no political arrangement is free. The second matter to be noted is that the mood of Socrates’ replica: “he [Euripides] uttered this phrase, the product of shrewd thought” (568a – b) is humorous, if not sarcastic. This mood colors the seriousness of Socrates’ agreement with Adeimantus on the point that it is poets’ wisdom, which attracts tyrants. After all, both the poets and the freed slaves are attractive to the tyrant (567e – 68b). The two groups are variables. The constant is a συνουσία, a being-with or an intercourse (as Bloom translates it) that the tyrant wants (ἐθελήσειεν, 567e) to have with them. This συνουσία is the tyrant’s wish in regard to the, otherwise dissimilar, groups and this desire for company should be analyzed. The third observation, which is based on the first two, is that the action of the speeches reverses the surface concern with “the regime” and puts in question the berating of poetry. The dialogical action makes poetry the conversation’s theme. This Bloom attests to by saying that poetry will be taken up again in Book X.³³¹ There, concern with various regimes serves as the playground for understanding the role of the poetic dimension of life. Bloom’s oversight brings him to a spurious, final conclusion: “Just as philosophy is unnecessary, so is poetry.”³³² However, the convergence between the speeches and their dialogical context, mood, and action—

³³¹ Ibid., 422

³³² Ibid.

between the philosophical and the poetic elements of the *Republic*—attests that both modes are anything but unnecessary to understanding both Plato's writing and its entwinement with the constitution of life.

Setting aside the attempts at establishing a linear correspondence between the poetic replicas in the *Republic* and their sources, the paradigmatic method seeks to attune the reading in such a way as to allow the analysis to be guided by a crafted image. The image of Oedipus does not simply tie the descriptions of tyranny to the poetic references in the dialogue. It informs the speeches about tyranny and the poetic elements that are present in the *Republic* and, by setting the tyrannical soul in relief, allows its peculiar pathologies be located. Having unearthed the workings of the pathological transformations of *thumos* and *eros* in a tyrant, we continue to study the soul and the necessary limits in view of which the human psychic movements gain their definition.

III. THE SOUL AND THE LIMITS OF IMAGE IN PLATO'S TIMAEUS

~The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees
Is my destroyer~
Dylan Thomas, 1934

1. Echoes of War

The strange, but undeniable, limitlessness of Plato's *Philebus*,³³³ which begins before the stated dialogical beginning and ends with an insistence that the conversations carried out in the dialogue must go on, marks also the manner in which the beginnings and endings, the echoing and the recoiling movements of the soul are without a definite limit. To trace these movements no measuring tool is required—such a tool is too blunt and too constrictive to account for the excessive and evasive manifestations of the soul. Instead we need a method that lets the psychic phenomena linger a while, impressing upon the reader's own psychic world. I call this method "echolocation." The soul's impressions—those states that excite and touch the soul during the textual analysis—are put in dialogue with the text. Relationship between the reader and the text is the sight of psychic echolocation. Echolocation merely suggests what a given state of the soul might look like without once and for all stamping it with that look. The method sounds the movements of the soul. Every such sounding, once it is heard, rejuvenates and changes the previous expression of the psychic impress. The sounding of the soul is endlessly varied in the same manner that a musical piece is rendered differently each time it is performed. Out of

³³³ For this description of the *Philebus*, see Benardete's *The Tragedy and Comedy of Life* 87 – 88.

the reader's dialogue with the text arises a constellation of the soundings and the echoes, of the impressions and of the new images that they evoke. The reader limns the dialogical and the psychic movement—its darkest and its brightest tones. To give an image: psychic echolocation is theater.³³⁴ Although this image readily evokes the sense of sight, it does not terminate in it. Theater is senseless without an audience. It brings together seeing, hearing, and movement into a sensory and sensible dramatic whole.

Plato's *Timaeus*³³⁵ proceeds by putting together—into a unified whole—1. the accounts about the visibility of bodies, 2. the traceable, but not immediately perceptible, movements of the soul, and 3. the understanding of the invisible principles of motion. The dialogue exhibits a structure that is akin to something like stage directions,³³⁶ where

³³⁴ It should be kept in mind that the ancient Greek word for theater, θέατρον, is associated closely with the verb θεάομαι (in the first person singular present indicative). The verb describes the activity of spectating. The related verb, θεωρεῖν (present infinitive), denotes a seeing of sights or performances as much as it connotes beholding or contemplating.

³³⁵ For a detailed study of the possible historical and dramatic dating of the *Timaeus*, see Alfred E. Taylor's *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1982), 3 – 13. See the same, pages 27 – 34 for the description of the *Timaeus*'s "Relation to Other Dialogues." See also Sallis's thorough discussion of the historico-philosophical reception of the dialogue in *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 2 – 12.

³³⁶ Schelling observes in his commentary on the *Timaeus* that there is a "principle according to which one must judge the manner of presentation in the *Timaeus*." "*Timaeus* (1794) F. W. J. Schelling" Arola, A. and Jolissaint, J. trans. (*Epoché*. 2008. 12(2): 205 – 48). Sallis confirms the observation that a principle or, a decoding key, so to speak, must be found in order to interpret the *Timaeus* when he describes the dialogue as "a dialogue of strangeness" (*Chorology* 3). Sallis further writes that "in its directionality and texture, the dialogue has the form of a story. Yet it is a story that ... seems badly told" (Ibid.). To make out the reasons for the many "interruptions and regressions, discontinuities and abrupt new beginnings" (Ibid.) a guiding principle is necessary. I suggest that this guiding principle should be understood in the same manner that Aristotle understands the tragic plot (*On Poetics* 1450a40). Whatever the precise form of the principle that lets the *Timaeus* show its unity amidst the many reversals and disjunctions, this principle animates the dialogue. Much in the same manner music and movement animate the otherwise disparate figures of dance. The interpretive principle renders meaningful the seemingly senseless detours and breaks in the presentation.

locations and figures are brought together with intonations, with inflections and changes of expression. All these congeal into a palpable performance, which moves the spectators and relates to them a certain meaning. The several dialogical beginnings (Sallis counts at least “three distinct speeches”³³⁷) in Timaeus’s speech, to which one more beginning can be added, namely, the beginning of the dialogue, and the opening exchanges that precede Timaeus’s account, can be seen, albeit anachronistically, as the several acts in a dramatic performance. Each act is an item unto itself and yet it is incomplete if considered apart from the other parts of the performance and from the underlying unity of the piece. If seen in this light—in a guise of a dramatic performance—the dialogue begins to look like a variation on the theme of *polis*, which is played out at length in the *Republic*.³³⁸ The themes accented in the *Timaeus* gravitate toward a cosmic understanding of unity, which nonetheless is also a unity refracted in and shining through a communal life in a city. However unearthly are Timaeus’s accounts, that is, however elevated and heaven-bound, we should keep in mind their origin and their ground—we should remember the polis.

Both the polis and its poets are recalled early in the dialogue. Socrates’ descriptions of the regime (πολιτεία, 17b), classes (γένος, 17c), soul and education (ψυχή, θρεπτός 18a – 19a), women, children, and child-making (γυναῖκες, παῖδες, παιδοποιία, 18c – 19a) correspond to the way in which these same subjects are presented in the

³³⁷ *Chorology* 18

³³⁸ See Sallis’s suggestions about the procedure of determining the temporal sequence between the *Republic* and the *Timaeus* and on making the content-based connections between the two dialogues (*Chorology* 21 – 23).

Republic.³³⁹ The polis—its construction and constitution—are echoed at the very outset of the *Timaeus*. Immediately following the remembrances of the polis are poetic echoes. Poetry appears in the context of telling a story about the two other cities. One of them is “what is now the city of the Athenians” (23c) and what then was the city “best in war ... outstanding in all respects for her excellent laws” (23c).³⁴⁰ The other city, which

³³⁹ In *Chorology* (23 – 30) Sallis discusses both the correspondences between the *Republic* and the *Timaeus* as well as the discontinuities between the two dialogues. Especially interesting are Sallis’s observations about the omissions that Socrates makes in his summary of the conversations from the *Republic* (*Chorology* 23).

³⁴⁰ At the beginning of the *Critias*, which is thought to be the sequel to the *Timaeus* (consider, for instance, Taylor’s remark: “to-morrow Critias will tell the full story of the heroic exploit of Athens” (*Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus* 14), Critias unambiguously states that Atlantis is overpowered by Athens (108e – 109a). However, as Critias’s narration unfolds, we learn that the “ancient” (ἀρχῆς, 112e, *Critias* in *Plato: Complete Works* 1292 – 1306) peoples, who lived nine thousand years prior to Critias’s time and whose exploits were recorded by the Egyptian priests, received their name “Athenians” from Solon’s translation of whatever Egyptian name they may first have been given (113a – b). Interestingly, Solon is not the first translator of the said name. Egyptian writers themselves “translated them [the names] into their own tongue” (Αἰγυπτίους τοὺς πρώτους ἐκείνους αὐτὰ γραψαμένους εἰς τὴν αὐτῶν φωνὴν μετενηνοχότας, 113a). Although Critias calls the ancient peoples, who fought Atlantis, “Athenians,” he warns us that we are dealing with double translation of names that are nine thousand years old (113a). Critias cautions us against the precipitous judgment that the ancient peoples he is talking about are, in fact, ancient Athenians.

As far as the *Timaeus* is concerned, it is notable that what is referred to by the commentators as the “ancient Athens [or] ... the original Athens” (*Chorology* 38), is only indirectly connected to the Athens of Critias’s and Solon’s or, for that matter, of Socrates’ and Timaeus’s time. I could not find in the Greek text of the *Timaeus* descriptions of that city, which (according to the narrated story) fought off Atlantis, as bespeaking either its ancient nature or, as Sallis states, its “ἀρχή”—that is, its installing character. Nor could I locate any direct references that indicate that the city in question is actual Athens. Instead, Critias, after he tells the story of Solon, implores his interlocutors to “make them citizens of this city of ours” (27b). “Them” refers both to the “men [to be] born by [Timaeus’s] ... speech” (27a) as well as to the men Socrates mentioned at the beginning of the *Timaeus*—those “educated in the highest degree” (27a). Both groups of men (those about to be produced by Timaeus and those already produced by Socrates) are to be pronounced citizens of Athens “on the grounds that they are indeed the Athenians of that former time” (27b). If anything, the status of the genealogical identity between those men who came before and those who are being considered in the dialogue is dubious. So is their identity as the *citizens* of Athens. It is important, then, that the readers are led to *assume* that the conversation is about the ancestral Athens, but that this assumption finds no direct verification in the text. One of the questions that the indirect connection raises is: What is it about Solon’s

Critias³⁴¹ describes as he reminisces about Solon's poetry and travels, is the isle of Atlantis (Ἀτλαντίδι νήσῳ, 25a). The *Republic* begins with the retellings of Sophocles' words and Pindar's verses (329b – c and 331a). The *Timaeus* opens with recollections about Solon (20d). References to the epic poets (notably, Hesiod and Homer) make an early appearance in both dialogues. The *Timaeus*, from the outset, is concerned with

Athens that is like that other city described by the Egyptian priest (22b, 23c)? More importantly, what do both Critias and his grandfather seek to achieve by identifying the warriors of Solon's story with the Athenians of their own time as well as with the accounts (already given by Socrates and about to be given by Timaeus) about the kinds of citizens that would be best for Athens?

A curious connection can be made between the "citizens born nine thousand years ago" (23e)—those citizens comprising the city that lost its "entire assembly of warriors" (25d), who perished in the flood along with Atlantis—and tyranny. Depending on the direction of counting, those born nine thousand years ago were either living tyrannical or philosophical lives (Cf., *Phaedrus* 248c – e and my earlier note 220 on the *Republic*) and, consequently, the present interlocutors are either living philosophically or tyrannically.

³⁴¹ Francis MacDonald Cornford states, with certitude, that the dialogical Critias "cannot be ... the Critias who was Plato's mother's cousin and one of the Thirty Tyrants" (*Plato's Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 1. Cornford surmises that this is the case on the basis of the following dialogical coincidence: "the Athenian Critias is an old man [who] ... speaks of his boyhood as 'very long ago', when the poems of Solon could be described as a novelty" (1). In support of the view that Critias of the *Timaeus* is Critias the III and not Critias the IV, Cornford cites John Burnet's genealogical tree (1, note 2). Sallis sides with "most modern commentators [against] ... Proclus [who] ... assumed" (*Chorology* 32) that we are dealing with the "Critias who was Plato's mother's cousin and a leader among the thirty tyrants" (Ibid.). Nails, calls the matter of whether it is the III or the IV Critias who is the interlocutor in the *Timaeus* and, hence, if we should trust the ancient or the modern commentators, "an unsettled controversy" (*The People of Plato* 106). She goes on to assert that "prosopographically, it must be Critias III" (Ibid.). However, Nails also reports that John Kenyon Davies "in 1971, *APF* [*Athenian Propertied Families*] ... continued to prefer Critias IV as the speaker—offering two reasons: Plato's literary motivation for telescoping of two generations of his ancestors (*Ti.* 20e – 21a); and an admonition that Burnet 'makes too much of phrases'." (107).

I side with the proponents of the tyrannical Critias as the dialogical character. Whether we should see him as Critias the IV is of a lesser interest to me (although, if archeological or other finds will prove this definitively, I shall not be surprised) than that we should understand the interlocutor as a tyrannical figure. Perhaps, the historico-dialogical ambiguity is best left intact. If it is, then it is not absolutely certain that we are to blame a particular historical individual for certain dialogical developments in the *Timaeus*. Then we remain alert and observe that despite one's "historical record," one is liable (in particular conversational settings, for instance) to hold and express tyrannical views.

poetry and with life in the city. It begins with πόλεως ποίησις or with what goes into the makings of the city life.

Although Solon is best known for his laws, his travels,³⁴² and the wise, but unheeded, advice he gave to the Lydian king Croesus,³⁴³ in the *Timaeus*, Solon is also remembered for “his poetry” (τὴν ποίησιν, 21c). The remembrance, we are told, stems from Critias’s youthful experience of hearing Solon’s poems recited by his grandfather, Critias (21a – b), who “was ... fairly close to ninety” (21b) years old. The recitation took place during the festival of “Apaturia” (21b), which as Kalkavage notes, brings to mind not only the Greek word for “brotherhood but also suggests the Greek word for deception, *apatē*” (*Plato’s Timaeus* 51, note 5). Deception inscribed into the intimacy of close relations—a lie that (like an appearance of a duplicitous, twice-born, and ever-youthful Dionysus whom the festival of Apaturia honors)³⁴⁴ cleaves the established trust—such is the background of Critias’s invocation both of the workings of a polis and of poetry. However seriously Critias and those with whom he is conversing take Critias’s story, we are well advised to keep in mind the tricky, or even, the deceitful setting that the significance of the events surrounding the appearance of Solon gives to Critias’s reminiscences about Solon as well as about the polis that Solon’s poetry describes.

³⁴² For a description of Solon see Eduard Zeller’s, *Philosophie der Griechen: in ihrer Geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Erster Theil, Leipzig: Fues’s Verlag, 1876), 79 and Sallis’s *Chorology* 36. Sallis notes that Solon was absent from Athens “for some ten years [and] ... returned finally to find Athens riddled with strife and intrigue” (6).

³⁴³ Herodotus, *The Histories* I.22 – 33

³⁴⁴ Cf. *Plato’s Timaeus* 51, note 5 and *Chorology* 37, note 41.

Critias's recitation of the tale passed on from one generation of men to another, at its outset, is marked by facetious play. Are we to believe that Solon's poetry is, unqualifiedly, worthy of admiration after the following disclaimer:

one of the members of our clan³⁴⁵ said—either because it really seemed (δοκοῦν) so to him at the time or because he was also paying Critias a compliment—that Solon, so it seemed (δοκεῖν) to him, had come to be both the wisest of the Seven in other matters ... and ... in his poetry, the noblest of all poets (21b—c)?³⁴⁶

Concern with good manners and appearances colors opinions of those fraternal interlocutors whose conversation Critias is about to recite. Solon's poetry only *seems* to be most free (ἐλευθεριώτατον, 21c). The questionable character of this presentation is confirmed in the immediately following lines, where Solon's limitations, restrictions placed upon him by the calamities of war (21c), put into question the liberty both of his political and of his poetic expression. The older Critias, having given the reasons for the brevity of Solon's career as a poet, then goes on to say (and with an eye on the preceding oddities in the portrayal of Solon, we now take this expression from the older Critias with a grain of salt), “in my opinion [κατά γε ἐμὴν δόξαν] at least, neither Hesiod nor Homer nor any other poet would ever have become more highly reputed than he” (21c – d). Solon? A greater poet than the epos makers? How could that be? What kind of poet are we considering? A statesman-poet, perhaps? A poet even more closely entwined with the fate of the polis than great Sophocles, who was a general together with Pericles; who

³⁴⁵ Presumably, the said member is Amynder (21c).

³⁴⁶ The reference is to the Seven Wise Men or the Seven Sages in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary Fourth Edition* (Hornblower, S. and Spawforth, A. ed. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1357. Regarding the description of Solon's poetic acumen, Kalkavage adds that “noblest” translates “*eleutheriôtaton*, literally, most free” (*Plato's Timaeus* 52, note 6).

presided over dealings of the Athenian failure in Syracuse. Could Critias be sorrowing over Solon's³⁴⁷ failure to be as effective as the poet of the *Republic*? The poet, who could tell "some ... noble lie" (413c), and arrange or make the polis out to be the best that there is?³⁴⁸ Or is the point precisely this: the ideal city of the *Republic*, the καλλίπολις, dreamt up, put into words, and sustained by means of a poetic license, that the interlocutors avail themselves of as they search for the perfect kind of justice in the soul, by necessity, terminates in tyranny. Yet, the idea of a statesman-poet does not arise any suspicions in Critias. To him, it remains perennially attractive.

The tyrannical soul mistakes the ideal, purified notions for the possible state of things. In it, the theatricality of the poetic presentation comingles with the drama of life. The tyrant misses the mark of the precarious, but necessary equilibrium by means of which life is not without poetry, but neither is it entirely according to the poet's design. The tyrannically configured gaze glosses over, aiming to suppress, the point of tension between the ideal and the actual. Tyrannical vision frees up the idealities from the perceptual flux that they imbue and sets these up to be all by themselves. It, thereby, establishes the ideal, grotesque standards in accordance with which life is to be measured.

It is from such an ideal-loving point of view, that Critias seeks to relate the all but forgotten "greatest and most justly famous action this city ever enacted" (21d). Critias's

³⁴⁷ Solon is mentioned twice in the *Republic*. Once at 536c – d in the context of education of the young and one more time at 599e with regard to lawgiving. In the former case, Solon is said not to be trusted. He is mistaken about the fact that old are as good at learning as the young. In the latter instance, Solon is said to be celebrated for the laws he gave to the Athenians.

³⁴⁸ Cf. *Chorology* (12 – 35), where Sallis explains the difficulties that arise when contrived city-making takes over most aspects of vital nature from which life, including the life in the city, springs.

tale turns out to be as much about glory as it is about hubris (ὕβρις, 24e). There is hardly anything grave about wanting to tell and wanting to hear the accounts of one's homeland's fame. There is, however, something odd about the interlocutors' failure to notice that Critias's Athens is more like the millennia old Atlantis³⁴⁹ and less like the "citizens born nine thousand years ago" (23e) to the place that is "now the city of the Athenians" (23c). The ancient account that Solon retrieves, which he translates,³⁵⁰ and then is "compelled to neglect ... because of the factions and all of the other evils he discovered when he came back" (21c) describes mythical figures (μύθου μὲν σχῆμα, 22c – d), gives physical verifications (ἀληθὲς ἐστὶ ... γιγνομένη, 22d) and political causes (ὁρμῇ δουλοῦσθαι, 25b) of ... destruction. It is an account³⁵¹ about the ways in which all three—the mythical, the natural, and the political—are entwined in their happenings and retellings (24d – 25d). The piece that Critias narrates (according to his good memory of it being recited by his grandfather Critias (21c), who himself heard the story from his grandfather, Dropides, who learned it from Solon (20d – e) as the latter brought it back from Sais (21e—22a) having heard the tale from "one of the very oldest of the priests" (22b)) is introduced as a story about the greatest glory. However, it is also an account about the "destructions of mankind ... by fire and water" (22c) as well as about the non-human origin of human life (23d – e). It is a tale that relates the miraculous works of

³⁴⁹ Especially the maritime might of Atlantis is reminiscent of the seafaring campaigns and power of the Athenian city-state. In view of the latter, consider part three, entitled "Empire" of John R. Hale's *Lords of the Sea: The Epic Story of the Athenian Navy and the Birth of Democracy* (New York, NY: Viking Press, 2009).

³⁵⁰ See *Chorology* 44

³⁵¹ Sallis gives an insightful reading of the differences between "myths" and "accounts" in the opening exchanges of the *Timaeus* (*Chorology* 39).

education (23d – 24d) and speaks about the role of chance in the preservation of humanity (22e, 23a – c). It is a narrative of war (24d – 25d) and, finally, it is an account that explains just how the human and the natural causes must coincide (22e – 23a) if we are to forestall our annihilation. Each of these six items falls primarily and respectively under one of the following designations: natural, mythical, and political. One and four (destruction by water and fire and chance preservation of life) are largely accounted for by the natural causes. Two and six (tales about gods who give birth to humans and the all-encompassing stories that are written down and kept safe for posterity) can be relegated to the realm of the mythical explanations. Three and five (education and war) are under the purview of the political necessities. Not a single one of the six items, however, is completely free from the influence of the other two designations in addition to the one under which it most readily falls. In other words, the natural, the mythical, and the political are entwined in the actual manifestations of life.

Critias's narration, framed by a possibly dangerous longing to live up to the ideal, or to reinstall the long-gone glory in the presently living polis, articulates the moments that compose human life. These moments are: φύσις, μῦθος, and πόλις. The three come together (in Critias's narration and in life) from within the horizon of destruction (φθοραί, 22c, 25d). The destruction that Solon's contemporaries faced was so pressing that Solon was "compelled" (ἡναγκάσθη, 21c) to turn away from the preservation of accounts about life in writing and in making poetry, to an immediate preservation of the livelihood of his fellow citizens.

The same kind of destruction—peril through “factions and ... other evils” (21c)—looms over Athens at the time that Critias reminisces about the stories he heard from his grandfather. Did the Athenians of Solon’s time learn from the words of the old priest at Sais? Did those of Timaeus’s and Critias’s? It is, Peisistratus, after all, who takes advantage of the rivalries that Solon finds upon his return from Egypt. Peisistratus makes himself a tyrant and then unifies the polis. He makes the polis strong. He amplifies the majesty of the greater Panathenaea such that Athena and Athens—the goddess and the polis—become as one. Thus, Athens is set upon its expansionist trajectory. The time at which Critias’s narration takes place falls at an historical juncture when the Athenians are paying up for their militaristic exploits. The warrior goddess of wisdom, none other than Athena, is invoked by Critias at the outset of his narration (20e). But is it the same goddess whom the Egyptian priest described to Solon? Remarkably, and notably, this question cannot be definitively answered.

There is, in the Delta of Egypt, said he, where, at its head, the stream of the Nile splits in two, a certain district called Saitic, and the greatest city in this district is Sais (where in fact King Amasis also was from), whose originator is a certain goddess—the name in Egyptian is Neith, but in Greek (so their account goes) it is Athena; and these people claim to be great Athens-lovers and in some fashion relatives of the people here. 21e

This is the only time that the goddess, Athena, is mentioned by name. But her name translates the name of the Egyptian goddess and marks a love and a filial affection (φιλαθήναιοι) that the Egyptians feel for the Athenian people. There is, at the beginning of Solon’s account, one goddess with two names and there are two groups of worshipers. Whether one of these two peoples are the Athenians of Solon’s, Critias’s, or of much

earlier times, is unclear. It is also unclear whether “she [the goddess who] took over your seed from Gê and Hephaestus” (23e) is Athena. The other gods are mentioned by their names. The immediate assumption is that the name of the goddess who deals with the “most beautiful and best race among men ... born in the place where you [Solon] live” (23c) is Athena. But Critias’s recitation of the speech, which has been retold many times, does not grant to this assumption anything more than a tentative basis.

On its surface, the unfolding story seems to split the one goddess into two, according to the two names that are given to her. Who else, but Athena, could be the goddess referred to as a “lover of war and a lover of wisdom” (23c)? It turns out that Neith could be one.³⁵² In fact, nothing prevents it from being Neith, who takes up the earth-generated and the blacksmith-god-fertilized seed, fashions it into a human form, and shapes this peoples to be the ones who “surpassed all mankind in every virtue” (24d). Then it would have been the Neithians, not the Athenians, who battled the hubristic (24e) peoples of Atlantis. Better still, it may have been neither the Neithians nor the Athenians. It may have been the people whom the goddess, indeterminate in her namelessness, had brought forth. Then the inseparability of the relationship between the people, the place, and the name, the inseparability for which Critias advocates (27b), is dissolved. At the

³⁵² Schelling, in the *Historical-critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* is referring to Carl Friedrich Dornedden’s *Phamenophis* (1797) where the latter, as Schelling puts it, proposes that “the whole Egyptian system of the gods is only a calendar system, a veiled representation of the yearly motion of the sun and of the change, posited with that, of phenomena in the course of the Egyptian year” (*Historical-critical Introduction* 178, note “e”). Dornedden’s thesis agrees nicely with the passage 22b – d in which the Egyptian priest substitutes the mythical with the natural causes of destruction. If Dornedden is correct, then my point about the indeterminacy of the goddess’ name is weakened.

same time, the contingent character of the alignment between nominalization and identification is stressed.

Athenians become Athenians when they identify as such and when they bind their polis and their life with Athena. This identification is so powerful that it even cleaves the singularity of a goddess into two and ties each one of the named goddess's manifestations to a place, to the earth or a region of the particular people. This tie is questionable as presented by the old Egyptian priest. Although, from the moment that the land is chosen, settled, the laws of the narrated city are established, and the war is looming (24c – e), the distance between Solon's Athens and the polis, whose inhabitants are progeny of the gods, diminishes (24d – e). Critias hurries to dissolve this distance completely.

In his haste, Critias misses the fateful warning that was also issued to the Athenians when Solon brought the story of Atlantis back from Egypt. This warning has to do with assuming that a certain conglomerate between the ideal and the actual can be achieved, whereby, the ideal is perfectly manifested. That is, where by means of poetic persuasion, for instance, nature, myth, and peoples are mixed up into a unity that must live up to the fabled ideal of the "Athenians of ... that former time, who, being hidden, were revealed by the oracular voice of the sacred texts" (27b). In striving for this singular idea of the Athenian people, in urging the interlocutors "to make speeches as though about men who are already citizens and Athenians" (27b), Critias fails to notice the several ways in which the peoples, the cities, the deeds, the gods, and the stories about all these can be aligned. And, consequently, which kind of meaning can be gleaned from an alternative alignment. To showcase one of the missed meanings, I accentuate one

dimension of the triply woven natural, mythical, and political fabric of life, and focus on the first one—the natural terrain.

Topography—the physicality of place—the location of the all-but-real Atlantis enables at first its imperial expansion, but finally also ensures its utter annihilation as “the island of Atlantis ... sank beneath the sea [that held it] and disappeared” (25d). Whether mythical or real, Atlantis, as it is portrayed in the story retold by Critias, is rooted in a place and is defined by it. It even sounds as if the isle takes its name from being located in the Atlantic Ocean (24e).³⁵³

In its insolence [the might of Atlantis] ... was advancing against all of Europe together with Asia. ... For at that time the ocean there could be crossed, since an island was situated in front of the mouth that you people call, so you claim, the Pillars of Hercules. The island was bigger than Lybia and Asia together, and from it there was access to the other islands for those traveling at that time, and from the islands to the entire opposing continent that surrounds that true sea. ... A great and wondrous power of kings ... mastered the entire island, many other islands, and even parts of the continent ... they further ruled over the lands here within Lybia as far as Egypt, and over Europe as far as Tuscany. Now once all this power had been gathered together into one, it undertook in a single onslaught to enslave the region around you and the one around us. 24e – 25b

The proximity of the islanders and of the continental peoples to Atlantis allows the kings of the island to keep their power over the polis intact while managing intermittent

³⁵³ In the *Critias*, we read the following regarding the isle’s name: “the whole island and the sea near it was called ... after the first king Atlas” (114a, translation mine). Although the name transfers from the man to the land and the sea, but not from the ocean to the island, as I have supposed, both (the island and the ocean) play, respectively, generative and nurturing roles. That is, Poseidon, whose domain is the ocean, fathers Atlas and his nine brothers. The landscape of the island, then, is rearranged by the god so that the boys can be nurtured and protected by the land (113b – 114a). According to Critias’s account, the geography of both Atlantis and Athens is decisive for the wellbeing, prosperity, and military prowess of their inhabitants.

campaigns during which they subjugate the neighboring lands.³⁵⁴ The aggregation of power, the assimilation of the nearby peoples to the dominion of Atlantis, gradually expands its influence, transforming the relationship between Atlantis and the places it conquers. Atlantis becomes something like a colonial city-state, although it is not referred to as such in the text, when “all this power had been gathered into one” (25b). This unification is a point of alteration not only in the manner of political arrangements, constitutive of the communal life in those places over which the kings of Atlantis now to preside, but also in the fates of Atlantis. Because Atlantis outgrows itself; because it grows to be a monster-state that arches over and that overshadows all the peoples out of which it is comprised, Atlantis is able to deploy its constituents toward a “single onslaught to enslave” (25b). Because Atlantis is disposed and able to act as an imperial power, it threatens the “power of your [Solon’s] city” (25b).

Three things happen when Atlantis rises to the height of its power. First, its might is placed in a precarious position. It is challenged by the peoples whom Atlantis aims to subjugate (25b – c). These peoples would not have been met with by Atlantis unless it increased its sprawling territory. Second, the military failure of Atlantis presages its

³⁵⁴ The terrain—the physical landscape of a given place—plays a crucial role in that state’s fortunes and ought to be taken into consideration even when the examination and creation of the country’s laws is in question. This maxim is posited by Montesquieu. For example, in *The Spirit of the Laws* Montesquieu insists that “laws must relate ... to the *physical aspect* of the country; to the climate, be it freezing, torrid, or temperate; to the properties of the terrain; its location and extent; to the way of life of the peoples” (Cohler, M. A. Miller, C. B. and Stoner S. H. trans. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 9. Montesquieu reflects on the relationship between the ancient Greek laws and topography and writes that the “barrenness of the Attic terrain established popular government there, and the fertility of the Lacademonian terrain, aristocratic government” (285). Cf. his chapters on the relationship between the terrain and the country’s laws, pages 285 – 292.

complete physical annihilation (25d). Third, the race of warriors that outstrip Atlantis is now most closely tied to the Athenian race (25b). It is most difficult at times of war, which portent destruction, to keep separable the place, the peoples, and their name. Yet, it is at such a time that a capacity to separate out these three aids in a prudent pursuit of preservation.

If we distinguish Athens at the time that Critias, Timaeus, Hermocrates, and Socrates are speaking from the city whose people stood up against the warrior force of Atlantis, then we begin to see that for all of Critias's desire to entwine the two and despite Socrates' encouragement (26e – 27a) thereof, Critias's Athens looks like that "city [, which] ... stood before all others in bravery and in all the arts relating to war" (25b) just as much as it resembles Atlantis.

Imperial Athens, a city that dominates its neighbors in the Delian league, takes over Skyros and Euboea and exacts strict control over its annexed territories. It is the power that advances against Syracuse, Hermocrates's homeland. Hermocrates's character says precious little in the *Timaeus*. He refrains to assess Critias's "boyish delight" (26c) about the seeming affinity between Athens and those who defeated Atlantis millennia ago. Is this refusal a reproach? Is it supposed to indicate Hermocrates's ridicule of Critias's zealotry? Whichever way we choose to understand Hermocrates's silence, Hermocrates's character, as Sallis observes,³⁵⁵ is meant to limit Critias's unabashed excitement. It is Hermocrates, after all, who is a key figure in bringing together Sicilian cities and Carthage as a counter force to the expansion of Athenian interests.

³⁵⁵ *Chorology* 41

Hermocrates, at a later time, at a time that falls outside of the possible dramatic dates of the dialogue, advises the Spartans while they plan their initial successful resistance to the Athenian aggression in Syracuse.³⁵⁶ Hermocrates's character is a reminder, to us and to the dialogical interlocutors, of the expansionist actions of Athens. The city, at the time that the conversations in the *Timaeus* take place,³⁵⁷ is at peace. This peace (of Nicias) will be shortly broken. Athens will begin preparing for the second and, for it, disastrous, stage of the Peloponnesian War. No advice or warning issues from Hermocrates.

However, a warning is given in the same speech that Critias takes as a call to arms and as a eulogy of the Athenian glory. Whether Atlantis is more like Persia (resisting which, Athens increases its political influence and significance³⁵⁸) or whether it is more

³⁵⁶ See Anthony Everitt, who places Athenian invasion of Melos in the “same year as Agathon’s symposium” (*The Rise of Athens: The Story of the World’s Greatest Civilization*. New York, NY: Random House, 2016), 331. Everitt portrays the aftermath of Melian refusal to join Athenian Empire as a massacre in which “[a]ll adult males were put to death and the women and children sold into slavery” (332). According to Everitt, “Alcibiades actively approved of the expedition and its cruel conclusion” (Ibid.).

³⁵⁷ Nails places the “earliest possible dramatic date for the dialogue [in] ... 429” (*The People of Plato* 107). Taylor writes that “the *Republic* no less than the *Timaeus*, presupposes a date no later than about the time of the peace of Nicias (421 B. C.)” (*A Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus* 16).

³⁵⁸ Sallis connects the mention of Panathenaea with Athenian victories over Persia. He observes that the “Panathenaea was primarily a celebration of the Athenian victories by land and sea in the Persian wars, the wars in which Persia sought to expand into the eastern Mediterranean by subjugating the Greek cities” (*Chorology* 41).

Proclus suggests that on the basis of comparison between the greater and the lesser

Panathenaea we can survey the difference between the *Parmenides* and this dialogue [the *Timaeus*]. For both have their hypothesis in the Panathenaea; but the former in the greater, and the latter in the lesser of these solemnities. For they were celebrated about the same time with the Bendidian festival [which is ...] said to have been celebrated in the Piraeus. [...] But that the Panathenaeac followed the Bendidian festivals is asserted. *The Commentaries of Proclus on the Timaeus* 62 – 3.

The *Timaeus*, the *Parmenides*, and the *Republic* set sail under the auspices of celebratory events meant to commemorate Athens’ military victories and to pay the due homage to the foreign hunter goddess; that is, to the divinity which was then new to Athens, whom the festival of

like Athens is beside the point. The point is to resist Critias in his desire to confuse the cities described in Solon's account with any of the actual cities. Such a desire leads to an action, to a narrative deed, which aims to satisfy Socrates' demand for mobilization (19c), but ultimately fails to do so. Socrates instills his "*desire to gaze upon*" (italics

Bendis celebrates. The skyphos, held at the Tübingen University Museum, is thought to commemorate the events of Bendidian festivities. Here is how the plate adjacent to the skyphos (430 – 425 BC) describes the depicted event:

A: Themis, the embodiment of the divine law, holding the sacrificial basket (*kanoun*) and the torch, greets Bendis, the Thracian goddess. Bendis, who is led by the deer, is recognizable as Artemis, the huntress, by her double girdled short chiton, boots and lances. She is also wearing a doeskin and a fox fur cap.

B: Artemis, clad in huntress attire, is standing by the hunter Kephalos, who, sitting down by the ithyphallic Herm, offers a libation. His dog, Laelaps, is sniffing a hedgehog. The cult of the Thracian goddess Bendis in Athens, in the year 430/429 BC was elevated to the rank of the state cult. Plato describes the first festival in celebration of the Bendideia in Piraeus, [that took place] near the Artemis temple in Munychia, in the introduction to the *Republic*. Socrates and his friends were then drawn to Piraeus to honor and worship the new goddess as well as to see the [joint] procession of the Thracians and the Athenians. Prior to the nocturnal part of the festivities, marked by the horseback torch races that were heretofore unknown in Athens, Socrates stopped by the [house of] Polemarchus, Cephalus's [Kephalos] son.

The historical aspect of the vase production is hardly confirmed by this extravagant skyphos. Was the mythical Cephalus included in the representation because the order [to make the vase] came from the house of the historical Cephalus? And what was the vase painter thinking as he placed a hedgehog right under the nose of the unsurpassably swift dog Laelaps whom no game, except for the uncatchable Theumessian fox, could escape? (Translation from German is my own).

The ancient Greek inscriptions at the bottom of the plate read as follows:

Κ Ε Φ Α Λ Ο Σ

Α Ρ Τ Ε Μ Ι Σ

Θ Ε Μ Ι Σ

Β Ε Ν

The hedgehog, placed nearby Laelaps, is an ancient Egyptian symbol of rebirth (winter hibernation and return to active life in spring). The animal is also associated with Ishtar, the Babylonian goddess of love and war.

mine, 19c) the beautiful animals “moving and contending” (19c) in Critias and in Timaeus. Both accept the challenge. In his aspiration to produce movement (and also the movement of war, 19c), Critias ends up reproducing a still “painting” (γραφῆς, 19b). Critias confirms his failure to produce a moving image, without realizing that he does, when he says: “the account [about Atlantis] has become fixed in me like the indelible markings of the burned-in painting” (γραφῆς, 26c). The reason why stillness of a picture and not movement of an action is reflected in Critias’s speech is because he aims to bring into motion an image of an ideal (peoples and polis) by projecting it onto the ideated perfection of actual Athens.

What Critias is after is not only hubristic. It simply cannot be. The movement of actual cities prohibits them from living up to the ideal, be it even glorious, ideations. This, of course, does not prevent Critias or Pisistratus from pursuing such dreams, whilst failing to see through the dream-like character of the pursuit. In an attempt to perfectly manifest the ideal in the actual, the powers of the gods may be tied up with the fates of the cities; the fabled peoples may be identified as living ones; and the actual cities may be, quite palpably, strengthened. Yet, none of that stands in the way or wards off the aftermath, the denouement which is, most often, violent destruction. The question is, of course, if it even makes sense to think of a way to live that does not fall prey to powerful, but in the case considered, dangerous ideals? Or whether there lives in us an unassuaged desire to keep repeating not only the stories, but also the deeds that Critias’s character relays? Are we inclined to be forgetful or, better, do we desire to forget that there is, despite their necessary coincidence, a difference between the dreamt-up and the actual

states of things? Or do we, falling for yet another mode of delusion, dream that the ideal and actual can be for all times and completely separated?

If Critias's desire is resisted, then the warning coded into Solon's tale—the kind of warning that Hermocrates could have given to his fellow interlocutors—is not lost. The warning speaks through signs. These signs are political, like the hubristic expansionist aggression. They are also natural, like the physicality of a place. The signs are, lastly, mythical, like the transposable moments of belief, of identification, and of time-defiant description. All of these signs are given in the “old account”

(παλαιὸν ... λόγον, 21a). Who is to take note of these signs and for what purpose?

Timaeus,³⁵⁹ because “he's the most astronomical” (ἀστρονομικώτατον, 27a) takes over the conversation after Critias has stipulated that what they are looking for, from now

³⁵⁹ Nails's *The People of Plato* offers a brief discussion of Timaeus's character. The discussion is mostly focused on establishing the veracity of Timaeus's affinity with the Pythagoreans. Nails describes Timaeus as being “well-born, rich, an astronomer and philosopher elected to high office at Locri” (293) and then adds that Timaeus is “unknown outside the dialogues” (Ibid.). Taylor compares Timaeus's interest in Pythagorean teachings with those of Philolaus “who tried to combine Pythagoreanism with medical theories based on Empedocles” (*A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* 25). In addition to commenting on Timaeus's learned interests, Taylor stresses that the “guests of Critias are ... men of eminence in their respective cities” (Ibid.). Taylor's remark on the circumstances surrounding the meeting of the *Timaeus* is especially interesting.

In 422 ... Phaeax [5th century BC] and his colleagues had been sent on a diplomatic mission to the Italian and Sicilian cities, the main object being to form a coalition against the ambitions of Syracuse, and one of the results of this expedition had been a proposal from Locri for a treaty with Athens (Thucydides v. 4—5). This may perhaps give us a clue to the presence of eminent Locrians and Sicilians in Athens in the following year. 26

It is, then, the politically engaged Locrian Timaeus, who is the main speaker of the dialogue. The main themes of the *Timaeus* are sounded through the interests and engagements of the character, which Plato crafts. One of these themes is: expansionist as well as diplomatic affairs of the Athenian polis and the role of the neighboring city-states in the politically challenging circumstances.

on, is a story (λόγος, 26d) that is not like a myth (μῦθος, 26c), but is truthfully (τᾷληθές, 26d) told. Despite Critias's stipulation, the weaving of the natural and the political with the mythical is very much alive in Timaeus's account. In fact, the several parts of the dialogue, the several rejuvenating moments (27a – 47e, 47e – 69a, 69b – 92c), can be conceived of as episodes or movements, in which a given theme takes precedence, but not at the expense of completely doing away with the other themes. In addition to the themes of φύσις, μῦθος, and πόλις, the motifs of stillness and movement reverberate throughout the dialogue. In fact, these two themes are at the core of the dialogical elaborations that deal with the other three—the natural, the mythical, and the political. Note that Timaeus's first speech inherits Socrates' request to produce and to show movement as well as Critias's failure to fulfill it. The first unfolding that Timaeus's

Several other themes of the *Timaeus* have to do with Plato's play on the ideas of the pre-Socratic thinkers: Pythagoras, Parmenides, Anaxagoras, and Empedocles. The mathematical and the otherworldly dimensions of the dialogue, channeled by Timaeus, have to do with the first one of the four thinkers named. The themes of singularity, immutability, and (ultimate) inimitability of perfect being, resonate with the second thinker, Parmenides. The noetic-constructive or mind-informed world-forming motif is Anaxagorean. Lastly, the accounts of the changeable, elusive character of the manifesting beings and their elemental instantiations are echoing Empedocles. Plato's representation of the ideas held by the followers of Empedocles can also be seen in the more technically medical coloration of Timaeus's speeches. Heraclitean notes are also heard in the *Timaeus* (52a – e). See Jackson P. Hershbell's article on "Empedoclean Influences on the *Timaeus*." *Phoenix*, 1974, 28(2): 145 – 166.

When locating Pythagorean moments in the *Timaeus* consult, for instance, Plutarch's *Moralia. On the Generation of the Soul in the Timaeus*. (Loeb Classical Library, vol. XIII.1) Cherniss, H. trans. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 62 – 67. Specifically, see the discussion of whether and how the construction of the soul is related to number. For the way in which Parmenidean idea of unity and priority of being is playing itself out in the dialogue, see Proclus' commentary (*The Commentaries of Proclus on the Timaeus*, especially pages 148 – 49). To differentiate between the Empedoclean, atomistic, and Anaxagorean takes on the primordial elements as well as to note Plato's possible appropriation and employment of Anaxagorean thought in the *Timaeus*, consult Zeller's *Philosophie der Griechen* (pages 670 – 678 and 679 – 702, respectively). Turn, again, to Proclus (*The Commentaries*, pages 57 and 116) as well as to Zeller (454 – 458) for appearances and refractions of Heraclitean thought in the *Timaeus*.

account undergoes deals with exhibiting movement of the visible bodies. It also aims to determine what such an exhibition of movement has to do with the “self-same” (κατὰ ταῦτα ... ἀεί, 28a)³⁶⁰ or with a kind of stillness.

2. Images of Stillness

Three times Timaeus has to start his account over (27a, 47e, 69b)³⁶¹ or, minimally, he has to indicate that we should remember an original beginning (69b). These multiple beginnings attest to the difficulty of satisfying the demand of producing and portraying movement. It is as if Timaeus has to remind himself of what movement is by reproducing the initiation of movement; by repeating the moment of difference between stillness and

³⁶⁰ Although, in the *Timaeus*, the self-sameness, rendered as stillness, does not presuppose the indestructibility of the cosmos (*Timaeus*, 38b – c and 32c, the latter passage indicates that the maker of the cosmos can destroy it), it does fit in with an account of cosmos as a kind of beautiful arrangement that is developed by Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* Book IX (1050b20 – 25). Timaeus’s descriptions of the cosmic spheres and the being of the cosmos require especially attentive reading. Although Timaeus says that the “model is something that *is* for all eternity, heaven in its turn is something that has become and *is* and *will be*, through the end, for all time” (38c). Heaven or cosmos is not called eternal. On the contrary, Timaeus says that it will be “through the end.” It will have an end. Moreover, Timaeus says that “time ... has come into being along with heaven, in order that, having been begotten together, they might also be dissolved together” (38b). Heaven might be dissolved. This is unambiguous. Cornford, for instance, misses this point. He equates the presentation of the cosmos in Plato’s *Timaeus* with Aristotle’s later view when he writes, “Aristotle appears to have repeated Plato’s argument in his dialogue *On Philosophy*: The cosmos must be ungenerated and indestructible” (*Plato’s Cosmology* 53). Thus, a particular, nuanced understanding of the cosmos is at work in the *Timaeus*. If the nuances are overlooked, then the reader of the dialogue ends up missing the points, which playfully sabotage the view that cosmos is indestructible and eternal.

³⁶¹ Note that if 68e is taken to be the third beginning, the three starts or the three parts of Timaeus’s speech correspond to the three things necessary to produce a theatrical performance. The first part is music. In the *Timaeus*, it is accounted for by the discussion of the musical ratios out of which the soul is composed (see 27a and what follows). The second is the choral dances. These, most conspicuously, resonate with the discussion of the *chora* (47e and on). The third is the stage and other essentials that are made out of wood. The third, ὕλη, marks the last part of Timaeus’s account, if we accept 69a and not 68e as the final beginning. This alternative beginning (69a) of Timaeus’s final speech and the alignment between music, choral dances, and wooden constructions used in the ancient Greek theater and the comparable construction, which transpires in the *Timaeus*, was suggested to me by Kevin Marren.

movement—the moment that is announced at the time that something begins or ends. The first beginning is κατὰ νοῦν (27c) or according to mind. The noetic order of the first beginning is stressed by Sallis in *Chorology*.³⁶² Having stated the significance of nous for understanding the first part of Timaeus’s speech, Sallis observes also the comic aspect of Timaeus’s “discourse on the head.”³⁶³ Benardete goes further than to identify nous with comedy. He proposes that “taken colloquially ... ‘a life *kata noun*’ [means] ... ‘a life to one’s liking’.”³⁶⁴ By extension, an account that is in accord with mind (κατὰ νοῦν) can be rendered as an account that is told in accordance with one’s liking, which is yet another meaning that can be discerned from calling Timaeus’s speech an εἰκὼς λόγος or a likely account.³⁶⁵ As Benardete points out, “[T]he secondary meaning of *kata noun* threatens to dilute the rationality of human life to almost zero and turn ... support of mind into nonsense.”³⁶⁶ Benardete’s warning is difficult to dismiss. After all, Timaeus inherits the expression, which stresses nous, from Critias, who, having made the distinction between mythical accounts and stories that relate truth (26c – d), checks in with Socrates to figure out which of these stories and distinctions are “to our mind” (κατὰ νοῦν). Preferential and noetic, poetic and rational, ideal and ideated, likely and truthful—each of these bleeds into the others. At this point of crosspollination, Timaeus takes over the conversation. He

³⁶² 14 – 15

³⁶³ See, for example, *Chorology* 62, where Sallis stresses the comedy of the “self-enclosed” cosmos that “feeds on its own excrement.” Cf. the way in which Sallis prefigures the heady character of the first part of Timaeus’s account by commenting on Socrates’ “discourse that is *merely head*” (14).

³⁶⁴ *The Tragedy and Comedy of Life* 93

³⁶⁵ See *Chorology* 55, for the implications of understanding Timaeus’s speech as a “*likely discourse*.” Cf. Bernd Witte, “Der Ἐικὼς Λόγος in Platos *Timaios*” in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 1964 46(1): 1 – 16.

³⁶⁶ *The Tragedy and Comedy of Life* 93

transforms the significance and meaning that can be attributed to the distinctions previously made.

In his search for order, for a cosmos that is ordered or made according to mind and, that is at the same time, generated, Timaeus finds himself in need of a “craftsman” (δημιουργός, 28a). This craftsman is both a maker and a progenitor; both a “poet and father” (ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα, 28c). Even in his cosmogenic searches, Timaeus remembers and observes Critias’s ancestral reverence. The tale that Critias tells is passed down the patronymic line and is given over to Timaeus on the day that Timaeus, in his turn, makes and delivers his account, which originates with the father of the all (28c – 29a). Timaeus says that this prodigious poet or craftsman makes the “the heaven (or cosmos, or whatever else it might be most receptive to being called)” (28b) by “looking to what’s in a self-same condition” (28a). Only if the “model” (παραδείγματι, 28a) is “always in the same condition” (ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὄν, 28a), then it is grasped by nous. The unchangeable stillness, the kind of stillness that will be described by Timaeus much later, almost at the end of the first part of his speech, serves as the model for imitation (μιμούμενοι, 47c). It is elevated by Timaeus to serve as a paradigm and a prototype of the craftsman’s work in creation of the beautiful (28b) cosmos. In his reliance on nous for its power to produce, if not to engender, beauty, does Timaeus recall the immobility of Socrates’ “beautiful animals” (ζῷα καλά, 19b)? The animals, whose portrayals and whose semblances are produced with the most ideal paradigms in mind—these animals did come out

beautiful.³⁶⁷ Yet, for all their beauty, they were motionless. These kinds of beautiful images which, once impressed either into young Critias's memory (μνήμη, 26b) or into the soul (*Republic* 401c, ψυχῇ) of the promising youth of the *Republic* (401a – d),³⁶⁸ necessitate nothing less than war in order to be set into motion. The beautiful, too beautiful for its own good, noetic (κατὰ νοῦν) production is assessed by Benardete. The reason, why the attempts of setting into motion that which is produced κατὰ νοῦν end in violence, according to Benardete, is that “it is too well ordered to be good.”³⁶⁹

Noetic ordering that guarantees beautiful production cannot accept of accidents that are coextensive with coming to be and perishing (28a) and still remain beautiful. While motionless, the cosmos, which in its arrangement is “all head,”³⁷⁰ may be beautiful. However, Timaeus's description of the cosmic motion and the change of state,

³⁶⁷ We can think of beauty in a different register, which allows us to conceive of it in terms of an unfolding or a happening in which beauty is excessive, but not in the same manner in which a perfect model necessarily exceeds any attempts at reproducing it. Active beauty is alive in music. The compositional possibilities for the violins, for instance, the possibilities yet to be uncovered, render the beauty, sought (now as well as centuries before) by the masterful instrument makers, excessive. At the same time, this is a living beauty. This beauty has not yet exhausted itself. It is alive with possibilities. Instead of undermining the beautifully sounding instrument, this potency or this beauty-to-be enriches our care for sound as well as for the instrument as we are taken up into the world of music given to us by the composer, the performer, and the beautifully crafted violin.

³⁶⁸ Consult the way in which Benardete aligns paradigmatic images with wordly beings in *The Second Sailing*. He writes that in the *Republic* “Socrates likens what they have done ... to a good painter, who on painting as a paradigm what sort the most beautiful human being (*anthrōpos*) would be, cannot show it is also possible for a man (*anēr*) to become of the same sort (427d4—7)” (126). Cf. “the sexlessness of the painting of the good city, which the comparison with the most beautiful human being entails, does not allow it to be realized in the family. Socrates is stuck with a paradigm to which no approximation as cities are now constituted is possible” (127).

³⁶⁹ *The Argument of the Action* 382

³⁷⁰ Consider Witte's allusions to the head-like character of the first description of the cosmos that Timaeus offers in: “Der Εὐκὼς Λόγος in Platos *Timaios*” (10 and note 14). Cf. Rémi Brague, “The Body of the Speech: A New Hypothesis on the Compositional Structure of Timaeus's Monologue,” in *Platonic Investigations* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1985), 53 – 83.

which comes about through it, project a very different image. It is an image of an order “so self-enclosed that it feeds on its own excrement.”³⁷¹ Timaeus’s first attempt at giving a true account of cosmic generation cannot take off ground. The work of the craftsman is described in order to account for the “cause ... apart from [which] ... it’s impossible for anything to have a coming to be” (28a). Timaeus’s explanation focuses, also, on accounting for how it is the case that a beautiful, that is, a very well ordered cosmos, comes to be. However, disorder and its eruption are inscribed in Timaeus’s focus on stillness, on a motionless paradigm (28a), which—regardless of the way in which Timaeus wants to operate it—only then produces perfectly ordered beauty, when it “has no becoming” (27d). Both Benardete and Bernd Witte agree that Timaeus’s searches for “some cause” (28a) of generative and productive processes do not amount to anything like an Aristotelian teleology.³⁷² Benardete denies even the effectiveness of Timaeus’s attempts at producing a cosmology. He deduces that

a sign of cosmology’s impossibility is this: although Plato has hundreds of words with the suffix *-ikos*, which in the neuter plural can designate a field of inquiry and in the feminine singular an art or science, neither *ta phusika* nor *phusikē* appears in Plato. Aristotle is the first to coin these words, for he believes the principles of bodies in motion can be separated, at least in part, from the principles of intelligible beings. *The Argument of the Action* 377

The entwinement of these principles—of the ἀρχαί—in the *Timaeus* is reflected in the repeated retracings of the attempts at separating them and in the questionable character of the success of the said enterprise. It is no surprise that the cosmos inherits the bellicose

³⁷¹ *Chorology* 62

³⁷² See Benardete, *The Argument of the Action* 377 and Witte, “Der Ἐικὼς Λόγος in Platos *Timaios*” 5.

principle of motion, namely, war.³⁷³ After all, the cosmos is ordered and produced in likeness of the paradigm (εἰκόνοϛ ... παραδείγματοϛ, 29b) of stillness. It is a cosmos that shares more characteristics with still images than Timaeus lets on. According to what he says, Timaeus sets the paradigm against its likeness, against the “look and power” (ιδέαν καὶ δύναμιν, 28a) that the paradigm produces. Thereafter, Timaeus gives the cosmic look over to the craftsman. The latter works it up into a likeness of the initial paradigm. According to what Timaeus’s speech accomplishes, however, not only the cosmos, but also that paradigm of which it is its a likeness, resemble the images of Socrates’ “beautiful animals” (19b), which can only be set in motion by the acts of war.

The order of battle, the arrangement of a battlefield: that is the original meaning of κόσμος.³⁷⁴ Pythagoras is the one to whom the first designation of “the all” as “cosmos” is attributed.³⁷⁵ Timaeus does not simply abide by his Pythagorean affinities. He relegates “the all” (πᾶϛ, 28b) to heaven (οὐρανὸϛ, 28b) as well as to cosmos (κόσμοϛ, 28b).

³⁷³ Claudia Baracchi makes a similar observation in her text on the *Republic*. She notices the “lifeless purity” (*Of Myth, Life, and War in Plato’s Republic*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 144, which characterizes what she calls the “just city” (Ibid.). That same city is evoked by Socrates at the beginning of the *Timaeus*. However, Baracchi does not analyze the reason why this “lifeless purity” leads to war. Instead, she attributes the lifelessness of the described city to Socrates’ desire and to his demand to see the city at war or in motion (143). Baracchi’s musings end in a paradox. According to the alignment she presents, war is to human kind as change is to nature (φύσιϛ, 144). Even if we assume that what is meant by this alignment is that the *depiction* of human city that Socrates gives is lifeless and needs to be animated, there is no evidence that φύσιϛ is depicted in the same manner. Nature is always in movement. It is always undergoing change. The “blind destructiveness” (144) of nature, which Baracchi says, the humans imitate when they go to war, is destructive, precisely, in its appearance—in what nature’s motion and change look like *to us*. This last point is made by Nietzsche in section nine of *Beyond Good and Evil*. Baracchi’s analogy does not hold. What is more problematic is that given an alignment between humanity, nature, war, and motion, which Baracchi offers, war can be valorized and war actions justified in unseemly and dangerous ways.

³⁷⁴ See Taylor’s *A Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus* 65 – 66.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

Timaeus leaves open the question of whether the name that takes its origin from the calamities of war is appropriate for the ordering (and a beautiful ordering at that) of heaven. Both here, and in the later passages, where Timaeus calls on us to still ourselves so as to imitate the “utterly unwandering” (πάντως ἀπλανεῖς, 47c) divine being, we still hear the echoes of war.

At that later time, unsettling the halcyon stillness that Timaeus implies should be achieved by those who seek to philosophize (47b),³⁷⁶ Euripides’ Oedipus reinstills the fierce movements of war in Timaeus’s dream of calm, perfectly ordered, heavenly (οὐρανῷ, 47b) revolutions.³⁷⁷ Oedipus laments the deaths of his two sons, contestants for the throne of Thebes, Eteocles and Polyneices. His mourning spells anything but peace. No matter how “heady” human accounts, theories, and imaginings might be, we are reminded by Timaeus’s recitation of the words uttered by a dismayed tragic figure, that our feet, by nature, tread on the ground. We would be well advised to keep ourselves intact by keeping our head from spinning off into the dizzying airlessness and loftiness of great, unearthly heights. The consequences of such sorry soarings³⁷⁸ are echoed in the

³⁷⁶ The conclusions that I draw from the analysis of the passage that runs from 46e – 47c are markedly different from those that Sallis offers when he addresses the same lines from the *Timaeus* on the last page of his *Logic of Imagination* (278). Sallis’s focus on vision, nous, heavenly bodies, the kinds of relationships that obtain between them, and the role that these play in ennobling the human person echoes the sense-denying tradition that his work seeks to dismantle and puts into question some of his earlier conclusions about “natural vision” (246).

³⁷⁷ See my earlier discussion of Timaeus’s recitation of the passage from Euripides’ *Phoenician Women* and the role that Oedipus plays in this passage. I discuss Oedipus’s appearance in the *Timaeus* at length in chapter one, part two.

³⁷⁸ In this context, consider: 1. the story of Phaethon’s flight that the priest at Sais tells to Solon, 2. the tale of Ephialtes and Otus, which is recounted by Aristophanes in the *Symposium* and 3. the story, which arguably gives rise to it, namely, the rebellion of Titans against the Olympic gods. Think also about the Old Testament narration, which relates the events that disappointed the construction of the tower of Babel. Note, further, the much more recent, historical accounts of the

tale recited to Solon by the Egyptian priest (22c – d). The stories, which the priest’s account echoes, speak of the lightheadedness that the overly enthusiastic, or even hubristic, searches for the means of soaring (literally or metaphorically understood) produce in the seekers of great heights. These stories, as I understand them, do not seek to warn against political, scientific, or technological advancement made possible through understanding of noetic matters. They only serve to remind us that just as happily as we embrace our “heady” (or “heavenly” as it is called of old) character, so undeniably do we belong to our bodily and earth-bound nature. An attempt to elevate the visible bodies to the power of the perfect, orderly, and beautiful arrangement, attributed to the invisible and changeless noetic being (30a – b), is an illusion.

