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EMOTION IN PLATO'S TRIAL OF SOCRATES

by

THOMAS WILLIAM MOODY

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Classics in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2022

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Emotion in Plato's Trial of Socrates

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Thomas William Moody

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Classics in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## Abstract

Emotion in Plato's Trial of Socrates

by

Thomas William Moody

Advisor: Peter Simpson

My dissertation argues that Plato composed the figure of Socrates as a three-dimensional literary character who experiences and confronts emotions in ways that other studies have overlooked. By adopting a dramatic, non-dogmatic mode of reading the dialogues and emphasizing the literary elements of the texts and their dramatic connections, this dissertation offers a new and compelling portrait of Socrates in the dialogues that relate his final weeks of life: *Theaetetus*, *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*. This study in turn provides new insights into the genre of Plato's texts and demonstrates how he exploited the dramatic nature of the prose dialogue to capture social-historical realities surrounding the trial and execution of Socrates. By emphasizing emotional and interpersonal aspects of Plato's texts, my dissertation shows that Plato's dialogues are profitably read through a literary lens to recover their complex reconstruction of Socrates' place and time in history.

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To the other members of my dissertation committee. David Schur's book on the *Republic* is a formidable study of theoretical approaches to reading Plato as literature and provided an excellent model for my own research. His comments were both insightful and practical and greatly improved the quality of my work. Gerald Press is a pioneer in non-dogmatic interpretation of Plato; the works that he has written and edited have edified my theoretical foundation and made me a far more careful and thorough reader of the dialogues. David Konstan generously agreed to serve as an outside reader; his "Grief and Mourning" seminar at NYU set me on the path to reading emotions in the *Phaedo*, and his formidable body of research on the emotions in classical literature opened an entirely new way of understanding texts.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction and Critical Approaches

Socrates was tried for impiety and condemned to death by a jury of his Athenian peers in 399 BC. His was one of a flurry of trials just after the Peloponnesian War, and other prominent intellectuals also faced impiety charges under the Athenian democracy.<sup>1</sup> Of these, Socrates' trial has left the most indelible mark because "Plato's [account] has become philosophy's founding myth and has immortalized Socrates in the popular imagination as a man of profound moral strength and intelligence – though also as a uniquely peculiar and inscrutable individual."<sup>2</sup> Plato's depiction immortalized Socrates to such an extent, in fact, that Martin Luther King, Jr., found in Socrates a model of someone who "felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal."<sup>3</sup> King's remark cuts to the heart of my focus – the emotional impact of Socrates' words and actions in the critical final weeks of his life.

The trial of Socrates has of course inspired an immense secondary literature. Still, the five dialogues in which Plato narrates the trial – *Theaetetus*, *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo* – deserve fresh scholarly treatment as a literary whole. These five dialogues – setting aside the intervention of the *Sophist* and *Statesman* between *Theaetetus* and *Euthyphro* because Socrates does not feature as a main speaker – comprise a continuous presentation of the stages in Socrates' trial and represent a significant portion of the

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<sup>1</sup> Nails (2006, p. 5) writes of "a wave of religious fundamentalism that brought with it a steep rise in the number of impiety cases in Athenian courts" in 399 BC. Anaxagoras, meanwhile, most likely faced the same charge in or around 429 BC, and Theophrastus was acquitted of impiety charges in the late fourth century (Allen 2010, p. 12).

<sup>2</sup> Nails (2006), p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> King, Jr. (1964), p. 80.

Platonic corpus. Because they feature emotion-laden moments in Socrates' life and take special care in preserving his legacy, they are fertile ground for a study of the emotions in relation to Socratic discourse and inquiry. The status of emotions, moreover, is a worthy area of study because "there is no monograph on either affectivity in general or particular emotions in Plato."<sup>4</sup> This dissertation does not endeavor to fill that gap entirely, but my sustained study of the emotions that are central to these dialogues aims to make a contribution. My reading complicates our view of Plato's Socrates and aims to reach a better appreciation of his private affective states, the centrality of emotions to his philosophic activity, and the role that emotions played in his trial and condemnation. I argue that Plato's careful construction of emotions reveals not that he was indifferent to or looked negatively upon affectivity but rather demonstrates an insightful grasp of the "holistic thought-feeling picture" of the human psyche.<sup>5</sup> My project looks to build upon the growing "dramatic, non-dogmatic" method of Platonic study and uncover literary and social-historical dimensions of the dialogues.<sup>6</sup> Candiotta and Renaut (2020) argue that "in Plato's dialogues, emotions are *embodied* in characters" and that Socrates "may be the first character with which a philosophic survey of emotions in Plato should start."<sup>7</sup> Vasiliou makes a compelling case for such an approach to reading the dialogues:

"The almost ubiquitous idea, both in specialist and non-specialist literature, that Socrates' commitment to virtue means that he ought not to care at all about living or dying, his children, pleasure, money, and so on makes an implausible mess of his position... Indeed, if you exclude living

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<sup>4</sup> Zaborowski (2012), p. 142. 2020 saw the publication of Brill's excellent collected volume *Emotions in Plato*, edited by Candiotta and Renaut, but the emotions in Plato remain an area worthy of study.

<sup>5</sup> Zaborowski (2016), p. 88.

<sup>6</sup> Press (1993), p. 107 ff., defines a "dramatic, non-dogmatic" approach to Platonic interpretation as one that accounts for all the elements that Plato deliberately includes in his compositions, including dramatic features, and reads the dialogues as Plato presents them to us, without imputing his meaning or intentions.

<sup>7</sup> Candiotta and Renaut (2020), p. 3.

and dying, pain and suffering, loss of property and reputation, how would you ever determine what was virtuous in the first place?"<sup>8</sup>

To shed light on the importance of emotions in Socrates' trial, I examine an emotionally complex Socrates and situate him in the social and philosophic context of the world that Plato creates in these dramas. Socrates emerges as a psychically authentic figure with real-world concerns, personal and civic, that influence his philosophic activity.

### **1. Trends in Platonic scholarship**

Since the early nineteenth century, the dominant approach to the Platonic corpus has been a chronological one in which scholars attempt by various methods to arrange the dialogues by date of composition.<sup>9</sup> In the long history of Platonic readership, however, the chronological approach is new and treats the dialogues in a way that virtually no readers had done before. A chronological reading is potentially valuable in that it would allow scholars to trace the development of Plato's thought over the course of his career, but it is also a methodology fraught with difficulties.<sup>10</sup> Although some scholars since the 1980s have begun to confront the problems of the method and abandon compositional chronology, Press notes that chronology remains both popular and intrusively influential on attempts at what he terms "dramatic, non-dogmatic interpretations."<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, there have been many significant contributions in recent

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<sup>8</sup> Vasiliou (2014), p. 608.

<sup>9</sup> Altman (2010), p. 18.

<sup>10</sup> Howland (1991) lays out several of these difficulties, not least of which is the ancient evidence concerning Plato's compositional habits. Of the few surviving pieces of ancient evidence, the comment made by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Comp.* 25) that Plato continued to revise his dialogues until his death is most damaging to the assertions that the chronology can be determined and provides the best sequence in which to study the dialogues.

<sup>11</sup> Press (1993), p. 107.

decades to a model of interpreting the dialogues that likely comports more closely with Plato's compositional design.

A related and equally enduring thread of scholarship, championed by venerable figures such as Taylor, Guthrie, and Vlastos, has maintained that within the Platonic corpus we find "Socratic dialogues" and "Platonic dialogues." The view holds that it is possible to derive from the "early" dialogues an historical account of the thoughts and actions of Socrates himself while, from the remaining dialogues, we discern Plato's more developed personal thoughts, although he continues to use the dramatic figure Socrates to voice these views. The position of these scholars also has methodological strikes against it. First, the premise that some dialogues expound Socrates' ideas while others relate Plato's is a consequence of the dubious chronological divisions of earlier scholars.<sup>12</sup> The view then falls into a circularity trap, since it relies on its premise of a chronological division to confirm its conclusion that the "early" dialogues belong to the "Socratic" period while the middle and late dialogues feature the thought of Plato.

Brickhouse and Smith (1989) begin their monograph on the *Apology* with a useful discussion of the ongoing debate on the historical accuracy of that text. The authors note a range of positions on the question, from a hardline historical view to the "fiction theory."<sup>13</sup> Vlastos is likely the most extreme of the historical interpreters; Brickhouse and Smith summarize Vlastos's view as follows: "Since Plato witnessed the trial, the emotionally charged atmosphere 'must have branded these words into his mind.'"<sup>14</sup> The consequence of such a view is that Vlastos and others see the *Apology* as the earliest composed dialogue and the one which confirms the existence of a "Socratic" corpus and

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<sup>12</sup> Kahn (1996), ch. 2, provides a through history of the development of Platonic chronologies.

<sup>13</sup> While Brickhouse and Smith are ultimately dismissive of the "fiction theory," they identify several scholars as having held this view, including Dion. Hal. (*Rhet.* 8 and 12), Shorey, and Friedländer.

<sup>14</sup> Vlastos (1971), p. 4, quoted in Brickhouse and Smith (1989), p. 3.

“Platonic” corpus within the texts of Plato. The other extreme, “the fiction theory,” holds that Plato’s *Apology* is entirely fictitious and we can know from Plato’s text nothing of what the historical Socrates said or thought. Instead, the Socrates in Plato’s texts is a dramatic emblem of the philosophic life in general, a personification of the principles for which Plato’s Socrates argues.<sup>15</sup> Brickhouse and Smith settle on what they take to be the consensus view, which we might call the weak historical view. Allowing for modifications, flourishes, and revisions, Brickhouse and Smith hold that the *Apology* of Plato does give us access to the historical Socrates and the facts concerning his trial.<sup>16</sup>

These related points of view come to bear on the dialogues under consideration in the present discussion because (1) a chronological view would group *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Euthyphro* as early or “Socratic” dialogues, *Phaedo* as a middle dialogue, and *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman* as late dialogues<sup>17</sup>; and (2) since the dialogues come from different periods of Plato’s literary activity, the Socrates we find in each text, or at least in the middle and late examples, should be altogether different from the supposedly genuinely historical Socrates of the early examples. The dramatic approach that I apply to these dialogues works regardless of when Plato wrote each one. Since he deliberately fashioned them as a dramatic sequence, the chronology of composition should not be determinative of their interpretation.

Schur’s 2014 study *Plato’s Wayward Path: Literary Form and the Republic* provides in its first three chapters an indispensable study of modern Platonic scholarship and its limitations. Schur identifies Tennemann (1792) and Schleiermacher (1804) as the first

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<sup>15</sup> Brickhouse and Smith (1989), pp. 4-6.

<sup>16</sup> Brickhouse and Smith (1989), pp. 9-10.

<sup>17</sup> Proponents of chronological groupings would universally agree that the dialogues under consideration belong to these respective periods; the order in which such scholars arrange the dialogues within each of the three divisions, however, varies greatly. Kahn (1996) also mentions that *Crito* has been dismissed as spurious by a not insignificant number of scholars.

modern scholars of Plato and credits Schleiermacher especially for his “holistic” attention to the text.<sup>18</sup> While Schleiermacher and many more recent scholars recognized the nexus between the dialogic form and the intellectual content of Plato’s writings, however, Schur posits that a more literary examination of the texts may yield a more coherent interpretation of dialogues themselves. On the other hand, Schur writes that “modern interest in the Schriftlichkeit of the dialogues, driven by a desire to recover Plato’s authentic philosophical purposes, tends to adopt an instrumentalist and teleological view of textuality, which paradoxically abandons the written form in favor of a stable Platonic lesson plan.”<sup>19</sup> Schur further notes that “avowedly literary approaches to Plato have remained largely focused on the didactic function of the literary form. The need for fuller consideration of nonexpository functions of literary form in Plato remains.”<sup>20</sup>

Schur instead pursues an interpretative framework that retains the literariness of Plato’s literary elements. Rather than attempt to explain how texts that “challenge our philosophic methods of reading insofar as statements made in them are sometimes inconsistent; arguments, unruly; positions, abandoned”<sup>21</sup> can in fact point toward a fixed system of thought that lies hidden within or beyond them, Schur adopts an approach that traces and explores literary themes as Plato’s texts develop them. By pursuing an interpretation that is anchored in the text, as opposed to presupposing some unarticulated purpose that lies beneath it, “reading becomes a dynamic balance of attention and inattention,

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<sup>18</sup> Schur (2014), pp. 3-12. Schur writes that Tennemann found the dramatic aspects of Plato’s texts to be an “aesthetic indulgence, ultimately inessential and potentially distracting” from the fundamental content of the texts.

<sup>19</sup> Schur (2014), p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> Schur (2014), p. 38.

<sup>21</sup> Schur (2014), p. 9.

rather than a search for hidden meanings or covert authorial agendas.”<sup>22</sup> Schur’s observations, I believe, provide valuable insights into the dominant and possible ways of reading and interpreting Plato’s texts.

The dialogues that I examine have been studied as a dramatic sequence, although with different points of emphasis, in Howland’s 1998 work *The Paradox of Political Philosophy*, in which he treats eight dialogues as a chronological sequence; these are: *Theaetetus*; *Sophist*; *Statesman*; *Euthyphro*; *Cratylus*; *Apology*; *Crito*; and *Phaedo*.<sup>23</sup>

Howland’s central question is how Plato re-stages the trial of Socrates as presented in *Apology* as a longer debate with variously capable interlocutors on the value of philosophy itself. However, Howland does not offer an extended study of either the *Crito* or *Phaedo*, and he treats the *Apology* as a starting point for his discussion. Chapters two and three focus on the preliminaries of and the digression in *Theaetetus*; he then turns to *Euthyphro* and *Cratylus* in chapters four and five and concludes with chapters on *Sophist* and *Statesman*. His work is thorough, engaging, and a valuable methodological template because “scholarly attempts to deal with more than a few Platonic dialogues at one time are uncommon. So, too, are readings that take as their object a dramatic series of dialogues.”<sup>24</sup> Where my present study differs from his, however, is in the particular dialogues from this set on which I plan to focus my attention. Because my central interest is in the dramatic portraiture of Socrates, I give

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<sup>22</sup> Schur (2014), p. 44.

<sup>23</sup> Howland’s inclusion of the *Cratylus* in this dramatic sequence follows a strand of scholarship beginning with Burnet that takes the conversation alluded to at 396d in the *Cratylus* to be the *Euthyphro*. Nails, however, rejects this reading and places the dramatic date of *Cratylus* at ≤422 B.C.: “Attempts to set the dialogue nearer *Euthyphro*, taking the conversation represented in *Euthyphro* to be the very one mentioned in *Cratylus* (396d), have foundered” (Nails (2002), p. 313). If Nails is correct, and I find her argument persuasive, then the inclusion of *Cratylus* as a major piece of the dramatic sequence will lead the overall trajectory of Howland’s argument to different conclusions.

<sup>24</sup> Howland (1998), p. viii.

little attention to the content of *Sophist* and *Statesman*, where the Eleatic Stranger is the main speaker.

## 2. *Sokratikoi logoi* and literary theory

The towering legacy of Plato and the dearth of extant works from other Socratic authors sometimes leads scholars interested in Socrates to take Plato's works as definitive.<sup>25</sup> In Plato's own lifetime, however, his was but one voice competing to memorialize Socrates in prose literature and may not yet have been the best known.<sup>26</sup> From Aristotle we receive the name *Sokratikoi logoi* as a constituent of the "genre of literature that is the mimesis of a philosophical life."<sup>27</sup> Aristotle counted the mimes of Sophron alongside the *Sokratikoi logoi* in this nameless poetic genre, and the ancient tradition holds that Plato was fondly attached to Sicilian mime.<sup>28</sup> Whether or not Plato drew inspiration from Sophron, however, it is clear that the type of prose mimetic literature identified by Aristotle as *Sokratikoi logoi* predate Plato's contributions to the genre, and may even predate the imitation of Socrates.<sup>29</sup> Clay suggests that Aristophanes' *Clouds* should be regarded as the first example of "Socratic dialogue," despite its metrical form.<sup>30</sup> Aristophanes and the other Attic comics recognized the "rich potential Socrates provided for a burlesque of intellectual life in Athens of the 420s."<sup>31</sup> Although the literary depiction of Socrates emerged before his death, his execution allowed further

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<sup>25</sup> Ford (2010), p. 221.

<sup>26</sup> Clay (1994), p. 28.

<sup>27</sup> Clay (1994), p. 23. Cf. Ar. *Poet.* 1, 1447b11.

<sup>28</sup> Clay (1994), p. 34.

<sup>29</sup> Ford (2010), pp. 225-27. Athenaeus names Alexamenus of Teos as the inventor of the genre, although he certainly would not have written about Socrates. That Aristotle applies the name *Sokratikoi logoi* to prose mimetic literature more broadly is attested by the fact that he counts the *Laws*, in which Socrates does not feature, among "οί τοῦ Σωκράτους λόγοι" (*Pol.* 1265a11).

<sup>30</sup> Clay (1994), pp. 37-8.

<sup>31</sup> Clay (1994), p. 40.



generic developments at which Plato excelled. Momigliano writes that “the Socratics experimented in biography, and the experiments were directed towards capturing the potentialities of individual lives.”<sup>32</sup> Following Socrates’ death, that potentiality lay in imagining how events could have turned out differently, and in his dialogues Plato “worked with a myth well known to his contemporaries in the fourth century – the myth of Socrates’ life.”<sup>33</sup> Plato became master of the *Sokratikos logos* because he best exploited character, time, and space to transport his readers into a fictive world where “the actors in the events they narrate or dramatize were unaware of the full implications of their words and actions.”<sup>34</sup>

Dorion (2013) credits Joël (1893-1901) with another observation vital to the interpretation of Plato’s dialogue. Joël departed from Schleiermacher (1818 et al.) and subsequent nineteenth-century scholars who discounted the worth of Xenophon’s Socratic writings in search of an historical Socrates. By engaging seriously with Xenophon, Joël came to believe that all literary depictions of Socrates are “historical fiction.”<sup>35</sup> We should not regard the competing literary constructions of Socrates in antiquity as more or less historically faithful; the question is undeniably intriguing, but our dearth of extant examples of *Sokratikoi logoi* render a creditable search for the “real Socrates” impossible.<sup>36</sup> The category of historical fiction does well to capture Aristotle’s meaning when he classified the *Sokratikoi logoi* as a genre of poetry that does not employ

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<sup>32</sup> Momigliano (1971), p. 46.

<sup>33</sup> Momigliano (1971), p. 44.

<sup>34</sup> Momigliano (1971), p. 46.

<sup>35</sup> Dorion (2013), p. 209: “Les historiens de la philosophie reconnaissent de plus en plus le caractère fictif (ou, si l’on préfère, fictionnel) des dialogues socratiques...”

<sup>36</sup> Kahn (1996) and Döring (1992) are two recent examples of the many scholars who regard *Apology* as the most historically faithful of Plato’s texts. Vlastos (1991) argues that, since *Apology* was likely the first text Plato wrote, Plato would have shied away from adding any fictive flourishes or otherwise making significant changes to the actual words of Socrates’ speech. Such claims, however, rely merely on supposition.

music or meter. For Aristotle, the defining characteristic of poetry was not form but content emerging from artistic imagination. Socratic texts are historical because they represent the thoughts and actions of real people, but they also become fictive once their authors begin to represent imagined encounters, anachronistic settings, or undocumented conversations. The skill with which an author captures real words, thoughts, and actions contributes an element of social realism which is vital to the text's dramatic effect.

The *Sokratikos logos* is also a form of drama that invites audience participation. Plato's dialogues often involve layers of memory and recitation, and their audiences are similarly complex. In considering the texts' audiences, we should think of two distinct sets: the internal audience, comprised of characters in the text witnessing and sometimes contributing to the discussion; and the external audience, comprised of Plato's readers. Each elenctic encounter, therefore, includes a public dimension, even those with private dramatic settings.<sup>37</sup> The quasi-historical nature of the dialogues already entails asymmetrical knowledge in that the reader possesses foreknowledge that the characters lack. Drawing attention to emotions explicitly in the dialogue reinforces this effect; before the guilty verdict is rendered, for example, the reader may be inclined to hope for Socrates to be acquitted, an experience that conflicts with the secure knowledge that he will be condemned. The *Sokratikos logos* therefore is not merely an art form that records Socrates' conversations; it is an essential feature that the audience feels as well as understands the trajectory of the discourse.

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<sup>37</sup> Dorion (2007) distinguishes between «*elenchos dialectique*», which targets the interlocutor, and «*elenchos rhétorique*», which targets the audience. Candiotta (2014) argues that all dialogues have a rhetoric context of which Socrates is aware, and for this reason uses the term «*elenchos public*».

If the dialogues are intended to provoke affective responses in the readers, they also allow the audience to participate in the conversation and find success where the characters fail. Press explains that the dramatic form of the *Sokratikos logos* entails enactment in two senses of the word.<sup>38</sup> First, as plays, the dialogic form causes its reader to enact the parts through the process of reading. At a deeper level, the dialogues enact philosophy by reproducing in their readers the characters' experiences. Press captures the effect well:

The dialogues create these experiences, wishes and feelings because they operate through the imagination and emotions as well as through intellect. Statements and arguments operate primarily on the mind, on the intellectual or rational level of our experience. The dialogues create effects in and through the imaginations and emotions of the readers as much as, sometimes even more than, through reason or intellect.<sup>39</sup>

Regarding *Sokratikoi logoi* as a genre of historical fiction also entails regarding them as works of literary fiction rather than historical narration. Studying Socrates' emotions in Plato's dialogues, and regarding them as distinct from any theoretical exposition about the proper function of the emotions, thus fits into an established framework of narratology. Even in the *Apology*, which takes the form of an oral recitation, Plato knew the outcome of the trial as he composed his representation of Socrates' defense. The deliberate composition allows him to develop non-linear thematic connections and develop Socrates as a "character known to his narrator as no real person can be known to a real speaker."<sup>40</sup> A close reading of the text as literature also immerses us in an imagined world where the speakers' minds "can be known in ways that those of real persons cannot."<sup>41</sup> Understanding the dialogues as Plato's contribution to a literary

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<sup>38</sup> Press (2007), pp. 3-4.

<sup>39</sup> Press (2007), pp. 138-39.

<sup>40</sup> Cohn (1990), p. 785.

<sup>41</sup> Cohn (1990), p. 785.

movement may also help to decouple Plato's literary Socrates from the pursuit of philosophic doctrine, whether Socrates' or Plato's. Socrates stands as a literary character on his own and need not represent or stand in for Plato. Critical philosophic questions and potential solutions are posed throughout Plato's dialogues, and it is both valid and worthwhile to examine the merits of the theories expounded by Plato's speakers. A holistic approach to the dialogues, however, should recognize that the dramatic nature of each dialogue may influence the style and strength of the arguments. Since Plato represents characters engaging in philosophy, the affective states indicated in and arising from the discourse should be taken as integral to *Sokratikoi logoi*.

### **3. The study of emotions in Plato and Athenian public life**

Scholars of emotion in Plato generally pursue one of two objectives – either to provide a comprehensive theory of the role of emotions in Plato's moral psychology or to explain how Plato understands specific emotions in particular dialogic contexts. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* can fairly be judged as the first attempt at a systematic treatment of the emotions in Greek philosophy, and Plato's disparate treatments of emotion therefore has received less critical attention.<sup>42</sup> One challenge with studying emotion in Plato and Greek authors in general is the absence of a term that corresponds to the Latinate emotion. Studying emotions across cultural and temporal barriers is no easy task, and this is especially true in the case of Plato, who uses the single Greek term *πάθη* to denote a wider range of experiences than we would count under the term "emotion."<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, a handful of emotions are central to Plato's moral psychology and come to

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<sup>42</sup> Konstan (2020) upholds the view that Aristotle innovated the study of emotions but also notes that "Plato led the way" in providing deep investigations of human sensations including those that we would count as emotions (p. 380).

<sup>43</sup> Konstan (2006a), p. 145. Plato includes, for example, thirst and hunger among the *πάθη*.

bear in the drama of texts on which I am focusing in this project; these include anger, shame, pride, admiration, and grief.<sup>44</sup> Among scholars who differentiate between “Socratic” and “Platonic” theories to be found in the Platonic corpus, a distinction is often made between the alleged total suppression of emotion by Socrates and the subtler integration of emotion into the tripartite soul by Plato. By contrast, I argue that Plato composes Socrates as a character driven in part by emotional and extrarational concerns throughout his life. I therefore highlight Plato’s authorial style: he composes the character Socrates in such a way that we find psychological theory enacted within the drama.

Despite the methodological challenges of studying emotions in the ancient Greek world, emotions were, then as now, central to all aspects of life, public and private. Long before Aristotle attempted a systematic account of the effects of public performance and discourse on an audience, Athenian dramatists and orators began to exploit their skills at eliciting affect to lead public opinion. Since Socrates frames his philosophic mission as his civic duty, emotions come to the fore of his interactions and are vital elements of his theoretical declamations. Danielle Allen frames the theories of justice and punishment explicated in Plato’s dialogues as repudiations of the Athenian system, which is rooted in mollifying the anger of victims in criminal disputes.<sup>45</sup> Unlike modern judicial proceedings, Athenian democracy allowed most any citizen to act as prosecutor, and our available evidence indicates that the victims themselves or their close relations most frequently pursued cases.<sup>46</sup> Therefore the stakes were deeply personal as well as legally contentious. Rather than discourage anger, Athenian

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<sup>44</sup> Price (2009), pp. 126-27.

<sup>45</sup> Allen (1999), pp. 199-202.

<sup>46</sup> Allen (1999), p. 194. Allen writes that in 96 percent of cases for which we have evidence “the prosecutor was either the victim or personally involved with the wrongdoer.”

institutions regarded anger as a force that could be qualified, quantified, and implemented to preserve the social order. Definitions of anger and its appropriate expressions “were woven into the definitions of law and justice that operated in the Athenian court and that shaped life in the Athenian polis.”<sup>47</sup> The trial of Socrates differs insofar as his prosecutors did not claim to have been personally affected by Socrates’ alleged crimes, but Plato makes it clear in the *Euthyphro* and *Apology* that anger was a motivating factor.

Anger affected many other public decisions as well. We read in Thucydides that the Athenians, roused to anger by Cleon, voted to execute the Mytileneans, only to regret their decision and send word that the order was rescinded just in time to prevent slaughter (3.35-50). Later in the Peloponnesian War, the Athenians failed to curb their anger at the generals who, despite winning a decisive victory, could not rescue the wounded at Arginousae. That Socrates by chance at least delayed the Athenians’ rash and extrajudicial punishment of their leaders is confirmed both by Xenophon (*Hell.* 1.7.1-35) and Plato’s *Apology* (32b). Socrates’ civic engagement and philosophic practices, therefore, required him to identify and manipulate the emotions – anger especially – that shaped Athenian social interactions. It is a throughline of Plato’s trial dialogues that the Socratic elenchus roused anger, both in those whom he questioned and those who listened. In the *Theaetetus*, testing how a potential student manages the epistemic anger that necessarily arises from elenctic discourse is inseparable from testing ideas. The emotional attachment felt toward ideas, moreover, is ubiquitous in Athenian culture. The strong emotions that modern readers often feel upon encountering Socrates are indicative of the extent to which this remains the case today

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<sup>47</sup> Allen (2004), p. 77.

as well. Even the appearance that Socrates undermines the shared ideas that underpin the polis provokes anger; it is this violent reaction to comic depictions that makes his defense an uphill battle in the *Apology*. Allen demonstrates that this collective anger was foundational to Athenian institutions. Although Plato offers a vision of a society in which anger is tamed and marginalized, the view that anger was dangerous ran contrary to prevailing opinion.<sup>48</sup> Experience showed, however, that an ethics of anger failed to achieve justice. That Socrates delayed the infamous and illegal condemnation of the Arginousae generals and then was condemned in an act of public anger himself is a tragically ironic illustration of the point.

#### **4. Dissertation outline**

This dissertation comprises five chapters in addition to this introduction. Each chapter treats one dialogue, and the dissertation proceeds sequentially, following the dramatic chronology, from the *Theaetetus* to *Euthyphro*, then *Apology*, *Crito*, and finally *Phaedo*. I end with a conclusion and suggest avenues of future study. Nehamas stated the situation well in writing that “we should not assume that Plato understands what enables Socrates to be the type of person he was. Plato has no deep account of the paradox Socrates constituted for him. His early portrait of Socrates exhibits the paradox and lays it out for our inspection.”<sup>49</sup> In each chapter, I offer an inspection of the elements which I find most crucial to understanding the enigmatic Socrates.

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<sup>48</sup> Allen (2013), p. 92, writes that “the Platonic approach to psychology and politics rejected anger as a justification for action.” On the other hand, Allen’s (2004) discussion of Aristophanes’ *Wasps* concludes that there at least existed a “coherent rationalization of ὀργή as a fundamental principle of democracy” (p. 84).

<sup>49</sup> Nehamas (1998), p. 85.

Chapter 2, "Maieutics and Emotional Intimacy in the *Theaetetus*," examines the emotional language used throughout the *Theaetetus* and argues that these emotions become critical motifs in the subsequent dialogues. Socrates' description of his maieutic arts and reflections on the role of philosophers in the polis indicate that emotions are not merely an afterthought or byproduct of Socratic inquiry. Instead, Socrates exhibits and elicits specific emotions from his interlocutors and attempts to marshal those emotions to stimulate philosophic development.

Chapter 3, "Private Sentiment and Public Expression in the *Euthyphro*," focuses on the public dimensions of Socrates' dialogic encounters as revealed in the *Euthyphro*. Socrates finds in Euthyphro a foil; the superficial affinity between them makes it possible for Socrates to accentuate his idiosyncratic views. The dialogue therefore becomes an enactment of the behavior that so angered his fellow Athenians. At the same time, Socrates expresses private thoughts that indicate his awareness and alarm at drawing the ire of his countrymen.

Chapter 4, "Socrates as Citizen and Stranger in the *Apology*," analyzes Socrates' elaborate self-presentation in his *Apology*, which represents the only piece of extended public oration that he ever delivered. The *Apology* marks Plato's conscious attempt to recreate that moment in the minds of his readers. In doing so, Plato signals to his reader the importance of affectivity in public discourse. This chapter focuses on the juxtaposition of emotions at the heart of Socrates' trial. In both the *Euthyphro* and *Apology*, Socrates identifies comic representations of himself as the source of public resentment. Ridicule transformed into rage, and that rage in turn presented a mortal danger to Socrates. Besides the ridicule and rage directed toward him, Socrates reveals his own complex emotions toward the city of Athens. On the one hand he feels a profound love for the city that he expresses in both religious and familial terms; on the



other, Socrates seems to reciprocate rage toward the jurors who voted to condemn him as he closes his defense speech with an apocalyptic warning.

Chapter 5, "Socrates' Imagined Escaped in the *Crito*," argues that the literary elements of the *Crito* reveal an emotionally conflicted Socrates who wrestles with the decision to save himself or protect his family. One key element is the dream of the previous night that Socrates relates to Crito at the opening of the drama. In the dream, an unnamed woman comes to Socrates and quotes a line spoken by Achilles in Book 9 of Homer's *Iliad*. Counter to most interpretations, I suggest that the dream reveals a subconscious desire to escape from prison and lead a new life in Achilles' homeland of Thessaly. I argue that the dramatic tension then turns on why each character will ultimately reject that possibility: Achilles to avenge his beloved companion and Socrates to ensure the best possible future for his wife and sons. The grounds on which Socrates ultimately declines Crito's offer of escape, then, is not as most scholars have written an inflexible commitment to the rational principle that it is always wrong to break the law, but instead comes down to the very personal belief that his family will fare better if Socrates stays and accepts the death sentence against him.

Chapter 6, "Experience and Emotion in the *Phaedo*," argues that Socrates' words and actions in the *Phaedo* reveal that Socrates does harbor a fear of death and does experience emotions of grief in parallel with his friends despite his rational objections to fearing death and expressing grief. While scholarship on the *Phaedo* has generally emphasized either the theory of Forms or focused on Socrates' perceived calm rationality in the face of death, I argue that Plato connects Socrates' emotional distress to that of his friends by using the dramatic frame to link themes. The narrator Phaedo comments on his own mixture of emotional pleasure and pain before recalling the words of Socrates, who introduces the topic of physical pleasure and pain

spontaneously in language that mirrors that of his friends. I conclude that Plato takes advantage of his chosen literary form to direct the reader's attention to details in the character of Socrates that are overlooked by his friends who idolize him and are superficially dismissed by the trajectory of Socrates' intellectualizing of the topic of death and the afterlife. The dialogue's emphasis on the pleasure derived from memory and discussion of verbal charms that provide emotional comfort in turn pick up and enact a resolution to the thematic tensions emerging from the *Theaetetus*.

Finally, I close with a brief conclusion in which I summarize the key findings of my dissertation. I also indicate some questions for further study and suggest ways in which the method of reading Plato that I employ may be profitably applied to other dialogues.

## Chapter 2

### Maieutics and Emotional Intimacy in the *Theaetetus*

Often considered a work that marks the transition from the middle to late dialogues by modern readers, *Theaetetus* may seem a strange starting point for a study of Socrates in his final days of life. The dialogue is widely believed to have been written in the early 360s BC,<sup>1</sup> a compositional date much later than those generally posited for the other dialogues treated in this dissertation.<sup>2</sup> The *Theaetetus* is also difficult to situate in relation to the evolution of Plato's thought. The conspicuous absence of the Forms in the *Theaetetus* has led to a range of views on the development of Plato's metaphysical theory, most of which interpret the dialogue as a farewell to the character Socrates and the beginning of a radical reconsideration of the Forms.<sup>3</sup>

Because *Theaetetus* is unique in that it is the only Platonic dialogue whose principle philosophic aim is to define knowledge, modern scholarship has generally privileged the dialogue's argumentation over its dramatic and literary elements in

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<sup>1</sup> Cooper (1997, p. 157) presents this date as established fact in his introduction to Levett's translation: "the dialogue's prologue seems to announce the work as published in his memory, short after his early death on military service in 369 B.C. We can therefore date the publication of *Theaetetus* fairly precisely, to the few years immediately following Theaetetus's death." Nails, however, explains the origins and problems of this view.

<sup>2</sup> Nails (2002, p. 274-8) explains that a compositional date of or soon after 369 BC, while attractive to many modern scholars, is not at all conclusively supported by the evidence. In short, mathematical developments related to the proof offered by Theaetetus at *Tht.* 147d-148b in the early- to mid-fourth century BC have been attributed to the historical Theaetetus. Assuming that he would have lived well into adulthood to make these mathematical advancements, scholars of the 1910s (Vogt 1909-10, Sachs 1914) attached Theaetetus's death to a known battle in Corinth in 369 BC. This postulation was eagerly accepted, in part because "a later date [of *Theaetetus*'s composition] neatly fit the then-growing developmentalist movement" (Nails 2002, p. 276). Nails points out, however, that the Athenian army of 369 BC mostly comprised mercenaries, not forty-six year old citizens, as Theaetetus would have been. Much more plausible, she argues, is that a twenty-four year old Theaetetus participated in an earlier battle, dated to 391 BC. Such a date would also justify Socrates' qualified comment that Theaetetus would become well known "if he lived to grow up" (*Tht.* 142d). If Nails is correct about the date of Theaetetus's military service, the motivating event of the dialogue, then we have no reason to accept a late year of composition.

<sup>3</sup> Morrow (1970), p. 311, by contrast, suggests that a "hidden definition is used" throughout the dialogue, which can be formulated as "knowledge is infallible apprehension of being"; since "the Forms alone are Being," knowledge turns out to be infallible apprehension of the Forms.

evaluating its place in the Platonic corpus, but such an approach discounts the lengths to which Plato has gone to interlace this work with the others in a dramatic sequence. While the *Theaetetus* may be seen as a forward-looking dialogue in terms of its argumentation, it also very consciously looks back on the life of Socrates. The dramatic cues in the text reveal a more closed and guarded dramatic setting than most others that come before it dramatically. In this critical respect, the *Theaetetus* marks the beginning of a set of dialogues in which Socrates is constrained socially, legally, and physically.<sup>4</sup>

Plato makes this retrospective function of the dialogue clear at several points. Its language and imagery are allusive of several Platonic texts besides the six that follow in dramatic chronology, most notably *Symposium* and *Republic*.<sup>5</sup> Its dramatic position in the corpus and the tone that it takes in developing its themes resituate the philosophic vision of those dialogues in the harsh political reality of spring, 399 BC. *Symposium* and *Republic* afforded opportunities for Socrates to describe philosophy in all its potential; *Theaetetus* forces him to reflect on its limitations. In the dramatic frame, Euclides and Terpsion are prompted to reflect fondly on Socrates by the apparently imminent death of Theaetetus and consider the best way to recount episodes from his life (143b-c). Within the main drama, Socrates reflects on his youth when he claims to have learned his maieutic skills from his mother and recounts his meeting with Parmenides (149a, 183e).<sup>6</sup> He is also cautious not to say too much to the wrong people; he wants to ensure

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<sup>4</sup> In comparing the maieutic technique practiced by Socrates in *Tht.* with Diotima's account of reproduction in *Symp.* and Socrates' examination of the slave in *Meno*, Burnyeat (1977, p. 10) comments that "what is distinctive about the midwife figure...is its restraint." This restraint manifests in the facts that Socrates in *Tht.* is barren, whereas all men become pregnant – Socrates especially – in *Symp.* and that very few of the ideas generated through intellectual pregnancy prove viable. *Tht.*, therefore, is a dialogue "deliberately restrained in its positive commitments" (Burnyeat 1977, p. 11).

<sup>5</sup> Notably absent, however, is the theory of Forms. While this has led many scholars to date the *Theaetetus* to a later period in which Plato had reworked or abandoned his theory, Simpson (2008, p. 180) suggests that "the absence of Forms has...everything to do with the character and profession of Theaetetus and his teacher Theodorus."

<sup>6</sup> Plato dramatizes the encounter with Parmenides in the eponymous dialogue. By dramatic chronology, *Parmenides* is the first of Plato's dialogue and depicts a far younger Socrates than any other dialogue.

that Theaetetus has as much promise as Theodorus had claimed before inviting him into a deep philosophic discussion, and he pauses the conversation at one point to ensure that none of the uninitiated can overhear. He also reflects on his successes and failures in his associations with the young men of Athens,<sup>7</sup> and at the very end of the dialogue indicates that he is leaving for the King Archon's stoa, a detail that places the *Theaetetus* immediately before the *Euthyphro* in dramatic chronology.

Given the *Theaetetus*'s complex position in the Platonic corpus, let me delineate my specific interests in the text. In this dissertation, I examine the emotional complexities of Plato's Socrates at the end of his life and argue that Plato reveals a degree of conflict, self-consciousness, and uncertainty in Socrates even as those around him perceive a steadfast, self-assured demeanor. Since my interest is primarily in the literary development of the character Socrates, I begin with the *Theaetetus*, which Plato purposefully placed before the *Euthyphro* and preceding dialogues in its dramatic date. I do not claim that Plato wrote the *Theaetetus* before any other dialogue under consideration in my study; rather I argue that reading this set of dialogues chronologically, starting from the *Theaetetus*, introduces themes and motifs that inform and complicate the characterization of Socrates in the subsequent dialogues. Because this work limits its focus to Socrates' emotional and psychic experiences, I am sidelining the *Sophist* and *Statesman* because, although those dialogues do intervene dramatically, Socrates hardly participates in their discussions. In this chapter, I examine the emotional complexity of Socrates in three particular manifestations, which are (1) the emotions provoked in others upon remembering Socrates; (2) the emotions that Socrates

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<sup>7</sup> Socrates explicitly mentions that Aristides failed to reach his potential after leaving Socrates' tutelage prematurely. Plato dramatizes the beginning of Socrates' association with Aristides in the *Laches*, which ends with a promise to meet the following morning to resume the inquiry.

himself experiences and provokes in others through elenctic discourse; and (3) the emotional reactions of those who witness or hear second-hand of Socrates' activity. Points (1) and (2) will elucidate overlooked nuances of Socrates' character and demeanor while point (3) provides a psychological account for the fact that so many people came to hate Socrates that his activity was found subversive and deserving of the death penalty.

### **1. Remembering Socrates: pleasure and authenticity**

The dramatic frame of the *Theaetetus* not only sets the stage for the dialogue itself; it also introduces the motif of the pleasure found in remembering Socrates and reperforming his dialogic encounters. The structure of Plato's dialogues varies widely. Some, like the *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, and *Crito*, are presented as direct dramas with no introductory material. Others rely on dramatic frames to set the scene and explicate the themes that will be raised in the discourse to follow. Among these, we find two kinds: those like the *Protagoras* and *Republic* in which Socrates himself frames the dialogue and then speaks each interlocutor's part; and others, like the *Symposium*, in which another speaker reports a conversation in which Socrates had participated to the dialogue's audience. The *Theaetetus*, however, employs a more complex structure. While it includes a dramatic frame that introduces the dialogue's social-historical context, the dialogue itself is written as a direct drama, the first style above. Two important features therefore stand out about the compositional style of the *Theaetetus*. First the dramatic encounter is said to be a written account of Socrates' conversation with Theaetetus,<sup>8</sup> and second the

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<sup>8</sup> Ginnopoulou (2013), p. 21 writes that "Of all Platonic works, only *Theaetetus* calls attention to its materiality, its status as a written text." Her comments on the prologue's effect in general (pp. 20-26) provide an elucidating discussion.

speakers in the dramatic frame explicitly discuss the three structures that *logoi Sokratikoi* can take. This observation signals to the reader that Plato is reflecting on the nascent genre of the *Sokratikos logos* as literature and draws the reader's attention to the effect of the various styles. While we occasionally find speakers reading from texts in the dialogues, moreover, the *Theaetetus* is the only one dialogue that refers to its own status as a literary text.<sup>9</sup>

The opening frame of the *Theaetetus* establishes important themes that recur throughout the dialogues narrating Socrates' final days. The frame begins with Euclides and Terpsion meeting in Megara. Terpsion had been looking in the agora for Euclides, who had gone down to the harbor to attend an injured and sickly Theaetetus. Although the dialogue offers no confirmation whether Theaetetus recovered or died from these injuries, the possibility of losing such a man prompts Terpsion and Euclides to reflect on his admirable qualities and recall how Socrates had predicted them after meeting a young Theaetetus just before he was tried and imprisoned by the Athenians. In contrast with the dialogue itself, which begins with Theodorus's rather crude observation that Theaetetus's ugly face is a match for Socrates' own, the frame invites a comparison between the moral excellence demonstrated by Theaetetus in battle and Socrates' own admirable career as a soldier, a fact emphasized in both *Apology* and *Crito*.

The fact that Theaetetus's moral excellence prompts Euclides to remember what Socrates had said about him some years before indicates the thematic importance of remembering Socrates and his words, in this dialogue and those that follow. As we

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<sup>9</sup> In the *Phaedrus*, for example, Phaedrus reads Lysias's speech from a scroll. The *Parmenides* captures the conversation that follows a public reading of Zeno's recent book, and the *Gorgias* is set after a public reading of Gorgias's book. Thus written documents do feature in the dialogues, but the dialogues themselves do not include the metaliterary discussion of the dialogue itself as a piece of writing as the *Theaetetus* does.

have observed, the *Theaetetus* relies heavily on the resemblance between Theaetetus and Socrates. For Theodorus, the resemblance is superficial; their distinctive eyes and noses are so similar that Socrates can effectively see his own face by looking upon Theaetetus (144e). Socrates soon turns the discussion of their resemblance toward an investigation of their souls (145b), but it is clear that he has not forgotten Theodorus's physical comparison when he tells Theaetetus that he is "handsome and not ugly as Theodorus would have it" many pages later in the dialogue (185e). One key point to emphasize is that the recurring discussion of their physical resemblance is not only a starting point for comparison. Their physical similarity may also be a catalyst to memory. In the *Phaedo*, for example, Socrates raises the possibility of recollection by proxy, in which seeing an object associated with someone or an image of that person stimulates recollection of the person himself (73d-e). In that dialogue, the discussion of memory is philosophically relevant because the theory of recollection is one justification for believing that the soul is immortal. The mention of memory also recalls *Phaedo's* earlier assertion that nothing gives more pleasure than remembering Socrates (58d). Although Euclides and Terpsion do not explicitly count pleasure as a reason for their revisiting the conversation between Theaetetus and Socrates that Euclides had put down in writing years before, it is once again the image of Socrates reflected through Theaetetus, first in his physical appearance and then in his manifest excellence, that prompts Euclides to turn a brief encounter with a wounded Theaetetus into an extended memorial of his discourse with Socrates.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Euclides and Terpsion both express their need to rest (*ἀναπαύω*), however, and so even if not explicitly pleasurable, listening to a reading of the Socratic dialogue is at least an activity they associate with leisure and respite. Notably, the freedom to discuss philosophic matters at leisure reappears as a virtue of the philosophic life in Socrates' vision presented in the Digression.



Critical to our understanding of how Socrates made so lasting an impact on his friends, too, is how Euclides first remembers Socrates in connection with Theaetetus. While the dialogue that he composed – with the guidance of Socrates – investigates the nature of knowledge and subjects several theories to critical investigation, it is in Socrates' capacity as a prophet that Euclides first thinks of him. Again, Euclides and Terpsion make no comment on this fact, but nonetheless the reader is alerted to the thematic significance of the extrarational traits of Socrates that often make an equally lasting impression upon his friends as his arguments. It becomes clear later in the *Theaetetus* and throughout the subsequent dialogues that Socrates' ability to connect with and soothe his friends and interlocutors is integral to his philosophic activity.

It is also significant to our picture of Socrates in his final days that he assisted Euclides in writing the dialogue (143a); alongside the later revelation in the *Phaedo* that he had begun to compose poems for the first time during his imprisonment, we encounter a Socrates who participates in crafting his literary legacy as he confronts death.<sup>11</sup> Even within the *Theaetetus*, Socrates criticizes writing because it cannot respond to questions from its audience and, as seems true in the case of Protagoras, leaves acolytes who may have a flimsy grasp on their master's theory to defend it (166a). Nonetheless, Socrates acknowledges the power of books to spread ideas and even reflects upon how books have shaped his own intellectual development. He looks back reverently on his own youthful encounter with Parmenides, during which Zeno read from his recent book and then fielded questions from his audience. Likewise in the *Phaedo*, Socrates recalls how he eagerly read Anaxagoras's book as a young man.<sup>12</sup> That

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<sup>11</sup> Even before his death, we find Plato's Socrates verifying accounts of his conversations. Cf. *Symp.* 173b.

<sup>12</sup> Sedley (2004, p. 161) observes in his discussion of *Theaetetus*'s Dream theory that Anaxagoras is the most likely Presocratic "who Socrates might have especially in his sights." This would be fitting since Socrates with Archelaus, a student of Anaxagoras, in his youth. Sedley concludes, "it is not

book, perhaps because he could not ask questions of its author, left him disillusioned with natural philosophy and set him on the path to human wisdom, which he pursued for the rest of his life.

## 2. Epistemic pain, wonder, and incantations

While the dialogue's overall goal is to define knowledge in a universal sense, Plato also includes ruminations on the role of the emotions as driving forces of philosophic inquiry. Candiotta and Politis write that a "notion of wonder as a *πάθος*, depicting the pre-reflexive beginning of philosophy as epistemic suffering and epistemic desire" stimulates the long and sometimes grueling discussion in the *Theaetetus*.<sup>13</sup> The underlying affective conditions of philosophic inquiry have important ramifications in the *Theaetetus* and illuminate the function of emotions in all the dialogues under consideration in this dissertation. Candiotta and Politis (2020) focus primarily on Theaetetus's experience of epistemic wonder, and so I add an examination of how Socrates manifests, elicits, and attempts to redirect the affective states arising from philosophic wonder and inquiry as fundamental elements of his philosophic practice. Burnyeat (1977) noted that the image of Socrates as a midwife in the *Theaetetus* possesses "compelling naturalness" and "seems so fitting... as to invite the thought that the metaphor corresponds, in some deeper sense, to psychological reality."<sup>14</sup> He continues to write that "a significant emotional charge attaches to the idea that the mind is no less capable of conception and birth than the body of a woman," and "in Plato's

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inconceivable" that Plato's Socrates "should have had in mind the version [of Presocratic epistemology] which Socrates had himself as a young man been taught." I am reluctant to accept this suggestion, but it does at least reinforce how the *Theaetetus* invites a retrospective reflection on Socrates' life.

<sup>13</sup> Candiotta and Politis (2020), p. 18.

<sup>14</sup> Burnyeat (1977), p. 8.

case, that his seriousness was of this order is something to be felt rather than proved.”<sup>15</sup> In this section, I discuss of the relevant feelings provoked by Socrates’ maieutic technique and demonstrate “the emotional seriousness which the writing conveys.”<sup>16</sup> The observations that I make contribute not only to a more careful reading of Socrates in the *Theaetetus*, but also to a clearer understanding of the affects that motivated Socrates’ trial and execution.

The vision of wonder that emerges from the *Theaetetus* is different from other accounts of wonder in Plato and therefore merits special attention. Wonder in the *Theaetetus* comports more closely with the Aristotelian account of wonder of at *Metaphysics* 982b than with other classic Platonic descriptions of wonder – most notably in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. Articulating a theory that he may have borrowed from the *Theaetetus*, Aristotle defines wonder as the starting point of human inquiry.<sup>17</sup> When one experiences *aporia*, wonder provides the cognitive motivation to escape ignorance. Wonder serves as a means to an end, which is *theoria*, or certain knowledge.<sup>18</sup> This instrumental account of wonder, however, overlooks the affective qualities of wonder that appear in other Platonic texts and are essential to Socrates’ maieutic technique in the *Theaetetus* as well. In the *Symposium*, for instance, wonder first leads Socrates to seek Diotima’s guidance (205b). Diotima, secure in her knowledge, replies that love is nothing to wonder about (205b). Soon after, however, Diotima reintroduces wonder as an experience that accompanies the apprehension of the Forms (210e). When he describes the soul of a god looking upon the Forms in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates does not use the word “wonder” but does describe the affective state of the soul. Looking upon

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<sup>15</sup> Burnyeat (1977), p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> Burnyeat (1977), p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Nightingale (2001), p. 46.

<sup>18</sup> Nightingale (2001), p. 43.

the Forms, he says, causes the soul to be nourished (τρέφεται) and feel enjoyment (εὐπαθειῖ) (247d). Whereas the culmination of philosophic contemplation involves positive affectivity, however, *aporia* is accompanied in the *Theaetetus* by a feeling of wonder that is painful and uncomfortable.

Confusion first prompts Socrates to propose knowledge as the central topic of discussion. At 145e-146a Socrates says:

Now this is just where my difficulty comes in. I can't get a proper grasp of what on earth knowledge really is. Could we manage to put it into words? What do all of you say? Who'll speak first?... Well, why this silence? Theodorus, I hope my love of argument is not making me forget my manners—just because I'm so anxious to start a discussion and get us all friendly and talkative together? (tr. Levett)

Socrates finds himself in *aporia* (ἀπορώ, 145e). Where this experience could cause frustration to the point of abandoning the inquiry, however, Socrates is undeterred upon reaching a dead-end. Instead he exhibits tremendous enthusiasm for philosophic conversation and becomes all the more eager to pursue the question with the help of his interlocutors. He is so eager, in fact, that he fears that his love of discourse (φιλολογία) will discourage anyone from joining in the conversation and expresses his desire not only for discussion but also to develop friendship with his interlocutors.

Theaetetus reluctantly agrees to attempt answering Socrates' question and offers specific branches of knowledge as his definition of knowledge as a whole (146c-d). Although Theaetetus initially succumbs to this error common in dialectic inquiry, Socrates discovers that Theaetetus can give a general account in the case of geometric powers and encourages him to do the same in the case of knowledge. To keep Theaetetus engaged in the discourse, Socrates urges him to be confident (θάραρει) and pursue the question wholeheartedly (προθυμήθητι δὲ παντὶ τρόπῳ, 148c-d). Despite Socrates' words of encouragement, however, Theaetetus remains doubtful of his ability

to provide a definition of knowledge that will satisfy Socrates: he will certainly show zeal for the discussion, but he cannot stop himself from worrying that the task will prove impossible (οὐ μὲν δὴ αὖ οὐδ' ἀπαλλαγῆναι τοῦ μέλειν, 148e). At this point, Socrates identifies Theaetetus's lingering anxieties as "labor pains" and offers his maieutic services (148e-149a). Theaetetus responds with unsurprising skepticism at the news that he is pregnant (οὐκ οἶδα, ὦ Σώκρατες, 148e), and his confusion affords Socrates the opportunity to explain the nature of his maieutic arts. Crucially, Socrates claims that with his maieutic art he both induces pain and alleviates it. Each component of his art – causing and relieving pain – constitutes a critical theme in the *Theaetetus* and the subsequent dialogues, and it will be profitable to examine the significance of each in turn.

Socrates twice says that he can relieve the pains of labor by singing incantations (*Tht.* 149d, 157c). The inclusion of incantations in the *Theaetetus* establishes a motif that recurs most prominently in the *Phaedo*. Socrates as soother and charmer is a critical facet of his philosophic life and indicates the physical and emotional closeness that he develops with his friends. Although Socrates urges his interlocutors to pursue rational inquiry, he remains sensitive to his friends' psychic distress and, at least when appropriate, deploys extrarational means of alleviating it. Tordo-Rombaut argues that an intrapersonal dialogue between conflicting emotions, when rightly ordered, produces virtue.<sup>19</sup> In the case of Socrates as charmer, the interpersonal emotional experience comes to the fore: overwhelmed by the pangs of intellectual labor, for example, Theaetetus requires the intervention of a close and compassionate interlocutor

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<sup>19</sup> Tordo-Rombaut (2020), especially p.172-73, where she illustrates this modulating dialogue in the case of a desire for and proceeding aversion to something.

to soothe and order his psychic tumult.<sup>20</sup> The element worth emphasizing here is that Socrates' maieutic role is not purely to act as a rational arbiter of his interlocutor's intellectual offspring. Besides examining the validity of a theory, Socrates engages empathically on an emotional level. McPherran characterizes the effect well when he writes that "[charms and incantations] provide virtue-training pleasures, pleasures that can be associated as stimuli with the self-control and internal harmony that is productive of virtuous behavior."<sup>21</sup>

Charms, therefore, are not only useful insofar as they can assuage the strong affects associated with epistemic wonder; they are also integral to effecting a productive educative result from the maieutic encounter. Like well-ordered public rituals, these private charms "impress upon the affective parts of the soul a habit of mind whose rational confirmation can only be arrived at in maturity."<sup>22</sup> Socrates' philosophic practice requires not only interpersonal interaction but also emotional connection.<sup>23</sup> Just as a real midwife needs to have an empathic bedside manner in addition to technical expertise as she aids patients in the intimate and vulnerable process of childbirth, Socrates' maieutics cannot succeed without his psychic compassion as well as his elenctic skill.

In Theaetetus's case, the empathic, encouraging rapport that he develops with Socrates succeeds at stimulating productive philosophic discourse. Once Theaetetus offers his first definition of knowledge and Socrates begins to unravel the full implications of his answer, Theaetetus describes how he feels:

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Burnyeat (1977), esp. p. 9, 11.

<sup>21</sup> McPherran (2010), p. 90.

<sup>22</sup> McPherran (2010), p. 88.

<sup>23</sup> This point anticipates a key contrast between Socrates' maieutic practice and the caricatured solitary contemplation practiced by the Digression-Philosopher described later in the dialogue.

καὶ νῆ τοὺς θεοὺς γε, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὑπερφυῶς ὡς θαυμάζω τί ποτ' ἐστὶ ταῦτα, καὶ ἐνίοτε ὡς ἀληθῶς βλέπων εἰς αὐτὰ σκοτοδινῶ. (155c)

Oh yes, indeed, Socrates, I often wonder like mad what these things can mean; sometimes when I'm looking at them I begin to feel quite giddy. (tr. Levett)

For Theaetetus, intellectual inquiry stimulates a feeling of wonder so powerful that it seems to manifest physically as well as psychically. Candiotta and Politis call this sensation “epistemic wonder” and note the enthusiasm with which Socrates responds to Theaetetus' experience:<sup>24</sup>

μάλα γὰρ φιλοσόφου τοῦτο τὸ πάθος, τὸ θαυμάζειν: οὐ γὰρ ἄλλη ἀρχὴ φιλοσοφίας ἢ αὕτη...(155d)

For this is an experience which is characteristic of a philosopher, this wondering: this is where philosophy begins... (tr. Levett)

Theaetetus's ebullient zeal for philosophic discovery now mirrors Socrates' φιλολογία, which he had feared might be so intense as to put off potential interlocutors. Instead, the gradual introduction of his maieutic art has elicited from Theaetetus a philosophic spirit that matches his own. Their psychic resemblance also confirms the similarity that Theodorus had seen in them, although what Socrates has proved is that their souls, which are of real importance, are alike, instead of or in addition to their facial features.

Not every maieutic relationship succeeds, however. In a passage that fittingly contemplates the mixed results of his philosophic mission, Socrates reflects upon his failures and shortcomings. Of the many young men he has delivered over the years, very few indeed have achieved anything worthwhile in their intellectual lives after leaving Socrates. This concession points to the immense difficulty of Socrates' divine mission and vividly describes the intense pain and anger that his interlocutors often experience. Socrates urges Theaetetus to restrain his anger if Socrates discovers that his

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<sup>24</sup> Candiotta and Politis (2020), p. 18.

intellectual offspring is not viable and recalls previous encounters in which the pain proved surmountable:

πολλοὶ γὰρ ἤδη, ὧ θαυμάσιε, πρὸς με οὕτω διετέθησαν, ὥστε ἀτεχνῶς δάκνειν ἔτοιμοι εἶναι, ἐπειδὴν τινα λῆρον αὐτῶν ἀφαιρῶμαι, καὶ οὐκ οἴονται με εὐνοίᾳ τοῦτο ποιεῖν, πόρρω ὄντες τοῦ εἰδέναί ὅτι οὐδεὶς θεὸς δύσνους ἀνθρώποις, οὐδ' ἐγὼ δυσνοία τοιοῦτον οὐδὲν δρῶ, ἀλλὰ μοι ψεῦδός τε συγχωρῆσαι καὶ ἀληθὲς ἀφανίσει οὐδαμῶς θέμις. (151c-d)

Do you know, people have often before now got into such a state with me as to be literally ready to bite when I take away some nonsense or other from them. They never believe that I am doing this in all goodwill; they are so far from realizing that no God can wish evil to man, and that even I don't do this kind of thing out of malice, but because it is not permitted to me to accept a lie and put away truth. (tr. Levett)

This striking description contains two critical elements: the ferocity of the emotions that Socrates can provoke and the divine favor that he professes to enjoy. The hostility with which interlocutors respond to Socrates recalls several dialogues, and in the scope of this dissertation provides a dramatic account of how Socrates came to be hated by his fellow Athenians, which he explains throughout the *Apology*. The passage also recalls a central element of Socrates' defense: as he recounts the oracle that put him on his philosophic mission, Socrates concludes that the god's pronouncement is *prima facie* true, even if difficult to comprehend, because it is not permissible for the god to lie (οὐ γὰρ δήπου ψεύδεται γέ: οὐ γὰρ θέμις αὐτῶ, 21b). Socrates' use of the word θέμις in the *Theaetetus* anticipates its repetition in the *Apology* and even more clearly emphasizes his intermediary position between the human and divine. Where it would violate θέμις if the god were to lie (*Apol.* 21b), Socrates would violate the θέμις imparted upon him by the god if he were to accept false opinions as truth. Socrates' close association with the god allows him to position himself as a rational arbiter but at the same time accounts for the intensity of the emotions that he stimulates. The maieutic metaphor imbues an interlocutor's offspring with the emotional weight of a firstborn child, and



invoking the divine rouses φθόρος, an emotion that emerges as pivotal in both *Euthyphro* and *Apology*.

Although the *Apology* does not mention any special skills or specific interactions with particular young men, Socrates provides a narrative description of how the Athenians came to hate him. He describes engaging all manner of fellow citizens in elenctic examination. A key difference between and the public, elenctic examinations recounted in the *Apology* and the maieutic discourse witnessed in the *Theaetetus* is the fact that Socrates seeks out his interlocutors and initiates the conversation. We might therefore expect that the intensity of violent reactions, described in the *Theaetetus*, which sometimes result from Socrates' examination of a person's intellectual offspring, would be multiplied by the fact that Socrates often performed his art unmasked and in public settings, despite the deeply personal nature of elenctic inquiry.<sup>25</sup> In fact, Socrates generalizes this experience in the upcoming Digression:

When it is an account of matters like all these that is demanded of our friend with the small, sharp, legal mind, the situation is reversed; his head swims (εἰλιγγιῶν) as, suspended at such a height, he gazes down from his place among the clouds; disconcerted (ἀδημονῶν) by the unusual experience, he knows not what to do next, and can only stammer when he speaks. (175d, tr. Levett)

The language here draws a sharp contrast with the experience of dizziness and epistemic wonder that Theaetetus had described earlier in the text. There is a clear resonance between dizziness in a maieutic-philosophic encounter and the lawyer-orator's head "swimming" at great heights. However, Theaetetus derives pleasure from this experience and becomes "giddy" to embark upon an intellectual challenge while

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<sup>25</sup> Candiotta and Politis (2020), p. 32-33, note that "pain related to an aporetic state enhances motivation... for generating knowledge." As Socrates emphasizes, however, this is only true of individuals with a suitable philosophic inclination. In many other cases, epistemic pain proves insuperable and instead generates hatred of Socrates or anyone else who exposes the epistemic weakness of such people's beliefs.

the orator-lawyer of the Digression becomes distressed and loses command of his accustomed rhetorical prowess. And, although this orator-lawyer is a generic archetype, his experience mirrors those of Socrates' real interlocutors, the encounters with whom he summarizes in the *Apology*.

### 3. The Digression-Philosopher (172c-177c) and Socrates' philosophic vision

About midway through the *Theaetetus*, Socrates embarks upon a discussion that he describes as a "digression" because of its superficial irrelevance to the discussion.<sup>26</sup> He constructs two archetypal figures, one lawyer-orator and one philosopher, and presents a vision of how each of them lives in a city whose legal system resembles that of Athens. The archetypal Digression-Philosopher, withdrawn from civic life and public affairs, looks to the afterlife for validation of his way of life after failing to justify himself before the lawcourts of his city. The Digression-Philosopher advocates becoming like a god and anticipates divine rewards for his pursuit of knowledge. This vision of philosophy recalls that presented by Socrates in the *Phaedo*, where he characterizes the philosophic life as practice for death. Grube vividly characterizes the *Phaedo's* vision:

To regard philosophy as a training for death is a dangerously negative point of view in which no allowance is made for the development of the human emotions. There is good reason to regard the teaching of the *Phaedo*, splendid though it be, as pure intellectualism divorced from life, its final aim being the eternal preservation of the soul in the cold storage of eternally frozen absolute Forms.<sup>27</sup>

Grube's characterization of the philosophic life as a frosty withdrawal from human life is certainly a viable reading of many of the *Phaedo's* most instructive passages.

However, the *Phaedo* also provides one of the most emotional and personal depiction of

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<sup>26</sup> Ryle (1966, p. 158) goes so far as to describe the Digression as "long and philosophically quite pointless."

<sup>27</sup> Grube (1935), p. 65.

Socrates in the whole of Plato's corpus. Therefore, rather than reading the vision of philosophic life presented in the *Phaedo* as "teaching," I suggest regarding it as a literary device that invites a critical comparison with the life that Socrates – Plato's ideal philosopher – actually lived. I shall say more about Socrates' emotional complexity in the *Phaedo* in Chapter 6, but by way of anticipation I suggest reading the *Phaedo*'s idealized philosopher alongside the idealized philosopher described by Socrates in the famously enigmatic Digression in the *Theaetetus*.

It is certainly tempting to identify Socrates with the philosopher of the Digression; in many key respects, Socrates and the Digression-Philosopher are similar. Like Socrates, who will soon answer Meletus's indictment, the Digression-Philosopher struggles and fails to defend himself in a court of law, whose prescriptive regulations leave him rushed, ill-prepared, and looking foolish. The Digression-Philosopher also values reality more than appearance, prefers to gain knowledge of reality through lengthy, meandering discourse, and finds the social and material goods preferred by the majority to be of little genuine value.

These similarities do not justify a complete identification of Socrates with the Digression-Philosopher, however, for Socrates differs from his hypothetical philosopher in many respects. For example, while the Digression-Philosopher dismisses familial connections as irrelevant trifles, Socrates knows Theaetetus's familial background better than his teacher Theodorus does (144c, 175a). Socrates, while he did avoid seeking formal public offices, spent virtually all his life in Athens and directed all his life's work toward improving his fellow Athenians.<sup>28</sup> There are more points of similarity and

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<sup>28</sup> At *Tht.* 143d, for example, Socrates asks Theodorus whether he has any particularly talented *Athenian* student, because he loves Athens more than Cyrene (or any other city, for that matter). This comment aligns with Socrates' philosophic mission as he explains it in the *Apology*: wholly devoted by divine injunction to improving the souls of the Athenians.

difference, but let us turn to the salient question of what these points of comparison and contrast indicate. Socrates' vision of the philosopher in *Theaetetus* anticipates and informs the vision of philosophic life presented in the *Phaedo* and draws attention to the human, interpersonal qualities of Socrates' own philosophic arts. While Socrates does enact some traits of the Digression-Philosopher, he also behaves very differently in ways that ground him in humanity.

The Digression evokes both comic and apocalyptic effects; both the lawyer-orator and Digression-Philosopher appear ridiculous outside their own specialized discursive arenas, and yet Socrates makes the stakes of their dispute a trial for life, death, and the eternal fate that awaits the disembodied soul of each speaker.<sup>29</sup> The view that the effect is comic is well developed by Rue (1993), who regards the Digression-Philosopher as a caricature with Aristophanic overtones.<sup>30</sup> This observation reveals a theme that recurs throughout the dialogues under consideration in this study, for Socrates will discuss the impact and applicability of comic tropes about philosophers, particularly those found in Aristophanes, in the *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, and *Phaedo*.<sup>31</sup>

I take the fact that Socrates' characterization of the Digression-Philosopher recalls Aristophanes as affirmation that Socrates is poking fun and thereby using humor to underscore the contrast between the Digression-Philosopher and himself.<sup>32</sup> At 173e,

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<sup>29</sup> Rue (1993) emphasizes the comic features of the Digression-Philosopher, which I think she identifies correctly. Barker (1976), on the other hand, takes the Digression-Philosopher as a mostly positive vision and writes that the Digression "prepares the way final, philosophical" refutation of Protagorean relativism (p. 462), in part by exposing the "uselessness" of the orator outside the narrow confines of the legal arena (p. 460).

<sup>30</sup> Rue (1993) argues first that Socrates presents a "caricature" of a philosopher rather than an idealized image (p. 72), and then suggests that there is an Aristophanic quality to that caricature (p. 87).

<sup>31</sup> As we shall see in the proceeding chapters, the reference to comedic depictions in the *Euthyphro* is indirect, as Socrates makes a single comment about "being laughed at" generally. In the *Apology* and *Phaedo*, however, Socrates discusses comic depictions of philosophers explicitly and at length.

<sup>32</sup> McPheran (2010), while agreeing that Socrates and the Digression-Philosopher are different in critical ways, disagrees with the conclusion that the Digression-Philosopher is merely a caricature. Rather, he suggests that the Digression-Philosopher of *Tht.* corresponds to the Philosopher-King of the *Republic* and

Socrates quotes Pindar rather than a comic poet to describe how the Digression-Philosopher directs his mind to places beyond the city in order to number stars, measure the earth, and come to know all other facts about the universe. Although Pindar is a more reverential source than a comedian, the activities that he describes the Digression-Philosopher undertaking are precisely those that Socrates pursues in Aristophanes' *Clouds* and comprise a generic comic trope about philosophy. Socrates then moves from his Pindaric reference to a folktale in which Thales, while gazing up at the stars, absentmindedly fell into a well to the great amusement of a Thracian servant-girl (174a). This joke – that philosophers know the things in the sky but fail to notice what is in front of their own feet – applies to all philosophers, Socrates says (174a). Similarly, when the lawyer-orator is forced to contemplate the subjects of philosophic inquiry, he becomes disoriented as he looks down from his place among the clouds and, in an inversion of the absentminded philosopher trope, makes himself look ridiculous because he is so ill at ease and unable to control himself (175d). The comic elements of the Digression justify the view that Socrates presents a caricature, and the comic motifs that he includes sharpen the distinction between the Digression-Philosopher and himself.<sup>33</sup>

The joke that philosophers live in the clouds may apply to all philosophers, but at least in the case of Socrates it is nonetheless a joke that does not correspond to reality. We find a momentary instance of this behavior when Socrates stops abruptly and remains lost in thought on the neighbor's porch while on his way to the dinner party at

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presents a vision of what happens when the true philosopher of the *Republic* emerges from the Cave (cf. in particular p. 80-1).

<sup>33</sup> McPherran (2010, p. 80-81) sees the Digression-Philosopher as analogous to the philosopher-king of the *Republic*. So while not purely a comic caricature, this philosopher's obsession with wholes and aversion of particulars renders his civic activity ineffectual, which is not the goal of the philosopher-king, since effecting the good is the main mission of the gods and therefore those who wish to be like them.

Agathon's house (*Symp.* 174d-175a), but Socrates strives to disassociate himself from these sorts of inquiry in the last weeks of his life. In the *Apology*, he explicitly denies participating in any of the activities depicted in Aristophanes' *Clouds* (19c). He is careful not to condemn the knowledge that such philosophers hope to acquire, but he denies that he pursues it. The rest of the dialogues bear witness to this: just as he views his maieutic intervention with Theaetetus as an opportunity to benefit the Athenians, he similarly directs all his conversations to discovering what can improve his fellow citizens or putting them on a path to self-improvement that will make them happy citizens (*Tht.* 143; *Apol.* 36e). When Strepsiades gains entrance to the Thinkery, he is startled by the gaunt, pallid appearance of Socrates' students (*Ar. Clouds* 186). The sickly pallor of philosophers was a common trope,<sup>34</sup> one which Socrates says is humorous if only for the ironic way in which the majority understand how philosophers indeed live close to death (*Phd.* 64b-c).

Despite the affinity between Socrates' description of the philosopher in the Digression and the comic poets' parodies of them on the stage, the frank terms in which Socrates frames the Digression introduces its apocalyptic elements. In comparing the leisurely discursive style of philosophers with the intense and fast-paced arguments made by the lawyer-orator, he makes it clear what will be at stake when the Digression-Philosopher is compelled to appear before the lawcourts:

"The talk is always about a fellow-slave, and is addressed to a master, who sits there holding some suit or other in his hand. And the struggle is never a matter of indifference; it always directly concerns the speaker, and sometimes life itself is at stake. Such conditions make [the lawyer-orator] keen and highly strung...[and] force him into doing crooked things by imposing dangers and alarms upon a soul that is still tender (μεγάλους κινδύνους καὶ φόβους ἔτι ἀπαλαῖς ψυχαῖς ἐπιβάλλουσα)." (172e-173a)

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Ar. Wasps* 1408, where Chaerephon is comically described as extraordinarily pale.

Parts of this description Socrates will deny pertain to the Digression-Philosopher in the same way as the lawyer-orator. The Digression-Philosopher's soul, for one, is not in an enslaved state like the lawyer-orator's, and the human judge therefore cannot rightly be considered the Digression-Philosopher's master. That his own death is a possible outcome also should not be distressing to the Digression-Digression-Philosopher because he understands life and death in a radically different way from the lawyer-orator. Despite these differences, however, the emotional experience of appearing as a defendant in a trial must be fundamentally the same for the Digression-Philosopher as for anyone else. He may be better equipped to modulate these emotions through his rational understanding, but the fact that cognitive processes are required to dampen or dispel the affective states of fear and alarm reinforces the Digression-Philosopher's basic humanity.<sup>35</sup>

Within the Digression, Socrates recalls the comic aspects of the philosophic life, especially as it has been understood and presented by comic poets. Beneath the humor, however, Socrates reminds us of the mortal danger that Digression-Philosophers could face in a city that misunderstands philosophy so badly that it is perceived as a threat to the city's accepted way of life. The similarities in the language that Socrates deploys in the Digression and in the dialogues that follow indicate his continued interest in the near-impossible challenge of civic-directed philosophy. If Socrates is to achieve better results than the stock caricature of a philosopher – as presented in comedy and in moments of the Digression itself – he must navigate the dangers of practicing

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<sup>35</sup> Tordo-Rombaut (2020) writes that “neither λόγος nor νόμος can rule without the help of affectivity” (p. 177) and, specifically in reference to the Digression (176b), that self-control and knowledge are mutually dependent in order to lead “the soul away from the improper affects of humans” toward the virtues in imitation of the divine (p. 179-80). Her analysis emphasizes that experiencing and then reacting properly toward affects is essential for virtue.

philosophy in a litigious society. What the Digression shows, then, is that Socrates cannot be like its idealized philosopher. He must engage discursively on the Protagorean orator's terms if his divine philosophic mission is to succeed at improving the city. To the extent that the *Theaetetus* offers a positive vision of philosophy, it lies in the expectation of future rewards. For Socrates, who is forced to contemplate his own mortality, these are the rewards of escaping to the afterlife where no evil can exist (*Tht.* 176b). For his friends, however, life and the process of philosophy, un beholden to the constraints of time (172d) must go on, and any rewards that philosophy may reap in the political realm also belong to the future (178a-b), where the epistemic gains made through maieutics and elenchus will result in apprehension of divine truth.

The dramatic unity of *Theaetetus* with the subsequent dialogues is perhaps most evident in Socrates' vision of death and the afterlife. In *Theaetetus* he imagines philosophers living in preparation for death by unburdening themselves of the worldly concerns that consume most people, especially rhetoricians, in language strongly reminiscent of the *Phaedo*. For those mired in worldly concerns, on the other hand, a life of ignorance in a world inhabited by evil is all that awaits. This apocalyptic vision of the life of the city after his death is expressed even more strongly in the *Apology*, where Socrates issues a grave warning that those who voted to convict him will face punishment from the gods and confrontational philosophizing from some unspecified persons whom Socrates so far has held in check; one must wonder whether Plato has himself in mind here, especially since just a few pages before he had named himself as one of the youths present at the court who would never testify against Socrates for having corrupted him, nor would his older brother Adeimantus.<sup>36</sup> In evaluating the

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<sup>36</sup> The strong implication of that passage is that Plato is a current student of Socrates at an age where corruption, if it were to occur, ought to be setting in. If his older guardian (in Plato's case Adeimantus,



emotional characterization of Socrates, this is a critical passage, since moments later he will claim to have no ill will toward those who voted to convict him. Never mind, then, that he had just told them that hell awaited them after a life of inescapable vexation for the injustice carried out against him. And, while Socrates maintains a façade of uncertainty, he closes the *Apology* with a vivid description of an afterlife in which he endlessly philosophizes with the Homeric heroes and past wise men. When we encounter him in *Phaedo*, Socrates gives an even more elaborate and utopian description of the place to which he is set to go after death, but also reveals an even deeper anxiety than he had let on in *Apology* that he may be wrong. In *Apology*, aside from his occasional emotional outburst, Socrates seeks to maintain that he claims to know nothing beyond his purpose in the life of the city and shrouds any further views as conjecture or ideas that he has picked up from someone else. In *Phaedo*, however, Socrates directs his arguments for the immortality of the soul and paints a utopian vision of the afterlife especially for his own benefit, since, as the one about to die, it is fitting for him to speculate about such matters (*Phd.* 61d).