We are led to believe that Timaeus’s account, his likely story, is successful in showing how the visible abides by the invisible principles and that such a dependence of the former on the latter is good (47b – c). However, because it is conceived by means of an engagement with a “self-same” (28a)³⁷⁹ changelessness or with the first meaning of the paradigm, as it appears in the dialogue, the visible does not imitate the invisible “circuits of god” (47c). Instead, the visible imitates itself. It imitates the motionless visible things as the latter are presented in the guise of invisibility. Although Timaeus

catastrophs that certain scientific discoveries and their technological application (atomic weapons) wrought on the human race. The tales of politically or pleonexically fueled hubris are in a somewhat different, but related register. The latter are preserved in such myths like the tale about king Midas and in the stories that inform the plot of Euripides’ *Bacchae*.

³⁷⁹ I am, here, considering only one permutation of the meanings of which κατὰ ταὐτὰ ... αἰεὶ admits. For a very different implication of the phrase’s analysis, as well as for the way that this other meaning informs the reading of *Timaeus* 28a – 48e, see Sallis’s *Chorology* 70.

does not present it as being bogus, it is a sham invisibility that we are invited to imitate at the end of part one of Timaeus's speech.³⁸⁰

3. Imaging Movement

A different relationship between the visible, the invisible, motion, and paradigm obtains when Timaeus suggests that we retrace our steps and make a “new beginning” (αὐθις ἀρχή, 48e). Before he begins to speak about “the all [,] ... two forms [and the] ... third kind” (τοῦ παντός, δύο εἶδη, τρίτον γένος 48e), the latter being the new feature, and after he stresses the need to account for the standoff or the “standing-together of necessity and intellect” (ἀνάγκης τε καὶ νοῦ συστάσεως, 48a), Timaeus draws our attention to the “strange and unusual narration ... based on likelihoods [τῶν εἰκότων]” (48d).³⁸¹ The

³⁸⁰ I stress that we should refrain from injecting into or superimposing onto Plato's writing such later developments, as Aristotle's understanding of learning, for instance, which posits that “learning always proceeds ... from what is by nature less intelligible to what is more intelligible” (*Metaphysics*, VII.4, 2029b). If we do use later thinkers' ideas to interpret the dialogues, we should be aware of the superimpositions and comparisons. Lack of such awareness leads to confusing statements like the one made by Gill Gordon in her work on *Plato's Erotic World: From Cosmic Origins to Human Death*. There, Gordon first writes that “examining visible phenomena, we might infer from our senses that we have before us the causes of things in the world. But, Timaeus tells us, what the visible world reveals to us are only auxiliary causes” (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 33. If we adhere to the Aristotelian tradition, although, I am not claiming that this is what guides Gordon's reading of the *Timaeus*, then this interpretation is sound. However, if the dialogue is approached on its own terms, the matters are considerably more complex. Gordon's conclusion about the interactions that obtain between nous, eros, causes, visibility, and invisibility is even more confusing. She writes: “*Nous's* power of *peithô* is exercised in an alluring way. The very link, then, between invisible and visible is rooted in an alluring, erotic power: persuasion” (35). Perhaps, if the Plotinian school of thought is engaged, as it can be, but if it is, it should be made clear that this is where the author is grounding her interpretive position, then Gordon's remark makes sense. Otherwise, the statement, which aims to wed the noetic with the erotic, betrays a biased reading, but gives no account that argues for the validity of the author's presuppositions.

³⁸¹ Sallis also observes that the second dialogical beginning is suspended or, even more strongly, that it cannot be said; cannot be pronounced in speech. Cf. his *Chorology* 111.

account that Timaeus is about to offer is preceded by an invocation. Timaeus calls on Zeus the “savior” (48d) in hopes of garnering assistance in production of such an odd story. The first part of Timaeus’s speech (27c – 48e) is also preceded by an invocation of “both gods and goddesses” (27c) and by a qualification that the account he is about to produce should be “to their [divinities’] mind” (κατὰ νοῦν, 27c). On its surface, the text indicates that the first part of Timaeus’s narration is set in the noetic and the second in the imagistic or *eikastic* register. However, we have already shown that images of visible motionlessness and stillness drive the first part of Timaeus’s exposition. We have also noted that, being avowedly κατὰ νοῦν, or according to mind, it is also a story that is simply to the interlocutors’ liking—it is a likely story.³⁸²

The noetic, then, partakes of the likely as much as, if not more than, the professedly imagistic does.³⁸³ Both are together and the more the one is said to guide or

³⁸² In this context, cf. Aristotle’s accounts of the distinction and the conjunction between the likely and the necessary (εἰκος / ἀναγκαιόν) happenings in the *Poetics*. Jean-Marc Narbonne in the 2016 Boston Area Colloquium for Ancient Philosophy lecture cites several occurrences of “this pair of terms.” He lists 1451a12 – 13, 1451a28, 1451a37, 1451b9 and 1451b35, 1452a20, 1452a24, 1454a34 – 36 (“Likely and Necessary: The *Poetics* of Aristotle and the Problem of Literary Leeway”).

³⁸³ Benardete gives a different, but similarly non-linear and also a very convincing, breakdown of the guiding dialogical principles in the *Timaeus*. Because of its importance for interpreting and understanding the play of phantastics and eikastics in this dialogue in particular, and in Plato’s writing in general, I cite here a rather lengthy passage with which Benardete concludes his “On the *Timaeus*” in *The Argument of the Action*.

The truth about space was stated, according to Timaeus, when he said that it was to be a receptacle, like a nurse, of all becoming (49a5 – 6). The truth juxtaposes a metaphor with a simile. It juxtaposes a phantastic with an eikastic phrase. A metaphor identifies two things; it takes the other for the same. A simile acknowledges a difference in the sameness it has seen. The truth about the likely story Timaeus tells is that as metaphor it is likely (*eikōs*), and as simile it is a phantom image. In the literal sense of metaphor, the images of being were transferred onto being and read off as if they were of that of which they were not—the ideality of the nominal sentence, *to toiouton pur*, represents this; but

dominate, the more likely it is that the other is, in fact, at work. Such is Plato's play. To this play Timaeus is "giving free rein" (59c) as he is about to "proceed ... to [more] likelihoods [εἰκότα]" (59d) about the designations and the mixtures of water, fire, earth, and air. Timaeus recommends this play as a repose from coming up with the accounts (59c, λόγους) "about things that always *are*" (59c). It is as if he is suggesting that we imagine also a play on words between the *chora* or the "third kind—that of Space—which always *is*" (τρίτον ... γένος ὃν τὸ τῆς χώρας αἰεί, 52a) and the determinate, but changing (graspable only in their continuous slipping away) figures and motions of the choral dancers.³⁸⁴ This play, in which the dictates of the mind as well as the envisioned patterns of the moving figures manifest only then when the necessities (the possibilities

once in principle a simile is acknowledged to be what it is, one cannot tell how to subtract the difference the simile has from that to which it is like. If one could, there would be no need of similes. Contrary, then, to one's first impression, the phantastics of the second part of the *Timaeus* is *eikastical*, and the eikastics of the first part phantastical. This turnaround is, as Strauss illustrated, the essential trait of any Platonic argument. If it does not occur, we are still stuck in the Cave and have not yet begun to make an ascent. 392

³⁸⁴ Note that at 40c even the heavenly bodies are described as performing a choral dance.

But as for the choric dances of these stars and their juxtapositions with one another, and the return-motions of their circles back upon themselves and their progressions, and which among the gods come to be in conjunction with one another and how many of them in opposition, and how they pass behind and in front of each other and at what times each of these is hidden from our view and, upon reappearing, sends terrors and portents of things to come afterwards upon men unable to calculate—to speak of all this without looking at imitations of these very things would be vain labor.

On the one hand, the physical motions of the stars and the planets are said to terrify those who cannot account for what occurs. Perhaps, we are to understand Timaeus's words, here, as a warning against seeing the planetary, divine motions as some supernatural manifestations or forebodings of things to come. Put simply, it looks like Timaeus is dispelling a superstition. On the other hand, the calculability of the planetary motions as well as the movements themselves are described as choral dances—as the kinds of things that occur on stage during the performances of comedy and tragedy. Is it, then, the tragicomic presentation of both the mythical-religious and of the calculable, physical, models of understanding that we are encountering in this dialogical passage?

as well as the impossibilities) of living bodies are observed, reflects back onto and informs Timaeus's initial musings on the cosmos (38b – 39e). Therefore, the “wanderings [πλάνας]’ of [cosmic] ... bodies” (39c), their circling motion, their heavenly choral dance is as much dependent on the “form of a model—intelligible and always in the self-same condition” (παραδείγματος εἶδος ... νοητὸν καὶ ἀεὶ κατὰ ταῦτ’ ὄν, 48e) as it is “on the things that come to be through necessity [ἀνάγκης]” (47e). Of course, to give a world-bound example or an image—such as a choral dance, for instance—of the way in which the noetic and the bodily or the ideal and the real are fitted together is to lean heavily on the side of the empirical. However, the pure nous must be talked about in order to be manifested. In speaking and in writing we often give descriptions. In order to reflect the meaning in an image, let fantasy here take its course, provided that we remain attentive to the necessarily imagistic character of all descriptions, that is, of all worldly stories—be they accounts, myths, arguments, or expositions.

The noetic paradigm, if it alone is left as the productive cause of the all, in its unchanging stillness, ends up producing a caricature of the worldly, living beings. Such paradigm fails to account for the fact that it is not suitable to “speak as if [we] ... knew fire, whatever it is, and each of the others; [nor] ... set them down as principles [ἀρχὰς]—as elements [στοιχεῖα] ... of the all [τοῦ παντός]” (48b).³⁸⁵ Movement, change, disruption,

³⁸⁵ Consider Crowley's “On the Use of *Stoicheion* in the Sense of ‘Element’” pages 367 – 368 for a synoptic description of the history of use of στοιχεῖα as elements. Crowley briefly mentions the circumstances that possibly surrounded the introduction of the term in common usage. He writes that “some anonymous Athenian master introduced the term for the specific purpose of explaining Empedocles’ doctrine of the ‘four roots’; thus Empedocles’ four ῥιζώματα become the four *stoicheia*” (368). Even thematically and conceptually Timaeus’s descriptions of fire, air, water, and earth as well as the passages on how these four are mixed echo Empedocles’ view of

and instability brought in through the “form of the wandering cause” (τῆς πλανωμένης εἶδος αἰτίας, 48a) have to be fractured into Timaeus’s account. If they are, then the universe and the whole of nature are no longer seen as if they were made up of something definitive and of something that is as easy to manipulate as “the forms of ‘syllable’” (ἐν συλλαβῆς εἶδεσιν, 48c). Timaeus alters how we now see the preceding account. By introducing wandering and, with it, by recouping a sense of puzzlement, a state of wonder, the second part of Timaeus’s tale overcomes the rigidity, which governs the speeches about nature given in the *Statesman*. In the latter, when the conversation turns to the way in which “our soul has been affected by nature ... with regard to the elements of all things” (278c – d), the natural is left encased in the grammatical. The issue with such encasement is that “speech because it admits of greater precision than fact, produces greater imprecision about facts.”³⁸⁶ The alphabetic is insufficient when we need to account for the natural. The new paradigm is needed. Timaeus gives to us, in his new beginning, a new way to think about the all and about the relationship between the mind,

the arrangement of the world. In the dialogue, Timaeus warns us against drawing strict and familiar distinctions between the continuously changing and moving elements. Similarly, in the first volume of the *Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, in his discussion of Empedocles, Eduard Zeller invites us to think about the so called “elements” and the underlying principles as being in movement, rather than as being in distinct opposition to each other. Citing Simplicius’ *Physics* 43, Zeller shows exactly how Empedocles’ meaning is misinterpreted. Zeller states that it is only according to the “later opinions, which contradict the documented evidence and the coherency of the entire Empedoclean teaching, that the antagonism of Love and Hate coincides with the elemental differences according to which the fiery [elements] are to be understood under Hate and the watery [ones] under Love” (520). Here, as well as in case of other English passages from the German texts, I offer my own translation.

Zeller stresses that as far as Love and Hate are concerned, Empedocles’ “original intention goes only as far as to represent by Love and Hate the principles of motion” (Ibid.). We can add that the other four are to be understood in a similar register—not as clearly delineated and opposing elements, but as continuously undergoing change, that is, as characterized by transformation and as being prime or paradigmatic instances thereof.

³⁸⁶ Benardete, *The Second Sailing* 96

the body, and the soul; namely, between the invisible principles of motion, the visibility of moving bodies, and the locatable, but not readily perceptible psychic movements. This new way of thinking reflects back onto what has been already said about the relationship between the three.

The reconfiguration of the noetic, the psychic, and the embodied moments, which Timaeus aligns in the first part of the speech, has to be done with an eye on accenting movement. It is not the case that movement was absent from the first part of the speech. Motion was considered first in relation to the body of the cosmic animal (33d – 34a). Second, motion was taken up in view of the mixture and the partitioning of the self-same being and, then, with an eye on the changes in bodily being (35a – d). Motion was also inspected with respect to the cosmic soul (37a – d) as well as in regard to the “wanderings” (39c) of planets and the passage of time (38e – 40c). However, movement was not taken up as a third kind, in addition to the other two—changeless being and becoming. Timaeus, referring to the third kind as “a form difficult and obscure” (49a), calls it “receptacle of all becoming [and] a sort of wet-nurse” (49b) as well as a “Space” (χώρα, 52d), a “mold” (ἐκμαγεῖον, 50c), and a “form of the wandering cause” (48a). However, the power that this third kind exhibits has to do with moving and with “being moved” (52e).

The ceaseless changeability and variability, the mixing and the separating out, the coming to be of something and slipping away from the definiteness of a particular look—all these underlying states of the familiar phenomena, to which Timaeus now draws our attention, are brought to light through the introduction and the discussion of the third

kind. In light of the third, which is the “power ... and ... nature” (δύναμιν καὶ φύσιν, 49a) that is always on the move (52e) and that evades complete conceptual encasement, we now rethink how we speak about, understand, and see “fire,” “water,” “earth,” and “air.”³⁸⁷ The new conception does not send all of the things that are into a frenzy of a piebald confusion.³⁸⁸ The introduction of the third kind does not amount to abandoning the noetic paradigm of stillness, which guided the production and the birth of the all in the first part of the speech. This third does not aim to reduce all things, and in particular, the so-called “elements,” to a comedic parody of a Heraclitean flux. Instead, the third kind tempers the excitement over a perfect, self-same model and over the outstanding power of the mind to both imitate and to produce such rarified perfection.

As if reminding us about the origins of the account, about those beginnings, which are rooted in the fates and the necessities of the polis, the third kind shifts the tonal focus, the register of the performed narration, away from things that have to do with soaring heights and places it closer to that expansive space, which holds up the human beings. In this recursive move, the noetic paradigm is neither eliminated nor discounted. It is simply presented as giving way to a grounding moment. Set to the noetic paradigm of the self-same being in the first part of Timaeus’s speech, motion was an attribute, interchangeably, of the cosmos, of the soul, or of the planetary bodies, for example. Given its dialogical space, however, motion ceases to be a designation of a relocation that is relative to a stationary place. Motion permeates spatiality.

³⁸⁷ See Sallis’s excellent discussion of the passage 49c – 50a and the debates surrounding its translations in the *Chorology* 101 – 107.

³⁸⁸ Benardete and Sallis both observe that the earth gains particular stability as Timaeus’s account progresses (*The Argument of the Action* 391 and *Chorology* 130, respectively).

If understood primarily as a locus of emplacement, that is, as space, the third kind has to be thought of not as a stationary place, but as a movement of spacing.³⁸⁹ By means of this kind of power, change—that mark of all that comes to be—takes (its own) place. The ideality of the noetic or of the self-same being that guides the more definite, recognizable looks and states of things is *placed* together with or is *spaced out* through the ongoing, changing fluidity and oscillation of becoming. Although, being and becoming are there prior to the dialogical introduction of emplacement, both being and becoming are in the same relation to each other as something changelessness is to change. They necessarily belong together—they share a logic—but otherwise, cannot immediately be related, unless by a mediating, unifying, actualizing third. The unfolding, moving spatiality, the happening of space allows the atemporal self-sameness to coincide with all that manifests in time. It is not a perfect coincidence. If it were, there would have been no reckoning with neither the self-same, changeless being, nor with the becoming of change. Spacing enables temporality in all becoming to take its place. Without such

³⁸⁹ Baracchi claims that “the concept [of space is] nowhere to be found in the ancient Greek insight” (*Of Myth, Life, and War* 176). What she means by this statement seems to be that in mythic tales, unlike time, space is not found in a divine guise. There is Χρόνος, Time. But there is no spatial counterpart to this god. Although, there are descriptions of a “broad-breasted earth” (Γαῖ’ εὐρύστερνος) in Hesiod (*Theogony. Works and Days. Testimonia* 12), the goddess Γαῖα, earth herself, is not as closely associated with space, as is Chronos with time. If what Baracchi means is that measurements (like Euclid’s) of and attempts at understanding space (like Melissus’, Parmenides’ and Zeno’s) do not amount to a conceptual insight about space, then Plato’s *Timaeus* stands out, especially, in regard to its treatment of spatiality. In the *Timaeus*, the progression of thinking about space is as follows: 1. from complete identity of land (even of motherland) with space (Critias’s speech at 27a – b, which is underscored in the dialogue, *Critias*), to 2. thinking about space as a physical entity (Critias’s report of what Solon heard from the Egyptian priest at 22b – e, as well as Timaeus’s own appropriation of understanding space as a physical place 33a – 36d). The said progression ends with 3. setting mechanical physics aside in favor of imaging spacing (chorology at 47e – 53c and the chorological articulation of the passages that address spatiality).

placing, the moments of becoming-change are indistinguishable and are, in effect, as self-same as the changeless being. Emplacement also serves to situate the self-same in its relation to the noetic and the sensed. By means of emplacement, unbreakable, impregnable, and “unbegotten” (ἀγέννητον, 51e) self-same being begins to cast a shadow over, or be the shadow against which, unities arise and recognition thereof works its way into the world of meaning. Refraction, in the spacing-out through which the logically belonging two (being and becoming) are realized, gives rise to images and dreams as much as it enables phantoms and delusions. One such phantom is being, when it is made into a caricature, that is, into a model to be copied. This phantom reigns over the first part of the *Timaeus*, where we have not yet been accepted (29d) or welcomed to pay heed to the third kind, the χώρα.

Attunement to the third kind is a tarrying along, which lets us express both how the spacing happens and how through its force whatever is, is neither simply self-same, nor is dispersed into utter unrecognizability. The said attunement requires yet another interlude. Timaeus asks us now to leave the state in which we seek to still or to abandon our wanderings and searches (ἐν ἡμῖν πεπλανημένους καταστησαίμεθα, 47b – c) so as to wander off into a ... dream (52b). This “dreaminess” (52c), if carefully attended to, is more lucid than the kind of “wakefulness,” which claims absolute knowledge and perfect understanding of being and becoming. The dream-state is preferable to the alert capacity to “blend together the many into a one and again in turn to dissolve a one into a many” (68d). In the state of such lucid dreaming, which Timaeus recommends, we realize that we are “incapable of waking up and making all [the] ... distinctions” (52c) or giving the

designations to things we heretofore thought we were capable of giving. The world in which the things come up as distinct, as namable, and categorizable begins to give way to the condition in which we reckon with the illusory, which is not to say completely false, character of our beliefs. The world appears as a place where it is impossible to be completely awake, if by complete wakefulness we mean that we can attain the exact and everlasting knowledge of what something is. It is not the case that knowledge is, in principle, impossible. However, it is the case that to claim absolute knowledge³⁹⁰ (such that holds unqualifiedly and eternally) is to be soundly asleep and not lucidly dreaming. Of course, it may be that, for a time, a truthful state of things is revealed to a human being (50a – b). However, in pointing to the permanence of “a third kind—that ... Space—which always *is*” (52a) as well as to it being “most perplexing [and] ... most hard to capture” (51b), Timaeus also points to the fact that the *χώρα*, without which the things would not have come to be and would not be available for our comprehension, escapes our attempts at perfect knowledge. Also the being of the phenomena themselves is “hard to tell of and wondrous” (50c).

Stressing the strange unknowability of the *χώρα*, Sallis says that it is, in some sense, best left nameless. Or rather, that “the name it is ... to be called, the name *χώρα*, if

³⁹⁰ In this context, consider Benardete’s analysis of the function of the good in Plato’s *Republic*.

The good, then, in restricting everything else, cannot itself be subject of any restrictions. It must be the whole that makes the beings parts of the whole. The beings are not as such parts; if they were, it would not be possible to know anything about one without knowing everything about all the others, and the *Republic* could not be devoted to justice to the partial exclusion of everything else. No being, therefore, can come to light before us as something to be known unless it is detachable from the whole to which it belongs. *The Second Sailing* 156

it is a name, has no meaning.”³⁹¹ Sallis draws here on the indeterminacy of the choric nature. This is a peculiar indeterminacy, because in its permanence, in regard to the fact that it “always is” (*Timaeus* 52a), the *χώρα* introduces what Sallis calls the “*duplicity of being*.”³⁹² Sallis says that it is the “duplicity in the double sense of doubling and of wandering, as in or into errancy.”³⁹³ The sense of wonder, the state of wondering, the possibility of equivocity and of error arrive together with the “bastard reasoning” (λογισμῷ τινι νόθῳ, *Timaeus* 52b). Timaeus introduces us to this strange reasoning in the second part of his account.

Although referred to by a name that hardly sounds inviting, the bastard reasoning engages with the possibility of erring and with the uncertainty of reaching the projected aim. It thus accomplishes the task of liberating us from the constraints of forcing beings to adhere to the programmatic judgments about the world. No longer do we have to look for such encasements as will guarantee a correspondence between the supreme form of a paradigm (παραδείγματος εἶδος, 48e) and its apparent “likeness” (εἰκόνας, 29b) or its “imitation” (μίμημα, 48e). Reasoning done in the register of grounding, spacing-motion, invites us to reexamine, now, the first part of the account and the generative makings that appear in it. Particularly, we can now reflect through the refiguring power or δύναμις (49a) of the *χώρα* on what was said about the cosmic soul (30b) so as to reckon, eventually, with the soul’s “mortal form” (εἶδος ... ψυχῆς ... τὸ θνητόν, 69b).

³⁹¹ *Chorology* 111

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 113

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

4. From Mechanical Movement to Metaphoric Emplacement

The noetic paradigm, which guides the first part of Timaeus's narration, dictates that the soul must be because it houses nous and allows it to be within the cosmic body (30b).

The soul, then, functions as an intermediary third between the intelligent and the corporeal. However, these strict divisions (between the noetic, the psychic, and the corporeal) outstrip themselves even as they are being made. Sallis observes, for example, that instead of following the proposed order of the cosmic making, Timaeus fails to tell first of how the soul was made so as to then proceed to tell us of the makings of the body.³⁹⁴ It is “as if the soul were ready-made”³⁹⁵ and only needed to be placed within the body. Having been thus placed, the soul is, nonetheless, also said to be “stretched ... throughout the whole ... to the point of covering the body” (*Timaeus* 34b). This all-encasing psychic bubble, which radiates from within the body of the cosmos, does not serve to “stretch the living being beyond itself, opening it to alterity.”³⁹⁶ Instead, the soul is used to insulate the cosmos (*Timaeus* 33c – 34b).

The complete veiling (περικαλύπτω, 34b, 36e) that the soul provides is mentioned by Timaeus once again after he gives the description of psychic formation and says that once the “soul had become agreeable to the mind of her constructor, he proceeded to build within her all that was bodily in form and he joined them with one another by bringing them together center to center” (36d – 37e). Under the auspices of the constructive imitation of the noetic, under the paradigm that sees being as changeless,

³⁹⁴ *Chorology* 63 – 64

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 64

³⁹⁶ *Chorology* 63

self-same *eidos*, and that understands becoming as an inferior copy thereof, distinctions, which Timaeus is attempting to relate, yield a fantastic picture. Distinctions between the body, soul, and mind—those cuts and folds and joinings without which the craft about which Timaeus talks would stall and without which the blueprint would lose its significance for making—simply do not hold. Not only the descriptions of intellect, body, and soul (30a – c), but also those of beauty and proportion (31b – 32c), of being, sameness, and otherness (35a – b and 37a – b), of circular and psychic motion (36b – c and 37a – c, respectively) as well as of musical ratios (36a – b) are encased within Timaeus’s narration of how the craftsman goes about making the cosmos. All of these distinctions and accounts cannot be simply discounted on the grounds that the completed, insulated cosmos looks both comic and fantastic. It is, however, prudent to question their origin or impetus that sets the dividing and the making into motion. Consider Timaeus’s divisions and mixings not as a “recipe” for cosmic making, but as projections of a human mind. These models, categories, and structures are images (εἰκόνα, 29b) projected onto the already extant cosmos. They *look* (to Timaeus) *like* they would be put to use *if* it were a super- or a supra-human intellect that guided the cosmic making. However, the following interposition must be stressed: between Timaeus’s craftsman’s intellect and the production of the cosmos, is a human mind at work.³⁹⁷ It is according to *our* mind, and

³⁹⁷ On this point see Benardete’s succinct conjecture about what is at stake in the divine making in Book X of the *Republic*. The supposition is that “thought ... either uses as images only the visible models it itself makes or, since everything that either becomes or is has been made, thought can confidently use anything visible as an image” (*The Second Sailing* 168). The latter alternative is what we would have to subscribe to if we took seriously the suggestion that there is only divine mind at work in the making of the Timaeian cosmos and no tacit human intervention.

not according to the intellect of a god,³⁹⁸ that we imaginatively discern how the cosmos is or should be constructed; how it is made according to a mind's design (κατὰ νοῦν, 36d).³⁹⁹

Prescribing how the soul would come to be, where it would be, and what it would accomplish, the image that is cut out *kata noun*, the cosmic blueprint, shows the signs of being in need of multiple revisions. The simple cut that would secure production of a likeness, which beautifully made images would model (28a, 29b), does not suffice because it attempts to generate—mechanically—the origin of life.⁴⁰⁰ What is needed is a kind of thinking and saying about generation that would account for or, better still, that would be in accord with, the living change, that is, with the movement of nature.

Although already present in Timaeus's first account, movement, there, is mechanically

³⁹⁸ I am aware that my claim, which presents not the divine mind, but the human intellect, as the guarantor of understanding, is in direct contradiction to the interpretive tradition, which takes the exact opposite to be the case. For instance, Thomas Aquinas' commentaries on Aristotle as well as Aquinas' views in *The Summa Theologica* should be consulted if one wants to get a sense of the developments that inform the school of thought, which places the divine or agent intellect at the core of the human capacity to know about the world as well as to know anything at all. Cf. *Summa Theologica*, "Treatise on Man" (Fathers of the English Dominican Province, trans. Chicago, IL: William Benton Publishing, 1952), Volume I, 378 – 527. See, particularly, articles 3 ("Whether There is an Agent Intellect") and 6 ("Whether Intellectual Knowledge is Derived From Sensible Things").

³⁹⁹ The analyses of mechanical production that follow my presentation of the noetic creation of the world should be compared to Zeller's remarks about Anaxagoras' thinking (*Die Philosophie der Griechen* 686 – 87). Zeller reminds us that Anaxagoras' nous is anthropomorphic. He also states that Anaxagoras' mind produces, mixes, and causes whatever comes into being just as a "machine god" (686) would. Zeller further cites Plato's *Phaedo* to underscore the problems that can be raised in view of Anaxagoras' treatment of the mind's productive role and power. Consult also the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* article, which locates references to Anaxagoras' mind in Euripides' *Trojan Women* (886) ("Anaxagoras," <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/anaxagoras/> Accessed on March 27, 2015).

⁴⁰⁰ I am indebted to Kevin Marren for this insight. Our conversations about Henri Bergson's thinking helped me catch the general drift of the *Timaeus*. During those conversations, I was led to see the underlying dialogical suggestions that render unsound the attempts to generate life as we know it (or give an account of such generation) mechanically.

defined. However, if there is a way to understand mechanics with an eye on nature; if there is a way to let the natural movement be expressed in other than mechanical terms, then the choric emplacement, the spacing-movement must be brought to bear on the movements of the initial or the “first” third, which is the soul. Χώρα and ψυχή can they be thought together?

According to the outline of the psychic making in the first account, the soul “was from these three portions (μοιρῶν), from the nature of the Same and Other and from Being” (37a). The craftsman, when he makes the soul, draws on the three allotments (μοῖρα), not the three parts (μέρη). Although the craftsman’s exactness guides the making when he divides and measures out the parts (μερισθεῖσα, 37a) that constitute the soul, by means of these divisions, he draws, also, on fatefulness of the unmeasurable measure—the mythical, incalculable precision of the three Fates. Necessity that guides the artful making of the soul is mythical necessity. It is none other, but Necessity (ἀνάγκη),⁴⁰¹ who is the mother of the three “Fates—Lachesis, Clotho, and Atropos” (*Republic* 617c). Cutting, dividing, and counting come up, in Timaeus’s first discourse, in an attempt to account for the mythical limitlessness. Benardete refers to such counting as “arithmetic ... whose highest achievement is the ordering of time.”⁴⁰² Temporal sensibility arises when we pay attention to the limiting moments—to the rhythmic alterations of night and day, the change of seasons, and the movements of the Sun and the

⁴⁰¹ I am indebted to Baracchi for the reminder that there is a dialogical significance to the mythical presentation of the three Fates as the daughters of Necessity. See Baracchi’s discussion of *Republic* X (617b – c) in conjunction with her remarks about Necessity in the *Timaeus* (*Of Myth, Life, and War* 190 – 91).

⁴⁰² *The Tragedy and Comedy of Life* 148, note 28

Moon (*Timaeus*, 37d – e, 39c – d). The counting of time comes next. It begins when we observe the regular and measurable aspects of the world as it is being ordered in accordance with the calculations (λογισμὸς, 34a and λογισμῶν, 47c) of the mind.

Perhaps it is because order and construction (σύστασις, 36d) guide Timaeus's first account that Benardete finds there to be a bridgeless rift between it and the second speech guided by the dreamy, choric logic. Constructive and mechanical portrayals of the limitless, of course, are bound to fail.⁴⁰³ Limitlessness cannot be counted, but it does not mean that the counting, which is done, amounts to nothing. Minimally, the counting of time, for instance, points back to the excessiveness of the temporal sensibility. It points to that excess and non-definability without which nothing could be marked as happening at “such and such” a precise time. It is then, the excessive, “bastard reasoning” (52b), when it is activated in respect of the first part of Timaeus's speech, that overturns Benardete's predicament. It allows us to “unify ... the arithmetic of the first part [and] ... the ordering of time ... with the geometry of the second part, which is grounded in a ‘space’.”⁴⁰⁴ And yet, this unification, as we already know, cannot amount to the “mathematical physics.”⁴⁰⁵ If it did, such a unification would still abide by what Benardete sees as Aristotle's belief that the “principles of bodies in motion can be separated, at least in part, from the principles of intelligible beings.”⁴⁰⁶ This divisionary, mereological, filleting

⁴⁰³ Benardete agrees with this observation and gives the following reason why it is the case: “the causal account, which is ultimately mechanical, presupposes a teleology that failed: whatever is, is a falling away from a perfect model” (*The Second Sailing* 174).

⁴⁰⁴ *The Tragedy and Comedy of Life* 148, note 28

⁴⁰⁵ *The Argument of the Action* 377

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

dream vision (according to which we strive to categorize all of being, and from which, I claim, we, being human, hope to, but cannot, fully awaken) leaches into the logic of a lucid dream.

The transformation from the somnambulant state, in which divisions seem to be as clear-cut as ever,⁴⁰⁷ to the lucid dreaming, in which the former certainty begins to cave in under the weight of our attunement to the pre-calculative, pre-differentiated workings of emplacing-movement or *chora*, reproduces the precarious balance between eidetic self-sameness and sensible multiplicity. This transformation denies complete separability between the principles of idealities and those of actual beings. It turns out that in denying to the ideal and to the actual a complete separation or a clean cut, lucidity, nonetheless, allows presence in self-sameness.⁴⁰⁸ Self-sameness in becoming guarantees the perceptible constitution and being of those beings that are “sensed, begotten, always swept along, coming to be in some region and again perishing from there” (52a). Here is how the transformation that instills self-sameness in becoming happens: Timaeus begins

⁴⁰⁷ Benardete shows how it is the case that while insisting that one has made proper distinctions (between opinion and knowledge, for example), one is most mistaken about the knowledge that one thinks one has. See his chapter on “Knowledge and Opinion” in *The Second Sailing*, and page 136, especially.

⁴⁰⁸ Sallis counters this view, insisting that what is described by Timaeus as the state of complete wakefulness is the desired condition in which “one who awakens from the dream will ... recognize that the intelligible εἶδη are set apart [in such a way], that they do not pass anywhere else into another” (“Daydream,” *Review Internationale de Philosophie*, 1998), 52.205 (3): 397 – 410. However, I argue that even if the eidetic self-sameness maintains its integrity, self-sameness as a principle still passes into and is shared with the generated beings. This sharing of a principle of self-sameness is, precisely, what is accomplished by the dream logic exhibited by the passage 52a – d, in the *Timaeus*. In a different context, Sallis offers an understanding of what is at stake in the “logic of the dream-work” (*The Logic of Imagination* 119). This other view, which Sallis has of the dream and the logic at work in it, can be interpreted to support my understanding of the dream-logic passage in the *Timaeus* (52a – d).

by stating that there is “one kind [that] is the form, which is in the self-same condition [κατὰ ταῦτὰ εἶδος]” (52a) and which—this is important—is “neither receiving into itself anything else from anywhere else nor itself going anywhere into anything else” (52a). The self-sameness of this kind, as Timaeus insists, is dependent on its not going elsewhere, not being something other than itself. Having described this first kind, Timaeus says, as he already had before, that there is “a second kind, which has the same name [ὁμώνυμον ὅμοιόν] as ... and is similar [ἐκείνῳ]” (52a) to the first. This kind does not attain to the self-sameness and impregnability of being. The second kind is becoming. Timaeus then speaks of “a third kind” (52a) or the χώρα. The third kind and its choric logic, call for a dreamy thinking or thinking through a dream. The third kind calls for lucid dreaming. Under the auspices of such thinking the self-sameness, attributable heretofore only to the ideated or to the ideal, is now emplaced within that which happens or unfolds also in becoming. Now “all that has birth [is ...] holding fast to Being” (52b, 52c). Now “so long as something is one thing and another thing another, since neither of the two ever comes to be in the other, neither will simultaneously become one and the same thing, and also two” (52c).⁴⁰⁹ The dream-logic installs self-sameness in the world of everything that comes to be. Self-sameness, which heretofore was restricted to the particular case of εἶδος, is now transposed in such a way as to apply also to the many “somethings” presenting themselves as the many beings of the sensible world. In this transposition, being is freed up from identification with the idea of something that never

⁴⁰⁹ ὥς ἕως ἄν τι τὸ μὲν ἄλλο ᾗ, τὸ δὲ ἄλλο, οὐδέτερον ἐν οὐδετέρῳ ποτὲ γενόμενον ἐν ἅμα ταῦτὸν καὶ δύο γενήσεσθον. The passage can also be rendered as, “Until this [something] is one [such] and this [something] is another, neither of the two becomes in the other, growing the same with it, [so as] to become, at the same time, two things” (52c).

comes to be. Being is, but being is not ideal. Ideality is now reserved for the “imperishable ... invisible ... and ... unsensed” (51e – 52a), which does not share itself, that is, does not dissolve to the point of vanishing in the “sensed [and] ... begotten” (52a). However, the ideal shares now, in its guiding principle of self-sameness, with actual beings. The chore of this transformative occurrence is a substitution play that happens between images or likenesses and phantasms (εἰκόνες, φάντασμα, 52c) as the dream becomes lucid with the χώρα.⁴¹⁰

The saying of this lucidity, nonetheless, is as difficult as ever. We have been warned about this difficulty (λόγος ... χαλεπὸν καὶ ἀμυδρὸν, 49a). This is how Timaeus, aware of the demanding character of the enterprise, renders the substitution play when he aims at “speaking the truth” (τὸληθὲς λέγειν, 52c): “in the case of a likeness, since the

⁴¹⁰ In the context of the substitution play of images, consider Sallis’s remarks in the *Chorology* about the need to pay an especially careful attention to the meaning and interpretation of image when it comes to thinking images along with and from the purview of the χώρα. Sallis warns that

if the third kind is, as Timaeus declares, completely formless, utterly amorphous, every image will be limited, assuming that it is the very nature of an image as such to present the form of that which it images but from which it is materially distinct. If the third kind lacks all determination, then one must wonder how there can be an image that has any bearing on itself. 114

Compare this concern with images’ instability and lack of self-identity, which the choric logic generates, with Benardete’s remarks about images and the *chora*.

Despite the number of images Timaeus applies to space, he never likens it to a mirror, for it is the ground of all orientation and consequently stands in the way of any isomorphism between being and image: the image (*eikōn*), since that for which it has come into being does not belong to itself, is a constantly moving phantom (*phantasma*) of some other (*heteron ti*) (52c2 – 3). We attach a condition to anything we believe to be: to be something is to be something somewhere. This somewhere (*pou*) is our acknowledgement that every something depends on something other than itself in order to be. *The Argument of the Action* 394.

very thing to which it has come to refer doesn't even belong to the likeness itself, and since it's always swept along as a phantasm of something other, for these reasons it is appropriate that it come to be *in* some other thing" (52c).⁴¹¹ Likeness is of something, but unless there is a need to liken something to something else, to image that something metaphorically, there is no need for, nor understanding of, likenesses or analogies. When likeness is seen as a part of an analogy, it is no longer understood as a perfect image or a copy of its model. It becomes a moment in the process of likening and, thereby, ceases to be self-determining. Abandoning the logic by which likeness refers back to its model and is tied to it linguistically as well as by means of its appearance or look (52a), choric emplacement speeds along the process of imaging or of the play of analogy (of ἀναλογία, of that which is ἀνὰ λόγον, that is, in measure or in step with certain speech) and substitution. The "*in* some other thing" (52c) to which Timaeus refers is a generative requirement of likenesses. It can be understood not as a stationary place, but as an imaginative and creative play of metaphor and substitution. The play has such a character that *in* it something that is about to no longer be itself refers to something that is not yet itself and by means of this referring designates what is to be recognized as something that is about to become itself.⁴¹²

⁴¹¹ ὥς εἰκόνι μὲν, ἐπεὶ περ οὐδ' αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἐφ' ᾧ γέγονεν ἑαυτῆς ἐστίν, ἑτέρου δέ τινος ἀεὶ φέρεται φάντασμα, διὰ ταῦτα ἐν ἑτέρῳ προσήκει τινὶ γίγνεσθαι. The passage can be rendered to read, "As the image is not itself [on account] of that [thing] for which it came to be, it, therefore, flees always [presenting itself] as the other thing's phantom, and through this comes to be present in that other thing" (52c).

⁴¹² This sense of the transformative and transposing work of the metaphor is expressed by Paul Ricoeur in his article on "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling" in

In the *Topics*, Aristotle, describing the relationship between metaphor and analogy, says that “metaphor makes what is signified somehow familiar on account of likeness (for everyone in making metaphors does so in conformity with some similarity)” (140a10 – 12).⁴¹³ This is how metaphor works for Aristotle: 1. something that is not yet talked about, something that is not yet manifest, something that is about to be recognized 2. has to become familiar. But how can something that is not yet manifest be familiar? It can be made familiar 3. on the basis of likeness. This likeness now becomes a transfer point. Through its work, imagination carries over that which is familiar into an incognito land. Imagination calls up that which is not yet reckoned with by means of implantation of “some similarity” (*Topics* 140a12). That is, through likening that which is already familiar to that which is yet to be recognized. The special case of poor metaphor that Aristotle then immediately cites is an inopportune description of law. Aristotle denies that calling law an “image” (εἰκόνα, 140a14) of that which is just by nature is a good idea. Davis comments on Aristotle’s passage and notes that “Aristotle seems to allude to Plato’s *Statesman* 293e and 300c – e where the Eleatic Stranger says that the six defective regimes (three law-abiding and three not) are all imitations of the one right regime.”⁴¹⁴ While he is teaching us about the way that metaphor works with likeness, Aristotle also confirms that copy-images do not make good metaphors. Why? Because

Critical Inquiry, 1978. 5(1): 143 – 159. Cf. Ricoeur’s much longer treatment of metaphor in *La Métaphore vive* (Paris, France: Éditions du Seuil, 1975).

⁴¹³ μεταφορὰ ποιεῖ πως γνώριμον τὸ σημαινόμενον διὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα· πάντες γὰρ οἱ μεταφέροντες κατὰ τινα ὁμοιότητα μεταφέρουσιν (*Loeb Classical Library No. 391*), 566. I use the Loeb edition for the Greek, but the Benardete and Davis copy of *On Poetics*, in which the English translation of the passage from the *Topics* is given in a footnote 144 on page 51.

⁴¹⁴ *On Poetics* 52, note 144

they do not generate a reckoning with something heretofore concealed. Such images do not place our understanding out into the concealed. Copy-images do not carry us over (making it possible for the imagination to prepare us, to make us familiar—*somehow*—with something that is foreign). They do not emplace, but merely stay put, as beautiful static pictures.

Through the metaphoric play of likenesses—the play that takes place by means of substitution, transport, or carrying over; through the emplacing play of μεταφορά—the world is populated with temporally subsistent beings that are self-same. This self-similitude only subsists through the continuous dispersal and differentiation (that is, by means of a return to, not as a copy of, a self). The world, made possible as a choric unfolding, opens unto both wonderfully and perilously fantastical possibilities for beings. Plato's dialogues retrace this unfolding and Benardete captures the spirit of this retracement best:

The truth juxtaposes a metaphor with a simile. It juxtaposes a phantastic with an eikastic phrase. A metaphor identifies two things; it takes the other for the same. A simile acknowledges a difference in the sameness it has seen. The truth about the likely story Timaeus tells is that as metaphor it is likely (*eikōs*), and as simile it is a phantom image ... Contrary, then, to one's first impression, the phantastics of the second part of the *Timaeus* is eikastical, and the eikastics of the first part phantastical. This turnaround is, as Strauss illustrated, the essential trait of any Platonic argument. If it does not occur, we are still stuck in the Cave and have not yet begun to make an ascent. *The Argument of the Action* 392

We take this succinct description as the key to realigning Timaeus's speeches in such a way as to show, despite of Benardete's own skepticism, that parts one and two of

Timaeus's account, belong together. If this is shown, then the vital unity of the *Timaeus* can be discerned. The basic schema that can be gleaned from Benardete's suggestion is:

Part One: Eikastics is phantastical; account of arithmetic yields temporal order

Part Two: Phantastics is eikastical; account of geometry stems from focus on
“space.”

If we modify this schema, so as to include Timaeus's reflections on the soul and his introduction of the *χώρα*, then we get the following alignment:

Part One: (Arithmetic→Time) Eikastics is Phantastical (Soul exhibits Mechanical Movement)

Part Two: (Geometry←Space) Phantastics is Eikastical (*Χώρα* or Spacing-Movement)

We now take Part Two as a non-mechanically conceived account of Part One in order to show psychic movement that is in accord with chorology.

The series of movements attributed to the soul (the descriptions of movement that precede the account of time) state that “she [the soul] is moved throughout her whole self” (κινουμένη διὰ πάσης ἑαυτῆς, 37b) and that she sets herself in motion or that the soul is “self-moved” (ἐν τῷ κινουμένῳ ὑφ’ αὐτοῦ φερόμενος, 37b). The talk here is about the movement *of* the soul or about movement as an attribute, as something that is in respect or in relation to something else. The movement of the soul looks like it is according to itself. If movement here is an attribute, then it is of a kind that Aristotle later calls “καθ’ αὐτὸ” (*Posterior Analytics* 73a25) predication.⁴¹⁵ Given its essential

⁴¹⁵ Aristotle does not speak there of the soul, nor of its movement. However, consult his *Topics* 73b5 – 10. This is the passage that I primarily have in mind, when I extrapolate the kind of self-relation that obtains of psychic movement.

character, as presented, movement of the soul, in part one of Timaeus's speech, is relative movement. The movement of the soul is also causal, as is indicated by κινέω, which in the middle passive, as it is applied to the soul, signifies that soul herself is the cause of motion. The soul sets itself in a recursive, circular motion (ἀνακυκλουμένη, 37b).

Both the recursivity and the sui generic character of the psychic movement point to the possibilities of interpreting the soul as breaking through the restrictions of the reading, which is prescribed by the paradigm of craft or mechanical production. Conceptually, this movement lends itself to being understood non-mechanically. Nonetheless, κινέω, signifies most immediately, the kind of motion that describes well the movements of carts, of stones, or movements of people, in short, the mechanical dimension exhibited by the motions of bodies as they relocate relative to other stationary objects or to a place. The indication of bodily motion at work in the description of the movement that is said to belong to the soul is strengthened by the sense of the word φερόμενος (37b), which is a participial form of φέρω. The verb, φέρω, is usually applied to things relocated from one place to another, thus signifying something that is being carried. By contrast, the words that describe the ways in which the χώρα causes movement or how it moves are forms of πλανάω (48a), σείω (52e), and ταλαντόμαι (52e). These terms mean, respectively, to wander (as in: “to stray off course” as well as “to digress”), to quake or shake in agitation, and to oscillate. When speaking of the χώρα, Timaeus also uses forms of κινέω. However, choric κινέω, spacing-movement is not qualified by φέρω, which characterizes locomotion. The term that makes the movement out to be an attribute of something moved, as if movement existed separately from that

moved thing, is not applied to the *χώρα*. Instead, emplacement, spacing-movement is described as an occurrence in which it is hard to separate out the movement. The movement no longer happens in or to something, but becomes a medium—it becomes in-moved. Of course, to some mechanically moving bodies belong also, other, that is, non-mechanical dimensions of motion. Of course, also the seismic terms of wave-like oscillation, used to describe emplacement, are applicable, for example, to waves that propagate mechanically. It could well be that these points of tension (between mechanical motion and the flux of non-mechanical energies) will remain undissolved.

It may be that this tension is there so that we keep in mind at least two things. The first one is that from our human vantage point, actualities (ideated and sensible), states (epistemic and doxastic), being (psychic and bodily), dimensions (temporal and spatial), movement, (mechanical and otherwise conceived), necessarily (even if disjunctively), coincide and present themselves as *models*,⁴¹⁶ *schemas*, or *looks* of what is. The second

⁴¹⁶ In this context, consider the following exchanges transcribed in *Encounters and Reflections*:

Seth: Yes, I think this discovery of the action is a second sailing. Maybe you always have to do something like what happens in the *Republic*, where you make the movement to the invention of the perfect city only in order to step back from it.

Robert: You construct a model, which eventually has to be undermined?

Seth: Well, you might say, in other words, that mathematical physics is the paradigm for the first stage of philosophical thinking.

Ronna: Why do you say that?

Robert: Because what you do is, you take a domain and you provide this *Roster*, this form, but you give no account of it, you don't explain the form.

Ronna: Mathematical physics stands for the tension between structure and cause?

Seth: For structure without cause.

Michael: And the second sailing is a correction of that. But isn't there something illusory about trying to pinpoint the moment at which one makes the second sailing? It looks as if it is a continual state of undergoing, rather than something that happens once and then you're beyond it.

observation is that it matters a great deal which focal points we stress or, better, how we attune ourselves to that which is. It matters what guides our choice in privileging a given look or model. To express this view in terms of that language to which Plato, too, belongs—it matters which kind of εἶδος strikes us and stays with us at the time when the recurrent and mobile character of ῥυθμός gives its way to a definable look.⁴¹⁷ It matters to which looks (and, hence, conceptions) of nature we grow accustomed as they arise (not out of the non-), but rather from the pre- or arche- and also as the syn-organic modes. It makes sense that we turn to Plato as we trace these transformations and inquire into how we are shaped by them. The characters of Plato’s dialogues first laid out the movements that we are now retracing. Timaeus, for example, transfers the activity that has a human look—the playful step of the choral dance—onto the understanding of the ever-moving and the ever-changing forms of ῥυθμός by introducing into the flow of rhythmic change the notion of number.⁴¹⁸

Privileging the constructive paradigm or the model, which is understood, for the most part, mechanically, renders motion as an attribute of the soul. The soul under this paradigm, though it is capable of grasping (εφάπτεται, 37a) beings (capable of reaching

Seth: The real question—you might say the Platonic question—is: Is the trap door in a Platonic writing an imitation of the trap door in nature? 126 – 27

⁴¹⁷ Consult Émile Benveniste’s *Problems in General Linguistics* (trans. Meek, E. M. Miami, FL: University of Miami Press, 1971), 281 – 88. See, specifically, his discussion of the topic of the ancient Greek notion of ῥυθμός and its conception as “distinctive form, proportioned figure, arrangement, disposition” (285). Benveniste traces the linguistic value of rhythm to meanings that denote a structure; that is certain. However, the rhythmic arrangement, according to Benveniste, differs from the eidetic one. The difference is in a processual, changeable fluidity of ῥυθμός and the completeness or definiteness of εἶδος (286).

⁴¹⁸ Cf. *Problems in General Linguistics* 287.

outside of itself), is something that only serves to veil or to conceal and segregate the living cosmos. However, if it is reckoned with in a different manner, if it is considered not as a copy of a best, singular model (not as eikastical phantastics), but as one of the many possible looks or images (as phantastical eikastics) that are in constant play of substitution with other likely looks of being, then the action of self-moving soul ceases to be restrictive.

No longer seen as an attribute of something being carried, but as a carrying over of sense—as metaphor—the psychic movement is the imaging; it is the likeness-phantom play. We make good on Critias’s promise of translation, about which he speaks using a participial form of μεταφέρω (μετενεγκόντες in *Timaeus* 26c and μετενηνοχότας in *Critias* 113a), and transpose our understanding of relative motion into a non-mechanically or not entirely mechanically proliferative kind. First φέρω becomes μεταφέρω and then it is μεταφορά. Moving throughout herself, moving herself, moving in return to herself, the soul images the differentiation in similitude, the recursive, unfolding self-sameness that presences as living nature. Attunement to this differing-similitude is crucial because in the choric or in the choral play of imaging,⁴¹⁹ expansive and excessive psychic movement is abundant. By means of the attunement, through the

⁴¹⁹ A counter point to my presentation of the choric imaging play could be made by a reference to Sallis’s “Daydream.” There (399 – 400), Sallis claims that the “χώρα is not yet even a time of imagination” (399). Imagining does not exist, “not, at least, if imagining is taken to consist in somehow bringing images to presence before, as we say, the mind’s eye. For the time to which *Timaeus*’s discourse on the χώρα is directed is a time before the generation of the heaven” (Ibid.). Indeed, if we take imagination to mean the capacity to give to the mind images, that is, as a capacity to re-produce the image for the mind, then the choric is the pre-imaginative. However, if we think the χώρα as image-generative or as productive imaging, then, it is only proper that the choric image play gives rise to the world and, together with it, to a possibility of consciousness of the world-bound presentations.

echolocation that sounds the unseen, the core soul manifests as the correlate of the choric-emplacement; as generative spacing-movement that is metaphor. This substitution play, through which the structure of ideality is also given as the actual unfolding being, that is, in becoming, when heeded to, begins to sound like something that one younger brother says to another in *The River Runs Through It*. “All there is to thinking, ‘he said’ is seeing something noticeable which makes you see something you weren’t noticing which makes you see something that isn’t even visible.”⁴²⁰ Yet, once made visible, it is no longer as it was. Whatever it is that comes up to the surface is not merely refracted, it is made to have a look—whether apparent or conceptual—and, thus, in being manifested, what is called up is also changed.

We have already said that thinking of the invisible as if it were some perfect being and of the visible images as if they were copies, that is, as only second best to the invisible, is bound to the constructive paradigm. How is the metaphorical manifesting different? It differs because it does not presuppose ideal being that changes into a sensible or comprehensible becoming.⁴²¹ Rather, the metaphoric substitution renders

⁴²⁰ Norman F. Maclean (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 144. I am indebted to Professor Stuart D. Warner, who brought to my attention both the line, which Benardete especially liked, as well as the film and the novel in which it appears. As Burger reports in *Encounters and Reflections*, “Benardete uses this line as the epigraph for his book *Socrates’ Second Sailing: On Plato’s Republic*” (127, note 6).

⁴²¹ Again, in Benardete’s writing, the reason why idealities do not simply become reality is clearly stated. When thinking about the manifestation of the beings for our understanding, Benardete writes,

The disclosure of the beings hides something. It hides not only what causes the disclosure but the fact that the cause of the disclosure is the cause of the being of the beings ([*Republic*], 509b6 – 8). That which discloses and that which is disclosed are bound together in an undisclosed way. They are manifestly separate and secretly together. The disclosure of the beings, then, must be also the concealment of the beings, for the mind

looks or models as images that are in constant play. The images are continuously carried over into and out of, together with, the emplacing force of recursive self-sameness. This performative capacity of metaphor allows for a kind of synesthesia, for image-sounding, for spatial unfolding, for reflective return *out of* the imaginative and poetic thinking *to* the noticing of mythically given self.

If seen as images at play, as likenesses that can, also, turn into and allow for phantoms, the models are no longer set to a single and perfect noetic paradigm. They shapeshift and break out of the harmonic tone; and take on a character of the (very) many sensings through which being overtakes us and gives itself. No doubt, such imaging also gives rise to the degenerative modes of looks, of likenesses, and phantoms. The possibility of pathological development is not forestalled in bringing ourselves to the kind of thinking that does not shy away from sensibility or that does not prefer *seeming* clarity and power-granting ideals as means of constructing our visions of the world. The thinking that does not subjugate imagination solely to re-productive movements, that is not squeamish in the face of insurmountable and necessary darkness, moves with nature's movement and carries life. However, it is also a thinking that attunes itself to the pathological psychic formations or to the looks of corruption.

does not know through the disclosure of Truth that it is thinking the beings. *The Second Sailing* 163.

5. Psychic Pathology

Images, looks, and models appear to and for us. Even if formed in accord with nature's movement,⁴²² they are of our own making. Hence, to reckon with the pathological psychic movement, as it gives rise to the malignantly destructive formations (although there are, of course, necessary modes of the destructive force) yielded by the metaphoric play, means to think along with Timaeus's account of the making of the mortal soul and, especially, of the human soul.⁴²³

The making of the cosmic soul and the cosmic animal, as well as the making of the mortal soul, is preceded by a description of the register in which this production is carried out. The paradigmatic register to which the making of the mortal, and thus also of the human, soul is set, leaves behind the choric unfolding and returns to constructive building (69a – b). Timaeus's discussion of the mixing or blending of color (67e – 68d) immediately precedes the reintroduction of the constructive paradigm. While describing the colorific mixings and makings, Timaeus specifies that when it comes to tests (βάσανος, 68d) and experiments (ἔργον, 68d) done on the basis of the investigations (σκοπέω, 68d) about color, humans are “ignorant” (ἄγνοέω, 68d) in comparison to the

⁴²² Heidegger suggests a sense in which there may be a coincidence between reflective thinking and acting and the manifestations of being as nature's movement. For his analyses of such coinciding, as well as for Heidegger's view of the intrinsic character of tragedy in human life, see his explanation of “The Anaximander Fragment (GA5)” in *The Early Greek Thinking* (Caputo, J. and Krell, D. trans. New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishing, 1989). Cf. “The Restriction of Being” in *Introduction to Metaphysics* (Fried, G. and Polt, R. trans. New Heaven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), where Heidegger discusses the indissoluble violence, which is at the core of human being. Pathological permutations of harmful modes of this kind of essential violence represent also that which I understand as malignant destruction.

⁴²³ The difficulty and the danger of discerning the movements that signal psychic pathology is reflected in the difficulty and the danger of settling on a single interpretation of what Sallis refers to as “the most disputed [passage] in the entire dialogue” (*Chorology* 101). For Sallis's treatment of the elusive passage mentioned, see *Chorology* 101 – 5.

“divine nature” (θείας φύσεως, 68d). Kalkavage notes that the word used for test, “*basanos*, ... can also refer to trial by torture. Timaeus [then] ... warns us against ... violence and presumption by reminding us of our inevitable human limits. But why should *color*, in particular, provoke so strong a warning?”⁴²⁴ In other words, why should color serve as a marker of our capacity not only to experiment with natural mixings, but also to fail at such experimentation? Why is our attempt to imitate something that is beyond ourselves—the work of some divine being—presented as an endeavor to torture out of nature its combinatory powers? How curious that this alignment between violence, hubris, acts against nature—unnatural acts—and the descriptions of color, which is the proper object of sight, should be placed immediately before Timaeus’s discourse on the making of the mortal soul.

Simply put, color is perceived by sight. Sight allows us to see the appearances of things in images, in likenesses, and as phantoms. Sight is the power about which Timaeus wishes to warn us. Sight, because of its tremendous capacity to make manifest the countless contours and surfaces of the world, seduces human beings into thinking that we are “sufficiently knowledgeable, and also able, to blend together the many into a one and again in truth to dissolve a one into a many” (68d).⁴²⁵ Sight gives to us a sham confidence about the many divisions, distinctions, unifications, and separations—about the cuttings

⁴²⁴ *Plato’s Timaeus* 103, nt. 119

⁴²⁵ Cf. Timaeus 92e, where Timaeus ridicules “men [who are] harmless but light-minded, and studious of the heavenly bodies yet believing, in their naivete, that the firmest demonstrations about such things come through sight.” This passage needs to be placed in its comical context in order to be properly understood, but even the preliminary reading stresses the irony of errors that arise out our privileging of sight.

and moldings, categorizations, definitions, and creations of the world—that we carry out. Sight misleads us into thinking that opinion and knowledge can be kept neatly separate and that there is a state of complete wakefulness, which does away with the necessity to pay heed to the logic of the choric dream (52a – c). Tyrannical Oedipus,⁴²⁶ who withstands the Sphinx’s test by seeing through the tripartite riddle to its unitary answer, denies himself the capacity to see the apparent colors of the world. Prophetic Tiresias,⁴²⁷ who sees through to the perverse mixing of Oedipus’s relations, lacks physical sight.