#### **4. Dreams and epistemic insecurity**

The Athenians ultimately condemned Socrates to death for his complex and unorthodox beliefs about the gods. A recurring topic in Plato's trial dialogues, therefore, is how Socrates discerns the will of his god and acts accordingly. Most famously Socrates claims that a divine presence stops him any time that he begins to act contrary to the god's will. These divine interventions, he says, infallibly prevent him from doing

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since his father had died; for Critobolus, Crito ought to testify if he had observed corruption) had noticed the ill effects of Socrates company, he ought to come forward now and provide witness testimony in support of Meletus' charges.

wrong. The *daimonion*, however, is not the only means by which Socrates gains access to the will of the gods; in the sequence of dialogues under examination particularly, he dreams and, upon waking, interprets his dreams as divine messages. Dreams are a common literary device in Plato.<sup>37</sup> Dreams are unlike the *daimonion*, which only intervenes episodically to stop specific actions, because dreams require a judgement in order to discern what actions they sanction. Because dreams must be mediated through his judgement, it is possible to reach a false conclusion about their meaning. Since dreams require interpretation, they also invite epistemic insecurity. We find two distinct experiences that are both categorized as dreaming: literally having a dream while asleep, as Socrates does in the *Crito* and *Phaedo*; and moments of epistemic confusion or uncertainty that resemble dreams, as we find in the *Theaetetus*. My contention is that dreams of both sorts result in epistemological insecurity and are therefore fallible. The fallibility and epistemic insecurity of dreams recur throughout the *Theaetetus* and establish a paradigm that the *Crito* and *Phaedo* also follow.

In the final stage of the *Theaetetus*, the theory that knowledge consists of true judgement accompanied by a *logos* is presented as an idea that Theaetetus had heard before and of which he has vague recollections, as if the previous experiences had been a dream. Theaetetus is so unclear about the details of his dream that he cannot fully articulate the theory, but Socrates offers “a dream to match a dream” and expounds an epistemological theory that coheres with the one Theaetetus gradually remembers more fully (201d). While initially promising, the Dream theory falls apart under elenctic scrutiny and leaves our interlocutors in *aporia* at the dialogue’s end.

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<sup>37</sup> Burnyeat (1970), p. 103: “Dreaming is one of Plato’s favourite images, with a variety of uses.”

Readers of the Dream have long been interested in attributing the theory to one Presocratic or another; the Socratic Antisthenes has often been suggested.<sup>38</sup> More recent discussions of the Dream have sidelined the historical question of who, if anyone, was Plato's source for the theory and have focused instead on its function within the dialogue itself.<sup>39</sup> A salient question then arises: why couch the theory within a dream? We have, after all, examined Protagoras's theory at length, and Socrates has also named Parmenides in the course of the discussion. If Plato meant the Dream to represent the theory of Antisthenes or anyone else, why not say so explicitly? Burnyeat (1970) and Sedley (2004) in particular have explored the literary function of the Dream.<sup>40</sup> I now highlight their most insightful points and expand upon their comments to establish a thematic resonance between dreams in the *Theaetetus*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*.

In the first place, Theaetetus and Socrates are hardly discussing a dream at all. Theaetetus says that his memory of the theory is so faint that it seems like a dream but does not say that the theory was transmitted to him while sleeping.<sup>41</sup> Likewise, Socrates seems already to be familiar with the theory that Theaetetus is struggling to recall, for he clearly lays out the subtleties of the argument and introduces the Dream "to supplement or clarify the position sketched by Theaetetus, rather than to refresh his memory of a particular exposition of it."<sup>42</sup> That Socrates frames his exposition of the theory as a dream fosters intimacy with Theaetetus and recalls the custom of relating

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<sup>38</sup> Hicken (1957) and Meyerhoff (1958) both argue against the attribution of the dream to Antisthenes.

<sup>39</sup> Meyerhoff (1958), for example, notes the parallels between the Dream theory (the third attempted definition) and the definition of knowledge as perception (the first definition). Rather than ascribing the Dream to another philosopher, therefore, Meyerhoff argues that the Dream is Plato's own thought and marks a thematic return to perception from Part I of the *Theaetetus*.

<sup>40</sup> Hicken (1957, p. 142) also identifies the literary function of the dream: "Much that is curious about the presentation of the 'dream' becomes easier to understand if we may suppose that it was put forward to be criticised and corrected in discussion and not borrowed from some well-known figure like Antisthenes."

<sup>41</sup> Burnyeat (1970), pp. 102-03.

<sup>42</sup> Burnyeat (1970), p. 102.

dreams upon waking, before the details are forgotten.<sup>43</sup> The very fact that dreams are difficult to remember precisely emphasizes their fallibility. Theaetetus's struggle to recall the theory that he had heard underscores the epistemic insecurity of dreams or dream-like experiences; the words are recalled "as if [spoken] by an alien voice," and "epistemologically, a dream is something to look back on as dim and doubtful."<sup>44</sup> Once Socrates reminds Theaetetus of the theory that he strains to recall, the theory itself resembles the effort to interpret a dream. An interpretation is an account of the dreamed elements. Its insecurity arises from the fact not only that it relies upon perceptible but unknowable elements, but also that the perceptions are themselves suspect, for they rely upon a waking memory of dreamed perceptions.<sup>45</sup>

While the Dream theory initially seemed promising in the quest for a satisfactory definition of knowledge, Socrates is forced to conclude that it was a "poor man's dream of gold" (208b). A comparable passage is found in the closing stages of the *Charmides*, a dialogue that has much in common with the *Theaetetus*.<sup>46</sup> Before attempting a final account of temperance, Socrates worries that he may be making a fool of himself and tells his interlocutor Critias to "listen then, to my dream, to see whether it comes through horn or ivory" (*Chrm.* 173a). Here Socrates exploits a Homeric allusion to cast doubt on his vision before he articulates it.<sup>47</sup> As in the *Theaetetus*, moreover, to

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<sup>43</sup> Sedley (2004), p. 154. Sedley's observation that the rhetorical exchange of dreams in the *Theaetetus* mirrors the social custom of comparing dreams should immediately call to mind the opening moments of the *Crito*.

<sup>44</sup> Burnyeat (1970), pp. 104-05.

<sup>45</sup> The Dream theory asserts that knowledge – true judgment plus an account – consists of an inventory of something's constituent components. It ultimately fails, however, because the elements upon which the account of a complex relies are themselves unknowable, though they are perceptible. See Sedley (2004), p. 154-155.

<sup>46</sup> The *Charmides* is similar to the *Theaetetus* in that Socrates is introduced to a promising youth whom he engages in deep elenctic examination. When the inquiry hits upon a dead-end, an older, more experienced interlocutor takes up the mantle on the youth's behalf. The key difference is that Theaetetus has a second go at answering Socrates' questions and, while the dialogue still ends in *aporia*, the result is clearly a positive one.

<sup>47</sup> Hom. *Od.* 19.564-567.

characterize a theory as a dream casts doubt on its origin and immediately calls into question whether it should be believed. As Homer reminds us, dreams are doubly insecure. In the first place, we cannot be sure whether a dream contains any truth to begin with, since it could emerge from the gate of deceptive ivory. Even if the dream passes through the gate of horn, however, we must still interpret it correctly, although our recollection of it may be dim and uncertain, in order to act upon it correctly. Like the *Theaetetus*, the *Charmides* also ends in aporia. Socrates and his interlocutors fail to give a satisfactory account of temperance or its utility. The final lines of the dialogue, moreover, foreshadow the destructive careers of Critias and Charmides in the years just before Socrates was condemned to death.<sup>48</sup> While Socrates' elenctic intervention may not have caused their tyrannical inclinations, his goal of improving them proved, like other maieutic encounters recounted in the *Theaetetus*, to be merely a dream.

Subsequent chapters will examine the dreams that Socrates experiences while sleeping in the *Crito* and *Phaedo*, and the pattern established by the *Theaetetus* and other related dialogues indicates that dreams in general have special literary significance in Plato. Dreams, Socrates says in the *Apology*, are one means by which he regularly receives divine guidance, but the way in which he likens epistemically uncertain positions to dreams, as he does in the *Theaetetus*, indicates that he recognizes the epistemic limitations of dreams, even those that he regards as having genuinely divine origins. For this reason, the epistemically insecure position of the Dream theory in the *Theaetetus* will be internalized by Socrates when he reflects upon his actual dreams in the subsequent dialogues. The status of dreams established in the *Theaetetus* provides

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<sup>48</sup> Press (2018a, pp. 27-28) observes that the effect of Socrates' epistemic dream is to "dramatically [render] Critias' view finally explicit." Critias' vision, Press suggests, calls to mind "twentieth-century fascist ideologies." No wonder, then, that Socrates' dream of a science producing genuine happiness proved false.

good reason for seeing Socrates' interpretations of his own dreams as equally tentative and fallible, a possibility which he acknowledges directly in the *Phaedo* and complicates his apparently steadfast resolution not to flee Athens in the *Crito*.

The *Theaetetus* signals the importance of affectivity in Socratic discourse. The dialogue itself enacts a productive engagement in which Socrates' enthusiasm and Theaetetus's sense of wonder stimulate a cooperative investigation. Although the speakers do not reach their desired end – that is, a comprehensive account of knowledge – Theaetetus experiences intellectual growth and, as the prologue indicates, went on to enjoy an admirable career as a mathematician. The backdrop of this positive elenctic encounter, however, is the disturbing fact that the epistemic emotions roused by Socratic inquiry leads his interlocutors to lash out in anger. In the Digression, which interrupts the maieutic examination of Theaetetus by making Theodorus the main interlocutor, Socrates presents a grim vision of the clash between philosophy and politics. When he indicates at the end of the dialogue that he is about to answer the criminal indictment against him, he embarks upon his own clash with the Athenian state. In the proceeding chapters, I examine the affective elements of Socrates' trial – both the public sentiments that motivated his accusers and the private experiences of Socrates himself as his grim vision becomes reality.

### Chapter 3

#### Uncovering Private and Public Sentiments in the *Euthyphro*

The *Euthyphro*'s most enduring legacy must be its critique of divine command theory *vis-à-vis* the so-called "Euthyphro dilemma." It is not uncommon to find a contemporary ethics textbook in which the Euthyphro dilemma is Plato's only contribution. The series of propositional statements, by the end of which Socrates dismantles Euthyphro's assertion that an act is pious because it is loved by the gods (9e-11b), is undeniably elegant and persuasive.<sup>1</sup> And yet it is also a scar of the analytical interpretation of Plato that a complex drama set in Socrates' critical final days is routinely stripped down to but one of its several strains of thought and deprived of its social-historical context. Moreover, to conclude that, because Socrates finds Euthyphro's definition of piety to be contradictory and therefore inadequate, he also believes that justice is independent of the gods misrepresents the ideas that Socrates promotes, both in the *Euthyphro* and throughout Plato's trial sequence.<sup>2</sup>

In Platonic scholarship, the *Euthyphro* has received far more serious treatment.

The complexities of Socratic religion have received due attention, and it is well

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<sup>1</sup> Numerous articles in contemporary philosophy, however, reject Socrates' reasoning as faulty. Joyce (2002), for example, rewrites the relevant section of the *Euthyphro* in the form of logical propositions and concludes that Socrates' argument is faulty because he "coerces from Euthyphro" an initial assumption that is untenable. To Joyce's credit, he engages deeply with the Platonic material. He writes: "Surprisingly, the 'Euthyphro Dilemma' gets referred to frequently with any of the above arguments being entered into. Either people do not bother with Plato's text, or they find a superior argument suggested by it" (p. 55). Where Joyce's analysis goes wrong, however, is in assuming that, because later philosophers have framed the Euthyphro dilemma as an attack on Divine Command Theory, Plato intended for it to be so. In fact Socrates' goal is not to provide a godless model of morality but to correct Euthyphro and other contemporary Athenians' defective beliefs about the gods.

<sup>2</sup> As one example of this view, see Macbeth (1982), in which the author begins with the common formulation of the "Euthyphro dilemma," which we should note is not to be found in the text of Plato: "Either right actions are right because God commands their performance, or God commands the performance of right actions because they are right" (p. 565). Macbeth's article goes on to argue that that morality is not "independent of God" because of the possibility that "knowledge of morality depend[s] on knowledge of God" (p. 570). While Macbeth does not make any specific mention of Plato or Socrates in his article, the position that he is suggesting here in fact shares a close affinity with Socrates' understanding of the gods as participants in the rational enterprise.

understood that Socrates' refutation of Euthyphro does not entail atheism on his part. Socrates instead hints at fundamental flaws in how traditional religion perceives the gods; an understanding of divinity shaped by rational inquiry rather than appeals to myth could resolve the problems that Euthyphro encounters. In developing this subtler reading of the *Euthyphro*, however, some of its crucial elements that dramatize the public sentiment toward Socrates have gone largely unnoticed. What I endeavor to do in this section is trace the thematic threads of the *Euthyphro* that can reveal not only what Plato's Socrates thinks, but more importantly how the ways in which he frames his ideas are received by interlocutor and audience alike. In the *Apology*, Socrates names Aristophanes' *Clouds* as one specific source of the public resentment of him that has led to his trial. In the *Euthyphro*, he does not name any specific comedy, but he comments on the effects of being laughed at and made the butt of a joke. His account is slightly different, however, because he says that it is not so much a problem to be laughed at, and the Athenians will tolerate a man they find ridiculous, unless they perceive that he is teaching his ideas to others. Then, he says, their amusement turns hostile - this is where he now finds himself.

The *Euthyphro* provides a unique opportunity to explore the complex range of public reactions to Socrates because it is the only of the trial dialogues that is set in an open, public space. The *Apology*, which we shall study in the proceeding chapter, also shows Socrates in a public venue, but there his speech is addressed to a clearly defined audience and its form is confined by its courtroom setting. The *Euthyphro*, however, takes place in the open, where any passerby could stop to listen, and takes the usual, meandering form of Socratic discourse. It is, in essence, a public performance of elenctic examination. This chapter will therefore analyze the emotions that Socrates and Euthyphro discuss as they introduce their respective legal cases, the nature of Socrates'



relationship to his Athenian compatriots, and some specific subversive comments that Socrates makes in the text that can help account for the anger and resentment felt by those who would have overheard him. The *Euthyphro* accomplishes this literary task first by providing the contents of the indictment against Socrates and second by giving space for Socrates to enact a conversation of the sort that motivated the prosecutors to indict him. Rather than writing a prosecuting speech in the voice of Meletus, Plato dramatizes a typical Socratic episode in the *Euthyphro* that shows Plato's audience both how Socrates actually conducted these conversations and how an audience of bystanders would misinterpret Socrates' intentions and thereby develop anger and resentment toward him.

### **1. The emotional complexity of public perceptions**

Beyond the *Euthyphro*'s philosophic legacy, the emotional terminology that shapes its literary introduction provides valuable insight into the sentiments that motivate Socrates, Euthyphro, and their Athenian contemporaries. The prefatory discussion from 2d-3e in particular introduces several thematic emotional sentiments that shed light on the mindset of Socrates and his countrymen. Plato also exploits the potential affinity between Socrates and Euthyphro to demonstrate the nuanced emotions that shaped Athenian discursive action. Although the exchange in which Socrates and Euthyphro discuss the sentiments that each of them experience is brief, it is worthwhile to analyze the text and take note of the speakers' comments because all of the emotional responses recur throughout the dialogues treated in my study. In the analysis that follows, I draw attention to four emotional experiences in particular and emphasize the significance of each in the broader context of Plato's trial dialogue sequence. These four emotional experiences are fear, laughter, envy, and anger.

The *Euthyphro* begins with the chance encounter between Socrates and its titular character. Euthyphro is surprised to find Socrates at the King Archon's porch since he is so accustomed to spending his time in the Lyceum (2a). Socrates informs Euthyphro that he faces indictment by Meletus (he omits naming his other accusers, Anytus and Lycon) and expresses insincere admiration of Meletus' wisdom to look out for the city's youth (2b-3a). Euthyphro responds to Socrates' comment in a serious tone:

βουλοίμην ἄν, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἀλλ' ὀρρωδῶ μὴ τοῦναντίον γένηται... (3a)

I could wish this were true, Socrates, but I fear the opposite may happen. (tr. Grube)

This brief comment points in many important directions, but for now the terms to which I wish to draw attention are βουλοίμην and ὀρρωδῶ. What Euthyphro wishes (βουλοίμην) here is that Meletus's alleged wisdom might prove to be μεγίστων ἀγαθῶν αἴτιος τῇ πόλει γενήσεται ("a source of great blessings for the city," 3a), but he fears that the prosecution of Socrates will prove harmful to the city instead. The grammatical formulation that Euthyphro uses here is a common one in Greek discourse, and the expression of both a preference and fear here is significant. In the first place, a wish indicated by βουλοίμην will be repeated by Socrates in a portion of his opening comments in the *Apology* (18e-19a). In that case, Socrates himself wishes explicitly that he will succeed in persuading the jurors of his innocence before acknowledging the difficulty of his task in the proceeding clause. In Euthyphro's case, the wish is less personal, but the more likely alternative that he fears resonates with Socrates' sentiments in the *Apology*: prosecuting Socrates will almost certainly prove to be harmful rather than beneficial to Athens. Plato also emphasizes the stakes of the trial by having Euthyphro express his fear with the stronger and less common verb ὀρρωδῶ in place of the more usual φοβῶ. Moreover, "anxiety" perhaps better captures the emotion

that ὀρρωδῶ indicates than “fear.” Plato denotes the preferred, but unlikely, outcome with the optative βουλοίμην and then draws a sharp contrast by using the indicative ὀρρωδῶ with the more likely outcome. Euthyphro therefore seems to manifest anxiety because he anticipates an outcome contrary to his preferences. Despite its brevity, Euthyphro’s comment here is thematically significant; not only does he express something of his own emotional reaction to learning of Socrates’ impending trial, but his response also prompts us to look for similar sentiments echoed by Socrates himself.

After Euthyphro expresses his doubts about the utility of Meletus’s indictment, he asks what the specific charges are and, when he hears them, points out emotional sentiments aroused by religious expertise. Euthyphro sees a parallel between the public responses to Socrates’ δαιμόνιον and his own prophetic activity. In both cases, the public responds with slander and laughter to religious expertise beyond their comprehension. While not emotions in themselves, slander and laughter are both framed as physical expressions of underlying emotional states. Slander and laughter, in fact, may be two distinct manifestations of the underlying emotional experience of envy.

Slander (διαβολή) is a topos throughout the *Apology*, and Socrates devotes a long portion of his speech to explaining its origin (*Apol.* 19e-24a), which he traces to fallacious depictions of himself and his activity in comedy. Socrates also devotes considerable attention in the *Phaedo* to depictions of philosophers in comic poetry and the deleterious effects of stagecraft meant to prompt laughter. Socrates will comment on laughter presently in the *Euthyphro* as well, in response to Euthyphro connecting envy (φθόνος) with derisive laughter of the sort that he experiences as public abuse.

In our present dialogue, Euthyphro points to envy (φθόνος) as the emotion that motivates the Athenians to “laugh him down” (καταγελῶσιν) before the Assembly whenever he speaks in his capacity as a prophet:

ἀλλ' ὅμως φθονοῦσιν ἡμῖν πᾶσι τοῖς τοιούτοις. ἀλλ' οὐδὲν αὐτῶν χροὴ φροντίζειν, ἀλλ' ὁμόσε ἰέναι. (3c)

Nevertheless, they envy all of us who do this. One need not worry about them, but meet them head-on. (tr. Grube)

The English “envy,” however, may not be a particularly suitable translation of the pathos that Plato intends to convey. Aristotle defines φθόνος as “a kind of pain, in respect to one's equals, for their apparent success in things called good, not so as to have the thing oneself but [solely] on their account.”<sup>3</sup> Konstan's analysis of the term φθόνος in other classical authors, however, indicates that Aristotle's definition, under which φθόνος is an unequivocally base emotion, does not encompass the full sense of the term. Particularly in fourth-century authors, φθόνος was the opposite pathos of pity. Citing Isaeus (6.61), Demosthenes (21.196), and Isocrates (*Paneg.* 23), Konstan concludes that φθόνος performed a social function, especially in a democratic polis, “to preserve the proper social hierarchy in society.”<sup>4</sup> Since φθόνος entails an ethical judgement, a person “rightly incurs φθόνος” when he “attempts to exceed his station,” and likewise when “an inferior...pretends to equality with his betters.”<sup>5</sup> Euthyphro, a self-proclaimed expert who considers himself to be “superior to the majority of men” (5a), undoubtedly perceives his audience's response as envy in an unqualifiedly negative sense.<sup>6</sup> Euthyphro may also wish to build rapport with Socrates at this point;

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<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.10, 1387b23-5, qt. in Konstan (2007), p. 112-13.

<sup>4</sup> Konstan (2007), p. 121.

<sup>5</sup> Konstan (2007), p. 121.

<sup>6</sup> We should perhaps be careful not to view Euthyphro in exactly the same way the Athenians seem to. McPherran (2000, p. 301) notes that recent evaluations of Euthyphro have taken his proclaimed affinity with Socrates more seriously and see him “as an odd and Sophistically-influenced doppelgänger of

in his view, they are both misunderstood and mistreated by the Athenians because of their peculiar gifts in religious matters.

Socrates, however, seems to distance himself from this close association with Euthyphro when he diminishes φθόνος as a factor in prompting his own trial:

Ἀθηναίοις γάρ τοι, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, οὐ σφόδρα μέλει ἄν τινα δεινὸν οἴωνται εἶναι, μὴ μέντοι διδασκαλικὸν τῆς αὐτοῦ σοφίας: ὄν δ' ἄν καὶ ἄλλους οἴωνται ποιεῖν τοιούτους, θυμοῦνται, εἴτ' οὖν φθόνῳ ὡς σὺ λέγεις, εἴτε δι' ἄλλο τι. (3c-d)

[F]or the Athenians do not mind anyone they think clever, as long as he does not teach his own wisdom, but if they think that he makes others to be like himself they get angry, whether through envy, as you say, or for some other reason. (tr. Grube)

Socrates equivocates on the role φθόνος takes in causing the anger that he faces from the Athenians. This comment is interesting because Socrates will talk of envy and slander (φθόνος and διαβολή) together at *Apology* 18d and 28a.<sup>7</sup> We have seen that φθόνος encompassed a broad semantic range, however, and there may also be many situations in which φθόνος may arise. Brisson's investigation of φθόνος, which he translates as "envious jealousy," is instructive here.<sup>8</sup> In general, φθόνος involves either feeling pain when others do well or feeling pleasure at others' misfortune.<sup>9</sup> The objects of φθόνος may include both moral and material goods.<sup>10</sup> When Socrates says that genuine φθόνος motivates those who seek to condemn him in the *Apology*, he must mean that some Athenians feel pain when they observe Socrates' moral or emotional

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Socrates as well [as a Homeric "fundamentalist"] – a lesson, that is, in what Socrates both *is* and *is not*" (italics McPherran's).

<sup>7</sup> The relevant passages from the *Apology* will be discussed fully in the following chapter. For the purposes of this discussion, it will suffice to point out that at 18d Socrates uses envy and slander in the instrumental case as the means by which comic poets have persuaded the Athenians that Socrates participates in socially deviant behaviors (ὄσοι δὲ φθόνῳ καὶ διαβολῇ χρώμενοι ὑμᾶς ἀνέπειθον).

<sup>8</sup> Brisson (2020), pp. 201-202.

<sup>9</sup> At *Philebus* 48b, for example, φθόνος may take two forms: rejoicing in another's misfortune or feeling saddened by the happiness of others.

<sup>10</sup> Brisson (2020), p. 207.

condition since he has no material possessions to speak of. His close relationship with the god and perplexing wisdom in particular attract the envy of others and, in part at least, explain why he became hated. In Euthyphro's case, however, his alleged prophetic powers are a subject of derision. If he does not truly possess something that others desire, then φθόνος would not strictly be relevant, and it may be for this reason that Socrates speaks so circumspectly about the role of φθόνος in the anger that both he and Euthyphro often face.

Socrates has already pointed out to Euthyphro the qualitative difference between the treatment that each of them receives. Whereas the worst that Euthyphro seems to face is laughter motivated by indignation, Socrates confronts mortal danger because of the anger (θυμοῦνται, 3d) that he has provoked and the eagerness (σπουδάσονται, 3e) with which the Athenians are likely to pursue his case. Socrates reinforces Euthyphro's earlier expression of anxiety as well:

ἐγὼ δὲ φοβοῦμαι μὴ ὑπὸ φιλανθρωπίας δοκῶ αὐτοῖς ὅτιπερ ἔχω  
ἐκκεχυμένως παντὶ ἀνδρὶ λέγειν, οὐ μόνον ἄνευ μισθοῦ, ἀλλὰ καὶ  
προσπιθεὶς ἂν ἡδέως εἴ τις μου ἐθέλει ἀκούειν. (3d)

I'm afraid that my liking for people makes them think that I pour out to anybody anything I have to say, not only without charging a fee but even glad to reward anyone who is willing to listen. (tr. Grube)

We may wonder if Socrates uses the verb φοβοῦμαι in earnest or ironically. I suggest that he genuinely does experience dread and anxiety. In addition to the verb φοβοῦμαι here, Socrates also responds to Euthyphro's comment that he should not worry about those who mock him by saying that to be laughed at, perhaps, is not a problem (ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν καταγελασθῆναι ἴσως οὐδὲν πρᾶγμα, 3d) and then draws a contrast with the anger that his behavior provokes. The next comments that Socrates makes reinforce this view. If the Athenians intended only to jest and laugh (παίζοντας καὶ γελῶντας), that would not be unpleasant (οὐδὲν ἂν εἰρηάδης, 3e). If they take the matter seriously

(σπουδάσονται, 3e), however, the outcome is unclear except to prophets (ἄδηλον πλὴν ὑμῖν τοῖς μάντεσιν, 3e). Socrates does not explicate what outcome he fears may be in store for him, but the proceeding dialogues bear witness to how events unfolded.

Socrates' claim that being laughed at is not a matter of serious concern also warrants investigation. The next time that we encounter Socrates will be in the *Apology*, where he repeatedly blames comic poetry for slandering him for many years. Socrates also directly responds to one of the most common comic slanders against him in the *Phaedo* when he says that even writers of comedy could not accuse him of wasting time with discussion of matters that do not concern him (*Phaedo* 70b-c). It is clear from those two texts that Socrates did care a great deal about how comic poets depicted him and philosophers in general;<sup>11</sup> why then does he brush aside being laughed at in the *Euthyphro*? The dramatic context of dialogues may offer insight here. In the *Euthyphro* Socrates has confronted his accusers and heard their charges for the first time. We know from the end of the *Theaetetus* that Socrates knew he was facing an indictment, but it is not until the moment captured in the *Euthyphro* that Socrates understands the stakes of the accusations. Now confronting a trial for his life because his actions have provoked the Athenians' anger, then, laughter seems a small matter. Further, although it makes sense to connect Socrates' discussion of laughter here to his later comments on comic poetry specifically, he talks only of laughter generally and especially in reference to the experience that Euthyphro had related. Upon reflection, Socrates does recognize the pervasive effects of being the subject of a crowd's laughter in the *Apology* and *Phaedo*,

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<sup>11</sup> The conflation of Socrates' particular brand of elenctic discourse with common tropes about philosophers by the comic poets, and resulting generalized beliefs about philosophy adopted by their audience, especially contributed to Socrates' unpopularity and made defending himself an insuperable task.

but within the dramatic world of the *Euthyphro*, his interlocutor's problems pale in comparison to his own.

As a final point, I turn now to the last line of the dialogue. Although Euthyphro's abrupt departure brings the text to a sudden close, Socrates nonetheless finishes the dialogue with a comment that, when we consider its resonance with lines at the beginning and end of the *Apology*, can shed light on Socrates' attitude toward his trial. In the opening sentences of Xenophon's *Apology of Socrates*, our only extant documentary evidence of Socrates' defense other than Plato's, Xenophon writes that he felt it necessary to make his own record of the events because other versions "didn't make clear... [that Socrates] had already decided that for him death was preferable to life."<sup>12</sup> Xenophon's concern is that Socrates' "arrogance" (μεγαληγορία) appears foolish without the proper insight into his thinking. I shall return to Xenophon's account in the proceeding chapter, but I close this section on *Euthyphro* by arguing that Plato's Socrates had *not* simply decided that it was better to die and therefore make no serious attempt to defend himself.<sup>13</sup>

In the opening stages of the dialogue, Euthyphro expresses anxiety about Socrates' trial, and Socrates seems to share that anxiety about his own trial by diminishing the effects of public ridicule in comparison with serious anger. Soon after, the conversation largely transitions to Euthyphro's case and its implications, which I discuss in section 3 below, but the examination of Euthyphro is bracketed with the suggestion that, should Socrates learn the nature of piety from Euthyphro, he might

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<sup>12</sup> Xen. *Ap.* 1.1-2, tr. Tredennick and Waterfield.

<sup>13</sup> I am side-stepping the debate on whose Socrates, Plato's or Xenophon's, (more) accurately resembles the historical Socrates. I do think, however, that the emotionally complex Socrates I am attempting to reveal in Plato's texts is a more believable and compelling figure than Xenophon's single-minded Socrates and allows Plato to develop his literary themes more intricately.



convince Meletus to stop prosecuting him. Socrates is almost certainly ironic in his professed confidence that Euthyphro can teach him the facts about piety, but this should not preclude the possibility that Socrates does genuinely hope at this stage to be acquitted. The closing sentences of the *Euthyphro* supports this possibility:

οἷα ποιεῖς, ὧ ἑταῖρε. ἀπ' ἐλπίδος με καταβαλὼν μεγάλης ἀπέρχη ἦν εἶχον, ὡς παρὰ σοῦ μαθὼν τὰ τε ὅσια καὶ μὴ καὶ τῆς πρὸς Μέλητον γραφῆς ἀπαλλάξομαι, ἐνδειξάμενος ἐκείνῳ ὅτι σοφὸς ἤδη παρ' Εὐθύφρονος τὰ θεῖα γέγονα καὶ ὅτι οὐκέτι ὑπ' ἀγνοίας αὐτοσχεδιάζω οὐδὲ καινοτομῶ περὶ αὐτά, καὶ δὴ καὶ τὸν ἄλλον βίον ὅτι ἄμεινον βιωσοίμην. (15e-16a)

What a thing to do, my friend! By going you have cast me down from a great hope I had, that I would learn from you the nature of the pious and the impious and so escape Meletus' indictment by showing him that I had acquired wisdom in divine matters from Euthyphro, and my ignorance would no longer cause me to be careless and inventive about such things, and that I would be better for the rest of my life. (tr. Grube)

The noun *elpis* is significant here and anticipates further discussions of hope, especially in the *Apology* and *Phaedo*. Like other affective terms in Greek, *elpis* denotes a variety of experiences and therefore possesses a broader semantic range than the corresponding term "hope" in English does.<sup>14</sup> Theoretical discussions of *elpis* appear in Plato's *Philebus* and *Laws*, and the arguments made there may be instructive about Socrates' affective state in the *Euthyphro*. In the *Philebus*, "popular conceptions of *elpis* as fallible and misguided" spur the dialogue's reevaluation of the pursuit of pleasure.<sup>15</sup> Even if popular notions of *elpis* are incompatible with Socrates' vision of the philosophic life, however, Plato's discussion of *elpis* displays subtle insight into affective states. *Elpis* is a mental state that produces pleasure through the anticipation of a pleasant future and is "opposed to the painful expectation that gives rise to fear."<sup>16</sup> An interpretive difficulty

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<sup>14</sup> Cairns (2019), p. 29.

<sup>15</sup> Cairns (2019), p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> Cairns (2019), pp. 17-18.

in the *Philebus* is whether *elpis*, as a belief about what is likely or possible in the future, constitutes an emotion, but the discussion makes clear in any case that a pleasant feeling accompanies *elpis*. The discussion of *elpis* in the *Laws* likewise connects beliefs about the future to the experience of pleasure and pain. The *Laws* differs from the *Philebus* in that *elpis* generically indicates two types of opinion about the future, *tharros* and *phobos*. *Elpis* once again strictly refers to a belief (*doxa*) about the future, but “its subspecies are affects.”<sup>17</sup> Uses of *elpis* beyond Plato emphasize the salubrious effects of *elpis* as an antidote to despair, even if the comfort provided by *elpis* is merely illusory.<sup>18</sup>

While the expository discussion of *elpis* in Plato may provide a framework, we should also consider how the dramatic context shapes our interpretation. Socrates of the *Philebus* attempts to situate *elpis* and its accompanying affects in an account of higher pleasures derived from the pursuit of philosophy, and his affective experience in the *Euthyphro* and other dialogues may enact this view of *elpis*. Gravlee’s (2020) survey of *elpis* in Plato concludes that hope functions positively, at least when closely tied to the practice of philosophy.<sup>19</sup> We noted that early in the *Euthyphro* Socrates expresses fear about the future as the gravity of his position becomes clearer to him. The *elpis* that he expresses at the end of the dialogue therefore may act to alleviate those fears by replacing them with the confident belief of a pleasant future. Gravlee writes that “the boundary between hope and reason” is fluid.<sup>20</sup> Reasonable confidence about the future appears to be identical with *elpis*, at least in some cases, and when this is true, Socrates reaps affective benefits.<sup>21</sup> This inextricable link between *elpis* and reason, and the

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<sup>17</sup> Cairns (2019), p. 20.

<sup>18</sup> Cairns (2019), pp. 28-29.

<sup>19</sup> Gravlee (2020), p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> Gravlee (2020), p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> Gravlee (2020), p. 11, writes that these benefits may include moral justification for acts that may lead hope to fulfillment and the motivation to act in the face of fears or difficulties.

resultant positive, confident feelings, recur prominently in the *Apology* and *Phaedo* and demonstrate that, whatever outcome Socrates hoped for at this point, his belief in the probability of a good outcome to his trial served to alleviate the fears that he also expresses in these dialogues.

The clause at 16a also creates a segue into the *Apology*, where I argue that Socrates indicates a real desire to succeed in his defense in the opening of the *Apology* and only at the end does he subordinate his own desire to the apparent will of the god that he be convicted and die. The relevant line in the *Euthyphro* reads: καὶ δὴ καὶ τὸν ἄλλον βίον ὅτι ἄμεινον βιωσοίμην (and I might live the rest of my life better, 16a). There is a clear resonance with *Apology* 19a, where Socrates says of the prospect of persuading the jurors of his innocence: βουλοίμην μὲν οὖν ἂν τοῦτο οὕτως γενέσθαι, εἴ τι ἄμεινον καὶ ὑμῖν καὶ ἐμοί (and so I would prefer that it be this way, if it is better for you and me). Socrates then states as he embarks upon his defense: ὅμως τοῦτο μὲν ἴτω ὅπη τῷ θεῷ φίλον (nonetheless, let the matter proceed in whatever way pleases the god). The phraseology is important: Socrates expresses a preference that his own desire (βουλοίμην) be better for himself and the jurors (εἴ τι ἄμεινον καὶ ὑμῖν καὶ ἐμοί) but acknowledges that the god's preference (τῷ θεῷ φίλον) could differ from his own. Socrates will of course emphasize that he has chosen to live his life in accordance with the wishes of the god to the greatest extent possible, but Plato's composition shows that Socrates' preferences do not always correspond with the god's will. In fact, Socrates' δαίμονιον only operates in cases where his intended course of action conflicts with the god's will (*Apol.* 31d). The close resonance between the lines καὶ δὴ καὶ τὸν ἄλλον βίον ὅτι ἄμεινον βιωσοίμην (*Euthyphro* 16a) and βουλοίμην μὲν οὖν ἂν τοῦτο οὕτως γενέσθαι, εἴ τι ἄμεινον καὶ ὑμῖν καὶ ἐμοί (*Apol.* 19a), however, and the thematic continuity across the texts indicates that Socrates does genuinely hope, at least before

receiving the verdict, to be acquitted. Reading the texts as a continuous, dramatic account, moreover, strengthens the characterization of Socrates and underscores the development of his conflicting desires and beliefs.<sup>22</sup>

## 2. Socrates and the hearth of Athens

When Euthyphro hears that Socrates faces an indictment for corrupting the young, he replies:

βουλοίμην ἄν, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἀλλ' ὀρρωδῶ μὴ τούναντίον γένηται:  
ἀτεχνῶς γάρ μοι δοκεῖ ἀφ' ἑστίας ἄρχεσθαι κακουργεῖν τὴν πόλιν,  
ἐπιχειρῶν ἀδικεῖν σέ. καί μοι λέγε, τί καὶ ποιοῦντά σέ φησι διαφθεῖρειν  
τοὺς νέους;

I could wish this were true, Socrates, but I fear the opposite may happen. He seems to me to start out by harming the very heart of the city by attempting to wrong you. Tell me, what does he say you do to corrupt the young? (3a, tr. Grube)

The phrase “ἀφ' ἑστίας ἄρχεσθαι κακουργεῖν τὴν πόλιν” (to start by harming the city at its heart) suggests that Socrates fills a vital role in the civic life of Athens, although Euthyphro does not elaborate what exact role he has in mind. The term ἑστία can be both a common noun, in which case its meaning encompasses both the physical hearth in a house and the household abstractly, and the proper name of the hearth goddess Hestia. It is thematically significant that Plato has Euthyphro connect the concepts of ἑστία and πόλις in one sentence through the character of Socrates. The two terms often function as a dichotomy between public and private affairs in Greek thought, with the ἑστία symbolic of and equivalent to the terms οἶκος and οἰκία. In the worldview that

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<sup>22</sup> The intervention of the *Sophist* and *Statesman* complicates the dramatic chronology. Because the trial would have taken place some time after the preliminary hearings, however, the long pause introduced by the *Sophist* and *Statesman* help to approximate the historical timeline. At the same time, the sidelining of Socrates in those dialogues make it possible to read his words in the *Euthyphro* and *Apology* as nearly continuous.