Timaeus says that we are given “vision” (47b) as a means of likening our own thinking to the “utterly unwandering [ἀπλανεῖς] circuits of the god” (47c). What kind of thinking would it be, then? Set still, likened to some unwandering state, thinking (if it were even to maintain its name) would lose its movement. The metaphorical playfulness of thinking, which takes us from whatever is disclosed to that which is not yet known,

⁴²⁶ Benardete offers an analysis of *thumos*, sight, beauty, and unnaturalness that brings together the figure of Oedipus with the story of Leontius from the *Republic* (*The Second Sailing* 99 – 101). Benardete gives another interpretation of Leontius’ character and the significance of Socrates’ narration of Leontius’s story, when he speaks about the “impossible ... understanding of the real city” (124). Interestingly, when Benardete discusses Leontius in conjunction with Oedipus, he points to the fact that there are some things, into which we cannot think ourselves. There are things that must be experienced in order to be understood. To put it in Benardete’s terms: “The communism of the best city welcomes Oedipus. Even his self-ignorance, which extends to his being the riddle the riddle of the Sphinx excepts, has its counterpart here: the *thumoeidetic*, which is the driving force behind eidetic analysis, does not let itself be understood eidetically. Access to it lies through experience and anecdote” (101).

⁴²⁷ The different versions of the Tiresias myth say that Tiresias lost his eyesight either to Hera’s or to Athena’s anger. In the former case, Hera is displeased with Tiresias’s response to her inquiry about whether it is women or men who most enjoy sexual intercourse. Tiresias, having been both a woman and a man, finds that sex is more pleasurable for women. Zeus, then, gifts Tiresias with the power of prophetic sight to compensate for Tiresias’s loss of physical eyesight. The myth in which Athena blinds Tiresias says that Tiresias pays with his eyesight for watching Athena and his own mother, Chariclo, bathe. Athena, then, bestows on Tiresias the gift of prophecy (*Dictionary of Classics Mythology* 255).

would be lost. It would be completely literal. It would be imitative in the highest degree, but not in the best sense. It would be copy-thinking or no thinking at all.

Picking up on the tonality suggested by the choric refiguration of Timaeus's speeches, we can connect the danger of non-thinking with the misapplied power of sight. Now we hear the warning that Timaeus issues against our attempts to experiment with the mixings of nature while remaining in the state of forgetfulness. We notice the hubris that forces us to disregard the fact that the natural blends are unreproducible. The excessive abundance of psychic movement is simply inimitable. The movement, which is correlative to the choric emplacement, unfolds as living nature and images or manifests being. This movement cannot be reproduced. We cannot encapsulate it. This means that whatever looks present themselves, and whatever shapes we give to this movement, if we resolve to cling to any of the given looks, we are bound to imbue them with sham permanence. No longer being in resonance with the play of the metaphoric emplacement, the desire to hold on to the particular look of things imparts to the psychic movement a twisting trajectory. For a time, such an impartation may serve to sound out something that is particularly difficult to abide by, to pay heed to, to hear and to be in attunement with or to see. Presumably, artistic and scientific genius, which sends out of the spacing-movement and into the world genuine discoveries, operates by seizing, for a time being, a saturated image as it announces that which is. However, the impermanence of images (as well as the violence of the tyrannical hold that some of them have on us) the fleetingness of our mortal nature, and the limitlessness of the in-moving play, all suggest that everything must run its course and then be let go. The choric porosity, the spacing out,

taking in, carrying over, and sending forth, which the metaphoric emplacement enables, all indicate that once something has lived its time, it has lived up to its living limit. It has outlived itself and it should be allowed to depart. Although, this does not mean that it ought not be remembered. The intent to hold on to a hollow, lifeless look, no matter how forceful its imprint or how productive its power, defies the poetic psychic movement and the metaphoric character of the choric play.

Such attitude is too literal, too Oedipus-like. It is tyrannical. In such a stubbornly steadfast state one aims neither to remember, nor to reconstitute something. One simply wants to keep it *as it is*. Since that which one aims to keep has passed into a “was,” since it no longer is there, Oedipus-like tenacity, this desire to keep having in one’s presence the bygone looks and to keep looking at the “forbidden faces” (*Oedipus Tyrannus* 1243 – 4) or images of things is a delusion.⁴²⁸ The tyranny of such lifeless images exerts itself also over Critias as he dreams to live by the “account [that] has become fixed in [him] ... like the burned-in markings of an indelible painting” (*Timaeus* 26c). Perhaps this image, branded into Critias’s soul, could be enlivened. But it cannot be brought to life exactly as it is. It is necessarily modified, transformed in the processes of actualization. The limit of the image, just like the limit of the noetic paradigm, which renders both incapable of being manifested *exactly* as they are envisioned, does not render either one as inherently corrupt. Rather, dismissal of the limits that apply to them sets the pathological psychic development into motion. It is this kind of excessive adherence to

⁴²⁸ I do not suggest here that we think about the inappropriate tenacity in terms of the common or linear conception of time. For my analysis of delusion (albeit, not necessarily of a tyrannical kind) and the destructive permanence of phantasms, see “Temporality of Psychosis.”

the exact or perfect model of how things ought to be that is denounced by the chorus in Antigone when it greaves the destructive uprooting of the “stock of Oedipus, ... /now hacked down, with blood-red dust up/from the nether gods,/madness made of logic, principle turned frenzy” (*Antigone*, 730).⁴²⁹ The pain and the anger vociferated in these lines are directed at the Labdacids. They, themselves, through their vitriolic obstinacy, by means of a “principle turned [into] frenzy” bring about their own demise.

The dogged desire for permanence, for stability, for stillness, this insistence on literal clarity; desire for precision, which turns into an unnatural perfection when it is transferred onto (human) life, spells the development of psychic pathology. Curiously, originating in a desire to hold on fast to the precise look of things, the infatuation with the hollow phantoms soon develops into a carnivalesque, ceaseless succession of visions that are no longer lucid, nor comforting. The pathological state, if it had to be put into a language of a dream, is both sleepless and nightmarish. It is tormenting and mad, although it is not necessarily a state of complete insanity.

How can we tell that the image is no longer alive, but hollow? How can we tell that there is a malignant twisting suffered by the soul? We cannot. At least not always. How can we let go of findings that are most sure, of things that are most dear, and of ways to which we are accustomed to so much so that they have grown into us and grooved into our being their imprint? We cannot always do that. Then what good is

⁴²⁹ *Sophocles' Antigone* (Braun, E. R. trans. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1989). Cf. Benardete's remarks about the outrageous implications of rampant rationality for the communistically arranged city in the *Republic*, where, Benardete says, “Antigone would feel right at home” (*The Second Sailing* 119).

Timaeus's warning? What good is it, if having issued it he sets his speech, once more, to the modality of the constructive paradigm? Although he does, the paradigm of mechanical production, which guides the third part of Timaeus's speech, is transformed while the second part is echoing through it. Chorology attunes Timaeus's speeches to the respiring of necessity. It then carries necessity over to the point of convergence with nous.

The noetic is set together with the necessary and is implanted back into the constructive. Moreover, the necessary, just as it was at the outset of the study of the *χώρα*, is now given a more prominent voice. The noetic no longer dominates the production. Instead, we hear about the kind of "reasoning" (*λογιζόμενον*, 69a), which suggests that "without the necessary [*ἀναγκαῖον*] it isn't possible to discern ... things we seriously pursue, nor ... to apprehend them, nor to partake in them in any way whatsoever" (69a). The noetic or the mind's operative power is always there. It is a constant, but it is only one constant. As one coordinate of life, it is no longer brought to mastermind, to blanket, or to dominate the all. Giving relief to life's movement, necessity is coordinated with the power of the mind. This coordination directs Timaeus in the third part of his narration. Timaeus sounds, by means of speech, the imaging movement as he places within "one animal ... all [other] animals both mortal and immortal" (69c). He then proceeds to say that the "immortal principle of soul" (*ἀρχὴν ψυχῆς ἀθάνατον*, 69c) finds its place in "a mortal body" (*θνητὸν σῶμα*, 69c). Within the union of these, is "housed ... another form of soul, the mortal form" (*εἶδος ἐν αὐτῷ ψυχῆς προσωκοδόμουν τὸ θνητόν*, 69c). The imitating work that goes into making of the mortal soul,

importantly, does not imitate the self-same motionlessness of a perfect paradigm; of an unseen standard.⁴³⁰ Instead, the work imitates *the actions* and *the movements* of the craftsman (70c). The movement that is being imitated cannot be, and this is the point, precisely copied, but from it, one can learn and, to it, one can be attuned as one sends forth one's own motions. The making of the mortal soul, set to the key of coordination between the necessary and the noetic, suggests, also, the kind of learning that would allow us to notice the pathological turns of the soul.

We can take peripatetic conversation as an example of psychic movement as learning or as the leading of the soul. Conversing, two people are walking down or up a path. Even if they see eye to eye, they do not see everything in the same manner. For each one of the two itinerant interlocutors, things gather accordingly, which does not mean that one cannot lead the other or that another cannot point something out; cannot let something be seen. Neither does this capacity, to show and to notice, dictate that what one perceives must be perceived by another in exactly the same way. If that were the case, the two would not be able to converse. There would be a strange bi-focal soliloquy instead of a dialogue. In carrying the conversation over from one to the other, in pointing things out and in paying heed to what is shown, there is alive a possibility of noticing not

⁴³⁰ The reason accountable for the existence of the noetic standard of perfection is explained by Benardete. He writes,

Thought speaks of the square it has drawn on the basis of its own postulation of squareness. Thought is the imagination of intention. It separates what it is talking about from what it is thinking about. It separates speaking from thinking without giving any thought to the separation. It thinks of the visible as imaging the thought as if the way in which the water reflects a tree is the way in which a drawn figure reflects a thought figure. The mathematicians fail to notice that the resemblance is itself a postulate. *The Second Sailing* 169.

only the genuine, the fantastical, and the duplicitous looks of things, but of sighting also the lifeless phantoms. In letting the phantoms show forth, in sounding out the images, new gatherings—refracted, rewoven, refigured, and regrown—new mixtures can take place. They do not come to be by means of our bidding. However, the new looks of things are not entirely free from our participation either.

The third part of Timaeus's speech confirms that it is necessary for us to reckon with the pathological psychic formations and with the hollow images of the apparent things. When Timaeus accounts for the making of the mortal soul, he names the "terrible and necessary" (δεινὰ καὶ ἀναγκαῖα, 69c) passions indwelling in it. Having listed the kinds of different "affections" (παθήματα, 69d), Timaeus again repeats that these are all "put together [in] the mortal kind, as was necessary [ἀναγκαίως]" (69d). Since the third part of Timaeus's speech receives its articulation from a paradigmatic thinking that accepts of the co-primacy of the noetic and the necessary, while it gives the lead voice to the latter, it is necessity that attunes, grounds, and guides the account. Hence, if we are to engage in careful, reflective thinking, which is in step with the play of metaphoric substitution (with the choric play that echoes through Timaeus's account), then we ought to be attentive to the kinds of affections, passions, or sufferings that are *necessary* for the mortal human soul. We ought to tarry along with even, and especially, the terrible affections. These ought not be excised from thinking about human life. If they are abandoned, in favor of some etalon of emotional perfection, then this repression serves to fuel the swelling of the hollowness of posited ideals and the standard, but impoverished looks of things. The acceptance and study of, as well as the attentive listening to, the

aches and terrors that transpire through the psychic movements, is not only important, it is necessary. It does not entail that pain or terror be accepted for the way of life, but it does mean that they be given their proper time and place. If they are not, then such repression will set into motion corruption and deprivation of the pathologically twisted soul. This reckoning with the terrible is the serious pursuit (69a), discernment, and apprehension (69a) that is made possible by means of reasoning according to the “necessary” (ἀναγκαῖον, 69a).

Also that necessity, which governs the making of the body, is a part of the “imperfect [ἀτελὲς] mortal kind” (72e). Kalkavage comments on Timaeus’s language here, saying that “words related to *telos* [or], end [are used], in the sense of both perfection and death or destruction.”⁴³¹ Imperfection, in this passage, is employed in the double register. It is meant as incompleteness as well as the temporary postponement of the hour of one’s death. If both of these registers are considered together, it turns out that, instead of being an obstacle or a shortcoming, human imperfection is constitutive of our being. As long as we are mortal, we are imperfect. The opposite also holds true. As long as we have not completed the course of our being, as long as we have not reached the “perfect end” (*Symposium* 211b) we remain alive.

⁴³¹ *Plato’s Timaeus* 108, nt. 134. The term that Kalkavage is translating as: “perfection” is: ἀποτελεῖν (*Timaeus* 37d). The term more readily means “a brining to completion.” Kalkavage translates the adjectival form, ἀτελεῖ (30c), as “incomplete.” It is the case that the various forms of the verb τελέω usually signify completeness, rather than perfection. Nonetheless, we also find related adjectival forms such as τελῆεις, which mean not only “complete,” but also “perfect.” For the latter use, see the *Iliad* I.315, “ἔρδον δ’ Ἀπόλλωνι τεληέσσας ἐκατόμβας” (they accomplished perfect hecatombs to Apollo, translation mine). The Liddell & Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* cites both τελειόω and τελεόω as to “make perfect, complete” (1770).

The search for perfection informs the ways and deeds of human beings. This search is not the same as an attempt to eliminate all imperfection or, put better, all incompleteness that is at the bottom of the human life. To give oneself an end or τέλος that is perfect and to think that one can not only strive toward it, but attain it and bring complete perfection into being, means to wish for death. Only when the two meanings of τέλος coincide can a human, that is a mortal being, attain perfection. The absolute or perfect completeness does not accept of any change—of anything that could render it imperfect.⁴³² To want to rid oneself of the necessities that manifest as human

⁴³² Witte takes the suggestion about completeness and perfection, which occurs earlier in the dialogue, quite literally. He thinks that “according to the Platonic-Pythagorean teaching, the circle (because of its simplicity) is the most beautiful. In addition, it is, for Plato, also the ‘most complete’ and the most valuable body (πάντων τελεώτατον ὁμοιότατόν τε αὐτὸ ἑαυτῷ σχημάτων ... μυρίῳ κάλλιον ὅμοιον ἀνομοίου: 33b)” (“Der Ἐκὼς Λόγος” 10). In a footnote 14, Witte refers his readers to Aristophanes’ speech in the *Symposium* and compares the globular beings that Aristophanes’ myth conjures up to the cosmos of the *Timaeus*, which is, at first, also globular, like a bodiless head. Despite all of these observations, Witte does not pick up on the humorous character of the passages that deal with globularity and completeness, which appear either in the *Symposium* or in the *Timaeus*. At least I do not detect any humor in Witte’s discussion. In my view, such an overly serious reading is a misinterpretation of what is at stake in thinking about completeness and finality. Are Aristotle’s accounts (accounts that give rise to the scientific inquiry) of the final cause and the best state of beings also rooted in a kind of misinterpretation (albeit ingenious) of Plato’s thinking?

Aristotle’s discussions of τέλος, of course, are hardly as one-sided as I have just suggested. For a nuanced presentation of the question, see *Physics* II.3, 7 and 8, as well as *Metaphysics* I.3, and V.2. Concerning the end of the human being and the kind of perfection or, to put it in Aristotle’s language, the kind of excellence that is at stake, see the *Nicomachean Ethics* I.9, 12 and 13.

Perhaps Heidegger’s detection of the origin of the powerful, but principally mistaken understanding of truth, which, according to him, takes its beginning from Plato’s *Republic* and the cave allegory (consult *Pathmarks*, “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth.” McNeill, W. trans. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007) finds its counterpart in the *Timaeus* passages, which speak about perfect completeness. There the possibilities arise for forceful, but not necessarily accurate, theorizing about completeness and finality. The most fascinating thing of all is the following: particular reading or, rather, a particularly positioned and predisposed reading of a given dialogue, picks up on that with which a given notion (be it completeness or truth) is being substituted and appropriates this comic substitution as a proper understanding of the passage or even as a rendition of some doctrine espoused by Plato. Yet, Plato’s writing dictates no doctrines.

imperfections, to be irate, like Odysseus, whom Kalkavage also quotes, at one's "wretched belly, that accursed thing, who bestows many evils on humans" (17.473 – 4),⁴³³ is to be angry in the face of needs and limits. But to be without needs means to be inhuman. To think that "to live according to the demands of necessity is to be a slave"⁴³⁴ is to desire absolute freedom. The same kind of illusory freedom manifests as utter enslavement to tyranny for the rebelliously-minded dwellers of the city in speech in the *Republic* (Book VIII). Limits, imperfections, and necessities are constitutive of being human. Nonetheless, the point is not to live *solely* by means of orientation to the axis of the mortal necessities. The point is to live in coincidence with the coordination of the axes determined by the necessary and the noetic, as these axial moments are articulated through the choric paradigms.

The failure to be attuned to the register in which both the noetic and the necessary orientation loci are sounded, ends up in a persistent illusion, which is no longer necessarily, but pathologically tragic. That there are at least two loci—one of necessity and another one of nous—guarantees that there is resistance in the metaphoric movement. This resistance is the living unfolding that takes place together with and in between the two—between the necessary and the noetic. As long as there is this tension in resistance,

It merely and wondrously offers the possibilities for thinking about certain notions, certain states of things, and for imagining what our life has to do with such thinking. It appears that we will do ourselves some good, if we learn to be sensitive to Plato's humor; to the comedic substitution play, which occurs so often in his dialogues. Shane M. Ewegen, in his text on the *Cratylus*, makes the following suggestion regarding the entwinement of comedy and philosophy, "[C]omedy, like philosophy, must not be taken too seriously" (*Plato's Cratylus: The Comedy of Language*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014), 9.

⁴³³ Odysseus is considerably more amenable to honoring the demands of our nature, when he advises Agamemnon and Achilles in the *Iliad* (IXX, 224 – 26).

⁴³⁴ *Plato's Timaeus* 108, nt. 134

there is violence and tragedy, but there is also life. Repression or silencing of either the noetic or the necessary supposes that all of being originates in an ultimately discoverable, supra-worldly unity. To put it in Davis's words, to think that a single origin can be uncovered is to be deluded into supposing that "we can ... start from scratch, from the *archai*. The serious attempt to behave as though we can begin at the beginning ultimately leads to tragedy. To the extent to which the need to treat certain things as fixed is a fixed condition of human nature, tragedy will be a perennial possibility for human beings."⁴³⁵ The fixity about which Davis speaks, and the tragic possibilities to which it gives rise, is constitutive of being human. However, insistence on discovering or uncovering, by which I mean, projecting oneself toward a future or returning back in excavation of the past, to a single

—x—, one aim, one ultimate, perfect end, or absolute law—that is the kind of permuted fixity, which terminates in pathologically tragic instances of life for human beings. The reason is that when one is desiring for such a monolithic oneness, unbeknownst to oneself, one dreams of doing away with the life-grounding tension that can only arise if there is a difference, if there are not one, but two axial moments at play. Although actually unattainable, blind desire for the singularly perfect origin or end—for a final and ultimate explanation, nonetheless, attunes life to a key of corruption, sending its movement along a pathologically unfolding course.

⁴³⁵ *Ancient Tragedy* 113

Unlike a single voice, then, the kind of sounding that allows us to echolocate the psychic movement and notice also its pathological forms is akin to the orchestral play.⁴³⁶ This play cannot take place if each of the performers listens only to her own unique voice or follows solely the directions of the conductor. Enlivening music comes out of listening to each other.⁴³⁷ Unlike the transgressive mode, in which one is dismissive and forgetful of the necessity to pay heed to that which is vociferated, careful listening allows one to accept, conceive, and send the world forth anew through multiple images and refractions. Such listening is enlivening. It lets go of or leaves be the overemphasis on reproduction of the seen; the reproduction that is prescribed by the paradigm of literal reading. Engrossment in the already familiar and the already known falls away when the fact of one's belonging to the pre-constituted, navigable world is recognized and accepted. This belonging cannot be dissolved completely. The seeming is always there together with the appearing and the latter is interpreted through the already known.⁴³⁸ The doxastic register

⁴³⁶ Also Baracchi recourse to the language of music and vociferation when she writes about the ways in which we gain access to the psychic world (*Of Myth, Life, and War* 189). Aside from such mythical, epic, and dialogical counter examples like Orpheus's, Odysseus's, and Er's (*Republic* X) psychic sightings, it appears that the domain of the unseen (ἄιδης) psychic life is best expressed and limned by means of sound.

⁴³⁷ I am indebted for this insight to the brief, but sharp, speech delivered by an Estonian conductor Eri Klas at the opening night of the 2015 performance of Fellini's *Orchestra Rehearsal*. Klas's appearance at the St. Birgitta Convent grounds in Tallinn was one of his last public appearances. Klas, who passed away on February 26, 2016, spoke, on the night of August 9, 2015, recital about the kind of attentive listening that is required from all of the performers of orchestral music. Klas expressed his hope that a similar harmonic attunement can be reached by the political leaders of the world.

⁴³⁸ Benardete puts this relationship between the seeming and the actual more straightforwardly when he writes that "only if Truth both separates and binds can mind know being as being. [...] Truth, then, is the fragmenting light of opinion, and any ascent from opinion must be on the basis of what opinion discloses. It is the contradiction in the manifold of opinion from which one begins the ascent to the unity of the *idea*" (*The Second Sailing* 162). And then he adds, poetically: "The moonlight of Truth is all that can ever be available to us" (Ibid.).

is dominant, but it does not have to be continuously ingrained. Nature does not have to appear as a written document to be deciphered according to the learned rules of grammar. Could nature be listened to and could the metaphoric play of psychic imaging be sounded through a response that locates its movement and allows the music to shine forth?

The *χώρα*, reverberating and echoing through the *Timaeus*, gives us hope. And yet, the mythic ending of the dialogue and the grotesque images it offers (90a – 92c), look like the warped and hollow phantoms that arise from the pathologically moving soul. What are these “genitals [that are like] ... an animal that won’t listen to reason [and ...] the matrix or so-called womb ... which is an indwelling animal desirous of childbearing” (91b – c)? The animal bodies piled upon or stacked within the human body—what are they about? What does the proliferation of the monstrously bodily indicate? What about the “tribe of birds [which] was the result of a remodeling [of] ... men [and] ... the beastly form [θηριῶδες that] ... has been born from those who neither applied themselves to philosophy nor at all pondered the nature of heavens” (91d – e)? These rather look like the nightmarish, flesh-seeded landscapes that Pieter van der Heyden and Hieronymus Bosch depict many centuries past Timaeus’s time. These hardly look like the rejuvenated or reconstituted images situated by means of the resistance between the noetic and the necessary. What kind of necessity dictates that wild animals come from men? This, rather, as experience suggests, is the reversal of life as we know it.⁴³⁹ These odd and grotesque descriptions of the “remodeled” (91d, μεταρρυθμίζω)

⁴³⁹ See chapter two, part two, section four of the present work, which discusses the unnaturalness of the transformation from a human being into a wolf.

generations rather look like what comes up when we forget the precepts of necessity and adhere to the incredible (re)combinatory capacities of nous. Monstrosity is there where the eidetic cutting up of the world attempts to give to life its genesis.

Timaeus now has grown forgetful (and we wonder what are we to make of that) of his own advice that reasoning is then serious when it adheres to the necessary (69a). Timaeus's reasoning, if we can call it that, is giving us a confused genesis of life in a polis, by means of a myth that is out of tune with nature. The three keys—mythical, natural, and political—to which the dialogue is set are now oddly mixed up. The confusion is such that, for instance, the fish “which lives in the water [and that] was born from the absolutely most unintelligent and stupidest of men of all” (92a – b) is “the fourth kind” (92a). Since no other animals are explicitly designated by kinds (one through three), the mention of the fourth kind hearkens us back to the discussion of the kinds that are the noetic, the necessary, and the “third kind” (48e) or the *χώρα*. However, that the fish, which metamorphosize out of the unintelligent men, should be preceded by nous, necessity, and the *χώρα* hardly makes any sense. We begin to make sense of the passage, when we reverse the designation somewhat and see that it is the unintelligent men who think of the water dwelling animals as being stupid creatures. Then, the four kinds are: nous, necessity, *χώρα*, and unintelligence or senselessness. Partaking in this senselessness, Timaeus is himself in the condition, which he is describing. His condition is characterized by the soul's “total lack of musicality” (*πλημμελείας πάσης*, 92b). Timaeus's speech, his vociferation is now out of tune, as it takes on the tone of comedy—of the cacophony of images and sounds.

IV. PHILOSOPHICAL COMEDY IN PLATO'S *STATESMAN* AND ARISTOPHANES' *LYSISTRATA*

~ Of all literary forms, tragedy and comedy alone seem
to make a natural pair.
They are natural in that they designate something
not merely in letters but in life,
and they are a pair in that, taken together, they seem
to comprehend the whole of life ~
Seth Benardete, *On Greek Tragedy*

1. Comedy of Divisions

Comedy marks the end of Plato's *Timaeus*. The tame and the wild animals⁴⁴⁰ are birthed out of the human beings' wondrous reincarnations. The humans themselves are endowed with fantastical, if not monstrously exaggerated, shapes. The reason why this state of things arises has to do with Timaeus's overconfident reliance on the power of reason. Specifically, it has to do with Timaeus's adherence to the combinatory and divisionary capacity of the mind. It is not the case that the mind's power to envision, shape, and reshape reality is blameworthy in its own right. It is the case, however, that when necessity—and its limiting power—are set aside, mind produces not the propitious, but comical, exaggerated, even monstrous images and states of things. An intellectual hubris underlies a conviction that a human mind is capable not only of comprehending, but also of recreating the generative potency of nature. However, this hubristic attitude, which

⁴⁴⁰ Timaeus's closing tale about the bizarre transmogrifications of the human and non-human animals may well be poking fun at the belief in reincarnation that some of the Pythagoreans held. Cf. *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library: An Anthology of Ancient Writings Which Relate to Pythagoras and Pythagorean Philosophy* (Guthrie, K. C. W. trans. and ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 1988), 31, 36, 40.

lacks foresight, is, really, senselessness and not at all prescience or perspicacity. Even if we grant that Timaeus, at the end of his speech, is offering his own version of the Pythagorean beliefs about metempsychosis,⁴⁴¹ this does not alleviate the incongruity of his presentation. It, rather, prompts us to question the soundness of the said beliefs. Attuned to the comedic key that guides the closing passages in the *Timaeus*, this chapter examines passages about generation and rebirth in the *Statesman*.

Like the *Timaeus*, the *Statesman* has several beginnings (257a, 268d, 275a, 287b, 284e, 287c), which are necessary because the preceding discussions are, in some way, inadequate to the proposed task of describing the inception of the universe (περὶ τοῦ παντὸς λόγους ποιεῖσθαι, *Timaeus* 27c) or to the “search for the statesman” (πολιτικὸν τὸν ἄνδρα διαζητεῖν, *Statesman* 258b). The first conversation in the *Statesman*, which sets the tone for the portrayals of statesmanship, shares Timaeus’s enthusiasm about the power of the human mind to divide and organize the many beings of the world. The scientifically minded discussion, with which the search for the statesman begins, runs from 258b to 268d. The first of the many divisions that are meant to winnow out the statesman sets science (ἐπιστήμη, 258b) at the top of the list. All of the consequent turns and choices proceed under this heading, but end up calling for a “different beginning” (268d).⁴⁴² As in Timaeus’s case, also in the case of the Stranger from Elea and his dialogical respondent, the young Socrates, the characters’ affinities and background color

⁴⁴¹ Helpful descriptions of Plato’s references to Pythagorean beliefs can be found in *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Kirk, S. G. Raven, E. J. and Schofield, M. eds. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

⁴⁴² Zdravko Planinc comments on the passage and offers a reading that reveals the absurdity of the Stranger’s procedure. See his article on “Socrates and the Cyclops” (*Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, XXXI, 2015), 193 and nt. 27.

their intellectual predilections. Although, it is likely that Timaeus of Locri does not exist “outside of the dialogues”⁴⁴³ and, although, it is clear that the identity of the main speaker in the *Statesman* is left purposefully ambiguous, the manner in which Plato colors his characters is telling. We surmise on the basis of the immediately preceding conversations, of which the *Sophist* is comprised, that in the *Statesman*, we are still listening to the Stranger from Elea. To be precise, Plato describes the man as “a kind of stranger, who in birth is from Elea, a comrade of the circle of Parmenides and Zeno” (*Sophist* 216a).⁴⁴⁴ Then, just as Timaeus’s Pythagorean affinities inform and flavor the speeches in that dialogue, also the Stranger’s Eleatic friends and their way of thinking must be kept in mind as we interpret the *Statesman*. Of course, the Stranger is not Parmenides himself, neither is he Zeno. Thus, it is reasonable to expect that if the Eleatic Stranger gives us anything of the said thinkers’ ideas, then it is a kind of refracted picture thereof or even a caricature.

The mock-picture of the Eleatic thinking⁴⁴⁵ is one of the main hues that form the backdrop of the *Statesman*. Another transposition that takes us out of the direct considerations of Parmenides’ and Zeno’s thought is the rendition of the young Socrates. In *Parmenides*, which offers conversations between Parmenides, Zeno, and the young

⁴⁴³ Nails, *The People of Plato* 293

⁴⁴⁴ τινὰ ξένον ... τὸ μὲν γένος ἐξ Ἑλέας, ἐταῖρον δὲ τῶν ἀμφὶ Παρμενίδην καὶ Ζήνωνα ἐταίρων. I am using the translation of the *Sophist* by Benardete in *The Being of the Beautiful*. Where the English translation of the ancient Greek differs from Benardete’s, assume that the translation is my own.

⁴⁴⁵ In his Fall 2014 Boston College lecture on the *Statesman*, Sallis observes that the Stranger, adopting Theodorus’ suggestion to divide the being of the statesman from those of the sophist and the philosopher, stands in “an implicit opposition to Parmenides and Eleatic school, who advocates the one. ... The Stranger ... curiously attributes this [multiplicity in Being] to the Eleatics. That would be impossible for them to say.”

Socrates, we meet Socrates himself. There he is the youth, who, in his older age, is the character in many of Plato's dialogues. However, in the *Statesman*, we get not Socrates' younger self, but his younger namesake.⁴⁴⁶ We learn from the opening lines of the dialogue that this young man, Socrates, is Theaetetus' "fellow gymnast" (257c). We also find out that this limber youth was present on the yester day when Socrates had questioned Theaetetus. The young Socrates is also there for the conversations of the *Sophist*. Unlike Theaetetus, however, the young Socrates is not praised for his smarts and assiduousness. It looks like the *Statesman*, from the start, is an imposter-dialogue. By this I do not mean that no serious ideas are contained in the dialogue, but that the mood of the presentation is subversively comic. The deriding tone of the dialogue ceases to be lightheartedly playful—that is, if such matters as statesmanship could be given a lighthearted consideration during Socrates' final months—and, instead, the speeches are set to more ominous notes as tyrannical ruler is discussed at 301c – d. At first, tyranny and violence are all but unrecognizable, masked by the comedy of divisions.

Incidentally, the term I choose to describe the diairetic searches of the first part of the *Statesman* corresponds well to the realities of Plato's own time. According to Planinc's findings on the subject, "Epicrates of Ambracia wrote a comedy in which Plato

⁴⁴⁶ Nails writes about the young Socrates of the *Statesman* that his "date of birth is established by his youth in 399" (*The People of Plato* 269). Nails states that she "has no reason whatever to think this is a fabricated character or a stand-in for someone else" (Ibid.). On the subject of the Eleatic Stranger and the young Socrates, see also Hyland's "Strange Encounters: Theaetetus, Theodorus, Socrates, and the Eleatic Stranger." At the beginning of his article, Hyland discusses the relationship between the characters of the *Sophist* and the "existentially specific" (103) nature of Plato's dialogues. Hyland then offers a dramatic ordering of the dialogues that begins with the *Theaetetus* and end with the *Phaedo*.

is depicted leading the students of the academy in pointless diairetic exercises.”⁴⁴⁷ In view of this, we should take the Stranger’s seemingly serious method with a grain of salt and a pinch of laughter. However, even then, like the *Statesman*’s author, also we, ourselves, run a chance of being made fun of. Could Plato’s dialogues, among other things, suggest to us a way in which we can come to appreciate and learn from being humored? Or would such lessons be too taxing on our sense of pride?

The pseudoscientific attitude in which the Stranger and the young Socrates begin to divvy up the world dictates that statesmanship, which, in fact, is a practical matter, ought to be understood and circumscribed by the purely cognitive, non-practical science (258d). Of course, such separation is, in principle, impossible. The language, which makes up the Stranger’s lines about the diairetic method attest to the said impossibility. The Stranger speaks about natural joints (διαφυσήν, 259d) and about fine craftsmanship (λεπτουργεῖν, 262b) according to which the divisions of the intellectual science (γνωστικὴν διοριζοίμεθα, 259d) must proceed. The Stranger says that in order to find the statesman, it is necessary and possible to search for the person along the lines of the science that does not mix itself up with the practical affairs. However, this proposition is undermined by the very language that the Stranger uses to speed the young Socrates along. Whatever conclusions we draw from the diairetic searches, these must observe this playful move—that which the Stranger’s speech proposes is shown to be impossible by the action of the said speech. It is the case that we readily speak of “theoretical” and

⁴⁴⁷ “Socrates and the Cyclops” 164

“practical” or “applied” sciences. However, the fact of the matter is—the two are mutually dependent.

I challenge you to understand, let alone derive, a mathematical formula without practicing math. I propose that such an attempt will end in failure. Granted, the supporter of the Stranger’s argument would counter that practice of mathematics is not the same as practical application thereof. Nonetheless, that the young Socrates has no objection to the purity of the distinction that the Stranger makes between cognitive (γνωστικήν, 258e) and practical (πρακτικήν, 258e) matters, plays up the facetious treatment given to science (ἐπιστήμας, 258e) in the dialogue. A similar frivolity accompanies the Stranger’s appropriation of the Eleatic views. The Stranger, perhaps unwittingly, toys with the Eleatic thinking during his narration of the myth about the differences between the reign of Cronus and the reign of Zeus (268d – 274e). The epistemic inadequacies, in their turn, lead up to the insertion of the mythic tale.

The set up that places the pure cognitive science at the helm of the search for the statesman, sets into motion the comedy of divisions. Already there, at the beginning of the diairetic search, the views of the young Socrates, who was Parmenides’ interlocutor in that dialogue, are being made fun of. In the *Parmenides*, the young Socrates agrees that it is laughable to assume (γελοῖα δόξειεν ἂν εἶναι) that there is a form (εἶδος) of such things like “mud” (130c).⁴⁴⁸ Although Parmenides replies that there will yet come a time when Socrates will grow older and will stop despising the paltry miscellany of “hair, mud, and dirt” (130c), the affirmation that there are forms of these never follows. Yet, in

⁴⁴⁸ *The Complete Works of Plato*. Gill, L. M. and Ryan, P. trans. (Indiana: Hackett Publishing, 1997).

the *Statesman*, the other young Socrates accepts the method, which seeks to “stamp a single look” (ιδέαν ... μίαν ἐπισφραγίσασθαι, 258c) onto and divvy out the split-hooved herd animals (265e). Incidentally, it is to this split-hooved εἶδος that both a pig and a human being are most immediately related. Already at this juncture, the less lighthearted presentation of the transmutability between men and pigs comes to mind. Circe of the *Odyssey*, with her capacity to give to men the look of pigs (235 – 242), steps forward from the background of the *Statesman*. The reminiscences of the dark magic, wielded by the daughter of the Sun, bring to mind, also, Odysseus’s comrades’ suffering, which casts its shadow over the Stranger’s speech. Most importantly, events of the Trojan war—the violence, the brutal cutting, slashing, lacerating, the ceaseless killing of the *Iliad*—where not only butchery of human beings is depicted, but also threats of cannibalism are made (I.231, IV.31 – 36, XXII.347, XXIV.212 – 213), all surge to the surface of the dialogue. Thus, the Eleatic Stranger’s comedy throws but a thin veil over the brutal truth—human beings practice butchery on one another. This cutting is not of a delicate kind. It does not always take a form of medicine that cuts according to the natural joints of a human body. Instead, battle field butchery divides according to the nature of war, which turns human beings into corpses and infuses humans with a monstrous voraciousness for human flesh.

The interlocutors’ attempts at circumventing the thirst for blood, by introducing a theoretical science of statesmanship, bespeak the ridiculousness of the enterprise. The comedy of the, so called, scientific search for the statesman shines through when the incongruous elements of the divisions and the questionable cuts made are placed side by

side. The Stranger compares the intelligence of Greeks with that of cranes (262d – e and 263d) and claims that both Greeks (Ἑλληνικὸν, 262d) and cranes (γεράνων, 263d) would be remiss to see the barbarians or the rest of the human beings as lesser kinds (γένος 262d, 263d) on account of their foreign and funny-sounding names. Although the Eleatic’s suggestion may sound correct, the truth of the matter is that in the *Iliad*, “cranes” (γεράνων, II.460) is one of the epithets for both the Achaean Greeks (Ἀχαιῶν, II.450) and for the Trojans (γεράνων, III.3). Both are so called at the precise time that they are headed into battle. One may object, like do those interpreters who take Plato to be criticizing Homer,⁴⁴⁹ that in these lines, the Eleatic Stranger, delivers Plato’s criticism of Homer’s epos; hence, the immediately following need for the new, mythic beginning in the *Statesman* (268d). However, this claim is false on at least two counts. Firstly, this view forgets that no dialogical character is a mouthpiece for Plato. Secondly, such a position does account for the even more explicit upsurge of violence with which the myth—alternative to “scientific” searches—starts.

Like the invocation of the scenes from the *Iliad*, the recollection of the “storied strife between Atreus and Thyestes” (268e), which frames the mythic tale, instructs us to be mindful of violence. The tale about the two brothers relates an account of cannibalism. Whereas, in the *Illiad*, Achilles, Hecuba, Agamemnon, and the goddess Hera only threaten cannibalism, or are accused of it in a metaphorical sense, Thyestes’s story tells us that he, albeit unwittingly, eats his own son, whose flesh is festively served to him by

⁴⁴⁹ See, for example, Dennis Schmidt, *On Germans and Other Greeks* 22. Myles Burnyeat, “Plato on Art and Beauty.” *Art and Mimesis in Plato’s Republic*. Denham, E. A. ed. (London, UK: Palgrave Publishing, 2012), 54 – 73. Barbara Koziak, *Retrieving Political Philosophy: Thumos, Aristotle, and Gender* (Philadelphia, PN: Pennsylvania University Press, 2000), 68.

his brother, Atreus. This same Atreus fathers Agamemnon and his brother, Menelaus, who fight for his wife, Helen, in the Trojan War. During this war, as it is recorded in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*, the chieftain is still referred to as the “shepherd of his people (*poimena laōn*).”⁴⁵⁰ Such epithet is nearly obsolete in Plato’s time. As the Eleatic’s first procedure for detecting the statesman fails, the echoes of the Trojan War become more pronounced. Whereas, during the diarsis, detection of the references to the atrocities of the Trojan battles requires perspicacity, the myth, which marks the second beginning in the *Statesman*, offers more immediate allusions to the war. Accounts of the Trojan War are alive both in the names of the progenitor of the Achaean war lords (in Atreus’s name) as well as in the epithet that is applied to the ruler that the myth produces. This ruler is referred to, at the end of the myth, as the shepherd (ποιμένα, 275a).

The failure of the “scientific” method as well as its comedic tenor both point to the upsurge of violence which neither laughter, nor precision can contain. However, violence is not the only thing that is evinced by the incongruities of the first part of the *Statesman*. Also the reason for the said violence begins to transpire and that is, at least partially, conditioned by the Eleatic Stranger’s suggestion (and the young Socrates’ acceptance thereof) that the science of ruling can be universal. Here is how Benardete comments on the passage (259d, 262c – e).

The stranger first ... proposed as their task the division of all sciences into two kinds, of which one was to be political science, and the other was to include every other science. Such a division looks very much like the young Socrates’ distinction between men and beasts and the vulgar Greek distinction between Greeks and barbarians, for in all three cases, a part

⁴⁵⁰ Benardete, *The Argument of the Action* 367.

seems to impose upon another a spurious unity. *The Being of the Beautiful*, III.86 – 87

Although, the young Socrates' distinction is corrected, the Stranger's is not. The Stranger overturns the young Socrates' distinction between humans and animals, in a spirit that is similar to that of another Eleatic, Xenophanes, who proposes that if "cattle and horses and lions had hands ... horses would draw the forms of the gods [θεῶν ἰδέας] like horses, and cattle like cattle, and they would make their bodies such as they each had themselves."⁴⁵¹ In a way, the subversion of the young Socrates' distinction is valid. Human is an animal too. However, if we want to extend the assertion in the opposite direction without qualifying it in any way and say that animals are also human, then we anthropomorphize the animals. We, unbeknownst to ourselves, impose upon the animals our own understanding of the world, our values, our beliefs, and even (as does Xenophanes) our mode of motor skill dexterity. In this case, when the distinction is erased, we are in the position that is no better than when the distinction is definitive, like it is in the young Socrates' initial division. The realization that a human being is also an animal, if it is directed at the animals without undergoing a refraction of some kind, ends up being a totalizing move, which mixes up animals with humans. The said totalization is prefigured in the Stranger's uncorrected division of the sciences and, as Benardete would have us believe, it serves as the foundation of the second dialogical beginning, i. e., the myth.

The young Socrates does not attempt to correct the Stranger, but accepts his postulate about political science. Therefore, instead of concerning itself with particulars,

⁴⁵¹ *The Presocratic Philosophers* 169.

ruling takes on the universality of a theoretical science. Benardete concludes that in his agreement to this view of statesmanship, the young Socrates “has unwittingly defined political science as the art which the god exercises in the age of Cronus, when there were no cities and not even the beasts were strangers. ... Only the gods could consider all human beings as a single herd, and separate them from other animals by the criteria the stranger uses” (III.88). The problem with this view of how human beings ought to be ruled is that it inherits the very same logic and the repercussions analogical to the initial divisions of human beings into Greeks and barbarians and of living beings into animals and humans. All of the three distinctions: humans/animals, Greeks/barbarians, gods/humans identify otherness of one of the members of the pair on the basis of that member’s inferiority. The dissolution of the distinction between the first two pairs amounts to an erasure of the said ranking. However, following the dissolution of the difference, no alternative mode of valuation is offered for the third pair. Gods are still superior to all of the remaining pair members.

Doing away with the young Socrates’ initial differentiation between the “Hellenic genus” (262d) and all of the other “barbarians” (262d), the Stranger divests the designation “genus” [γένος] of its customary relation to the familial or to one’s heritage (262d – e). He achieves the universalization for which the science calls when γένος no longer refers to this or that familial clan, but to a more general realm that marks the entirety of the human kind. This universal genus, the Stranger proposes, is divided most “beautifully in two and more in accordance with species [εἶδη] if one should cut number by even and odd, and the genus of human beings in turn by male and female [τῶν

ἀνθρώπων γένος ἄρρενι καὶ θήλει]” (262e). Note, that the elevation of γένος, to the point at which the designation is used to refer to all human beings and the consequent position of εἶδος as a marker of gender, is based on the universal character of the mathematical εἶδος (262d – e). This elevation does not solve the problem of inferiority as the basis for judging about otherness. Human beings, as a whole, can still be judged as being inferior to gods, for instance. Moreover, the universalization of γένος does away with the possibility of addressing the cultural particularities and the peculiarities that mark different groups of peoples. A fox, you see, is, in fact, either a male or a female fox. However, that we refer to foxes as being either a “Tibetan Sand” or a “South American Gray” hardly draws the same grooved lines of cultural differentiation as does a human being’s self-identification as being a Tibetan or a Chilean. Because the Stranger’s juggling of γένος and εἶδος aims at propelling the universal point of view from which the science of statesmanship is supposed to judge about ruling, it only reinforces the possibility of absolute otherness—the kind that disposes of all particularity and obtains not between different peoples or even species, but between incompatible realms of being.

Understandably, the young Socrates asks for another distinction, which could have prompted a production of an alternative for establishing why one part of the examined whole (in this case, human beings) is different from another part. He asks, “how would one come to recognize more vividly genus and part [γένος καὶ μέρος], that the pair of them is not the same but other than one another?” (263a). In other words, what else could be the basis for distinguishing a part (Greeks) from the whole genus (human beings) that is divided into non-heritage specific species (female and male, 262e)?

Instead of appeasing Socrates, the Stranger comes up with another way to confound, “whenever there is a species [εἶδος] of something, it’s necessary that it also be a part [μέρος] of whatever thing [πράγματος] the species [εἶδος] is said (to be) of, but there’s no necessity that a part [μέρος] be a species [εἶδος]” (263b).⁴⁵² One reading that can be given to the Stranger’s explanation is that it places the species or the look [εἶδος] of something as being superior to a part [μέρος]. The species can be a part, but no necessity warrants a reversal of this relationship. A part, Greeks, is not the species of human. However, the species, female are a part of human beings and male is also a part and another species. This sounds curious that females and males should represent different species. How do they, then, produce offspring? However, Aristotle, in the “Generation of Animals,” seconds this curious alignment. He says, “animals that are closely allied in nature, and are not very different in species [οὐκ ἀδιαφόροις τῷ εἶδει], copulate” (746a31 – 2).⁴⁵³ We do not have to be of the same species. We just need to be close enough. Still, how would the reproduction be accomplished? Aside from Aristotle’s notes on the matter, the *Statesman* itself gives a reason to think that the Stranger’s separation of the males and females into two species is necessary. The internal logic of the rearrangement by means of divisions, if it is taken to its limit with regard to the division between the

⁴⁵² ὥς εἶδος μὲν ὅταν ᾗ του, καὶ μέρος αὐτὸ ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι τοῦ πράγματος ὅτουπερ ἂν εἶδος λέγῃται: μέρος δὲ εἶδος οὐδεμία ἀνάγκη

⁴⁵³ *Aristotle: Generation of Animals* (Loeb Classical Library No. 366). Peck, L. A. trans. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942). Marguerite Deslauriers in her article on “Sex and Essence in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and Biology” pursues the question of reproduction and gender in Aristotle. The essay is published in the collection entitled: *Feminist Interpretation of Aristotle*. Freeland, A. C. ed. (Philadelphia, PN: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 138 – 70. See especially note 13 on page 163 where Deslauriers refers her readers to Gareth Mathews, who shows that Aristotle can be read as designating “male” and “female” as different species.

species of males and females, may very well prohibit sexual procreation. This is not presented as a problem in the dialogue. On the contrary, the requirement of “generation from one another” (ἐξ ἀλλήλων ἐγεννῶντο, 271a) is done away with in the myth, which states that human beings are no longer born, but, instead, are raised out of earth (γηγενές, 271a). These asexually generated beings are called the “earth-born genus” (γηγενές ... γένος). The sprouted, mythic race is prefigured in the Stranger’s generalization of the familial γένος into the universal γένος, the consequent division of all human beings into the looks or species (εἶδος) on the basis of gender, and the eventual suppression of γένος.

The problem with the proposition, which drops the talk of genus and states that a species can be said of a thing (τοῦ πράγματος ὅτου περ ἂν εἶδος λέγεται, 263b)—a proposition to which the young Socrates no longer objects—is that it loses sight of the generative. Instead of talking about γένος, the Eleatic Stranger now speaks about πράγματος (263b). We observe the following series of transpositions: at first the meaning of γένος as familial affinity is substituted with the universal view of γένος that, at this juncture, divides between males and females in the same manner that the mathematical species, εἶδος, represents the even and the odd (262e). “American” or “Russian” is no longer a proper way to address another human being’s otherness. However, “male” and “female” still works. Eventually, when γένος falls out, all human beings, regardless of kin or gender, fall under the heading: “πράγματος” or “thing.” Movement away from specificity and toward generality speeds humans on their way to being counted like even and odd numbers of things and taken for male or female parts of the herded cattle. Even the latter difference is abandoned in the myth, where gender plays no role in generation

and gods pasture all animals according to partitions that interchange “genera and herds” (γένη καὶ ἀγέλας, 271d). Despite its initial peacefulness, the mythic tale, too, turns into an account of violence. The reason why violence, already anticipated by the comedy of division, continues is that the assumption of inferiority, which dictates the basis on which we pick a part (μέρος) from the whole, is preserved. Even during the halcyon time of Cronus (269c – 272b), when human beings are mixed with other animals to make up a homogeneous cattle, these human-animals are the ruled or, rather, the herded part. Their herdsmen are gods. Gods are superior to human beings. The myth confirms this assumption because when the divine shepherding comes to an end, all manner of calamities befall the uninstructed, uneducated, and generally resourceless (ἀπορίαις, 274c) humans.

Before he hears from the Stranger about the method of proper separation of the parts from the whole by means of “cutting through the middle” (διὰ μέσων ... τέμνοντας, 262b), the young Socrates deems it proper that the statesman should “nurture human beings” (262a). The science of statesmanship, as the young Socrates understands it at the time, dictates that it must not busy itself with the “nurture of beasts” (262a). The Stranger claims that this division is made in a “manly way” (ἀνδρειότατα, 262a), but then proceeds to ruffle the young Socrates’ feathers. Does the young Socrates even understand what “manly” is, if he cannot see that male and female, and not, say, the brave Achaeans, are the species and, therefore, properly sized parts of the human whole? Now, the young Socrates and we, too, would think that the Stranger has a point. Kenneth M. Sayre goes as

far as to describe the incongruities in the diarsis as the Stranger's "seeming missteps."⁴⁵⁴

I take the off-beat movements to be not seeming, but actual, moments of the arguments that are carried out by means of the Stranger's speeches' action.⁴⁵⁵ This means that the errors undermine the goal of the pursuit and that the diarsis is not prescriptive. The errors, in the diaretic searches of the *Statesman*, describe the unexamined blind spots in the methods that we use to divvy up the world. If anything, the Stranger's slashing game teaches us how not to go about apportioning the domain of rule. The diaretic specification cannot be charged with the task to "find the statesman" (τόν ... πολιτικόν εὐρήσομεν, 261d). If Sayre was right, and the lapses were meant to help the "readers become better dialecticians,"⁴⁵⁶ then why is it the case that the same assumptions, which go into making the cuts during the comedy of divisions, are perpetuated when the dialectics is set aside in favor of myth telling? How does the education we receive from the dialectical method account for the fact that we end up thrown back in time and stuck with the rulers who are referred to by the same epithet as the Trojan War lords? The Stranger's myth gives us divine shepherds. These are to substitute for the shepherds who lead the people during the Trojan War. Yet, the apportioned lot (εἰμαρμένη, 272e) is such that the divine shepherding, too, runs out and gives way to the time when "everything proves to be harsh [difficult] and unjust" (χαλεπὰ καὶ ἄδικοι, 273c). Neither the myth, nor the young Socrates' attempts to clarify the Stranger's strange divisions (263a – b), help

⁴⁵⁴ *Metaphysics and Method in Plato's Statesman* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 18.

⁴⁵⁵ I learned the concept of action of the speech that Plato's dialogues exhibit by reading Benardete. See Benardete's description of his own intellectual genealogy in *Encounters and Reflections* 124.

⁴⁵⁶ *Metaphysics and Method in Plato's Statesman* 35

us pick out the best rule for the different groups of people. It is unclear how ruling Lydians, differs from ruling Athenians. On the contrary, the two groups of people are amalgamated into a single kind, which erases their particularity and warrants a further amalgam between animals and humans. If we take Sayre's analysis as valid and if we follow his advice, which is to practice "correct division [that] makes cuts according to Forms (κατ' εἶδη: 262D7)," ⁴⁵⁷ then just as the Stranger's and the young Socrates', so also our, paring will give to us a world in which things have gotten mixed up in most fantastical ways.

2. Attunement to the Myth

Is this fantastical state of things desirable? Does the Eleatic Stranger's suggestion sound like a good idea? He instructs the young Socrates that when "dividing more beautifully ... in accordance with the species [κατ' εἶδη] ... one should cut number by even and odd, and the genus of human beings in turn by male and female, and only then split off Lydians and Phrygians" (262e). The Stranger is doing something very curious here. He recommends that we judge about opposition not on the basis of our hereditary associations, but according to our gender. If Greeks, who fight in the Trojan War, no longer see themselves as being opposed to Lydians or Phrygians, does this not alleviate some of the tensions, which eventuate in acts of war between the two groups? Division based on gender difference ameliorates the *thumatic* tendencies by dampening these with dictums of erotic needs. A Lydian and a Greek do not need to coexist in order for either

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., 22

one of the said groups of peoples to go on living. Some males and some females, however, have to come together and copulate, if the human race is to continue on.

The reformulation, which the Stranger gives to the young Socrates' initial distinction between human beings and other animals (262a), follows Empedoclean principle of attraction and strife (Φιλότης and Κότος or Νείκος).⁴⁵⁸ Whatever hatreds there may arise, if Lydian women, for example, are attracted to and want to have children with the Greek men, then the possibility of annihilation of one of the peoples by the other is not as likely as when all of the Lydian women only mate with the Lydian men. Not the worst idea. However, the closer we get to the myth, which, as has been pointed out, sets sail on the heels of the tale about cannibalism and Atreidae's domestic animosity, the stranger Empedocles' principles begin to look. It is as if the myth takes the literal version of Empedocles' views and follows it to its logical conclusion. The Stranger's myth shows that if everything should "from the earth pour forth ... rooted and solid [...] trees ... and men and women, beasts and birds and water-bred fish, and long-lived gods, too, highest in honor,"⁴⁵⁹ then there is no gendered procreation from one another, but only sprouting out of earth. There are no cities and no human rulers, but only germinated herds (made up of all manner of animals) and divine shepherds (270d – 272a). The Stranger's rearrangement of the relationship between γένος, εἶδος, μέρος, and πράγματος, which leads up to and justifies the non-metaphorical presentation of Empedoclean teachings, ends up in a performative contradiction. If we, along with other generated beings, spring up from earth, then why are we not gardened, but herded?

⁴⁵⁸ On the subject, consult *The Presocratic Philosophers*, "Empedocles of Acragas" 280 – 321.

⁴⁵⁹ *The Presocratic Philosophers* 293

Despite such views about the desirability of mythic comingling between arts appropriate for different modes of care as well as between animals and humans as are held by, for example, Krell,⁴⁶⁰ the fact of the matter is—this fantastical mixing is based on the suggestion, which sounds good and which, in theory, looks appealing, but that miserably fails in practice. The Stranger pokes fun at Empedoclean mixings. Also the swapping of mortality for immortality (*Statesman* 270d – 272a)⁴⁶¹ is being ridiculed in the myth. Moreover, the myth shows that, although comical, utopian state of affairs ends in no laughable matter.

The time of Cronus's rule is “fated” (εἰμαρμένη, 272e) to terminate and give way to the time of Zeus. In time of Zeus's reign, the “ancient disharmony dominates” (τῆς παλαιᾶς ἀναρμοστίας, 273c) and the echoes of war are distinct. Then, following Plato's character's rendition of the Eleatic Stranger, we observe that war and violence are imminent when we take those accounts, which metaphorically describe the natural world, and use these as blueprints in our attempts at rearranging our own way of being. We take this observation a step further and suggest that if Plato's Stranger's diairetic procedure and the consequent myth are taken prescriptively, then Plato's clever play evades our understanding. The Stranger and the young Socrates, despite their attempts at finding a

⁴⁶⁰ See Krell's suggestion that the myth should be read as a serious reflection on the possibility of refiguring our relationship with animals, based on the observation that, for example, “Dogs ... are better judges of human character than either the Stranger or the Younger Socrates” (39). Krell interprets the time of Cronus's rule to correspond to the state of affairs when animals and humans “went to school together, as it were, and all our possibilities were held in common, which befits a community of friends” (29). See his “Talk to the Animals: On the Myth of Cronus in the *Statesman*.” *Plato's Animals: Gadflies, Horses, Swans, and Other Philosophical Beasts*. Naas, M. ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2015), 27 – 40.

⁴⁶¹ See also, *The Presocratic Philosophers* 296

new look of the statesman, accomplish repetition of the same—the human beings are cattle, the statesman is a shepherd, and we are headed for the fated state of war. If we read Plato's *Statesman* with the zealous attachment to the play that rearranges, but does not articulate inherited ideas, then we are bound to follow in the footsteps that the said ideas prescribe and, in so doing, we reinstall the views that already dominate our own lives. Since Plato did not write our own characters, but wrote those characters that we can study, it follows that we hold ourselves tethered to the repetition in so far as we refrain from noticing the constitution of Plato's play.

The dialogical play is as follows: the Stranger inserts the pre-Socratic teachings into his and the young Socrates' own pursuit. The unexamined version of Parmenides, Zeno, Empedocles, as well as of Pythagorean and Orphic beliefs is mixed in with the Homeric and Hesiodic tales, touched up by tragic narrative, and then recast as a plausible manual for action. The most playful part is that this manual is readily followed not only by the dialogical interlocutors, but also by Plato's readers (consider works by Sayre, J. R. Trevaskis, Harold F. Cherniss, and Norman Gulley, to name a few, where diáresis is viewed not so much as being a part of the dialogical development as, rather, a part of Plato's programmatic teachings). The dialogue presents the procedure as if it were a serious enterprise worthy of emulation. Upon examination, however, the pseudoscientific method that the Stranger proposes appears to consist of two major parts. One part is made up of the fairly rigorous eidetic and geometrical notions (ex.: 262b – 263b, 266a – b) and the other part concerns political, generative, human matters (ex.: 260c – e, 261c – e, 262c

– b). The mixing of the two parts, if it is accepted as a cogent guide in actual matters of life, ends up in absurdity.

Mitchell H. Miller takes note of and explains the strangeness of the mixture, to which he refers as one of the Stranger’s jokes.⁴⁶² Miller also offers nuanced accounts of the shortcomings of the “bifurcatory diaresis”⁴⁶³ as well as of the problematic character of the immediately following “alternative methods.”⁴⁶⁴ Nonetheless, at the point where the Stranger substitutes cutting down the middle (διὰ μέσων, 262b) for making cuts according to the mean (τοῦ μετρίου, 284c), Miller accepts the diairetic method as something that can help “actualize in social-historical fact the ideal of just polity.”⁴⁶⁵ Miller sees the mean as a mediation that “spans the ontological gap between form and particulars.”⁴⁶⁶ It looks like Miller’s attachment to the “doctrine of the ‘communion’ or ‘blending’ of forms”⁴⁶⁷ guides his search for the ways in which the Stranger’s rearrangement of the world could be taken prescriptively. Yet, what, exactly, is form—εἶδος—in the *Statesman*?