Socrates reiterates, however, inquiry into personal virtue is inextricably linked to one's performance in public service. This is best symbolized by the fact that Socrates sees his philosophic activity as both a personal mission enjoined upon him by the god and the highest act of service to the city of Athens. Although Hestia seems to us a very minor figure in the mythical literary corpus, she was a central divinity in daily Athenian life, especially in private settings. Hestia was most prominent in civic religion in connection with the Prytaneum in the agora.<sup>23</sup> The Prytaneum therefore was the public space that most conspicuously merged civic and familial religious considerations. That the *Euthyphro* begins by connecting Socrates with the hearth of Athens creates a literary parallel to the passage near the end of the *Apology* in which Socrates proposes as a "penalty" that he receive free meals in the Prytaneum like an Olympic victor (*Apol.* 36d-e). The hearth's thematic significance in connection with Socrates therefore will come full circle in the course of the dramatic composition.

*Euthyphro* continues to develop the merging of the public and private realms and underscores the thematic significance of the hearth only a few sentences later. Socrates asks whether the victim in *Euthyphro's* murder case is a relative, and *Euthyphro* replies that it is in fact his familial connection to the perpetrator that motivates him to seek justice. He then asserts that someone should consider only the guilt or innocence of the accused in making the decision to prosecute, "even if the killer shares a hearth and table with you, for the *miasma* is the same" (ἐάνπερ ὁ κτείνας συνέστιός σοι καὶ ὁμοτράπεζος ἦ: ἴσον γὰρ τὸ μίασμα γίγνεται, 4b-c). *Euthyphro* appears to make a rational, universal proposition: loyalty to family should not stand in

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<sup>23</sup> Thompson (1994, p. 47) notes that Hestia was the deity of both the *oikos* and at the Prytaneum's *hestia koinoē*.

the way of the pursuit of justice.<sup>24</sup> He betrays his real concern in the next clause, however, when he says that the *miasma* arising from the unprosecuted crime attaches to the perpetrator's entire household.<sup>25</sup> Although he appears at first to speak in a theoretical language which Socrates could appreciate, Euthyphro's fear of *miasma* penetrating his household reveals that his rationalism remains entangled with traditional religion.<sup>26</sup> An interesting parallel between the two trials under consideration in the dialogue then emerges.<sup>27</sup> In Socrates' case, Euthyphro expresses dismay that the Athenians are willing to risk the consequences of "striking at their own *ἑστία*." In his own case, however, Euthyphro asserts that he is right to strike at his own hearth and home in order to purify it and ward off divine retribution.<sup>28</sup> Although this idea is not developed further in the *Euthyphro*, Socrates himself conjures a similar vision when he condemns the jurors who voted against him in the final section of the *Apology* (39c).<sup>29</sup>

Situating Socrates at the *hestia* of the city underscores the liminal relationship that Socrates has with his Athenian counterparts and calls into question the relationship

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<sup>24</sup> Euthyphro readily agrees with Socrates at 4b that one who would pursue the course of action Euthyphro has undertaken must be "far advanced in wisdom." We might expect that "wisdom" to consist of a rational, ethical maxim along the lines of my suggestion here; certainly Socrates hopes to hear a similar sort of statement to define "piety."

<sup>25</sup> Blits (1980, p. 22) provides a clear account of Euthyphro's position. He is not defending the view that "justice alone matters" because "sacred family ties are of paramount importance, but only those that bind the prosecutor to the slayer and those binding him to the slain" because of the *miasma* that will attach to someone who, like Euthyphro, "associate[s] knowingly with such a person [i.e. a murderer] and do not bring him to justice."

<sup>26</sup> McPherran (2005, p. 10), however, emphasizes that Euthyphro's understanding of *miasma* is more complex because he connects it with a context-independent view of justice. McPherran also notes the thematic resonance between Euthyphro's concern over *miasma* and the allegation that Socrates corrupts the youth by his proximity to them.

<sup>27</sup> Diamond (2012) demonstrates the literary use of "parallel trials" with considerable success. Diamond concludes that the trials are parallel because the old men who stand accused in each case are innocent while their young prosecutors are guilty of the very charges they bring against others. In the course of making this argument, the article makes a strong case against Socrates from the point of view of Anytus (cf. *Meno* 89e-95a).

<sup>28</sup> Adler and Vasiliou (2015) provide an insightful survey of Euthyphro's ethical and intellectual burdens and deficiencies. On his motivation in particular, they write that "Euthyphro's argument is to justify actions that are deeply personal..." and that his self-professed expertise in the matter "is an explicit source of pride" (p. 49).

<sup>29</sup> Socrates there speaks of *τιμωρία* that will strike back at his condemners soon after his death.

between public and private life in Plato's corpus more broadly. In addition to the reference under present consideration from the *Euthyphro*, two Platonic dialogues include discussions of Hestia: at *Cratylus* 401b-c; and in three passages of the *Laws*.<sup>30</sup> The nexus between these Platonic references to Hestia sheds light on Plato's understanding of the relationship both between the public and private spheres of life and between religious and philosophic thought.

In *Cratylus*, Socrates begins with Hestia, in accordance with custom, as he explores the etymology of each god's name.<sup>31</sup> The custom to which Socrates refers here is a religious one: in Hesiod, Hestia is the firstborn of the Olympian gods, and the physical hearth in the household was the locus of an infant's acceptance into the familial unit.<sup>32</sup> Socrates recognizes and accepts established religion as the starting point for his discussion. He then connects the name Hestia to two inflections of the verb *einai*: *essia*, a dialectic variant of *ousia*; and *estin*. On Socrates' account, Hestia's name is appropriate for her because she is an avatar of pure existence and the first being in the Olympian reality.<sup>33</sup> In his brief discussion of Hestia, Socrates acknowledges her mythical and cultural provenance and then transforms her. By connecting her with *ousia*, he draws Hestia out of the household and equates her with the vital philosophic concept of being.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Socrates also mentions her at *Phaedrus* 247a only to say that she is the only god who does not participate in the procession of souls.

<sup>31</sup> Goux (1983), p. 101.

<sup>32</sup> Thompson (1994), pp. 49-50.

<sup>33</sup> I mean here that Socrates begins with Hestia because she is the firstborn of the Olympians. This reflects the custom of offering first sacrifices to Hestia in Greek religious ceremonies of various kinds, and it is this cultural primacy that Socrates has in mind when he calls her the first.

<sup>34</sup> Kahn (2003), p. 458, n. 2 writes, "There is nothing to be said about the forms *essia* and *osia* which Plato reports as dialectal variants on *ousia*." If the etymology that Plato offers for Hestia is his own invention, then Plato must have chosen to mark her name with special status, in which case the appearance of Hestia in connection with Socrates in the *Euthyphro* takes on additional significance.

In the *Laws*, the discussion of Hestia is pragmatic. Shrines to Hestia are given priority in the Athenian Stranger's ideal constitution. At *Laws* V.745b, the division of physical space in the city begins by establishing a shrine to Hestia, Zeus, and Athena on the acropolis.<sup>35</sup> Hestia's place in the ideal city becomes public rather than private and puts her on equal footing with two gods associated with regulating the social order through mechanisms of the polis.<sup>36</sup> Hestia also becomes central in the adjudication of cases involving temple theft. Since that crime, when committed by a citizen, is a "great and unspeakable offense against the gods or his parents or the state, the penalty is death" (*Laws* IX.854e). The trial procedure requires the judges to hear evidence and cross-examine the disputants three times and only then render a verdict by depositing an affidavit on the altar of Hestia (IX.856a). The text elevates Hestia from her role as a household goddess to a central position in the legal system and introduces a further entanglement of what we would see as public and private realms. The *Laws*' inclusion of Hestia in the legal process provides a safeguard against impious legal action by making the goddess more active in the judicial process and forcing the judges (1) to consider the case and weigh their verdicts several times before making them binding and (2) to swear an oath to Hestia that have acted justly in rendering their verdict. If the *Euthyphro* allows us to see Socrates as closely connected with Hestia, then the legal procedure that the *Laws* prescribes also responds to the Athenians' rash injustice in their own verdict against Socrates.

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<sup>35</sup> Similarly at *Laws* VIII.848d the Athenian says that the constitution should require the establishment of a shrine to Hestia, Zeus, and Athena, this time along with a district patron deity, in each of the twelve village divisions of the city.

<sup>36</sup> I.e. Zeus is associated with legitimacy of political power, especially in non-democratic regimes, and with justice as a social mechanism in general. Likewise, Athena's civic function in Athens cannot be overstated.



Plato's reconfiguration of Hestia in the *Cratylus* and *Laws* suggests that the seemingly casual reference to her in the *Euthyphro* carries deeper symbolic and thematic meaning. In the *Cratylus*, the Hestia of the mythical pantheon is transfigured into an avatar of being itself, and then in the *Laws* she is drawn out from her place at the innermost part of the house to assume a prominent, civic position alongside the more traditionally political Zeus and Athena. Finally, her role in the reformed trial procedure that Plato's Athenian Stranger advances in the *Laws* must be read in comparison with the real trial procedure that condemned Socrates. If Plato's Hestia represents a fundamental reality (*ousia*) and therefore serves to ensure the validity of a judge's verdict, then the reckless, swift, and indefensible vote that will condemn Socrates does indeed strike the city "ἀφ' ἐστίας."

As a final point of consideration on the hearth, Socrates invokes a more traditional image of the hearth in the *Theaetetus*, where he describes running around the hearth as part of the familial initiation ritual to capture the deep attachment felt by his students toward their metaphorical offspring (160e). Socrates exploits the cultural tradition to illustrate the intimate connection his maieutic method fosters with his interlocutors. They may lash out at Socrates if he finds their intellectual offspring unviable. The hearth ritual, on the other hand, as it signifies acceptance into the household, underscores how Socrates' most intimate friends come to view him as a father figure. Indeed, though he positions himself as merely the midwife, Athenian fathers ceremonially recognized the legitimacy of their newborn children by running around the hearth with child in arms. The passing mention of the hearth in the *Euthyphro*, however, reconfigures the implications of the image. Now the household hearth is Euthyphro's central concern, for the pollution that could arise from his father's actions threaten the spiritual wellbeing of his entire family. By contrast, Socrates urges

Euthyphro to see beyond the particulars of his lawsuit and consider justice, piety, and the gods in their entirety. The hearth becomes representative of Socrates' mission to decouple morality from mythology, particulars from universals. In the intimate context of the *Theaetetus*, Socrates exploits the feelings of closeness and belonging called to mind by the image of the hearth, but in the *Euthyphro* the hearth to which Socrates may be most closely connected is abstracted from its familial and civic context and, like his skepticism toward myth, points toward an alternate paradigm.

### 3. "Exasperation and resentment"

"Socrates' method must have caused exasperation and resentment" Gómez-Lobo writes in *The Foundation of Socratic Ethics*.<sup>37</sup> The simple observation is insightful because it reminds us that we cannot faithfully read a Platonic text without considering how the drama unfolds. In the *Euthyphro*, exasperation is communicated by Euthyphro's curt exit from the dialogue: εἰς αὐ̄θις τοίνυν, ὦ Σώκρᾱτες: νῦν γὰρ σπεύδω ποι, καί μοι ὥρα ἀπιέναι ("Some other time, Socrates, for I am in a hurry now, and it is time for me to go," 15e, tr. Grube). A tradition dating to Diogenes Laertius and endorsed by some modern scholars, including McPherran and Brickhouse and Smith, holds that Euthyphro departs abruptly because Socrates has shown him the error of his ways and convinced him to withdraw his complaint against his father.<sup>38</sup> Nothing in the text confirms or denies this conclusion.<sup>39</sup> Nonetheless, I suggest that Euthyphro and anyone else observing this conversation would have quite the opposite reaction. Let us imagine

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<sup>37</sup> Gómez-Lobo (1994), p. 12. Gómez-Lobo uses Thrasymachus's outburst from *Republic* I as a *locus classicus*, but as I say above, the sentiment pertains in most Socratic texts.

<sup>38</sup> DL 2.29; McPherran (2002), p. 107; Brickhouse and Smith (2004), p. 14-18.

<sup>39</sup> *Contra* McPherran (2002) and Brickhouse and Smith (2004), Benson (2013) writes that "lacking the relevant expertise himself, Socrates has no substantive advice to offer Euthyphro" (p. 116) and concludes that "Socrates's account of practical reasoning...is rather disappointing" (p. 135).

the scene: Socrates and Euthyphro meet by chance outside a busy administrative building in the bustling heart of the agora. Plato does not indicate that bystanders are listening in to this conversation as he does in some other dialogues, but we must think that several Athenian passers-by overhear and, some at least, stop to listen. Indeed it was “out in the open, in plain sight” where Socrates’ “threat to democratic society was greatest.”<sup>40</sup> His “philosophizing in public places” eroded “the morale of the exhausted democracy by his constant criticisms.”<sup>41</sup> To the analytic philosopher reading the text of the *Euthyphro*, Socrates’ words are quite convincing in light of the ubiquity of the “Euthyphro dilemma.” To an Athenian observer, however, for whom both speakers have ridiculous reputations, the conversation must indeed be exasperating.<sup>42</sup>

It is easy for a modern to erroneously retroject a reverence for Socrates into the Platonic texts. To conclude in the absence of any evidence whatsoever that “Socrates’ tactics thus benefit Euthyphro...by dissuading Euthyphro from pursuing a potentially damaging course of action” makes precisely this error: to assume that Socrates’ contemporaries regarded him with the same admiration that modern readers of Plato do.<sup>43</sup> Socrates, however, does not always get the better of his interlocutors, as Cooper writes in his introduction to the *Protagoras*: “Thus both speakers get their comeuppance – Socrates for denying that virtue is teachable, Protagoras for denying that it is wisdom.”<sup>44</sup> I have suggested that Euthyphro’s comeuppance comes in the form of φθόνος, indignation accrued by his overestimation of his own abilities. In Socrates’ case, comeuppance may be more subtle, and we may deny that it is “comeuppance” at

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<sup>40</sup> Fortunoff (1993), p. 74.

<sup>41</sup> Lavine (1984), p. 13-14 (qt. in Fortunoff (1993), p. 74).

<sup>42</sup> Euthyphro, despite his high opinion of his own standing, faces ridicule whenever he speaks before the assembly. Socrates, likewise, struggled to differentiate himself from the widespread comic caricature of himself, as he will emphasize in the *Apology*.

<sup>43</sup> McPherran (2002), p. 107.

<sup>44</sup> Cooper (1997), p. 747.

all. It is undeniable, however, that Socrates provokes negative emotional responses in some of his interactions, the *Euthyphro* included. Rather than turning Euthyphro away from his misguided prosecution of his father, Socrates may in fact have inclined bystanders to support the indictment he faced. As we have seen, early in the *Euthyphro* Socrates claims that the Athenians become angry with him when others imitate his habits (3d). His own testimony in the *Apology*, however, complicates this claim. In addition to the slanderous comic portrayals, Socrates says that his conversation themselves caused him “to be disliked both by [my interlocutors] and by many others” (21e). This hatred spread not (only) because young men imitated him, but in the first instance because “the bystanders thought that I myself possessed a wisdom that I proved my interlocutor did not have” (23a). He fails to mention another source of hatred: resentment and indignation on the part of friends of those whom Socrates puts to the test.<sup>45</sup> Socrates shows a clear awareness of the social consequences of his elenctic style but believes that the good his interactions produce are nonetheless more choiceworthy as he continues to pursue his accustomed method of discourse.<sup>46</sup>

Euthyphro had tried to build rapport with Socrates but was rebuffed in the opening stages of the dialogue (3b-e).<sup>47</sup> Socrates also makes effectively no effort to deny the charges that he faces. Euthyphro expresses dismay that Socrates has been accused and sympathizes with him because he too is a social outcast for his religious views.

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<sup>45</sup> For example, in the *Gorgias* Polus (461b-c) and (Callicles (482c) each berate Socrates on behalf of their mentor Gorgias. Polus tells Socrates that “to lead your arguments to such an outcome is a sign of great rudeness” (461c, tr. Zeyl).

<sup>46</sup> Ex.: *Euthyphro* 3d, *Apol.* 21e and 23a, where he describes his “unpopularity” as “hard to deal with and a heavy burden.”

<sup>47</sup> The grammar may contain evidence of Euthyphro’s failed rapport-building. At 3c, Euthyphro uses the first-person plural when he says that the Athenians “envy all of us who do this [prophesy]” (ἀλλ’ ὁμως φθονοῦσιν ἡμῖν πᾶσι τοῖς τοιούτοις). Socrates’ reply a few lines later, however, employs the second-person plural: “the outcome is not clear except to you prophets” (ὅτι ἀποβήσεται ἄδηλον πλὴν ὑμῖν τοῖς μάντεσιν).

Socrates, however, distances himself from Euthyphro's specific practice, prophecy, despite claiming to be a prophet or speak prophetically elsewhere in Platonic texts, and mounts a full-on assault of Euthyphro's religious beliefs.

Among the positive claims Socrates makes, albeit in his characteristically oblique way, is that popular civic religion is fundamentally incompatible with the holistic, universal understanding of morality that he seeks. This view in itself is a dangerous one in a theocratic state such as Athens.<sup>48</sup> Socrates openly professes his extreme skepticism about mythical accounts of the gods and goes so far as to cast doubt upon the Panatheniac festival when he pointedly asks whether Euthyphro believes the stories depicted on the goddess's peplos. There is an undeniably subversive quality to the line of questioning that Socrates pursues, and he underscores his own skepticism of myth repeatedly as he questions Euthyphro's account of piety. As he poses questions about whether the gods can agree about ethical matters if they also oppose and even hate each other, he twice qualifies this premise with phrases like "if the gods really do disagree, as is your assertion." Thus Socrates indirectly denies that myths are true.<sup>49</sup> Socrates gives another hint as to what he thinks a proper understanding of piety entails when he gives Euthyphro the opportunity to redefine "care for the gods." Euthyphro insists that this "care" is identical to the care that breeders give to horses, doctors to patients, and so forth.<sup>50</sup> This view, however, forces the gods to be in need of something that humans can provide them, and for Socrates the gods can only be understood as completely good

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<sup>48</sup> Fortunoff (1993) discusses the political climate in Athens from the late-fifth to mid-fourth century. He sees the Athenian democracy as increasingly hostile to subversive ideas during this period and emphasizes that religious non-conformity was in itself a seditious political act.

<sup>49</sup> Nails (2006, p. 10) notes that "what [Socrates] states as questions at [*Euthyphro*] 6b-c, he states unambiguously elsewhere (*Tht.* 176b8-c1)."

<sup>50</sup> Cephalus at *Republic* I.331a-b provides a classic example of the transactional human-divine relationship that Euthyphro must have in mind when he cites giving sacrifices and other goods to the gods as pious acts. In the passage, Cephalus says that wealth makes the prospect of death less frightening because it provides the means to avoid committing unjust acts toward other men and forgoing sacrifices to the gods.

and thus self-sufficient.<sup>51</sup> Had Euthyphro backed down from his definition of “care,” however, he and Socrates might have agreed upon a different view of the human-divine relationship that would elucidate the definition of piety.<sup>52</sup>

An element of social realism that emerges from the text of Euthyphro can help us to understand why Socrates' inquiries and implicit assertions proved so controversial and roused anger. As we noted above, when Euthyphro begins defending his decision to prosecute his own father, he says “the *miasma* is the same” whoever the perpetrator happens to be (4c). At the same time, Euthyphro also asserts a universal principle of justice: all wrongdoers must be punished. That is to say, he arrives at something like a Kantian imperative, but his conclusion seems to rest on a fear that the gods will punish him and his family if they fail to prosecute the guilty party. Euthyphro’s dramatic dilemma, then, is as follows:

- (1) If he declines to prosecute his father, he risks *miasma* attaching to his household for failure to prosecute and thereby achieve purification for the guilt of murder;
- (2) if he chooses to prosecute his father, he risks *miasma* attaching to himself for committing violence against his father by bringing him to court.

Euthyphro’s self-proclaimed expertise lies in his “knowing” that (1) is inevitable while there is no real risk of (2); Zeus, after all, established the precedent when he brought his own father to justice (6a). Euthyphro is advocating an ethical principle that directly

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<sup>51</sup> For the view that someone who is or possesses the good will be self-sufficient, see the argument against friendships between two good people at *Lysis* 214a-215c.

<sup>52</sup> McPherran (2000, p. 301) identifies the “dramatic juncture” at 14a-c as the place where we nearly find “the final elements of a Socratically-acceptable conception of piety.” Because Euthyphro does not relinquish his assertion that human piety provides some good to the gods, however, he cannot fully develop the distinction he had allowed between piety and human justice at 11e-12e.

conflicts with popular morality and therefore provokes the anger of his relatives (4e) and others (5e).<sup>53</sup>

The belief that an individual's actions could bring harm to the entire community was a pillar of Greek thought. Euthyphro's deviant views made him suspect in the eyes of his fellow citizens, and the same was true of Socrates. Although Socrates begins the dialogue by arguing for the popular view that prosecuting one's own father is nearly unthinkable, we should take note of the ease with which Socrates undermines conventional civic religion in a public space, as Plato permits us to witness in the *Euthyphro*.

Another key function of civic religion is to provide clarity and agreement about what the citizens are to do in any given situation. Nearly every aspect of daily life in the Athenian polis was governed by the performance of specific religious rituals, and these shared experiences laid the foundation for social cohesion and civic stability. The fact that Euthyphro plans to prosecute his own father is shocking and disruptive to the social order, and the additional fact that he can convincingly justify his behavior by appealing to mythic precedent makes his actions doubly vexing. As Socrates presses Euthyphro on this position, he reveals contradictions in Euthyphro's view. As the *Euthyphro* shows, however, the fact that Socrates readily accepts premises in order to tease out and test their conclusions inevitably leads to confusion over whose views Socrates is voicing. At 11b-d, Euthyphro and Socrates disagree as to which of them is like Daedalus. The crux of the matter is whether Socrates makes his own or his interlocutor's ideas move and evade apprehension. Whatever the reality may be, the

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<sup>53</sup> Socrates falls on the side of popular morality when he expresses incredulity that Euthyphro is prosecuting his own father in the opening stages of the dialogue. This move seems to be a rhetorical one to stimulate conversation, but Socrates is generally cautious not to violate traditional morality without firm justification, even if he is skeptical of the mythical grounds on which it has been formulated.

public perception that Socrates holds deviant views or disagrees simply for the sake of complicating seemingly simple matters causes resentment, both in his interlocutor and, as his reputation shows, in anyone who happens to be listening.<sup>54</sup> Within the *Euthyphro*, we can find examples of Socrates appearing to change his own position in the course of the discussion. As we noted above, Socrates actually argues in agreement with the majority who find Euthyphro's actions astonishing at 4b and 4e. A short time later, however, he seems to take an even more extreme position than Euthyphro's when he expresses doubt that the mythical exempla cited by Euthyphro are true at all (6a).

The perception that Socrates endorses any view that he voices is especially significant as Socrates tests Euthyphro's expertise on piety. Euthyphro begins with the claim that "wrongdoers should always be punished" and gives evidence that this directive can include his own father by pointing out that Zeus had punished his own father, too (4b-e, 5e-6a). Socrates initially presses Euthyphro on his belief that such stories about the gods are true (6a-c) but then asks what form it is that the gods recognize in each of these mythical exempla (ἐκείνο αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος..., 6d). Euthyphro replies that the pious is what all the gods love (7a), to which Socrates replies that, if the gods do disagree as Euthyphro believes (7b), the disagreements must be about ethical topics just as human disagreements are (7d-e). No one, human or divine, disputes the principle that Euthyphro asserted at 4b, that wrongdoers should always be punished, but the inescapable conclusion of Euthyphro's view is that not even the gods agree whether the doer did wrong or acted justly (8d). If we allow that the story of Zeus binding Cronus is true, we still cannot appeal to it to defend Euthyphro's actions

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<sup>54</sup> cf. *Apol.* 32e-33b. There Socrates says: "Throughout my life, in any public activity I may have engaged in, I am the same man as I am in private life" and goes on to say that he never prevents anyone from listening to his conversations.



because the gods are not in universal agreement that (a) Cronus had done wrong by swallowing his children or (b) Zeus had done right by punishing Cronus. So much for Euthyphro's clever defense.

But what does this line of argumentation mean for Socrates in the public eye? Insofar as Socrates seems to have thoroughly deflated Euthyphro's arrogance, anyone listening in on the conversation may be well pleased with Socrates. Deconstructing Euthyphro's view, however, required Socrates to make two subversive claims of his own. The first is as follows. At 6a-b, Socrates says that he is a defendant in his own *asebeia* case precisely because he "finds it hard to accept things like that [i.e. the story of Zeus binding Cronus] being said about the gods" and presses Euthyphro to say if he "really believe[s] these things are true." Euthyphro affirms his belief in these and many other "surprising things, of which the majority has no knowledge" (6b). Socrates presses him once again: the stories depicted on the cult statue of Athena's peplos at the Panathenaic festival, do we say those are true as well (6c)? Euthyphro again confirms his belief, but Socrates remains skeptical that such myths are true.<sup>55</sup> Setting aside his reasons for speaking as he does here, anyone listening is sure to feel shock and anger that Socrates openly challenges established civic religion, especially in the context of the city's most important religious event, the Panathenaic festival. The first subversive view that Socrates reveals here, therefore, is that he is openly skeptical of the myths that underpin civic religion. He does not go so far as to deny them outright, but his skepticism is already known, since it forms the foundation of his impending case (6a) and is palpable as he presses Euthyphro on the truth of myth. Although I think it is

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<sup>55</sup> At 7b, Socrates uses the non-committal phrases "we stated" and "it was said" in relation to gods disagreeing. Likewise at 8d-e, Socrates twice embeds the gods' supposed disagreement in if-clauses. All of these statements indicate his desire to pursue the argument without endorsing the position.

clear in a broader reading of Plato's texts that Socrates is neither an atheist nor willing to discard all mythical accounts of the gods, the point that I want to emphasize here is that any potential juror overhearing the very public dialogue between Socrates and Euthyphro would be hard pressed *not* to find truth in the second element of the criminal indictment against Socrates, i.e. that he creates new gods (element 1) while *not believing in the old gods* (element 2).

The second subversive claim that emerges from Socrates' examination of Euthyphro is the conclusion at 7d-e that the gods disagree about the same things as humans do, such as what is just, beautiful, and good. Again, it would be an erroneous reading of the text to conclude that Socrates believes that justice, beauty, and the good are not derived from the gods. If we imagine the *Euthyphro* as a conversation in the public eye, however, any listeners are unlikely to be so thorough as Plato's reader. In its social-historical context, the implication of Socrates' line of argument here is perhaps yet another permutation of the "Euthyphro dilemma": either the myths that the Greeks believe about their gods are false, or their gods hold contradictory beliefs about moral goods and routinely violate their own ethical precepts. Socrates' conclusion that the gods disagree about fundamental ethical values, therefore, may not directly provide evidence in support of either the first or second element of the charges, but there can be no doubt that this statement subverts civic religion and therefore proves hostile to the welfare of the polis whose policies and rituals are inextricably connected to the pantheon of gods.

In the *Euthyphro* Plato shows us both the subtle dexterity of Socrates' elenctic skill and how easily his fellow Athenians would misunderstand Socrates' line of thought and attribute to him views incompatible with mainstream religious beliefs. While holding laughable ideas like Euthyphro may prove to be unpleasant but

harmless, Socrates' views attract hostility because the implications of his statements subvert and potentially endanger the polis.

The *Euthyphro* shows a dialectic Socrates in action. His critique of a moral theory derived from traditional myth demonstrates his elenctic prowess. When we consider the dramatic elements of the *Euthyphro*, the emotional impact of this encounter and his countless others like it comes to the fore. Socrates recognizes that his unorthodox religious views make him both laughable and contemptible in Athenian society. His fear and uncertainty about what the future holds in the opening of the dialogue reveal the extent to which his social position affected his psychic state. At the same time, however, his belief that elenctic examination is therapeutic for the human soul and his hope that practicing philosophy would not cause him harm pressed him to continue his mission. As he vividly articulated in the *Theaetetus*, his philosophic inquiries necessarily cause his interlocutors to experience epistemic pain. We may well sympathize with Euthyphro's exasperation by the end of the dialogue. As Socrates will reiterate in the *Apology*, however, making his fellow citizens uncomfortable is an essential first step in motivating them to reconsider the traditions that guide civic action. Even at his most dialectical, Socrates remains aware that philosophic progress is impossible without the subtle interaction between reason and emotion. That fact that Socrates has hope as he confronts an uncertain future likewise enacts one way in which reason may produce and benefit from positive emotions.

## Chapter 4

### Socrates as Citizen and Stranger in the *Apology*

Readers who approach the *Apology* in isolation often remark that its *in medias res* structure and omission of the prosecuting speeches that would have preceded Socrates' *apologia* in the historical trial constitute an incomplete narrative of Socrates' trial. Such a view assumes that providing an historically faithful record of the trial would have been Plato's primary goal in publishing the *Apology*.<sup>1</sup> In this section, I suggest that we set aside the insoluble question of the degree to which Plato's *Apology* can be read as an historical document and instead focus on its place in Plato's literary sequence.<sup>2</sup> From that point of view, we find a Socrates who responds to many of the themes raised in the preceding dialogues and continues to acknowledge both his own psychic distress and the disturbing emotions that his philosophic activity arouses in others. I explore three main questions that arise from this reading in this chapter: (1) how has Socrates become so hated by his fellow Athenians; (2) what outcome does he hope to achieve as he presents his defense; and (3) to what extent does Socrates reciprocate the anger that now imperils his life?

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<sup>1</sup> This view is by no means universally accepted, but many prominent scholars have defended it. Noteworthy examples include Grote, who writes that the *Apology* "is a report, more or less exact, of the real defense of Socrates" (qt. in Guthrie (1975), p. 72). Burnet adds that Plato "would have defeated his own end if he had given a fictitious account of the attitude of Socrates and of the main line of his defence" (qt. in Guthrie (1975), p. 72).

<sup>2</sup> Brickhouse and Smith (2004b, pp. 80-83) provide a compact survey of arguments for and against the historicity of the *Apology*. They find the arguments on both sides provisional at best, in large part because either view rests on Plato's imputed motivation to write the *Apology*. Brickhouse and Smith attempt to work from "an essentially neutral stance" that treats "Socrates" as the "character delivering the three speeches" in the *Apology*.

## 1. Audience reception of Socratic discourse

From the beginning of his defense, Socrates dismisses his prosecutors' speeches as persuasive but entirely false and claims that a far greater challenge is posed by his "first accusers" because their slanderous depictions of him had influenced public opinion for far longer. Among the other, unnamed "first accusers" is Aristophanes, whose *Clouds* featured a comic Socrates interested in natural speculation and corruptive discourse. Theatre provided one venue that fomented resentment of Socrates and philosophers in general through popular depictions that lacked nuance. The proliferation of this hostile view of philosophy, not only in public theatre, but also in public discourse generally, effectively makes the whole of the Athenian populace potential enemies.<sup>3</sup>

That Socrates seems to blame Aristophanes for having written plays about him may not come as a surprise. The claim, however, that Aristophanes and the other first accusers were Socrates' real enemies deserves more serious consideration. Socrates blames Aristophanes for the material written about him, but we should recall Socrates' comments in the *Euthyphro* here as well. There Socrates distinguishes between the relative benignity of being laughed at and the more serious hostility that arises when a supposed social deviant makes others like himself (3d). *Apology* 18a-e explains that the persuasive and enduring power of comic slanders lies in the fact that the audience members were young and accepted the fictive world on stage as a true account of reality uncritically. Once those audience members had seen the play, they accepted its depiction as fact.<sup>4</sup> The blame, therefore, falls at least in part on the audience and the

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<sup>3</sup> We cannot know whom Socrates had in mind when he mentioned accusers who could not be named, but it is probably the case that the general amnesty issued upon the restoration of democracy in 401-400 B.C. forbade bringing litigation involving events in the years under the Thirty. Evans (2010) provides a thorough discussion of *asebeia* trials in the years following the restoration of democracy and the legal intricacies of the amnesty.

<sup>4</sup> That many of the jurors would have seen the *Clouds* performed is not at all clear. Its original production occurred 24 years before Socrates' trial, which means that many of the jurors would have been young

theatrical institution itself. Among Plato's writings are his famous excoriations of various modes of poetic imitation; in the *Apology*, Socrates casts the *Clouds* as a case study in the corruptive power of the theatre.<sup>5</sup>

We should also suppose, however, that Socrates' own public performances of philosophic elenchus were sufficient to turn public sentiment against him. The public nature of dramatic performances is not unlike the public nature of many of Socrates' elenctic encounters. The *Euthyphro* is representative of such an encounter, and Socrates indicates that there were many more in the *Apology* as he recounts his frequent public encounters with Athenians of all professions and social status. While Socrates frames these conversations as part of his systematic attempt to find the meaning of the Delphic oracle, his observers were free to impute whatever meaning they chose onto Socrates' activity (21b).<sup>6</sup> In some cases, the young men who watched found a model; these are the imitators who rouse public anger and create danger referenced at *Euthyphro* 3d.

Although Socrates often defends controversial claims or objects to fundamental civic values ironically, the fact that he does so publicly means that anyone who listens to his conversations is free to distort or misrepresent his words or intentions. In this respect,

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children at the time. On the other hand, Aristophanes did revise the text of the *Clouds*. Socrates does not make an explicit reference to the text version of the *Clouds*, but he does say that the jurors could purchase and read copies of Anaxagoras at 26d-e. Dover (1968, lxxx-xcviii) provides a thorough discussion of the transmission and possible (re-)performance of the two versions of *Clouds*. H. Tarrant (1991, pp. 162-166) argues that Plato was likely familiar with *Clouds* I, from the 423 B.C. production.

<sup>5</sup> "Historic" at least insofar as comic depictions of Socrates were in fact staged in Athens and had enough impact on Socrates' reputation that Plato believed them responsible for the guilty verdict in the trial. The question of how well we know the *Clouds* might have been is complicated by the fact that Aristophanes wrote a second version of the play, which so far as we know only existed as a text, and it may be to this document, along with various pamphlets circulated on the trial of Socrates in the years following his death, that Plato intends to direct his hostility.

<sup>6</sup> The fact that Socrates reveals the oracle as if it is new information to the jury compounds the chronological difficulties that the entire oracle narrative presents. Danzig (2003: pp. 303-06) provides a thorough overview of these difficulties. Stokes (1992: p. 55) expresses incredulity that the oracle would really have been "the best-kept secret of a lifetime." If the oracle would have come as a surprise to most or all of the jurors, then it becomes even easier to see how Socrates' behavior over the previous three decades would have regarded as primarily an assault on prominent citizens and civic institutions.

Socrates' own activity is very much like Aristophanes' dramas. Artistic nuance is sure to be lost on some members of a large, heterogeneous audience. Thus, while Socrates, at least in the heated moment of delivering his defense speech, directs blame at Aristophanes for his damaging depictions of him, he should also sympathize with the extent to which one's artistic or social impact is contingent upon the composition and character of the audience.<sup>7</sup>

We have also seen that Socratic inquiry involves the merging of traditionally hermetic social spaces: the family and the state, private and public affairs. The *Apology* shows this deconstruction of traditional institutions in action; Socrates undertook his philosophic examination of public figures in private encounters as a result of a personal religious experience. The conversations that he undertook as a private citizen, moreover, occurred in public view and have therefore become a matter of civic concern. The content of his conversations then fosters conflict among the secular affairs of state, civic religion, and private religious beliefs. Socrates undertakes a difficult line of argument in the *Apology*: he seeks to defend the legitimacy of his philosophic inquiries by showing that they are the logical result of extranatural motivations. Because Socrates holds a genuine belief that arriving at a more correct position through cooperative inquiry is one good that results from his philosophic encounters, he sometimes defends points of view to which he is not committed. In the *Apology*, Socrates largely avoids taking any definite positions but does voice explicit skepticism about commonly accepted ideas and undermines the social authority of his interlocutors in the process.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Rosen (1988, pp. 61-2) points out that at least some of Socrates' negative attributes in the *Clouds* were "common joke[s] used by comic poets against philosophers, regardless of their real doctrines." Rosen quotes Scholia *Nub.* 96, which comments that readers should recognize this fact. In the case of an audience witnessing a live performance, however, this sort of intertextual scrutiny is not possible.

<sup>8</sup> Tyrrell (2012, p. 93) summarizes public perception of Socrates nicely: "However little he resembled sophists, he sounded like them to the indiscriminating many, and everyone knows that sophists were atheists who challenged their religion and traditions."

At 21c, for example, Socrates describes an early encounter with an unnamed but well known “leading man” that helped him recognize his own unique wisdom and its deficiency in most everyone else.

The activity in which Socrates engaged amounted to a series of public performances that provoked strong reactions from his interlocutors and any bystanders (21d).<sup>9</sup> In the narrative account of his philosophic activity, Socrates describes his encounters with politicians, including at least one very prominent one whom Socrates declines to name (21c). Each of these many encounters made Socrates less popular, in large part not because of any slanderous *ex post facto* accounts of them but because Socrates conducted his activity openly before *ad hoc* audiences of bystanders (21d, 23a).<sup>10</sup> While Socrates admits that his elenctic encounters themselves caused him to become disliked, however, he places more emphasis on his view that pervasive slander has turned public opinion against him (18a-e; 23d-24a; 33a-b). The effect of his rhetorical tack is to diminish the extent to which he has brought hatred upon himself and overemphasize the effect of slanderous accounts and depictions from secondhand sources.<sup>11</sup>

While Socrates seems to minimize the effect that his own activities had on the proliferation of slander against him, he does reveal that he was affected emotionally by these sentiments. He indicates painful awareness that he was becoming unpopular in

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<sup>9</sup> Rosen (2013, p. 26) writes that angry responses to his philosophizing were good insofar as they proved that Socrates was attracting attention: “In a very real sense, therefore, Socrates requires the threat of the suppression he suffers, because it means that his philosophizing is having some effect.”

<sup>10</sup> On the issue of bystanders, Blanchard (2000, pp. 441-42) astutely points out the bystanders would include “many Athenians like Callias who have invested their wealth and prestige in the sophists.” That is, many of the witnesses were also personally invested in the stakes of the inquiry.

<sup>11</sup> Leibowitz (2010) regards the entire *Apology* as being ironic to the point of deliberate provocation. On his reading, Socrates undermines his attempts to impugn his slanderers at 37d-e, where he refuses to recommend exile as a counter-penalty because “he would find himself in the same trouble all over again owing to inevitable problems concerning the young. He thus indirectly confirms that it was chiefly his effect on the young – not his refutations of politicians, poets, and craftsmen – that gave rise to his troubles in Athens” (p. 162).



his beloved *polis* when he likens himself to Heracles by describing his investigations as “labors” (22a) and further characterizes his experience:

μετὰ ταῦτ' οὖν ἤδη ἐφεξῆς ἦα, αἰσθανόμενος μὲν καὶ λυπούμενος καὶ δεδιώς ὅτι ἀπηχθανόμην, ὅμως δὲ ἀναγκαῖον ἐδόκει εἶναι τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ περὶ πλείστου ποιεῖσθαι... (21e)

After that, I proceeded systematically. I realized, to my sorrow and alarm, that I was getting unpopular, but I thought that I must attach the greatest importance to the god’s oracle... (tr. Grube)

ἐκ ταυτησὶ δὴ τῆς ἐξετάσεως, ᾧ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, πολλαὶ μὲν ἀπέχθειά μοι γεγόνασι καὶ οἷαι χαλεπώταται καὶ βαρύταται... (22e-23a)

As a result of this investigation, men of Athens, I acquired much unpopularity, of a kind that is hard to deal with and is a heavy burden... (tr. Grube)

These public encounters proved particularly damaging to Socrates’ popularity; I offer two reasons why this would have been the case. In the first place, Socrates conversed with interlocutors who, despite public reputations for wisdom, were unskilled and mostly uninterested in the sort of elenctic discussion that Socrates conducted. In sharp contrast to Socrates’ method of joint inquiry, nearly every public interaction entailed an element of interpersonal competition in the Greek world. A reticent interlocutor with a high reputation and a captive public audience inevitably would not look charitably upon Socrates’ techniques or intentions. The human wisdom that Socrates claims to possess in the *Apology* requires a humility and recognition of human limits that a public figure in the agonistic world of democratic Athens could not afford to display.<sup>12</sup> Second, the apparent hostility of Socrates’ tactics is compounded by his own reluctance to assent

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<sup>12</sup> Metcalf (2004, pp. 154-5) points out that, in the *Sophist*, the elenchus is framed as a competition of words, but the intended or ideal result is that “those who are being examined, on seeing [that their opinions are self-contradictory], become angry at themselves and gentle toward others” (230c, tr. Metcalf). Protagoras, as imagined by Socrates, cautions Socrates to enjoy in discussion carefully so as to produce this rather than the opposite effect (*Tht.* 167e-168a). It is clear that the real-world encounters described in the *Apology*, however, did not achieve this desired effect.

to any particular set of beliefs in these public encounters.<sup>13</sup> Even if Socrates initiated these conversations out of a genuine sense of religious and civic obligation, his contemporaries are unlikely to have seen him as anything other than troublesome and tiresome. The fact that he declines to give answers himself – even when we know from other, private conversations that Plato allows us to witness that Socrates *did* have definite opinions – only compounds the hostility that he incurred.<sup>14</sup>

As loathsome as Socrates' targets must have found these encounters, his young onlookers experienced them very differently. These young men took great pleasure in watching Socrates examine Athens' leading citizens (23c).<sup>15</sup> Because the encounters were pleasurable, a number of these young men began to follow Socrates to observe his conversations and become familiar with his elenctic method (23c). In the *Euthyphro*, Socrates indicated that the Athenians really became angry with him because they believed that he made others think and speak in his manner (3c-d). In the *Apology*, Socrates consistently denies that he instructs anyone in his methods, but he is clear that he has never refused (ἐφθόνησα) anyone – young or old – the chance to listen (33a). Many people enjoy spending time with Socrates, and examining people is “not unpleasant” (33b-c). The pleasure that young men especially experience when they are with Socrates, however, only compounds the anger that others feel toward him. With or without Socrates' instruction, his young followers began to imitate his method in their

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<sup>13</sup> Grano (2007) argues that “Socrates's practice of contestation is after the less positive production of doubt and anxiety” (p. 3). In sum, Grano shows that Socratic discourse as described in the *Apology* is primarily concerned not with testing ideas but with creating interior conditions of doubt, anxiety, and ambivalence.

<sup>14</sup> Xenophon's Socratic writings provide additional confirmation of this view. In *Mem.* 4.4.9, for example, Hippias charges that Socrates mocks others' opinions but will never render an account of his own about anything.

<sup>15</sup> Metcalf (2004, p. 154) writes that Socrates' elenctic encounters are not unpleasant because “there is something gratifying... in witnessing someone's inflated opinion of himself being deflated publicly.” The elenctic demonstration, therefore, functions as a catharsis – perhaps more so for its witnesses than participants in many cases.

own encounters (23c).<sup>16</sup> As he said in the *Euthyphro*, being imitated in turn makes his enemies more fervent in their hatred as they blame him for introducing the youth to his methods (*Apol.* 23d). Those enemies, who are “violent, ambitious, numerous, and vehement,” then amplify their slander and make Socrates an ever more polarizing figure (23d). The more that Socrates engaged in his dialectic mission, the stronger the reactions he provoked.<sup>17</sup>

Socrates himself expresses complex emotional responses to his growing reputation. He describes feeling pain and fear (*λυπούμενος καὶ δεδιώς*) as he realized that he was becoming hated (*ἀπηχθανόμενῳ*, 21e). It is possible to read his pain and fear facetiously – after all, Socrates prohibits acting out of fear in the *Apology*.<sup>18</sup> The fact that he does not accept fear alone as justification for an action, however, does not mean that he never experiences it. Earlier in his defense, Socrates tells the jurors that he fears his first accusers more than his current ones, and he seems to be earnest about feeling fear because it is the *πάθος* that corresponds to his judgement of how difficult succeeding in his defense will be (18a-19a).<sup>19</sup> As he describes becoming unpopular, he implicitly likens himself to Heracles by characterizing the hatred he faces as “extremely difficult and burdensome” (*χαλεπώταται καὶ βαρύταται*, 23a). At 28b-e, Socrates also compares

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<sup>16</sup> Socrates’ disclosure of his “secret” maieutic technique to Theaetetus also indicates that the public account of his activity in the *Apology* conceals and obfuscates the depth of his interactions with these young men.

<sup>17</sup> Tyrrell (2003, pp. 8-9) cites Nicias’s comment at *La.* 187e-188a that coming close to Socrates inevitably results in giving an account of oneself and writes: “Both effects, enlightenment and hatred, derive from Socrates’ activity.”

<sup>18</sup> Socrates repeatedly denies that fear factors into his decision-making; at 29a-c, fear does not cause him to defy orders and abandon his assigned missions, first as a soldier and then as an agent of the god; at 32a-c, he fears neither the democratic mob nor the Thirty as he chooses to uphold the law in defiance of both groups; and at 37b, fear of death does not motivate him to beg for his life and propose exile or imprisonment as his punishment.

<sup>19</sup> Reeve (1989, p. 70) makes the astute point that Socrates can only be sure that he has defended himself in the appropriate way when he realizes at 41d that his *daimonion* “has not opposed the course of action which has led to the death sentence.” Until Socrates receives confirmation from his *daimonion*, he can act only on beliefs about what is best, which in the case of his defense includes the possibility that a “successful” defense will result in acquittal.

himself to Achilles, who “despised death and danger and was much more afraid to live a coward who did not avenge his friends.” Both Heracles and Achilles are driven by emotion; what makes them interesting as characters is the suffering they endure and redemption they enjoy. In order for Socrates to resemble these heroes and be an equally compelling figure, he too should genuinely feel pain and fear as he faces a trial for his life, the culmination of years of being hated by his fellow citizens of his beloved city. Like the heroes, too, Socrates anticipates a redemption that is happy and enjoyable in Hades (41c). I discuss happiness in more detail below, but there is clear parallelism between the external sentiments around Socrates and those he experiences internally. Being hated is painful to him, although he presses on with his divine mission despite the difficulty, and joining the famous souls in Hades will be “an extraordinary happiness” (41c). Although Socrates rejects acting purely on emotion at key points in the text, being affected by *πάθη* is unavoidable and essential to cultivating virtue and enjoying the good.

## 2. Persuasive speech and Socrates’ discursive goals

The opening two sentences of Socrates’ speech indicate that the complex relation between knowledge, persuasion, and emotion will be a central topos of the speech that he plans to deliver:

ὅτι μὲν ὑμεῖς, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, πεπόνθατε ὑπὸ τῶν ἐμῶν  
κατηγόρων, οὐκ οἶδα: ἐγὼ δ’ οὖν καὶ αὐτὸς ὑπ’ αὐτῶν ὀλίγου ἑμαυτοῦ  
ἐπελαθόμην, οὕτω πιθανῶς ἔλεγον. (17a)

I do not know, men of Athens, how my accusers affected you; as for me, I was almost carried away in spite of myself, so persuasively did they speak. (tr. Grube)

Although Socrates will claim just a few lines later that he plans to speak in his usual *ad hoc*, extemporaneous manner, the *Apology* in fact contains many rhetorical flourishes.

One that stands out in the dialogue's opening line is the interplay between *πεπόνθατε* and *πιθανῶς*. We might expect to find the verb *πεποίθατε* in place of *πεπόνθατε*: I do not know to what extent you have been *persuaded*. That Plato chooses instead a form of *πάσχω* to characterize the effect of very persuasive (*οὕτω πιθανῶς*) speech indicates that the emotional sentiments of the jury will be at least as central to the *Apology* as rational argument. Socrates acknowledges the challenge that confronts him: facts alone are insufficient to change the opinions of the jurors after they have been inflamed by persuasive speech that has provoked strong emotional responses.

More surprising is the way in which Socrates characterizes his own response to his accusers' speech: he "was almost carried away in spite of himself" (17a, tr. Grube). Harold North Fowler renders *ὀλίγου ἑμαυτοῦ ἐπελαθόμεν* as "almost forgot my own identity" in his 1966 translation. The difference between Grube's and Fowler's translations indicates the difficulty of pinning down just what Socrates claims to have experienced. The same verb appears again at 34a, where its meaning is clearly "forget."<sup>20</sup> In this opening line, however, Socrates does not mean forgetting in a cognitive sense. The prosecutors' speeches emotionally affected Socrates as well as the jurors. I propose two possibilities for the reaction that he wants to articulate. Either Socrates nearly lost sight of the facts about his philosophic activity because of his accusers' rhetorical misdirection, in which case he "almost forgot [his] own identity," or he nearly experienced a loss of self-control upon hearing sustained, hyperbolic slanders. If the latter is the case, then we could go so far as to read Socrates' frequent pleas of the jurors "not to make an uproar" during his speech as displacement of his own reaction to

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<sup>20</sup> Apol 34a: "If Meletus forgot [to call witnesses], then let him do it now..."

the prosecutors' speeches that preceded his defense. What we can conclude with certainty is that Socrates' trial was an emotionally charged spectacle.

An interesting question to ask of the text at this point is what Socrates hoped the outcome would be. After the guilty verdict is rendered, Socrates says he is *not* angry because, among other unspecified reasons, the outcome was “οὐκ ἀνέλπιστόν” (36a). I shall turn again to the theme of hope below, but we should take note of the root ἐλπίζ in ἀνέλπιστόν. Grube translates this phrase as “not unexpected,” but a case could be made for “not un hoped for” as well. This translation would certainly resonate with Xenophon's *Apology*, in which Socrates declines to prepare a defense because he anticipates and welcomes being condemned to death.<sup>21</sup> While the phrase “οὐκ ἀνέλπιστόν” in isolation may support a similar interpretation of the motives of Plato's Socrates, I suggest that the portrayal is more complex.

By the end of the *Apology*, Socrates regards death as beneficial, especially in contrast to the moral ills that he expects to befall the Athenians.<sup>22</sup> But another comment near the beginning indicates that his attitude toward the trial is more complicated:

Very well then, men of Athens. I must surely defend myself and attempt to uproot from your minds in so short a time the slander that has resided there so long. I wish (βουλοίμην) this may happen, if it is in any way better for you and me, and that my defense may be successful, but I think this is very difficult and I am fully aware of how difficult it is. Even so, let the matter proceed as the god may wish, but I must obey the law and make my defense. (18e-19a, tr. Grube)

This passage provides a critical glimpse into Socrates' psychic state. While a primary theme in the *Apology* is Socrates' uniquely close relationship with the god, his comment

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<sup>21</sup> Leibowitz (2010, p. 161) notes the ambiguity of the word ἀνέλπιστόν but interprets its meaning very differently than I do. He suggests that Socrates “indicates that the trial is going as he wants it to.” Because the vote was surprisingly close, however, Leibowitz asks, “To guarantee the outcome he seeks, will he have to increase the level of provocation?”

<sup>22</sup> Destrée (2005, p. 69) writes that Socrates comes to regard death as beneficial by the end of the *Apology* because his *daimonion*, which regularly intervenes to prevent him from doing something *unbeneficial*, has remained silent.

here reveals that his desires may not align with the god's. While the task before him is immensely difficult, he wishes (βουλοίμην) that he might succeed at convincing the jury of his innocence and therefore be acquitted. This seems natural enough. Socrates has enjoyed a long life in Athens and has compelling reasons to wish to live. Socrates points out all his friends in attendance at 33e-34a and, in a deft example of *paralepsis* at 34c-d, reminds the jurors that he has a wife and young children as well. Despite all the ways in which Socrates stands at odds with customary Athenian behavior, he is one of them. He enjoys a rich and complex emotional life the same as everyone else, and he seems genuine in his desire to succeed in his defense. At the same time, he acknowledges that his wish may prove contrary to the god's and defers to the god's will (ὅμως τοῦτο μὲν ἴτω ὅπῃ τῷ θεῷ φίλον).<sup>23</sup> As shall see in the proceeding chapter, Socrates appears to face the same dilemma in the *Crito*. Although his desires need not always align with the god's, his chosen course of action must, to the greatest extent possible. These conflicting desires may then be revelatory of emotional distress.

### 3. Socrates, a "foreigner in his own city"

The previous section highlighted the potential gap between (1) the interests of Socrates and the jurors and (2) Socrates' desires and those of the god. Although Socrates touts his service and devotion to the *city* of Athens, he rhetorically sets himself apart from the *citizens* of Athens. By the very fact of being on trial, on display alone before the jurors who will judge his case, Socrates is separated physically and psychically from his fellow

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<sup>23</sup> The grammar especially reinforces Socrates' willingness to defer to the god's will. He expresses his desired outcome with the optative verb βουλοίμην but uses the third-person imperative ἴτω in the proceeding sentence: "ὅμως τοῦτο μὲν ἴτω ὅπῃ τῷ θεῷ φίλον (let the matter proceed as the god may wish, tr. Grube)". Grube's choice to repeat the word "wish" in his translation at this point rather confuses the matter; better is Fowler's rendering: let the matter proceed "as is pleasing to the god."

citizens. While he sometimes attempts to bridge that separation, Socrates also casts himself as an outsider. In the first instance he does this by demarcating the proper role (ἀρετή, 18a) of speakers and judges in a court case. The language that he uses soon after echoes this cognitive separation:

βουλοίμην μὲν οὖν ἂν τοῦτο οὕτως γενέσθαι, εἴ τι ἄμεινον καὶ ὑμῖν καὶ ἐμοί, καὶ πλεον τί με ποιῆσαι ἀπολογούμενον... (19a)

I wish this may happen, if it is in any way better for you and me, that my defense may be successful... (tr. Grube)

The statement “if it is in any way better for you and me” emphasizes that Socrates is separated from the jurors not only by virtue of being on trial. Although the inclusion of “and” here hints that Socrates imagines a mutually beneficial outcome, his use of pronouns to set himself apart from the jurors highlights that their interests do not necessarily align. Just as their roles as defendant and judges necessarily cast Socrates and the jurors as potential adversaries, so does the possibility that the result may be better for one party and not the other. We should compare this line from the beginning of the speech with the last line of the *Apology*:

ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἤδη ὥρα ἀπιέναι, ἐμοὶ μὲν ἀποθανομένῳ, ὑμῖν δὲ βιωσομένοις: ὁπότεροι δὲ ἡμῶν ἔρχονται ἐπὶ ἄμεινον πρᾶγμα, ἄδηλον παντὶ πλὴν ἢ τῷ θεῷ. (42a)

But the hour to part has come. I go to die, you go to live. Which of us goes to the better lot is known to no one, except the god. (tr. Grube)

The final words that Socrates would ever speak in a public setting emphasize the permanence of his separation from his fellow Athenians: “I go to die, you go to live.” Socrates sets himself apart from his audience with pronouns here as he did in the previous passage (19a) and repeats ἄμεινον. Whereas the earlier passage left open the possibility that trial could end better for him *and* the jurors, however, the finality of the



death sentence means that their paths *must* diverge. Socrates' last words at 42a should also be read alongside the very first sentence of the *Apology*:

ὅτι μὲν ὑμεῖς, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, πεπόνθατε ὑπὸ τῶν ἐμῶν  
κατηγόρων, οὐκ οἶδα... (17a)

How you, men of Athens, have been affected by my accusers, I do not know... (tr. Fowler)<sup>24</sup>

The sentences show a clear resonance: both begin with an indirect question and finish with a main clause that indicates uncertainty as to the answer.<sup>25</sup> The key difference, however, is the inclusion of “except to the god” as the final words of the *Apology*. If we reduce the *Apology* to the core elements of its first and last sentences,<sup>26</sup> what we find is a succinct and illuminating summation of Socratic wisdom: I do not know; the truth is unknown to everyone except the god.

As Socrates makes his opening remarks to the jurors and transitions into the first stage of his defense, he develops the theme of his dissimilarity with his fellow Athenians. The most obvious way in which Socrates differs from the other Athenians is in his unique relationship with the god, which is at issue in the trial. As he attempts to explain the origins and purpose of his religious activities, he also stresses his liminal status in the polis. In response to the prosecutors' warning that Socrates' inventive speech might deceive the jurors, Socrates makes two dissonant comments that establish his tenuous standing in Athens. On the one hand, he plans to speak in the manner he always has; indeed, many of the jurors present have heard him speak in this way in the agora (17d). On the other hand, his unpolished discursive style is alien to the sort of

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<sup>24</sup> I have followed Fowler's translation here rather than Grube's because Fowler preserves the Greek word order more closely; the word order in this case is integral to my comparison.

<sup>25</sup> Both Grube and Fowler translate ἄδηλον in 42a as “is known.” While ἄδηλον has a primary meaning of “invisible,” Plato exploits the semantic overlap between vision and knowledge since ἄδηλον shares a common root with οἶδα, which can mean “to know” in the present or “to see” in the perfect.

<sup>26</sup> Press (1993, p. 123) includes the possible relationship between the first and last lines on a dialogue among the structural elements that aid in forming a dramatic interpretation.

speech typical of the lawcourt, and Socrates asks them to afford him the same leeway they would for a visitor, as if he were “a foreigner in his own city” (18a). Socrates embodies a contradiction: his speech is familiar to most of his audience and at the same time is foreign and out of place.

Socrates’ status as a member of the polis remains thematically relevant throughout his defense. While his discursive inexperience may make him like a foreigner when it comes to speaking before the lawcourt, he soon stresses that he is not at all like the Sophists, the famous foreigners who profess to educate the aristocratic youth of Athens (19e-20c). The text includes a vital word whose significance escapes notice in translation. Socrates says that the Sophists, including Gorgias, Prodicus, and Hippias:

οἷός τ’ ἐστὶν ἰὼν εἰς ἑκάστην τῶν πόλεων τοὺς νέους—οἷς ἔξεστι τῶν ἑαυτῶν πολιτῶν προῖκα συνεῖναι ᾧ ἂν βούλωνται—τούτους πείθουσι τὰς ἐκείνων συνουσίας ἀπολιπόντας σφίσιν συνεῖναι χρήματα δίδοντας καὶ χάριν προσειδένα. (19e-20a)

can go into any city and persuade the young, who can keep company with anyone of their own fellow citizens they want without paying, to leave the company of these, to join with themselves, pay them a fee, and be grateful to them besides (tr. Grube).

I draw attention to the term *συνουσία* and its related verbal forms, of which we find three occurrences in this sentence. Grube’s English expressions “keep company with” and “join with” construe the meaning but cannot capture the social significance of the Greek word. In the context of fifth- and fourth-century Athens, *συνουσία* denotes traditional forms of social initiation and education that came under threat with the emergence of new learning and book culture.<sup>27</sup> Therefore it is a deft move in Socrates’

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<sup>27</sup> Robb (1993, pp. 82-3) writes that *συνουσία*, “when used in a technical sense... referred to the regular association with older, more accomplished men by younger men who were in need of formation and training, both social and civic” and “is, thus, a continuation of an oral practice into a century growing more literate by the decade.”

defense to reiterate the disruptive activity of the Sophists and then attempt to draw a strong contrast between what they do and his own activity.

The fact that *συνουσία* was a controversial topic situates Socrates in the revolutionary cultural moment in which he lived. While the Socrates of Aristophanes' *Clouds* teaches professionally that the sun is stone and the moon earth, Plato's Socrates denies that he believes these claims, and points out that anyone could read these theories in Anaxagoras's book (26d-e). This passage in Socrates' cross-examination of Meletus presupposes that many of the jurors and Athenians in general are not only literate, but also well read, since they would "ridicule Socrates if he pretended that these theories are his own" (26e). With books readily available, oral transmission was no longer the primary or most disconcerting source of nonconforming religious ideas. As Socrates attempts to explain the origin and purpose of his own discursive activity, he also insists that the Athenian intellectual landscape has changed without his intervention. His divine mission, therefore, is the restoration of an Athenian society that is already permeated with corruptive outside words, spoken and now written.<sup>28</sup>

The recurrence of the word *συνουσία* in two of the other dialogues discussed in this dissertation emphasizes its thematic importance in Socrates' philosophy.<sup>29</sup> In

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<sup>28</sup> Socrates in the *Apology* fails to disclose that his knowledge of the supply and price of Anaxagoras's book likely comes from his own interest in reading it as a young man; Socrates reveals this detail only to his closest friends at *Phaedo* 97b-98b. The dialogue *Parmenides* also relates an oral conversation that takes place after reading aloud Zeno's book. The conversation in the *Phaedrus* also develops from reading the script of Lysias's speech. Within the dialogues of Plato, therefore, Socrates has a keen interest in and readily makes use of written texts, which he declines to reveal to the jurors as he creates a narrative of his philosophic activity in the *Apology*.

<sup>29</sup> The *Laches* cannot be overlooked in the discussion of *συνουσία* in Plato although it falls outside the scope of this work. To summarize, the dramatic setting of the *Laches* is a public performance by a physical training instructor who apparently claims that his tutelage in unorthodox combat methods will also effect civic virtue in his students. Lysimachus and Melesias, sons of the great Athenian heroes Aristides and Thucydides respectively, are interested in hiring a tutor for their sons because the two of them, despite their illustrious parentage, were taught nothing useful by their own fathers and have little to pass on to their own sons. In the course of the discussion, it is revealed that Lysimachus has allowed his bond to Socrates through the *συνουσία* of their fathers to lapse. Indeed, the failure of Socrates' aristocratic

chapter 2, we noted how Socrates characterizes his maieutic associations as *συνουσία* in the *Theaetetus*. To reiterate its significance in the *Apology*, I point back to one more passage in the *Theaetetus* and forward to one in the *Phaedo*. The discussion of *συνουσία* throughout this set of dialogues indicates that Socrates saw himself as something of an outsider working from within the democratic system to redefine this cultural term in particular. This point is worth recognizing not only for its significance in the intellectual history of Athens, but also because *συνουσία* was a cultural practice rooted in the traditional bonds between social groups above the level of immediately family but below that of the polis as a whole. Since, as Socrates confirms, his Sophistic predecessors and contemporaries already had begun to loosen those social bonds and form new attachments in their place, Socrates' parallel efforts both to correct the Sophistic approach and still redefine traditional social values would have made him enemies, not only as intellectual rivals, but among familial and civic leaders who considered any reforms detrimental to society.

An appearance of the word *συνουσία* at *Theaetetus* 168a seems to anticipate its thematic importance in the *Apology* as well. The term appears in a rhetorical passage in which Socrates, speaking in the imagined voice of Protagoras, criticizes the elenctic method. Speaking as if he were Protagoras, Socrates accuses himself of "being unjust" in his questions and conflating his interlocutor's answers with those that Protagoras would actually provide (166a-167e). In order to examine the matter more seriously, Socrates must "take care to keep controversy distinct from discussion" and come to his interlocutor's aid when an answer proves untenable (167e-168a). If Socrates observes these rules of engagement, his interlocutors will accept that his missteps are caused by

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contemporaries to educate their own sons through *συνουσία* has forced the Athenians to look outside their own city for capable educators to fulfill their neglected duties.

their former “intellectual associations” (τῶν προτέρων συνουσιῶν) and “will seek [Socrates’] company, and think of [him] as their friend” (καὶ σὲ μὲν διώξονται καὶ φιλήσουσιν).<sup>30</sup>

The *Theaetetus* passage provides two pieces of information that highlight the significance of συνουσία in the *Apology*. First, Socrates is aware of the criticisms of his methods available to his rivals and detractors and even finds them somewhat valid, for this rhetorical sidebar leads him to reframe his discussion of knowledge with Theaetetus and make a new start. Especially in the agonistic arena of Athenian intellectualism, the perception that Socrates does not fight fair undoubtedly contributes to the negative sentiment against him. We can easily imagine the politicians, poets, and craftsmen of the *Apology* making the same case against Socrates’ methods as we find in the *Theaetetus* (*Apol.* 21c-22e). Second, within this rumination on method in the *Theaetetus*, we find the charge that Socrates’ method is bound to be corruptive no matter how he deploys it. When Socrates argues carelessly and claims to have refuted Protagoras’s theory by “frightening a small boy,” he “persuade[s] [his] audience to follow [his] example” (166b-d). Again we find a point that is reinforced in the *Euthyphro* and *Apology*. Those who watch what Socrates does inevitably find his method of refutation pleasurable and begin to imitate him. On the other hand, the advice that Protagoras offers Socrates is to pursue the investigation in a cooperative rather than competitive spirit. The consequence, however, will be that his interlocutors reject their former associations (συνουσία) and pursue philosophy with him instead. Although Socrates in the *Apology* maintains that the Sophists convince the young to leave their former associations, the same charge is applied to Socrates here in the *Theaetetus*.

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<sup>30</sup> *Theaetetus* 168a. English translation by M.J. Levett, revised by Myles Burnyeat.

While the occurrence of *συνουσία* at *Theaetetus* 168a firmly situates Socrates within the competitive intellectual world of fifth-century Athens, the appearance of the word in the *Phaedo* offers a vision of *συνουσία* that transcends human culture and becomes integral to Socrates' thanatopsis. Before we look to the *Phaedo*, however, we should note one related statement in the final sentences of the *Apology*. I discuss Socrates' vision of the afterlife in the *Apology* further in section 5 below, but I point out one feature now. As Socrates imagines the possibility of examining mythical heroes in the afterlife, he says that "it would be an extraordinary happiness to talk with them, to keep company with them and examine them" (41c, tr. Grube). I draw attention here to the phrase "keep company with them," which is how Grube translates the infinitive *συνεῖναι*. Establishing a new *συνουσία*, one that lasts "for the rest of time," constitutes the extraordinary happiness that awaits Socrates and those who join his pursuit of philosophy.

In the *Phaedo*, too, Socrates makes *συνουσία* an integral part of the afterlife. His description there is more elaborate and goes further than what we find in the *Apology*. He says of the souls that depart from their human bodies:

And they have sacred groves and temples of the gods, in which the gods really dwell, and they have intercourse (*συνουσία*) with the gods by speech and prophecies and visions, and they see the sun and moon and stars as they really are, and in all other ways their blessedness is in accord with this. (111b-c, tr. Grube)

Whereas the thanatopsis of the *Apology* presents a vision of Hades and imagines some of the standard heroes of Greek myth – Ajax and Odysseus among others – the *Phaedo's* is more daring. The souls migrate not to the Homeric Hades but to the furthest reaches of the universe where it is possible to establish *συνουσία* with the gods themselves and view the essence of celestial bodies. Both thanatopses, however, offer a new vision of *συνουσία* – a pure, transcendent, and eternal association that touches upon genuine

truth and reality. Socrates indirectly reveals a revolutionary understanding of *συνουσία*. He is different from the Sophists, whose dissolution of traditional associations poses a danger to the polis, but the *συνουσία* that Socrates envisions also stands in opposition to the hermetic, polis-oriented *συνουσία* of Athenian tradition. In that respect, his philosophic aims are foreign to the Athenians and position him as an outsider – in traditional society, among his intellectual contemporaries, and even from civic religion, whose view of death and the afterlife he gradually revises until it becomes the transcendent, mystifying *συνουσία* with the gods themselves in the *Phaedo*.

#### **4. Anger and vengeance**

The final two sections of the *Apology*, although much shorter than the main body of the defense speech, introduce several interesting emotional terms that merit analysis. These passages are especially critical because they constitute the last words that Socrates will ever speak to a public audience in Plato's dialogues – the *Crito* and *Phaedo* relate private conversations with his closest friends. Because of the passages' significance, then, the manner in which Socrates speaks deserves as much attention as the content of what he says.

After the main body of Socrates' speech, the jury returns a guilty verdict, and Socrates must now propose a counter-penalty to the prosecutors' recommendation of death. Socrates begins this portion of the *Apology* by responding to the guilty verdict. He says, "There are many other reasons for my not being angry with you for convicting me, men of Athens, and what happened was not unexpected" (36a, tr. Grube). The fact that Socrates finds it necessary to deny that he feels anger indicates that his denial may be surprising. Although he alludes cryptically to "many other reasons," which he does

not explicate in the final section of the *Apology*, he indicates that the outcome was not “unexpected” (ἀνέλπιστόν). He expresses amazement that the vote turned out to be as close as it was and declares himself cleared of Meletus’s charges. Even if he counts the closeness of the vote as something of a Pyrrhic victory, that should not preclude feeling anger all the same. He will soon urge some of the jurors to be of “good hope” (εὐέλπιδας) at the prospect of a happy afterlife, and, to the extent that he genuinely does not feel anger, the connection between anger and hope that he makes here and, more explicitly, in the *Phaedo* can shed light on his reasoning.

The Greek term that Grube renders “being angry” is ἀγανακτεῖν. This same verb appears twice in the *Phaedo*’s discussion of the appropriate way for a philosopher to confront death (62e, 67e). As we shall see in the proceeding chapter, what prompts that line of inquiry is a deeply personal rebuke of Socrates by his friends. They sense great loss as the hour of his death draws near, and yet he seems to them largely unaffected by the circumstances. To express the attitude that his friends expect him to have as he faces death, Socrates deploys the verb ἀγανακτεῖν in phrases that are there rendered “resent dying.”<sup>31</sup> In that context Socrates cites his “good hope” that he will soon enter a happy afterlife as justification for not feeling resentment. The comment here in the *Apology* that he is not angry because, among other reasons, the outcome was not unexpected, a word that shares a root with “hope,” shows a thematic resonance between the passages. Although the subject of his anger or resentment is not death itself, but the jurors, in the *Apology*, the hope that he feels at the prospect of enjoying a good afterlife similarly outweighs any feeling of anger.

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<sup>31</sup> Grube renders ἀγανακτεῖν as “resent” twice in his translation of the *Phaedo*; here in the *Apology*, he chooses to render the same term “be angry.”



At 41d, Socrates repeats his assertion that opened the final two sections of the *Apology* when he repeats that he is not angry either with those who accused or condemned him. In this instance, however, he employs a different verb, *χαλεπαίνω*, than he had used previously. In any case, it is reasonable to expect Socrates to be angry at the verdict, and we should ask what to make of his repeated denials that he is angry. One possibility is that he is simply not telling the truth: surely a virtuous man unjustly condemned to death is angry at those who effected the verdict. This explanation is certainly possible, but it may also be the case that Socrates has a more complex understanding of anger in mind.

We noted earlier that Socrates had expressed his marked difference from the rest of the Athenians by classifying himself as an outsider, on which scheme he had regarded the entire jury as a single, unified entity. Indeed, he continues to speak of the jurors collectively as he proposes a counter-penalty to death from 35e-38b. In the final section of the *Apology*, however, Socrates divides the jurors according to their votes (38c-42a). After the death sentence is rendered, Socrates tells the “men of Athens” that they will “acquire the reputation and the guilt” because they have chosen to kill Socrates (38c). Only after this comment does he clarify that he is speaking now only “to those of you who condemned me to death” and continues to address those jurors (38d). After specifying that those who condemned him will bring guilt upon the city, he speculates on their motivation for voting against him. Although he does not yet repeat the word, his first reason points back to anger and resentment (*ἀγανακτεῖν*).

The repetition of anger in the final pages of the *Apology* invites a contrast between Socrates, who claims not to experience anger, and his condemners. In the case of the condemners, Socrates seems to conceptualize “being angry” or “resenting” as both a *πάθος* and an action. The same jurors who were likely to resent him for

declining to employ courtroom theatrics to win their votes found him guilty for that very reason (34b-c, 38d-39a). In the closing lines of his main defense speech, Socrates posited that some jurors “might be angry” because he declines to engage in the hyperbolic melodramatics, like bringing his crying family on stage, that are customary in the courtroom (34c). If any of the jurors had ever defended himself in that way, “he might feel resentful toward [Socrates] and, angry about this, cast his vote in anger” (34d, tr. Grube).<sup>32</sup> At 38d, Socrates asserts that he was, in fact, convicted because he lacked the boldness and shamelessness to beseech the jurors with lamentations and theatrics. He repeats his reasons for declining to do this. Such actions may be common in the Athenian lawcourt, but to behave in this way would reveal a desire “to avoid death at any cost” (39a, tr. Grube). Death, however, is inevitable and may well be a blessing, especially for those who have lived just lives. Socrates’ line of thought is that, if the jurors expect defendants to beg forgiveness and pity through melodramatic gestures, they must believe that it is reasonable to do anything to avoid death. There is no difference between courtroom theatrics of this sort and throwing down one’s weapons in battle to avoid death (39a). Although Socrates is now condemned to die, those who convicted him “are condemned by truth to wickedness and injustice” (39b).

When he begins to prophesy at 39c, Socrates first addresses his condemners as “those who voted against” him (καταψηφισαμένοι). In the next sentence, he calls them his killers “οἱ ἐμὲ ἀπεκτόνατε” and tells them that vengeance will come upon them much harder than they take by killing him (ἢ οἶαν ἐμὲ ἀπεκτόνατε). Socrates says of this same group that they will resent even more (καὶ ὑμεῖς μᾶλλον ἀγανακτήσετε) the

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<sup>32</sup> It is worth clarifying the Greek terms and their English correspondents in the translation. Grube translates “ἀγανακτήσειεν” at 34c as “might be angry.” At 34d, Grube writes “resentful” for “αὐθαδέστερον” and “angry” for ὀργισθεῖς.” As I note above, Grube also uses “resentful” for ἀγανακτεῖν in his translation of the *Phaedo*.

unnamed philosophers who will take up Socrates' task (39d). He strongly intimates that the condemners will attempt to kill the next group of philosophers just as they are now killing Socrates, but he warns that killing people will not "prevent anyone from reproaching [them] for not living in the right way" (39d). Socrates connects the verb ἀγανακτεῖν not only with violent feelings but also with actualized violence directed against himself and those who take up the philosophic mantle after his death. The jurors who were angry and voted against him in anger have now killed him, and resentment will soon prompt them to attempt to kill Socrates' successors as well. The violence that the condemners have perpetrated, moreover, is unjust, done from a false belief that, by killing those who test them, they will avoid giving an account of their character (39d).