If we refrain from importing doctrinal interpretations, then in the examined dialogue, εἶδος is a “stamp [or] a single look” (258c). Note that this stamp does not pre-exist the Stranger or the young Socrates. It is not posited as an ideal to which all worldly things ought to live up. It simply means that by which a cut, once it is made, is going to be recognized henceforth. This understanding of εἶδος as both a seal and a look is

⁴⁶² *The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman* (Boston, MA: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980), 29 – 31.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, 16

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 66

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 17

prefigured in Socrates' introductory remark (257d). Although the term, εἶδος, is not used there, Socrates speaks about the two ways in which someone can be recognizably similar to another human being. These two ways are: physical likeness (τοῦ προσώπου φύσιν ὅμοιον, 257d) and name (κλήσις ὁμώνυμος, 257d). Theaetetus looks like Socrates and the young Socrates shares with Socrates his name. But there is no general class, let alone an otherworldly instantiation thereof—of Socrates—which makes both Theaetetus and the young Socrates akin to the elder one. The ideated (be it by means of memory of Socrates' face or of his name) permutation of εἶδος can be, in principle, however not in actuality, separated from Socrates—the living man, the unique one. Even when εἶδος is thought of as a universal, in the passage that separates the particular looks of Lydians, Phrygians, and Greeks and then replaces such understanding of εἶδος with the more general look that allows us to distinguish female and male animals, the species (which is what εἶδος names in that passage 262d – 263a) refers to the characteristics of physical beings. As the dialogical conversation elaborates on the matter, the species of female no more pre-exist, let alone inform or shape a living female swan or a living female human being, than Socrates' look or, so called, essence, exist before his birth.

If Plato's *Statesman* is taken on its own terms, then what needs to be traced out is the Stranger's manipulation of γένος, εἶδος, μέρος, πράγματος, and, consequently, also, of μέτριος. The mixings that the dialogical speeches carry out yield easily to being covered over with the theories and dogmas. Miller accomplishes just this kind of covering when, instead of asking about the relationship between the action of the speeches and the substitution between the terms ("genos ... meros and morion [and] ...

eidos”⁴⁶⁸) that they articulate, he simply takes the substitution to be an indication and a justification of the “doctrine of the ... forms.”⁴⁶⁹

Attentive to the play of Plato’s dialogues, which is as apt at revealing to us our deep-seated presuppositions and prejudices as it is capable of reinforcing these,⁴⁷⁰ we now read the myth of the reversal of time between Zeus (who governs in the young Socrates’ time) and Cronus with an eye on its dramatic texture. We sound out the pre-Socratic, the mythic, and the tragicomic notes and observe how the combinations of preceding speeches necessitate the mixing of the said motifs. Tracking, in this way, the paradigmatic structure, namely, the dialogical necessity and the arrangement of the narrative strands that Plato appropriates, we show what conclusions follow from the action of the dialogue.

3. The Myth of the Reversal of Time—Cronus

The myth (268e – 274e) is heralded by the Stranger’s invocation of child’s play and of musical enchantment. In the context of identifying the statesman with the “cattleman” (βουκόλω, 268a) as “the only herdsman and nurse of a human herd” (268b – c), the Stranger adds to the responsibilities of the herdsman a capacity to enchant the herd with music. The Stranger says that this is possible “to the extent that his nurslings have

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., 125, nt. 2

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 17

⁴⁷⁰ In the article on “Platonism, Moral Nostalgia, and the ‘City of Pigs’,” found in the *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* (2001) 27(1): 207 – 27, Rachel Barney’s reading of Plato’s dialogues corroborates my supposition about Plato’s curious literary style, which, according to Barney, is often “sharply oriented to [the] ... limitations and prejudices” (225), of the dialogical characters. I add that Plato’s writings engage as much the prejudices and limitations of his characters, as they do our own.

partaken by nature in child's play [παιδιᾶς] and music [μουσικῆς, and, hence], no one else is mightier than he to soothe [παραμυθεῖσθαι] them and by enchanting gentle them [κηλῶν πραϋνεῖν], both with instruments and by the mouth alone [μετά τε ὀργάνων καὶ ψιλῷ τῷ στόματι]" (268b).

Although the young Socrates does not bring it up, we are reminded of just this capacity to beguile by means of song and music that was bestowed on Orpheus. As far as musical enchantment is concerned, then, we should keep Orpheus in mind. Since the passage (267e – 268b) transitions from describing the herding of animals to the herding of enchanted human beings, we should also be mindful of the human Orphic practices. Connection between the latter and Orpheus, himself, has to do with the Dionysian mysteries. Apollodorus relates to us that "Orpheus also invented the mysteries of Dionysus, and having been torn in pieces by the Maenads he is buried in Pieria" (εὔρε δὲ Ὀρφεὺς καὶ τὰ Διονύσου μυστήρια, καὶ τέθραπται περὶ τὴν Πιερίαν διασπασθεὶς ὑπὸ τῶν μαινάδων).⁴⁷¹ Herodotus reports that the name and the mysteries of Dionysus were brought to the Greeks from Egypt by a, most-likely, mythical character, Melampus⁴⁷² and, for the Egyptians, Dionysus is Osiris.⁴⁷³ Dionysus, the twice-born god, is closely identified by the ancient Greeks with the Egyptian Osiris.⁴⁷⁴ The myth about re-membering and revitalizing the torn apart and dismembered divinity underlies both the

⁴⁷¹ *The Library of Greek Mythology, Volume I* 1.3.2

⁴⁷² *Histories* II.49

⁴⁷³ *Histories* II.42. However, research undermines Herodotus' view that the Greek deities originated as Egyptian gods. Consult Appendix C, §2, 4 in *The Landmark Herodotus: The Histories* 737 – 38.

⁴⁷⁴ For sources that make this identification credible, see Gregory Vlastos, "Theology and Philosophy in Early Greek Thought" (*Studies in Presocratic Philosophy*. New York, NY: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd. Publishing, 1970), 109, note 59.

Greek beliefs in Dionysus as well as the Orphic cosmogonies and practices. On the subject of Orphic Cosmogonies we read that “Dionysus was to become the central figure of the special Orphic myth of the creation of men out of the ashes of Titans who had killed and eaten the child-god.”⁴⁷⁵ The affinity with Dionysus is also preserved in the Orphic purification rituals. Cornford describes the “Orphic [follower as someone who] still clung to the emotional experience of reunion and the ritual that induced it, and, in particular, to the passionate spectacle (theoria) of the suffering God.”⁴⁷⁶ Orphic invocation of Dionysus appears to be used for the purpose of purifying one’s soul. By means of such purifying enchantments the rites prepare the soul for immortality. If we combine this image of the Orphic rites with the magical capacity of the mythic Orpheus to still nature and, by this stilling, to captivate the humans and the animals alike, then we perceive, rather accurately, the immediate import of the Stranger’s preface to the mythic tale. The sought statesman will resemble, most closely, someone capable of luring humans into cohabitating with other animals, where both are mingled into one enraptured community. However, where there are Orphic motifs, there, too, is the Dionysian theme.

Herodotus compares the Greek with the Egyptian rites of Dionysus and says that “the Egyptians celebrate the festival of Dionysos in nearly the same way as the Hellenes do.”⁴⁷⁷ Both at the Egyptian and at the Greek festivals “a flute player leads the way ...

⁴⁷⁵ *The Presocratic Philosophers* 30. Consult the authors’ account of the legitimacy and coherency of the Orphic cult as well as of the possible time frame for its proliferation in *The Presocratic Philosophers* 21.

⁴⁷⁶ *From Religion to Philosophy* 200.

⁴⁷⁷ *Histories* II.48

and the women follow”⁴⁷⁸ the music. Heard in the Dionysian register, the Stranger’s preamble to the myth is hardly a child’s play. Firstly, it marks the celebration of *eros* and of erotic life, which is going to be completely absent from the mythical time of Cronus. Secondly, the Dionysian revelry and its Bacchic frenzy bring to the surface the violence, which is covered over by the Orphic attunement. Both animals and human beings get torn to pieces by the followers of Dionysus. Although absent from the first part of the myth, the violence returns in the second part. It is as if the Stranger’s narration serves to peel back the dazed whimsicality of the Orphic beliefs and to reveal the submerged violence of nature.

The mythic tale itself corroborates the idea that, with time, the Dionysian necessities (which are as much erotic and recalcitrant as they are violent) come to replace the ones that are free from turbulent desire (εἰμαρμένη τε καὶ σύμφυτος ἐπιθυμία, 272e). One last thing heralded by the Dionysian background reflects rather grimly on the final divisions made during the first search for the statesman. According to the results of the diaretic searches, as we recall, the human being is closest in kin to pigs. As we imagine, in the mythical time of Cronus, humans and pigs are all the more akin, while both are being herded by the gods. However, when the idyllic time gives way to the time of violent needs, what prevents some human beings from treating the rest as if they still were pig-like, that is, meant for slaughter? It turns out that one of the differences between the Dionysian revelries practiced by the Greeks and the Egyptians is that “on the eve of the festival of Dionysos, each Egyptian slaughters a young pig in front of the entrance to

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

his home and then gives it back to the swineherd who sold it to him to take away.”⁴⁷⁹

With the age of Zeus comes the time of “resourceless perplexities” (274c) when needs are many and the assuagements are difficult to procure. As fierceness of repressed Dionysus erupts—the fierceness with which beasts prey on humans (247b – c) and with which the Bacchanites dismember living beings—what is to guard against the gruesome sacrifices? What is this world and time, which mixes up not in taxonomic determination, but in murderous deeds, the human and the eatable animal? The answer is strangely simple. This time and this world are still ours. For all of the attempts at circumventing the brutality of murder and the atrocity of war, we live in the time and in the world that harbors both. We do not have to resort to cannibalism in order to be implicated in the practices of “human sacrifice.” Complacency in the face of suffering suffices. The *Statesman* relates the kinds of circumventions that end either in complete failure or that serve as temporary palliatives of the ills spelled by the acts of violence. Perhaps, thinking about eradication, circumvention, or alleviation of violence is a wishful thinking. Maybe this is a “child’s play” (παιδιὰν, 268d) to which the Stranger invites the young Socrates and us.

The Stranger’s and the young Socrates’ conversational play stalls, for the time being, savagery and confusion. However, in the *Iliad*, child talk (ἐπέεσσὶ γε νηπυτίοισιν, XX.211 and λεγόμεθα νηπύτιοι, XX.242) is disavowed as Aeneias and Achilles are getting ready to fight one another to the death. Far from being assuaged by the baby talk (ἐπέεσσὶ με νηπύτιον, XX.431), Hektor promises to Achilles caustic insults (κερτομίας

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

ἡδ' αἴσυλα μυθήσασθαι, XX.433) and death. Where war is imminent, child-play is but a gruesome metaphor and cooing, soothing phrases must be set aside. Contrarily, there is no place for deadly anger nor for war where children talk and play. However close in age the young Socrates might be to the age of “child’s play” (παιδιὰς, 268e), he is no longer a child. Hence, the playfulness of the myth, even at the outset of the Stranger’s presentation, indicates something rather serious and that is—it is impossible for human beings, who are past the age of childhood, to sustain the innocence and purity of child play.

In both of its accounts that relate the ways of things in time of Cronus and in time of Zeus, the myth is a playful narration, but as far as the time of Cronus goes, this play is especially uncanny. It pretends to make possible for all humans the kind of blamelessness that is attributable only to the little children. Two images of being child-like are active in the myth. The first one has to do with carefree existence and with the lack of need to pursue erotic desires. The second is an image of infirmity and weakness, of defenselessness that, for some, foretells suffering and, for others, is a root of extreme brutality. The myth implies that both with respect to our dreams of surrendering ourselves to paradisiac life as well as with respect to the acts of gruesome violence we are too childlike. Agreeing with this assessment, as far as it pertains to the tale about Cronian rule, Barney argues that the account of the “Golden Age” should be understood as a “deviant and parodic play.”⁴⁸⁰ She supports her findings by referring the reader to Martha Nussbaum. On Nussbaum’s view, the “gluttonous comic visions of the Golden Age

⁴⁸⁰ “Platonism, Moral Nostalgia, and the ‘City of Pigs’” 217

depend on a suspension of the realities of the natural world [and] ... result [in] ... untroubled appetitive satisfaction.”⁴⁸¹ It is all the more curious that the trouble-free gluttony is immediately preceded by an invocation of a myth that calls to mind cannibalism (268e). Melissa S. Lane draws the cannibalistic and the voracious motifs closer together when she compares the shepherding in the *Statesman* myth to the images of shepherding in the *Iliad* and the *Republic*. She inquires:

do shepherds fatten their sheep merely in order to eat them (as Thrasymachus insists), or is Socrates right to believe in a genuine art of shepherding guided solely by the best interests of the herd? The *Statesman*'s general account of ruling sustains Socrates' view that true rulers will have the true interests of the ruled in mind. But this view of ruling cannot be satisfactorily modelled in terms of shepherding. That widely accepted model of rule will be shown to lack both the internal differentiation as an art, and the special (and internal) applicability to humans. *Method and Politics in Plato's Statesman* 45⁴⁸²

Lane focuses on the requirement of “internal differentiation” or on the need to establish the parameters by which we can distinguish between the peculiarities of herding and ruling as well as then, further, between ruling Greeks as opposed to Persians, for instance. Her attentiveness to the amalgamation of difference leads Lane to suggest that the rule of Cronus looks of awful much like tyrannical rule. Miller offers the same conceptual view of Cronus's rule. Miller supports this interpretation with ample historical detail when he compares Cronean time to the period during which Athens is governed by Pisistratus.⁴⁸³ Drawing a tacit analogy between the historical Athens and the change of hands that power undergoes in the Stranger's myth, Miller concludes that “by its own inner dynamic

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., 217, nt. 10

⁴⁸² Published in Cambridge, UK by Cambridge University Press, 1998

⁴⁸³ *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman* 43 – 44

Pisistratus' tyranny was doomed to give way to the very 'power of the people'—*dēmocratia*—which it suppressed.”⁴⁸⁴ Similarly, the myth exhibits an internal necessity according to which the “Golden Age” ceases and is succeeded by the reign of Zeus. Even this change, however—the swapping of ruling power—is already planted in the seed from which the Stranger's mythmaking grows.

We hear the Stranger tell the young Socrates that “of ancient stories [τῶν πάλαι λεχθέντων], there was, among many different ones which occurred and will recur, the particular case of the portent [or monster, φάσμα] in the storied strife between Atreus and Thyestes” (268e). By Plato's time this trope about the two brothers' enmity is spilling over from the domain of myth onto the stage in performances of Aeschylus', Sophocles', and Euripides' tragedies. Thus, we should keep in mind that however whimsical and comic the reversals, mixings, and configurations of the Stranger's myth may be, the ground from which they grow and which they only cover over temporarily is—tragic. The knotted roots of this tragedy run deep and are tied up with the showings of monstrosity. Atreus's gruesome wrongdoing is a repetition, of sorts, of his grandfather Tantalus's transgressive deed.

Referred to, interchangeably, as the king of Phrygians or Lydians, Tantalus, Zeus's son from Oceanid, Pluto, kills, cooks, and serves his own son, Pelops, at the banquet to the gods. All but Demeter, who grieves over the disappearance of her daughter, Persephone, discern that Tantalus is testing the divinities. Demeter, unwittingly, eats dead Pelops's shoulder, which Zeus, when he revives Pelops, replaces

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

with an ivory prosthesis. Tantalus's unwholesome curiosity about the means of nourishment does not stop at feeding humans to the gods. He also takes the gods' victuals (nectar and ambrosia) and gives them to humans. The mythical character, who swaps the respective food stuffs and, by doing this, attempts to enact a kind of mixing between the ways in which divinities and human beings sustaining their lives, is punished by Zeus. Tantalus's theft, in the Stranger's telling of the myth, presages an appearance of another thief, Prometheus. The latter, too, suffers a cruel punishment meted out by Zeus, but the Stranger says nothing about that.

The Stranger's narrative consistency shines forth if we trace Tantalus's genealogy to the point where it meets with Atreus's son, Agamemnon. Recall the amalgamation of the Greeks with the rest of the barbarians that the Stranger offers to the young Socrates as a proper way to think about human beings? The amalgam serves to point out to the young Socrates that the Lydians and the Phrygians should not to be set against all of the other Greeks. It turns out that, even at the time when the Stranger tells his mythic story, he has not lost sight of this initial diairetic reconstitution of the relations between peoples. Agamemnon, who fights for the Greeks at Troy, is a descendant of Tantalus. The latter is either a Lydian or, depending on the account, he is the king of the Phrygian peoples. Both Lydians and Phrygians are Trojan allies during the War, but later, at the end of the seventh century BC, Lydians subjugate the Phrygian kingdom. Lydia, in its turn, is overrun by Persia. All tribes mix in letters (in the Stranger's myth, that is) and in life (as it is described in the words of Homer), but with this exception—the Stranger, albeit unsuccessfully, seeks to ward off the bloody mixing and the calamities of war.

The young Socrates picks up on the story line that has to do with a grudgingly made sacrifice of the “golden ram” (τῆς χρυσοῦς ἀρνός, 268e). Atreus’s failure to pass Hermes’s test of the legitimation of kingship spells disaster for this human. Instead of sacrificing the whole beautiful golden ram to the god, Atreus burns and offers the flesh of the animal, but hides and keeps the golden fleece. Hermes happens to be the patron of shepherding. He is the first one among gods and human beings to sacrifice animal flesh to the other gods. The stolen fleece, this token of his greedy kingship, is given by Atreus’s unfaithful wife to her lover, Thyestes; that same Thyestes who is Atreus’s brother. When the time comes for the two brothers to be in dispute over rule in Mycenae, Atreus, unbeknownst to himself, bargains away his kingship at a contest, which prescribes that the possessor of the golden fleece is the rightful king. Atreus believes he has the token. Little does he know that with Aerope’s help, Thyestes stole the prized possession. This is the longer version of the young Socrates’ conjecture that “[p]erhaps [the Stranger is] ... pointing at the sign about the golden ram” (268e). However, the Stranger, as he is known to do, gives another twist to the conversation.

No, not at all, mine pertains to the change [τῆς μεταβολῆς] in the setting and rising of the sun and the rest of the stars—the place, the story goes, from which it now rises was at that time where it set, and it rose from the opposite side, and that was the time when the god testified for Atreus and changed [μετέβαλεν] it into its present scheme. 269a

Contrary to this proclamation, the fact of the matter is that the Stranger merely offers a continuation of the golden fleece story and not some other tale. However, the Stranger’s point of reference is cosmic, rather than earthly. In the original tale, Zeus reverses the course of the sun for the sake of solving a dispute that takes place on earth. The moment

that Zeus enters the picture, the axis of power is elevated above the capacities of any mortal creature. Atreus cannot win the contest alone. He cannot affect the movement of heavenly bodies. He could have, out of his own accord, carried out a proper sacrifice to Hermes. Atreus could have remained king relying on his own power, but he cannot become king once again, after the loss of his kingdom, by resorting to those same means.

The second half of the mythic strife, retold by the Stranger, sets up another contest between Atreus and Thyestes. The sun must run backwards. If it does, then Thyestes will give the kingdom back and return the rule to his brother. This is the “part of the big myth” (268e) that the Stranger will use in his own mythic narration. However, in his own version of the myth, the Stranger sets aside human agency. He also leaves out any mention of the punishment that befalls the rulers who are unwilling to properly honor the difference between the humans and the gods. The Stranger also suppresses the notion of sacrificial practices. He stresses the supernatural change (μεταβολή), the change in the direction run by the course of the sun, on which Atreus’s agency bears only tangentially, and which points, rather, to the origin of the present scheme (σχῆμα, 269a) and the cause of the sun’s revolutions. In the Stranger’s myth, the human and earth-bound agency drops out in favor of the cosmic.

The stripping away of the political aspect of the myth—of the aspect, which grounds it in human disagreements—makes the Stranger’s narration all the more fanciful, fantastical, and estranged. Rosen suggests that the “deficiency” of the myth is owed to the fact that “the Stranger abstracts from the human perspective [and carries out the] ...

treatment of human beings in the myth [from] ... the cosmological perspective.”⁴⁸⁵

Although, I agree with Rosen on the subject of the shift in perspective, I do not see the myth as being deficient. I do not take the dialogue to offer prescriptions for statesmanship. Therefore, I do not count the failure of the diairetic comedy or of the mythic tale to produce the statesman as signifying the deficiency of these. Instead, as we trace out the presentations of the failures and the context thereof, we avail ourselves of noticing the deficiencies in the frameworks that we bring to bear on the dialogical developments and on our interpretive views of the world.

In the spirit of learning something about ourselves from the dialogue, we continue to trace out the elements, which make up the Stranger’s tale. The two moves that the Stranger makes, as he avails himself of some parts of Hesiodic cosmogony (269a) and of the stock of the Theban myths (269b),⁴⁸⁶ happen quickly. He warns the young Socrates that all of the three mythic strands (Zeus’s reversal of the sun,⁴⁸⁷ Cronus’s rule, and chthonic generation) will be mixed up in his own account. The mixing is warranted, according to the Stranger, because

all these together are from the same affect [ἐκ ταῦτοῦ πάθους ...] no one has stated the affect which is the cause for all these things [τούτοις αἴτιον τὸ πάθος], but it must at last be said, for once it’s stated it will eminently fit in with the showing forth of the king [τοῦ βασιλέως ἀπόδειξιν]. 269b – c

⁴⁸⁵ *Plato’s Statesman* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 41

⁴⁸⁶ Benardete reserves the birth of the Titans as an explanation for the mention of “those before [who] grew up earth-born” (269b). See his note 22 to page III.18 of the *Being of the Beautiful*.

⁴⁸⁷ Benardete notes that Herodotus reports that the kinds of solar lapses happened also in Egypt “without [having] any effect on life (II.142.4; cf. 26.2)” (III.151, note 20).

The Stranger switches his procedural predilection from halving diáresis to the search for causes. The cause, for which the Stranger searches now, is a kind of affect. Once it is found, the king will show himself. Injected into the most fantastical myth making is, again, a search that can be seen as the Stranger's imitation of the pre-Socratic attempts at accounting for the arrangement (the regularities and the changes) of nature. Affects like attraction and strife as well as the explanation of change by means of these are Empedoclean notions. Also the view that the perception of time when "the race of men were produced from the earth [ἀνθρώπων γένος ἐκ τῆς γῆς]"⁴⁸⁸ was different "because of the slowness of the sun's motion"⁴⁸⁹ is attributed to Empedocles. The myth of the reversal of time, at least in its first part, takes up and appropriates, rather straightforwardly, which does not mean fairly, the pre-Socratic search (carried out both by the poets who speak mythically as well as by those who speak of nature) for the origin and the causes of the cosmic and the human worlds. The said search is recast in the Stranger's mythologizing as an attempt to situate the cause of change in the cosmic and the earthly arrangements. The search for the cause of origin is substituted with the search for the cause of change. Once the affective cause of change is established, the search, according to the Statesman, will yield the king—that statesman, who is the best for human beings. Of course, it does not. It yields, again, "the shepherd of the human herd ... a god instead of a mortal" (274e). No matter the professed shift in the perspective and the search for the affective cause of cosmological change, the fact of the matter is—the cosmic tale is still set to the melody not of the extraterrestrial, but of the human aches,

⁴⁸⁸ *The Presocratic Philosophers* 305

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

realities, and needs. In the not so distant background of the cosmically situated myth-telling are the stories that explain and relate not the otherworldly, but the earthly strife. However, before we show how this is so, we should examine the cosmos at issue.

The Stranger portrays the cosmos as an “animal” (ζῷον, 269d), which is intermittently accompanied or, if you wish, overseen by the god. Although it is at first described as being “spontaneous” (αὐτόματον, 269d), eventually the change in the direction of the cosmic rotation, is said to coincide with the withdrawal of the god (270a, 272e) and is attributed to the “inborn desire” (σύμφυτος ἐπιθυμία, 272e). Here is the Stranger’s set up: the cosmos is an animal and, therefore, its nature is to have desires. So long that the god (ὁ θεός, 269c) is watchful in providing for the animal’s desires, the cosmos rotates in one direction. The cataclysm arrives when the divinity withdraws and the desire makes itself known to the cosmic animal. The Stranger wants the young Socrates to know that the cosmos does not continue on according to its own principle of eternal motion (269e), but neither does it always get its motion from the god (270a). Instead, the cosmic motion is more akin to a mechanism set to work by the divine presence. It “sometimes is joined for its guidance” (270a) by a “divine cause” (270a) of movement. It is wound up, that is. “[A]nd sometimes, whenever it is just let go [it], goes by itself through itself” (270a). We can think of the cosmos not as if it were a tippie top, but as if it were something capable of sustaining undulating tension, in a manner of a string musical instrument. Then, we can hear in the Stranger’s account resonances with the following description of the all “οὐ ξυνιαῖσιν ὅκως διαφερόμενον ἑωυτῷ ὁμολογέει·

παλίντροπος ἄρμονίη ὅκωσπερ τόξου καὶ λύρης.”⁴⁹⁰ This saying, which has come down to us as Heraclitus’ Fragment number 51, translates as “[t]hey do not apprehend how being at variance it agrees with itself ... there is a back-stretched connection, as in the bow and the lyre.”⁴⁹¹ The string of a bow or of the lyre sometimes comes to life when it is touched by a human hand. This touch, which imparts the initial motion, in the Stranger’s analogy is substituted for the “divine cause.” Thereafter, the string reverberates and moves “itself through itself.” We observe that the paradigm for setting up the movement and the rotation of the living animal, which is the cosmos, much as it is in the first account of the *Timaeus*, is borrowed from the work accomplished by means of craft. Confirming this assumption, the Stranger specifies that the god is, in fact, a δημιουργός (270a).

We also learn from the Stranger that the reason why the god “lets go” (269c), leaving the navigation of the cosmos to its own devices, is because “the circuits have obtained the measure of the time appropriate to the all” (αἱ περίοδοι τοῦ προσήκοντος αὐτῷ μέτρον εἰλήφωσιν ἤδη χρόνου, 269c) and, hence, the “going in reverse [is] ... of necessity” (τὸ ἀνάπαλιν ἰέναι διὰ τόδ’ ἐξ ἀνάγκης, 269d). The trio of necessity [ἀνάγκη], time [χρόνος], and reversal in the established direction [ἀνάπαλιν] (the latter turns out to be a turn toward injustice, ἄδικος, 273c) is most closely echoing Anaximander’s saying. The latter goes like this: “κατὰ τὸ χρεών· διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν.”⁴⁹² “According to the need. Themselves [they ought]

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 192

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² Ibid., 107. Cf. Heidegger’s take on “The Anaximander Fragment” in *Early Greek Thinking*.

to give justice, as such, for injustice [done] to each other according to the arrangement of time”⁴⁹³ or “according to necessity; for they pay penalty and retribution to each other for their injustice according to the assessment of Time.”⁴⁹⁴ Whether the arrangement of time specifies the need to pay the recompense or whether it stresses the doing of injustice, the passage relates the sense that there is a change in the way of things and, depending on the direction, it is either a change from injustice to a just deed (the payment of the recompense) or it is a reversal from the just arrangement to the one in which injustices are caused to one another. The reversal, in the Stranger’s myth, maintains fidelity to this schema, which dictates that, by necessity, which seems to depend on the temporal nature of our being, there is an oscillation between the just and the unjust arrangement of things. Thus, however hopeful the images of Cronus’s time may be, they are illusory on two counts. First, there is no mention, in the Stranger’s appropriation of Anaximander’s fragment for his Cronus myth, of this underlying order or arrangement, which by necessity includes both just and unjust deeds. Second, despite this exclusion, the age of Cronus does not safeguard against arrival of injustice, which sets in at the time when the age of Cronus ends. The trouble-free life under Cronus underscores the inalienable fact— injustice cannot be rooted out from the time of human life. This is so at least as long as the demiurgic logic of the cosmic arrangement, which the Stranger introduced to start (270a), holds sway. So long as animals (human animals included) have needs and desires that are provided for according to the ordering of time and the guidance of artifice or craft (270a), the human beings are bound to both justice and injustice. Perhaps there is no

⁴⁹³ My translation

⁴⁹⁴ *The Presocratic Philosophers* 108

other arrangement for us. However, if we are to learn from the Stranger's account of the κόσμος, then we should set aside the preconceived view of what is best for human beings.

One example of how preconception leads astray is Miller's conclusion about the myth. He writes,

[T]here is a task of developing an 'art' (or 'science') which can somehow 'harmonize' men into a cohesive social whole. As an *art* which, itself one among many, accepts labor and differentiation as the presuppositions of community, such statesmanship ... is the proper human analogue, the appropriation, of the god's rule. *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman* 53

Miller's assessment of the Stranger's purpose for telling the mythical story and of the meaning of the myth leaves us exactly where we started. Art and science are still confused. Human things are still extrapolated from the mythically given divine order. Both the distinctions between art/science and human/divine are still governed by the constructive, demiurgic paradigm of arranging human beings by means of harmonization (ἁρμονία, is a shipbuilding and a wood working term, taken to mean musical harmony by Heraclitus⁴⁹⁵ Pythagoreans, and some of Plato's characters).⁴⁹⁶ It may well be that the myth does not take us much further than Miller's evaluation thereof. However, what other reason, aside from the ostensible termination of the myth and the proclivity to draw decisive conclusions, do we have for extracting a prescriptive method from the Stranger's story? The Stranger, himself, does not recommend to take the conclusion of the myth in any definitively applicable manner.

⁴⁹⁵ Although, see Charles H. Kahn, who claims that there are at least three different ways to think about Heraclitus' use of "ἁρμονία" and musical harmony is but one of the meanings that can be attributed to it. *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 203.

⁴⁹⁶ Liddell & Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* 244

The first part of the myth proper (269c – 270d)⁴⁹⁷ is woven together by the Stranger rather seamlessly with the second thread (270d – 271c). The first part describes the asexual generation of human beings. Most interpreters (among them Benardete, Barney, and Miller) take the scene of chthonic generation to be a recasting of Hesiod's *Theogony* where the Titans and “Cronus the youngest and most terrible of [Gaia's] children was born” (ὀπλότατος γένητο Κρόνος ἀγκυλομήτης, δεινότατος παίδων, 137 – 38)⁴⁹⁸ out of earth. Hesiod is one poet whose works might be the Stranger's palimpsest. Another mythic story to consider as adding to the Stranger's color-palette is Cadmus' crops of Spartoi, the earth-born warriors, whose offspring populate and rule the Seven-gated Thebes. Of course, neither of the considered tales about creatures born out of earth corresponds to the peacefulness of the Stranger's description. The Titans—Cronus being the foremost among them—rebel against the reign of Uranus. The Spartoi kill each other, leaving only five warriors, as ancestors (along with Cadmus) of the Theban tribes. The Spartoi and, especially, the Titans are not vapid, dreamy creatures. They are hubristic ones and there is a penalty that accompanies their haughty desires and thoughts. However, the beings of the Stranger's Cronus time are rather docile. What is more, unlike the sprouted beings of the Stranger's tale, the Spartoi age and die. The Titans, although raised out of earth, are not revived corpses either. Yet, it is exactly, the zombie-like generation, if the generative term is even appropriate in this regard, that the Stranger describes to the young Socrates. It looks like what we are witnessing in the Stranger's

⁴⁹⁷ Cf. Rosen, who counts “seven parts” (*Plato's Statesman* 40).

⁴⁹⁸ *Hesiod: Volume I, Theogony. Works and Days. Testimonia*. Translation mine.

myth is not a promise of asexual, painless generation, but rather an anti-genesis—a literal reversal of nature—and the grim changes that come with it.

The age of Cronus is reversed and the living beings are said to suffer the reversal of their temporal markings (270d). As if a ship, rebuilt plank by plank out of the newer pieces, the beings of nature are fantastically renewed. This rearrangement, which was prefigured in the Stranger's toying with γένος, εἶδος, and πράγματος (262d – 263b), is now fleshed out in the story that treats of the living beings as if their possibilities are the same as those of the non-living matter. Given this confusion between the paradigms of generation and craftsmanship, the Stranger's initial, mesmerizingly appealing picture, morphs into a rather terrifying sight.

First of all, the age, which each and every animal had, came to a halt, and everything that was mortal stopped its advance toward looking older, but, in altering, each genus grew back in the contrary direction, younger as it were and suppler [Beanrdete interpolates “genus,” where the Greek reads: ἦν ἡλικίαν ἕκαστον εἶχε τῶν ζώων, αὕτη πρῶτον μὲν ἔσται πάντων, καὶ ἐπαύσατο πᾶν ὅσον ἦν θνητὸν ἐπὶ τὸ γεραίτερον ἰδεῖν πορευόμενον, μεταβάλλον δὲ πάλιν ἐπὶ τοῦναντίον οἷον νεώτερον καὶ ἀπαλότερον ἐφύετο] [...] going back toward the nature of the new-born child, getting to be similar to it both in terms of the soul and in terms of the body [κατὰ τε τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα]. [...] they began to wither away and vanish utterly and completely. And of those, in turn, who died violently at that time, the body of the corpse, in being affected with the same affects [πάσχον παθήματα], quickly in a few days wasted away and disappeared.
270d – e

Observe that they, who vanish (ἐξηφανίζετο) when the cosmic time reverses, do so as little babes. These reversed children are really childlike in their souls and in their bodies. Given that the Stranger does not fail to mention violent deaths and the transformations of the corpses of the murdered, which are marked by the same changes that all of the rest of

the living beings undergo, death is not only not absent from the fabled time, it is, rather, made to look terrible. Those growing younger “day by day and night by night” (270e) are watching the corpses as those swiftly become younger-looking, wither, and vanish into nowhere. The unburied, altering, vanishing bodies are there on display. The beings, which revert to the state that is indistinguishable from childhood, are made to watch how the unburied dead dissolve and disappear. At the same time, the young observe themselves “being affected with the same affects” (271a). The affects continue, until, as little babes, they comprehend no more and fade away. For all that a child knows it watches both the corpses and itself die. This is unambiguous—the children are dying. The reverse side of the fabulous temporal reversal, the concomitant affect of asexual generation, is that children bear the lot of the old. If this unnatural and eerie, plague-like state (remember that the babes are also dead at the beginning of *Oedipus*, at the time of plague) is the Stranger’s caricature of Empedoclean cycle where “[d]ouble is the birth of mortal things and double their failing [ἀπόλειπς, leave]; for ... these things never cease their continual interchange”⁴⁹⁹ then it is a jarring image.

The Stranger paints an even grimmer picture as he describes the manner in which these temporally reversed beings generate. The young Socrates brings up the issue of generation: “[b]ut what exactly, stranger, was the genesis [γένεσις] of animals then? And in what manner did they generate from one another [ἐξ ἀλλήλων ἐγεννῶντο]?” (271a) The Stranger counters, “It’s plain, Socrates, that the generation from one another was not in their nature at that time, but the earth-born genus [ἐξ ἀλλήλων οὐκ ἦν ἐν τῇ τότε φύσει

⁴⁹⁹ *The Presocratic Philosophers* 287

γεννώμενον, τὸ δὲ γηγενὲς εἶναί ποτε γένος] [is ...] from the dead, who lie in the earth ... they get put together there once more and live again [ἐκ τῶν τετελευτηκότων αὖ, κειμένων δὲ ἐν γῇ]” (271a, b). This is a noxious preface to the tale about paradisiac life. The children are dying and the corpses are refashioned and then made to sprout back up out of earth. Whatever Empedocles means by “bring from Hades the strength of a dead man,”⁵⁰⁰ it is unlikely that he means what the Stranger here shows to the young Socrates and to us. Planinc observes that the chthonic return from the dead is uncharacteristically portrayed as an attractive fate by the Stranger. For instance, “[f]or Hesiod [,] ... being ‘earth-born’ is a brutal and undesirable condition for the few who are said to suffer it.”⁵⁰¹ Commenting on the implications of the Cronus rule, Planinc goes as far as to suggest that the “cosmos with Kronos at the helm is his [the Stranger’s] intellectualized projection of the Cyclops’s cave.”⁵⁰² The kind of unerotic life and deathlessness that, according to Planinc, is offered in the first half of the myth, is “excessive and unnatural [and] ... is itself a type of death.”⁵⁰³ The death that Planinc has in mind seems to indicate the disappearance of human possibilities of suffering and of learning. The differences between human and fantastical possibilities, Planinc notes, are outlined in the difference between the “symbolic opposition of Calypso and Penelope [which] is the opposition of false and true eros, false and true immortality.”⁵⁰⁴ We might aspire to possess such supernatural capacities as age-reversal, negation of death, and even complete provision

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., 286

⁵⁰¹ *Socrates and the Cyclops* 196

⁵⁰² Ibid., 197

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

for all of our desires and necessities. Would this bring about our blissful existence? Do such hopes and aspirations of a trouble-free life cast rather unseemly shadows? The myth outlines the contours of the dingy apparitions and points to a realization—we, humans, cannot live like the deathless gods do. We cannot go unvisited by the sting of dire needs; whether these needs affect us as the pains of love or as the aches of hunger. Neither does the divine omnipotence befit the human kind. The murderous hubris of the archaic Spartoi and Cronus's hubris, which bids the Titan to castrate his father and take the power at the helm, manifest as terror if attempted by the human beings. At the origin of magnificent power—be it the power of absolute rule or the power to reverse time and stave off death—serving as the principle of such force, is terror. Yet, we keep rewinding time, so to speak; we keep reaching for this grievous origin. In various renditions and disguises (as systems of political and social oppression, or as an imperative to dominate nature, or as a dream to be rid of suffering), we keep replaying the initiation into the ways of tyrannous might. As if we cannot help it, as if we are unable to do otherwise, we repeat the violent impetus. The Stranger confirms its seductive character in the first half of the myth. The attestation to our penchant for the kinds of things, which presuppose terrible power, is carried out in the comedic key.

The list of the attractive features, which life in the time of Cronus offers, includes abundance of eatable vegetation that needs no tending (272a) as well as absence of war or conflict of any kind (271e). Moreover, there is nothing “savage nor any act of feeding on one another” (271e). There is no need for clothes or shelter (272a). There is such clemency of the elements as to provide a “mixture that gave no pain” (272a). The more

fantastical fruits of divine beneficence is the exchange of both intelligence (συναγυρμὸν φρονήσεως, 272c) and speeches (διὰ λόγων δύνασθαι συγγίγνεσθαι, 272c) between the sprouted beings and animals (μετά τε θηρίων καὶ μετ' ἀλλήλων ὁμιλοῦντες, 272c). We should note, following Barney, that “[l]eisure, divine protection, being able to talk to the animals: none of it is any good unless used in the pursuit of wisdom. [However, the] ... image of earthborn primitives discussing epistemology with their animal friends is a hopelessly comic one.”⁵⁰⁵ The Stranger is telling a funny tale, but his conclusion is less decisive than Barney makes it out to be. He says that those who philosophize in the age of Cronus “excelled these now in point of happiness by a thousandfold” (272c). However, he does not say that the other mode of being, the supposedly philosophical one, available to the nurslings of Cronus, is clearly marked by unhappiness. Instead, the Stranger introduces an alternative to the establishment of collective prudence (συναγυρμὸν φρονήσεως, 272c) through recognition of different natural capacities (παρὰ πάσης φύσεως εἴ τινα τις ἰδίαν δύναμιν ἔχουσα ἤσθητό τι διάφορον τῶν ἄλλων, 272c). He suggests that another way to live under Cronus is by being satiated as much with food and drink as with the common type of conversation (ἐμπιμπλάμενοι σίτων ἄδην καὶ ποτῶν διελέγοντο πρὸς ἀλλήλους καὶ τὰ θηρία μύθους οἷα δὴ καὶ τὰ νῦν περὶ αὐτῶν λέγονται, 272c – d). It is assumed, by Barney, for example, that the second alternative is necessarily inferior to the so-called philosophical cohabitation. However, the Stranger does not say that the satiated and self-centered life is inferior. He says that it is easy to decide about the happiness of the discussed lives (272c). But he only notes that life spent

⁵⁰⁵ “Platonism, Moral Nostalgia, and the ‘City of Pigs’” 222

in prudent conversation with animals is happier than the present lot of human beings, not that it is happier than the alternative existence under Cronus. We jump to the conclusion that the search for and exchange of intelligence with animals is preferable to the fire-side story-telling, but the Stranger does not, himself, make this leap. Instead, he continues to speak mythically and, in so doing, makes us, the readers, who may be eager to accept one of the lives in the time of Cronus as being superior to the other one, into the unsuspecting participants in his joke.

One of the Stranger's comical tropes is the, quite literal, stripping and nakedness of the blessed beings about whom Xenophanes speaks. Consider the following verses from Xenophanes of Colophon:

One ought to say such things as these, beside a fire in wintertime,/lying fully fed on a soft couch,/drinking sweet wine and eating chick-peas for dessert:/'Who among men are you [τίς πόθεν εἰς ἀνδρῶν] and what family are you from?,' 'How old are you, good sir?,'/and 'What age were you when the Mede came? *Xenophanes of Colophon* 31⁵⁰⁶

Lesher, who translates the fragment, adds that, for some commentators, the "opening description contains an implicit moral about polite conduct."⁵⁰⁷ Lesher's conclusion about the passage is that it contains Xenophanes' endorsement of the proper "way to live."⁵⁰⁸ Even if the description of sharing after-dinner tales about former calamities and, presumably, bravery is indicative of good life for Xenophanes, such pleasures are ridiculed by the Stranger. The ridicule is not obvious if we consider only the Stranger's or

⁵⁰⁶ James H. Lesher, trans. (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1992)

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., 72

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid.

only Xenophanes' words. However, observe what happens if we let the two narrations speak to one another.

First, we notice that the Stranger's Cronus-nurslings are in no need of protection from the elements and, thus, are naked. Imagine what this would look like for Xenophanes' account. Stripped of clothes, somewhat buzzed and leisurely lounging, men recount the tales, which, as Reinhardt observes, include "Homeric device ... used to introduce accounts of heroic exploits."⁵⁰⁹ If this is not enough to connote facetiousness, then consider the next difference between the Stranger's description of the gloried age of Cronus and Xenophanes' verses. Xenophanes borrows from Homer the interrogative, τίς πόθεν (*Iliad* XXI.150), which differentiates between the kinds or tribes of men.

Xenophanes, thereafter, goes on to invoke the tales about war and manly valor. However, the Stranger cuts out references to manliness, needful for successes in war, and mixes up the differences that obtain not only between men, but also between human beings and animals. The final remake of Xenophanes' verse (if we assume that these are, in fact, the background of the Stranger's playful mythologizing) paints the following picture: well fed, kept warm by the wine and the heat of the fire, naked humans of all ages and kinds converse with animals. To avoid very unseemly eventualities, the Stranger excises *eros* from the picture. He also replaces the interest in bravery and glory with the predilection for philosophy (φιλοσοφίαν, 272c). Having nothing else to attend to, except for the cultivation of the desires for the sciences (ἐπιστημῶν) or for speeches (λόγων, 272d), the human-animal herd buzzes on peacefully. Then comes the time when, like those who are

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid., 73

transformed into cicadas that are mentioned in the *Phaedrus* (259a – d), they pass away and make room for another generation that, resembling the bugs even in their birth, crawls out of the earth. Not only is this mock philosophizing rid of its sting, not only the possibility of the necessary reflection on the nature and the consequences of having passions, aches, and desires is cut out from the Stranger’s version of the blessed life; but also Homeric-style tales of the immortal splendor—those Siren-songs of war—do not make the Stranger’s cut. The accounts of either the Trojan War or of the more recent Persian onslaught, which is evoked in Xenophanes’ narration, are silenced in what the Stranger’s speeches say. However, the action of suppression in the Stranger’s account is set in contrast to this silence.

The stranger is silent about one of the most pressing concerns in war. The fate that befalls those for whom the men are responsible—the women’s and children’s fate—is hateful. Nothing is said about this ugliness (*Iliad* XXII.465 – 506), which is on the opposite side of glory that a heroic man stands to gain if his people win the war. The Stranger makes no reference to the known tales, which depict the savage acts such as, for instance, the ghastly feeding on the corpses, to which the characters in the *Iliad* refer over and over again. The Stranger only says that those herded by the divinities in the time of Cronus know nothing “savage nor any act of feeding on one another” (271e). And, the Stranger adds immediately, “there was no war” (271e). Although Stranger denies that there are war-related atrocities in the age of Cronus, the mere mention and the side by side placing of war, savagery, and feeding brings to mind, once more, the *Iliad*.

In the *Iliad*, humans and heroes dream of and threaten cannibalism (XXII.344 – 346; XXIV.43 – 44, XXIV.212 – 213), a goddess is accused thereof (IV.35), and as much as humans feast on the animal flesh, so also animals (vultures and dogs, to be specific) devour the dead warriors (XXII.66 – 67 and 354, XXIV.210 – 13). The divine shepherds of the Stranger’s account, providing sufficiently for humans and animals alike, stave off both the savage desires and the acts of violence. Contrarily, the shepherd of the people from the *Iliad*, in his longing for the dead companion, is “like a lion who ... goes among the flocks of men, to devour them” (XXIV.41, 43). This line about the effects of Achilles’s wrath—about the unfulfilled and raging desire for revenge of the superhuman offspring of divinity—is telling. Achilles is implacable because “the Destinies put in mortal men the heart of endurance” (XXIV.49), but his heart does not grow gentler with suffering that ameliorates the common mortals. Achilles is not fully human and the obverse side of his heroic magnificence in war is his savagery when it comes to dealing with pain. The nurslings of Cronus are not fully human either. To them, both the pain of yearning and the pangs of suffering remain unknown. In the *Iliad*, Achilles’s rapaciousness ensues from the seed of supra-human nature. The diametrically opposite effect is described in the *Statesman*, where the pacifism of Cronus’s nurslings is indebted to their generation as not quite human kinds of beings.

The *Iliad* shows the aftermath of the murderous rage, unmitigated by the abiding spirit of humanity. Although his divine origin allows Achilles to push the limits of human capabilities when it comes to fighting, when it comes to accepting the circumstances, which he cannot change, Achilles falls short of admirable action. His killing spree

certainly benefits the Achaeans, but it hardly satiates Achilles's own anger and pain. In as much as Achilles is subject to the wonderfully pleasurable enticements of *eros*, he is also liable to feel the agony of loss and the fury of ensuing *thumos*. The first word of the *Iliad* invokes Achilles's μῆνις or anger, and sets the stage for the affective tenor of the epos. The *Statesman*'s myth of Cronus takes the implications of the *Iliad* to their logical, albeit fantastical, conclusion and shows what has to happen if we are to forgo all savagery and war. Whatever causes pain, longing, hubris, wantonness, and rage has to be eliminated. However, if we are completely free from pain and unaffected by *eros*, then we are neither part-divine nor quite human. If we claim that one of the things that mortal, fallible, suffering, yet thoughtful, that is, human beings are capable of doing is regarding ourselves and the world philosophically, then this possibility is exactly what the Stranger's Cronus time denies in deed even as it avowedly prescribes it.

The prescription of philosophical comingling, in which the animals are also expected to partake, is yet another pun. It reverses what Achilles means when he addresses his arch-enemy. Achilles says to "Hektor, argue me no agreements [μή μοι ἄλαστε συνημοσύνας ἀγόρευε]. I cannot forgive you./As there are no trustworthy oaths between men and lions,/nor wolves and lambs have spirit that can be brought to agreement" (XXII.261 – 3). There is no agreeable talking between predators and prey in the *Iliad*. Animals are divided into savage and tame and humans into enemies and friends. There is no amicable living, let alone philosophical conversing, among these two groups. Aside from Achilles's horses' prophesying his swiftly approaching death (IXX.404 –

423), there is no time at which animals and humans talk. However, the *Iliad* offers plentiful scenes in which humans take on the guise of animals.

We see Diomedes and Odysseus appear as two lions as they prowl in “the black night through the carnage and through the corpses, war gear and dark blood” (X.297 – 98). Agamemnon, too, is compared to a lion right before he murders the sons of Antimachos (XI.143 – 144). Achilles is another one who is likened to the felid predator (XXIV.572) and on another occasion is celebrated as the spirit of a Myrmidon wolf pack (XVI.155 – 67). Before he is saved by Apollo and while he waits for Achilles, Agenor is compared to a leopard (XXI.573). Hektor, Odysseus, Achilles, and Diomedes are likened to lions, leopards, tigers, wolves, and snakes. The Trojans (III.3) and the Achaeans (II.450) are referred to as birds and the former are also made to appear as fawns (XXII.1). In some of such guises—as animals—humans converse with one another. For example, Diomedes, dressed in a lion hide, and Odysseus, who sports a much-coveted helmet, which is decorated with the teeth of a boar, interrogate the Trojan Dolon. The latter eagerly responds to the two Achaeans. During this unfriendly conversation, Dolon happens to wear the “pelt of a gray wolf” (X.334). Thus we have, in the *Iliad*, a scene in which a lion, a boar, and a wolf are talking. This parley ends poorly for the canid scout. The last that we see of him is when Diomedes slashes his neck with a sword and “Dolon’s head still speaking” falls and rolls “in the dust” (X.456 – 57). The severed head, as it loses its animal cover, talks in vain. The human to whom it belonged is dead. In the *Iliad*, death is the most common outcome of talks and encounters between animals, that is, between humans disguised as animals. The conversations are real. The animality of

human beings is a metaphor. The unstoppable nature and spirit that does not yield to the demands of speech is metaphorically rendered through the animal guise, which the warriors assume. The glorious animality presents itself as either desirable or fearsome; as either rapacious or as victimized. Animals are said to mix with humans in death (XXI.120 – 35). A river-god Axios, divinity that manifest as nature's element, lies in love with a woman (XXI.141 – 43). If we recall the genealogy of the alleged culprit of the Trojan War, namely the divine origin of Helen's beauty, we are reminded of the seduction and rape that eventuates in an erotic union between a swan (Zeus in disguise) and a woman (Leda). We learn from the *Iliad* and from the stories that lead up to the events of the Trojan War about the many ways in which humans and animals mingle. The one activity, which the animals and humans never appear to share, is philosophizing.

If we assume that the Stranger sets philosophizing between humans and animals as a measurement of happiness (272c) then, it is happiness at the expense of *eros*, at the expense of familial affection, as well as in lieu of suffering and completely rid of *thumos*. It is a neutered happiness. Hence, as far as human being is concerned, it is no happiness at all, but either a dystopia or a joke. It is the former, if we read the myth about the life under Cronus's rule prescriptively. If we take the Stranger's remarks descriptively, as a mythologized commentary on all too idealized a view of what is best for humans, then it is a satire. A vision of the world completely rid of war, although desirable in principle, is ridiculed in the Stranger's enactment of such an all-too-good-to-be-true an idea.

Whatever is good and whatever is true for human beings has to take into account the underlying drives that manifest as violence and as acts of war. These drives are *eros* and

thumos. If these realities of human nature, these forces animated through the life of human soul, are not taken into consideration, then we are witnessing an idyllic image—a beautiful idea—of communal life (be it cosmically or politically conceived). Such an arrangement has been dreamt up not only by the interlocutors of Plato’s dialogues, but also by the historical leaders of human beings. However, the Stranger ridicules the appearance of this idea in reality by portraying the impossible circumstances that accompany its manifestation. Among these are asexual generation, reversed aging, life that is utterly free from needs and pains, as well as the crowning jewel of the joke—philosophical conversations with animals. A serious repercussion that the Stranger’s ridicule of these utopian visions reveals is that *eros* and *thumos* cannot be exiled indefinitely. Even if cauterized, they return and, as the second half of the myth teaches, their return sets the entire cosmos reeling off of its purported course.

4. The Myth of the Reversal of Time—Zeus

The young Socrates is told that the “fated and inborn desire” (εἰμαρμένη τε καὶ σύμφυτος ἐπιθυμία, 272e) is the reason why the cosmos reverses its revolution. The surfacing of the desire is swiftly followed by the appearance of things “harsh and unjust” (χαλεπὰ καὶ ἄδिका, 273c)—the kinds of things which are either causes of or provoke the upsurge of *thumos*. The reason why the native cosmic desire manifests is because the helmsman (κυβερνήτης, 272e) of the all withdraws. Although the Stranger does not explain *why* the helmsman leaves the navigation of the cosmos to its own devices, the Stranger describes *the time* at which it happens. The Stranger relates that the moment of the helmsman’s

departure coincides with the time when “there had to be an alteration ... after the entire earthly genus [γένος] had already been used up, when each soul had rendered back all its generations [γενέσεις], ... once it had let fall into the earth as many seeds as had been prescribed for each” (272e). It is striking that the period of effortless living, when the shepherd gods provide for everyone and all of the nourishment grows in limitless abundance, comes to an end because of the limited number of generations and seeds, γενέσεις and σπέρματα. The insight suggested by the Stranger here is that even if all of the things which we consume are produced for us limitlessly, there is still a limit to which we ourselves are held accountable—the ways in which *we* come to be are restricted. There comes a time, according to the Stranger, at which despite all of the diaretic tricks and genetic manipulations, the limit to which our nature is subject, presses on and evokes the dormant desire (ἐπιθυμία). The latter, in its turn, holds possibilities both for attraction and for repulsion, for pleasure and for pain, for the powerful draw and rage of both eros and *thumos*.

Three things accompany this awakening of the desiring nature. First, not only the ruler god, but also the rest of the shepherd divinities leave their herds. Second, the cosmos—the order of the all—reverses its direction. “In twisting around and sustaining a shock, [it] starts out with an impulse contrary to the beginning and end, and in making a lot of quaking in itself [produces] once more a different destruction of all sorts of animals” (273a). This latter eventuality—the deaths of many different living beings—is the third curious accompaniment of the return of desires. In sum, all of the shepherds of living beings withdraw, the order of the all changes to the exact opposite from what it

used to be, and this causes violent deaths of “all sorts of animals.” Such is the state of things that serves as a transition to the second part of the myth and the Stranger’s recital of how life is lived under Zeus’s rule.

The allusions to the *Iliad* continue throughout the entirety of the Stranger’s myth. We recall that the original use of κόσμος pertains to the arrangement and order of battle.⁵¹⁰ In the *Iliad*, the reversal of this order is exactly what causes the withdrawal of the leading chieftains (referred to as the shepherds of the people) on the losing side as well as the violent perishing of the many warriors who, as we have seen, are often likened to the many different animals. Priam bewails the reversal in the order of the fighting fortunes among the Achaeans and the Trojans. Priam berates his remaining sons, who survive the withdrawal of their main chieftain and shepherd, Hektor. Hektor leaves the realm of the living and departs into Hades. From Hades, Hektor can no longer lead his troops, nor look after his own people.

Get out, you failures, you disgraces. Have you not also/mourning of your own at home that you come to me with your sorrows?/Is it not enough that Zeus, son of Kronos, has given me sorrow/in losing the best of my sons?/You also shall be aware of this since you will be all the easier for the Achaians to slaughter/now he is dead. But, for myself, before my eyes look/upon this city as it is destroyed and its people are slaughtered,/my wish is to go sooner down to the house of the death god. XXIV.239 – 46

Suffering and death are visitations upon the losing side and upon the people whose fates have changed and for whom the way of life is about to undergo a drastic and violent reversal. Correspondingly, the reversal in the order of things brings good tidings to the

⁵¹⁰ Consult Taylor’s *A Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus* 65 – 66

other side and the other peoples. Andromache, Hektor's grieving wife, says as much when she expresses her fears for her son's future.

Though he escape the attack of the Achaians with all its sorrows,/yet all his days for your sake there will be hard work for him/and sorrows, for others will take his lands away from him. The day/of bereavement leaves a child with no agemates to befriend him./ ... [H]e/goes, needy, a boy among his father's companions, and tugs this man by the mantle, that man by the tunic,/and they pity him, and one gives him a tiny drink from a goblet,/enough to moisten his lips, not enough to moisten his palate./But one whose parents are living beats him out of the banquet/hitting him with his fists and in words also abuses him:/“Get out, you! Your father is not dining among us.”/And the boy goes away in tears to his widowed mother,/Astyanax, who in days before on the knees of his father/would eat only the marrow or the flesh of sheep that was fattest./And when sleep would come upon him and he was done with his playing,/he would go to sleep in a bed, in the arms of his nurse, in a soft/bed, with his heart given all its fill of luxury. XXII.487 – 504

In these lines, the Stranger's myth is synoptically encapsulated. If what Andromache describes last came first and if what she fears as her son's fate and talks about at the beginning is what awaits little Astyanax, then what Andromache grieves about traces out exactly the reversal of allotment or fate that the Stranger describes. The Stranger generalizes and applies to all Andromache's particular fear for her own child. In the Stranger's tale, everyone, at first, luxuriates under the protection of the divine shepherd. Everyone lives painlessly and effortlessly, just as a well-cared for and much loved child does. All are like the children of the powerful, which means winning, archons. The order of war and of fate changes the conditions of the child's life, in Andromache's account. The perturbations in the order of the all change the fate of all animals and of all human beings in the Stranger's narration. Sorrows, hardships, the need to toil for one's livelihood—all these follow suit when the arrangement in the order of war (*Iliad*) or in

the order of the all (*Statesman*) reverses. There are, also, discontinuities between Andromache's lines and the Stranger's description. Astyanax eats the marrow of the fattest lambs. The Stranger's nurslings do not eat meat in the age of Cronus. Astyanax is a child. All beings are child-like, from our perspective, but they are, nonetheless, of different ages, in the Cronus time. The Stranger distributes among all living beings the bounty of Hesiod's golden age of Cronus, which in the *Iliad*, is relegated to the pleasurable life of the children of the wealthy.

However, if Cronus's rule and the time of divine shepherding cannot be taken as a prescriptive model for rule, neither can be the age of Zeus. Despite the remarks made by Miller and Rosen about the viability of Zeus's age as the "proper human analogue, the appropriation, of god's rule"⁵¹¹ or as the "paradigm" appropriate for human governance, which is "not the demiurgic god but the cosmos,"⁵¹² the Stranger does not offer the age of Zeus as the model of good government. The rule by means of a human art of law (νομός) in Zeus's time is only a symbolic substitution for divine ruling as pasturing (νομός). It does not mark a genuine change in the meaning and understanding of governance. The reason for this becomes apparent if we realize that in the *Iliad* the alteration in the course of war is a reversal of fate for the two fighting peoples, but not a thoroughgoing, philosophically-grounded change in the underlying organization of the polis. There is simply an exchange of fates that is coincident with the reversal of the order of battle (κόσμος). Similarly, in the *Statesman*, there is an exchange of conditions that is coincident with the reversal of the order of the all (κόσμος).