Since Socrates connects anger and unjust action with respect to his condemners, it is reasonable to apply this same relation to his own anger, or lack thereof. Socrates may not be providing insight into his private emotions, therefore, when he says that he is not angry, but rather drawing a contrast between his behavior and his condemners'. He does this especially by ceding agency to the god. Those who condemned him acted of their own volition out of anger. Socrates, on the other hand, only prophesies how vengeance (1) is sanctioned by the god and (2) will be effected by others. The enigmatic claim that he has held back other, younger philosophers who gain vengeance by bringing the condemners to account actually lets Socrates cast himself as the defender of those who condemn him (39d). We may recall that Socrates had earlier maintained that he would always remain at his post, whether civic or divine (28d-e). There he cites the principle that it would be shameful to disobey orders on account of danger and fear. Rather than deny that he experiences fear, however, Socrates makes fear into a cognitive process rather than an emotional one. The fear of death in particular is ignorance

because it is impossible for humans to know that death is not good for them, but to act out of fear is to avoid a known evil (29a-b). If, as is commonly thought of the *Apology's* Socrates, he sees every action as reducible to a choice made on a rational basis, then for him to act out of anger in the same way his condemners did would equally be a case of ignorance. Like fear in the heat of battle, however, the choice to suppress a *πάθος* is not the same as denying that the *πάθος* exists. What distinguishes Socrates from his condemners are his self-control to subordinate impulses to rational evaluation and his humility to recognize the limits of his intellect. For this reason, I suggest that Socrates can rightly claim not to be angry in the exact sense his condemners, who act upon their anger, are. This interpretation requires Socrates to stretch the colloquial definition of anger so that its resultant actions can be evaluated according to his rationalist ethical model. I conclude here with this suggestion: although Socrates does not convert his anger into deleterious actions like his condemners do, his conviction that the god will punish his condemners provides a similar sense of satisfaction. He lacks agency to act upon his anger, but his vision underscores that the god is not. Although Socrates generally believes that the purpose of punishment is to rehabilitate the wrongdoer, his eschatological vision allows him to enjoy the just deserts.

## **5. Rewards, happiness, and good hope**

The final two sections of the *Apology* explore more than anger and vengeance.

Intertwined with these themes are positive claims about what Socrates and those who side with him deserve, in this life and the next. Now convicted, Socrates must propose a counter-penalty to the death sentence requested by his prosecutors. Here he is afforded another opportunity to summarize his service to the city and concludes that he deserves to enjoy the same public benefits, including free meals, as an Olympic victor (36d). The

claim is surprising enough in itself, but the reason that he gives is equally noteworthy; Socrates says, “The Olympian victor makes you think yourself happy; I make you be happy. Besides, he does not need food, but I do” (36e, tr. Grube). The contrast that he draws between the Olympic victor and himself makes the intent of his philosophic activity apparent. Socrates again relies on the distinction between appearance and reality; the reality that he strives for is one in which his philosophic inquiry produces genuine εὐδαιμονία in the Athenian polis.<sup>33</sup>

That Socrates’ ultimate aim is εὐδαιμονία is revealing, too. Throughout the Platonic corpus and in Platonic scholarship there is a rift between the rationalism of Socratic inquiry and the extrarational spirituality that permeates the texts. The *Apology* points here to a synthesis: acquiring wisdom of the sort Socrates seeks would entail a complete knowledge of virtue. Virtue, in turn, makes people happy or produces happiness.<sup>34</sup> A difficulty arises when we ask if anything is required in addition to virtue to produce happiness: Plato’s texts sometimes indicate that intermediate goods like wealth, health, and beauty need to accompany virtue in order to produce happiness.<sup>35</sup> As Socrates exhorts his fellow Athenians, however, the material and social goods that they value above all else *cannot* produce happiness unless they are subordinated to virtue (30a-b). Convincing the Athenians to strive for genuine happiness by investigating virtue is at the core of Socrates’ divine mission, and he does this not only like a gadfly, but also like a “father or elder brother” (31b). To the extent that listening

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<sup>33</sup> Leibowitz (2010, p. 161) neatly summarizes how the Athenian jurors must have reacted to this suggestion: it is comic (“he makes the Athenians so happy that they want to kill him”) and also outrageous (the Prytaneum is a holy place – not a restaurant”). I disagree, however, that the suggestion is necessarily only intended to be a provocation, however, and think that the religious significance of the Prytaneum is integral to Socrates choosing to mention it in his counter-penalty.

<sup>34</sup> Reeve, 1988, p. 138.

<sup>35</sup> Reeve, 1988, p. 129. Reeve finds the identity hypothesis, i.e. that virtue and happiness are the same, lacking because it overlooks the frequency with which the dialogues indicate that intermediate goods must be added.

to Socrates is pleasurable, the pleasure must derive from the fact that discussing virtue orients the soul toward the enjoyment of genuine εὐδαιμονία (36c-d, 38a). Soon after, when Socrates suggests that souls in the afterlife are “happier than we are here,” it is precisely the opportunity to examine the souls and investigate the nature of virtue uninterrupted that makes the afterlife seem “an extraordinary happiness” (41c).<sup>36</sup>

We should also note the contrast between Socrates’ and an Olympic victor’s need of τροφή. Socrates of course has made his poverty an integral part of his defense throughout the *Apology*: if he were a professional corrupter as is alleged, he would earn wages similar to those commanded by Evenus and the other sophists. The word τροφή has a broader semantic range than “sustenance,” however; it regularly appears in the Platonic dialogues as a term for education.<sup>37</sup> Socrates frequently exploits the contrast between body and mind to illustrate his philosophic views, and such a contrast might be detected here. Whereas τροφή sustains the physical excellence of Olympic victors, Socrates’ particular sort of τροφή nourishes the soul.

The *Apology* also points back to a point that we observed in the *Euthyphro*. Euthyphro comments in passing that the Athenians risk striking their own city “ἀφ’ ἐστίας” by prosecuting Socrates (3a). The ἐστία (hearth) provided a connection between Socrates’ and Euthyphro’s legal disputes in the *Euthyphro* by suggesting that the relationship between Socrates and the Athenians resembles that between family members (συνέστιοι), just as Euthyphro endeavors to prosecute a συνέστιός in his father. The word ἐστία, moreover, can also be Ἐστία, the Olympian goddess who

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<sup>36</sup> The fact that the afterlife is happy because it entails continuous elenctic investigation of virtue indicates that Socrates thinks of external goods as only necessary for *human* happiness. Note, however, that the *social* good of associating with (συνεῖναι) the other souls remains indispensable.

<sup>37</sup> For example, at *Crito* 48c, Socrates uses τροφή to mean “the upbringing” of his sons. A similar use appears at *Tht.* 160e: Socrates will examine Theaetetus’s intellectual offspring to ensure it is worth of an upbringing (ἀξιον ὄν τροφῆς). At *Laches* 186e, meanwhile, τῆς τῶν νέων τροφῆς clearly means “educating the young.”

represents and resides at the hearth. As we noted in our discussion of the *Euthyphro*, the Prytaneum in the Athenian agora was both the city's hearth insofar as it provided state-funded banquets and in being the site of Hestia's cult shrine. Thus, the image of Socrates holding a place of honor in the Prytaneum not only makes him like an Olympic victor – the image which he explicitly conjures here – but also implicitly situates him at the divine *ἑστία* of the city.<sup>38</sup> To grant Socrates' strange request, then, would be to acknowledge his unique connection with the divine and validate his spiritual mission in service of the city.

After Socrates prophesies to his condemners, he pivots to show his affinity with those who had voted to acquit him, and the final paragraphs of the *Apology* are addressed toward them. He first addresses these jurors as his “friends” at 40a before speaking of them in the inclusive first-person plural from 40c. As he defends the claim that good people do not fear death, he connects hope and the afterlife:

ἐννοήσωμεν δὲ καὶ τῆδε ὡς πολλὴ ἐλπίς ἐστὶν ἀγαθὸν αὐτὸ εἶναι. (40d)

Let us reflect in this way, too, that there is good hope that death is a blessing... (tr. Grube)

We should first take notice of the first-person plural verb (ἐννοήσωμεν) that Socrates uses here. Throughout the *Apology* Socrates has spoken in the first-person singular and addressed the jurors in the second-person plural, a grammatical feature of the text that reinforces the thematic separation between Socrates and fellow citizens.<sup>39</sup> Changing now to the inclusive first-person plural reinforces that Socrates is cultivating his affinity with the jurors who voted to acquit, the only ones he considers to be “real jurors” after

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<sup>38</sup> The connection between Socrates and the hearth also – first, in the dramatic sequence – appears at *Tht.* 160e, where Socrates includes the tradition of running around the hearth with a newborn child as part of his maieutic method.

<sup>39</sup> A handful of exceptions appear in cases where Socrates speaks about himself in the third person instead of first person. One such example is discussed at length above.

the delineation of the arete of jurors from the outset.<sup>40</sup> This transition marks a thematic shift and indicates a drastic change of tone from the way in which he had addressed “those who condemned me to death” in the second-person plural in the passage from 38c-39e.

Once Socrates establishes his rhetorical affinity with the jurors who voted to acquit, he urges them all, himself included, to have good hope for a positive afterlife. Hope stands in stark contrast to the vengeance that Socrates had prophesied just moments before he redirects the discussion to a hopeful vision of the afterlife. The final comments that he makes to the jurors provide insight into Socrates’ own emotions and highlight the evolving role that he casts himself in throughout the dialogues. Although Socrates couches his discussion of the afterlife as a possibility in the *Apology*, it is nonetheless the shared hope of an afterlife that renders the unjust outcome of the trial ultimately harmless to him and those who sided with him.

We should note, too, that the *Phaedo*, even with its elaborate account of the world that awaits the human soul in the afterlife, retains an element of doubt. Socrates urges his friends in the *Phaedo* to have “good hope” that the story is true just as he does the jurors in the *Apology*. Throughout the sequence of dialogues, Plato imbues Socrates with a degree of epistemological insecurity so that his belief in the afterlife is always modulated with a tinge of doubt and fortified by hope. Hope, in turn, appears to constitute a *πάθος* in Greek psychology because hope entails positive beliefs about the future on the basis of limited or suspect evidence but is reinforced by an ineffable sensation that what is hoped for must be true. Socrates introduces a rational argument to reify his hope in the afterlife, but these conjectures really serve to strengthen his

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<sup>40</sup> *Apol.* 40a: “...you I would right call jurymen” (tr. Grube).



experience of hope as a positive feeling. Hope also serves to alleviate Socrates' emotional distress. If he can be confident that the god will punish those who wronged him, then he need not be angry or vengeful himself and is still able to approximate the satisfaction of those impulses.

## Chapter 5

### Socrates Dreams of Escape in the *Crito*

In the opening moments of Plato's *Crito*, Socrates wakes just before dawn to find his dear friend Crito already in the prison cell. Socrates asks why Crito did not wake him as soon as he arrived. Crito was reluctant to wake his friend, he says, because he did not wish to interrupt his peaceful slumber by announcing the imminent arrival of the ship sent to Delos: it appears likely to arrive that very day, which will in turn mean that Socrates' execution can proceed on the morrow. The ship's imminent arrival creates dramatic tension: either Socrates will agree to escape *now*, or he will die tomorrow. The *Crito* "begins and ends with eloquent personal appeals which are felt as well as argued."<sup>1</sup> While this news constitutes a crisis for Crito and the rest of Socrates' friends, Crito notes that Socrates appears unaffected and pleads with Socrates to escape – if not for his own sake, then for the sake of his friends. Before the two speakers turn to an elenctic inquiry into the dilemma, we gain critical insight into the psychic state of Socrates through two means: first, from the verbal exchange between Crito and his dear friend and second, from the dream that had come to Socrates just before he woke. After some deliberation that leaves Socrates and Crito at loggerheads (44b-50a), Socrates impersonates and personifies the Laws of Athens in order finally to reject Crito's plan of escape (50a-54d). However, he does not choose to stay and die on moral principle *alone*; rather, the dialogue "allow[s] us to comprehend the tension of exit and, perhaps, to more deeply appreciate the losses and potentialities entailed both in the decision to depart and in the decision to remain."<sup>2</sup> The *Crito* is a dialogue that represents Socrates the way we might expect someone in his position to be and feel, not the way in which

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<sup>1</sup> Gomme (1958), p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Kirkland (2017), p. 46.

he should have reasoned. The insistence on doctrinal consistency that some readers impose on the *Crito* discounts the other literary aims that Plato may have had in composing the dialogue;<sup>3</sup> this chapter examines Socrates not merely as a philosopher but also as a human grappling with a distressing and emotionally charged dilemma.

### 1. Socrates' exterior and interior demeanor

Crito chose not to wake Socrates straightaway because he appeared to be sleeping very pleasantly (ὡς ἠδέως, 43b) and Crito wanted him to spend his last hours of life as pleasantly as possible (ὡς ἥδιστα). Crito has counted Socrates happy (ἠὺδαιμόνισα) throughout his entire life and does so especially now that he bears his misfortune so easily and gently (ὡς ῥαδίως αὐτὴν καὶ πράως φέρεις). We might wonder, however, why Crito chooses to let Socrates sleep peacefully if he is taking his misfortune so easily – surely waking to philosophize with his friend would be more pleasurable to Socrates than sleeping? We can partially account for this apparent defect in Crito's logic by recognizing that Crito undoubtedly feels anxious about the conversation that he and Socrates are about to have and, despite the urgency that the situation demands, wants to avoid it as long as possible. While it is easy to read in the *Crito* a dichotomy between the distressed Crito and the serene Socrates, the fact that Crito dreads confronting the dire crisis does not preclude Socrates from also experiencing dread and anxiety of his own. In the *Phaedo*, the dramatic form of the dialogue allows Socrates to reveal emotions that his friends mostly fail to notice as they express both admiration and resentment at

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<sup>3</sup> By “doctrinal consistency” I mean attempts to resolve the apparent contradiction between Socrates' professed willingness to disobey a hypothetical verdict at *Apol.* 29c-30c and the “obey or persuade” principle expounded by the Laws at *Crito* 51b-c. Brickhouse and Smith (2004a) provide a concise summary of the various solutions that scholars have proposed and attempt to show that such a contradiction is in practice impossible under the Athenian legal system.

his apparent insouciance.<sup>4</sup> The *Crito* also employs this literary technique. The fact that Crito comments on how undisturbed Socrates appears calls the reader's attention to Socrates' psychic state and invites the reader to explore the possibility that Crito is mistaken.

I find the first hint that Socrates may be more distressed than he appears in his response to Crito's observation that he bears his misfortune easily:

καὶ γὰρ ἄν, ὦ Κρίτων, πλημμυλὲς εἶν ἀγανακτεῖν τηλικούτου ὄντα εἰ  
δεῖ ἤδη τελευτᾶν. (43b)

"It would not be fitting at my age to resent the fact that I must die now."  
(tr. Grube)

I note that he does not necessarily agree with Crito that he is taking his misfortune easily. Rather, his reply is an assertion that he *should not* resent dying simply because, at his age, he should not expect to live much longer in any case.<sup>5</sup> It is worth considering whether this view carries weight: yes, Socrates is seventy years old, but there is nothing to indicate that his health is failing. It was not uncommon for his contemporaries to live well past seventy, and, as Crito reminds him, Socrates apparently had plenty to live for.<sup>6</sup> Once faced with the necessity to die, however, it became important to Socrates that he die in the most philosophic state of mind; the proper attitude toward death recurs as one of the central themes at the end of the *Apology* and throughout the *Phaedo*.

Socrates then asks Crito why he has come to the prison so early, and Crito shares his difficult news. He again repeats that the present situation does not seem difficult for Socrates to bear (οὐ σοί, ὡς ἐμοὶ φαίνεται), but for Crito and the rest of Socrates'

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. ch. 6, sections 2, 3, and 7.

<sup>5</sup> Xenophon's Socrates makes no attempt to persuade the jurors of his innocence precisely because the trial offers a swift and painless death in Socrates' old age. Since the motif occurs in both Plato and Xenophon, it is worth accepting as something that Socrates did say, but I suggest that the statement serves to deflect attention from Socrates' genuine sentiments.

<sup>6</sup> Nails (2002, p. 157) suggests that extreme longevity in antiquity, like that of the centenarian Gorgias, was more common than we might expect in part due to the bactericidal properties of mixed wines.

friends, the news is difficult and burdensome (καὶ χαλεπήν καὶ βαρεῖαν) – perhaps among the most burdensome (ἐν τοῖς βαρύτεν, 43c). The words that Crito uses here stand out because they almost exactly mirror the emotional distress that Socrates says he endured in the *Apology* as he became increasingly unpopular in his own city (πολλὰ μὲν ἀπέχθειά μοι γέγονασι καὶ οἷα χαλεπώταται καὶ βαρύτενται, 22e-23a). Socrates' imminent execution, moreover, is the tragic conclusion of the very hatred that was so distressing to him. By the end of the *Apology*, Socrates comes to believe that the silence of his *daimonion* throughout his defense proves that the outcome of the trial accords with the god's intent, but this divine confirmation only entails that Socrates must accept the result, not that he should feel no affect toward it.

Socrates asks whether this difficult news is the arrival of the ship from Delos, and Crito confirms that it is reported to be arriving later that day. In reply, Socrates says that the matter should proceed in a way pleasing to the gods. Socrates employed a similar formulation at the beginning of the *Apology* that raised the possibility that his preferred outcome may not be the same as the god's (18e-19a). There is at least the possibility similar discrepancy between the will of the gods and Socrates' own expectations here. Crito's report that the ship is about to arrive, if it proves to be true, must be the course of events ordained by the gods. Socrates, however, intimates that Crito's report may be false by virtue of his interpretation of previous night's dream (43e). The uncertainty raised here concerning the precise sequence of events and the god's role in orchestrating them lends a tone of doubt to the dialogue as a whole.

After Socrates recounts his dream, Crito launches into an impassioned plea that Socrates assent to the escape plans already put in place by Crito and others (44b). Crito thereby sidesteps the question of the gods' will that Socrates had raised and grounds his appeals in human concerns. In light of Socrates' apparent equanimity at the beginning

of the dialogue, we might expect Socrates to be unmoved by Crito's pleas. However, when Crito asks Socrates if he is reluctant because he is concerned (προμηθῆ, 44e) for his friends and fears (φοβῆ, 45a) that they will be punished for plotting his escape, Socrates replies that he is concerned – about these things and others besides (καὶ ταῦτα προμηθοῦμαι, ὧ Κρίτων, καὶ ἄλλα πολλά, 45a). So, although Socrates would not confirm or deny that he took his own misfortune as easily as he appeared to, he now concedes that he is concerned for his friends.

Although Crito noted his friend's apparent serenity at the beginning of the dialogue, he now realizes that Socrates is not so carefree as he had seemed and attempts to reassure him. Do not fear, Crito tell Socrates (μήτε τοίνυν ταῦτα φοβοῦ, 45a). Crito has plenty of money of his own to make any necessary bribes and other expenditures in order to free Socrates, and Simmias and Cebes have also come from Thebes with money for this purpose. Crito emphasizes the resources and determination of Socrates' friends by once again saying not to be fearful (μήτε ταῦτα φοβούμενος, 45b). Crito raises another point that is a potential source of psychic distress: Socrates should not let the fact that he would not know what to do to pass the time in exile trouble him (δυσχερὲς σοι γενέσθω, 45b). There are many cities, Crito says, that would welcome Socrates lovingly (ἀγαπήσουσί σε, 45b). The verb that Crito chooses here – ἀγαπήσουσί – draws a strong contrast between the warm reception Socrates could expect elsewhere and the hatred he has long endured in his own city.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, what Crito has to offer must be an attractive possibility. If Socrates opts to seek refuge in Thessaly, Crito's friends there will provide security (ἀσφάλειάν σοι παρέξονται) and no one in Thessaly will harm him (σε μηδένα λυπεῖν τῶν κατὰ Θετταλίαν, 45b). Once again, Socrates

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Apol.* 22e-23a.

may think that Thessaly seems a fine place as he sits imprisoned and awaiting death in Athens. Crito identifies both psychic and physical sources of potential harm of which Socrates is fearful and seeks to dispel his fears on both accounts.

Crito continues by taking up a new rhetorical strategy. For Socrates not to attempt to escape would amount to an act of cowardice and hypocrisy (45d). He would help his enemies by capitulating to their efforts to see him killed and would betray his sons (προδιδόναι, 45c). Crito then uses a verb rich in literary allusions: now that Socrates has had children, he ought to endure the hardship (συνδιαταλαιπωρεῖν) of raising and educating them (45d). The verb συνδιαταλαιπωρεῖν is attested only in this passage of the *Crito* in Greek literature, but it is formed by adding the intensifying prefixes συν- and δια- to ταλαιπωρέω, a verb built on the noun stem τάλας, a favorite word of the tragedians to mean “wretched” or “suffering.”<sup>8</sup> Socrates had already compared himself to the epic and tragic heroes Heracles and Achilles in the *Apology*, so Crito’s use of a verb so reminiscent of tragedy strikes a nerve. He then drives the point home further: he accuses Socrates of choosing the easiest path (τὰ ῥαθυμότατα αἰρεῖσθαι) rather than one that takes goodness and courage (ἀγαθὸς καὶ ἀνδρεῖος, 45d). For Socrates to be overcome by fear and avoid his painful duties now would be turn his back on virtue after a life spent in pursuit of it (45d).

In answer to Crito’s impassioned words, Socrates makes a brief speech, from 46b-47a, that includes the famed dictum that Socrates is at all times “the kind of man who listens to nothing but the arguments that on reflection seem best” (46b). Much is made in scholarship of Socrates’ forceful assertion of the rationality principle here,<sup>9</sup> but I draw

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<sup>8</sup> The verb συνταλαιπωρεῖν is also attested, but Plato’s συνδιαταλαιπωρεῖν is an apparent hapax.

<sup>9</sup> McPherran (2013, p. 260) defines the “Rationality Principle” as this very assertion made by Socrates at *Crito* 46b.

attention to two further comments in this same speech which suggest that Socrates will not rely exclusively on reflective reason as he weighs the choice before him. Both comments closely parallel similar expressions in the *Phaedo* and therefore indicate a pattern in Socrates' style of expression as he and his friends grapple with the difficulty of his final days.<sup>10</sup>

First, Socrates seems to concede that his present situation is a difficult one for *him* in particular: in asserting the rationality principle, he specifies that he cannot discard his long-held beliefs simply because of the misfortune that now affects him (ἐπειδὴ μοι ἦδε ἡ τύχη γέγονεν, 46b). Here, Socrates deploys the term τύχη to characterize his present circumstances. Although τύχη has a wide semantic range, its connotation in tragedy is almost always negative. The *Crito* as a whole contains numerous parallels to tragedy, including the forceful, tragic verb that Crito had just used in the speech to which Socrates is now responding (45d). Both the strength of the points that Crito made in favor of Socrates' escape and the specific words with which he expressed them lend weight to the possibility that Socrates does see his present circumstances as his own tragic fate (μοι ἦδε ἡ τύχη). The inclusion of the first-person singular pronoun μοι reinforces that Socrates views the circumstances as unique to or especially relevant to him. We have observed that Socrates chooses the person and number of verbs and pronouns with care – either to include or exclude his interlocutors or audience from the conversation or inquiry. Throughout the speech from 46b-47a, Socrates emphasizes that he hopes to enter a joint inquiry with Crito, but besides the inclusion of μοι at 46b, he twice more makes significant delineations through his grammatical formulations. The

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<sup>10</sup> Brickhouse and Smith (2005, p. 43) also point to *Crito* 46b as one the clearest expressions of Socratic rationality and examine how Socrates' frequent reliance on extrarational signs poses a challenge to a view of Socrates as wholly rational.



next occurrence follows at 46c-d, where Socrates again emphasizes that the present crisis affects him most of all: “How should *we* examine and take up (σκοποῖμεθα, ἀναλάβοιμεν) the investigation, Crito? In the same way as before *I* was sentenced to die (πρὶν μὲν ἐμὲ δεῖν ἀποθνήσκειν, 46d)?”<sup>11</sup> At 46e-47a, he encourages Crito to answer his question earnestly and adds by way of encouragement:

σὺ γάρ, ὅσα γε τὰνθρώπεια, ἐκτὸς εἶ τοῦ μέλλειν ἀποθνήσκειν αὔριον,  
καὶ οὐκ ἂν σὲ παρακρούοι ἢ παροῦσα συμφορὰ:

You, as far as a human being can tell, are exempt from the likelihood of dying tomorrow, so the present misfortune is not likely to lead you astray. (tr. Grube)

Socrates statement implies that, since he is going to die tomorrow, the present misfortune (συμφορὰ) may well lead him astray. The passage shows a close affinity with *Phaedo* 90e-91b, where Socrates tells his friends that they should watch the argument more clearheadedly because, as he is close to death himself, he is susceptible to believing a poor but soothing argument.<sup>12</sup> Here he also characterizes his unfortunate circumstances as a συμφορὰ, which is also favored by the tragedians. In sum, Socrates’ comments from 46b-47a seem to confirm what he had told Crito before (45a): he is concerned and disturbed by his plight (τύχη or συμφορὰ) – not only with respect to the implications for his friends, but for himself as well.

I close this section with a second feature of Socrates’ speech that is clearly reminiscent of the *Phaedo*. As Socrates emphasizes how important it is to him that he

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<sup>11</sup> Gomme (1958, p. 49) counts this particular line as the first of two “personal touches” in the *διάνοια* of the *Crito* which indicate that “Socrates is deeply touched by Crito’s enthusiasm.” The comment that Socrates makes here in the *Crito* is also reminiscent of a few comments that he makes alluding to his own impending death in the *Phaedo*, including 61d-e, where he proposes eschatology as a topic for the day’s discussion.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Morgan (2010, p. 71) for the view that Socrates’ proximity to death raises the possibility that he might become “‘inspired’ in a bad way,” such that he might prioritize persuasion over knowledge.

and Crito deliberate in their usual, reflective manner, he insists that he will not abandon his best-supported principles at 46c for any reason:

οὐδ' ἂν πλείω τῶν νῦν παρόντων ἢ τῶν πολλῶν δύναμις ὥσπερ  
παῖδας ἡμᾶς μορμολύττηται, δεσμούςσ καὶ θανάτους ἐπιπέμπουσα καὶ  
χρημάτων ἀφαιρέσεις.

not even if the power of the majority were to frighten us with more  
bogey, as if we were children, with threats of incarcerations and  
executions and confiscation of property. (tr. Grube)

Socrates invokes a striking image to encapsulate how he and his friends might fear the consequences of angering the majority. The comment closely parallels *Phaedo* 77e, where Cebes says of the fear of death:

... ἀλλ' ἴσως ἔνι τις καὶ ἐν ἡμῖν παῖς ὅστις τὰ τοιαῦτα φοβεῖται. τοῦτον  
οὖν πειρῶ μεταπειθεῖν μὴ δεδιέναι τὸν θάνατον ὥσπερ τὰ  
μορμολύκεια.

... but perhaps there is a child in us who has these fears; try to persuade  
him not to fear death like a bogey. (tr. Grube)

The word that Plato chooses for fear in both cases – the verb μορμολύττηται in the *Crito* and its derivative noun form μορμολύκεια in the *Phaedo* – is rare in Greek literature and therefore draws attention to the parallels between the two texts.<sup>13</sup> In the *Phaedo*, Socrates responds to Cebes by saying that his friends should sing charms to their inner children every day until the fears have been charmed away (77e). Cebes then asks where they can find someone to sing these charms after Socrates has died (78a). If we consider these passages in parallel, it appears that the image of being frightened like a child is a familiar one in the Socratic circle – but a strange verbal formulation otherwise – and that Socrates is accustomed to warding off these fearsome bogeys with a particular form of soothing speech (ἐπάδειν, *Phd.* 77e).<sup>14</sup> In the *Phaedo*, Socrates deploys both rational

<sup>13</sup> One of the few uses of the verb appears at Xen. *Sym.* 4.27, which reinforces its Socratic connection.

<sup>14</sup> We should also recall that, in an inversion of this Socratic trope, Socrates accuses himself, through the imagined voice of Protagoras, of scaring children rather than soothing them at *Tht.* 166a.

arguments and charms to soothe the anxiety that all those present felt on that day. The closely resonant formulations that we find in the *Crito* suggests that Socrates does much the same a few days beforehand as well. Although Socrates insists that he and Crito must trust in the same arguments as before, the implication of his own emotionally provocative language is that he may rely on other sorts of speech to aid in alleviating their anxieties. In fact, the argument of the *Crito* is bookended by two types of extrarational communication that shed light on Socrates' anxieties and his efforts to soothe them. I turn now to those – first, we look back to the dream that Socrates recounted just after he woke (43e-44b) and then examine the words “spoken” by the Laws of Athens through the voice of Socrates (50a-54d).

## 2. Socrates' dream

After Crito brings news of the ship's imminent arrival, Socrates comments that his friend's decision not to wake him immediately has proved prudent, for he had just had a prophetic dream that led him to conclude that the ship is not likely to arrive for another day (44a). Crito asks what the dream was, and Socrates says:

ἐδόκει τίς μοι γυνή προσελθοῦσα καλή καὶ εὐειδής, λευκὰ ἱμάτια ἔχουσα, καλέσαι με καὶ εἰπεῖν: “ὦ Σώκρατες, ἤματί κεν τριτάτῳ Φθίην ἐρίβωλον ἴκοιο.” (44a-b)

I thought that a beautiful and comely woman dressed in white approached me. She called me and said: “Socrates, may you arrive at fertile Phthia on the third day.” (tr. Grube)

The reference to Phthia is a paraphrase of *Iliad* 9.362-3, where Achilles says:

εἰ δέ κεν εὐπλοίην δώη κλυτὸς ἐννοσίγαιος ἤματί κε τριτάτῳ Φθίην ἐρίβωλον ἴκοίμην.

If the renowned Earth-shaker grants me smooth sailing,  
I will arrive at fertile Phthia on the third day.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> This translation is my own.

Crito says that the dream is strange (ἄτοπον τὸ ἐνύπνιον), but Socrates replies that its meaning is clear to him (ἐναργῆς μὲν οὖν, ὥς γέ μοι δοκεῖ, 44b). Crito says it is apparently very clear to Socrates (λίαν γε, ὡς ἔοικεν, 44b) and then launches into his plea for Socrates to accept his friends' assistance to escape prison.

Because Plato has his speakers leave the matter unresolved, the reader is left to interpret the Homeric allusion. An example of a recent interpretation is found in Yamagata (2012, p. 134):

The dream does not make sense to Crito, but Socrates says its meaning is clear. Although he does not elaborate, the most likely interpretation of the meaning of this dream is that to go to 'Phthia' is to go 'home', which in turn means to die, because the death of the body means that the soul, i.e. one's true self, goes back to its original home. The irony is that in the original context, 'to go to Phthia' means for Achilles a way out of otherwise certain death. In this sense the escape from the prison superficially matches what Achilles threatens to do in this line (but will not do); but in fact the way to true life for Socrates is to stay and die (which Achilles does choose to do in the end). Nevertheless, this passage leaves us with no doubt that Socrates, like Achilles, is making a heroic choice, namely the sort of death that provides ultimate self-fulfillment.

Yamagata's interpretation fits generally within a broad framework that sees Socrates as heroic and committed to facing death from the opening of the *Crito* and embracing the likelihood of immortality by the conclusion of *Phaedo*.<sup>16</sup> Weiss notes how the portrayal of a "daimonic Socrates" here corresponds to the self-image that Socrates presented in the *Apology* and notes that Crito's response is tinged with dismay, for Crito brings a message that requires urgent action, but Socrates' dream tells him they have another full day to talk and plan.<sup>17</sup> Grube takes Socrates' dream as correct: on the third day, he does indeed die and arrive in the underworld, his new spiritual home.<sup>18</sup> Nails, however,

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<sup>16</sup> Another example of this view can be found in Harte (2004, pp. 245-47): "The dream predicts his death. But it also characterises death as a return home, not of the physical body, the focus of Crito's anxiety and of his conception of harm, but of the soul, the focus of Socrates' interest."

<sup>17</sup> Weiss (1998), p. 54.

<sup>18</sup> In Cooper (1997), p. 39, n. 1: "The dream means that Socrates' soul, after death, will find its home on the third day (counting, as usual among the Greeks, both the first and the last member of the series)."

correctly points out that the *Phaedo* may be set one or two days after the *Crito*: there is no internal evidence in either dialogue to confirm whether Socrates' dream was true.<sup>19</sup>

The impulse that many scholars have to assume that Socrates must be right is not unique to the question of what his dream means. For example, a popular thread of scholarship on the *Crito* has focused on resolving the contradiction that many readers have found between Socrates' approbation of civil disobedience at *Apology* 29c-d and his extreme commitment to obey the Law in the *Crito*.<sup>20</sup> To assume that Socrates is always right, however, diminishes the dramatic composition that goes into a Socratic text. It may also not be reasonable to demand perfect consistency in reasoning when our protagonist faces such an emotionally charged decision. Likewise, to recognize a "daimonic Socrates" need not entail the assumption that every sign that Socrates receives is genuinely prophetic. As we shall see from the *Phaedo* in the proceeding chapter, Socrates fears that he has long been misinterpreting a recurring dream of his; the desire to cover his bases then propels him to write poetry during his imprisonment (*Phaedo* 61-b). Because the *Crito* and *Phaedo* are dramatically continuous, Socrates is equally likely to have misinterpreted his dream in the *Crito*. In his psychic distress, either his dreams or his powers to interpret them reliably have become suspect.

For this reason, I propose a different interpretation of the dream in the *Crito*: the dream does not entail a clever transposition of "home" and the "underworld" or a reversal of Socrates' and Achilles' actions. Instead, Plato includes Socrates' Homeric dream to put him exactly in the place of the Homeric hero. Socrates, like Achilles, faces a choice between escaping his present troubles or staying to face death. Socrates' dream

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<sup>19</sup> Nails (2002), pp. 322-23.

<sup>20</sup> At *Apol.* 28c-d, Socrates proposes a hypothetical agreement under which the jury would acquit him on the condition that he cease practicing philosophy, to which suggestion Socrates would reply that he would obey the god rather than the jurors and never cease philosophizing.

of escape is just that – a dream, not a prophecy. As Kramer writes, re-thinking the common interpretation of the dream allows us to appreciate Plato’s *techne* more fully.<sup>21</sup> This interpretation also makes sense of Plato’s deliberate ambiguity, confirms the psychic distress that Socrates admitted to feeling, and raises the emotional stakes of the *Crito*. In order to show that the dream reveals Socrates “reverting to the interior in order to examine his situation and his decision from a variety of perspectives,”<sup>22</sup> I first consider the intertextuality between *Iliad* 9 and the *Crito* and then situate the dream as one entry point into Socrates’ complex psychology.

In the famous embassy scene of *Iliad* 9, Achilles says that he has decided to abandon the Greek war effort and, if granted smooth sailing by Poseidon, he will arrive Phthia in three days’ time (9.356-61). However, after Phoenix speaks (9.434-605), Achilles indicates that he remains undecided. He rejects Agamemnon’s apology-by-proxy but invites Phoenix to stay the night with him, and:

...ἄμα δ’ ἠοῖ φαυνομένηφι  
φρασσόμεθ’ ἢ κε νεώμεθ’ ἐφ’ ἡμέτερ’ ἢ κε μένωμεν. (*Il.* 9.618-9)

...At the coming of dawn  
we will discuss whether we should set sail for home or stay.

By 9.619, Achilles acknowledges that the decision to leave remains unsettled. Phoenix’s tearful plea seems to have reminded Achilles that a difficult choice still awaits him. Socrates’ dream of travelling to Phthia works in a similar way; escape, whether to Thessaly or anywhere else, presents a choice that demands consideration, and “choosing one course of action over the other... means that something dear must be

<sup>21</sup> Kramer (1988), p. 194. Kramer’s brief article challenges the assumption that Socrates’ dream must indicate that he will return to a metaphorical home and suggests, as I do, that the dream’s deliberate ambiguity warrants further consideration.

<sup>22</sup> Kirkpatrick (2017), p. 31. She also writes that *Crito*’s entrance then provides “Socrates with the opportunity to reveal this interiority, to give voice to what was thought or heard by him alone.”

sacrificed.”<sup>23</sup> For both Achilles and Socrates, the choice to leave would entail the sacrifice of friends (and, for Socrates, family as well) and social distinction.<sup>24</sup>

When Plato adapted *Iliad* 9.363 for the *Crito*, he omits the protasis clause (9.362) in Homer. Plato’s free-standing verb ἵκοιο can be read a potential optative: Socrates *could* arrive in Phthia.<sup>25</sup> Reading the line this way, the interpretation that Socrates’ dream is prophetic and means that he will arrive in the underworld is not at all certain. Rather, the dream merely tells Socrates that he could arrive in Phthia, which I suggest means that he could choose to escape with Crito and take refuge outside Athens – perhaps even in Thessaly. This reading indicates the dramatic function of the allusion to Achilles: it lays the groundwork for Socrates to reject the dream’s suggestion of an escape to Phthia. By extracting the line from its original grammatical context, Plato has subtly altered the meaning expressed by the verb.<sup>26</sup> Whereas Achilles asserts his intention to leave Troy and envisions a scenario in which his arrival on the third day is likely, Plato has the woman in Socrates’ dream use the line to express a mere possibility. We know, of course, that after the events of *Iliad* 16, Achilles has changed his mind and never does return to Phthia. I think that Socrates’ dream, too, is an unfulfilled possibility; if he were to leave with Crito, he could arrive in Phthia on the third day. Instead, Socrates too chooses to stay and confront death.

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<sup>23</sup> Kirkpatrick (2017), p. 45.

<sup>24</sup> Yamagata (2012, p. 134) emphasizes the power that Homer held for Socrates: “The dream... is an extraordinary testimony to the extent to which Homer penetrated into Socrates’ mind, even deep into his subconscious. At the present crisis of his life, his prophetic daimon seems to have chosen to speak through Homer, the poet whom he says he has revered since his childhood.”

<sup>25</sup> Jowett translates the line: “The third day hence, to Phthia shalt thou go.” Grube writes: “may you arrive at fertile Phthia on the third day.” More recently, Yamagata writes: “On the third day, you shall arrive in fertile Phthia.” Jowett and Yamagata both render ἵκοιο as a future emphatic (“shalt thou go”; “you shall arrive”) while Grube uses the modal “may you arrive,” which I take to express a wish or desire. In all three cases, I suggest the translators express the verb as too concrete a certainty.

<sup>26</sup> Kramer (1988, p. 196) writes that “ἵκοιο functions as a potential optative. Its range of meaning extends all the way from merely suggesting that something *might* happen to asserting that something certainly *will* happen” [italics in original].