⁵¹¹ *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman* 53

⁵¹² *Plato's Statesman* 63

Divine shepherding is exchanged for the human imitation (274d) thereof, but the paradigm of ruling as ordering and tending to the cattle is never explicitly abandoned. The mythical satire only serves to point out the repercussions of the utopian and the actual manifestations of such rule. The order of this rule, its arrangement, is borrowed from the *Iliad* where the movement of heavenly bodies mingles with that of the ones on earth as Achilles advances against Hektor. “[A]s a star moves among stars in the night’s darkening,/Hesper, who is the fairest star who stands in the sky, such/was the shining from the pointed spear Achilleus was shaking/in his right hand with evil intention toward brilliant Hektor” (XXII.317 – 20). Thus, the Stranger redistributes the narrative fabric of the *Iliad*. He takes all the heavenly movements and places them on one side (in the first half) of the myth. Movement as violence, injustice, and insipient war is placed on the other side (the second half). The human shepherds are collapsed with the heavenly movements and actions of divinities in the first half. In the second, the notion of shepherding is suppressed in speech, but nonetheless, is still operative in action as humans are left to tend to and fend for themselves. The reversal of fate that befalls the two different peoples and their respective shepherds in the *Iliad* is also re-distributed so as to affect all of the human kind at once and to underscore the mythic difference between life under Cronus in opposition to life under Zeus. These narrative divisions and substitutions that belie the Stranger’s work of dialogical weaving echo both the diaretic comedy that precedes the mythic tale and presage the explicit discussion of weaving, which follows the myth.

The change in the rotation of the cosmos and in the conditions of life is supposed to account, also, for the cause of the particular arrangement that life has in Zeus's and in Cronus's time. However, the substitution of one time and way of life for the other does not provide a genuine understanding of the causes of either. This is the Stranger's trick—neither the cause of A nor the cause of B is explained. Yet, the substitution of A for B gives a semblance of an explanation of causes of both. Something like a Parmenidian dichotomy is set up, where inadequacies of one state are meant to serve as the ground of the account for the choice of the other. “[T]he decision regarding these things depends on that of the issue, *is* or *is not*,”⁵¹³ we read in Fragment 8 of Parmenides' poem. The set up does not elucidate the origin of either being or that of non-being, but the division drawn between the two allows Parmenides to poetize about the appeal of one over the other. Since “it cannot be said [φάσθαι] or conceived [νοεῖν] that anything is not ... it must either be entirely or not be at all.”⁵¹⁴ Thus, from the initial opposition of not-being to being and from the apparent necessity to express something or to outline some kind of being in speech, Parmenides' goddess (Fragment 1, 22) posits that not-being is both unspeakable and inconceivable. She then describes being as indivisible [οὐδέ διαιρετόν ἐστιν], uniform [πᾶν ἐστιν ὁμοῖον], and completely one (πᾶν δ' ἔμπλεόν ἐστιν ἐόντος, Fragment 8, 22 – 25). The motionless and deathless, self-same being (Fragment 8, 26 – 30), which the goddess urges Parmenides to grasp, is set in contrast to that which is perceived by most mortals (Fragment 5, 4). The latter have “no understanding [and] stray

⁵¹³ *The Fragments of Parmenides*. Coxon, H. A. trans. (Wolfeboro, NH: Van Gorcum & Company Publishing, 1986), 64.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*

two-headed, for perplexity [ἀμυχανίη] ... [as] their journey turns backwards [παλίντροπος] again.”⁵¹⁵

The Stranger takes up this theme of opposition between deathless being and dissolution in confused perplexity (273c – e). In his version of the myth, the discussion of the “ancient disharmony” (273d), on the one hand, and the “deathless and ageless” (273e) cosmos, on the other, is interjected immediately prior to the description of life in the time of Zeus. Without the guidance of the divine helmsman, the cosmos is consumed in “perplexities” (ἐν ἀπορίαις, 273d) and the “rising storm of disorder” (273d) threatens to “dissolve all in an endless sea of dissimilarity” (273d).⁵¹⁶ Only the “god who made it” (273d) can save the day as he “makes it a cosmos [κοσμεῖ] and in correcting it, works it up into something deathless and ageless” (273e). Changing from a more ordered state so as to find itself in a condition of disorder, altering the course of its revolution, turning backwards and then going in an opposite direction to the one assumed before—all of this in no way explains either the origin of the all or the cause of its arrangements. It simply contraposes what is perceived as order to a relative disorder. One mode of organization is contrasted to the other and both are aligned with the matching rule of gods. The philosophical import of this mythological sleight of hand is the realization that thinking from opposites such as beginning and end, limitlessness and limit, deathlessness and mortality, divine and human, being and not-being is insufficient for providing an account of the origin and the causal efficiency of a given arrangement. The sought king, let alone the paradigm of the best government, cannot be discerned from a description of the

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., 54

⁵¹⁶ My translation of the *Statesman* passages in this sentence differs somewhat from Benardete’s.

change that comes about when one element of the considered pair gives way to its opposite. Just as the manipulation of kinds that the Stranger accomplishes during the comedy of diarexis is inadequate for singling out the king, also the mythic substitution of opposites fails to offer the model of government.

However, the failures are telling. They shine the light on the ways in which our thinking goes astray when we attempt to generate best practices or best forms of government, in this case, by tracing the existing conditions to their beginnings and projecting them to the point of their envisioned end. All models built on the grounds of examination of limit-cases or, perhaps, simply all models, are more or less mythical approximations of an extrapolated and imagined state of life. The myth discloses the mythical foundation of the projections that make up the forms of political arrangements, which we impose on ourselves. The myth exposes, also, the elements that are shaped in various ways by the chosen forms of government. These elements—erotic and *thumatic* passions, the needs of finite nature, the generative and the imaginative capacities, which supersede (but do not oppose) the limits of mortal life—are the very things to which we can trace back the constitution of the fashioned images. The reason why it is helpful to see through the images of order, political or otherwise, to which we are accustomed is because questioning their purchase on reality, we attain the distance necessary for rejuvenating the play between the commonplace life and the life of myth.

In his examination of Euripides' *Iphigeneia Among the Taurians*, Davis concludes that Euripides “restores an awareness of the original reality to rituals that have become so

much for form's sake that it is no longer clear why they are practiced.”⁵¹⁷ The vivacity of ritual, its reality, is contained in its surreal character and in its power to super-charge the everyday—to saturate it with extraordinary significance. The ritual, which is not dissolved into the monotony of meaningless repetition, breaks with the mundane and, in so doing, revitalizes it. Similarly, myth, before it becomes merely an item in the history of the people's lore (before it dies away, passing into the national heritage and becomes the depositary of custom) sounds out the fault lines at which the formative capacity of images recedes back into the formed life. Unless we let ourselves be taken up by the mythical depths of being, we are confined to excessive literalness. We are bound to mistake idealities for the actual states of being; ideals for the ways of life; systems of thought for the communities of peoples. I do not deny that, to some extent, these are and should remain enmeshed. Yet, if we aim to excise our reality completely from its entwinement with myth, then we are liable to become “wholly unpoetic”⁵¹⁸ and, in so doing, to live altogether fantastically. The Stranger's myth succeeds in revealing the insufficiency of images, however ideal or however real these may be, to secure permanent order of the world. It also succeeds in showing why it is necessary to speak in images—to make mythic tales. One of the basic arcs according to which our lives unfold and by which they are formed is the imaginary and, thus, we arrange our lives in mythic ways. The latter is not a downfall to be overcome. It is an essential feature of human capacity to envision, to poetize, to order, and to make. The task is not to dissolve the tension between the straightforward and the poetic presentations of the world, but to be

⁵¹⁷ Benardete, *The Soul of the Greeks* 35

⁵¹⁸ *The Argument of the Action* 75

aware of and attuned to the mythical mode of being. The sensitivity to the mythic and the poetic, nonetheless, is not the same as acceptance of particular myths for shorthand explanations of reality.

Whereas, the Stranger, in the *Statesman*, recognizes that there is a problem with giving an account of the divine kingship or of the “god instead of a mortal” (275a), when the goal is to delimit the realm of human statesmanship, Protagoras, in the eponymous dialogue, seems to miss the point that myths fail to explain life. Protagoras submits that Zeus’s decree to distribute justice and shame to all human beings (322c – d) is responsible for and serves as the guarantor of the “universal belief that all humans have a share of justice and the rest of civic virtue.”⁵¹⁹ Whether Protagoras believes what he says or whether his equation of myth with life is a tongue in cheek rhetorical move turns out to be significant. However, before we can get to the analysis of the sophistical implications of myth telling and to Plato's philosophical satirizing of sophistical myth making, we need to make some sense of what the Stranger’s, Protagoras’s, and, as we shall see, Aeschylus’ myths say about human life in the time of Zeus.

The Stranger’s story about Zeus’s rule is much shorter than Protagoras’s. Although, the Stranger tells young Socrates that the age of Cronus is superseded by that of Zeus and that the latter rules in the “present life” (272b), Zeus is not mentioned when the time of his alleged rule is discussed. Zeus is conspicuously absent from the description of the age at which he is supposed to rule. Contrarily, in Protagoras’s version of the myth, Zeus is continuously invoked by name. He plays an important role of

⁵¹⁹ *Plato: Complete Works*. Lobardo, S. and Bell, K. trans. (323a)

noticing that “our whole race might be wiped out” (322c). He is actively involved in saving the human kind through his messenger Hermes (322c). Another divinity that figures in Protagoras’s rendition of the myth, but that is absent from the Stranger’s, is Epimetheus.

Protagoras⁵²⁰ says that Epimetheus is absentminded (321b, ἔλαθεν αὐτὸν) and “not very wise” (οὐ πάνυ τι σοφὸς, 321b) because Epimetheus, having distributed the needful advantages to the other speechless animals (τὰ ἄλογα, 321c), left the humans “completely unequipped” (ἀκόσμητον, 321c). Protagoras’s charge against Epimetheus is too harsh. First, Epimetheus’s labor involves understanding various kinds of animals and providing for their respective needs. Protagoras himself describes the many different ways in which Epimetheus benefits the animals. Secondly, and more importantly, Protagoras, in calling the non-human animals, τὰ ἄλογα, marks out the advantage that the humans have over them and that is *logos*. Strangely, Protagoras fails to notice the advantageous character of the action he is carrying out when he, himself, speaks.

Perhaps, for Protagoras, there is a marked hierarchical gradation of validity between

⁵²⁰ Strauss remarks about the gathering that marks the occasion of the *Protagoras* that it is set in Hades. In order to establish this allegorical peculiarity, Strauss gives a rundown of the amorous affairs of Callias, Hipponicus’s son, who happens to be Ischomachus’s son in law. Ischomachus’s and Socrates’ conversation about virtue, farming, and the know-how of running a household is recorded by Xenophanes in the *Oeconomicus*. Strauss goes on,

Callias had married their [Ischomachus’s and his wife’s] daughter, and ... Callias had Ischomachus’s wife and Ischomachus’s daughter together in his house, just as Pluto or Hades had Demeter and her daughter Persephone together in his house. He was, therefore, called Hades in Athens, and Plato’s *Protagoras* is based in its setting on this story, the *Protagoras* taking place in the house of Callias, and there are quite a few allusions to the fact that we are there in Hades. “The Origins of Political Science and the Problem of Socrates” 177.

telling stories (μῦθον λέγων, 320c) and developing arguments (ἢ λόγῳ διεξιθῶν, 320c). However, since Protagoras makes the myth at first a stand-in for, and then a part of, his own argument, he clearly fails to understand the enmeshment between *logoi* and *muthoi*—the mingling that is presupposed by our not being like the τὰ ἄλογα. Because of his preference for taking *logos* to mean, primarily, rationality, Protagoras is hyper-rational, which means, he hedges on irrationality. Benardete claims that Protagoras “confuses rationality with the teaching of a lesson.”⁵²¹ This leads Protagoras to “parade . . . irrationality in the guise of rationality.”⁵²² Protagoras unwittingly does what he accuses Epimetheus of doing—he leaves *logos* out. The capacity for speaking, thinking, and for reflective afterthought (ἐπιμηθεῖ) is set aside by Protagoras, in favor of thinking ahead (προμηθεῖ). But this forethought is always for the sake of securing “some means of survival” (321c) through “wisdom in the practical arts” (τὴν ἔντεχνον σοφίαν, 321d). Both in Protagoras’s myth and in the Stranger’s mention of the human condition, Athena is paired with Hephaestus. The use of thinking and speaking is for the sake of figuring out practical survival. Wisdom is subservient to craft. This is made even clearer by the Stranger, who does not mention Athena by name, but calls her a “co-artisan” (τῆς συντέχνου, 274d) of Hephaestus. The Stranger and Protagoras agree in their conclusion that humans do not simply discover the arts, but receive their artfulness and inventiveness from the gods as the “storied gifts” (274c). However, the two narrations diverge on the point of sufficiency of the said bestowments.

⁵²¹ *The Argument of the Action* 193

⁵²² *Ibid.*, 194

The Stranger makes it seem that the arts from “Hephaestus and his coartisan” (274c) as well as “fire from Prometheus” (274c) in addition to “seeds and plants” (274d) suffice for humans’ “own care for themselves” (274d). Before the arts were dispensed, the “weak and unguarded” (274b) humans, left by the divine shepherds, “were torn apart by beasts” (274c). This situation is alleviated, in the Stranger’s account, when humans receive “from gods ... the necessary (indispensable) instruction and education” (274c) and when humans begin to “manage their way of life and their own care for themselves just as a cosmos as a whole in joint imitation” (274d). Protagoras’s version of the myth differs in this very important respect—the arts or “technology [δημιουργική] was adequate to obtain food, it was deficient when it came to fighting wild animals [τῶν θηρίων]. This was because they [humans] did not yet possess the art of politics, of which the art of war is a part” (322b).

On the one hand, Protagoras’s claim makes sense. Baking does not avail one of the know-how necessary to wage war. On the other hand, once wisdom in “practical arts together with [the wielding of] fire” (321d) is attained also the capacity of making arms and defenses seems to be accessible. Both Hephaestus and Athena, after all, are associated with war. In the *Iliad*, the former fashions Achilles’s marvelous shield and the latter protects and supports the Achaeans in their fighting against Troy. Benardete sheds light on Protagoras’s meaning here when he interprets Protagoras’s wild beasts to stand in for human others—for the enemies of the city.

Thus, what the Eleatic Stranger omits from his stumped version of the Promethean myth is the problem of war. This omission is especially strange, given the

dramatic date of the conversation between the Stranger and the young Socrates, who lives in Zeus's time, and who is a namesake for the older Socrates, the man who fought at Potidaea (432BC), Delium (424BC), and served at Amphipolis (422BC). It is as if this problem—of war—is dissolved once humans begin to imitate the motions of the cosmos. It is as if suppression of Zeus's name suffices to overcome the tensions among humans who, cleverness and technological ingenuity notwithstanding, *always* find reasons to go to war and to treat other human beings as if they were terrible beasts or herd animals meant for slaughter. The only indication of the spackled instability is the Stranger's admittance that humans' imitation of the cosmos has us "live and grow sometimes in this way and sometimes in that" (247d). This back and forth to which the Stranger alludes reminds us of the changes in the course of the cosmos, which bring with it "destruction of all sorts of animals" (273a).

In the ascending passages of *Statesman*, as well as in those of the *Timaeus*, wisdom is equated with proficiency in the arts. This alignment is partially responsible for the self-undermining character of the ascents. The Stranger concludes that the imitation of the cosmos, in which the Zeusian beings engage, is insufficient for the production of the statesman (274e – 275a). Timeus is less perspicacious. He does not catch the inconsistencies in his own description of how humans ought to engage in "imitating the utterly unwandering circuits of the god" (47c). A tragic character, Oedipus, whose lamentations Timaeus vociferates in his hopeful speech, indicates the repercussions of including industry in arts under the genus of philosophy (47a) and then proclaiming that there is no greater good than such philosophizing (47b). Both Timaeus's and the

Stranger's (as well as Protagoras's) accounts of human artfulness are indebted to Aeschylus' poetic rendition. "[W]hat wretched lives people used to lead,/how babyish [νηπίους] they were—until/I gave them intelligence,/I made them masters of their own thought (ἔννουσ ἔθηκα καὶ φρενῶν ἐπηβόλους, 443 – 45).⁵²³ Prometheus's gift of independent use of intelligence is in the background of Timaeus's account about the benefits of thinking (47b) and it informs, also, the Stranger's transition from the "world of Kronos where everything is a plant"⁵²⁴ to Zeus's world in which humans "manage their way of life" (274d).

In Aeschylus, Prometheus, bound by Zeus to whom he continuously refers as a tyrant, converses with the chorus of the Oceanids. Prometheus begins the recitation of the benefactions he bestowed on humans by stressing the importance of nous. The latter is one of the central axes in Timaeus's account. The other three are necessity, *chora*, and senselessness.⁵²⁵ The closure of Prometheus's list of gifts is marked by his mention of necessity (ἀνάγκη) which, he says, is more potent than art (512). It is also by necessity (ὕπ' ἀνάγκης, 274a) that the humans revert to the "imitation of conception, generation, and nurture" (247a) in the time of Zeus in the *Statesman*. Between the divine nous that nurtures beings in the time of Cronus and the bounds of necessity that weigh on humans under Zeus's rule, stand the arts. They give to humans a semblance of having overcome necessity's constraints and having come close to the perfection of the gods' noetic power. Prometheus compares the artless humans to "shapes in a dream" (ἀλλ' ὀνειράτων

⁵²³ *Prometheus Bound*

⁵²⁴ Davis, *The Soul of the Greeks* 212

⁵²⁵ On the role of nous in the *Timaeus*, consult chapter three of the present work.

ἀλίγκιοι μορφαῖσι, 458 – 59) that look, but see nothing; that listen, but do not hear (457 – 58). These shade-like creatures are reminiscent of the “witless shades” that populate the unseen world or Hades in the *Odyssey*. The pre-Promethean life is not quite human. However, once Prometheus gives to human beings the knowledge of their own industrious artfulness, the possibility of transgressing humanity—the fault of hubris—enters therewith. It is as if the life that is properly human is never simply given, nor present, to us. Instead, there is work to be done; the work of catching up with and returning to the limning that, in the process of reflection, retraces the humane. If this practice of reflective action is absent, then the human beings are, as the chorus of *Prometheus* describes, “blind and weak, like prisoners of a dream” (547).

In between the two renditions of dream-like (ἰσόνειπον, 549) life (458 – 59 and 547 – 49), Aeschylus inscribes the arts. Aeschylus’ Prometheus gives a thorough account of the privations and the abilities that he distributes to humans in order to make up for the various lacks. The feeble-minded, pre-Promethean humans toil in confusion, making “a hodgepodge of everything” (450). They have no knowledge of using brick or wood for building houses (451 – 52). The insect-like beings swarm to “sunless caves” (ἄντρον ἐν μυχοῖς ἀνηλίοις, 453).⁵²⁶ Unlike in Timaeus’s account (47a), the distinctions between the harvesting, the planting, and the wintry seasons did not yet come to light (454 – 56). Prometheus marks the effects of change that his teachings brings at the exact same place where Timaeus situates the “cause of the greatest benefit” (47a). Prometheus and, after him, Timaeus, privilege sight in its capacity to discern that “which is difficult

⁵²⁶ Here, both the sunless, cave-like dwelling of Plato’s *Republic* and Polyphemus’s cave, in the *Odyssey*, come to mind.

[δυσκρίτους] to see” (*Prometheus Bound* 458). Namely, Prometheus teaches those beings that are on their way to becoming human exactly how to see “where and when the stars rise and set” (ἀντολὰς ... ἄστρον ἔδειξα ... δύσεις, 457 – 58). Timaeus, without mentioning Prometheus, nonetheless, praises the divine gift of sight (47a, b). The reason why the gift of sight is so highly prized is because without this gift humans would not have “seen neither the stars nor the Sun nor heaven” (47a). Arguably, also the Eleatic Stranger of the *Statesman* refers to the same observational capacity of sight when he resolves the “resourceless perplexities” (μεγάλαις ἀπορίαις, 274c) of human beings by means of the “storied gifts of long ago” (274c). Thus, the controlled power of the mind, the being of a human as ἔννοος—mindful or intelligent—is coupled, immediately, with productive artfulness and is undergirded by the surveying faculty of sight that aims, first of all, at inspecting the heavens.

The second moment, which Aeschylus’ Prometheus indicates, and Plato’s *Statesman* mirrors (immediately after invoking dreams at 277d),⁵²⁷ is the introduction of “NUMBER: wisdom/above all other./And the painstaking,/putting together of/LETTERS: to be their memory/of everything” (*Prometheus Bound* 459 – 61). Since number was placed at the head of the discussion between the Stranger and young Socrates, it is omitted after the Stranger repeats the invocation of Promethean injunction

⁵²⁷ The context of the passage, which echoes Heraclitus and says that “it’s probable that each of us knows everything as if in a dream and then again is ignorant of everything as it is in waking” (277d) should be compared not only to Aeschylus’s use of dream metaphors in *Prometheus Bound*, but also to the appearance of dream-like knowledge or “bastard reasoning” (λογισμῶ τιμι νόθῳ) in the *Timaeus* 52b – d.

to examine the heavens. However, letters and syllables are discussed at length.⁵²⁸ The upshot of that discussion is the creation of a paradigm according to which the elements of nature are equated with the elements of writing. In fact, the natural elements are left behind and we are left with syllables and letters (278c – e). From this point on, the discussion in the *Statesman* and Prometheus’s recitation part ways.

The Stranger, having established the paradigm of writing as the way to think about nature, produces one more “paradigm ... with the same business as the political” (279a). The craft that serves as the paradigm case for the political matters is “weaving that deals with robes woven from wool” (279b). Weaving, let alone weaving used as a means of providing clothes, is conspicuously absent from Prometheus’s account.

Benardete’s divides Prometheus’s speech about the arts into nine parts.

[T]he first four arts form a whole: (1) openness (houses); (2) the seeing of the sky in its differences (astronomy); (3) the precise discrimination of the stars’ movements (number); (4) the precise recording of these movements (letters). The fifth and central art is the taming of animals. which partly is necessary for agriculture and hence depends on the preceding three arts. The mention of horses suggests ships, the horses of the sea, *The Argument of the Action* 114

which makes seafaring the seventh art. “Medicine deals with symptoms, which are predictive signs of disease, and hence Prometheus couples it with prophecy.”⁵²⁹ Medicine and prophecy (under which also the sacrifices are nested) together make up number eight, according to Benardete’s counting. Benardete then mentions “metals, the ninth and last invention.”⁵³⁰ Having produced this list of Promethean arts, Benardete observes that “[o]f

⁵²⁸ See my discussion of the Stranger’s use of paradigm, elements, and letters in Chapter I.1.

⁵²⁹ *The Argument of the Action* 114

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

the three human needs—food, clothing, shelter—Prometheus mentions the arts that satisfy the first and third but not the art of weaving.”⁵³¹ Indeed, the art that produces cover for human bodies and its products, which the Stranger describes as “robes woven from wool” (279b) is not one of the arts that Prometheus teaches. Benardete goes on to connect weaving with the Fates and with Athena, “the goddess of weaving”⁵³² and calls it “the only female art.”⁵³³ It is not certain that Benardete is right about his last point. After all, there are female priestesses. One of them is Diotima, whose erotic art Socrates describes in the *Symposium* to the men gathered to celebrate Agathon’s victory at the drama festival. However, Benardete’s observation about the absence of weaving is correct.

The Stranger, in the *Statesman*, rectifies Prometheus’s oversight.⁵³⁴ There, weaving becomes the paradigm art for political life. If we consider Benardete’s suggestion about associating weaving with the Fates and with Athena, then the Stranger is attempting to introduce a paradigm that would give humans, or at least the ruling human, a power equal to the one held by the Fates and by the goddess of wisdom and of war. This is no small power. Arachne’s punishment for claiming it is severe. Athena transforms the woman, who dares to claim she exceeds the goddess in her own craft, into a spider. No such warning is issued to the young Socrates, who agrees to accept weaving as a paradigm for ruling. If we pursue a different line of association and remember not

⁵³¹ Ibid., 120

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ Ibid.

⁵³⁴ For correspondences between the arts mentioned in the *Prometheus Bound* and the in *Statesman* see *Statesman* passage 299d – e.

the divine, but the human weavers, we are harkened back to the accounts of hubris and war in the *Iliad*, where Andromache (XXII.435 – 45), Helen (III.125 – 28), and Agamemnon’s daughters (IX.388 – 90) are associated with weaving. We are reminded of the travails described in the *Odyssey*, where Penelope’s famous weaving trick is finally revealed. Used metaphorically, weaving comes up in the *Iliad* when Nestor is said to “weave [ὑφαίνειν] his councils before” the Achaeans (IX.93). However, in the *Statesman*, the weaver [ὑφαντικός, 279b] is not modelled on Nestor’s councils. Instead, the passage that runs from 279c to 280a, as Benardete points out, is a tamer version of the one from Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata* (565 – 86).

Lysistrata, Aristophanes’ play, is first performed in 411BC and the production of the *Statesman* is relegated to the last twenty years of Plato’s life.⁵³⁵ Indeed, then, Plato’s Stranger could be drawing on Aristophanes’ play. The comedy, both Aristophanes’ and Plato’s, has grim undertones. The actions that *Lysistrata* describes to the magistrate have three layers of meaning. The first one is simply relevant to the task of weaving. The second denotative dimension superimposes weaving onto city life and employs it as a model for solving military conflicts. Thus, it deals with politics. The third, metaphoric meaning of weaving, which allows us to apply it to war, highlights the formal structure of conjoining and taking apart. In its third, formal sense, *Lysistrata*’s dark comedy points to the devices used in tragedy. Aristotle says that these are “entanglement [δέσις] and an

⁵³⁵ *Statesman*. Skemp, B. J. trans., Ostwald, M. ed. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1998), viii. Consider, also, Lane’s remark about the temporal and contextual relationship between Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata* and the *Statesman* (*Method and Politics in Plato’s Statesman* 164 and note 58). Both Benardete (*The Being of the Beautiful* III.153, note 59) and Strauss (*Socrates and Aristophanes*. New York, NY: Basic Books Publishing, 1966, 202) take note of the relationship between the weaving metaphor in the *Statesman* and *Lysistrata*’s recourse to weaving.

unraveling [λύσις]” (*On Poetics* 1455b24).⁵³⁶ The *desis* and the *lusi*s of drama in the Stranger’s appropriation are the *syncritics* and the *diacritics* (282b). However, their surreptitious use in the dialogue is less apparent than in Aristophanes’ play.

The Stranger’s take on weaving suppresses the fact that is apparent in Lysistrata’s example. In the *Lysistrata*, weaving has to do with putting together human coalitions and dissolving human lives. The conversation between the Stranger and the young Socrates, when set to a comedic key, paradoxically, uncovers the monstrous and the tragic implications of their exchanges. Plato’s satire, set in relief by our attention to Aristophanes’ comedy, now shows that, if we take any of the speeches in the *Statesman* as genuine models, fit for application in political life, then we have missed the point. To take the initial diaretic searches, the ages of either Cronus or Zeus, or weaving and writing as viable paradigms for governance is to participate in the perpetuation of the sophistic myths that Plato’s dialogues uncover and undermine.⁵³⁷ None of the models that the Stranger suggests are there to be implemented. However, noticing the ways in which they are inadequate helps us understand Plato’s philosophical method. In conversation with Plato’s characters, we can engage in dialogical philosophizing for the sake of detecting the avenues for thinking about the manner in which political, scientific, religious, and conceptual paradigms propagate in our life.

⁵³⁶ Benardete, S. and Davis, M. trans.

⁵³⁷ Note that just as the initial diareisis continues after the mythical story telling is said to be over and just as weaving permeates the Stranger’s myth, so also the mythic circling (cast as the Stranger’s own version of the Pythagorean cyclical reincarnations and rebirths) movement is retained. Miller points out that the “phrase *en kuklōi*” (*The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman* 71), which signifies the roundabout way or a movement in a circle, appears “at 283b [and is] ... repeated at 286e” (Ibid.).

5. Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* and the Implications of Comedy for the *Statesman*

a. The History and the Political Significance of Ancient Greek Comedy

Although, “drama” is said of both tragedy and comedy in the present work, in fact, “[i]t is very doubtful whether *δρᾶμα* is ever used of comedy in classical Attic.”⁵³⁸ It is “at least possible that *δρᾶμα* was originally a Doric word.”⁵³⁹ Consequently, “*δρᾶν* is primarily in Attic a word with a religious colour, and is used especially of serious and solemn religious performances.”⁵⁴⁰ Regarding comedy, “there can be no doubt that *κωμωδία* is connected with *κῶμος* (*κομάζειν*) [revel], not with *κώμη*, and that in any case *κώμη* was a good Attic word, at least in the fifth century B. C., though it referred to a quarter of the city, not to a country town or village.”⁵⁴¹ Arthur W. Pickard-Cambridge’s analysis denies to Aristotle the veracity of the report according to which “some say they [the imitations] are also called *dramata* because they imitate those doing [*drôntas*]” (*On Poetics* 1448a28 – 9). Aristotle supposes that, depending on its mode, “imitation” includes Sophocles’, Homer’s, and Aristophanes’ art; namely tragedy, epos, and comedy. All three imitate “acting [*prattontas*] and doing [*drôntas*]” (1448a27 – 8). Since the word for “doings” is Dorian in origin, Aristotle concludes that “[i]t is for this reason that the Dorians also make a claim to tragedy and comedy” (1448a30 – 1). However, Pickard-Cambridge insists that “drama” is not used to refer to comedy and places the origin of the name for

⁵³⁸ *Dithyramb Tragedy and Comedy* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1927), 144. Pickard-Cambridge gives several Appendices that treat the different theories of the beginning, origin, and form of ancient Greek comedy.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, 145

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 144

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 225 – 26

the plays, which invoke laughter, decisively with revelry. Aristotle is less definitive when he recites the possible origins of the term, saying that the “Dorians make the names the sign. For they say that they call their outlying districts villages [*kômai*], while the Athenians call them demes, as if comedians or revel singers [*kômôdoi*] were so called not from reveling [*kômazein*] but by wandering from village to village [*kata kômas*]” (1448a36 – 1448b).

Tracing the activity in which the raucous displays and performances of comedy began, Roy C. Flickinger recurses by way of Aristotle, to Aristophanes himself. Flickinger, following Cornford, takes up Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* where he finds “the best illustration”⁵⁴² of what Aristotle thinks is the beginning of comedic revelry, namely the “phallic ceremonies.”⁵⁴³ Flickinger recites the scene from *Acharnians* in which the sacrifice to Dionysus is meant to celebrate the peace that the private citizen, Dicaeopolis, “concluded ... with Sparta.”⁵⁴⁴ Before long, “Dicaeopolis re-forms his procession with various coarse remarks and starts up a phallic ballad of an obscene nature in honor of Phales. ... The proceedings thus consist of a procession to the place of sacrifice, the sacrifice itself, and the phallic song.”⁵⁴⁵ There is a strong relationship between Dionysian and comedic revelry; between comedy and Dionysus. Aristophanes’ plays are, themselves, a source to which the scholarship refers when working out the details of this

⁵⁴² *The Greek Theater and Its Drama* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1936), 36. On the origin of comedy and the relationship between satyr play, phallic processions, Dionysus, and comedy, see Lämmle’s, *Poetik des Satyrspiels*.

⁵⁴³ Flickinger, *The Greek Theater and Its Drama* 36

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

relationship. The relationship between Dionysus and tragedy solidifies in “534 B.C., when Pisistratus, tyrant of Athens, established a new festival ... in honor of Dionysus Eleuthereus [and] ... made a contest in tragedy the chief feature of its program.”⁵⁴⁶

Comedic performances join the dramatic contest in 487/6 BC.

Pisistratus’ festival is meant to strengthen Athens and the comedians gladly contribute to it. However, they understand their role in this strengthening in their own way. Shining the light on the shortcomings and missteps of the city’s leaders, comedic banter does not fail to reach Pericles himself. Another target of satire is a demagogue, Cleon.⁵⁴⁷ The latter is so upset with how his character is lampooned in Aristophanes’ *Knights*⁵⁴⁸ that he proceeds to sue the playwright. After the revolt of Samos (441 – 439 BC), Pericles bans direct and virulent mockery in comedy.⁵⁴⁹ The 438 – 437 ban does not last long, but that it is put in place at all is an attestation to the revelatory and destabilizing potential of ancient Greek comedy. Pericles sees in it not only a capacity to undermine his own persona, but to unhinge the power dynamics between the city-states. It is only plausible that this subversive force, of which Plato avails himself in the *Statesman*, turns a number of straightforward dialogical conclusions on their head.

⁵⁴⁶ Cf. Ibid., page 21, for the analysis of the development of tragedy out of the dithyrambic songs to Dionysus.

⁵⁴⁷ Michael Vickers, *Pericles on Stage* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1997), xv.

⁵⁴⁸ Dorey, A. Thomas. “Aristophanes and Cleon.” *Greece & Rome* (1956) 3(2): 132 – 39

⁵⁴⁹ Vickers further reports that Alcibiades resorts to even harsher measures to punish Eupolis’ comedic attacks against his persona (*Pericles on Stage* xviii). Vickers cites Alcibiades’ 415 BC decree against direct lampooning as the reason for Aristophanes’ omission of Alcibiades’ name in his *Birds*, for instance.

b. Politics in the *Lysistrata*

The shadow of the disastrous Sicilian expedition (413 BC) falls over the first performance of *Lysistrata* (*Λυσιστράτη*). Alcibiades' precarious conspiracy with the Spartans and his negotiations with the Persian satrapy speed along his machinations and help instigate the Athenian oligarchs to stage a revolt against the democracy. The oligarchs take power in 411 BC. The reign of four hundred and then of five thousand oligarchs is brief, but it marks the year in which *Lysistrata*—the play about the inanity of war—is produced. In his introduction to a study of *logos* and *eros* in Aristophanic comedy, Freydberg renders the bellicose foolishness as “the result of male irrationality.”⁵⁵⁰ We can fine-tune this initial suggestion and state that the self-serving shortsightedness of the particular representatives of the city's male leaders serves as the laughing stock for the play. However, the pressures of the tumultuous and violent times, at which the comedy is produced, retard the lighthearted laughter and, albeit playfully, return the audience to the confusion of a hardly laughable matter—the pain of war. Vickers cites a slew of scholars, who dismiss or undermine the political nature of Aristophanes' work.⁵⁵¹ He attributes this phenomenon to the penchant to avoid ambiguity and decry the presence of “hidden meanings” in the interpretation of classical works.⁵⁵² However, in *Lysistrata*, the political meanings are not hidden. They are right at the surface as well as in the background of the play. *Lysistrata* is about war, sex, and the city or, to put it in less jarringly contemporary terms, it is about *polemos*, *eros*, and *polis*.

⁵⁵⁰ *Philosophy and Comedy* 6.

⁵⁵¹ Vickers, *Pericles on Stage* ix – xx

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, xx

Strauss, in the first line of his analysis of *Lysistrata*, draws attention to the fact that “[t]his is the only play whose title designates a human individual. It is the only play whose title designates the chief character or the human being responsible for the design that is executed in the play.”⁵⁵³ Aside from wedding the plot to the main character’s choices and uniqueness, the name, used as the title, “suggests releasement, liberation, loosening.”⁵⁵⁴ It also means to “dissolve” or to “break up into parts.” The meaning of the root-term is at least bi-valent. The name recalls both a resolution or a liberation and a dissolution or a disintegration. In some sense, *desis* having been summarily outlined at the outset of the play, the whole of the *Lysistrata* can be seen as a *lusi*—as a protracted search for a release of built up tension. Strain is put by war onto men and by men onto women. To reverse this, Lysistrata rallies with Athenian, Boeotian, and Spartan women to deny sex to their husbands. Her successful ploy destabilizes, also, the initial stress-relation. Lysistrata’s plan reveals that it is not the war that is the cause of all trouble, but that men, having engaged in war, pain both themselves and their wives.

The first woman to arrive at Lysistrata’s summons, Kalonike, confirms the greatness of the female pains. “Say, what for did you call us, women, here? What is this thing [πρᾶγμα]? How great is it [πηλίκον]” (22)?⁵⁵⁵ Lysistrata confirms that this thing on account of which she called a gathering is μέγα or great. Kalonike offers another discerning qualification, “[S]urely [it is] not also thick” (23)? Indignant, Lysistrata cries

⁵⁵³ Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes* 195

⁵⁵⁴ Freyberg, *Philosophy and Comedy* 194

⁵⁵⁵ I am giving my own translations of the Greek text found in the 1922 Hall, W. F. and Geldart, M. W. Oxford Classical Texts edition of *Aristophanis Comoediae* (Cambridge: UK: Oxford University Press)

out, “[B]y God, it is also thick, alright” (23) and then Kalonike wonders, “[W]ell, why aren’t we all coming” (25)? Lysistrata and Kalonike are thinking of different things, when they exchange their impressions about those things’ thickness and bigness. Lysistrata is mulling over the fate and the affairs of her city (τῆς πόλεως τὰ πράγματα, 33). Kalonike’s mind is on the pleasures of good sex. Freydberg’s treatment of these opening exchanges alerted me to the frequency with which Plato’s characters address themselves to greatness, pleasure, and to the proper mean that, supposedly, serves to stave off the problems, which arise when human interest in pleasure is too great.⁵⁵⁷ Freydberg’s discussion also stresses the self-undermining nature and falsity of arguments, which attempt to use some higher, otherworldly referent as a standard by which to measure and prescribe such very down to earth things like the pleasures of sex.⁵⁵⁸

c. The Veiled Tragedy of the *Lysistrata* and the Role of Aristophanes’ Play in the *Statesman*

Standards and measures are exactly the things that are discussed in the *Statesman* in the lines that follow the consideration of weaving as the paradigm for rule. Miller⁵⁵⁹ and Krell,⁵⁶⁰ in their respective commentaries on the lines 284d – 287b, emphasize the role of the “essential measure”⁵⁶¹ in the young Socrates’ education. Despite the seemingly

⁵⁵⁷ *Philosophy and Comedy* 160

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 161 – 62

⁵⁵⁹ *Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman* 71 – 72

⁵⁶⁰ “Talk to the Animals: On the Myth of Cronus in the *Statesman*” 35.

⁵⁶¹ Miller, *Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman* 71

accurate interpretive maneuver, which calls for a recognition of the fact that education should be well-measured, the upshot of the Stranger's suggestion to "divide the art of measurement ... by cutting it in two" (284e), leads the readers not to the matter of the young Socrates' education, but to drama. Here is what I mean: the Stranger's division of the arts of measurement, roughly speaking, makes them akin to the arts that measure bodily states and those, which evaluate action. On the least somber reading this is an Aristophanic comedy, but it is a Euripidean tragedy on the most solemn one. I explain. The Stranger's and the young Socrates' discussion of bigness (284e – 286b) and length (286b – 286e), which supersedes the Stranger's divvying up of the "art of measurement" (284e), ends up preferring the "fitting" as the measurement appropriate to "make our blame and praise of brevity and length" (βραχύτητος ἅμα καὶ μήκους, 286c). The comparison "by judging [the] ... lengths relative to one another" (286c) is set aside and so is "any fitting length relative to pleasure" (πρὸς τὴν ἡδονήν, 286d). The Stranger is acting out Lysistrata's part as he inculcates in the young Socrates the idea that the "fitting, the opportune, and the needful" (284e) call for a reconsideration of the basis on which we decide the aptitude and the appropriateness of bigness and length. According to Lysistrata, the circumstances are such that it is no longer fitting to consider the length and greatness of a man's penis. Instead, it is needful to reckon with the length of time that women will abstain from having sex and the greatness of discomfort that this will cause them. However, most important, to Lysistrata, is the effect that this abstinence will have on their husbands' war-mongering desire. Both Lysistrata and the Stranger bid their interlocutors to disregard pleasure on account of it being irrelevant in measuring the

“fitting length” (μήκους ἀρμόττοντος, *Statesman* 286d). The difference is that in the *Statesman*, too long (a speech, 286e) and in the *Lysistrata* too short (a penis, 109) is a matter that threatens to cause distress. There is a play on abstinence in both. In both the dialogue and in the play, the suppression of pleasure and the agreement to bear pain for the sake of the sought result, quickly lead to an invocation of sacrificial victims. “*Incipit tragoedia.*”

In the exchanges that precipitate the eruption of tragedy in the *Statesman*, the interlocutors concern themselves with cutting. The Stranger, having separated the king (ὁ βασιλεὺς, 287b) out from the many caretakers (σύννομοι, 287b) “that were in the same field or rather from all that deal with herds” (287b), suggests that the way to proceed now is to divide by cutting the causes and co-causes [συναιτίων καὶ τῶν αἰτίων] of the caretaking in two” (τεμεῖν δίχα, 287c). Somehow, the introduction of the “fitting” measure, which was, by the way, found by means of cutting into two (δίχα τέμνοντες, 284e) is, at this point, insufficient for securing the position of the singled out king. The Stranger advises that we recourse, once again, to halving. He affirms that also the current splitting presents a formidable task. In lieu of scrupulously looking for the new ways to cut in half, the Stranger gets the young Socrates to agree to “divide ... as if it were a sacrificial victim, limb by limb” (κατὰ μέλη ... οἷον ἱερεῖον διαιρώμεθα, 287c). With this suggestion, the Stranger, once again, evokes both Aristophanes’ comedy as well as the tragic terror veiled therein.

The scene that runs from 113 – 119 in the *Lysistrata*—the one that mentions halving—is nothing other than a comical iteration of the scene that precedes a gruesome sacrifice of Pentheus to Dionysus in Euripides’ *Bacchae*.⁵⁶² In the *Lysistrata*, at first, Myrrhine envisions herself drunk with wine. Then Kalonike, weighed down by loneliness and longing for her husband, sees herself “split in half [θῆμισ], like a flat fish” (115 – 16). Lastly, the Spartan Lampito plays Pentheus when she offers to climb mount Taygetus to observe the mysteries of peace. Once these sacrificial gestures are described, Lysistrata is ready to reveal the secret mysteries to her companions. In the *Bacchae*, the women, drunk and transfixed by Dionysian power, pull spying Pentheus off his fir tree perch (ἐλάτῃ, 1070 – 1112) and proceed to tear him into pieces. After the unspeakable sacrifice is complete, Agave, Pentheus’s mother, presents her prized trophy to her father Cadmus, who asks, “[W]ell then, whose face do you hold folded in your arms?” (1277).⁵⁶³ Still maddened by the spell of Dionysus, she responds, “[A] lion’s [λέοντος] head—at least that’s what the women hunters told me./Look again” (1279), Cadmus implores, “[T]he toil of looking is brief” (1279).⁵⁶⁴ Agave sees her prey through Cadmus’s eyes and recognizes that she carries her own son’s head.

⁵⁶² Aristophanes made use of Euripides’ works. For instance, Aristophanes’ *Frogs* parodies motifs from Euripides’ *Andromeda*. Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazousae* riffs on both Euripides’ *Andromeda* and *Helen*. Cornford confirms that *Lysistrata* shares elements with Dionysian mysteries when he describes the “Bacchic cries that end the *Lysistrata*” (*The Origin of Attic Comedy* 15).

⁵⁶³ I am using Stephen Esposito’s translation of the play. *Euripides’ Bacchae* (Newberry Port, MA: Focus Publishing, 1998).

⁵⁶⁴ In the myth of Er, which Socrates recounts in book X of the *Republic*, “Ajax, son of Telamon, who shunned becoming a human being, remembering the judgment of the arms” (620b) picks “the life of a lion” (λέοντος βίον, 620b). Socrates talks about other transformations of the human

The terror of the *Bacchae*, where the hubristic son dies at the hands of his Dionysus-possessed mother, whispers through the lines of the *Lysistrata*, but it rises to the surface in the sacrificial scene in the *Statesman*. Note that the god, whom Euripides' Pentheus abuses and refuses to accept as the descendant of the Theban royal family, Dionysus, is referred to as the Stranger (ξένος), throughout Euripides' play.⁵⁶⁵ Dionysus, the Stranger from Lydia, beguiles Pentheus who, under the god's spell, dresses as a woman and proceeds to spy on his raving mother and the other Bacchanites. Both Pentheus and Oedipus descend from the line of Cadmus, who is the father to Polydorus and the grandfather to Labdacus. Oedipus is Labdacus's grandson and Pentheus is Labdacus's cousin. The house of Cadmeans, from which the Labdacids descend, is fastened to the Tantalids by an unseemly crime of Oedipus's father, Laius. The latter abducts and rapes Chrysippus, Pelops's illegitimate son. Pelops's royal descendants are Atreus and Thyestes, who murder their half-brother Chrysippus, because he is a contestant to the royal throne in Olympia. The brothers flee Olympia and, thereafter, themselves, engage in a competition for power in Mycenae, during which Thyestes has an affair with his brother's wife. Agamemnon and Menelaus are sons to Atreus and Aerope. Thyestes, who unknowingly devours his sons at the cannibalistic feast prepared by his vengeful brother, Atreus, then rapes his own daughter, Pelopia and begets Aegisthus. Aegisthus murders both Atreus and Agamemnon. The raging *thumos* and the perverse *eros* of these kingly families precipitate Socrates' remark in the *Republic* that

souls into the souls of birds and animals as well as about Odysseus's wise choice at 620a – 620c. I am citing, here, the translation by Allan Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*.

⁵⁶⁵ Dionysus, in fact, is no stranger to Pentheus, whose mother's sister, Semele, gives birth to the god.

“when a tyrant grows naturally, he sprouts from a root of leadership” (ὅταν περ φύηται τύραννος, ἐκ προστατικῆς ρίζης ... ἐκβλαστάνει, 565c – d). Curiously, the substitution of the natural, rhizomatic growth for the more pliable elemental combinations—the refashioning of ριζώματα into στοιχεῖα—does not uproot tyranny from human life. The *Statesman* testifies to that.

The *Bacchae* confirms that the denial to Dionysus of his rightful place, a metaphorical suppression of the god’s erotic power, ends in grotesque *thumo-erotic* violence and in tragedy that befalls the Theban kingdom. Stephen Esposito draws parallels between the Theban and the Athenian misfortunes. He observes that Euripides’ plays bespeak “the tearing apart of a once magnificent ... city.”⁵⁶⁶ Esposito sees “*Erôs* unbounded headed for Athens.”⁵⁶⁷ He cites Thucydides, who writes about the outrage of the Peloponnesian War, during which “[a]ll alike fell in love (*erôs*) with the enterprise. ... With this enthusiasm of the majority, the few that liked it not, feared to appear unpatriotic by holding up their hands against it, and so kept quiet’.”⁵⁶⁸ Esposito’s conclusion is that in the *Bacchae*, Euripides depicts an “*Erôs* [that] had indeed gone crazy.”⁵⁶⁹ Aristophanes’ ultra-erotic comedy, which toys with the tragic motifs, given all of the references made to sacrifice (113 – 19, 378, 387 – 402, 468, 477), ends up in a peace treaty between the sexually frustrated Athenians and Spartans. Aristophanes’ work

⁵⁶⁶ Euripides’ *Bacchae* 16

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid. Esposito cites Richard Crowley translation of *Thucydides: The Peloponnesian War* (New York, NY: Modern Library Reprint of the 1876 edition, 1951), 6.24.

⁵⁶⁹ Esposito, *Euripides’ Bacchae* 16.

evokes not terror, but laughter. However, what is laughable in the *Lysistrata* is presented with utmost seriousness in the *Statesman*.

The young Socrates' agreement to the division of causes and co-causes of arts by means of sacrificial dismemberment presages his acceptance of the sanctioned use of violence. The stark examples of such a use appear at 293d – e and at 296b – e. The first *Statesman* passage mentioned, appropriates the weaving scene from the *Lysistrata* (565 – 86). The second echoes the “healing” that Myrrhine applies to Kinesias (at 830 – 1013). The latter passage in the *Lysistrata* divulges the effects of Myrrhine's salutary abstinence on her inflamed and engorged husband. Unwilling and frustrated, Kinesias submits to his wife's prescription of celibacy. His confusion and anger, which are the effects of Myrrhine's forceful commitment to heal Kinesias of his desire for war through an excitation of his pent-up desire for sexual intercourse, resonate with the Stranger's description of the “forcibly treated” (296c). To lie in love with Myrrhine and, thereby, treat his sexual frustration, Kinesias has to agree to a peace treaty with Sparta. He would rather have sex with Myrrhine then and there (934), but Myrrhine persists and, although angered (972, 979 – 80), Kinesias accepts the “medicine.” Likewise, the politically uncouth citizens in the *Statesman*, are compelled to undergo treatment by the one who is knowledgeable about the things that are “just ... better, and more beautiful” (296c – d), albeit, not written down as laws.

Aristophanes' play unveils the treatment, the disease, as well as the desired state of health. These are, respectively, the buildup and the release of sexual tension, the

hubristic desire for conquest, and peace. It is uncertain what corresponds to the triad in the *Statesman*. The one thing that is certain is that those “treated” by force will think that what is happening to them is “ugly, unjust, and bad” (296b), while the “intelligent rulers” (297a) believe that the things they make the many suffer are “just, ... better and more beautiful” (296c – d). Whereas, the *Lysistrata* is funny because it disrobes a tyranny clothed in good intentions and makes use of this dangerous intimacy to provoke laughter, this same proximity between the best king and the tyrant is hardly a laughable matter in the *Statesman*.

As Strauss observes, in the *Lysistrata*, “[T]he women do not deny that they intend to set up tyranny.”⁵⁷⁰ However, once the men agree to peace, the threat of tyranny is abated. This is not the case in the *Statesman*. On the contrary, because the best king rules by art and often without regard for the written laws, ancestral customs, and those things that are perceived as being good by the many (297a – d), the line, between best kingship and tyranny, is easily erased. All that it takes for the tyrant to rise to power is that he pretend to be as knowledgeable about rule as the best king is supposed to be (301c – d). In fact, just as the best king is said to do, also the tyrant “acts neither in conformity with laws nor in conformity with usages” (301c). Unlike the king, the tyrant merely “pretends, just as if he were the knower [that] ... the best has to be done contrary to what has been written” (301c). The *Lysistrata* is funny because it does not make a claim to having secured a safe distance and a means of distinguishing between tyrannical acts and

⁵⁷⁰ *Socrates and Aristophanes* 204

intentions, and those of well-meaning individuals. The woman, who wants to end the war, is accused of hubris and rightly so. She proposes killings as a means of untangling the warp of animosity. She threatens violence. Yet, her threats remain empty, all ends well, and we laugh. The Stranger presents seriously the same deeds and intentions that Aristophanes ridicules. The comedian exposes the shaky and duplicitous foundations on which these acts are built. However, the young Socrates agrees to sanctioned violence as a means of securing political stability. This is no laughing matter.

Whereas, Lane addresses the relationship between violence and weaving in the *Lysistrata*, she, nonetheless, does away with violence in her treatment of the dialogue, which she sees as a “technical correction”⁵⁷¹ to Aristophanes’ play. Miller, although he recognizes that the weaving section signals the fact that “the dialogue is in crisis,”⁵⁷² sees this crisis as a problem that has to do with method and not with the upsurge of violence, which the weaving metaphor implies. Strauss thinks that the *Lysistrata* “anticipating the Eleatic stranger in Plato’s *Statesman* [proves] ... that the women’s work in handling wool is a perfect model for brining order into the disordered affairs of the city.”⁵⁷³ Benardete explains why that is the case when he writes, “[T]he woof is the herd, the warp is the ruler, and this interweaving of commandment and obedience is the web of political science as the art of caring for the whole city.”⁵⁷⁴ Benardete brings the myth, as well as the pre-mythical rendition of the ruler as the herdsman, to bear on the discussion of

⁵⁷¹ *Method and Politics in Plato’s Statesman* 173

⁵⁷² *The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman* 64

⁵⁷³ *Socrates and Aristophanes* 202

⁵⁷⁴ *The Being of the Beautiful* III.113

weaving. Miller wonders about the likeness between the divisions that articulate the art of weaving and the “divisions in the ‘earlier discourse’ [which have] proven unsatisfactory and insufficient.”⁵⁷⁵ However, having expressed their questions and observations, the authors proceed to treat the discussion of weaving as either a cogent model for politics (Lane, Strauss) or as a necessary step in the young Socrates’ education (Miller, Krell). None of the authors offer an analysis that would compare the lines about weaving in the dialogue with those in Aristophanes’ play in order to ask the question: What does laughter reveal to us about violence—the violence that is unavoidable if Lysistrata’s weaving is taken up as a serious paradigm for political life?

The passage in which Lysistrata suggests that women know how to run the city, because they know the art of weaving, mentions separation of “grease and filth” from the fabric. This is her metaphor for driving out “bad citizens” (574 – 76).⁵⁷⁶ Stretching, scourging, carding of “matted coalitions,”⁵⁷⁷ and plucking of “head clumps”⁵⁷⁸ is used as an analogy of separating out and preparing the shorn wool for being worked over into suitable material. The mixing of the desirable parts that follows is cast less metaphorically. Lysistrata says,

Gather into a basket the shared good will of all, mixing together the metics, any friendly stranger, and anyone who solely owes money to the treasury. ... [T]he cities, those which are your colonies, adjudicate with

⁵⁷⁵ *The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman* 60

⁵⁷⁶ Here, I am using an anonymous translation of *Lysistrata*. Crofts, T. ed. (New York, NY: Dover Publishing, 1994)

⁵⁷⁷ This is how Benardete translates the passage from the *Lysistrata* in *The Being of the Beautiful* III.153, note 29.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

discernment, because they now severally lie apart like flock. And then from all of them ... weave a cloak for the people. III.153

The Magistrate's (Πρόβουλος) response to this sound solution to the conflict is—dismissal (587 – 88). The Magistrate refuses the proposal, but for the wrong reasons. Instead of objecting to its violence (we are, after all, talking about murder, torture, coercion, forced mingling and separation of peoples, and redistribution of property) in the name of establishment of order, the old man dismisses it on the grounds that it is ... weaving! “Is it not shameful that they treat all” of the affairs of the city by “thrashing and by winding?” (οὐκ οὐν δεινὸν ταυτὶ ταύτας ῥαβδίξειν καὶ τολυπεύειν, 587). Such a response shows up the Magistrate's incompetence. It is funny. However, it is not funny that Lysistrata intends, if necessary, to end the war, not by a peaceful sex strike, but in accordance with this much crueler plan.

Lysistrata's harsh plan is far from being dismissed in the *Statesman*. There, the diaretic method is woven into the presentation of weaving as a craft that works over the elements, which make up the *polis*. This divisionary and combinatory remixing is called the “royal art” (280a). It “does not at all differ except in name from ... cloakmaking” (280a), which is the “political art” (280a). Following the Stranger's alignment of warp and woof (282e – 283a) and Benardete's reflection on the metaphorical implications that follow, we should notice that the relationship between the people and the ruler (the woof and the warp) has been modified since the introduction of the herdsman metaphor and the development thereof in the Stranger's myth (268e – 275a). The ruler is no longer separated from the herd, as a divine overseer. The invocation of Athena and Hephaestus

and the reiteration of Prometheus' myth (274c – d) prepares the ground for taking up art as the paradigm for the science of statesmanship. Since Athena is subservient to the blacksmith-god (274c), wisdom is made to serve craftsmanship. The master-craft—the royal art—is weaving, which is but one of Athena's talents. Cloakmaking is politics. The elements of writing substitute the elements of nature (278c – e) and we read on as Plato's Stranger weaves his tapestry, which traces out the unwritten recipe for reassembling law and nature into an ordered city-life.

Miller is right to observe that Plato is giving us the paradigm of “weaving [that] mirrors *the dialogue as a whole*.”⁵⁷⁹ Plato weaves the *Statesman* out of epos, drama, pre-Socratic thought, the sophists' distinction between law and nature, and out of his own philosophizing about the possibility of political life. Since writing only points to or sets in relief the actions that are at work in separating out and plating that which, in principle, is not separable, namely convention and nature, we would miss the point of the *Statesman* (not to mention the literary background on which Plato draws to compose it), if we accepted weaving as a paradigm for politics. To discern patterns in Plato's web is not the same as to confine oneself to either one of them. It is especially difficult to see that weaving fails as a dialogical solution to the problems of politics, because it is formally akin to Plato's art.

Plato is not a politician, yet his dialogues inform our political world. The world of writing (scholarly and political), which draws from Plato, does not keep to, and hardly

⁵⁷⁹ *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman* 60

keeps interest in, Plato's form. If Plato's own weaving is really writing, then why do we think it to be a good idea to appropriate the political dimension of his dialogues prior to having figured out the plating of the strands? How could an assimilation of any of the so-called "Plato's Forms" or paradigms be even possible, if upon examination, the paradigm for what Plato does (weaving) dissolves back into the method of his own writing—that is, into something that only Plato could do? Indeed, such forms and paradigms are, in principle, inaccessible. What is accessible is what we can, but do not always, do when we read Plato. A dialogical engagement with the dialogues has a potential to pull on powerful emotions and to question the presuppositions, which we, despite all claims to philosophical rigor, seek to confirm and support from Plato's writing. It can call out from us our biases as well as our idealistic views. A conversational reading that is aware of the reader's own "speaking"—of that which she brings to the dialogue, and that is open to "listening"—to following the mythic, philosophical, historical, and dramatic voices ventriloquized by Plato's characters, promises to reweave the reader's relationship to the world, instead of confining it to the prescribed or ingrained modes of social and political participation.

Strauss describes the "coincidence between *phusis* and *nomos*,"⁵⁸⁰ the stock on which Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* draws, as a laughing matter. This same coincidence is rendered, in the *Statesman*, in the guise of the royal art, which aims to generate city-life through weaving (δὴ τέλος ὑφάσματος εὐθυπλοκία συμπλακὲν γίγνεσθαι ... πολιτικῆς πράξεως, 311b – c) and the trajectory for which was set up as early as the discussion of

⁵⁸⁰ *Socrates and Aristophanes* 212

the genetic reassembling (262d – 263b). The *Lysistrata*, as discussed both by Strauss⁵⁸¹ and by Freydberg,⁵⁸² undermines our hopes of a perfect alignment between nature and law. Strauss addresses the series of questionable conditions that speed the play's plot along. He observes that

Artemis and Athena ... are more powerfully present (also through oaths and invocations) in *Lysistrata* than in any other play. Yet the huntress Artemis and the utterly warlike Athena are even less goddesses of peace than Aphrodite. The ending of the play puts the emphasis altogether on Athena, the warlike goddess who not only does not give birth but was herself not born, not generated by a father and a mother, the embodied denial of life. [...] [T]he strike could be effective only if ... there were no possibility of sexual gratification except through intercourse between lawfully wedded husbands and wives, or if the pleasure of sexual gratification were possible only in and through marriage. [...] Lysistrata's design presupposes that unnatural coincidence of *physis* and *nomos* according to which war would be against nature because it condemns men and women to sexual starvation or prevents the generation of offspring whereas, to say nothing of other things, a small number of men can fertilize a large number of women: There is no fundamental disharmony between war and nature or between Ares and Aphrodite. 211 – 12

The separation of the two deities and the setting up of an opposition between erotic deeds and the deeds of war is laughable in comedy. Even though, the question of the relationship between eros and war is a serious matter, which is treated at length in the Stranger's myth. The impossibility of *Lysistrata*'s ingenious solution, although it provokes laughter, points not only to the impossibility of universal and eternal coincidence between law, custom, and desire, but also, it points beyond itself, to the precariousness of a pursuit aimed at such a coinciding. As the Stranger hints and Strauss reiterates, there is something unnatural, something that announces itself as a "denial of

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., 211 – 12

⁵⁸² *Philosophy and Comedy* 180

life” in the human claim on the arts of the weaver, war-goddess Athena. Perhaps, the hubristic attempts of doing what the goddess does—of attaining Athena’s wisdom—is another comical strand that runs through the *Lysistrata* and which destabilizes the scientific searches for the royal art of rule in the *Statesman*. Perhaps, for human beings the desire for wisdom, if it manifests as the desire to master and order the unruly nature, is altogether misguided, because the initial division—between that which is being mastered and that which supposedly masters—does not hold.