Homer's *Iliad* grew out of a defined mythical tradition. He and his audience know all along that Achilles will die before the Trojan War ends. This is the heart-wrenching fate that Thetis struggles with throughout the epic cycle and accounts for her various efforts to keep her son away from the war and, failing that, to make his time in war as glorious as possible. For Homer's composition to contain any meaningful dramatic tension, he must write Achilles' character in such a way as to bring out a genuine internal conflict. Yes, Achilles will fall before the walls of Troy – because the traditional narrative demands that he must – but Homer's artistry lies in creating genuine tension within the embassy scene. The more Achilles insists he will leave Troy and choose the fate that we know the tradition forbids him, the more an audience appreciates Achilles as a three-dimensional figure who struggles against his own fate and genuinely wishes that he could do otherwise.

I suggest that Plato is in the same position as he constructs a narrative of Socrates' final days. Plato and his audience know that Socrates will die by the end of the narrative arc. Since the dramatic plot is predetermined, Plato must, like Homer and the tragedians, develop his characters in such a way that the audience empathizes with the hero's choice, even if the final decision is a foregone conclusion. The dramatic and emotional impact of Socrates' position is highlighted by connecting him to Achilles and indicates that the characters are more than superficially alike. It is altogether possible that – and makes a more complex and satisfying dramatic narrative if – Socrates genuinely *wants* to escape and survive, at least to some degree or at certain moments. The inclusion of Socrates' dream therefore alerts us to his desire to reach a safe haven that can never be attained and “evocatively elucidates a tension between the desire to



be free of the homeland and the yearning to remain a part of it.”<sup>27</sup> On this view, the dramatic tension emerges from Socrates’ internal struggle to overcome his emotional impulses and choose the course of action that is perhaps more painful but that he believes is most beneficial, both morally *and* pragmatically. At least for Crito, Thessaly offers Socrates freedom and the continuation of a philosophic life.<sup>28</sup> Once the Laws begin to convince Socrates not to escape, they repeatedly emphasize the deleterious effects that escape would involve for Socrates and especially for his children.<sup>29</sup> Kirkland finds the Laws’ prediction a hyperbolic one that “seems to cry out for debunking as a fearsome fantasy.”<sup>30</sup> Perhaps so, but the force of their objections to Crito’s plan may also indicate that Socrates shares Crito’s dream of a peaceful exile in Thessaly.

Plato had Socrates point to Achilles as a moral exemplar in the *Apology* as well (28c-d). It is worthwhile to put these two allusions alongside each other to explore what effect Plato intends to achieve. The reference to Achilles in the *Apology* comes at a powerful moment in the text. Socrates has just cross-examined a reluctant Meletus (24b-28a) and forced him to admit that the charges against Socrates contain an internal contradiction: Socrates cannot at once be an atheist and an inventor of new gods (27b-e).<sup>31</sup> Plato’s embedded stage directions show us that these moments are emotionally charged; Socrates repeatedly presses Meletus to answer under force of the law (25c, 25d,

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<sup>27</sup> Kirkpatrick (2017), p. 47.

<sup>28</sup> Kirkpatrick (2017), p. 44.

<sup>29</sup> Tim Blake Nelson’s recent stage adaptation of the trial of Socrates (first staged in early 2019), titled *Socrates*, includes a powerful scene in which Xanthippe implores Socrates to think of his family, for once, and let his friends save them. While this scene clearly goes beyond the Platonic texts, the arguments that the Laws in *Crito* make about the children’s future as foreigners in another land and fugitives from Athens serves as a plausible response to Socrates’ friends and family.

<sup>30</sup> Kirkpatrick (2017), p. 41.

<sup>31</sup> Socrates’ cross-examination does lead Meletus to acknowledge this contradiction, but nonetheless is not a persuasive defense. The actual charge as Socrates states it at 26b is that Socrates corrupts the young by teaching them not to believe in the gods in whom the city believes but in other new spiritual things. Meletus makes the mistake at 26c of the cross-examination of saying that Socrates “does not believe in gods at all,” but this is not the actual language of the charge. It is entirely possible, and I even think it is the case, that Socrates does believe in gods, but not the same ones in whom the city believes.

27b) and asks the jury to compel him to answer (27b). Meanwhile, Socrates attempts to calm the raucous jurors twice at 27b. The cross-examination concludes as Socrates exposes the weakness of Meletus's indictment and says that, if he is to be found guilty, it will be on the insuperable strength of the decades-old accusations against him. He then puts a question to himself: is he not embarrassed to have spent his life engaged in the sort of activity that garners widespread hatred and suspicion and has now brought him to the brink of death? It is here that Socrates points to Achilles as an exemplar of his moral maxim that a good person should not take into account the possibility of life and death but look only at the goodness of his actions (28b-d).

In drawing a comparison between himself and Achilles in the *Apology*, Socrates points to the passage at *Iliad* 18.94-126. After Patroclus died, Achilles forcefully dismissed his mother's pleas to hold back from fighting in order to return home and live a longer life. Socrates then mentions his own military career to illustrate that he, too, valued duty more than he feared death (28e). When, once imprisoned, Socrates dreams of Achilles, he is reminded that even his paradigmatic hero gave serious thought to abandoning his comrades at Troy and seeking refuge in Phthia. As the discussion in the *Crito* progresses, Plato repeatedly posits Thessaly as an escape destination, which helps to reinforce the Homeric connection from Socrates' dream and remind us that Socrates, like Achilles, never makes good on his promise to go to Thessaly. His dream, however, reminds us that his decision was neither easy nor obvious.

### **3. The Laws and the impossibility of escape**

Plato's dramatization in the *Crito* allows readers to access the mind of Socrates.

Although the words that Socrates has the Laws speak in the final section of the *Crito*

settle the question of escape definitively, the effect of the speech is not so much to persuade Crito as to reveal Socrates' interior deliberation and allow us to see how he persuades himself.<sup>32</sup> Before I examine specific points in the Laws' discourse, I turn to relevant passages of the *Phaedo* that show Socrates deploying a similar strategy of self-persuasion.

I have already mentioned *Phaedo* 90e-91b in section 1 above, but a critical line there is worth repeating since it illuminates Socrates' frame of mind. He first says that he is in danger of not having a philosophic attitude (οὐ φιλοσόφως ἔχειν) because he is extremely eager to persuade (φιλονίκως). Moreover, he reveals a few moments later that his primary desire (προθυμήσομαι) is to persuade himself, not the friends with whom he is conversing. A few moments later, he points to another Homeric precedent for his actions – this time Odysseus. Under examination is the claim that the soul contains distinct parts that constitute a harmony when ordered appropriately. As evidence for this claim, Socrates quotes *Odyssey* 20.17-18, a passage in which Odysseus strikes his breast, rebukes his heart, and orders it to endure the present difficulties. In order for one part of the soul to gain mastery over the rest, as the allusion to Odysseus demonstrates, the directing element can assert its rule in a number of ways, including “by threats and exhortations, holding converse with desires and passions and fears” (94d, tr. Grube). Speaking to himself through the voice of the Laws seems to be a clear enactment of the types of speech that Socrates discusses in the *Phaedo*. He engages in persuasive speaking primarily with the goal of persuading himself and expresses desires, passions, and fears associated with the possibility of escaping Athens into exile elsewhere.

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<sup>32</sup> Kirkpatrick (2017, p. 47) suggests “that Socrates gives voice in a literary way to his connection to the polity” precisely in order to show the difficulty of the choice that he faces in the text.

When Socrates begins to speak as the Laws, he stops using the inclusive first person plural typical of his dialect discourse and instead has the Laws address him in the second person singular and replies to them in the first person singular.<sup>33</sup> It could be that Socrates speaks this way so that Crito responds more sympathetically to Socrates since the Laws are admonishing him directly. But the directness of the language Socrates has the Laws use may also give insight into Socrates' concealed desires. The Laws certainly address Socrates as if he genuinely wants to escape. For example, at 51c they say:

“Σκόπει τοίνυν, ὦ Σώκρατες,” φαῖεν ἂν ἴσως οἱ νόμοι, “εἰ ἡμεῖς ταῦτα ἀληθῆ λέγομεν, ὅτι οὐ δίκαια ἡμᾶς ἐπιχειρεῖς δοᾶν ἅ νῦν ἐπιχειρεῖς.”

“So consider, Socrates,” perhaps the Laws would say, “if we speak the truth, that you are planning to do us injustices in the things you are now planning.”

The repetition of the verb ἐπιχειρεῖς after the vocative Σώκρατες strongly suggests that Socrates is planning to escape; the Laws speak with clear certainty. Crito mentions at 43a that he regularly visited Socrates before the present dramatic encounter and later at 46a says that the decision to escape should already have been made. The evidence internal to the text of the *Crito* thus suggests that Crito has broached the topic of escape before while Socrates and his friends awaited news of the ship's arrival. Perhaps this accounts for Socrates' dream. The prospect of escape had been raised before and was on Socrates' mind. Therefore, the Laws are right to say that Socrates is planning escape; even if his rational mind takes charge and vetoes the idea, the dramatic structure of having Socrates speak to himself in the voice of an omniscient outside agent grants access to his concealed desires and reveals the difficulty of overcoming them.

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<sup>33</sup> Socrates does on a few occasions interrupt his dramatic performance to ask for Crito's assent, in which cases he addresses Crito in the first-person plural; Socrates then resumes the dramatic scene by answering the Laws in his own voice in the first person singular.

One comment that the Laws make through the voice of Socrates stands as a complex response to the sensation of sorrow (*λυπεῖν* and *λύπη*) as expressed both in the *Apology* and earlier in the *Crito*. In constructing an emotionally dynamic Socrates, Plato has Crito observe that he wishes he were not so sleepless and sorrowful (*ἐν τοσαύτῃ τε ἀγρυπνίᾳ καὶ λύπῃ εἶναι*, 43b) after the apparently tranquil Socrates awakens. The use of the noun *λύπη* here clearly recalls Socrates' description of his own emotional distress in the *Apology*: as he realized that he was becoming hated in his own city, he experienced "sorrow and alarm" (*λυπούμενος καὶ δεδιώς*, 21e).<sup>34</sup> The close resonance between the expressions confirms that Crito's current distress is very similar to Socrates' past sorrow. Crito addresses Socrates' pain at being hated in his own city at 45c, where he tells Socrates that no one in Thessaly will harm (*λυπεῖν*) him. The Laws discuss *λυπεῖν* once again at 53e, but here *λυπεῖν* recalls a distinct sense of the word from *Apology* 41e, one which reinforces the practical impossibility of escape, however desirable it might appear to be.

At 53e, the Laws say to Socrates that in licentious Thessaly he may avoid being ridiculed for going to such lengths as would be required in order to escape Athens, so long as he does not cause anyone pain (*ἂν μὴ τινα λυπηῆς*). Socrates used the verb *λυπεῖν* in the active voice at *Apology* 41e as he instructed the jurors to cause his sons pain in the same way that he had pained them if their virtue is found wanting (*λυποῦντες ἄπερ ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς ἐλύπουν*). In its active sense here, *λυπεῖν* means to annoy or aggravate and is the inevitable byproduct of elenctic examination.<sup>35</sup> Although Crito wishes that he could escape his own sorrow and Socrates would agree that the

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<sup>34</sup> Grube translates "sorrow and alarm"; better perhaps is Fowler's – "grieving and fearing."

<sup>35</sup> Kirkpatrick (2017, p. 40) captures the sense of *λυπεῖν* in this passage well: "Socrates will not be able to agitate for change in Athens if he exits" and will therefore "no longer be Socrates."

avoidance of pain is natural, it is a necessary feature of Socrates' philosophic mission that he aggravate his interlocutors into action.<sup>36</sup> Socrates says at *Theaetetus* 149d that midwives bring on pains and can alleviate them if they choose. When Socrates induces this pain, though steeped in metaphor, it reflects the painful experience that his interlocutors experienced upon examination. Indeed, the φθόνος that the Athenians feel toward Socrates arises from the unmodulated envious jealousy felt upon the loss of public esteem with respect to wisdom (*Apol.* 18d, 28a).<sup>37</sup> What the Laws remind Socrates, then, is that the painless, even loving welcome that he might receive in Thessaly (45c) is fundamentally inconsistent with his own nature and the nature of his philosophic mission. The Laws remind Socrates of what he had said at *Apology* 37e-38a – that he would never stop philosophizing, even if the jurors agreed to let him live a quiet life in peace. Crito's machinations and Socrates' dream of departing for Phthia are impossible; like Achilles, it is not in Socrates' nature to lead a quiet life, as desirable as it might seem.

The Laws make another comment that is at tension with Socrates' own words from earlier in the dialogue. We noted above that, in response to Crito's observation that Socrates appears to bear his misfortune easily, Socrates says that to resent death would not be fitting (πλημμελὲς εἶη ἀγανακτεῖν, 43b). This does not mean that he does not resent dying, however, and the indirectness of his statement raises the possibility that he *is* resentful. The voice of the Laws points back to this ambiguous comment at 52c:

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<sup>36</sup> The sense of λυπεῖν here is reminiscent of ἐγείρειν at 30e, where Socrates famously compares himself to a gadfly that wakens the city and rouses it to action.

<sup>37</sup> Brisson (2020), pp. 216-17.

σὺ δὲ τότε μὲν ἐκαλλωπίζου<sup>38</sup> ὡς οὐκ ἀγανακτῶν εἰ δέοι τεθάναι σε, ἀλλὰ ἡροῦ, ὡς ἔφησθα, πρὸ τῆς φυγῆς θάνατον...

Then you prided yourself that you did not resent death, but you chose, as you said, death in preference to exile. (tr. Grube)

Two points stand out in this comment. First, the Laws use the verb ἐκαλλωπίζου to characterize the way in which he had delivered at least part of his defense speech in the *Apology*. While Grube offers the translation “you prided yourself,” the primary meaning of καλλωπίζειν is to beautify the face or embellish,<sup>39</sup> and Fowler translates ἐκαλλωπίζου as “you put on airs.”<sup>40</sup> Therefore, the Laws’ statement is tantamount to an accusation of deception: if Socrates plans to escape death now, then his words at the trial were nothing more than empty bluster. Second, Socrates must in fact resent death if it is true that his defense speech amounted to a disingenuous recitation. We should also note that while Socrates claims not to *fear* death in the *Apology*, he only uses the verb ἀγανακτεῖν to say that he is not angry at the jurors and not, as he does here and in the *Phaedo*, to characterize his feelings about the fact that he must die. If the Laws’ comment here picks up on specific vocabulary that Socrates had used, then they must point back to his statement that it would not be fitting to resent death earlier in the *Crito* (43b). Finally, since the words of the Laws are in fact the words that Socrates imagines the Laws would say to him, the repetition of his own earlier statement indicates that the resentment of death is at the fore of his mind.

Socrates’ frequent repetition of ἀγανακτεῖν while explaining the proper attitude

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<sup>38</sup> This verb – ἐκαλλωπίζου – is also very reminiscent of the word that Socrates uses to negatively characterize sophisticated rhetoric of the sort employed by his accusers: κεκαλλιεπημένους γε λόγους (*Apol.* 17d).

<sup>39</sup> *LSJ* s.v. καλλωπίζω.

<sup>40</sup> Gomme (1958, p. 49) uses the same expression as Fowler: “how did you put on airs at your trial!”

toward death in the *Phaedo* bears witness to its importance for Socrates. His intense interest reveals that it required his consistent, conscientious effort not to lapse into resentment as his death became reality.

What Socrates voices through the Laws is a universal principle that repaying evil for evil is itself unjust and that to ever perform an unjust act is forbidden. Therefore, the Laws do not say that Socrates is guilty or deserves the punishment he is about to receive. Of this even Socrates seems quite certain. A tension therefore exists within Socrates between his dismay at his unjust conviction and his desire to prioritize justice over any other considerations. The prophetic dream that opens the *Crito*, then, need not be fulfilled to express something true about Socrates. Escape in this case could certainly be defensible. Crito thus appears unconvinced by Socrates' assertion that it is better to suffer an injustice than commit one. The Laws in the *Crito* act as an outside voice of authority against which Crito is not permitted to speak and which addresses Socrates like a divine and parental voice against which he dare not object. These two aspects of the Laws appear to be especially relevant as responses to crucial considerations raised earlier in the drama.

At 46c, Socrates cautions Crito that the two of them should not let the social concerns raised by Crito frightened them like ghouls terrifying children. One response to this worry is to prioritize an expert's opinion over the majority's and pursue through discourse the argument that is most convincing. A second response comes from the Laws themselves. They argue that, since they govern the institution of marriage and the education of children, they are more rightly regarded as Socrates' parents than his own mother and father (51e). The parental motif shapes their discussion with Socrates. Instead of engaging in philosophic discourse, the Laws make a series of proclamations and directives to which Socrates can only give cursory assent. It is striking indeed that,



although Socrates had set out to find and pursue the course of action best supported by rational argumentation, the concluding section of the *Crito* has the Laws direct Socrates by pointing to the utility of his potential actions.<sup>41</sup>

As the Laws close their speech, they make a final argument that addresses Socrates' fears; in fact, the Laws come close to frightening Socrates in exactly the way that he had cautioned against at 46c when they raise the possibility that he will face additional punishment in Hades. They introduce Hades as they dismantle the argument that Socrates should escape for the sake of his sons (53e-54a). If he were to relocate his sons to Thessaly with him, they would not enjoy citizenship and their education would be left to strangers (54a). If his sons remain in Athens, however, Socrates' friends have already promised to oversee their development – would this promise be any less true if Socrates departed to Hades rather than Thessaly (54a)? The Laws' final paragraph is then framed as a discussion of the afterlife. Although Socrates' defense failed to persuade his human judges in Athens, he will soon defend himself again before the magistrates in Hades (54b). In the *Apology* Socrates also presented a vision of the mythical judges in the underworld, whom he called "true jurymen," and speaks with enthusiasm at the prospect of meeting them (41a). In the *Crito*, however, the situation is very different. If Socrates escapes prison, the Laws of Athens will be angry with him (σοι χαλεπανοῦμεν), and – more concerning – their brothers in Hades "will not receive him kindly" (οὐκ εὐμενῶς σε ὑποδέξονται, 54c). The vision may understate the

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<sup>41</sup> Lane (1998) provides a useful examination of the tension between *logoi* and *erga* in the *Crito*. On the Laws in particular, she writes that "the Laws invoke the familiar Greek distinction in stressing that the agreement to which they refer was made 'by deeds, not by words (52d4-5)'" and stresses the apparent tension that arises since Socrates had earlier claimed to be someone "whose action is determined exclusively by *logos*" (p. 324).

severity of punishment that could await Socrates if he angers the Laws, but Socrates has made abundantly clear how vital the afterlife is to him.

The Laws' vision of the afterlife also seizes upon Socrates' anxiety. While Socrates speaks in very definite terms about the afterlife at *Theaetetus* 176a-b, he speaks in far less certain terms in both the *Apology* and *Phaedo*, where he envisions himself entering the afterlife rather than speaking generally of its existence. The Laws, by contrast, are very explicit in the *Crito*: Socrates will die, will stand in judgement in Hades, and, if he chooses to escape with Crito, will suffer penalties. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates encourages his friend to charm their souls with incantations to sooth anxieties about the soul and its afterlife, and he then enacts this advice himself as he closes his argument in the *Phaedo* with a mythical vision of the afterlife. The *Crito* seems to anticipate the thematic importance of confidence in the afterlife by indicating through the voice of the Laws that the prospect of punishment in Hades is distressing to Socrates. The points raised by the Laws address concerns that are especially personal to Socrates, and the fate of the soul in Hades in particular is constantly on Socrates' mind at the end of his life. Therefore the speech that Socrates has made in their voice serves more to convince himself than to alleviate Crito's lingering doubts.

As Socrates ends his discussion in the voice of the Laws, he tells Crito that he hears the Laws' words buzzing in his ears in the way that a Bacchant hears the music of a Corybantic band. Likening himself to a Corybant raises questions about how to interpret the views expressed by the Laws in the preceding pages and whether Socrates himself endorses them. Harte, for example, points to Socrates' use of the verb  $\beta\omicron\mu\beta\epsilon\tilde{\iota}$  as evidence that the noise is not pleasant or harmonious but irritating and discordant

(54d).<sup>42</sup> Weiss similarly argues that Socrates “puts a distance between himself and the Laws” when he uses the language of Corybantic rites to characterize their speech.<sup>43</sup> Wasmuth, on the other hand, points to the curative aspects of the Corybantic rites to conclude that, insofar as the Laws’ words correspond to Corybantic music, they are “beneficial, even if not philosophical.”<sup>44</sup> Wasmuth’s view is persuasive because his reading, like mine, is open to the possibility that Socrates experiences fear, worries, and the rest of the emotions that we would expect to find in a condemned man days before his execution.<sup>45</sup> Rather than offering an oblique assessment of whether he agrees with the Laws’ reasoning, when Socrates likens himself to a Corybant, he means that “the Laws’ arguments [alleviate] fear and [bring] health to [his] soul.”<sup>46</sup> In contrast to the dream that he had earlier in the dialogue, the source of which is not revealed and whose accuracy is left ambiguous, Socrates’ final words in the dialogue confirm that the god led him to the decision not to escape (ἐπειδὴ ταύτη ὁ θεὸς ὑφηγεῖται, 54e).

That Socrates closes the dialogue by saying that the god led him is reminiscent of the end of the *Apology*. There, the silence of the god verifies for Socrates that the way in which he had conducted his defense brought him to the divinely sanctioned result (*Apol.* 40a-b). In the *Crito*, however, Socrates indicates that the god did lead him (54e); we should recall, however, that in the *Apology* he told the jurors that his *daimonion* never commands him to do anything, but only prohibits him from doing something wrong. If the god intervened to direct him away from the wrong course of action, the *Crito* depicts Socrates as genuinely struggling in his deliberation. It is also worth

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<sup>42</sup> Harte (2004), p. 230.

<sup>43</sup> Weiss (1998), p. 134. The main thesis Weiss’s book is that “the views espoused by the Laws are the views of the Laws – not of Socrates” (p. 3).

<sup>44</sup> Wasmuth (2015), p. 70.

<sup>45</sup> Wasmuth (2015), p. 73, cites *Laws* 7.790d-791b and concludes that “according to Plato, then, Corybantic rites offer a way of curing fear arising from having an unhealthy soul.”

<sup>46</sup> Wasmuth (2015), p. 82.

remembering the central question of the *Crito*: will Socrates participate in his friends' plot to free him from prison and avoid his execution? Although Socrates had promised to follow the argument that seemed best to him, the *Crito* is fundamentally about action, not argument.<sup>47</sup> The divine experience that Socrates has in the second half of the dialogue provides external verification that he should choose to remain in the prison and renders the arguments inconsequential to the resolution of the drama. In *Ion*, Socrates compares poets to Corybants because they enter an ecstatic state to produce poetry (533e-534a). If he is also inspired like a Corybant in the *Crito*, then his performance as the Laws shares the features of "the psychology of epic performance."<sup>48</sup> The performer is not in control of his senses, and his soul believes in its inspired state that it is someone or somewhere else (535b-c). Socrates' Corybantic performance in the *Crito* has a similar effect: by speaking through the voice of an outside agent, Socrates takes leave of his own sensibilities (which, he has admitted, are troubled and confused) and compels his soul to be content where it is (the prison) and soon will be (the afterlife).

While I have argued that Socrates speaks as he does in the voice of the Laws primarily to settle his own interior deliberation and extinguish the desires and passions revealed earlier in the dialogue, the speech also leaves Crito unable to respond. Because the *Crito* is followed by the *Phaedo*, however, the final scene of the *Phaedo* indicates that Crito had not been fully persuaded – perhaps not only by the arguments in that dialogue, but by the Laws as well. Socrates as the Laws only asks Crito for perfunctory assent and allows the Laws to speak authoritatively in speech that amounts to

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<sup>47</sup> Lane (1998, p. 313) writes that the *Crito* is the "sole Platonic dialogue in which Socrates engages in deliberation."

<sup>48</sup> Yamagata (2005), p. 114.

monologue.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, Socrates' words at the end of the *Phaedo* may apply equally to the *Crito*: despite the multitude of arguments and other forms of speech Socrates has marshalled in his final days, he apparently did not convince Crito and may have spoken all these words "in vain in an attempt to reassure you and [himself] too" (*Phaedo* 115d, tr. Grube). The fact that Socrates hints at the end of the *Phaedo* that he is not fully convinced himself is a clear reminder of the epistemic insecurity,<sup>50</sup> also revealed through his dreams and doubts concerning the interpretation of them, that comes with his conflicting principles and desires.

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<sup>49</sup> Thesleff (1967, pp. 55-60) classifies the Laws' speech under "monologue and continuous exposition"; this type of passages, Thesleff argues, functions "not to carry the main argument, but present a problem... or a point... or a vision in connection with, but not solving the problem" (p. 57). The speech of the Laws in the *Crito* is grouped with passages on "a visionary level with reference to superhuman matters" (p. 60). Thesleff's analysis is useful because, while the Laws do assert principles, they ultimately present a vision of Socrates' future, if he were to escape, that appears wholly detrimental and do not invite any cross-examination of their assertions.

<sup>50</sup> It is worthwhile to consider what he is convinced of here, as well. In the *Phaedo*, his final argument attempts to establish that the soul is immortal, eternal, and will live on after corporeal death in a divine place beyond the earth. His firm, although less strongly articulated, belief in the afterlife also provides him assurance that he defended himself in the best possible way in the *Apology*, and the Laws point to judgement in the afterlife as a reason not to betray his principles by escaping with Crito.

## Chapter 6

### Experience and Emotion in the *Phaedo*

In composing the *Phaedo*, Plato constructs a drama that is far more compelling than a mere series of arguments. The drama within which Plato situates his famous arguments is fundamental to appreciating the subtly layered characterization of Socrates that lies at the heart of the dialogue. The dramatic frame with which the dialogue opens has Echecrates of Phlius asking Phaedo whether he was present himself on the day Socrates died (57a). After Phaedo confirms that he was there, Echecrates asks for an exact, detailed account of Socrates' death (58d). What did Socrates do and say? Who was there with him? Phaedo replies that he remembers precisely and proceeds to narrate the day's events. What follows in Phaedo's account then is an attempt to recreate the experience of being present with Socrates on his final day. Yes, Phaedo recalls the arguments with admirable exactitude, but what make the text so compelling are the details that bring the experience to life.

The thematic significance of the experience is emphasized in a number of ways. The opening line announces that closeness and intimacy will be key to the story Phaedo tells:

Ἐχεκράτης: αὐτός, ὦ Φαίδων, παρεγένου Σωκράτει ἐκείνη τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἣ τὸ φάρμακον ἔπιεν ἐν τῷ δεσμωτηρίῳ, ἢ ἄλλου του ἤκουσας;

Were you there with Socrates yourself, Phaedo, on the day he drank the poison in the prison, or did you hear from someone else?<sup>1</sup>

The verb *παραγίγνομαι* performs a double duty here: (1) the fact that Phaedo was there in person ensures the credibility of his account, and (2) the verb also emphasizes Phaedo's closeness with Socrates. Phaedo was not just a witness but was right alongside

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<sup>1</sup> Translations of the *Phaedo* are my own unless otherwise indicated. In all cases I have translated in consultation with Grube's translation published in Cooper (1997).

Socrates the entire day. The physical proximity denoted by the verb is later reinforced by the dramatic interlude in which Phaedo recounts his physical contact with Socrates at an especially difficult moment in the day's discussion. In addition, the specification "in the prison" (ἐν τῷ δεσμωτηρίῳ) announces the literary motif of imprisonment, bondage, release, and escape that punctuates the dialogue. Finally, the oblique way in which Echecrates asks about Socrates' death here may also suggest a repression or aversion to saying that Socrates is dead: the consequence of drinking the poison (τὸ φάρμακον ἔπιεν) is well understood but not yet stated. Echecrates does ask about the death itself (τί δὲ δὴ τὰ περὶ αὐτὸν τὸν θάνατον, 58c) a little later, but the euphemistic allusion to Socrates' deathday in the opening line nonetheless stands out.

Echecrates redoubles his interest in the physical presence of Socrates' friends:

Ἐχεκράτης: τί δὲ δὴ τὰ περὶ αὐτὸν τὸν θάνατον, ὦ Φαίδων; τί ἦν τὰ λεχθέντα καὶ πραχθέντα, καὶ τίνες οἱ παραγενόμενοι τῶν ἐπιτηδείων τῷ ἀνδρὶ; ἢ οὐκ εἶων οἱ ἄρχοντες παρεῖναι, ἀλλ' ἔρημος ἐτελεύτα φίλων; (58c-d)

What about the death itself, Phaedo? What was said and done? And which of his friends were there with the man? Or did the officials not permit them to be present so that he died deprived of his friends?

The recurrence of the verb παραγίγνομαι underscores Echecrates' interest in who was there with Socrates, and the last question, *did Socrates die alone?* cuts to the point. Being physically present during Socrates' final moments was clearly significant to his friends, both those who were there to experience it and those left to wonder until someone brought a reliable account.

A difficulty arises in Phaedo's account when we note the rift between the dialogue's keen interest in the experience of being present with Socrates on that day and the vision of philosophy that Socrates articulates at key points in the discussion. Grube noted that Socrates' vision of philosophy as "training for death is a dangerously

negative point of view” that advocates “pure intellectualism divorced from life.”<sup>2</sup> Lange responded to Grube’s view by noting that “the dialogue is not cold – it is replete with exquisite feeling.”<sup>3</sup> More recently, Nails has made a strong case for seeing Socrates as fully engaged in interpersonal, affective dimensions of life:

Socrates appears to have been the happiest of men, thoroughly enjoying even the relationships that were not consummated physically; he grew old with dear fellow demesmen and friends from childhood, surrounded by many newer friends, with a wife and children; and he faced death with a tranquility that was a wonder to them all. The philosopher’s life really does seem to be the best of all lives and Socrates the happiest of men because what he really wanted, and what he thought he wanted, really was good.<sup>4</sup>

The longstanding difference of opinion among readers of the *Phaedo* indicates how intractable this contrast has proven to be. Yes, *Phaedo* recalls and describes the emotions experienced on Socrates’ deathday, but in the words he attributes to Socrates himself, philosophy is explained as a preparation for death (64a) and death as the separation of the soul from the inadequate, mutable, and confounding body that imprisons it (79c).

One way to resolve the disconnect between these viewpoints is to say that Socrates’ friends simply did not understand and believe Socrates’ message. I wish to pursue what I believe is a more fruitful and more persuasive line of investigation. I propose that the dramatic composition and its tension with the overt ethical message of Socrates’ speech is deliberate and essential to seeing the full picture that Plato provides us. The fact that Socrates resolutely accepts death in the end does not invalidate or preclude struggling with fear of death, anger at the outcome of his trial, sorrow for his

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<sup>2</sup> Grube (1935), p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> Lange (1938), p. 297. Lange’s piece appeared in the “Notes” of *The Classical Journal* 33.5 as a response to Grube’s then-recent *Plato’s Thought*.

<sup>4</sup> Nails (2007), p. 198.



family, and missing his friends. If Socrates does provide a template for his friends to emulate by facing death fearlessly, he does so because he experienced the same emotions that he would like his friends to overcome.

### **1. Opening frame: pity, pleasure, and pain**

In the opening frame of the dialogue, Phaedo gives a nuanced description of the emotions that Socrates' friends experienced on his final day. Phaedo introduces three sensations in particular that are thematically key for a reading of the text; these are pity (ἔλεος), pleasure (ἡδονή), and pain (λύπη) (58e-59a). The related term "sorrow" (πένθος) also appears in this passage. These terms are noteworthy because of the ways in which Phaedo says that each one contributed to the shared experience of Socrates' friends. First, he mentions pity only to say that he did not have any feeling of it, which runs counter to expectation in the circumstances (οὔτε γὰρ ὡς θανάτῳ παρόντα με ἄνδρὸς ἐπιτηδείου ἔλεος εἰσήει, 58e). Instead, in his present sorrow (παρόντι πένθει, 59a), Phaedo felt an unaccustomed mixture of pleasure and pain at the same time (τις ἀήθης κρᾶσις ἀπὸ τε τῆς ἡδονῆς συγκεκραμένη ὁμοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς λύπης, 59a). The fact that Phaedo conspicuously calls attention to the emotional complexities of witnessing Socrates' final day, moreover, primes us as readers to observe how and when these emotions manifest themselves in the main drama. In this section I discuss what Phaedo means by each of these terms and how these emotions are reflected in the companions' experience of Socrates' final day, but I also call attention to the priming effect of this preliminary discussion in the dialogue and will later explore how Socrates manifests many of these same emotions as well.

Let us first consider pity (ἔλεος). Phaedo mentions pity only to say that he and his companions, counter to expectation, did not feel pity toward Socrates. Why would it

be likely for someone in Phaedo's situation to experience pity, and why did he not? Konstan provides a useful overview of basic emotions as they are deployed in Greek thought, with Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as a starting point. Konstan identifies pity as an emotion that involves "cognitive and social" elements and "moral appraisals."<sup>5</sup> In part because *Rhetoric* is his starting point, Konstan's analysis considers the role of pity in discursive deliberation more than in private interactions. That is, the criteria Konstan identifies as constituent of pity are those that jurors or lawmakers might weigh in reaching a verdict or choosing a course of action. In the *Phaedo*'s case, however, the verdict has already been rendered and there is no judgement to be made. Aristotle efficiently defines pity as "a kind of pain in the case of an apparent destructive or painful harm in one not deserving to encounter it [and which] one might expect oneself, or one of one's own, to suffer, and this when it seems near."<sup>6</sup> The experience of pity, on Aristotle's account, relies on the following factors: (1) one observes another suffering; (2) the suffering is unjust or undeserved; (3) the observer could reasonably expect to suffer similarly; and (4) the observer is well-disposed to the sufferer. Aristotle's definition provides a reasonable set of criteria under which to evaluate the following passage from the *Phaedo*:

Φαίδων: καὶ μὴν ἔγωγε θαυμάσια ἔπαθον παραγενόμενος. οὔτε γὰρ ὡς θανάτῳ παρόντα με ἀνδρὸς ἐπιτηδείου ἕλεος εἰσήει: εὐδαίμων γάρ μοι ἀνὴρ ἐφαίνετο, ὃ Ἐχέκρατες, καὶ τοῦ τρόπου καὶ τῶν λόγων, ὡς ἀδεῶς καὶ γενναίως ἐτελεύτα, ὥστε μοι ἐκεῖνον παρίστασθαι μὴδ' εἰς Ἄιδου ἰόντα ἄνευ θείας μοίρας ἰέναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκεῖσε ἀφικόμενον εὖ πράξειν εἶπερ τις πώποτε καὶ ἄλλος. διὰ δὴ ταῦτα οὐδὲν πάνυ μοι ἔλεινόν εἰσήει, ὡς εἰκὸς ἂν δόξειεν εἶναι παρόντι πένθει... (58e-59a)

Indeed I experienced wondrous sensations while I was there. Though I was witnessing the death of a man who was a close friend, pity did not strike me. In fact the man seemed happy to me, Echecrates, in his demeanor and words as he died fearlessly and nobly so that it occurred to

<sup>5</sup> Konstan (2006b), p. 201.

<sup>6</sup> Arist. *Rh.* 2.8, 1385b13-16, qt. in Konstan (2006b), p. 204.

me he would not go off to Hades without divine favor, but he would fare well there if anyone ever does. For these reasons no pity whatsoever struck me, as one would think likely in my present sorrow.

Phaedo emphasizes his own emotional state as a response to the apparent calm courage of Socrates. While Socrates' demeanor is not sufficient to ward off any painful feelings, Phaedo does regulate his emotions in light of how he perceives Socrates' demeanor. Since pity entails a feeling of sorrow on behalf of another's suffering, and since Socrates is apparently not suffering, Phaedo has no grounds to pity him. Of the four conditions that constitute pity above, Phaedo's assessment that Socrates is not suffering precludes a sense of pity. The second criterion, however, that the suffering is unjust, remains at the fore of the early stages of the dialogue; although Phaedo and the others do not perceive Socrates as manifestly suffering on his deathday, there can be no doubt that the proceedings necessitating his death are regarded as singularly unjust. Phaedo does not explicitly acknowledge anger at the loss of Socrates in his preliminary statements, but he does relate Simmias' frustration that Socrates "appears to bear leaving them too lightly" (63a). Perhaps Phaedo's own sorrow is multiplied by recognizing the admirable qualities of the person he is about to lose since Socrates does not immediately seem to reciprocate the sense of loss as he faces his own death and separation from his friends.

Phaedo may also deny that he felt any pity at the death of Socrates because the sorrow of losing his close friend was modulated by a concurrent sense of pleasure (ἡδονή, 59a). The way in which Phaedo explains his pleasure is significant; he and his companions experienced an unusual mixture of pleasure and pain at once. In the immediate context of the dramatic frame, Phaedo does not give any specific examples of what motivated his sense of pleasure, but he does say that he found the usual pleasure from Socrates' philosophic discussion. Phaedo also says that he and the others wept throughout the day but found themselves laughing intermittently as well. Phaedo

dramatizes many of these instances by including in the narrative times when someone laughed or mentioned experiencing pleasure. What is more, Phaedo says that he considers remembering and re-enacting the words of Socrates the most pleasurable activity and therefore brings the events of the solemn day to life with vivid expression (58d).