As Freydberg sees it, “with respect to us humans, the *phusis* / *nomos* distinction is at most a second order one, an offshoot of the *erotic* dimension of human life.”⁵⁸³ Part of the reason for this is that human law is not entirely unnatural and, at any rate, it works over nature, among other things. Also, nature is infused with human conceptions of law; with lawful ways in which we seek to arrange it; and most importantly, with the regularity afforded to it by human understanding. The two are mutually informative, but they do not coincide perfectly. If the conclusion of the *Statesman* is taken in a solemn register, then this point is missed. At the end of the *Statesman* a warning is issued against a political attempt to build the state on the basis of the separation and consequent recombination of law and nature by means of a preferential treatment of the sciences and the arts. It is not a warning against exercising our scientific and artful capacities, but against believing that these are unproblematic in their potential to remodel human life.

The paradigms (be they diareisis, fitting cuts, divine shepherding, writing, or weaving) discussed in the *Statesman* all fail. This does not mean that the dialogue fails to

⁵⁸³ Ibid., 180

provoke conversations and offer us an opportunity to construct our own arguments about desirable political arrangements and their attendant problems. The laughable and the self-undermining moments in the *Statesman* expose the shortsightedness of the attempts to seek out the origin and fully account for the constitution of order—be it the order imposed by means of scientific diaphysis, universal rotation, “opportune” halving, or weaving. Since to give a full causal explanation of order, we would have to start from complete disorder, that is, from chaos, and since human beings cannot think, speak, or act chaos out, all claims to full knowledge of order are preposterous. The second best state of things, which is enacted in Plato’s dialogues, is to keep seeking out the subversive developments in the given order—be it the ordering of political arrangements or of scientific systems. At the margins, where *kosmos*⁵⁸⁴ reverses to a new kind of order and the previous orderly arrangement undermines itself, as it does in the *Statesman* myth (272e, 273d – e), this is where subversive thinking resides. This thinking is for the sake of realizing that the actions, speeches, and arguments dwell at the threshold and are capable of birthing—poetically or mythically imagining—rejuvenated thought. In this way, by retracing our steps to the places of instability or to the apertures from which unruliness bursts forth, we give ourselves a chance to catch up with the unfolding of order. Instead of forcing things into arrangements of taxonomies, relations, and realms we glimpse the co-constitution of the understood order as well as the very understanding, which is ordered thereby and which arises nearly simultaneously with it.

⁵⁸⁴ On the original meaning of κόσμος as the orderly arrangement of the battlefield and Pythagoras’ initial designation of “the all” (το πᾶν) as cosmos, see Alfred E. Taylor’s *A Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus* 65 – 66.

Plato's philosophizing invites us to develop a sensibility for liberating thinking. The comedy that throws a wrench into the systematic argumentation and into those forms of order, which are derived from it, gives us a sense for the disorderly. Disorderliness of the unexpected jolts of laughter and the upsurge of eros, delivered as Plato's comedy that draws on and joins these, imbue the structures of the dialogical exchanges. Such a disorderly boisterousness is the closest that we have to an experience of chaos. Instead of seeing this development as a threat of anarchy, *mysology*, or even as the meaninglessness of life, I invite you to hear the laughter that rises out of the dialogue. It parts the veils of the orderly and the expected and leads into the imaginative, the overlooked, and the unknown. There, bubbling up to the surface, our incongruities and faults, our hard-headed beliefs and our ardent desires—those inextricable elements, which constitute our character as well as the blind spots peculiar to it—all become laughable. Laughter avails us of a distance from ourselves and, thereby, allows us to move closer to serious self-understanding. Socrates speaks about the “nature of the ridiculous” (τὸ γελοῖον ... φύσιν, *Philebus* 48c)⁵⁸⁵ as a “kind of vice [πονηρία] that derives its name from a special disposition; it is, among all the vices, the one with a character that stands in direct opposition to the one recommended by the famous inscription in Delphi” (48c). Socrates' joke, here, hinges on the fact that the ridiculous stands in direct opposition to our self-knowledge. Comedy makes use of the downfalls and faults, which are ours, but to which we are either purposefully or unknowingly blind. Our quirks, our strong convictions, and predilections are also funny because we take them to heart. We treat them seriously. Yet,

⁵⁸⁵ In *The Complete Works of Plato*. Frede, D. trans.

the vice to which Socrates points, is vice strictly, only if we remain in the condition of denying ourselves the possibility to laugh at ourselves, to see through the blinding effects of both our good intentions and our problematic habits. There is hardly anyone more laughable than a person who believes that the Delphic inscription can be realized once and for all. How can one know oneself completely?! Comedy and the Delphic injunction, work in tandem. The latter is a life-long exercise that is then complete, when it is ongoing, and when it seeks, but does not claim, completion. The former, comedy that is, is only then vicious, when it makes use of the ridiculousness of the, supposedly, full knowledge (of the situation, of human nature, or of oneself, for example), while arousing no impetus to reflect on the implications of such a hubristic knowledge claim. Of course, in that guise, it is no longer comedy, but rather something gratuitously grotesque and even tragic. If good comedy, or, put better, if comedy that is well received, reveals to us both the vulnerable and the dangerous aspects of being human and, thereby, welcomes us to a serious study of ourselves, then it is fine and good if every now and again the joke is at our expense.

V. THE DIONYSIAN, DOUBLE FACE OF SHAME IN THE *GORGIAS* AND IN THE *CLOUDS*

Achilleus has destroyed pity, and there is not in him
any shame [awe]; which does much harm to men but profits them also.

(Ἀχιλλεὺς ἔλεον μὲν ἀπώλεσεν, οὐδέ οἱ αἰδῶς
γίγνεται, ἥ τ' ἄνδρας μέγα σίνεται ἡδ' ὀνίνησι).

Homer, *Iliad* XXIV.44 – 45

1. Shame, Eros, Drama, and Dionysus

Plato's *Gorgias*⁵⁸⁶ might as well have been named "On Shame." The word appears sixty nine times in the course of the dialogue with a lion's share of references to shame being made by Socrates' character. Callicles⁵⁸⁷ comes in second in his use of the term. Either

⁵⁸⁶ E. R. Dodds speculates that the date of Plato's *Gorgias* is "about 387-385" BC (*Plato's Gorgias*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1959), 24. Cf. Benardete's discussion of the dramatic date in *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy: Plato's Gorgias and Phaedrus* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 7. Douglas L. Cairns surveys the usages of shame and awe in the work entitled, *Aidōs: The Psychology of Shame and Honour in Ancient Greek Literature* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1993). Douglas notes that in the corpus of the lyric poet, Theognis of Megara (6 century BC), we have "the first instance of the noun *aischunē*" (175, n. 100). The word, αἰσχύνη, appears at line 1272, in the first Book of Theognis' *Elegiac Poems* (*Greek Elegiac Poetry: From the Seventh to the Fifth Century B.C. Loeb Classical Library No. 258*. Gerber, E. D., trans. Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1999), 368. Cairns goes on to comment on Theognis' use of αἰσχύνη and says that "[h]ere it appears in the objective sense, but later it will also be found in a subjective sense, as the reaction to or mental picture of disgrace and so as equivalent of *aidōs*" (175). Although, it is important to differentiate αἰσχύνη and αἰδώς, we should also be aware of the fact that the terms, as Douglas suggests, are capable of expressing interchangeable meanings. Hence, the context in which a given term appears, should be consulted carefully.

⁵⁸⁷ Nails confirms Benardete's view that the "*Gorgias* is not set in real time" (*The People of Plato* 75) and writes that because of this "most information that one can normally use to establish [Callicles's] ... date of birth is not definitive" (Ibid.). She goes on, "Callicles, a member of the aristocratic Ceryces clan ... has been in combat already (498a, thus over 18) and is embarking on a political career (515a, thus probably over 30). He is a householder, hosting an important visitor, Gorgias (447b)" (Ibid.). Cf. Benardete's *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy* where he

the ostensible subject of the *Gorgias*, which is usually identified as rhetoric, is not the dialogue's true concern or the explicit subject matter cannot be understood without its accompanying element, which is shame. The myth (μῦθος, 523a) about afterlife with which the *Gorgias* concludes (523a – 527e) confirms the central role that shame plays in the dialogue. The premise of the story is nakedness. The shameful and the admirable deeds are all revealed when that which is unseen is made visible in Hades; when the soul stands free from the trappings of bodily nature. This is how things are after death.

In life, the only thing that can be made quite literally naked, in the same sense that Socrates' myth relates, is the body. However, unless we, like the ancient Greek men, are comfortable with naked exercise and naked competitions, bodily nakedness revealed before others, let alone others who judge, is a matter of shame. It does not matter how prudent and admirable one's actions concerning the body, unless occasion is set up so that all of those present are naked (and that would be a strange gathering), to be examined naked in company of and by others is humiliating or at least uncomfortable, awkward, and shameful. If it were not, then the comedians would not have employed the motif with such success. What does it say about us that we find things that humiliate others to be very funny when they are not aimed at humiliating us? Would we still laugh at Aristophanes' humor if we saw that the joke is not only for our entertainment, but that it is also at our expense? Learning from Aristophanes' comedies entails being in the limbo state where we cringe, because we see how easily we fit the mold of the ridiculed characters and actions, but still find these very funny.

discusses the meaning of Callicles's name, which "contains 'the beautiful' (*kallos*) and 'the naming of the beautiful'" (63).

All of Aristophanes' comedies bet on our propensity to react to the images of shamefulness not so much with indignation or a desire to recoil, but with laughter. The *Clouds*, being "Aristophanes' 'wisest' comedy,"⁵⁸⁸ also lends itself to philosophical examination. In the *Clouds*, shame (αἰσχύνῃ) comes closest to reverence or awe (αἰδώς) in the face of desecrating that which ought not be transgressed. If we transgress against the sacred, then we are liable to lose our humanity. Thus the *Clouds*, for all of its gayety, is concerned with a very serious question: What makes us human? The comedy provokes not only our laughter, but also our sense of shame. Aristophanes' play problematizes the relationship between shame, humanity, and corruption and, thereby, invites serious self-examination. The *Clouds* can be the occasion to be naked in the sense that the myth of the *Gorgias* relates. Since we are all still alive, embodied, and, at least when in public, also clothed, it quite likely that the feeling of being naked in the eyes of others will arouse our sense of shame. Still, since the serious question of the *Clouds* is: What makes us human? and its resolute correlate in the *Gorgias* regards "the way we're supposed to live" (500c), we are well advised to disrobe, so to speak, and look at ourselves.

The ancient Greek tragedy and comedy, especially when acted out, are conducive to the exposure that self-examination requires. The reason for this is the comforting effect of the mask. While it is ourselves—our own characters, deeds, opinions, biases, predilections and desires—that we set out to make bare, we do so not as ourselves, but

⁵⁸⁸ Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes* 53. Cf. *Clouds* (520 – 522) where the leading Cloud, as Aristophanes himself, refers to himself as σοφός and to his *Clouds* as the "wisest [σοφώτατ'] of [his] ... comedies." Unless otherwise indicated, all of the English language references to *Clouds* are to the West G. T. and West S. G. translation of the play in the *Four Texts on Socrates*.

through the dramatic characters.⁵⁸⁹ Looking at the personages of the *Clouds*, wearing them as masks, we reflect on their hopes and faults as if they were our own. The Dionysian origin of ancient Greek drama welcomes this masked undressing. The skillful

mask-makers did not attempt to fashion a detailed portrait—that would have suffered from the same difficulty as the naked human physiognomy; like our newspaper cartoonists, they reduced each character to the fewest possible traits, which were suggested in bold strokes and were easily recognizable by even the most remote spectator. Under close inspection representations of ancient masks seem grotesque and even absurd, ... but it must be remembered that distance would to a great extent obliterate this impression. Moreover, such masks were admirably adapted to, and at the same time reinforced, the Greek tendency to depict types rather than individuals.⁵⁹⁰

I claim that the types, in Aristophanes' *Clouds* and in the *Gorgias*, which being Plato's dialogue is, also, a work of dramatic philosophizing, are representative of the behaviors and responses typical of perennial human dilemmas. These are, for example, the relationship between old and new (customs, mores, and laws), conflicting religious beliefs and different attitudes toward religion, as well as competing views on education, government, and what constitutes the best human life. On their own, these can be seen as themes for the dialogical arguments. As such, they may ignite our desire to prove one point or to undo another, but they do not incite reflection needful for self-examination. Yet, what good is philosophical thinking if it does not include examination of the self?

Plato's writing comes alive when it calls to us with the same force of aesthetic and emotional engagement as does the dramatic art. When Aristophanes' comedies are

⁵⁸⁹ Davis offers an insightful discussion of the relationship between the passions of the tragic characters and the audience's impassioned response. He also gives a helpful account of Aristotle's remarks on purification of fear and pity. See his *The Poetry of Philosophy* pages 38 – 39.

⁵⁹⁰ Flickinger, *The Greek Theater and Its Drama* 223

regarded with the same attentiveness to their speculative dimension that is given to Plato's dialogues, then we catch sight, also, of their philosophical import. The intersection of the seriousness (with which Plato's philosophical work is usually regarded) and the levity (attributed to Aristophanes' plays) and the crosspollination of the one with the other, to some, may seem like madness. However, even this designation of the proposed method is appropriate. It brings the dramatic register of Plato's writing closer to the surface and it draws both the *Gorgias* and the *Clouds* into the vicinity of Dionysian revelries out of which performances of tragedy and comedy originate.

Report of Dionysian madness is recorded in Herodotus' *Histories*. Herodotus tells us of the contempt that the Scythians have for Hellenic customs and the apprehension they feel when their own king, Skyles, adopts those rituals, including the celebration of Bacchus.⁵⁹¹ In fact, it is because of this penchant of the Hellenophile king, says Herodotus, that "it was fated that things would turn out badly for Skyles [because] ... [h]e had conceived a desire to be initiated into the rites of Bacchic Dionysus."⁵⁹² Things turn out very badly, indeed, for Skyles. He is beheaded by his own brother. This is a high price to pay for the "initiation [into and the] ... celebration of Bacchic rites."⁵⁹³ The Scythians, except for Skyles, "say that it is unfitting to seek out a god who induces people to madness."⁵⁹⁴ However, Skyles is a celebrant and the Skythians are ridiculed on his behalf by their non-nomadic fellow, "one of the Borysthenites," who hurls at them this

⁵⁹¹ Cf. Davis' *The Soul of the Greeks* Part II, chapter five entitled "Motion at Rest: Herodotus's Scythians" (90 – 101) and Benardete's *Herodotean Inquiries* chapter four, "Scythia and Lybia." (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine Press, 2009), 98 – 131.

⁵⁹² *The Landmark Herodotus* IV.79, 313.

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*, 314

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

vituperation: “You Scythians laugh at us because we celebrate Bacchus and the god takes possession of us. Well, now this same divinity has taken possession of your own king, and he is celebrating the Bacchic rites in a state of madness under the influence of the god.”⁵⁹⁵ Thus madness and Dionysus go hand in hand. Whereas, for some the love of such madness proves to be fatally attractive (Scythian Skyles and Euripides’ Pentheus, for instance),⁵⁹⁶ ancient Athenians⁵⁹⁷ hold on to their Dionysian worship and make Dionysus the “patron deity” of dramatic performances.⁵⁹⁸ Flickinger relates that unlike the “modern theatergoer,” a resident of ancient Athens “could not have recourse to his favorite recreation any day that he might choose.”⁵⁹⁹ Flickinger clarifies that “this situation resulted from the fact that ancient drama was connected with religion, was part of some god’s worship, and as such could be presented only at the time of his festivals.”⁶⁰⁰ The reason why “Dionysus (Bacchus)” was the god celebrated with the performances of tragedy (at first) and (then also) comedy is because “tragedy and satyric [plays] ... were offshoots of the Dionysiac dithyramb ... the *comus* (κῶμος) from which comedy had developed ... had a meaning and function similar to those of certain rites of

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁶ The *Bacchae* is the only extant tragedy that we have in which Dionysus appears in person. Consider, further, Richard Seaford’s observation, “Dionysus [is] almost entirely absent from Homer” (“Dionysus as Destroyer of the Household: Homer, Tragedy, and the Polis,” *Masks of Dionysus*. Carpenter, H. T. and Faraone, A. C., eds. New York, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 142.

⁵⁹⁷ For a description of Hellenic and Egyptian Dionysian revelries, see *Histories* in *Landmark Herodotus* II.48 – 49, 139.

⁵⁹⁸ Flickinger, *The Greek Theater and Its Drama* 119

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid.

Dionysus and in the course of time was brought into connection with his worship.”⁶⁰¹

Suffice this to show that the performances of tragedies and comedies in ancient Greece are closely associated with Dionysus, who, in his turn, is the god capable of inducing ecstasy and madness alike.

The double nature of the Dionysian rites, the nature which is both exuberantly⁶⁰² and violently⁶⁰³ erotic, lives on in the celebrations during which dramatic plays are performed. In comedies, the hilariously lewd and in tragedies, the rampant Dionysian spirit is preserved. The comedies, in consonance with the traditional phallic processions, put on display the shameful elements of our erotic nature and poke fun at our sensitivity to randy exhibitions thereof. The tragedies, in continuity with menacing Maenadic frenzy, elicit fear of punishment for the transgressive and the violently erotic, shameless deeds. Thus, shame, eros, and the double (merrily and terrifyingly erotic) nature of Dionysus,

⁶⁰¹ Ibid. Flickinger continues with a qualifier that “[a]t Athens, Dionysus had several festivals, but only two at which plays were performed, viz., the City of Dionysia and the Lenaea” (Ibid.). Cf. Cornford, *The Origin of Attic Comedy* 194. See, also, Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyramb Tragedy and Comedy* (149 – 168).

⁶⁰² Consult the discussion of Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* in chapter IV, part five of the present work

⁶⁰³ Consult the discussion of Euripides’ *Bacchae* in chapter IV, part five of this work. The intermingling of violence, tyranny, Dionysus, and the kind of love or eros for war, about which Thucydides writes in books II and VII of the *History of the Peloponnesian War*, is reflected in the iniquities and rampant passions of the Third Reich. The entry on “Dionysus” in the dictionary of *The Classical Tradition* (Grafton, A., Most, W. G., and Settis, S. eds., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010) states,

“[t]hanks to the cult of Nietzsche in National Socialism, the revolutionary aspect of Dionysus also had a place there, although Alfred Rosenberg, the editor of *Völkischer Beobachter* (*People’s Observer*), saw him (as a god coming from Asia) as a symbol of “miscegenation” that did not fit into the ideology of the “pure Aryan race” (*Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 1930), 273.

the twice-born god,⁶⁰⁴ are ever-present in ancient Greek tragedy and comedy alike. We can even posit that, held in honor of the god, the dramatic performances evoke Dionysus' nature through their respective thematic treatments of eros and shame. It stands to reason that an investigation of shame's Dionysian, double function as the ambivalent emotion, which at times discloses corrupt deeds and passions and, at other times, itself warps characters and makes them liable to become corrupt, will prove fruitful when pursued in comedy and in Plato's dialogical drama.

Moreover, a study of shame in the *Clouds* and in the *Gorgias* will help disclose the parts of both in which shame is used to chastise lustful characters or, on the contrary, where shamelessness runs rampant in celebration of licentiousness. Thus, the analysis of shame tracks, also, the suppression and eruption of eros in its grotesque (either sterilized or violently excessive) permutations. Attentiveness to the Dionysian, dramatic tenor of the considered works, allows us to interpret them in the register, which picks up on and, hence, avoids both strident moralizing and lurid anarchism. If shame is not used to limit the force of eros, nor is shamelessness employed to amplify it, but if, instead, shame is seen as an indication of eros' disorderly presence, then the detections of shame can become an occasion for self-understanding. Instead of buying into the moralistic or the libertine attitudes toward that which is considered shameful—the attitudes on which both the dialogue and the play draw—we can examine the relationship between our own eroticism and shame. This way, the incongruity and the unruliness of eros as well as its

⁶⁰⁴ On some accounts, Dionysus, like Osiris, is dismembered and then revived. For the identification of Dionysus and the god's suffering with that of the Egyptian Osiris, see Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* page 160, note 119.

power to take us out of ourselves, are not immediately smoothed over and suppressed. Instead, if we examine shame, which is indicative of ways in which we react to eros' disorienting force, then we are well positioned to take note of and analyze the implications of our own opinions about what is commendable or reprehensible.

2. Shame in the *Clouds*

The *Clouds* (Νεφέλαι), which bears the name of the characters represented by the comedy's chorus, is first produced in 423 BC at the City Dionysia. Despite the fact that the rambunctious comedic play is named after the image related by its chorus, "The chorus of *Clouds* is consistently dignified and detached: it never succumbs to emotional excitement and is never involved in any rough and tumble."⁶⁰⁵ During its first performance, the *Clouds* comes in third or last with Cratinus' *Pytine* or the *Wicker Flask* being the winner. In the second, revised version of the *Clouds*, Aristophanes takes the occasion to reprimand his audience for their poor tastes.⁶⁰⁶ Aristophanes himself appears in the *parabasis* (518 – 562) as the leading Cloud. "This identification of Aristophanes with the chorus in the *Clouds* is unique among his plays."⁶⁰⁷ However, it is in step with the comedy's focus, which is "sophistic rhetoric, and in particular such rhetoric's claim to

⁶⁰⁵ L. P. E. Parker, *The Song of Aristophanes* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1997), 184

⁶⁰⁶ See *Aristophanes' Clouds* (Newburyport, MA: Focus Classical Library Publishing, 1992) by Jeffery Henderson, who evidences the extent of Aristophanes' revisions and the speculated revision dates (7). See, further, Daphne Elizabeth O'Regan's *Rhetoric, Comedy, and the Violence of Language in Aristophanes' Clouds* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1992) chapter five and Appendix.

⁶⁰⁷ *Four Texts on Socrates* page 136, note 88.

a power as irresistible physical force.”⁶⁰⁸ According to O’Regan, the reason why the first iteration of the *Clouds* met with little success has to do with Aristophanes’ decision to dispose of the “many of the obscene and violent aspects of the conventional comedy in favor of purely verbal wit.”⁶⁰⁹ In the subsequent version, which is the one that we have, Aristophanes resorts both to the depictions and threats of violence as well as to the portrayals of rhetoric’s capacity to incite it. In other words, he doubles up on the use of violence, which the audience finds to be so funny. “The result,” O’Regan writes, “is the comedy unique among those we have and one that comments upon its own uniqueness.”⁶¹⁰

If the subject of the *Clouds*, rhetoric and, especially, the power of sophistic rhetoric, is unique in that it colors, also, the play’s style, then the rhetorical tools, internal to the play, are not so singular. These are best represented by the battle of the two speeches (889 – 1104); shame is one such implement. Thus, the Δίκαιος Λόγος or the Just Speech, at the beginning of the *agon* between the two speeches, labels the Unjust Speech (Ἄδικος Λόγος) as “shameless” (ἀναίσχυντος, 909). The Unjust Speech earns this telling title, which stands as a shorthand for the basis of a counter-argument that the Just Speech will mount, for its suggestion that either justice does not exist or even Zeus acts unjustly (when he castrates Cronus, 904 – 905). Here, as well as at the end of the *Clouds*,

⁶⁰⁸ O’Regan, *Rhetoric, Comedy, and the Violence of Language* 3 – 4

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid., 5

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

where Strepsiades⁶¹¹ berates his son, Pheidippides,⁶¹² after the latter beats his father, shame is connected with reverence and shamelessness (ἀναίσχυντος, 1380) with a sacrilegious attitude. Shame indicates a boundary that marks out the human realm and distinguishes it from the deeds and the desires of the gods. Whereas, Zeus is divine and is revered, despite his history with Cronus and notwithstanding all of his amorous affairs, it strikes us as both cruel and distasteful when a human man beats his aging father. Whatever rhetorical devices Pheidippides learns during the time spent as an apprentice at the “thinkery” (φροντιστήριον, 94), his transgressive actions seem unjustified by the rhetoric he uses. If the Unjust Speech’s suggestive rhetoric is shameless, then its counterpart in Pheidippides, who takes on the belief that “nothing is shameful” (νόμιζε μηδὲν αἰσχρόν, 1078) is—shameless actions. Thus, instances of shaming and shamelessness in the *Clouds* can be studied in relation to the question of transgression.

The question of shame and transgression in the *Clouds* is two-pronged. On the one hand, there is transgressive shamelessness, like the one that Pheidippides and the

⁶¹¹ West and West note that “[t]wist and turn’ translates the verb *strephein*, from which Strepsiades’ name is formed. Other occurrences of ‘twisting’ or ‘turning’ (the word can also mean ‘cheating’) are found at lines 88, 335, 434, 450, 554, 776, 792, 1455” (117, n. 7).

⁶¹² See West and West, “Pheidippides: ‘thrifty horseman’, is an oxymoron, like ‘stingy big-spender’” (118, n. 16). Aristophanes is painting a portrait of a young man, who is very different in terms of his aspirations, interests, and mettle from the one historical Pheidippides. The latter, as Everitt describes him in *The Rise of Athens*, is a “professional herald and long-distance runner” (111), who in 490BC covered “140 miles ... from Athens to Sparta” (Ibid.) to request Spartans’ military aid against Persians, whose “army had landed in Attica” (Ibid.). The swift-footed Pheidippides, on his famous trek, had a vision of Pan and, at this sight, Pheidippides felt “holy terror” (112). The message, which Pan gave to Pheidippides encouraged Athenians to offer due worship to Pan and when the great victory of Marathon was won, “Miltiades dedicated a statue of Pan on the battlefield for which Simonides wrote a brief verse. ‘I am goat-footed Pan from Arcadia. I was against the Persians/And for the Athenians. Miltiades erected me’” (128). The Just Speech, in his address to Pheidippides, talks up the “education [that] nurtured the men who fought at Marathon” (*Clouds* 985).

Unjust Speech represent. On the other hand, there is shaming to which the Just Speech resorts. The Just Speech crosses the line between decency and overbearing moralizing. The said transgression of the Just Speech makes bare its suspiciously sensitive relationship to shameful matters (972 – 983, 1001 – 1019). To put it in Strauss’s words, “When he [the Just Speech] speaks of chastity both demanded and practiced in the ancient times, the Just Speech goes into such details as to make one fear that his abhorrence of unchastity is not altogether chaste.”⁶¹³

The excess of shamelessness, on the one hand, and the excess of shamefulness, on the other, with which the *Clouds* is concerned, arise in the face of desire. Strepsiades desires to be rid of his debts and this desire sets into motion his wanting to learn to be a speaker (βουλόμενος, 239 – 242). The reason why Strepsiades is in debt is because Pheidippides and his mother⁶¹⁴ live beyond their means (14 – 55); they desire things, which squander Strepsiades’ wealth. Because Pheidippides does not want to enroll in the thinkery (124 – 125), Strepsiades has to become a student himself. Prior to learning about the two Speeches’ take on desire (960 – 1085), we meet Socrates, and other dwellers of the thinkery, which “is a society of friends and hence a society without *eros*.”⁶¹⁵

The opening of the play, as far as Strepsiades’s and Pheidippides’s characters are concerned, is the inverted image of the ending. At the beginning, Strepsiades wants his

⁶¹³ *Socrates and Aristophanes* 30. Note that in the *Gorgias*, Polus and Gorgias are said to be “more ashamed than they should be” (487b). The claim at 487e is that the two lose to Socrates because of “excess of shame.”

⁶¹⁴ Cf. Vickers, “Pheidippides is said to be descended from ‘a high-plumed race of women, the house of Coesyra’ (800); Alcibiades’ pedigree was identical (*Alc.* I.I)” (*Pericles on Stage* 43).

⁶¹⁵ Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes* 48

son to learn the crafty speeches taught at the thinkery, even, and especially, if these speeches promise to win out unjustly in the court of law and swindle Strepsiades out of his debts. Strepsiades does not mind injustice. Pheidippides's first line reads: "Philon you are unjust; drive in your own course" (Φίλων ἀδικεῖς: ἔλαυνε τὸν σαντοῦ δρόμον, 25).⁶¹⁶ The name of the alleged competitor, whom Pheidippides mentions in his sleep, sounds like the noun, "φίλος," which means a friend or a beloved. Thus, when we meet Pheidippides, he is, at least while asleep, speaking about friendship and is concerned with matters of injustice. This picture is reversed after Pheidippides emerges from Socrates' tutelage. There are no *philia* connections that Pheidippides is unwilling to transgress (1410 – 1446). The end of the *Clouds* is a triumph of rampant desire, embodied by Pheidippides's resolve to keep to utmost injustice as far as family affairs go and to "look down on established laws" (1400). Strauss posits that "Pheidippides is the comic equivalent of Oedipus."⁶¹⁷ Since Pheidippides does not find mother-beating terrifying (1442 – 1443), let alone reprehensible, he is liable to transgress the laws that safeguard the family and to spurn the "prohibition against incest [which] ... owes its force or sacredness to divine sanctions."⁶¹⁸ The words about friendly love and injustice that Pheidippides utters in his sleep, when we first meet him, are exchanged for his wakeful and aware indorsement that eros is a just passion, even if it reigns in *philia*'s place. Strepsiades's willingness to make good on his wish (βούλομαι, 1499) and promise to destroy the thinkery (1489 – 1510), too, indicates the fact that we are presented, at the

⁶¹⁶ Author's translation

⁶¹⁷ *Socrates and Aristophanes* 52

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 48

end, with the ravaging force of unbridled desire. Pheidippides's desire to change the laws of the family and the city (1395 – 1450) and to “set down ... a novel law” (1423 – 1424) produced in consultation with no one, but himself, is the upshot of his training in shamelessness. Although, once Pheidippides hears the two speeches argue, he “is altogether unimpressed by the debate [and although] ... he loathes Socrates and all his works as much as before,”⁶¹⁹ it turns out that, at the end, Pheidippides does exactly what the Unjust Speech preaches (1078 – 1082). The off-stage mystery of Pheidippides's instruction produces a shameless man, who “puts his hand to what may not be touched.”⁶²⁰ This infuriates Strepsiades, who himself, “had no misgivings about the rejection of divine sanctions for oaths.”⁶²¹ Yet, true to his name, Strepsiades's character makes another turn when “he sees that the same thought that liberates him from his creditors legitimates incest.”⁶²² Before Strepsiades sets out to burn the thinkery, he turns “to piety and justice.”⁶²³ In the light of Pheidippides's antinomianism and perversion, Strepsiades professes his fondness for morality and justice. However, instead of acting by the letter of the law, Strepsiades, rather, does what Pheidippides generally suggests. That is, Strepsiades forgoes the law and takes the matter of punishing Socrates and his cohorts into his own hands. The end of the *Clouds* is a caricature of lawless tyranny where a man's desire or “love [Ἔρως] lives like a tyrant ... in all anarchy and lawlessness.”⁶²⁴

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., 33

⁶²⁰ *Oedipus Tyrannus* 892

⁶²¹ Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes* 48

⁶²² Ibid.

⁶²³ Ibid.

⁶²⁴ τυραννικῶς ἐν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἔρως ἐν πάσῃ ἀναρχίᾳ καὶ ἀνομίᾳ ζῶν, *Republic* 575a

It is instructive that Pheidippides's initial desire to be a celebrated horseman is replaced with a much more dangerous passion. Pheidippides tells us that he finds it "pleasant [ἡδὺν] to consort with novel and shrewd matters and to be able to look down on the established laws!" (1399 – 1400). The liberation of Pheidippides's antinomian desire⁶²⁵ is aided by Socrates, who teaches Pheidippides that there is no Zeus and, hence, no awe that we owe to him; nor is there any laws that Zeus's justice guards, which it is shameful to transgress. If men are not at fault for behaving like the gods (1080 – 1082), then what prevents, us, mortals, from claiming that it is just for us not only to do, but also to *be* like the divinities (*Oedipus Tyrannus* 1080 – 1085)⁶²⁶—to be, that is, as powerful as gods? Pheidippides's love of public recognition (charioteers' sport is a publically hailed affair), when run through the mysteries that take place behind the thinkery's closed doors, is left wanting in its grasp of omnipotence. Reformed Pheidippides no longer wants to be admired as a skillful and good-looking rider (*Clouds* 120), whose victories impress some, but leave others unaffected. He, now, revels in his power to affect the lives of all.

The effects of Pheidippides's almightiness, we surmise, are hardly auspicious. This we conclude on the basis of what the chorus of the *Clouds* describes as Pheidippides's newly acquired expertise. They sing to Pheidippides, "Your work, you mover and heaver of novel words, is to seek some way of persuasion so that you will

⁶²⁵ Cf. *Republic* 560d – 561a

⁶²⁶ Cf. Parker, who discerns tragic notes, that is, quite literally, the meter that is used in tragedy, in Strepsiades' "encomium" to himself near the end of the play (1205 – 1213), when Pheidippides exists the thinkery and is about to be hosted to a dinner commemorating his great learning. Parker cites "one surviving example from Sophocles, ... [t]he rest are Euripidean" (*The Song of Aristophanes* 206).

seem to speak just things” (1396 – 1397). Whatever things seem just to Pheidippides and even things that are manifestly unjust, but which Pheidippides desires to see come to pass, of those things we will be persuaded by the likes of him. Whether Pheidippides is successful in practicing the art of such persuasion is beside the point. However, it is important that when his teaching is complete, Pheidippides agrees that he is better off now that he thinks himself able to make speeches in support of whatever it is that he decides to “set down [as] ... law” (1420). The *Clouds* witnesses a transformation of a young man, who seeks to be esteemed by some people for his just victories as a skillful athlete, into someone who loves the power to turn anyone to his side, no matter if that toward which he is turning his newfound public is unjust.⁶²⁷ In short, corruption is Pheidippides’s new favorite sport.

Incidentally, it is also Alcibiades’. Nails relates Xenophon’s account about Alcibiades, the historical figure, who “at about nineteen outwitt[ed] ... Pericles I in a conversation about law, persuasion, and force”⁶²⁸ but, she goes on, “Xenophon points out at great length that Alcibiades III was no student or disciple of Socrates but, like Critias IV, someone who wanted to use Socrates to advance his own ambitions.”⁶²⁹ Alcibiades’ advancement is very much in step with Pheidippides’s antinomian desires at the end of the *Clouds*. Vickers makes explicit the connection between historical Alcibiades and Pheidippides’s character when he writes, “Alcibiades, who was surely in the audience,

⁶²⁷ Cf. *Republic* 571c – d, where we get a taste of the kinds of unjust actions that Pheidippides might think himself capable of justifying by means of his crafty speeches.

⁶²⁸ *The People of Plato* 12

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*

would have been very angry, not so much on account of what had been said about Socrates, but because of what had been implied about himself and his real and adoptive families, and about the danger that his extravagance, his violence, and his sophistry presented to Athens.”⁶³⁰ Alcibiades’ behavior, desires, and reputation make him a very likely candidate for the prototype of Aristophanes’ Pheidippides.

Pheidippides’s fight with Strepsiades breaks out over the lines that the former recites from Euripides. According to Strepsiades, the verses tell about “how (defend us from evil!) a brother had intercourse with his sister from the same mother” (1371). Vickers notes that “Alcibiades, too, was rightly or wrongly, accused of incestuous relations with his sister.”⁶³¹ The unseemly father-beating, which is Pheidippides’s response to his father’s indignation, also finds correlate in Alcibiades’ actions. Vickers confers, “the beating of Strepsiades by Pheidippides and the latter’s justification of his action. ... If [it] ... bears any relation to Alcibiades ... must refer to his propensity to fisticuffs in general, and his beating up of his father-in-law in particular.”⁶³² Also Pheidippides’s love of luxury⁶³³ and, most specifically, his love of horsemanship mimics “the character of Alcibiades, who had the same love for horses and bore a similar relation to Socrates.”⁶³⁴ Nails describes Alcibiades’ equestrian escapades by making him “the ancient equivalent of a record-breaking sports superstar, though winning his victories, not

⁶³⁰ *Pericles on Stage* 57

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*, 55

⁶³² *Ibid.*, 54

⁶³³ *Ibid.*, 32

⁶³⁴ William J. Donaldson, *The Theater of the Greeks: A Treatise on the History and Exhibition of the Greek Drama, With Various Supplements*. Seventh Ed. (London, UK: London Longman Publishing, 1860), 185.

by participation, but by ownership of teams of horses in chariot races, the most expensive of the events.”⁶³⁵ Pheidippides, unlike Alcibiades, is himself a racer. However, Aristophanes’ choice of Pheidippides’s infatuation with horses, the youth’s association with Socrates, his eventual conviction that power can be gained by means of sophistic oratory and machination, and even the peculiar speech defect that Pheidippides’s character’s diction shares with Alcibiades,⁶³⁶ make it nearly indubitable that Aristophanes’ model for Pheidippides is Alcibiades himself.⁶³⁷ Vickers sums up Alcibiades’ career in relation to the narrative arc of the play thusly:

[f]rom a spoilt brat, Alcibiades had developed into a thug. It is possible that Socrates had attempted to temper the worst excesses, but he, like Pericles, must take some of the blame for having created a monster. Aristophanes’ *Clouds* was written with wit, and no little courage; it was perhaps unfortunate for Athens that the judges were less courageous.⁶³⁸

The older guardians help neither Pheidippides, nor Alcibiades to develop a steadfast character. Strepsiades spearheads Pheidippides’s entry into the thinkery, which speeds along the young man’s corruption. Alcibiades who, along with his “younger brother Clinias IV [was] ... made [ward] of Pericles I,”⁶³⁹ turns out to be a sacrilegious debauchee and a traitor.⁶⁴⁰ Out of the many parallels that Vickers draws between Pericles

⁶³⁵ *The People of Plato* 13

⁶³⁶ See Vickers, *Pericles on Stage* 24 – 25.

⁶³⁷ Consult Gustav Friedrich Hertzberg’s *Alkibiades der Staatsmann und Feldherr* (Halle: C. E. M. Pfeffer, 1853), especially page 67.

⁶³⁸ Vickers, *Pericles on Stage*, 57. Consider, also, Vickers’s statement that “[j]udgment in dramatic competitions was not in the hands of the audience, but rested with a panel of ten judges, and we might well speculate that these were afraid of what might happen to them if they gave the prize to Aristophanes” (Ibid.).

⁶³⁹ Nails, *The People of Plato* 11

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid., 13 – 20

and Strepsiades,⁶⁴¹ the most instructive set of likenesses is comprised of the enumeration that Vickers makes of Pericles' association with the sophists and the philosophers of his day. The reason why this point of contact between history and the play interests us the most is because of the thematic continuity sustained between Pericles' experiments with the kinds of ideas, which the inhabitants of the thinkery epitomize, and the influence that the said notions have on Pheidippides's and on Alcibiades' characters on stage and in life.

Vickers asks us to "recall Pericles' association with Pythocleides and Damon ... who was (probably) ostracized for all [of] ... the attempts to disguise his sophistry with musical education"⁶⁴² as well as with Protagoras, Zeno, "and especially with Anaxagoras, a philosopher whom Pericles greatly admired."⁶⁴³ Strepsiades takes Pheidippides to the thinkery. Pericles' many sophistically and philosophically inclined acquaintances gather and teach at the house where Alcibiades grows up. Whatever the intentions and the results of the association that Aristophanes' elder and his possible historical palimpsest, Pericles, have with the learned men of their time, Pheidippides and Alcibiades do not learn from the educators much, if any, respect for the old customs, for upright ways, or for reverential attitude toward the divine. All of the named modes of respectfulness presuppose that the individual finds it opprobrious to debase them or to humiliate those who hold these dear. However, neither Pheidippides nor Alcibiades show signs of shame in the face of ancestral, ethical, or religious irreverence. On the contrary, the fictional

⁶⁴¹ *Pericles on Stage* 26 – 30

⁶⁴² *Ibid.*, 29

⁶⁴³ *Ibid.*, Cf. Plato, *Alcibiades I* 118c

character scoffs at Zeus to whom his father prays at the end (1466 – 1470). Alcibiades is accused of profaning the Eleusinian mysteries and is implicated in the mutilation of the Hermae.⁶⁴⁴ Pheidippides's shamelessness is expressed, also, through his curiosity in unsavory eroticism (1371) and in his despicable acts and threats of violence (1375 – 1446). The same kind of erotic and cruel escapades belong to Alcibiades. Vickers cites “Alcibiades’ accuser in c. 416 B.C.,”⁶⁴⁵ who implores, “Were I faced with the task of describing at length [Alcibiades’] career as an adulterer, as a stealer of the wives of others, as a perpetrator of lawless acts in general, the time at my disposal would be all too short.”⁶⁴⁶

Alcibiades celebrates his eroticism. He does so at the expense of paying due respects to his heritage. Vickers, relating *Athenaeus’* account, reports that instead of carrying a shield “emblazoned with the ancestral bearings of his family,”⁶⁴⁷ Alcibiades’

⁶⁴⁴ Nails, *The People of Plato* 17 – 20. However, consider Everitt’s observation that the Hermae bore inscriptions and injunctions from “Pisistratus’s second son” (*The Rise of Athens* 87), Hipparchus, “a playboy [who] ... liked to be amused” (88). Although Alcibiades’ sacrilegious acts were seen as a serious crime, Hipparchus’s own flighty character (88) contextualizes the crime. The offense can be interpreted both as an affront to the Athenian establishment, and as an attempt to question the authority of a whimsical and an unpopular ruler (89). Everitt, moreover, asks us to consider that the whole thing might have been staged to convict “Alcibiades in the court of public opinion” (*The Rise of Athens* 335). Alcibiades himself, according to Everitt, denied his participation in the sacrilege.

Cf. *Clouds* 1476 – 1484, where Strepsiades seeks council from Hermes and acts upon this allegedly received advice when he burns down the thinkery.

⁶⁴⁵ *Pericles on Stage* 46

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid. Cf. O’Regan, who confirms that Alcibiades’ interest in rhetoric, and in friendship with Socrates, has to do with hubris. She describes “Critias and Alcibiades as both excessively ambitious and driven to Socrates for the same reason—desire for the power attainable through rhetorical skill” (*Rhetoric, Comedy, and the Violence of Language* 191, n. 72).

⁶⁴⁷ Vickers, *Pericles on Stage* 45

sports a shield with “an Eros wielding a thunderbolt.”⁶⁴⁸ Vickers then adds, “The leading men of Athens viewed his [Alcibiades’] conduct with disgust and apprehension.”

Alcibiades’ wantonness, his resolve to use his charm and eloquence toward questionable ends, his scoffing at the established mores, his celebration of himself as a seductive and erotic man—all these indicate his laxness. It is perceived by his stalwart contemporaries as being contemptible for its shamelessness. Thus, Alcibiades, the man who flaunts and pursues even his questionable desires, appears to skirt excessive Dionysian⁶⁴⁹ eroticism; the kind that has its place in celebrations dedicated to the god, but not in everyday life. The upshot of living one’s life as if it were a ceaseless Dionysian revelry, the collateral damage of living shamelessly, that is, is that Alcibiades uses his talents (his persuasiveness, aptness in politics and in battle, his charisma) to attain his selfish ends and only incidentally to benefit Athens.

Thucydides relates Nicias’ warning against trusting Alcibiades’ exhortation to embark on the disastrous Sicilian expedition during the 17th year of the Peloponnesian war. Specifically, Nicias cautions that

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid. Vickers learns about the image with which Alcibiades imprints his shield from Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophistae*, Book 12.534e. Athenaeus’ text reads: “καὶ στρατηγῶν δὲ ἔτι καλὸς εἶναι ἠθέλεν: ἀσπίδα γοῦν εἶχεν ἐκ χρυσοῦ καὶ ἐλέφαντος πεποιημένην, ἐφ’ ἧς ἦν ἐπίσημον Ἔρως κεραυνὸν ἡγκυλημένος” (*The Learned Banqueters, Volume VI: Books 12 – 13.594b*. Olson, Douglas S. trans. Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library Publishing, 2010), 433.

⁶⁴⁹ Pheidippides does not recognize “ancestral Zeus” (Δία πατρώον, 1469) when he calls his father “ancient” (ἀρχαῖος, 1469), but avows that he “wouldn’t do injustice to [his] ... teachers” (οὐκ ἂν ἀδικήσαιμι τοὺς διδασκάλους, 1466). At the beginning of the play, Pheidippides first swears “by this Poseidon of horses” (84), but when his father begs him not to swear by the god who is “responsible for [his, Strepsiades’s,] ... evils” (85), Pheidippides agrees to “obey, by Dionysus” (91). The only other two personages, who swear by Dionysus in the *Clouds*, are Aristophanes, himself, in the guise of the leading Cloud of the chorus (519) and the Unjust Speech (1000).

if there be any man here, overjoyed at being chosen to command, who urges you to make the expedition, merely for ends of his own—especially if he is still too young to command—who seeks to be admired for his stud of horses, but on account of heavy expenses hopes for some profit from his appointment, do not allow such a one to maintain his private splendor at his country’s risk, but remember that such persons injure the public fortune while they squander their own, and that this is a matter of importance, and not for a young man to decide or hastily to take in hand.⁶⁵⁰

Self-aggrandizing and desirous of others’ adoration,⁶⁵¹ Alcibiades looks a lot like the tyrant from Plato’s *Republic*, who “is reconciled with some of his enemies from outside and has destroyed the others [and] ... is always setting up some war in motion, so that the people will be in need of a leader” (566e). Alcibiades’ comic double, Pheidippides of the *Clouds*, also fits Socrates’ description of the tyrant. The tyrannical person dares to “use force on his father, and if he doesn’t obey, strike him” (569b). On the matter of the relationship between the older and the younger generations⁶⁵² under tyranny, Socrates concludes that “the tyrant [is] ... a parricide and a harsh nurse of old age” (569b). Indeed, Alcibiades, in his life, and Pheidippides, in Aristophanes’ take on it, fail to be persuaded by the goodness contained in the ethos that survives in the older generation of leaders and educators.⁶⁵³ For reasons that will be discussed in the next section on the *Gorgias*, Pheidippides’s actions and speeches, at the end of the play, indicate that he adopts the way of life with which the Unjust Speech entices. One of the things requisite for

⁶⁵⁰ *The Peloponnesian War* VI.12, *The Landmark Thucydides* 369

⁶⁵¹ Cf. Plato, *Symposium* 216a – c

⁶⁵² See also a brief, but instructive, discussion of “The Conflict of Generations” in K. J. Dover’s translation of the *Clouds* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1968), xxviii.

⁶⁵³ However, see Benardete’s, “Symposium” in the *Argument of the Action*, where Benardete suggests that Alcibiades, in fact, craves or at least expresses something like a veneration for Socrates’ near-divine status. Benardete writes that “Alcibiades speaks of his experience” (184) of communing with Socrates “as a form of religious conversion and comparable to old songs that reveal those who are in need of gods” (Ibid.).

accepting the Unjust Speeches' beliefs is that Pheidippides should dismiss the relevance of the moral standards adhered to by those deemed upright by the older generation.

Nicias, in the antiwar speech that Thucydides records, appeals to the sensibilities of the older generation and warns against the opportunistic and risky enterprises of the self-assured and self-serving youth. He has, of course, a particular youth in mind—Alcibiades, his opponent.⁶⁵⁴ Both Alcibiades and Pheidippides remind us of an individual “rid of ... all shame [αἰσχύνης] and prudence” (*Republic* 571c). The young men's rampantly Dionysian eroticism erupts as an insatiable desire, as “[L]ove [ἔρωτά]” that is “a great winged drone” (572e).⁶⁵⁵ The question that we pursue in the next section is whether suppression of desire corresponds to the eruption of shameless eroticism? What does didactic moralizing have to do with the unchecked lustfulness directed at others as well as with the love of love or with the tyrannical eros described in the books VIII and IX of the *Republic*?⁶⁵⁶ We examine Plato's *Gorgias*, with an eye on Aristophanes' mockery of moralizing in the *Clouds*, in order to establish whether violently erotic

⁶⁵⁴ There is an opinion, expressed by Donald Kagan, for example, that Nicias' calculation—against Alcibiades' enticement of Athenians to carry out the expedition—misfired. Namely, Nicias' ploy, to deter the sailing by an argument for the grand expenditures that would be incurred, fell through. Hence, the number of triremes and hoplites was increased; so were the eventual Athenian losses. Cf. *The Peace of Nicias and the Sicilian Expedition (A New History of the Peloponnesian War)*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

⁶⁵⁵ Cf. Chapter II, Part Two and Section 5, especially, where I discuss the unbalanced relationship between *eros* and *thumos* in a tyrannical character.

⁶⁵⁶ Cf. Chapter II, Part Two of this work. In the context of the discussion of Alcibiades' eros and tyranny, consult, also, Scott Dominic's “Eros, Philosophy, and Tyranny” in *Maieusis: Essays on Ancient Philosophy in Honour of Myles Burnyeat*. Shortridge, A. ed. (2007) (87): 136 – 53. Although, I disagree with Dominic's conclusions in the article, such as his view of philosopher's “asocial” character or of the intrinsic relationship between erotic passion that we might experience for someone and that person's physical beauty, Dominic's opening remarks about Alcibiades and Athens are informative.

passions⁶⁵⁷ arise as an unmeasured response to the suppression of our erotic nature. As in the present section, also in the next, we analyze appearances of shame in so far as these indicate unabashed eroticism or attempts at holding eros in check.

3. Attunement to the Study of Shame in the *Gorgias*

Much of the *Gorgias* and its combative rhetoric in favor of and against the unbridled exercise of our desires can be gleaned from the competitive attacks that the two speeches of the *Clouds* mount against each other.⁶⁵⁸ The preparatory work for the analysis of shame, its suppression, and eros in the dialogue is carried out in the opening pages of this section that focus on the altercation of the Just and the Unjust Speeches in the *Clouds*.

From the start, the *agon* between the Just and the Unjust Speeches⁶⁵⁹ turns on the question of the opposition between the Old and the New.⁶⁶⁰ These two are represented, on

⁶⁵⁷ Cf. Benardete's "Symposium." Benardete portrays even Alcibiades' desire to acknowledge his shortcomings, in the presence of Socrates, as an occasion to "revel in self-abasement" (184). Alcibiades derives perverse enjoyment from satisfying his desire to be with Socrates "whose exhortations to repentance cannot but give Alcibiades pleasure as he wallows in self-contempt" (Ibid.).

⁶⁵⁸ Cf. Barney who offers an analysis of the motifs shared by the dialogue and the play in her article entitled, "Gorgias' Defense: Plato and His Opponents on Rhetoric and the Good." *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* (2010) 48(1): 95 – 121.

⁶⁵⁹ Consult Strauss, who writes, "The Unjust Speech is called the Weaker Speech because he undertakes the apparently hopeless task of opposing law and penal justice, i. e., what is generally held to be strongest" (*Socrates and Aristophanes* 31).

⁶⁶⁰ Aristophanes bookends his play by stressing this opposition through Strepsiades's obsession with the Old and the New moon (17, 1178). The last day of the month is the customary time to pay up the debts. Strepsiades is only concerned with the Old and the New in so far as these apply to his financial affairs. The comedy shows that a much more serious question is set into motion by Strepsiades's desire to swindle out of his destitute. This matter is—the Old and New

the one hand, by the “novel notions” (γνώμας καινὰς, 895), which the Unjust Speech propounds and for which he earns the title “shameless” (ἀναίσχυντος, 809), and, on the other, by the traditional views of the Just speech, who is accused of being “ancient” (ἀρχαῖος, 915) and “unmusical old fogy” (τυφογέρων εἰ ἀνάρμοστος, 907). On its surface, the comedy contrasts the degraded ideas of the Unjust Speech as well as the unbridled and corrupt sexuality for which it stands (1020, 1040, 1061, 1067 – 1082) with the self-professed uprightness and moral mettle of the Just Speech (985 – 999, 1057 – 1060, 1083 – 1084). However, Aristophanes does not put his audience to the task of looking too hard for the sings of trouble with the “wisdom” (σοφία, 925) that the Just Speech claims to represent. The upright, just, and wise veneer wears thin and the Just Speech’s “shamefully squalid” (αὐχμεῖς αἰσχρῶς, 919) appearance speaks for itself. Despite the change in the Just and the Unjust Speeches’ fortunes and despite the upsurge of popularity that the Unjust Speech enjoys with the Athenians of Pheidippides’s time, the Just Speech prepares to stand its ground as it calls out the Unjust one and the Athenians, who agree with it, on their “madness [in that they] ... harm the lads” (μανίας ... λυμαινόμενον τοῖς μαιρακίοις, 925 – 926). Although worn and out of fashion, the Just Speech claims to offer great “education [, which] nurtured men who fought at Marathon” (985). This education, in the traditional principles and values, we are led to assume, rears men of valor—brave, capable, and victorious—the ones to whom the memory and reputation of Athens’ glory duly belong. However, such exalted reputation is gained by an exercise of self-control; especially in the matters of erotic desire. The Just Speech

approaches to education. Cf. Cornford, who discusses the four general forms of *agon*. Among these is the confrontation between youth and old age (*The Origin of Attic Comedy* 71).

offers several remarks that support this view. It speaks of “ancient education ... when moderation [σωφροσύνη] was believed in” (962), when men had “knowledge of how to hate the marketplace and keep away from the baths” (991), because there unsupervised young and experienced old men meet and mingle. The safeguard against promiscuity and dangerous erotic curiosity, says the Just speech, is to “be ashamed of shameful things” (τοῖς αἰσχροῖς αἰσχύνεσθαι, 992). The Just one teaches “not to misbehave toward your own parents; and not to do anything shameful [αἰσχρὸν] that would tarnish the statue of Awe [αἰδοῦς]; and not to dart into a dancing girl’s house” (994 – 995), where pleasures of heterosexual sex can be enjoyed for a fee.

Whereas, the Unjust Speech’s tantalizing allure is the (supposedly) novel and the sweet seductiveness of the belief that “nothing is shameful” (μηδὲν αἰσχρὸν, 1078), the Just Speech’s good old education uses shame to guard the youths from developing a taste for unsavory pleasures, including pleasures of the erotic kind. The battle fronts of the two Speeches can be dubbed in short-hand as the Old and the New attitudes to shame. No small role in that which is considered shameful and shameless is reserved for the works of eros. Freydberg suggests a slightly different focal point for the Speeches’ disputation. He omits the role of shame and understands the “*logoi* [to] concern themselves with sexual matters and their place in the social context.”⁶⁶¹ On its surface, the Just Speech’s role is to profess repression of eros and to deem the unbound pursuit of erotic pleasure shameless. It is all the more curious that Aristophanes pivots the defeat of the Just Speech

⁶⁶¹ *Philosophy and Comedy* 41

on the matter of shameless eroticism (1085 – 1104).⁶⁶² All those who are meant to educate the young abide by the erotic teachings of the Unjust Speech. Why is it the case that the sexual behavior of those Athenian men, who deal in persuasion (tragedians and public advocates as well as orators), appears to be shaped by the persuasiveness of the Unjust Speech?⁶⁶³ What is it that happens to be so unpersuasive about the old moral teachings of the Just?⁶⁶⁴

The reason why neither the eminent Athenian public educators nor Pheidippides are impressed with the Just Speech's rhetoric is because there is a dissonance between the Just Speech's professed and tacit attitudes toward eros. About this dissonance Freyberg writes that "the presentation of Stronger *Logos* is itself ridiculous. ... [I]t is hardly less

⁶⁶² The Just Speech believes that to be a passive homosexual, who enjoys much anal sex is the greatest evil that a man can suffer (1085). However, the Unjust Speech proves that the most outspoken, public men in the city, who are meant to uphold the proper ethos, are all "buggered" (1086 – 1096). Thus, Athenians in deed depose what the Just Speech preaches. They practice licentiousness praised by the Unjust Speech. Cf. Everitt, who writes about the relationships between older (*erastes*) and younger (*eromenos*) lovers in the context of male education and states that "[b]uggery was absolutely out of bounds and brought shame on any boy who allowed it to be done to him" (73 – 74). On this account, the "public advocates," "tragedians," and "public orators" (*Clouds* 1089 – 1096) have disregarded propriety in education and (at least as far as erotic matters are concerned) cannot possibly be good at teaching the youth.

⁶⁶³ Cf. O'Regan's *Rhetoric, Comedy, and the Violence of Language*, where she claims that victory in oratorical battles eclipsed the importance of old education and the physical competitions for which it prepared the aristocratic men (12).

⁶⁶⁴ Cf. Benardete's account of the importance of persuasion to the *Gorgias* in *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy* 6, 17. Benardete reminds us, "The present passive of the verb 'to persuade' (*peithesthai*) is indistinguishable from the present middle, which means 'to obey'" (17). See, also, Benardete's insight into Callicles's admission of the fact that those who persuade by means of speeches or "the present-day rhetoricians are flatterers" (89). This suggests that Callicles "thereby admitted that the Athenian demos is worse now than it once was" (89). Callicles's position, as Benardete describes it here, is in agreement with that of the defeated Just Speech.

lascivious, and in a sense even more so, than the presentation of Weaker *Logos*.⁶⁶⁵ The reason why the Stronger Speech outdoes its opponent in matters of lustful eroticism is because that shameful on which the Stronger Speech relies only intensifies the erotic desires. The Just one's descriptions of proper sexual conduct turn into suggestive allusions and innuendoes as the veil of shame, which the Just Speech evokes, turns youthful eroticism into the coveted, but forbidden, fruit. There are several lines that are tense with sexual excitation, which the Just Speech suggests we abstain from, but which it itself seems unable to moderate. For example, the Just one remembers that it is

needful for the boys to keep their thighs covered while sitting at the gymnastic trainer's, /so as to show nothing cruel to those outside./Next, again, when they stood up, they had to smooth the sand/back again and be mindful/not to leave behind an image of puberty for their lovers./At that time no boy would anoint himself below the navel,/so that dew and down bloomed on their private parts as on fruit./Nor would he make up a soft voice and go to his lover,/he himself pandering himself with his eyes. 972 – 980

If the goal is to moderate our eroticism, then why does the Just Speech call up the images of seductive and infuriating erotic attractiveness of the youth? If one is already properly moderate, as far as eros is concerned, why would one need to remind oneself (and to preach to others) about the dangers of lewd shamelessness?⁶⁶⁶ The Just Speech

⁶⁶⁵ *Philosophy and Comedy* 41. Cf. Dover, who also holds the view that the Just Speech “betrays his emotion” (*Clouds* lxv) toward the erotically enticing youths. Dover observes that although, “Right should condemn a boy who ogles a lover (979f.) [and this] is in accord with Greek convention. What goes beyond convention [, however,] is his [Just Speech’s] own obsession” (Ibid.).

⁶⁶⁶ It would appear that the reason why Aristotle says that “[i]t is not appropriate to speak about the sense of shame as if it were a virtue” (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1128b10) is because the properly educated, ethical people do not do things for which they might feel shame. Alternatively, the reason that shame is “[t]he feeling [that is] ... fitting ... only in the young” (Ibid.) is because the young, who have not yet reached the excellence of the

contradicts in action (in what the speech accomplishes by means of images, emotional states, and associations it evokes) its own message. Consider only how it waxes poetic about the pleasantries of young boys' moderate life at 1004 – 1009.

The Unjust Speech stays true to its message. It shows no shame in advocating and practicing the life of corruption, where any and all pleasures are a “go” and nothing is shameful. Therefore, the Unjust one has little to offer in terms of the development of human character. There is no respect, nor glory that a young man, like Pheidippides, can hope to gain if he lives his life as the Unjust Speech recommends. Neither does the Just Speech offer particularly good life choice options. The Just Speech not only performatively contradicts itself, but it also serves as the prerequisite for the victory of the Unjust one. Pheidippides's Athens is in disarray—politically, economically, as well as in terms of its ethical mores and education. Return to former glory is long overdue, but given the failure of the Just Speech, such a retrieval of the past appears to be impossible. If the defenders of the moral mettle, themselves, are tempted by the primly coated youthful bloom that is made all more desirable as it shines through the coverings of bashful shame, then these educators are, indeed, “out of tune” (ἀνάρμοστος, 907) and their teachings are inappropriate. If what the Just Speech represents is the intensification of erotic desire, as it flares up in the face of the forbidden and shameful acts, then the Unjust Speech is simply the next logical step in the desire's development or, rather, degradation.

stable condition, crave the shameful things and, therefore, are in need of being checked by shame.

The Unjust Speech stands for the coincidence between the engorged eroticism and the exercise of such inflamed desires. The dissonance is removed. Whatever presents itself as desirable “boys, women, cottabus, relishes, drinking, boisterous laughter,/ ... [having] done wrong, ... adultery” (1073 – 1076)—all these get a “go” in the world of the Unjust Speech as well as among the Athenians whom Aristophanes puts on the spot and ridicules through it. Presumably, there are also members of his audience who are best represented by the Just Speech’s attitudes and actions. Its self-contradicting way of life proves to be a fertile ground for the wicked life that the Unjust Speech advocates. The festering of tyrannical eros for which the Unjust Speech stands is born out on the basis of the contradiction, which the Just Speech embodies. Such eros cannot be satiated. It spreads from the extravagant sexual escapades to the desire to pervert and manipulate by means of “novel and shrewd” (1399) notions.⁶⁶⁷ Both fictional Pheidippides and historical Alcibiades fit the description of being engulfed by such a tyrannical passion about which Plato’s Socrates speaks in *Republic* VIII and IX. They both appear to hold that “wisdom and the power to manipulate and persuade are one and the same.”⁶⁶⁸ Both of them deem it attractive and “pleasant ... to look down on the established laws” (*Clouds* 1400). To put it in the language of the *Republic* II and IX, the Athens of the Unjust Speech is a “luxurious city [and a] ... feverish city” (372e), where a human being can reach a state of such unaccountability and depravity that “rid of ... all shame and

⁶⁶⁷ Consider O’Regan’s warnings about the “dangers of inserting *logos* into the continuum of the desires, which could make it just one of many (for example, for power, for money, for sex)” (*Rhetoric, Comedy, and the Violence of Language* 16).

⁶⁶⁸ Freydberg, *Philosophy and Comedy* 47. Freydberg mentions Plato’s Gorgias’ sophistic “profession” in this context.

prudence [one] ... doesn't shrink from attempting intercourse ... with a mother or with anyone else at all—human beings, gods, and beasts; or attempting any foul murder at all, and [abstaining from] ... no food” (571c – d) whatever its unwholesome origin. The Just Speech is shortsighted and its dishonesty is skin-thin. The Unjust Speech's honest depravity is terrifying. No wonder Pheidippides is skeptical about his proposed education (1110 – 1113). No wonder Aristophanes' comedy does not get the first prize during its initial run. Perhaps, it depicts the Athenian problems all too vividly and, thereby, ceases to be lightheartedly entertaining and unassumingly funny. The humor of the *Clouds* is explosive, precisely, because it cuts so close to the skin. Aristophanes' jokes not only shake up the ancient Athenians, they also turn the blade of serious levity upon us and with it cut through the ingrained attitudes toward morality and shame—be they more like those advocated by the Just or by the Unjust Speeches.

4. Shame in the *Gorgias*

Both the *Clouds* (5 – 6) and the *Gorgias* (447a) begin with references to war. The war troubles, the memory of which the comedy evokes explicitly and the dialogue obliquely, are those that spell the fall of Athens during the second stage of the Peloponnesian war. Both the play and the dialogue draw our attention to the general dissipation of character whereby aggressive militarized expansion serves to satisfy love of gain.⁶⁶⁹ After Pericles' death and Cleon's ascension to power, also particular individuals, such as Cleon, himself,

⁶⁶⁹ Compare to *Republic* II.373d – e.

and Alcibiades become the target of philosophical and dramatic portrayals of corruption.⁶⁷⁰ Aristophanes' comedy playfully portrays the repercussions of such political developments. It also probes the unethical attitudes and actions that eventuate in poor political decisions that the ancient Athenians have made and that we run the risk of making. Aristophanes' humor scoffs at both the attempts at sorry and ineffective moralizing as well as at the reign of depravity that the didactic efforts fail to combat.

Plato's Socrates, in the *Gorgias*, warns against our falling in with the depraved, while he seems to embody the moralizers.⁶⁷¹ Yet, the dialogue, which is written so as to take place after the *Clouds* was first performed, would be too heavy-footed, if it were meant to be read as a prescription of that same moralizing, which the comic play rejects. If we take Socrates' preaching straightforwardly, if we forget that Socrates is the man who avers his passionate affections for Charmides (*Charmides* 155c – d), Phaedo (*Phaedo* 89b), and Alcibiades (*Gorgias* 481d) in word and in deed, if we miss the correspondences between the role that Socrates plays in the *Gorgias* and the one performed by the Just Speech in the *Clouds*, then we also have to take the suggestions of the Just Speech in the *Clouds* to be simply right. However, we have already seen that Aristophanes, in his rendition of the Just Speech and its faults, plays up the subversive

⁶⁷⁰ Cf. the previous chapter and notes on Aristophanes' ridicule of Cleon and Alcibiades. See, also, the parallels between Pheidippides and Alcibiades drawn in the previous section of the present chapter. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates says that he is in love with Alcibiades at 481d and presages Alcibiades' assassination at 519b.

See, also, Benardete's account of Cleon's role in Athenian politics and Aristophanes' depiction thereof in the *Knights* (*The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy*), 63.

⁶⁷¹ Consider Benardete's claim that in order to arrive at an understanding of rhetoric as a craft, the dialogue has to first examine and dispel "the strict moralism that lurked in rhetoric" (82). Examination of the role of moralism also allows us to question the strict distinction between "art and experience" this moralism "has grounded" (82).

elements of moralizing. “Is Socrates the moralist as impossible as the reality of the setting in which he is most moral?”⁶⁷² Whether Socrates outside of the *Gorgias* wears the mask of overbearing didacticism is not our question here. Our question is: Why does Socrates take on the guise of the moralistic preacher in the *Gorgias*, in the first place? As to the related question, which Benardete asks, about the unrealistic setting of the dialogue, Benardete’s own answer is this, “*Gorgias* is of a time but not in time.”⁶⁷³ He arrives at this conclusion when he observes that

[s]ince it is impossible to square ‘the recent death of Pericles [429BC, 503c],’ as Callicles puts it, with the *Gorgias* occurring one year after Socrates’ tribe presided at the trial of the generals [Arginousae battle, 406BC, 473e], we have to say that Plato situates the *Gorgias* in wartime Athens but in such a way that we are enjoined to believe that the conversation never occurred.⁶⁷⁴

Immediately prior to the timeless discussions that make up the *Gorgias*, Socrates and his companion, Chaerephon, are “loitering about in the marketplace” (447a).⁶⁷⁵ In the *Clouds* Chaerephon is the first dweller of the thinkery whom Strepsiades meets. Just like the dialogue, the *Clouds*, too, points to a conversation that never occurred. The exchange that does not happen there, but about which we wonder, is between Socrates of the dialogues—Socrates who puts into question his interlocutors’ attitudes toward justice, excellence of character, craft, poetry, best life, tyranny, education, and relationship between these—and the voluptuously self-indulgent Unjust Speech or the tyrannical

⁶⁷² Benardete, *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy* 8.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*, 7

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁵ Benardete discusses the significance of Chaerephon’s character and his initial replicas in *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy* 9. Cf. Christopher Moore, “Chaerephon the Socratic.” *Phoenix* (2014) 67(3/4): 284 – 300.

Pheidippides. Instead, we get the bantering of the Just and the Unjust Speeches and the mysterious, hidden from our view, education of Pheidippides in the thinkery. Socrates is unseen during the latter and is absent during the former. The timeless conversations of the *Gorgias*, in which Socrates is sporting a straitlaced take on shame, pleasure, power, and education, is Plato's repartee to Aristophanes in whose work Socrates is silent and unseen during the discussion of these subjects by the two Speeches. The Speeches are from his thinkery. In the *Clouds*, sophisticatedly-minded Socrates⁶⁷⁶ could stand in for either the prude or the pervert or for both. In the *Gorgias*, moralistically-minded Socrates looks very much like a prude. He speaks against the perverts.⁶⁷⁷

Socrates opposes Gorgias, who in echoing Strepsiades's desires and sophistical Socrates' know-how,⁶⁷⁸ argues that there is no greater good for a human being than being able "to persuade by speeches judges in a law court, councilors in a council meeting, and assembly men in an assembly or in any other political gathering" (452e).⁶⁷⁹ Socrates defeats Gorgias' twisted view of oratory, its purpose, and the benefits it brings (460e –

⁶⁷⁶ Cf. O'Regan (1992), 4; Dover (1968), xxxiv – v; Strauss (1967), 13; Freydeberg (2008), 12.

⁶⁷⁷ In this context, consider Christina H. Tarnopolsky's exploration of the "the nature of shame [and] ... the *salutary and pernicious* roles it can play in contemporary democratic politics" (*Perverts, Prudes, and Tyrants: Plato's Gorgias and the Politics of Shame*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 33. Cf. her research on the theoreticians of shame in Plato on page 34, n. 23. Cf. Cain R. Bensen's article, "Shame and Ambiguity in Plato's *Gorgias*." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* (2008) 41(3): 212 – 237.

⁶⁷⁸ See Benardete, *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy*, where he makes a connection between Gorgias' claim that the teacher (of oratory) should not be blamed if the student is abusing the craft learned from the teacher (457b – c) and Pheidippides's abuse of the skills he learns at the thinkery (21, 24). Cf. Barney's treatment of the same connection between violence in the *Gorgias* and in the *Clouds* in "Gorgias' Defense: Plato and His Opponents on Rhetoric and the Good," 107 – 8.

⁶⁷⁹ Unless otherwise indicated, the translation of the *Gorgias* that I am using is Donald J. Zeyl's in *The Complete Works of Plato*.

461c).⁶⁸⁰ This is when Polus comes to the rescue of his dialogical father, Gorgias.⁶⁸¹

Unlike Strepsiades's son, Pheidippides, who is reluctant to take sides with his father's interest in power of persuasion, Polus is all too eager to learn from Gorgias (448c – d). Polus, whose name means “colt,” and who is simply called so by Socrates at 453e, shares the equestrian imagery with Pheidippides and with Alcibiades, the proud owner of the race horses. A more important similarity between the three is their thirst for unlimited (tyrannical) power (466b – c). Socrates of the *Gorgias* succeeds where the Just Speech⁶⁸² of the *Clouds* fails. Polus's perverse view that tyranny⁶⁸³ is the greatest and most desirable power is put to shame (474c – d, 475a – b, 477c – e). Callicles to the rescue—his entrance at 481b marks another parallel with the *Clouds*. Although, it is Strepsiades (Στρεψιάδης), whose name evokes the images of twisting, turning, and swindling, it is the Unjust Speech who makes a move to win by means of turning things upside down or backwards in its contrarian speeches (ἀλλ' ἀνατρέψω γ' αὐτ' ἀντιλέγων, 901). The master twister Callicles, the Unjust Speech of the *Gorgias*, aims to pervert in the very same way. Callicles, in his tirade against Socrates, does exactly that of which he accuses his dialogical rival. Callicles's speeches turn things “upside down” (ἀνατετραμμένος,

⁶⁸⁰ O'Regan discusses Gorgias's oratorical technique and names several points at which it mimics the sophistic subjects of which Socrates treats in the *Clouds*. Consult her *Rhetoric, Comedy, and the Violence of Language*, page 101 and nt. 54.

⁶⁸¹ Cf. Socrates' remark addressed to Polus, at 461c, “it's not for nothing that we get ourselves companions and sons.”

⁶⁸² In this context, see Strauss's discussion of Socrates as the Just Speech of the *Gorgias* in “The Origins of Political Science and the Problem of Socrates” (184 – 85).

⁶⁸³ Cf. Benardete, *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy* 6

481c).⁶⁸⁴ The Unjust Speech represents the crooked ways of the many powerful public figures in Athens and, hence, its popularity and its unabashed, albeit perverse, actions appear appealing and even right to quite a few. Also Callicles turns out to be right in terms of history, albeit not in terms of ethics, when he prophesies to Socrates that his determination to “practice the true politics” (521d) will cause him to be “brought to court ... by some very corrupt and mean man” (521c).

The *Clouds* and the *Gorgias*, for all of their artful levity in use of multi-faceted characters, subversive arguments, and jokes arrive at pessimistic conclusions. Persuasion is helpless. Violence reigns. Strepsiades burns down the thinkery not in the flames of truth, but by the heat of violent fire. Socrates, the man “unable to protect himself [although, he], is to be admired” (522b), aside from Callicles’s final underhanded concession (521b), does not solicit much agreement from Callicles. The dialogue ends with a myth about harsh punishments that tyrants suffer in the afterlife.⁶⁸⁵ The violent men, who win in this life, meet with violence in the next. Violence against violence. Violence as a deterrent from violence. Socrates chooses to close his combat against perverse way of life with violence. Plato’s *Gorgias*, which opens with remarks about war

⁶⁸⁴ The verb that is at the root of Aristophanes’ Unjust Speech’s ἀνατρέψω and Plato’s Callicles’s participial form, ἀνατετραμμένος, is exactly the same—ἀνατρέπω, or, I turn backwards, I turn upside down.

⁶⁸⁵ Note that at least one of the judges in the underworld, Minos, is, for all intents and purposes, a tyrant. See final section of this chapter, where I discuss Minos’s tyranny. Cf. Radcliffe G. Edmonds III, who discusses the myth of the *Gorgias* in his “Whip Scars on the Naked Soul: Myth and *Elenchos* in Plato’s *Gorgias*,” *Plato and Myth: Studies on the Use and Status of Platonic Myth*. Collobert, C., Destrée, P., and Gonzalez, J. F. eds. (Boston, MA: Brill Publishing, 2012), 165 – 186. Consult, also, Cristopher Rowe’s “The Status of the Myth of the *Gorgias*, or: Taking Plato Seriously” (187 – 198) in the same volume. Also, David Sedley writes on the myth in the “Myth, Punishment, and Politics in the *Gorgias*,” *Plato’s Myths*. Partenie, C. ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 51 – 76.

and battle comes a full circle. However, all is not lost as long as we are willing to listen to Aristophanes and to Plato in an attempt to discern the echoes of the conversation between their works. We give some slack to our own conceptual and cultural frameworks when we keep track of those resonances. Thereby, we give ourselves a chance to set the ancient writings free from the linguistic and doctrinal impositions. In turn, Plato's words and images as well as those of the dramatists, sophists, epos writers, and thinkers on whose words he draws, call out from us unscripted, and maybe even genuine, reflection.

Aristophanes' comedies (and the *Clouds* is no exception) make use of gastronomy and violence. Another favorite topic is sex and things that have to do with the indecent display of our erotic nature. Somehow eating, fighting, and being horny can look very funny to us. Out of these three go-to subjects of comedic ridicule, two are explicit in the *Gorgias*. Benardete observes that in the dialogue, "[B]attle and feast ... seem to be a formula that embraces Socrates' way."⁶⁸⁶ Nothing is actually eaten in the *Gorgias* and no one is physically harmed. Although, as Benardete points out, Callicles, at 485c, recommends corporeal punishment, because he believes that he "can straighten Socrates about politics, but [to do that]... demands a straightforward beating."⁶⁸⁷ In comedy, the metaphorical feasting and verbal fighting come to a head and become literal. The pugilistic complement of the *Clouds*⁶⁸⁸ is the physical brawl of the two Speeches (933)

⁶⁸⁶ *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy* 9

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 67

⁶⁸⁸ Hyland studies comedy in Plato's dialogues and writes,

It is striking how pervasive is the agonistic element in the dialogues. Of the four forms of agon Cornford explicitly mentions as characteristic of comedy, three are plainly present in various dialogues: the agon of life and death is central to the

and Pheidippides's beating of his father (1384 – 1390). There are also several scenes in which food and livestock are consumed (175 – 179, 1354) and cook-wear is described (657 – 680).

Aside from the affinities that indicate a sharing of genre, the *Clouds* and the *Gorgias* share similarities in terms of the ideas and the attitudes to life that their respective characters represent. The themes of war and violence serve as the bookends to the dialogue and the play. The *Gorgias* and the *Clouds* brandish arguments that rest on pairing up pain (inflicted through punishment) with Justice. Pleasure is paired up with the doing of the Unjust deeds. Consider, further, the subject matter that sets into motion the events in the *Gorgias* and in the *Clouds*—wealth (or lack thereof) and sophistry. Strepsiades's substance is dried up because of the parasitic life-style that his wife and his son lead. Although Strepsiades is the only one in the family, who has real knowledge of things that sustain human beings—he is, after all, a farmer—he is eager to turn to sophistical contrivances. Strepsiades is desperate. Is Gorgias, or Callicles, or Polus? These three sing praises to the power with which they claim persuasive speaking endows those who possess this know-how. This kind of influence that sophistical oratory has over human affairs is juxtaposed to the benefits of other arts.

Knowledge of medicine (448b)—real knowledge of a life-sustaining craft—leads the way into the first debate between Socrates and Gorgias. This debate will leave

Apology, Crito, Phaedo, and even Theatetus; the agon of youth and old age is obviously present in those dialogues which Socrates has with youths, such as the *Lysis, Charmides, and Theatetus*, but also in Socrates's youthful encounter with Parmenides in the *Parmenides*. *The Finitude and Transcendence in Platonic Dialogues* 130

Gorgias's claim to his knowledge of oratory wanting (460e – 461b). Gorgias's self-laudatory exclamation at 449a presages his defeat. Socrates questions whether “we’re supposed to call you [, Gorgias,] an orator” (449a)? Gorgias replies, “Yes, and a good one, Socrates, if you really want to call me ‘what I boast myself to be,’ as Homer puts it” (449a). This line, which comes from Glaukos of the *Iliad* (VI.211), is a very strange pick on Gorgias's part. Glaukos utters the boast, which Gorgias repeats, right before he is about to be duped by Diomedes into giving up his golden armor for Diomedes's that is made of bronze. As Homer describes the exchange, Glaukos trades in “for nine oxen's worth the worth of a hundred” (VI.236). Therefore, whatever fame Glaukos's name bears before the said exchange, this reputation is changed, and not in Glaukos's favor. It is, indeed, very peculiar that Gorgias, who claims to be an expert with words, including the words of poets, understands these words so little as to make a slip as obvious as this. In the introduction of Gorgias's oratorical skill that Gorgias, himself, offers to Socrates, Plato gives us, the readers, a clue to Gorgias's inadequacy.⁶⁸⁹ Gorgias is unfit to teach the art of oratory because he does not understand the context, the implications, and, hence, the significance of the things he teaches.

In his shortsightedness of the effects of his teaching, Gorgias is akin to Aristophanic Socrates, who creates a monster, Pheidippides and, thereby, incurs Strepsiades's wrath. Although, Gorgias does not suffer the same fiery fate in the dialogue, as Socrates does in the *Clouds*, Gorgias's pupil, Polus, is awfully interested in the same limitless power that attracts Pheidippides. These two young men, as well as

⁶⁸⁹ Cf. Benardete, *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy* 10.

their historical counterpart, Alcibiades, are fascinated by the combination of unaccountability and authority that tyranny promises. History spells a gruesome end both for Socrates' unprincipled lover as well as for the city that falls in love with gain and with war. The comedy, at least on its surface, follows historical example closely. The teaching of the moralizing Just Speech falls apart and Pheidippides, having no one good to emulate or learn from, ends up villainous and perverted.

The *Gorgias*, as far as Polus is concerned, offers a different conclusion. Instead of leaving the young man where the *Clouds* leaves Pheidippides—to shameless pursuit of whatever things that the tyrant sees fit to desire—Socrates shames Polus into agreeing that tyranny is not happiness, but undesirable corruption (478d – e). Even so, Polus's final remarks betray his unwillingness to swear off his deep convictions. He finds the methods that Socrates proposes to heal injustice and corruption to be “absurd” (inapt or out of place, ἄτοπα, 480e). Polus, to Socrates of the *Gorgias*, is what Pheidippides is to Socrates of the *Clouds* with this exception: the transformation of Pheidippides is complete. “Socrates ... succeeded in overcoming Pheidippides' profound loathing of him by his bewitching power or charm—a charm great enough to disgust Pheidippides for the rest of his days with horsemanship and to convert him into a dedicated lover of speeches.”⁶⁹⁰ We build on Strauss's remark and propose that Pheidippides loves speeches because of what he perceives them capable of doing; and that is—bending everyone and all, including all laws, to his desire. Polus retains Pheidippides's dissipated outlook on things, but, at the end of his conversation with Socrates, Polus lacks Pheidippides's

⁶⁹⁰ Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes* 50

conviction. Polus's conversion is incomplete. He knows what he wants, but once Socrates is done with him, he also knows that what he wants is "injustice and impiety" (ἀδίκῳ καὶ ἄνοσίῳ, 479c) or a very "bad thing" (τοῦ μεγίστου κακοῦ, 479d). Injustice (1400 – 1446) and impiety (1468 – 1470) are exactly Pheidippides's forte at the end. Polus is what Pheidippides would have been if Pheidippides bent to the rhetoric of shame mouthed by the Just Speech.⁶⁹¹ Plato's Socrates is a more formidable, that is, less obviously flawed, version of Aristophanes' moralizer. It is only appropriate that Plato's Socrates' true challenger is not the older, slower, and less ferocious Gorgias, nor the younger, stormier, and duller Polus, but, rather, the craftier and more dreadful Callicles. If Socrates is an enhanced version of the Just Speech, his dialogical match is Callicles, the Unjust.⁶⁹²

The leitmotif of the Speeches' battle in the *Clouds*, the Old and the New, and the inversion of the two that is accomplished by means of standing the Just Speech's arguments on their head, is preserved in the *Gorgias*. Callicles's concern is that Socrates' speeches, if adopted as a way of life, would turn that life upside down (481c). As the conversation between Callicles and Socrates unfolds we learn that matters are even worse

⁶⁹¹ However, see 473e where Polus is more akin to the reformed, unethical Pheidippides. There, Polus is laughing at Socrates' suggestion that "the one who avoids getting caught and becomes a tyrant is the ... miserable one." Polus is not yet put to shame for his tyrannical predilections and his laughter indicates that, given a chance, he is more likely to act like Pheidippides does at the end of the *Clouds*, rather than like a "self-controlled ... and ... just" (478d) man whom Socrates calls on Polus to be. Dismissing Socrates' view that tyranny brings misery Polus is laughing at no laughable matter. He has a strange taste. He laughs at gruesomely tragic things. Also Callicles has an odd sense of humor, which comes through in his opinion that it is ridiculous to philosophize once one is past tender age (485a). Effectively, between Polus and Callicles, we have the opinion that the one who opposes tyranny and practices philosophy is very funny. It is tragic that there are people like Polus and Callicles, who hold this view.

⁶⁹² However, see Devin Stauffer's article on "Socrates and Callicles: The Reading of Plato's *Gorgias*" in *The Review of Politics* (2002) 64(4): 627 – 57. Devin defends the view that Callicles has, although does not acknowledge, his moral convictions.

than Callicles initially suggested. It is not that things could or would be inverted, but that they already are so, thanks to the general misunderstanding of that which is “admirable ... by law and ... by nature” (482e). To set matters straight, Callicles drives in the exact same wedge between law and nature that aids the victory of the Unjust Speech in the *Clouds*. He borrows from Socrates the notion of shame (αἰσχρός, αἰσχύνω, 482d – 483d) and pivots it toward the dichotomies of strength and weakness as well as justice and injustice, with the grounding division being between nature and law. The basic argument that Callicles gives us (481c – 484e) is that Socrates misrepresents the natural strength and that which is just by nature because what Socrates says is just is only so in terms of law, which only benefits the weak. Callicles comes to save the day (for the naturally strong ones among us) as he aims to turn around the wrong that is done to the strong. He swears “by Zeus [and], in accordance with the law of nature” (483e) that education of the young has to be changed from its present, debilitating course. The current law and education, says Callicles, bids that “we ... mold the best and the most powerful among us, taking them while they’re still young, like lion cubs, and with charms and incantations we subdue them into slavery, telling them that one is supposed to get no more than his fair share, and that that’s what’s admirable and just” (483e – 484a). The reason, as Callicles sees the matter, why Socrates’ contemporaries are successful in the enterprise of twisting and enslaving the best and the strongest of the young, is because shame comes to the aid of the law that prescribes moderation. The stronger ones are made to feel ashamed to have and to desire more.⁶⁹³

⁶⁹³ Cf. Benardete who discusses the shortsightedness of Callicles’s proposition in *The Rhetoric of*

The strict dichotomy that Callicles establishes between law and nature (and its consequent modified form: conventional law and natural law) is spurious.⁶⁹⁴ Our customs are informed by and, in return, mold our nature. Convention is subject to change.

Callicles proposes to have it be so altered as to bring back the golden age in which the “just [is] what is most violent” (484b). He cites Heracles as his example of the best and the strongest. Callicles forgets to mention that Heracles is the only hero who becomes divine. Heracles is the worst example Callicles could have picked to make his case, because Heracles is—now—a god and not a human being. The nature of gods and humans does not accept of the exact same laws. Hence, whatever may be just for Heracles could very well turn out to be atrocious for Callicles or Polus.⁶⁹⁵

All the same, in the *Clouds*, the Unjust Speech offers the exact same view of human nature as Callicles. The Unjust Speech appeals to stories of gods’ mischief to

Morality and Philosophy 66.

⁶⁹⁴ Cf. my discussion in chapter IV, part 5 of the mutually informative relationship between the two. See, also, Benardete, *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy* for an alternative alignment between the elements on which Callicles’s argument is built. The argument falls apart during his “long speeches” (70).

⁶⁹⁵ The other example that Callicles picks to embellish his attacks against Socrates is from Euripides’ *Antiope*. He chides Socrates, using the words of Antiope’s son, Zethus, and says that, like Zethus’s brother, Amphion, Socrates is “neglecting the things [he] ... should devote [himself] ... to” (485a). This choice of poetic reference on Callicles’s part is a very odd one. Both sons of Antiope fare poorly. Although, at first, the two brothers become joint rulers of Thebes, they eventually kill themselves. The story of Amphion’s wife’s, Niobe’s, hubris ends in the deaths of all twelve of Amphion’s and Niobe’s children. Niobe is Tantalus’s daughter. The curse of the Tantalids persists. Zethus, too, loses his only son. The story about the misfortunes of the king-brothers connects up with the Labdacids through Laius. Oedipus’s father is expelled from Thebes by the two brothers and returns to rule the city after their deaths. Consult Andrea W. Nightingale, whose article entitled, “Plato’s ‘Gorgias’ and Euripides’ ‘Antiope’: A Study in Generic Transformation,” broaches the answer to the question: “How does *agōn* between Socrates and Callicles imitate and transform that of its tragic model” (*Classical Antiquity*, 1992 11(1): 121 – 141), 126. On Callicles’s references to Pindar, see Dale Grote’s “Callicles’ Use of Pindar’s Νόμος βασιλεύς: *Gorgias* 484B ” in *The Classical Journal* (1994) 90(1): 21 – 31.

justify human transgressions. Human beings are desirous, why curb or moderate our desires if the unrestrained exercise thereof is only considered shameful by convention? To be desirous and to hold back is a foolish weakness. To do the opposite is the true, natural strength. Also, if gods succumb to the force of eros, then who are we, mere mortals, to resist that which even overtakes the gods? Aristophanes' comedy turns to its audience for proof—all public figures that have any power act in accord with their nature, i.e., they do not resist. They are passive in their love of eros. They succumb. Once the Just Speech realizes this, it is worsted because it, itself, holds on to the idea that there is a strict division between nature (natural desires) and convention (moral law).

It is hardly as easy to bring down Socrates of the *Gorgias*. He differs from the Just Speech of the *Clouds* in that what Callicles hears from Socrates is “not Socrates’ opinion,” even though Callicles “cannot quite put his finger on the difference between Socrates and Socrates’ argument.”⁶⁹⁶ We said that the Just Speech’s words betray its fissured conscience. However amorous Socrates might be, his character’s duplicity is different in kind from the Just Speech’s. The latter believes that what it teaches is good and right. The locus of the Just Speech is the Just Speech or, more precisely, it is the beliefs that some of Aristophanes’ contemporaries hold and the style of life that they adopt. It was our task to see how the action of the Just Speech contradicts its content. Socrates, on the other hand, does not have to subscribe to the views for which he argues. For example, at 500c – d, Socrates warns Callicles that he is not “jesting” (or is being playful, παίζοντος, 500c) when he, Socrates, questions about “the way we’re supposed to

⁶⁹⁶ Benardete, *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy* 61

live” (500c). This may be so. The question of the best life is, indeed, a very serious question. However, the two ways of life that Socrates chooses to contrast immediately thereafter have to do with the “practice [of] oratory” or other “sort of politics” (500c) and philosophy (500c). Coincidentally, but hardly accidentally, both of these ways of life are ridiculed in the *Clouds*.

The two Speeches stand for the life of political persuasion and the withdrawn, pseudoscientific, and sophistic Socrates of the thinkery is Aristophanes’ parody of the philosophic life.⁶⁹⁷ It looks like Plato’s Socrates, despite his claim to the contrary, is jesting, after all. His jokes have serious implications. The locus of Socrates’ character is not Socrates. His speeches are not for the sake of his beliefs, although they may be, at least partially, for his sake.⁶⁹⁸ Ultimately, the speeches that Socrates makes are for the sake of eliciting, contextualizing, and presenting for what they are the beliefs of his interlocutors (who, like the Speeches of the *Clouds*, happen to be individuals that represent types). Instead of betraying Socrates’ true view, exchanges of the *Gorgias* spur us along to question why and if we should examine and modify ours.

Aristophanes’ comical personae are not copied, but refracted in Socrates and in Callicles. Thus, Callicles sides with the Unjust Speech’s argument that unabashed and unrestricted expression of natural desire is to be made into law and, yet, Callicles also preserves the Just Speech’s concern with manliness (485b – d and 961 – 1023, respectively). However, it turns out that the two (Callicles and the Just Speech) consider manliness to be expressed in diametrically opposite manner. Callicles, who prescribes

⁶⁹⁷ See Brad Levett’s “Platonic Parody in the ‘Gorgias’.” *Poenix* (2005) 59(3/4): 210 – 27.

⁶⁹⁸ Cf. Benardete, *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy* 25

philosophical discourse to young boys, finds it unmanly for the grown men to “make conversation in this way, halting in its speech and playing like a child” (485b). A boy, but not a man,⁶⁹⁹ is supposed to be “speaking haltingly” (ψελλιζομένου, 485c). The Just Speech proscribes the boys against any talking when he says that in the old days “it was needful that no one hear a boy muttering a sound” (963). Thus, the promising manliness amounts to opposite attitude, in so far as speaking is concerned. However, both Callicles and the Just Speech paint for us images of manliness. Callicles, because of his sensitivity to the disgracefulness of appearing unmanly, loses where the Unjust Speech wins.

As if to pick up the line of attack that the Unjust Speech uses against the Just, Socrates concentrates his argument’s forces on Callicles’s self-image. The Unjust Speech cares not for whether it appears shameless or ignoble. Callicles cares very much for having enviable “qualities, which the others don’t” (487b) have. Socrates takes advantage of Callicles’s care for his self-esteem and sings his praises to ingratiate himself with the opponent. Socrates addresses Callicles to say that “[y]ou’re well-enough educated, as many of the Athenians would attest, and you have good will toward me” (487b). Socrates goes on to mention Callicles’s wisdom (487c). He claims that Callicles does not lack in wisdom (487e), nor is he marred by an excess of shame (487e).

Thus, on the surface, Callicles is sharp-witted, well-educated, and perceptive. He is so smart as to see through the trappings of conventional education that preaches

⁶⁹⁹ Cf. 487e – 488a, where Socrates picks up the motif of oldness and newness in the guise of generational differences between the old and the young. He also asks that, if he should fail to be consistent in his thinking, then Callicles should treat him like both Socrates (of the *Clouds*) and Pheidippides treat Strepsiades; namely, like a “very stupid ... and ... a worthless fellow” (488a – b). Cf. Benardete’s comments on Callicles’s use of “*andreia*” (*The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy* 68).

moderation and relies on shame. As Socrates portrays him, Callicles is the Unjust Speech. Yet, if he is, then shaming him will do no good whatsoever. It is instructive that despite Socrates' prelude, the conversation between the two turns on the subject of shame. Callicles is not indifferent to the matter, but his opinion about that which is shameful hinges on his beliefs about that which is the best and lawful by nature (492b – c). In short, Callicles finds it a shame that tyrants—those who are, according to Callicles, better and stronger by nature—have to restrain themselves by law, whereas, they should be “free to enjoy good things without any interference” (492b). It is a good thing, Callicles says, to let the naturally strong man's “own appetites to get as large as possible and not to restrain them” (491e).⁷⁰⁰ Socrates tries to, but (as Callicles's closing remarks show) fails to dissuade Callicles and to change his opinion about tyranny. He fails to inculcate in Callicles the notion that tyrants live unjustly and “if unjustly, shamefully, and if shamefully, badly” (521b). Although Callicles is not persuaded, he is threatened with being put to shame (484e, 495b). Socrates, in the *Gorgias*, gives us a fortified version of the Just Speech.

If we adopt a part of Socrates' own analogy to draw the new one between him and the Just Speech, then we say that Socrates is to the Just Speech as a doctor is to a gymnastic trainer.⁷⁰¹ Socrates comes close to arguing for a superiority of medicine to gymnastic (452a – d and 464a – 465e) that makes “people physically good looking and

⁷⁰⁰ However, see Benardete, *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy* that offers an understanding of “Callicles's ... ignorance of the nature of pleasure and pain and his innocence about good and evil” (78). On this view, which portrays Callicles's “hedonism [such that it] takes its bearings from morality” (78), Callicles's position is more akin in its simplicity and inconsistency to that of the Just Speech.

⁷⁰¹ The Just Speech mentions gymnastic training at 1001.

strong” (452b). Socrates claims that, although, physical training can end up yielding an “apparent state of fitness” (464a), this state “isn’t real” (464a). Medicine has its sham counterpart in “pastry baking [that] has put on the mask of medicine” (464d), but not in itself. Medicine, on Socrates’ account, does not obtain of the same capacity for producing a seeming state of wellbeing as physical exercise. However, this is patently false.

Socrates could be in pain and be medicated by taking a drug that would make the pain go away, but not the underlying condition that produces it. The premise that physical exercise is secondary to medicine is also wobbly.

In the *Republic*, the guardians’ physical fitness is aligned with health that is superior to “licentiousness and illness [that] multiply in the city” (405a) swollen with disease. In fact, in Book III of the *Republic*, Socrates observes that the “arts of the law court and medicine [are] full of pride whenever many free men take them very seriously” (405a). According to this picture, medicine and forensic oratory are one of a piece. Yet, in the *Gorgias*, medicine is aligned with justice and oratory with pastry baking. Thus, Socrates in the *Gorgias*, by his own standard, is the medical man and, as far as we go along with the idea that medicine is the beneficial art *par excellence* and that it does not dissemble, we deem Socrates superior to the Just Speech. The Just Speech memorized the drills that make the youths look healthy, but it has failed to realize that training of character is not successful, if it is carried out as an unreflective drill. Comparison between the Just Speech’s mechanical memorization teachings in moral fitness and Socrates’ conversion of medicine into the art fit to heal the soul (465b – e, 521d – 522e), gets us closer to a practice of reflection requisite for ethical formation. However, once we

notice that medicine, too, has the power to conceal the ailment instead of healing it, we realize that the psycho-therapeutics on which Socrates insists are liable to misfire.⁷⁰² Hence, Socrates, at best, silences his interlocutors, but he does not heal them, if by healing, here, we mean a genuine transformation or the turning of the soul. Although, Socrates is not worsted, he does not succeed at changing his interlocutors, either. It is a draw.

Socrates' rhetorical use of shame against his dialogical opponents betrays the fact that he is not engaged in genuine psycho-healing in the *Gorgias*. Socrates resorts to moralistic shaming, instead of deploying shame as a tool to diagnose the particular psychological and character malformations of his interlocutors. In this prescriptive attitude to morals and to shame, Socrates is repeating, with important variations, the Just Speech's approach to education. The difference, which Socrates' character introduces to the kind of rhetoric that the Just Speech employs, allows us, albeit not Socrates himself, to examine the diagnostic role of shame. Ultimately, if we do not subscribe to the views of Socrates as these appear in the *Gorgias*, then, we can seek to form our own conclusions that surface from our reflection on the meaning of the arguments that *Gorgias* presents. If that is done, then in the Socrates of the *Gorgias*, we gain what is lost in the Socrates of the *Clouds*' thinkery and that is—philosophy.

⁷⁰² Cf. Benardete, *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy*, where he furthers my argument regarding the failure of the therapeutic analogy that extends from the body to the soul and discusses the impossibility of a "mapping of one [city] onto the other [soul]" (78). Benardete gives another explanation of the failure of the analogy between the therapy of the body and that of the soul on page 88. There, Benardete concludes that Socrates "recommends the course of treatment that does not exist." See, further, Benardete's suggestion that the "sophistry in Socrates' argument to which Callicles objects is not Socrates' sophistry but Callicles's" (80).

The Unjust and the Just Speeches of the *Clouds* come from and dissolve back into the sophistical teachings of the thinkery. We, as the audience of the play, have to interpose philosophical analysis into the structure of Aristophanes' comedy in order to reveal the thoughtful implications and the philosophical foundation of the play. Otherwise, the comedy retains its pleasurable and entertaining aspect, but fails to become an occasion for philosophical reflection. We remain, as Glaucon of the *Republic* (475d) or Callicles of the *Gorgias* (502b – d), convinced that all there is to tragic and to comic art is pleasure of spectatorship and not any serious, nor thought-provoking foundation. However, the *Gorgias*, by virtue of assigning the task of rhetorical persuasion, as well as that of the sophistic kind—among other interlocutors—also to the philosophical genius of Socrates, presupposes that we approach it philosophically from the start. The curious thing is that the thoughtfulness that the *Gorgias* requires is wedded to our aesthetic and artistic sensibility. We get the best look at the philosophical dimension of the *Gorgias* from the dramatic spectator's seat. If we remember the two speeches of the *Clouds*, the unsettling, disruptive action of comedic laughter, as well as the momentary arrival of disorder that it brings, then we are well positioned to catch sight of the speculative, as opposed to dogmatic, implications of the dialogue. As Benardete writes, "Between the spurious corporeality of hedonism and the equally spurious morality of soul, philosophy shines through. Its orderliness is grounded in the ordered disorderliness of knowledge of ignorance."⁷⁰³ We remember our own blind spots, as I call them, or ignorance, as Plato and Benardete do, when in lieu of trusting everything that Socrates says and disparaging

⁷⁰³ *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy* 90

the views of his dialogical partners, we seek a middle ground on which to base and from which to understand their exchanges. I show what I mean, now, as I articulate Socrates' and Callicles's respective attitudes to and their uses of shame.

5. Shame in the *Gorgias* Continued: A Diagnostic Study of Shame

Shame is one recurrent topic in the *Gorgias*. Another one is tyranny. Plato uses the term “τύραννος” and its related forms twenty two times. In comparison, the various forms of the word “sophistry” appear seven times. Polus's favorite tyrant, Archelaus, reappears among the tyrants whom Socrates cites as exemplary cases on display in Hades (525d – e). The Hades myth that Socrates narrates ends the dialogue. Socrates gets the last word. However, Socrates' choice of the subject matter—otherworldly punishment for lives avariciously, hubristically, or lasciviously lived (Sisyphus, Tantalus, and Tityus, respectively)—betrays Socrates' skepticism. The need for the final myth makes it seem as if Callicles remains unchanged after hearing Socrates' earlier discussion of Euripides' lines about the living dead (492e) and the consequent development of the idea contained in this metaphor in Socrates' recitation and thematization of the story of the leaky jars (493a – d).⁷⁰⁴ The tripartite structure of the subject matter of Socrates' response to Callicles's supposition about tyranny (493e – 492c) is preserved in the final myth. The components of this structure are limitless desire, its transmutation into a tyrannical or an incarnate eros, and shame. Callicles expresses or represents the first two. Socrates elicits

⁷⁰⁴ Cf. Benardete's excellent discussion of the meaning that Socrates attributes to Euripides' lines as well as to the tale of the leaky jars, which Benardete compares to the punishment of Danaids, in *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy* 74 – 77.

our reflection on what these elements mean. Socrates uses shame in his attempt to divert Callicles from his view that tyrant's inflated appetites should be pursued and further augmented (492a – c). We ask the following questions: What is the meaning of Socrates' failure to use shame so as to heal Callicles of his pathological interest in tyrannical desire? What does the failure tell us about tyranny? What avenues for philosophical thinking does it indicate?

Socrates' initial response to Callicles's encomium on tyranny is alarming. He greets Callicles's conviction that for tyrants, "in truth [nothing] could be more shameful and worse than self-control" (492b) with a chilly attestation. Socrates says, "Callicles [,] ... you are now saying clearly what others are thinking but are unwilling to say" (492d). Callicles stands not only for the continuation of Gorgias's (452e) interest in enslaving others and Polus's fascination with tyranny, but also for the many (of Socrates' and Plato's contemporaries) who share Callicles' views. Individual, Callicles, stands in for the type of the general Athenian attitude. Benardete explains, "One outbraves and outsmarts the enemy as Demos and enjoys one's triumph as little man. Callicles expresses perfectly the private Athenians' experience of Pericles' funeral speech in praise of the quasi-tyrannical city."⁷⁰⁵ It looks like small-mindedness and unqualified ambition is the reason why Callicles advocates for the unobstructed pursuit of the unhinged desires, at bottom of which, as the *Republic* says, is a terrible drone of love (ἔρωτά, 572e). The many insignificant, attention-seeking people are as deranged and dangerous as the one tyrant, whom they put in power (*Republic* 568e, 569c). The reason for this

⁷⁰⁵ *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy* 72

correspondence between the many and their tyrant is that rid of accountability for their dreams of grandeur (how can one be held accountable for one's dreams, after all?) the many are free to fall for the illusion that promises satisfaction of every dream, every desire, and subsidence of every pain. Benardete sharpens the point thusly, "That the imperial city does whatever it likes cannot but be experienced in each citizen as the right to do whatever he likes. Democratic equality is on the books, but the strut of the tyrant is in everyone's heart."⁷⁰⁶ Callicles is not ashamed of this tyranny of the heart. He celebrates permissive and anarchical attitude toward all desires that are set free (as we show in the preceding study of the *Clouds*) when eros reigns shamelessly.

Perhaps, Socrates proposes, if Callicles is not persuaded to be ashamed of an "insatiable, undisciplined life" (493c), he might be ashamed of the disgrace that this kind of life brings upon the body (494e)? Socrates asks, "Isn't the climax ... the life of a catamite [κιναιδῶν βίος], a frightfully shameful [δεινὸς καὶ αἰσχρὸς] and miserable one" (494e)? One thing is echoed and another one is prefigured in this line. The former is the Just Speech's downfall. The Just one thinks that there is no greater evil than to be "buggered" (εὐρύπρωκτος, 1085). The latter is the division between the life of the body and that of the soul, which is made use of by Socrates in the Hades myth. Here, the body shows signs of shameful abuse. In the myth, it is the soul's look that speaks for its perverse and harmful pathologies and transgressions (524c – e). We do not hear Callicles's commentary on the undressing that the soul suffers in the closing tale of the *Gorgias*. However, his playfully or bashfully dismissive answer (501d) to Socrates'

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid., 74

question about the shameful marks left by the incontinent life on the body indicates that Callicles, like those whom the Unjust Speech picks out of the audience in the *Clouds*, does what pleases him, whatever the repercussions. Nonetheless, unlike the Unjust Speech, Callicles agrees with Socrates' "opinion" (οἶεἰ, 495b) that if we posit "that those who enjoy themselves, however they may be doing it, are happy [then ...] many shameful [αἰσχρὰ] things hinted at just now obviously follow" (494a, 495b). From this point on, Callicles offers little resistance to Socrates' propositions. At any rate, the substantive objections that Callicles does make, with the exception of his defense of Pericles, Themistocles, Cimon, and Miltiades (503c, d),⁷⁰⁷ are personal attacks (499b, 511a, 515b, 521c), dismissals (497b, 504c, 505c, 505d, 513c, 514a, 516b) or expressions of indignation (497b, 505d, 522b), but they are not topical counterarguments or counterexamples to Socrates' claims.

Like Callicles's willingness to engage in well-argued debate, tranny, also, drops out to be re-introduced by Socrates toward the end of the dialogue (510a – c, 525d). Without the resistance from his interlocutors, Socrates' final remarks about tyranny present it in the unquestionably critical light. Despite the negative presentation of tyranny to which Callicles assents (at 510c), Socrates brings a few of the famous tyrants back to bash tyranny one more time in the Hades myth (525d). Since Callicles alters his definitively agreeable answers with the indignant and the spiteful ones, we conclude that Socrates does not bring Callicles about. At best, Socrates stings Callicles and makes him

⁷⁰⁷ Nails in *The People of Plato* and Everitt in *The Rise of Athens* offer biographical and historical information on these Athenian leaders.

more pliable with the threat of being put to shame (494e)—the same threat that worked on Gorgias and on Polus (482c – e).

In between the concluding denunciation of tyranny and the shaming or taming of Callicles stands the condemnation of the dramatists and the orators. The tragic art is exposed for mongering in illusory pleasures (501e – 502c) and the outspoken military and public leaders, like Pericles, are discovered as the men engaged in corrupting Athenians (515e). A schematic presentation of the second half of the *Gorgias* dictates that Socrates, in the company of those who sympathize with the unlimited exercise of power or with the unhindered pursuit of desires, has to tame his opponents by shaming them. Once Socrates' audience is so tamed, it is ready for Socrates' dramatic exhibition of his own oratorical skill⁷⁰⁸ by means of which Socrates drags the dramatic displays and the public speakers of the day through the mud. Concluding act of Socrates' performance reveals the malice of the tyrannical life with which his interlocutors are infatuated. There is some truth to Callicles's initial accusation, which states that "you [Socrates are] in fact bringing the discussion around to the sort of crowd-pleasing vulgarities that are admirable only by law and not by nature" (482e). The partial truth of this assertion is not that tyranny is admirable (whether by nature or by law), but that Socrates knows how to please his crowd. Polus and Gorgias are pleased that Callicles, who accused them both of being put to shame, is, himself, shamed into submission. Certainly, there are many of Plato's readers, whom Socrates' high-minded speeches please. However, if we stop at

⁷⁰⁸ Socrates makes a number of lengthy speeches in the dialogue.

being gratified by Socrates' speeches, then we lose out on their capacity to ignite thought, which is born out of tension, not out of an appeased sense of self.

The tension with which the second half of the *Gorgias* is alive is the dissonance between Socrates' rhetorical style as well as the dramatic tenor of his words and the undoing that his speeches bring to the popular tragedy and to the famous public figures. Socrates could have made a claim as mild as the one that he makes at the end of the *Meno*. The view that Socrates offers there is that men like Themistocles and Pericles surely desired their sons to be good not only in such arts as horsemanship, gymnastics, and wrestling, but also in excellence of character or virtue (93c – 94e). The leaders of the past wanted to, but did not succeed, according to Socrates of the *Meno*, in teaching their offspring how to be genuinely good. This is a much milder claim than the one that Socrates makes in the *Gorgias*.

Instead of falling short of teaching their sons how to be good, Pericles, Themistocles, Cimon, and Miltiades, are summarily accused of actively corrupting the Athenian public (*Gorgias* 516d – e).⁷⁰⁹ Note that Socrates avails himself of the cattle herding (516a) and the horsemanship (516a, 516d – e) metaphors when he mounts the final attack on the public leaders of the recent Athenian past.⁷¹⁰ It is as if through our familiarity with the Pheidippideses and Alcibiadeses of the world, we are supposed to

⁷⁰⁹ Observe that Cimon (II) is the son of Miltiades (IV). Thus, the line-up of the alleged corrupters is represented by two generations of leaders. Cf. Michael Svoboda's take on the historical milieu that serves as the backdrop for the dialogue in his "Athens, the Unjust Student of Rhetoric: A Dramatic Historical Interpretation of Plato's 'Gorgias'." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* (2007) 37(3): 275 – 305.

⁷¹⁰ Cf. chapter IV of the present work where I make sense of and discuss the significance of the cattle herding imagery and its political implications for the *Statesman*.

pick up on the harsh commentary that Socrates offers on the realities of the Athenian political arena. The sons of those who are in power, the more or less well-to-do youth, amuse themselves by seeking recognition for their lavish and showy displays of wealth. The truth is that these young jet-setters have no substantial wealth to speak of and, in fact, abuse the substance of their fathers (or adopted fathers, as far Alcibiades is concerned) and of the public treasury. The funds dry up, the war actions aimed at gain through subjugation grow more aggressive, and the haughty horse-lovers respond by “kicking, butting, and biting” (516a) at those from whom they get their feed (516d – e). Pheidippides and Alcibiades turn away from their love of horses and turn into Polus-like colts for whom the best life looks like the life of the biggest and most famous tyrants (470e – 473e). Socrates presages that this transformation spells trouble for the unprincipled youth (519a – b). Like the old generation of the Athenian leaders, the up and coming one, “feasted them [the citizens] lavishly with what they had an appetite for. ... But ... the city is swollen and festering” (519a). Accustomed to gratifying the “body and things of the body,”⁷¹¹ as Benardete notes, “imperial Athens” is chastised by Socrates because it has forgotten about the soul. In the dialogue, “‘Soul’ disappears from the argument until it returns in the myth’ (517d1, 518a5).”⁷¹² Put otherwise, the reason why the address to undo Callicles’s love of Athenian glory is made in terms of the body is because, to repeat Benardete, “the strut of the tyrant is in everyone’s heart.”⁷¹³ This does not necessarily imply that there is no way to speak to the soul. Rather, this means that the

⁷¹¹ Benardete, *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy* 97

⁷¹² Ibid.

⁷¹³ Ibid., 74

dissolution of individuality, which tyranny propels,⁷¹⁴ dictates that to differentiate between oneself and the other, one has to look first at the physical signs; one has to consider the body.

Socrates runs through the attributes of the human body for which imperial magnificence lavishly provides, as well as through the physical augmentations that fortify the city. He condemns those who think that “harbors and dockyards, walls, and tribute payments and such trash as that” (519a) can make “the city great” (519a). According to Socrates, all these enhancements are adding to the diseased city that “is swollen and festering” (519a). The older generation of the Athenian leaders (Pericles, Themistocles, Miltiades, and his son, Cimon), encouraged by the victory at Marathon and if not envious of, then attracted to, the riches promised by the life-style of the Persian tyrants, engorge Athens with innovations. In so doing, these public leaders aim to insure their own political power. Even if we grant some of the questionable alliances that Miltiades⁷¹⁵ had and political decisions that Themistocles⁷¹⁶ made or if we take seriously the rumors about

⁷¹⁴ Cf. Chapter II, part two, sections five and six of the present work, where I discuss the surreal existence of the individual plagued by tyranny.

⁷¹⁵ Nails, in *The People of Plato*, reports that Miltiades “served Darius I for a time, then joined the ‘Ionian revolt’; when it was subjugated, Miltiades returned to Athens where he was tried and acquitted of tyranny in the Chersonese and promptly elected general in 490/89. ... Miltiades IV is credited with a decisive role in the Athenian decision to fight the Persians at Marathon” (207). Nails goes on to say that Miltiades “dies of wounds, but not before the Athenians could fine him fifty *talents* for failure to capture the town. His son, Cimon II ..., inherited and paid the debt” (Ibid.).

⁷¹⁶ Nails writes that “evidence is said to have emerged implicating Themistocles in treachery with the Persians. ... Athens condemned him to death *in asbentia*” (*The People of Plato* 280). Cf. Everitt’s claim in *The Rise of Athens* that although “Athenian *ecclesia* had elected [Themistocles] as general [he] ... typically ... bribed another likely candidate to stand down at the elections in February” (154). See the same, who discusses Herodotus’ take on the events surrounding the 480 battle at Thermopylae and writes that Euboeans “had word with Themistocles and offered him a bribe of thirty talents if he could persuade the high command to stand and fight. He pocketed the

Cimon's dealings with the Macedonian Alexander I,⁷¹⁷ their, otherwise, illustrious careers are hardly worthy of being deemed as simply damaging to Athens. It is even more difficult to find fault with Pericles.⁷¹⁸ What is more, is that Socrates, although he calls himself a lover of Alcibiades (481d), forgets to reflect on the deleterious effects of his, Socrates', association with the youth. No one, not even Socrates, can do only good. He is mortal. Mortals are fallible. Where we do good, we are liable to do harm, also. Fathers are culpable for failing to provide the education that would make their sons truly good (*Meno* 93c – 94e). The public leaders are to blame for their failure to educate the population about “justice and self-control” (519a). What about the failures of lovers? Socrates is silent about the blame that he deserves for falling short in educating his “friend Alcibiades,” who will, in fact, be assassinated when “they [the many] lose not only what they gained but what they had originally as well” (519a – b).

Socrates, here, plays the part of the Unjust Speech, who, in the *Clouds*, trashes the Just Speech's praise of the old, Marathon-hardened generation. However, he also tracks the part of the Just one closely, when he reprimands Athenians and their leaders for their love of posh luxury and disparages their excessive appetites for wealth (519c – b). One

money ... Themistocles never saw any harm in making a profit from doing the right thing” (167 – 68).

⁷¹⁷ Nails conjectures that “Cimon II was perhaps prosecuted by Pericles I for taking bribes from Alexander I of Macedonia in 463 or 462; he was acquitted” (*The People of Plato* 97). However, see the same, who writes, about Cimon that he “arranged a five-year truce between Sparta and Athens. ... Cimon II died in 450/49 while serving as general against the Persians on Cyprus” (*Ibid.*). Everitt, in *The Rise of Athens*, tells us that “Cimon, the handsome young son of Miltiades [...] staged a demonstration to assert the loyalty of the aristocracy and its backing for Themistocles” (157) and his plan to rout the Persians at sea.

⁷¹⁸ However, see Benardete, who writes, “Pericles might have used up inherited capital in a vain show” (*The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy* 95).

thing that Socrates omits is his own role in the education of one particular individual, Alcibiades. It is as if while wearing the mask of now the Just and then the Unjust Speech, Socrates in the *Gorgias*, plays also the role of Socrates from the thinkery of the *Clouds*. There, the sophistic Socrates is missing while the two Speeches contest. Here, we cannot help but wonder if philosophical import of Socrates' speeches is lost on us if we close our eyes to their rhetorical and sophistical tenor.

Socrates' silent oversight suggests that the *Gorgias* is concerned with very much the same problem as the *Clouds*. This problem is: the Old and the New attitudes to eros and to shame. Although, diametrically opposite on their surface to the New ones, the Old views lead up to the blossoming of tyranny, the interest in aggressive expansion, and the acquaintance with the ways of foreign potentates "brought in from abroad" (*Republic* 573b). Hence, both the Old and the New leaders are impotent in offering an education that would resist the dissipation, which tyranny's allure brings with it as the desires become violently unhinged and eros reigns incarnate. Benardete comments that "Alcibiades and Callicles seem as if they violate the principles embodied in Cimon and Miltiades when in fact those principles have simply sunk deep within them and reemerged with a different look. Athens looks at Alcibiades and recoils in horror at its own tyranny and impiety."⁷¹⁹ One thing that Athens cannot do is to look at and recognize the tyranny and impiety in itself.

The corruption that is now at home, which Callicles is forced to recognize when he gives up defending public leaders (519d), first came from Macedonia and Persia, as

⁷¹⁹ *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy* 97

mentioned in the dialogue by Polus (470d – e). It is as if victorious Greeks, who routed the Persian army at Marathon, got a taste of the forbidden victuals (*Republic* 565d – e) and entered the path that ends in gruesome and destructive tyranny, which debilitates the state. Now, Polus, a man who still thinks and “behaves rather childishly,”⁷²⁰ has to be disabused of his love of tyranny and of his dreams of all of the material and bodily bounty it brings. Socrates aims to rid Polus of his tyrannical aspiration by convincing him that there is nothing more shameful and more monstrous than “corruption of one’s soul” (τῆς ψυχῆς πονηρία, 477d).⁷²¹ Socrates, again, makes numerous appeals to shame (the term appears seven times between 477a – e) on route to soliciting Polus’s agreement with the claim that all kinds “of corruption of soul are the worst thing there is” (477e). Specifically, the kinds of corruption that Socrates means are, “injustice, ignorance, cowardice” (477b). Observe that all three are characteristic of the tragic tyrant, Oedipus (*Oedipus Tyrannos* 514 – 544, 362, and 974, respectfully).⁷²² Another invocation of the famous tyrant is made when Socrates asks Polus: “is being unjust, undisciplined, cowardly, and ignorant more painful than being poor and sick” (477d)? The undisciplined (*Oedipus Tyrannos* 673 – 675, 776 – 781, 1059 – 1085, 1521 – 1523, to point out a few instances of Oedipus’s incapacity to control himself), but wealthy and, except for his limp, physically fit Oedipus, turns out to be so wretched as to blind himself and to wish that he could “stem the stream of sound” (1386). Just prior to hearing the reports that will uncover the truth about his familial affinities, Oedipus is possessed by rage as he blames

⁷²⁰ Nails, *The People of Plato* 252

⁷²¹ The word that can be translated as wickedness or baseness, πονηρία, appears seven times between 477a – 477e.

⁷²² See, also, my analysis of Oedipus in Chapter II, part two.

Jocasta for her being “ashamed [αἰσχύνεται] of [his] ... humble origins” (1079).⁷²³ This is the pivotal instance of shame in the play. It is indicative of a change of perspective that Oedipus is about to undergo. His focus will shift from a concern with whether he is a hereditary king to a realization that securing of royal throne is the last thing he should worry about. Not Creon, not Tiresias, not Polybus, not the dead Laius, not even Jocasta is his worst enemy. They do not plan, nor bring about his undoing. Oedipus’s shame and his corruption are spawned by his own desire to wring an answer from the Delphic oracle and his consequent flight from Corinth. Oedipus’s shame does not come from lack of noble birth or outward trappings of penury. It springs forth from Oedipus’s character; it is birthed and carried by Oedipus himself. This same lesson, about corruption that forebodes pangs of greatest shame, Socrates teaches to Polus, who, before Socrates introduces the question of shame, is enamored with Oedipus-like tyranny.

At the beginning of their conversation, Polus agrees that the dismal decrees, which Oedipus proposes in his ignorance of who he is, are the acts that are done for “the sake of what’s good” (468b). Socrates, as if describing Oedipus, the king who does not

⁷²³ Douglas L. Cairns, in his comprehensive study of *Aidōs: The Psychology of Shame and Honour in Ancient Greek Literature* argues that at 1079 “*aischunomai* may legitimately be translated ‘I am ashamed of x’” (301). The significance that Douglas attributes to this usage of the term is that the “usage clearly does suggest a move away from the consideration of the visibility of actions, or their openness to criticism, towards evaluation in subjective and personal terms” (301 – 2). Cf. Douglas’s brief discussion of shame in the *Gorgias*, 367, n. 73 and pages 379 – 80. Out of numerous (at least sixty nine) appearances of “shame” in the dialogue, Douglas chooses to talk about passage at 522d, where Socrates claims that “he would experience *aischunē*” (379). Douglas argues against the view that “Plato [goes] ... as far as explicitly to acknowledge the possibility of self-directed shame in absence of any external catalyst” (380). We cannot say, with certainty, about Plato, but Socrates’ attempts to teach his interlocutors to be ashamed of things they desire, argue for, and find admirable only succeed in silencing, but not in changing them. However, to claim, as Douglas does, that this attempt on the part of Plato’s Socrates does not qualify as an instance of the development of self-reflective attitude toward that which is shameful is an overstatement.

know just how well he fits the bill of the criminal whom he is seeking (*Oedipus Tyrannos* 225 – 267), says that “a tyrant or an orator puts somebody to death or exiles him or confiscates his property because he supposes that doing so is better for himself when actually it is worse” (468d). Oedipus mentions that as he condemns the murderer he seeks, he also serves “himself” (ἐμαυτὸν ὠφελεῖ). Thus, it is not only and, not primarily, the Thebans whom Oedipus seeks to benefit by bringing death to the accursed killer of the former king (246 – 247). Oedipus seeks to benefit himself. If we believe in punishing transgressors, then we might agree that for a tyrant to suffer at the hands of his or her own violent decree is just. At any rate, Socrates argues that even for the non-tyrannical individuals it is better to suffer pain and injustice than to inflict these onto others (509c). The tyrants, according to Socrates, ought to pay their painful dues in order to be healed of their corruption (479a – e). Pain and punishment dominate in Socrates’ myth.

Appeals to pain notwithstanding, while Socrates speaks with Polus, his aim in divulging tyranny for its corruption and its shame, is to compel Polus to see the underbelly of the terrible power that he seeks and worships. Socrates’ questioning of Polus in the *Gorgias* and Sophocles’ portrayal of *Oedipus*, call for the same thing. It is as if they ask that instead of lashing out against the subjects and growing enamored with power, the ruler should first turn the gaze of examination, if not suspicion, inward. We guess that in the characters of the *Gorgias* (excluding Socrates), this interest in self-reflection remains unkindled and, therefore, the story of the otherworldly punishment rounds out the theme of tyranny and war with which the dialogue begins. Socrates’ rhetoric is successful at putting Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles to shame, but it is

insufficient to convince his fellow speakers that oratory does not have to amount to a “shameful public harangue” (503a), but that it can be as much an occasion for self-examination as for “striving valiantly to say what is best” (503a). If Socrates is not entirely effective in his conversations with Gorgias, Callicles, and Polus, then why would his soliloquized myth, which threatens pain to the tyrannical, corrupt, and monstrous individuals after they die, be persuasive? Why would the three interlocutors be won over by this piece of narrative drama? It may not have been persuasive to Socrates’ fellow-speakers or to Plato’s contemporaries for the same reason that it might seem persuasive to us. This reason is that we often only seek one true answer, theory, or standard by which to measure Plato’s writings and the validity of our understanding thereof.

However, Plato’s dialogues operate according to “a concept of truth” that calls for “the simultaneous truthfulness of different meanings and modes of reality.”⁷²⁴ The dialogues, in other words, share “a specific feature of ancient Greek tragedy that has much to do with Dionysus.” Dionysus, as Schlesier portrays the god, symbolizes dramatic layering of masks. In addition to the mask that the actor in a tragedy or in a comedy would wear,⁷²⁵ Schlesier explains, “a second mask is created verbally and thus

⁷²⁴ Renate Schlesier, “Mixtures of Masks: Maenads and Tragic Models,” *Masks of Dionysus*, 89 – 114. I realize that my claim about truth and Plato’s dialogues stands in direct opposition to what Schlesier herself writes about the “goals of Plato’s thinking” (95). Schlesier sees that truth and reality obtain of multivalence in drama. It is a pity that she does not realize that her conclusions about drama open onto insightful and careful interpretations in Plato scholarship.

⁷²⁵ Cf. Pickard-Cambridge for a discussion of the initial stages of ancient Greek drama and the introduction of masking the actors’ faces (*Dithyramb Tragedy and Comedy* 111 – 112). Consult Carpenter and Faraone for the sources that discuss the mask in relation to Dionysus (*Masks of Dionysus* 2 – 3). See, finally, Flickinger, *Greek Theater and Its Drama*, for a discussion of the relationship between the worship of Dionysus in Greece and ancient Greek dramatic performances (119 – 124).

... appears before the eyes of the spectators.”⁷²⁶ In terms of Plato’s dialogues, Schlesier’s thesis looks exactly like Benardete’s insistence that “there [is] ... argument *in* the action.”⁷²⁷ Since we read the dialogues, instead of watching them as we would watch a captivating film or a theatrical performance, the verbal mask comes first. However, discursivity is not the only dialogical dimension. The dramatic layering of masks is preserved. There is a difference between what the dialogical exchanges say and what is carried out or done by means of these exchanges. A line from Plato accepts of the same polyvalent truth as does a dramatic line. There is, for example, what Socrates says—there is the meaning of that uttered statement, and then there is the dialogical context that activates the speech; that gives it a performative dimension. This is the action of the speech and there is an argument “*in* the action.”⁷²⁸ Schlesier continues her examination of truth and drama and says that “the ‘visual meaning’ of Greek drama sometimes implies the transformation of words heard into a vision.”⁷²⁹ A transformation of the meaning of what is said also takes place in the dialogues when we perceive the patterns of the dialogical action and attune to the images that arise out of the arguments we read. Unless we read the dialogues with an eye on their drama and, *at the same time*, perceive the

⁷²⁶ “Mixtures of Masks,” 95, n. 27

⁷²⁷ *Encounters and Reflections* 124. Cf. Hyland, who approaches the issue of multiple meanings that the speeches in Plato’s dialogues relate from the point of view of irony. He writes, “Ironical speech is speech wherein the truth is significantly other than, and in strong cases the opposite of, what is said” (*The Finitude and Transcendence in Platonic Dialogues* 89). Hyland draws a parallel between the multidimensional conception of truth in Plato’s philosophizing and in life. He writes, “[the] structure of irony is not merely literary but philosophical in that it is founded in and revelatory of Plato’s teaching about human nature. Human life is therefore deeply and inherently ironic” (110).

⁷²⁸ There are, also, the emotive and actual actions of the dialogical interlocutors. I offer examples of such actions and discuss their significance in the first part of chapter I.

⁷²⁹ “Mixtures of Masks” 95, n. 27

philosophical dimension of the tragic and the comic plays (that Plato’s works both echo and create), we fall for the Calliclean condemnation of “that majestic, awe-inspiring practice [, of] the composition of tragedy” (ἡ σεμνὴ αὕτη καὶ θαυμαστή, ἡ τῆς τραγωδίας ποίησις, 502b).⁷³⁰ In this case, we, necessarily, miss out on the polyvocal truth with which Plato’s writings resound.

Take, for example, the last “act” of the *Gorgias*—Socrates’ myth. The very first line, with which Socrates introduces his narration, undergoes a metamorphosis of meaning even as Socrates is speaking it. The transformation of that which is said in this introductory sentence refracts the alterations in the meaning of the myth. Socrates requests:

“Give ear [ἄκουε] then—as they put it—to a very fine account [μάλα καλοῦ λόγου]. You’ll think that it’s a mere tale [μῦθον], I believe, although I think it’s an account [λόγον], for what I’m about to say [λέξω] I will tell [λέγειν] you as true [ἀληθῆ]” (523a). Socrates asks, like a minstrel or a performer of poetic song would, that we lend him our undivided attention and listen closely. This request—to be heard—according to Achilles⁷³¹ of the *Iliad*, is granted to those who obey the gods. Thus, even before we embark on the tale about afterlife, we are reminded that we owe piety to the gods. The opposite of piety is hubris, which is one of the main tragic themes in epos⁷³² and on stage.

⁷³⁰ Cf. Nails, *The People of Plato*, where she gives evidence in support of Cinesias’s poor artistic form (97 – 98). However, even if we accept that Cinesias is rightfully ridiculed by Aristophanes and that he was, in fact, a “sycophant” (Nails 98), it is still premature to dismiss all of Socrates’ contemporary tragedians as being producers of the “public harangue” (502c, 503a). Socrates picks “Cinesias’ case” and universalizes it to extend it to all “poetry” (ἡ ποιητική, 503d).

⁷³¹ Homer, *Iliad* I.218 (ὅς κε θεοῖς ἐπιπείθεται μάλα τ’ ἔκλυον αὐτοῦ).

⁷³² Ibid., 214

From the outset, Socrates devises a narration that shares its subject matter with the Homeric and the tragic art. He also tells us to be wary of thinking that the myth (μῦθος) is any less important than the account (λόγος). The beautiful account and the mere tale are interwoven in Socrates' myth. The mythos and the logos, both speak truthfully (ἀληθῆς). Or, better, through both of these, truth speaks. Thus, as Socrates introduces his mythologic tale, he also reminds us of the, at least, bivalent mode through which the truth transpires. The bivalency is preserved and further refracted, that is, multiplied, in the action of the tale itself.

The Old and the New comes up again as the theme that introduces Socrates' tale. Socrates speaks about the time of Cronus and the way in which a human life was judged, at that time, for its pious and impious deeds. The continuity with the time of Zeus is established on the basis that, at first, human beings were judged, in the time of Zeus, in the same way as they were during the reign of Cronus. Specifically, the "men faced living judges while they were still alive, who judged them on the day they were going to die" (523b). The problem with the judgment, to which Socrates draws our attention, turns on the fact that since human beings were still "clothed" in the trappings of "handsome bodies, good stock and wealth" (523c) the living judges were blinded by the outward looks. The "wicked" got away unpunished and headed to the "Isles of the Blessed" (523b – c). However, the problem that is left unattended, the very practical matter of time, baffles us. Socrates ascribes to the pre-promethean human being the knowledge that, we, otherwise, do not possess; namely, the knowledge of the day of our "death ahead of time" (523d – e). Thus, the issue, of interest to us, is the pre-promethean perspicacity. The

matter that Socrates plays up in his account, namely, the question of how to tell which person has lived a wicked life and which a pious one, is secondary. The reason why it is, is because the condition for being good or being wicked is: being alive. Our question now is: How would the knowledge of the exact day of one's death change one's life? How would this knowledge influence action? The perennial question of the indeterminacy of the moment of one's death, to which Prometheus chains human race in Socrates' narration, casts a shadow over the rest of Socrates' tale. We begin to wonder about our finitude. We, finite beings, born into the world and bound to imminent death, do not give to ourselves our own birth and cannot know, nor endlessly forestall, the moment of our departure. If we have no power over these fundamental elements of our nature, how can we be completely certain about anything in our lives? How can we be sure about such important matters as doing good or evil. The best that we can do is to aim to do good and to remind ourselves that for all of our good intentions, albeit not for lack of trying, there are no guarantees.⁷³³

What about the mythic judges? Whereas, the human, living judges had the most fantastical foresight and knew, in advance, the exact day on which they were to judge the dying human beings, the otherworldly Aeacus, Minos, and Rhadamanthus (523e) pass their judgments while they are "naked and dead" (523e – 524a). Imagine that this tale, which Socrates is telling to his, now silent, listeners, is acted out on stage. If it were, it would have to be a comedy. Only in comedy nakedness is made noticeable. Reminders thereof are strapped on and paraded as the grotesquely large members of male

⁷³³ Cf. *Meno* 93c – 94e

endowment.⁷³⁴ Comedy also welcomes and puts much stock into the laughable depictions of violence. However, the gruesome elements in staged tragedies, such as “beatings ... inflicted by whips or other blows” (524c) as well as the deformations like the one that Oedipus inflicts upon himself in Sophocles’ play, for example, occur off-stage. Although, violent scenes and, especially, the scene of death, “does not take place within the view of the spectators, it is sometimes within hearing.”⁷³⁵ Thus, one other thing that Socrates accomplishes when he first calls on our capacity to listen closely is that he readies his audience, thereby, for taking his tale as if it were a performance piece. The scenes that are described, that are accented, in this performance, are the ones that would be only made available to hearing in tragedy. In comedy, the nakedness and the violent punishment, which Socrates, in his myth, describes and prescribes, are out in the open for everyone to see. Socrates’ mythologizing, although comical in form, has a tragic meaning.

We pity the human lot or, at least, we might be moved to fear the lot that befalls the wicked when they are dead.⁷³⁶ Their fate, “in Hades [, is] ... pain and suffering, for there is no other possible way to get rid of injustice” (525b). We might be struck by the finality of Socrates’ judgment that “those who have committed ultimate wrongs ... have become incurable [and] ... are made examples of. These persons themselves no longer derive any profit from their punishment” (525c). We are supposed to imagine the

⁷³⁴ Cf. Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyramb Tragedy and Comedy* for the discussion of phallic elements in comedy (236 – 40).

⁷³⁵ Donald Clive Stuart, “The Origin of the Greek Tragedy in the Light of Dramatic Technique.” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* (1916) (47): 173 – 204, 183.

⁷³⁶ Cf. Davis, *The Poetry of Philosophy* pages 38 – 39.

desperate state of “tyrants, kings, potentates, and those active in the affairs of cities” (τυράννων καὶ βασιλέων καὶ δυναστῶν καὶ τὰ τῶν πόλεων πραξάντων, 525d) and shrink back from doing evil. These leaders, according to the story, “commit the most grievous and impious errors because they’re in a position to do so” (525d). Socrates addresses Polus and says that “Archelaus, too, will be one of their number” (525d). A moment later, Socrates calls Callicles by name as he explains why there are no tales of suffering that depict such “private citizens” (525e) as Thersites “who was wicked” (525e).

Thersites was not a public leader. However, “persons who become extremely wicked [πονηροί] do come from the ranks of the powerful” (526a). It makes no sense to make a display of Thersites for lack of the theatrical value of his persona. He is not well-known. We are familiar with Socrates’ remarks in the *Republic* VIII and IX that support the claim he makes here, in the myth, about the gravity of wicked deeds carried out by the public figures. It is, also, experientially true that one person in power is capable of inflicting a greater amount of suffering than a person who does not have much of a public role. However, why not make an example of a private citizen? Would that not be a good deterrent for individual private persons, who do not hold sway over the fortunes of the many? It looks like Socrates seeks recognizable personae whom to bring up on charges of detestable and punishable lives. The despicable tyrant Archelaus (471a – d) would make an excellent subject. He is a tyrannical ruler and he is well-known. However, only two out of the three items on Socrates’ “punishment exhibit,” Tantalus and Sisyphus qualify as the examples of those who ruled during their time on earth. The third one, known as the giant Tituys, on Hera’s orders, tried to rape Leto. His punishment is to be “spread

over nine acres [, which] ... exposes his bowels to be torn”⁷³⁷ by vultures. Tityus, at least as far his punishment goes, reminds us not of the tyrants, but of Prometheus. Tityus also serves to remind Socrates’ listeners about Rhadamanthus, whom the Phaeacians carried to Euboea, because “the golden-haired Rhadamanthus ... was desirous of visiting Tityus, own son of Gaea.”⁷³⁸ The three main judges, and the three examples of the damned, are meant to be compared.

Tantalus is, most certainly, tyrannical.⁷³⁹ Why do we trust that none of the judges are? Take Minos, for example. Minos, the first mythic king of Crete,⁷⁴⁰ rules three generations prior to the Trojan War. He disobeys Posidon and keeps the gorgeous white bull—the sign of divine support—instead of sacrificing it to the god of the sea, who gave it to Minos in the first place. Minos’s punishment is another kind of bull, the Minotaur (Μινώταυρος), the bull of Minos. Minotaur, who is the offspring of Minos’s wife, Pasiphaë, and Posidon’s white bull, is a ferocious monster and a perpetual affront to king

⁷³⁷ Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*. Simpson, M. trans. (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), IV.424 – 68, 70.

⁷³⁸ Homer, *Odyssey* VII.321 – 24

⁷³⁹ Cf. chapter II, part two, section four of the present work for the discussion of Tantalus’s transgressions and tyranny.

⁷⁴⁰ Note that Zimmerman differentiates between Minos II and Minos I. The latter is the “famous lawgiver whose laws remained in force nearly 1,000 years [who], with his justice, wise legislation, and moderation [was] approved by all the Greeks and all the gods” (*Dictionary of Classical Mythology* 168). Zimmerman continues, “Minos II was king of Crete; husband of Pasiphae; father of Ariadne” (Ibid.). Hamilton, in her *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes* (150 – 51), does not speak about Minos, the father, and Minos, the son. She only describes Minos as the king, who saw to it that “young victims arrived in Crete” (151). Herodotus in *The Histories* does not refer to two different Minos’s either. He writes, “when Crete had been deserted, other peoples went there and settled it, including the Hellenes. In the third generation after Minos had passed away, the Trojan War was waged, in which the Cretans were clearly not the least of those who avenged Menelaos” (VII.171), *The Landmark Herodotus*, 568. Even, and especially, if we grant Zimmerman’s claim, the name “Minos” designates polar opposite attitudes toward rule. Thus, the identity and the aptitude for rule of the main judge of the dead in Hades are ambiguous.

Minos's honor. Minos's bull, Mino-taur, is not his bull at all. It is not his progeny. It is the fruit of his wife's passionate love for the white bull of Posidon. Pasiphaë's eros is a refraction of the king's own desire to keep Posidon's gift; to keep to himself the symbol of divine power. King Minos is not the only one who pays for his hubristic desire by having to reckon with the fruit of the forbidden eros of his wife. Posidon's wrath has repercussions outside of Crete.

Athenians send seven youths and seven maidens, every seven (or, on some accounts nine) years as a tribute to atone for the murder of king Minos's son, Androgeus.⁷⁴¹ Until Theseus's crafty ploy succeeds, the youths die in Daedalus's labyrinth and become Minotaur's feed. It would appear that, to Athenians at least, Minos is a merciless tyrant to whom the Athenian youths are customarily sacrificed. Moreover, the beast that devours the young men and women, the Minotaur, is a constant reminder of Minos's hubristic, impious desire to hold on to that which belongs to gods. His love of power, as well as his unforgiving nature, makes Minos out to be more like a tyrant rather than like a goodly king. Yet, Minos is not simply one of the three judges of the dead. He appears to have the last word on all of the pronounced judgments (526c – d).

The tragedy of the tale that Socrates narrates, therefore, has less to do with its content and more with the plot that is embodied by means of Socrates' characters' actions. Consider the plot, the μῦθος, which Socrates' λόγος implants in us by means of his speech's action (δρᾶμα). Contextual analysis of Socrates' story shows that we need to ask the question: Why is it the case that at least one of the judges of the dead, himself, is

⁷⁴¹ Zimmerman, *Dictionary of Classical Mythology* 22

a tyrant? What light does Minos's tyranny shine on the conclusion of the dialogue? It looks that if we take the myth for its words only, but not for the argument that is delivered to us by means of the action of the words, then we end up, at best, persuaded that punishment will catch up with those who do wrong. Does this mean that we get any further than Socrates' interlocutors, whom Socrates seems to want to scare into believing that tyranny is detestable and that wicked deeds are foul? What else is there to stop us from living badly aside from pain of punishment and fear thereof, as well as fear of the pain of shame? The promise of the afterlife on the Isles of the Blessed is a carrot to which the "prison in Hades" (525c) is a stick. This is no serious answer to either the question: Why should I do good? nor to the one that asks: What is "the way we're supposed to live" (500c)? The ultimate example of the do-gooder that Socrates cites, "Aristides, the son of Lysimachus" (526b) is a very curious choice.

Although, his name echoes adjective, ἄριστος, or best, Aristides's actions and relations⁷⁴² place him alongside Themistocles, who is exactly one of the men berated for corrupting the Athenians (515c – 519b). The naked souls are not all that naked in Hades, after all. The judges of the dead are not as insightful, nor as blameless, as we are lead to believe. Hence, if we accept the myth's preaching, then we are not much better off than the chastened by shame, but otherwise unchanged, Callicles, Polus, and Gorgias. The palliative story about punishment of the wicked and their perverse deeds, whether because we pity them or because we fear their fate, might stick. Yet, the effect of this moralizing is, at best, an analgesic. It is no true medicine. Moreover, such propaedeutic

⁷⁴² Cf. Nails, *The People of Plato* 48 – 49

therapy has a sedating effect on our interest to study the movements of our desire. Desire's human limits as well as its monstrous and its beautiful masks are covered up by censorship of shame. However, if we resist the impetus to take the medicine of Socrates' words for granted; that is, if we study its supposed effects on his interlocutors and on us, then we catch on to Plato's meaning. We do not take as a final answer Socrates' praise of stalwart character, which welcomes even injustice and punishment willingly (521b – 522e), as long as not pleasure, but "true political craft and true politics" (ἀληθῶς πολιτικῇ τέχνῃ καὶ πράττειν τὰ πολιτικὰ, 521d) are served. Instead we ask: Why does Socrates make such praises? Whom do his words please? I think we owe it to ourselves to take some time and give the best, that is, an honest answer to this question.

The reason why moralizing (the Just Speech's, Socrates', or the one that we encounter in our time) fails is not only because of its inherent duplicity. Based on our findings about the Just Speech, we see that those who are willing to scold others are not free from the very same faults against which they preach. Even if we are dealing with a somewhat less fissured conscience, like the one that enlivens our trust in Socrates' words, the anesthetic quality of moralizing shame falls short of genuine, that is, transformative thinking. Put simply, it falls short because of its philosophical inadequacy. What about the force of this education in the public and political realm? Benardete's answer is that "Socrates, in asserting that he is a true politician, admits that in appearance, that is, in the element of opinion, he is powerless."⁷⁴³ There is a strong tragic undercurrent in the naked comedy that the final myth presents.

⁷⁴³ *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy* 5

The shaming and the scaring tactics befit the Callicleses, the Poluses, and the Gorgias of the world. To some extent, if we subscribe to a life dictated by these educational techniques, then we run the risk of retrospectively producing just these same kinds of characters whom shaming rhetoric and the retributive moral of the myth are supposed to yoke. If we abide by the education prescribed for would-be tyrants, we fall for the same tragic denouement that the mythology of eternal punishment is supposed to forestall. This point, unfortunately, keeps being proven by history. The alternative, thoughtful, response to the high-minded rhetoric might sound like this: “rhetoric that altered the agent’s doubt into certainty about the morality of acting morally might not be a good thing; but a rhetoric that managed to restrain the certainty of the will for right seems to be exactly what is needed to check the righteous form of self-righteousness.”⁷⁴⁴ Benardete’s remark takes us past recalcitrance of Socrates’ interlocutors and into the domain of self-righteous souls. The tragedy, here, is that unchecked self-righteousness, as Benardete notes, is no good and, I add, it is dangerous. The second part of Benardete’s thought that calls for the restraint of our “will for right” cannot be exercised on the basis of moral education only. It calls for self-examination that is philosophical in kind. Therein lies the second part of *Gorgias*’ tragic message, which is the public and, hence, political unattractiveness of philosophical thinking. It takes a life-long effort. It does not guarantee a morally upright population. It ever recoils unto itself; recedes into the ceaseless attempts to reformulate the question. It would not have been thinking if it offered neatly packaged answers. The arduous exhilaration of a self-reflective, probing,

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid., 18

self-searching and world-questioning, experimenting and experiential thought is a taste that one does not acquire overnight, but grows accustomed to never quite fully having. We cannot teach philosophy like we would teach a set of moral rules. Plain and simple. Every time we try, we end up perpetuating dogmas and doctrines (consider communist, democratic, pacifist theories, or “Plato’s theory of Forms,” for instance) or we play into upholding the seductive status quo (in politics or in professional life) and hedging dreadfully close to manufacturing new forms of tyrannical dominion.

The unattractiveness of philosophizing, its proverbial uselessness and powerlessness, is its saving grace. Where ideologies (with their political tyrannies and tyrannies of thought) spring forth, thinking is over. However, this simply means that thinking looks differently and that we ought to look for it not in dogmatic theories, nor in propagandistic slogans, but excavating these relics and the bygone ways of thought, we ought to look for thinking somewhere else. If we approach Plato’s dialogues as a set of theoretical dictums, then we have moved right past their living, active, thoughtful ground. With Plato’s writings, the task is not to latch on to the best sounding, nor to the most pleasing explanation, even if it is delivered by or if it closely follows the meaning of Socrates, himself. The task is to linger longer amidst the call-and-response patterns of Plato’s polyvocal, imagistic words from which spring forth the dialogues that are as much works of philosophy as they are the works of drama.

CONCLUSION

Σωκράτης:
μηνύει δὴ νῦν ὁ λόγος ἡμῖν ἐν θρήνοις τε
καὶ ἐν τραγωδίαις καὶ κωμωδίαις, μὴ τοῖς δράμασι μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ
τῇ τοῦ βίου συμπάσῃ τραγωδίᾳ καὶ κωμωδίᾳ, λύπας ἡδοναῖς
ᾗμα κεράννυσθαι, καὶ ἐν ἄλλοις δὴ μυρίοις.~
Plato, *Philebus* 50b

By way of conclusion, I turn to the closing scenes of Plato's *Symposium* and offer my analysis of tragicomic tyranny played out in these.

The *Symposium* is a celebration of the tragedian Agathon's victory at the Lenaen festival in 416BC.⁷⁴⁵ Thus, from the outset, *Symposium* has something to say about tragic drama. Aside from being mentioned, by Socrates in the *Apology* (19c), Plato's contemporary, comedian Aristophanes, appears nowhere else in Plato's corpus, but in the *Symposium*. There he speaks at length. The speeches of the *Symposium*, are recited from memory to an unidentified listener (Ἑταῖρος) by a certain Appolodorus, the Phalerian, who himself learns the account from Aristodemus. Interlocutors are competing at singing praises to *eros*. By the looks of things, the *Symposium* is a tragicomedy about *eros*. At the time of its conclusion, when the somewhat tipsy praises to *eros* (176e) and a very inebriated encomium to Socrates (214a), are sung, the *Symposium* turns on the subject of dramatic art.

⁷⁴⁵ Arthur Elam Haigh, *The Attic Theatre* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1889), 38. See Nail's very informative and engaging account of the relationships between the characters gathered at the *Symposium* and the events that surround the dramatic date of the dialogue in "Tragedy Off-Stage." *Plato's Symposium: Issues in Interpretation and Reception*. Leshner, H. J., Nails, D. and Sheffield, C. C. F. eds. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 179 – 207, esp. 181 – 87.

Aristophanes and Agathon are listening to Socrates as he is “compelling them to agree that the same man should know how to make comedy and tragedy; and that he who is by art a tragic poet is also a comic poet” (223d). We do not hear why that is the case or where we can turn to find proof and examples of this dramatic genius because “Aristophanes ... first, and then, when it was already day, Agathon” (223d) wither. Tragedy and comedy go to sleep. Socrates leaves for the Lyceum. From the dithyrambic encomia to *eros*, to the comically staged (ὥς κωμαστῶν, 212c), Dionysus-like entry of the drunken Alcibiades, in its form, if not also in its content, the *Symposium* is a dramatic performance. The main character of this tragicomic drama, depending on the image we consider, that is, depending on who does the speaking and what we make of the alignment between the character who speaks and his (or, remarkably, her) speeches, actions, and their context, **is [pause]** *eros*, or Socrates, or Alcibiades, or tyranny, or Dionysus.

The substitution between the first pair, between *eros* and Socrates, transpires at the beginning of Socrates’ rather theatrical enactment or recitation of Diotima’s⁷⁴⁶ erotic teaching (203a – d). There Socrates, transposed into Diotima’s character, speaking on her behalf, while he is describing *eros*, also, describes himself. Listen to this, “[A]lways poor; ... far from being tender and beautiful, as the many believe, but ... tough, squalid, shoeless” (203c – d), this is how Socrates, in Diotima’s words, portrays *eros*. Now listen to how Apollodorus, recalling Aristodemus’ words at the beginning of the *Symposium*,

⁷⁴⁶ See Nails, who qualifies Diotima’s part in the *Symposium* thusly, “Thoughtless religious fervor is dangerous, a persistent and insidious kind of ignorance that leads to error and that can be perpetuated by priests and priestesses. In this context, Diotima is an ambiguous character” (“Tragedy Off-Stage” 201).

speaks about Socrates, “[F]reshly bathed and wearing fancy slippers, which was not Socrates’ usual way, ... [Socrates] was going now that he had become so beautiful” (174a). Festive Socrates is shod and bathed. By implication, Socrates’ usual looks are exactly like those of eros—squalid and unshod and “far from being tender and beautiful” (203c).⁷⁴⁷

The second substitution, the one between Socrates and Alcibiades, also turns on the matter of looks. Alcibiades, who speaks at length at the end of the *Symposium*, desires to “praise Socrates ... through likenesses. ... [T]he likeness will be for the sake of the truth, not for the sake of the laughable. I declare” (215a – b), says Alcibiades, “that he [Socrates] is most strictly like those silenuses that sit in the shops of herm sculptors, the ones that craftsmen make holding reed pipes or flutes; and if they are split in two and opened up, they show that they have images of gods within” (215b). The divinity that enthuses the ugly, unshod, and poor Socrates works over those to whom Socrates is attracted and turns them, his beloveds, into lovers of Socrates. Alcibiades connects Socrates’ silenic guise (τὸ σχῆμα αὐτοῦ τοῦτο οὐ σιληνῶδες, 216d) with the exchange of roles or places between the lover and the beloved; between Socrates and Alcibiades.⁷⁴⁸

Alcibiades says, “amazing is the power ... [that Socrates] has” (216c), because “his speeches too are most like silenuses when opened up. ... [T]hey ... first look

⁷⁴⁷ Note that one other unshod (ἀνυπόδητος, 173b) character in the dialogue is “Aristodemus, a Kydathenean ... one most in love with Socrates at that time” (173b).

⁷⁴⁸ Cf. Steven Berg’s, *Eros and the Intoxications of Enlightenment: On Plato’s Symposium*, where he proposes that Alcibiades’ “entire speech appears to have a structure mimicking the form of the Silenus statues” (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2010), 139. Berg elaborates, “Alcibiades begins and ends his account with the topic of Socrates’ speeches and makes central his account of Socrates’ deeds” (Ibid.).

altogether laughable. ... [T]he very hide of a hybristic satyr. ... But if one sees them opened up and gets oneself inside them, one will find ... that they are most divine” (221e – 222a).⁷⁴⁹ Alcibiades’ praise of Socrates is, as he says, “mixed [συμμείξας] in with ... blame” (222a). Alcibiades blames Socrates for his hubris (ὕβρισεν, 222a). Socrates is hubristic because he deceives young men like Alcibiades, Charmides,⁷⁵⁰ and Euthydemus, among many others (222a – b) “into thinking of him as the lover [ἐραστής while], he [Socrates] brings it out that he is the beloved [ἐραστός] rather than the lover [ἐραστής]” (222b). Alcibiades is emphatic that this substitution between the beloved and the lover or between Alcibiades and Socrates is no laughing matter.

Alcibiades has a point. The lover derives great pleasure from his erotic love. The beloved yields to the lover in a way prescribed by decency, but not in the way that is so often ridiculed in Aristophanes’ comedies and that is shamed in dialogues like the *Gorgias*, for instance. Yet, while yielding, the beloved is not supposed to feel the

⁷⁴⁹ Silenuses, customarily, accompany Dionysus. Ancient Greek pottery depicts many scenes in which Dionysus is celebrated and accompanied by silenuses.

⁷⁵⁰ Charmides, along with the other “three men of Scambonidae—Alcibiades III, Adeimantus, and Axiochus—were accused ... of having illegally performed the secret Eleusinian mysteries in the house of Olympieum belonging to Charmides” (Nails, *The People of Plato* 91). Anthony Everitt, who questions Alcibiades’ participation in the profanation of the mysteries (*The Rise of Athens* 335), also notes that once Alcibiades was again accepted into Athens (407BC, Everitt 366), he went out of his way to show respect for the Eleusinian mysteries. Everitt reports,

Since the Spartan occupation of Decelea, the annual procession from Athens to Eleusis to celebrate the Mysteries had had to travel by sea. This year Alcibiades led it along its traditional land route, escorted by troops. The Spartans did not react. It was a doubly symbolic gesture; it showed contempt for king Agis and his men and it gave Alcibiades an opportunity to show his reverence for the Mysteries, which he had been accused (falsely, he still claimed) of mocking. 366

titillating surge of erotic pleasure.⁷⁵¹ If Socrates tricks his beloveds into being lovers, into feeling and acting like ones, then Alcibiades correctly calls Socrates' actions and attitude outrageous. Of course, this is true only if the beloved, indeed, does not find pleasure in the lover's attention, caresses, and amorous adoration of himself. From Alcibiades' short exposition of the relationship between himself and the Athenian people (216a – c) we know this is not the case. The opposite holds true. Namely, it is the case that Alcibiades has “succumbed to the honor [he gets] ... from the many” (216b). In his craven love of the praises that the Athenians and others (Persians and Spartans, for example) offer to him, Alcibiades is like Callicles of the *Gorgias*, whom Socrates there calls the lover of the Athenian people (481d).

While with Socrates and while in conversation with him, Alcibiades is “ashamed” (αἰσχύνομαι, 216b) of himself. Alcibiades, like Callicles (*Gorgias* 495a – b), is ashamed because he is “incapable of contradicting” (216b) Socrates. Whereas, Callicles ought to stop claiming that all that is pleasurable is also good, Alcibiades ought to stop meddling in the affairs of the Athenians and, instead, should examine himself (216a). Both Alcibiades' and Callicles' shame has to do with the desire to close their eyes or, in

⁷⁵¹ However, consult Nails's “Tragedy Off-Stage,” where she explains that

Athenian citizen males did not marry until they were at least thirty, and the period of being an *erōmenos* was very short—adolescence to first beard. *Then* what for the next dozen years or more? [...] Whatever disapproval was expressed by the young man's parents or the laws, sexual relations between young men were an appropriate extension of the *eromenos* stage. 186

Alcibiades' case, stop his ears (216a),⁷⁵² when it comes to questioning the all-too-simple view of pleasure that each of the young men holds.

The reason why Alcibiades' attitude to pleasure is simplistic is the same reason why the third pair of subjects that are at stake in the *Symposium*, Alcibiades and tyranny, can be substituted for one another. Alcibiades ostensibly presents the beloved as someone who does not erotically enjoy the lover's fancy. However, this opinion is contradicted by Alcibiades' own actions.⁷⁵³ He flees [δραπετεύω, φεύγω, 216a – b] from Socrates into the arms of the many, who (at least for a time) adore him. Socrates' care, which makes the beloved realize that he is also, or even more so, a lover, does not take root. Alcibiades does not claim any serious responsibility for his actions toward those who honor him; toward his individual lovers or toward the many people whose attention he enjoys. He is not responsible for their troubles, nor for their suffering, because, for Alcibiades, like for Callicles, pleasure is all good. There is no pain in pleasure. Pain is a sure sign of someone-else's "overweening deed" (ὑπερήφανον, 217e), someone-else's misdoing, and someone-else's hubris.

Listen to Alcibiades when he pleads, "Take me, for instance. I was bitten by a more painful viper in the place that is most liable to pain—the heart or soul [τὴν καρδίαν γὰρ ἢ ψυχὴν] or whatever name it must have—bitten and struck by philosophical speeches" (218a). Alcibiades' complaint is that while he is listening to Socrates' speeches, he must accept the contradictory nature of his opinions. If Alcibiades seeks out and enjoys the love of the demos, then he cannot be simply a beloved. If he is a lover,

⁷⁵² Allusion to the *Odyssey* [XII.165 – 200] and to *Oedipus* (1386).

⁷⁵³ Everitt describes Alcibiades' shameless amorous escapades in *The Rise of Athens* 262.

then he is responsible for those who give him praise. Responsibility brings with it tough choices and the pain of possible rejection. However, there is no acknowledgement, on Alcibiades' part, that there is an intimate relationship between our pleasures and our pains. Alcibiades can dismiss this because he denies himself the time and practice it would take to realize not only that he yearns to be the beloved of the demos and, thus, is active in his enjoyment of the people's love, but also, and most significantly, that he loves being loved.

Alcibiades' most dominant, most readily exercised desire is all about *eros*'s action on itself. This love, which Socrates in the *Republic* calls "a great winged drone," (572e) is tyranny. Alcibiades himself is a tyrant. He is *eros* incarnate.⁷⁵⁴ Like the tyrant of the *Republic* or like the many tyrants of the *Gorgias*, Alcibiades takes no responsibility for his love of being loved. He loves for the sake of pleasure of *eros* and not at all for the sake of the beloved. Thus, desiring what the more mature lover desires, but behaving like the youthful beloved, Alcibiades is a picture of immaturity.

It is as if Alcibiades wishes to turn on its head the meaning of his stepfather Pericles' address to the Athenians. Pericles' speech is remembered as the Funeral Oration of 431BC.⁷⁵⁵ Instead of falling in love with Athens (ἐραστάς γυνόμενους)⁷⁵⁶ and being

⁷⁵⁴ Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* 133

⁷⁵⁵ The speech, as it is recorded by Thucydides, is likely a compilation of two different orations. It is rumored to have been composed by Aspasia, Pericles' lover. See Everitt's conjecture in *The Rise of Athens* 260 – 61. Cf. Plato's *Menexenus* 236b – d.

⁷⁵⁶ Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War* II.43.1, in *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*. Strassler B. R. ed. (New York, NY: Touchstone Publishing, 1998), 115. Cf. David Rosenbloom's remarks about the connection between Pericles' invocation to the Athenians and the dangers of the imperialism in "Empire and Its Discontents: Trojan Women, Birds, and the Symbolic Economy of Athenian Imperialism." *Bulletin of the*

willing to die for her, as Pericles entreats, Alcibiades wants the people to become his lover. Whether in love with him or not, many die on account of Alcibiades' actions.⁷⁵⁷ Even his hosts at the *Symposium* fare poorly.⁷⁵⁸ Alcibiades' Dionysian entrance in the dialogue—his taking on the persona of the god—give emphasis to the sacrilegious mutilation of the herms,⁷⁵⁹ which marks the historical date of the *Symposium*. Alcibiades' shameless sexual escapades, his flashy shield that sports not family insignia, but Eros wielding a thunder bolt, his tormented complaint about Socrates' rejection—all these bespeak Alcibiades' desire to embody love itself; to be Dionysus, to be eros.

Alcibiades' eroticism is very different from eros, which Seth Benardete understand as a condition of self-knowledge, namely, eros that reflects the beloved in the lover without the beloved's knowledge of there being any such reflection. Benardete's analysis of the *Phaedrus*, line 255d, articulates the “eros of the beloved [as] the experience of self-motion, and the condition for self-motion is self-ignorance. One moves toward oneself in the guise of another that is simultaneously the other in the guise of

Institute of Classical Studies. Supplement No. 87. Greek Drama III: Essays in Honor of David Lee. 2006 (245 – 71), 250.

⁷⁵⁷ Alcibiades rallies for the Sicilian expedition, but does not honor the lives of the Delian warriors lost during the campaign. He defects to Sparta and then to Persia, where he proceeds to scheme against the Peloponnesian cause.

⁷⁵⁸ The Sicilian expedition sets sail in 415BC, a day after the mutilation of the hermae and a year after the dramatic date of the *Symposium*. By the time that the *Symposium* is written (385 – 370BC) Phaedrus, Agathon, and Socrates are dead. Aristophanes dies in 386BC and Alcibiades is assassinated in 404BC. Little is known about how Pausanias and Eryximachus fared past the dramatic date of the dialogue. Eryximachus and Phaedrus were in exile after the mutilation of the hermae. Nails adds about Agathon and Pausanias that “they left Athens together permanently and joined the court at Macedonia in about 408” (“Tragedy Off-Stage” 205).

⁷⁵⁹ However, see Everitt, who claims that Alcibiades' “involvement [in sacrilege] is, in truth, most unlikely. To commit such a public outrage on the eve of his departure for Sicily would have been the height of stupidity—and whatever he else he was, Alcibiades was not stupid” (*The Rise of Athens* 335).

oneself.”⁷⁶⁰ If Alcibiades experiences anything of the sort, then his joyfully experience, when it comes to Socrates, at least, is quickly thwarted. He feels ashamed when Socrates is near. Alcibiades’ shame is not aroused by his youthful bashfulness, nor is it an effect of sexual fantasizing on his part. Alcibiades is ashamed of himself as he begins to see this self—in all its glory—through Socrates’ eyes. Alcibiades wants nothing to do with such an ignorance-dispelling spectacle. He is not interested in working through his shame so as to begin to move toward an understanding of himself.

To pay no mind to Dionysus or to discount eros, like Pentheus does in the *Bacchae* or like Cephalus does in the *Republic*, belies an attempt to control the god, who makes one lose all control (Pentheus). Alternatively, such an effort betrays a desire to have no erotic desires (Cephalus). Any such repression or discounting of human powerlessness and eroticism forecasts violence. The *Bacchae* ends in tragic terror. The *Republic*—in tyranny. However, how does Alcibiades’ flaunting of the erotic nature of the human being account for his tyranny and what does this kind of rampant eroticism have to do with political tyranny in Athens? The answers to these two questions have to do with the fourth and final substitution of the characters in the *Symposium*—tyranny and Dionysus.

In Alcibiades’ case, not the repression, but lack of accountability for his erotic, impassioned love of love, ends up as his antinomianism. To embody a god, after all, is to be higher than all human beings and to be free, in principle, from any human customs, mores, and laws. We see these unprincipled, if not uncontrolled, characteristics in

⁷⁶⁰ *Socrates and Plato: The Dialectics of Eros* (München: Carl Friedrich von Siemens Stiftung, 1999), 79.

Sophocles' *Oedipus*, who calls himself the “son of Fortune” (1080) and who is accused, by the chorus, of the kind of “hubris that begets tyranny” (873). The same disregard for all, including familial, relations makes Aristophanes' Pheidippides hedge on the verge of perversion as he beats his own father and threatens, in Oedipian fashion (1255 – 62), to harm his mother (*Clouds* 1440 – 45). All three (Alcibiades, Oedipus, and Pheidippides) do not so much as question the gods and their pronouncements (like Socrates does with Apollo), but disregard whatever laws and customs seem inconvenient at the time. There is an intimate relationship between the characters' respective claims to more than human knowledge⁷⁶¹ and their professed disavowal of the limits that are placed on human beings by laws and customs; human or divine.⁷⁶²

As a human being, who puts himself above or outside of humanity—as Alcibiades, who impersonates an unmasked god—the power of Dionysus erupts in violence and in tyranny. Alcibiades, the man who flaunts and pursues even his questionable desires, appears to skirt excessive Dionysian⁷⁶³ eroticism; the kind that has

⁷⁶¹ Consider Oedipus' jesting boast about his perspicacity and Tiresias's dimwittedness (395 – 399) and Pheidippides's disregard for the familial customs and his claim to the kind of knowledge that enables him to “look down on the established laws” (1400, 1420 – 25). Alcibiades, in the *Symposium*, professes a capacity to see into or, “inside” Socrates in a way that no one else can. He is promptly chided by Socrates for claiming this kind of perspicacity (216d – e, 218e – 219a).

⁷⁶² Oedipus' haughty identification with and disregard for the divine (1080 – 85, 964 – 72) and Pheidippides's hubristic discrediting of the “Ancestral Zeus” and his power (1469) are part and parcel of the characters' transgressions against their families and against the laws of the polis. Victoria Wohl describes Alcibiades' antinomianism in *Love Among the Ruins: The Erotics of Democracy in Classical Athens* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 138, 157.

⁷⁶³ Pheidippides does not recognize “ancestral Zeus” (Δία πατρώον, 1469) when he calls his father “ancient” (ἀρχαῖος, 1469), but avows that he “wouldn't do injustice to [his] ... teachers” (οὐκ ἂν ἀδικήσαιμι τοὺς διδασκάλους, 1466). At the beginning of the play, Pheidippides first swears “by this Poseidon of horses” (84), but when his father begs him not to swear by the god who is “responsible for [his, Strepsiades's,] ... evils” (85), Pheidippides agrees to “obey, by Dionysus” (91). The only other two personages, who swear by Dionysus in the *Clouds*, are

its place in celebrations dedicated to the god, but not in everyday life. The upshot of living one's life as if it were a ceaseless Dionysian revelry, the collateral damage of living shamelessly, that is, is that Alcibiades uses his talents (his persuasiveness, aptness in politics and in battle, his charisma) to attain his selfish ends and only incidentally to benefit Athens. A sign or a symptom of his times, Alcibiades stands in for its terror. He is an image of a monstrous contradiction, which is expressed as the finite being's attempt to resolve the necessarily contradictory nature of life and to embody—perfectly and completely—the limitless force of eros. Reflected back into the Athenians, the image looks like an inversion of the one that Pericles proposed.⁷⁶⁴ Albeit, it may be the case that the inverted image first appears because of what men, like Pericles, seek to awaken in the people.⁷⁶⁵ Thucydides captures the look of fantastic passion when he writes about the proposed Sicilian expedition that “All alike fell in love [ἔρως] with the sailing campaign” (VI.24.3).

Note that, unlike Pericles' eros, which ought to make everyone into the lovers of Athens, Thucydides' eros describes all as being in love with war. Thucydides tells us about people's motivations. He says that the old seek to subdue the rebels, those in their prime want to sail for the sake of seeing spectacles and sights (ἡλικία τῆς τε ἀπούσης

Aristophanes, himself, in the guise of the leading Cloud of the chorus (519) and the Unjust Speech (1000).

⁷⁶⁴ Cf. Wohl's account of Alcibiades' ploy to make “himself a reflection of every man's desire” (*Love Among the Ruins* 135).

⁷⁶⁵ In the context of Pericles' influence on the Athenians, consider Thucydides' description of the man and the state at the time when it “became a democracy only in word, but in deed—it was ruled by the foremost man” (II.65.9, author's translation), i.e., by Pericles. Cf. Proclus' account of Pericles' influence on Alcibiades in *Proclus: Alcibiades I: Translation and Commentary*. O'Neill, W. trans. (Netherlands: Martin Nijhoff, The Hague Publishing, 1965), <115>/75.

πόθῳ ὄψεως καὶ θεωρίας), and the many of the poorer folk think that the victory will bring unlimited (αἰδίων) recourses.

The motivation of the many and of the powerful is especially instructive. There is no such thing as unlimited recourses. But, as Socrates informs us in Book II of the *Republic*, there is such a thing as the desire to have more than what is necessary and that desire can be unlimited or ἄπειρον (373d). As in historical ancient Greece, so also in the *Republic*, there is little that separates unlimited desire from expansionist war. The reason Thucydides cites for the warlike eros of the fittest—for the aggressive, rampant eros,⁷⁶⁶ which is infused with *thumos* through and through—is the want (πόθος) of ὄψις and θεωρία. The best did the opposite of that for which Pericles had hoped. Instead of “feeding, day by day, their eyes on Athens” (τῆς πόλεως ... καθ’ ἡμέραν ἔργῳ θεωμένων, II.43.1) as Pericles encouraged, the bold grew bored with the Athenian sights. Not on a θεωρία marked by sacred peace, as that which travelled from Athens to Delphi during the winter months sacred to Dionysus, but on a warmongering mission,

⁷⁶⁶ Eruption of what Nails refers to as “religious hysteria” (416BC) and “religious backlash” (399BC, “Tragedy Off-Stage 200 – 201”), can be associated with the arousal of rampant eroticism skirted by those Athenians who, against good council and against prudence, covet the spoils of expansionist war. The outbreak of the war-mongering eros, in its turn, can be seen as a terrible face of Dionysus or as Dionysus’ violent mask. Nails goes on to describe the time following the profanation of the Eleusinian mysteries as

a time of mass religious hysteria in Athens. In addition to tortures and summary executions in the early days (some in error), and regular executions later, there were about fifty men who fled Athens and were sentenced to death in *absentia*. All lost their property and citizenship, all their families were affected, and none returned before 407, if then. 204

they set sail for Sicily. The disastrous expedition, for which Alcibiades advocates,⁷⁶⁷ sows panic among Athenians and their allies and is a certain sign of the decline of the Athenian strength. This is the situation in 413BC.⁷⁶⁸

By the year 406BC,⁷⁶⁹ when Aristophanes' *Frogs* depicts an anxious Dionysus and his Heracleian labors—descent into Hades and search for better tragedians—the fate of the great polis is sealed. Athens is all but fallen. What does the comic poet see? What do we hear as we let Aristophanes' verses resonate with the words of Plato's characters as we seek to account for tyranny, for rampant eros, and for the disasters of war?

Leo Strauss contends that Aristophanes understands a thing or two about eros. Strauss sees "Aristophanean comedies [as being] ... dedicated to the praises of Aphrodite and Dionysus, or the praise of *eros*."⁷⁷⁰ Aristophanes' Dionysus, in the *Frogs*, is a self-

⁷⁶⁷ Everitt offsets the gravity of Alcibiades' involvement in the Athenian military fiascos by framing these in terms of historical circumstances that are outside of Alcibiades' power. For example, Everitt conjectures,

If only Alcibiades had been allowed to retain his command; if only Nicias had put his shoulder to the wheel, had not been foolishly superstitious; above all, if only Lamachus had been allowed to launch an attack on Syracuse immediately on arrival, as he wished—with a reasonable degree of diligence all would have been well. *The Rise of Athens* 350 – 51.

⁷⁶⁸ Everitt gives a sense of the energy that was amassed to counterbalance the Sicilian disaster. He writes about the preparations for the Athenian victory at Arginusae—the victory that followed Alcibiades' failed attempt to win against Spartan Lysander at sea in 406BC—that these took a "tremendous effort" (*The Rise of Athens* 369). Callicratidas, Lysander's successor, had the Athenian fleet in a tight spot at Mytilene in 406BC. In response, Athenian "Conon managed to sneak one ship out to report to Athens and ask for more ships. ... Slaves were freed to row in the fleet and even the aristocrats in the cavalry knuckled down as oarsmen. One hundred and ten warships were built and manned. The allies contributed forty more, including ten from still loyal Samos" (369).

⁷⁶⁹ Nails points out that the "play was first performed following the Naval disaster at Aegospotami" ("Tragedy Off-Stage 205").

⁷⁷⁰ "The Origins of Political Science and the Problem of Socrates" 157.

professed pervert. He is a voyeuristic lecher (541 – 44). Alcibiades, whom we see in the *Frogs*, is the object of the city’s fascination and of the citizen’s obsessive hate and love (1421 – 26). Athens, itself, is a raging lion.⁷⁷¹ The unprincipled demagogue Cleon seconds this opinion about Athenians’ tyrannical temper that Aristophanes’ Aeschylus presents.

In the *Frogs*, the worth of the dramatic art is being measured by the same measure used to weigh grain, spices, and coin (ταλάντῳ μουσικὴ σταθμῆσεται, 797). The win of either Aeschylus’ or Euripides’ stanzas depends on the precise work of a measuring scale. As it is with Dioscorides, the first epigrammatic poet active in the third century BC, so also with Aristophanes, Euripidean art loses and Aeschylus’ wins. Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, at the dusk of Athens, just as Dioscorides’ epigrams to Sophocles, at dawn of Roman dominion in Greece, call for a return to former principles and to former glory. Euripides’ near-skeptical view of things will not do. Aristophanes’ Euripides advises us to “put faith in the faithful and [stop] ... having faith in the faithless. ... [To stop] trusting the citizens we’re trusting and [begin] ... trusting the citizens we don’t” (1446 – 48). The image of the city’s flip-flopping would have been funny were it not so obviously and so ruinously true.

On its surface, the *Frogs*, like its much later epigrammatic counterpart, concludes with an attempt to save the polis. Aeschylus’ victory stands for a movement from

⁷⁷¹ Cf. Aristophanes’ *Ecclesiazusae* 1040 – 42, where a young woman cries out “ἐπεὶ μήτηρ ἂν αὐτῷ μᾶλλον εἴη ἢ γυνή. ὥστ’ εἰ καταστήσεσθε τοῦτον τὸν νόμον, τὴν γῆν ἅπασαν Οἰδιπόδων ἐμπλήσετε.” As far as this comedic scene is concerned, rule by women is bound to be as fraught with odd perversities as the assembly and the state run by men. Those in power are liable to be or to become corrupt, regardless of their gender.

anarchy, ἀναρχία, to ἀναρχαῖζω—to the former ways of tragic and political art. However serious the message of the *Frogs*, it is a comedy. Aeschylus, too, is being ridiculed.⁷⁷²

Instructed by Pluto to dispose of certain men on earth (1500 – 1514), Aeschylus bequeaths his spot in the underworld to Sophocles (1514 – 27). Why does not tragedy stand a chance with Aristophanes? Do his comedies, while laughing at the tragedians, sound, also, tragic notes, and thereby, relay serious reflections?

If we take Aeschylus of the *Frogs* to stand in for the kind of zealous, pro-Achaean sentiment that Pericles' Funeral Oration seeks to set ablaze and which Aristophanes' Just Speech in the *Clouds* miserably fails to awaken, then we discern one path that the tyrannical eros takes. High-minded aspirations and nationalistic fervor unite and elevate the spirit. Such sentiments enthuse the heart with great pride. However, these are not tyrannical in their own right. They only become so if we forget that we, as well as Plato's images, are a part of the theater of life. The “best regime” (462e) and the “perfectly just man” (472c), the “guardian dogs” (450e) and the “tyrannical pomp set up as a façade for those outside” of the *Republic* (577a); as well as those Athenians who, against all odds, deflect aggressors from Atlantis, in the *Timaeus* (25b – c); and “the web [ὕφασματος] of political action” (311b) in the *Statesman*; just as the “corruption of one's soul ... most shameful ... and astounding badness” (477d – e) and the rather painful treatments that Socrates prescribes against such a blight in the *Gorgias*—these are all distillations.

Unless we study them as we would study scenes and characters of drama, unless we

⁷⁷² Aristophanes' masterful, if also dangerous, ridicule of Socrates appears not only in the *Clouds*, but also in the *Frogs* (1491 – 99), and Aristophanes attacks “Socrates in 414 in *Birds* too (1280–1283, 1553–1555)” (Nails, “Tragedy Off-Stage 205”).

theorize theatrically, that is, we limit ourselves to a merely outward appearance of things. If, as Benardete puts it, “Platonic writing [is] an imitation of the trapdoor in nature,”⁷⁷³ then taking the ostensibly prescriptive passages at face value, we make sure that we remain trapped. Plato weaves his dialogues as well as their more refined, more archetypal figures out of life’s action, which is, then, sequenced through his thinking, and which we weave back into life.

Actions of life, philosophical reflection, and theatrical drama are entwined. This is another reason why comedy, as it perforates the idealistic sentiments,⁷⁷⁴ however justified a given sort of idealism may be, and as it induces self-ridicule, is much more serious and more important to philosophy than first meets the eye. Comedy gives to us signs of a tragic future, a future that always follows suit, unless we curb our enthusiasm for self-aggrandizement—whether we speak of one’s own self or of one’s family, of one’s collaborative group or of one’s state, or even of one’s ideas. Comic self-ridicule is a practice attendant upon our capacity to know ourselves and that includes, also, at least an intimation of knowing when to stop.

⁷⁷³ *Encounters and Reflections* 127.

⁷⁷⁴ Cf. Strauss, “The Origins of Political Science and the Problem of Socrates.” There, his interpretation of the *Republic* supports my claim. Strauss writes that the “action of the *Republic* can be said to consist in first arousing spiritedness or the virtue belonging to it, that is to say, zeal dedicated to non-understood justice, that is, what we now mean by political idealism, and then purging it” (192).

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