The term *λύπη* is an evocative one because it can denote a range of experiences, and Plato exploits its polysemy in the text. Aristotle uses *λύπη* as the term for “pain” in his definition of emotions as “all those things on account of which people change and differ in regard to their judgements” when attended by pain and pleasure.<sup>7</sup> This generalized psychic pain is basis for a sense of injury or injustice that precipitates anger, pity, or indignation.<sup>8</sup> In other classical *loci*, however, the term *λύπη* more specifically refers to the sensation that we would render “grief,”<sup>9</sup> and we would be well justified to read the *λύπη* that Phaedo and the others felt as grief here as well. Indeed, if Phaedo did not feel pity because, on his evaluation at least, Socrates was not suffering, then the *λύπη* that he experienced must entail both anger at the injustice he perceives himself to be suffering at the loss of Socrates and grief at the devastating loss itself.

Phaedo’s preliminary comments are thematically significant because they impose expectations on the reader about what will follow. In order for the drama to be effective, however, and in keeping with Plato’s subtle artistic style, we may well anticipate that some of these expectations will be subverted or inverted to create the artistic texture of the dialogue. In the brief comments that Phaedo has made on the emotions experienced in the prison, he has primed the reader to look for a Socrates who is at peace, fearless,

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<sup>7</sup> Ar. *Rh.* 2.1, 1378a20-2, qt. in Konstan (2006b), p. 245.

<sup>8</sup> Konstan (2006b), p. 246.

<sup>9</sup> Konstan (2006b), p. 244.

and noble. Despite Socrates' apparent quietude, however, I suggest that he nonetheless is complex, three-dimensional, and does manifest signs of sorrow, fear, and doubt through his words and gestures in the drama. Phaedo may be idealizing his friend's memory immediately after his death, and therefore describes Socrates in a simple, one-dimensional way to bring out the contrast between his and his friend's demeanors, but the details of what he recounts in the drama reveal a Socrates who is in fact more complex and thus all the more human than Phaedo recognizes. I now turn to an examination of Socrates' psychic complexity.

## **2. Socrates' psychic complexity**

Like his friends, Socrates also exhibits complex emotions through his words and actions in the drama. In this section, I present and analyze a series of passages which demonstrate my vision of a layered and emotionally complex Socrates. The anxiety that Socrates experiences goes largely unnoticed by Phaedo and the others, but Plato exploits the asymmetry of knowledge between reader and narrator, speaker and listener.<sup>10</sup> In this way, Plato shapes Socrates as a complex character with emotions that run contrary to the attitude prescribed by Socrates himself in the dialogue's philosophic discourses.<sup>11</sup>

Plato achieved this effect by embedding the words of Socrates within a recitation by Phaedo. The dramatic cues and commentary, therefore, give evidence only for what

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<sup>10</sup> The literary technique employed by Plato here is complicated. Genette (1980) writes of cases in which the narrator comes to know information after the fact that could not have been known at the time within the narrative (pp. 205-207). Plato takes this a step further in that his narrator Phaedo recites Socrates' words without having gained knowledge of their full significance at all.

<sup>11</sup> By "the attitude prescribed by Socrates" I mean the motif that runs through the dialogue: living a philosophic life is practicing for death, and the philosopher is the person who is closest to being "dead" during his mortal life. Lear (1998) and Nussbaum (1986), to name two examples, criticize Socrates for embracing a philosophic lifestyle that renders him detached and aloof from the realities of human life.

Phaedo remembers seeing and what he now believes, a considerable time after the fact, that the actions and gestures meant. On the other hand, Phaedo speaks in the voice of Socrates throughout the text and therefore gives us access to Socrates' thoughts. Plato thus makes it possible to distinguish which details belong to Phaedo's later reminiscence and which provide insight into Socrates' internal psychic state.<sup>12</sup>

Plato's style of composition leaves Phaedo in the position of a rhapsode: he recalls in detail the words that he recites, but his ability to recite does not entail a full understanding of their meaning.<sup>13</sup> Socrates' friends often do not fully appreciate the arguments that he makes.<sup>14</sup> They reveal the disconnect between their rational appreciation of his teachings and their emotional processing of them when they begin to weep uncontrollably upon administration of the poison. Socrates rebukes all of them, and Crito in particular when he tells Crito that "Socrates" cannot be buried, only the body left behind after the departure of his soul (216a). Phaedo's narrative account of events parallels this scene: Phaedo does recall the words that Socrates said, but his understanding of the content is limited and clouded by his idealizing admiration of Socrates.

As for Socrates, note that Phaedo here is describing how he perceived Socrates; Phaedo's account must tell us something about Socrates' outward disposition, but we do not have access to Socrates' internal psychic states until Phaedo recites Socrates'

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<sup>12</sup> Berger, Jr. (2015, p. 46) expresses this feature of the dialogue well: "What Phaedo tells Echecrates is not merely what Socrates said but what Phaedo heard—what he was listening for, what he wanted to hear. He presents it as a true report, both of what actually happened on the last day of Socrates' life and of what really went on in his conversation. But his attention to what happened, though 'true,' is selectively controlled by his misperception of what went on."

<sup>13</sup> Berger, Jr. (2015, pp. 36-37) emphasizes the friends' failure to appreciate Socrates' *logoi*. Instead, he writes, they view Socrates as a "magician whose fatherly words" will alleviate their fear and sorrow.

<sup>14</sup> Jansen (2013, p. 337) argues that the heightened emotional stakes of the dialogue apply more to the interlocutors than they do to Socrates. The dialogue therefore dramatizes the "plight of Socrates' companions." Although I do not agree with her view that Socrates displays "equanimity" throughout the *Phaedo*, her focus on the emotional state of the companions helps to explain their detachment from the dialogue's explicit teachings.

words. Phaedo seems to have a deep impression of what emotions he and the other friends experienced and what Socrates said on that day, but Phaedo apparently fails to notice important elements of the meaning of Socrates' words and actions that reveal an internal distress that is at odds with his calm outward demeanor.<sup>15</sup> Therefore Phaedo provides us an unmediated account of what Socrates said, but relies on his idealized *ex post facto* recollection of how Socrates seemed to behave in his account of Socrates' emotional state.

As Socrates enters the stage in Phaedo's dramatic narration, he is released from the shackles affixed to his leg; Phaedo and the others enter as Xanthippe is escorted out, and Socrates speaks to his friends for the first time in the dialogue.<sup>16</sup> Socrates rubs at his sore leg and comments on the cyclic nature of pleasure and pain. While bound, his leg caused him pain; now the release of the bonds prompts a feeling of pleasure as his pain gives way to relief.

It is significant that Socrates comments on the nature of pleasure and pain at this point.<sup>17</sup> His observation echoes the "unaccustomed mixture of pleasure and pain" that Phaedo and the others felt that day. A salient question raised in the analysis of Greek emotions is whether the Greeks made a clear distinction between physical pain and emotional or psychic pain. In contemporary language, hurt feelings are clearly a different sensation from a hurting leg. Harris (2001) suggests that for the Greeks, by

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<sup>15</sup> Jansen (2013) challenges the influential view of Nussbaum (1986, p. 131) that "the dialogue explicitly teaches that these [grief and pity] are immature and unhelpful responses." Jansen highlights the complex interaction of explicit arguments – like Socrates' view that philosophy is preparation for death – and key details that are subtle or implicit.

<sup>16</sup> Socrates' first line of dialogue is his brief instruction to Crito to have Xanthippe escorted home: και ὁ Σωκράτης βλέψας εἰς τὸν Κρίτωνα, ὡς Κρίτων, ἔφη, ἄπαγέτω τις αὐτὴν οἴκαδε.' (60a)

<sup>17</sup> Burger (1984) writes that "mythos and logos unite to underscore the theme of the dialogue" in this scene as Socrates begins to mythologize on the nature of pleasure and pain (pp. 11-12).

contrast, all pleasure and pain contained physical and psychic components.<sup>18</sup> Since Greek less clearly distinguishes between psychic and physical pain, Plato may expect his audience to readily make the connection between Socrates' and his friends' pain.

In the same passage, Socrates effectively composes an etiological fable extemporaneously, which he characterizes as the sort Aesop might have written, to account for the sensations he is now experiencing. His mention of fables prompts Cebes' response in the following lines, for word has spread that Socrates has taken up writing poetry during his imprisonment. While the poems that Socrates had begun composing in prison stimulate the conversation within the drama. I draw attention now to Socrates' first, extemporaneous fable to explain pleasure and pain:

ὡς ἄτοπον, ἔφη, ὦ ἄνδρες, ἔοικέ τι εἶναι τοῦτο ὃ καλοῦσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἡδύ: ὡς θαυμασίως πέφυκε πρὸς τὸ δοκοῦν ἐναντίον εἶναι, τὸ λυπηρόν, τὸ ἅμα μὲν αὐτῷ μὴ ἴθελειν παραγίγνεσθαι τῷ ἄνθρώπῳ, ἐὰν δέ τις διώκῃ τὸ ἕτερον καὶ λαμβάνῃ, σχεδόν τι ἀναγκάζεσθαι αἰεὶ λαμβάνειν καὶ τὸ ἕτερον, ὥσπερ ἐκ μιᾶς κορυφῆς ἡμμένω δύ' ὄντε. καί μοι δοκεῖ, ἔφη, εἰ ἐνενόησεν αὐτὰ Αἴσωπος, μῦθον ἂν συνθεῖναι ὡς ὁ θεὸς βουλόμενος αὐτὰ διαλλάξαι πολεμοῦντα, ἐπειδὴ οὐκ ἐδύνατο, συνῆψεν εἰς ταῦτόν αὐτοῖς τὰς κορυφάς, καὶ διὰ ταῦτα ὧ ἂν τὸ ἕτερον παραγένηται ἐπακολουθεῖ ὕστερον καὶ τὸ ἕτερον. ὥσπερ οὖν καὶ αὐτῷ μοι ἔοικεν: ἐπειδὴ ὑπὸ τοῦ δεσμοῦ ἦν ἐν τῷ σκέλει τὸ ἀλγεινόν, ἦκειν δὴ φαίνεται ἐπακολουθοῦν τὸ ἡδύ. (60b-c)

What a strange thing that which men call pleasure seems to be, and how astonishing the relation it has with what is thought to be its opposite, namely pain! A man cannot have both at the same time. Yet if he pursues and catches the one, he is almost always bound to catch the other also, like two creatures with one head. I think that if Aesop had noted this he would have composed a fable that a god wished to reconcile their opposition but could not do so, so he joined their two heads together, and therefore when a man has the one, the other follows later. This seems to be happening to me. My bonds caused pain in my leg, and now pleasure seems to be following. (tr. Grube)

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<sup>18</sup> Harris (2001) writes that “the archaic and classical Greeks did not construct any definite barrier between physical suffering and intense emotional suffering” (p. 340).



On Socrates' account, the dualist relationship between pain and pleasure precludes feeling both simultaneously, but admitting the one nearly assures the eventual presence of the other. The fable's message initially appears to preclude the "unaccustomed mixture of pleasure and pain together" that Phaedo describes at 59a. When Socrates fleshes out this claim by composing a fable, however, his and Phaedo's account seem to parallel each other neatly. Socrates describes pleasure and pain as two opposite creatures who are bound to each by virtue of sharing one head. In less allegorical language, what he describes is compatible with "an accustomed mixture of pleasure and pain." Moreover, on Phaedo's account, although he considers the opposite emotions to be a mixing together (ὁμοῦ), he and the others did not necessarily feel both simultaneously. Instead, just as Socrates describes the cyclic movement of his allegorical creature, Phaedo's emotions manifest as bouts of intermittent pleasure and pain (τοτέ μὲν γελῶντες, ἐνίστε δὲ δακρῦοντες).<sup>19</sup> Understood in this way, Socrates' physical pain and subsequent pleasure correspond to the emotional pleasure and pain described by Phaedo in the opening frame.

It is worth noting, too, that although Socrates' fable may oversimplify the relationship between pleasure and pain, in other dialogues Socrates shows a deep interest in the mixture of pleasure and pain that constitutes various emotions.<sup>20</sup> When we consider that the terminology for these sensations in Greek complicates any distinction between physical and emotional pleasure and pain, it becomes clear that

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<sup>19</sup> Grube translates ὁμοῦ as "at the same time," a choice which emphasizes or even causes the apparent contradiction between Socrates' and Phaedo's accounts of emotion. The adverb ὁμοῦ is more properly of place than time, however, and reinforces the notion of two opposites, i.e. pleasure and pain, brought together in a single confounding experience, though each manifests on its own from moment to moment.

<sup>20</sup> The most comprehensive discussion of the mixture of pleasure and pain appears in the *Philebus*. An apropos example is that of the mixing of pleasurable laughter with painful *phthonos* in the case of comic theater. Miller (2008) comprehensively examines these mixed sensations and shows that the account of pleasure in the *Philebus* also informs our understanding of what makes Socratic inquiry pleasant for bystanders to watch.

Socrates genuinely shares the psychic experience of his friends from the opening of the drama.<sup>21</sup>

The fable also maps the trajectory of the *Phaedo*. Readers should expect to feel a sense of pain or grief on behalf of Socrates and his friends as they approach the text. The opening frame and Socrates' fable, however, modulate those expectations as the speakers provide more nuanced accounts of what they experienced. Plato also has Echecrates make a curious comment in the dialogue's sixth line that could easily slip our notice:

τί οὖν δὴ ἔστιν ἄττα εἶπεν ὁ ἀνὴρ πρὸ τοῦ θανάτου; καὶ πῶς ἐτελεύτα;  
ἠδέως γὰρ ἂν ἐγὼ ἀκούσαιμι. (57a)

And what were the things that man said before his death? How did he die? I would gladly listen.

I call attention to the adverb ἠδέως here. Why should Echecrates be glad to hear such a grim report? Moreover, Phaedo echoes the sentiment before he begins his narrative drama. Echecrates asks once again to hear the details of Socrates' death, and Phaedo replies:

ἀλλὰ σχολάζω γε καὶ πειράσομαι ὑμῖν διηγήσασθαι: καὶ γὰρ τὸ  
μεμνηῆσθαι Σωκράτους καὶ αὐτὸν λέγοντα καὶ ἄλλου ἀκούοντα ἔμοιγε  
ἀεὶ πάντων ἠδιστον. (58d)

Indeed I do have time and will try to tell you everything. For remembering Socrates, whether talking about him or listening from someone else, is always the sweetest thing.

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<sup>21</sup> Harris (2001) writes that "the meaning of *lup-* words is from a modern point of view ambiguous: they can refer to physical pain or psychological distress" (p. 343). Konstan (2006b) does qualify this point by showing that "words based on the root *alg-*...refer principally to physical pain, and indeed the Epicureans and Stoics, in general after Aristotle, adopted *algedon* rather than *lupê* as the term for the strictly corporeal sensation" (pp. 245-6). We should note that Socrates uses words from both roots, *lup-* and *alg-*, in his first speech, and that the distinction Konstan finds in the Epicureans and Stoics postdates Socrates considerably. In Aristotle, moreover, the term *lupê* is the psychic pain that accompanies any sensation qualified as a *pathos* (Konstan 2006bd, p. 245).

Phaedo responds to Echecrates' use of ἡδέως with his own ἡδιστον. Two lines later, he begins his account of Socrates' deathday by commenting on the astonishing experience and unusual mix of pleasure and pain that I discussed above. The story itself, then, invites a reperformance that brings with it the alternating feelings of pleasure and pain, the nature of which Socrates explains through his fable.<sup>22</sup> Not only do Socrates' friends experience these emotions as they reflect on the loss of their friend, but Socrates indicates that he, too, both felt and reflected upon these sensations, as would surely be natural in the circumstances.<sup>23</sup>

Phaedo makes one final comment in his narration of the preliminary greeting with Socrates that can provide some insight on the psychic state of Socrates (59d-61e). At the same time Socrates composed his fable about pleasure and pain, he rubbed at his sore leg and positioned himself on the couch (τὸ σκέλος ... τρίβων ἄμα, 60b). A page later, after Socrates explains why he has been writing poetry, he begins to sit with both feet on the floor and remains in this position for the remainder of the dialogue (καὶ ἄμα λέγων ταῦτα καθῆκε τὰ σκέλη ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν, καὶ καθεζόμενος οὕτως ἤδη τὰ λοιπὰ διελέγετο, 61d). Although Phaedo does not comment beyond describing Socrates' pose, the image of Socrates in a fixed, stable position must contrast with the psychic if not physical vicissitudes of his friends throughout the dialogue. Phaedo's account here also omits that, at the close of the dialogue, Socrates will drink the poison and then walk around the room to stimulate blood circulation and accelerate the effects of the poison. He will then lie down and, Plato writes simply, ἐκινήθη (118a12). The idealizing

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<sup>22</sup> Again, although the fable offers a simplistic account of the relationship between pleasure and pain, the link between them is key to Socrates' theories of affect elsewhere. Mills (1985) also treats the account of *phthonos* in the *Philebus* as a classic case. The audience of comedy is instructive here; their *phthonos* at the undeserved goods of comic characters first entails pain at observing unmerited goods and then pleasure at seeing the comic debunking of such characters (pp. 1-3).

<sup>23</sup> Nails (2007, p. 198) finds "the human Socrates of Plato's dialogues" clearly at odds with "Nussbaum's freak – a philosopher at odds with practical life in the real world." Cf. Nussbaum (1986).

symbolism of an unmoved Socrates at 61d contrasts starkly with the grim reality of what likely happened: hemlock causes violent, painful convulsions as the poison takes effect in the body.<sup>24</sup> These passages underscore the disconnect between the way in which Phaedo memorializes Socrates and what Socrates actually felt and experienced. Phaedo takes on the role of rhapsode when he speaks in the voice of Socrates; although he can speak the words, his admiration and idealization of Socrates make him, like a rhapsode, blind to the full meaning of what he says. Thus Socrates begins and ends the dialogue in physical pain that gives way to pleasure upon release. But it is essential to Plato's depiction of Socrates that he did feel the pain as well. As Socrates himself says in the fable, the one seems always to follow closely behind the other.

### 3. Socrates dreams and turns to poetry

In the *Apology*, Socrates points to the afterlife as a reason not to fear death and therefore not to go to great lengths to prolong his mortal life. Although he presents a vivid account of what the afterlife might be like, he maintains his claim to ignorance by allowing for the possibility that there is no afterlife at all. He hopes to depart to the underworld and enjoy a better sort of existence than he has experienced in Athens, but he is careful to express this outcome as a possibility, not as a determined certainty.<sup>25</sup> I mention this here because Socrates' apparent certainty of a particular sort of afterlife that he will go on to express in the *Phaedo* is often cited as a main differentiating feature

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<sup>24</sup> There is, however, some controversy on the question of the effects of hemlock. Sullivan (2001) points out that two separate species could be used in the preparation of hemlock poison, one of which produces milder effects, a fact which she says makes Plato's description of the effects on Socrates in the *Phaedo* more plausible.

<sup>25</sup> Hope, in fact, must be expressed as nothing more certain than a desired possibility. Benton (2019, p. 135) points out that the epistemological element of hope consists in its being "somehow incompatible with knowledge."

between the *Apology* as an early dialogue and the *Phaedo* as a middle dialogue.<sup>26</sup> I argue, however, that Socrates expresses anxiety and uncertainty of life after death in the *Phaedo*, too. The first such hint of anxiety appears in his explanation of why he has been writing poetry in prison:

νῦν δ' ἐπειδὴ ἢ τε δίκη ἐγένετο καὶ ἢ τοῦ θεοῦ ἑορτὴ διεκώλυέ με ἀποθνήσκειν, ἔδοξε χρῆναι, εἰ ἄρα πολλάκις μοι προστάττοι τὸ ἐνύπνιον ταύτην τὴν δημόδη μουσικὴν ποιεῖν, μὴ ἀπειθῆσαι αὐτῷ ἀλλὰ ποιεῖν: ἀσφαλέστερον γὰρ εἶναι μὴ ἀπιέναι πρὶν ἀφοσιώσασθαι ποιήσαντα ποιήματα καὶ πιθόμενον τῷ ἐνυπνίῳ. οὕτω δὲ πρῶτον μὲν εἰς τὸν θεὸν ἐποίησα οὗ ἦν ἡ παροῦσα θυσία: μετὰ δὲ τὸν θεόν, ἐννοήσας ὅτι τὸν ποιητὴν δέοι, εἶπερ μέλλοι ποιητὴς εἶναι, ποιεῖν μύθους ἀλλ' οὐ λόγους, καὶ αὐτὸς οὐκ ἦ μυθολογικός, διὰ ταῦτα δὲ οὐς προχείρους εἶχον μύθους καὶ ἠπιστάμην τοὺς Αἰσώπου, τούτων ἐποίησα οἷς πρῶτοις ἐνέτυχον. (61a-b)

But now, after my trial took place, and the festival of the god was preventing my execution, I thought that, in case my dream was bidding me to practice this popular art, I should not disobey it but compose poetry. I thought it safer not to leave here until I had satisfied my conscience by writing poems in obedience to the dream. So I first wrote in honor of the god of the present festival. After that I realized that a poet, if he is to be a poet, must compose fables, not arguments. Being no teller of fables myself, I took the stories I knew and had at hand, the fables of Aesop, and I versified the first ones I came across. (tr. Grube)

Socrates' choice to begin writing verse (ταύτην τὴν δημόδη μουσικὴν ποιεῖν) derived from a fear that he had long been misinterpreting the dream's command (εἰ ἄρα πολλάκις μοι προστάττοι τὸ ἐνύπνιον). The recurrent dream is markedly different from his usual divine sign: here, the dream orders him to do a particular activity while the *daimonion* only prevents improper actions. Now that he is facing the end of his life and anticipates judgement in the afterlife, he also seems to cover all his bases by reevaluating his interpretation of his dream and responding to it in a different way than

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<sup>26</sup> Kahn (1996), for example, generally rejects traditional chronology in his study, yet he still asserts that the *Phaedo* belongs to a later group of dialogues in his hypothesized protreptic scheme because the *Phaedo* unifies the mystical elements of *Meno* and *Symposium*. It is also, according to Kahn, in the *Phaedo* that the narrative voice of Socrates becomes univocal with Plato - a clear indication of the later and more developed position Kahn sees for the *Phaedo* (p. 57).

before. That he doubts his former interpretation is revealing: until his imprisonment, Socrates has lived a life of philosophy in response to the god's command. Now that his death is imminent, however, he questions whether the god has been wanting him to do something else in addition to philosophy, and he chooses to take up another form of discursive activity just in case he has overlooked the dream's significance. While his response to the dream underscores his devotion to the gods, the fact that he suddenly and privately doubts his response to the god's command also indicates a degree of anxiety and uncertainty that Phaedo appears not to have noticed.<sup>27</sup>

Cebes asks Socrates what had induced him to write poetry while in prison:

περὶ γάρ τοι τῶν ποιημάτων ὧν πεποίηκας ἐντείνας τοὺς τοῦ Αἰσώπου λόγους καὶ τὸ εἰς τὸν Ἀπόλλω προοίμιον καὶ ἄλλοι τινές με ἤδη ἤρουντο, ἀτὰρ καὶ Εὐήνος πρόωγόν, ὅτι ποτὲ διανοηθεῖς, ἐπειδὴ δεῦρο ἦλθες, ἐποίησας αὐτά, πρότερον οὐδὲν πώποτε ποιήσας. (60c-d)

Evenus asked me the day before yesterday, as others had done before, what induced you to write poetry after you came to prison, you who had never composed any poetry before, putting the fables of Aesop into verse and composing the hymn to Apollo. If it is of any concern to you that I should have an answer to give to Evenus when he repeats his question, as I know he will, tell me what to say to him.

Cebes mentions what appear to be two separate literary projects: versifying Aesop's stories (ἐντείνας τοὺς τοῦ Αἰσώπου λόγους) and composing a hymn to Apollo (τὸ εἰς τὸν Ἀπόλλω προοίμιον). Socrates explains both projects in his response:

οὕτω δὴ πρόωτον μὲν εἰς τὸν θεὸν ἐποίησα οὗ ἦν ἡ παροῦσα θυσία: μετὰ δὲ τὸν θεόν, ἐννοήσας ὅτι τὸν ποιητὴν δέοι, εἶπερ μέλλοι ποιητὴς εἶναι, ποιεῖν μύθους ἄλλ' οὐ λόγους, καὶ αὐτὸς οὐκ ἦ μυθολογικός, διὰ ταῦτα δὴ οὐς προχείρους εἶχον μύθους καὶ ἠπιστάμην τοὺς Αἰσώπου, τούτων ἐποίησα οἷς πρώτοις ἐνέτυχον. (61b)

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<sup>27</sup> Roochnik (2001, p. 256) argues that Socrates follows "the practices of reason" in re-examining the meaning of his frequent dreams. He also notes, however, that a dream "represents an uncertain, disputable, unexamined state" (p. 244). I agree with his characterization of the epistemological state of dreams and would add that such a state of *aporia* entails psychic discomfort. Even if Socrates settles on rational deduction in his choice to practice other sorts of music, therefore, the dream stimulates epistemic anxiety that motivates this rational reflection.

So I first wrote in honor of the god of the present festival. After that I realized that a poet, if he is to be a poet, must compose fables, not arguments. Being no teller of fables myself, I took the stories I knew and had at hand, the fables of Aesop, and I versified the first ones I came across. (tr. Grube)

Socrates' words on writing poetry point to another theme of the text, which is the dramatic tension between Socrates as the idealized philosopher and Socrates as a prophetic poet.<sup>28</sup> Despite writing a number of versified fables, Socrates denies that he is a "story-maker" (αὐτὸς οὐκ ἦ μυθολογικός, 61b); he says that because he had no original material, he borrowed and adapted the works of Aesop he had at hand. We should notice, however, that Socrates' account admits of ambiguity: he seems to have composed a hymn on his own before turning to the source material of Aesop. Moreover, we noted in the previous section that Socrates appears to compose a fable extemporaneously to illustrate how pleasure and pain follow each other. The volume of Socrates' poetic output during his imprisonment also appears at odds with his insistence that he is no μυθολογικός.<sup>29</sup>

#### 4. Philosophizing and storytelling: how Socrates will spend his final day

After Socrates explains the impetus for his ongoing poetic activity during his imprisonment, he proposes a topic of conversation for the day:

ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ ἐγὼ ἐξ ἀκοῆς περὶ αὐτῶν λέγω: ἅ μὲν οὖν τυγχάνω ἀκηκῶς φθόνος οὐδεὶς λέγειν. καὶ γὰρ ἴσως καὶ μάλιστα πρέπει

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<sup>28</sup> Later in the text, at 85b, Socrates explicitly claims to speak prophetically: "As I believe myself to be a fellow servant with the swans and dedicated to the same god, and have received from my master a gift of prophecy not inferior to theirs, I am no more despondent than they on leaving life" (tr. Grube). K. Morgan (2010) provides an elucidating discussion of prophetic speech in the Platonic dialogues, with an emphasis on the *Phaedo*. Morgan argues that "Plato engages in a programmatic reinterpretation of some of the most important elements of society" and that "the *Phaedo* does [this] with divination" (p. 63). She also nicely states the conflicting interests that Socrates has to balance in the dialogue: "The imminence of death puts pressure upon him to deliver narratives of belief, but a lifetime of dialectical practice does not let the matter rest there" (p. 72).

<sup>29</sup> In addition to the hymns and fables mentioned in the *Phaedo*, Socrates also assisted in composing at least one *Sokratikos logos* during his imprisonment, as reported by Euclides (*Tht.* 143a).

μέλλοντα ἐκεῖσε ἀποδημεῖν διασκοπεῖν τε καὶ μυθολογεῖν περὶ τῆς ἀποδημίας τῆς ἐκεῖ, ποίαν τινὰ αὐτὴν οἰόμεθα εἶναι: τί γὰρ ἂν τις καὶ ποιῶ ἄλλο ἐν τῷ μέχρῃ ἡλίου δυσμῶν χρόνῳ; (61d-e)

Indeed I also speak of these things [i.e. the philosopher's readiness to die] from hearsay. But I have no aversion to telling you the things I've heard. In fact, perhaps it is most fitting that someone about to depart this world investigate thoroughly and tell stories about what we think the journey to that other place is like. What else could one do in the short time until sunset?

A key phrase here is “διασκοπεῖν τε καὶ μυθολογεῖν περὶ τῆς ἀποδημίας τῆς ἐκεῖ.”

Socrates recommends that the most appropriate topic of conversation is investigation and storytelling about the journey after death. Because this proposition was something of a *non sequitur* from the immediate context, for Cebes had just asked on behalf of Evenus why Socrates had begun writing poetry, to which Socrates replied with the additional advice for Evenus that he should follow him to the grave as soon as possible, the topic of conversation does not yet go in the way Socrates proposed. First, he explains why he believes suicide is morally prohibited and in so doing invokes a theory of the soul that Simmias and Cebes wish to re-examine. The portion of the discussion that follows on the existence, persistence, and immortality of the soul, in fact, seems to satisfy the first half of Socrates' proposal: διασκοπεῖν. The verb σκοπέω and related noun σκέψις occur frequently in Plato to mean to engage in philosophic examination or elenctic discourse. But what of Socrates' second suggestion, μυθολογεῖν? Why would Socrates propose mythologizing, and how is it compatible with the hyper-rational practice of philosophy that he seems to endorse further on in the text? It appears that Socrates deploys poetic modes of discourse in addition to *logos* in order to relieve epistemic and emotional pain.

The fact that Socrates proposes storytelling as a topic gives the reader a look into his psychic state. Phaedo's account of what Socrates had said concerning his physical



pleasure and pain is reinforced by a description of Socrates' emotional state as the conversation progresses. Then, after Cebes expresses his surprise at the claim that a philosopher is the person least likely to resent death, Phaedo comments on Socrates' reaction:

ἀκούσας οὖν ὁ Σωκράτης ἠσθηναί τέ μοι ἔδοξε τῇ τοῦ Κέβητος  
πραγματεία, καὶ ἐπιβλέψας εἰς ἡμᾶς, ἀεὶ τοι, ἔφη, ὁ Κέβης λόγους  
τινὰς ἀνερευνᾶ, καὶ οὐ πάνυ εὐθέως ἐθέλει πείθεσθαι ὅτι ἄν τις εἴπη.  
(62e-63a)

I thought that when Socrates heard this he was pleased by Cebes' argumentation. Glancing at us, he said: "Cebes is always on the track of some arguments; he is certainly not willing to be at once convinced by what one says." (tr. Grube)

Far from being annoyed at his friend's persistence, Socrates communicates through non-verbal cues interpreted by Phaedo that he is pleased by or delights in (ἠσθηναί) the argumentation. This narrative detail recalls the pleasure of conducting philosophy that Phaedo had mentioned in the opening frame with Ececrates and seems to be at odds with the argument that soon follows, which holds that the senses are not reliable grounds for knowledge. The pleasant and interpersonal nature of conducting philosophy is a constant theme in Plato's dialogues, and that is especially the case in how the action of the *Phaedo* unfolds, even if elements of the argument itself point to Grube's "intellectualism divorced from life." Socrates' interaction with his friends here, however, could not be further from such icy intellectualism. Human interaction, like the glance Socrates casts on his friends propels the dialogue forward and brings the scene to life.<sup>30</sup> The inclusion of these details highlights why being present with Socrates makes so lasting an impression on his friends.

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<sup>30</sup> While the glance here may be a subtle example of physical drama, Berger, Jr. (2015, pp. 31-32) discusses the significance of Socrates' glances or stares at two other points in the *Phaedo*. At 86d, Socrates looks at (διαβλέψας) Cebes with his usual stare, and at 117b, he looks intently (ὑποβλέψας) upon the jailer who has brought him the poison. Berger, Jr. notes that most translators omit the adverbial ταυρηδὸν that

The text reveals another way in which Socrates appears to have consoled his friends while reaffirming his own beliefs. At 77e, as the philosophic discussion turns to the immortality of the soul, Cebes asks Socrates to imagine that he must persuade Cebes's inner child not to fear death. Socrates replies that his friends must "sing charms to him every day until you charm away his fear" (77e). Cebes replies that after the death of Socrates he and the others will be at a loss as to who can sing such charms for them. Socrates replies that they must make it their lives' work to find another charmer but cautions that they may find that they were the charmers all along. This comment raises the possibility that Socrates is his own charmer, too, just as he thinks his friends may someday be. The image of an "inner child" who needs charming also recalls how Socrates awoke from a dream and began to write poetry to alleviate his worry that he had not pursued music in the prescribed way. Repeatedly in the *Phaedo*, Socrates turns to charm and rhapsody in addition to rational *logos*.

A comparison with an important scene from *Republic I*, in which Cephalus describes how the old become genuinely fearful of stories about Hades that they had dismissed as youths, may shed light on Socrates' psychic state. Socrates' experience as he approaches death comports with the account that Cephalus gives, except that Cephalus finds comfort in wealth and the peace of mind having the means to pay his debts brings him. Interesting, too, is what prompts the discussion of the afterlife in the *Republic*. Having been persuaded to join the gathering at Cephalus's home, Socrates is welcomed by the old man and tells him that he enjoys speaking with older men because they possess firsthand experience of the journey of old age. Although Cephalus, not Socrates, directs their conversation toward the afterlife, there remains a strong

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precedes ὑποβλέψας at 117b and suggests that Socrates' bull-like glance reveals latent anger at the circumstances of his death (pp. 48-49).

resonance between this passage and the *Phaedo* 61d-e. From the *Republic* to the *Phaedo*, Socrates' role is reversed: he is now the old man who will tell stories about the journey to Hades, on which he is about to depart, to his younger companions. In both texts, the process of engaging in a discourse is both instructive and therapeutic; by learning from the old or instructing the young, Socrates finds a degree of reassurance in conversation and storytelling. In both texts, when Socrates proposes these topics of conversation, it provides a genuine opportunity to explore a very human concern. He will expand the parameters of the conversation to abstract *logos* in the course of the discussion, but each text is also rooted in a real engagement about shared aspects of the human experience. We may, in fact, see Socrates enact the way in which an old man's concern becomes more serious than in his younger days: in the *Republic*, Socrates is younger and adopts a jocular tone in his interaction with Cephalus. In the *Phaedo*, however, as Socrates embarks upon his final hours of life, the question of what happens after death becomes a serious concern.

Socrates finally concludes the day's philosophic discourse by telling his friends the promised myth about the soul's journey after death. Simmias comments (110b):

ἀλλὰ μὴν, ἔφη ὁ Σιμμίας, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἡμεῖς γε τούτου τοῦ μύθου ἠδέως ἂν ἀκούσαιμεν.

"But really, Socrates," Simmias said, "we should happily listen to this story."

Critically Simmias mentions the pleasure (ἠδέως) with which he and the others will listen to the story. The language here recalls *Phaedo's* comment in the dramatic frame that he takes pleasure in talking or listening about Socrates. The passage also reinforces the paternal image of Socrates: at 77e he was a charmer who reassured his friends' inner children, and now he tells them a myth that they receive with pleasure, perhaps like enraptured children. The connection of Socrates's fatherly demeanor to his friends'

pleasure in hearing and talking about him displaces the grief they felt at his death and at the same time encourages his friends to re-enact and re-examine the philosophic discussion.

### 5. Socrates must make a defense: *Apology* and *Crito* revisited (63a-69e)

It is just after Socrates suggests dialectic and mythologizing as the day's topics of conversation that Plato revisits the motif of Socrates defending himself as if on trial one final time.<sup>31</sup> Simmias turns the challenge put forth in general terms by Cebes, that the philosopher rather than a foolish person should resent dying, into a personal indictment of Socrates. The charge leveled by Simmias against which Socrates must defend himself is that is enduring the death sentence *too lightly* and therefore not showing sufficient dedication or concern for his friends. The *Crito* indicates that Simmias and Cebes came to Athens specifically for the purpose of facilitating Socrates' escape; Crito comes alone to the prison but names the two Thebans among his allies and co-conspirators. By the time staged in the *Phaedo*, the friends have accepted *that* Socrates will die but object to *how* he bears the penalty lightly (οὕτω ῥαδίως φέρεις, 63a). What Socrates must defend is the apparent indifference with which he faces death:

καὶ ὁ Σιμμίας, ἀλλὰ μὴν, ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατες, νῦν γέ μοι δοκεῖ τι καὶ αὐτῷ λέγειν Κέβης: τί γὰρ ἂν βουλόμενοι ἄνδρες σοφοὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς δεσπότης ἀμείνους αὐτῶν φεύγοιεν καὶ ῥαδίως ἀπαλλάττοιεν αὐτῶν; καὶ μοι δοκεῖ Κέβης εἰς σὲ τείνειν τὸν λόγον, ὅτι οὕτω ῥαδίως φέρεις

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<sup>31</sup> He had previously done so abstractly in the *Theaetetus*, where he does not defend himself explicitly but imagines how a philosopher would do poorly in a court of law; the *Apology* gives Plato's dramatization of Socrates' defense at the actual trial; and in the *Crito* Socrates puts himself on trial by invoking the voice of the Laws to examine his (or his friends', at least) plan to flee Athens. Each instance of a trial requires Socrates to address a different set of charges. The *Theaetetus* and *Apology* both examine Socrates' (or philosophy's) aim and method, with the result that the non-initiate *dêmos* is incapable of comprehending philosophy and the philosopher incapable of promulgating his mission within the parameters of forensic discourse. The *Crito* then tests whether Socrates is obligated to accept the penalty imposed by the jurors even if he and the Laws concede that the specific verdict was wrong. The final stage of this examination of Socrates now occurs in the *Phaedo*.

καὶ ἡμᾶς ἀπολείπων καὶ ἄρχοντας ἀγαθούς, ὡς αὐτὸς ὁμολογεῖς,  
θεούς. (63a)

Said Simmias: “But actually, Socrates, I think myself that Cebes has a point now. Why should truly wise men want to avoid the service of masters better than themselves, and leave them easily? And I think Cebes is aiming his argument at you, because you are bearing leaving us so lightly, and leaving those good masters, as you say yourself, the gods.” (tr. Grube)

Simmias levels a charge against Socrates here that is common in literary accounts of death.<sup>32</sup> Although the issue at hand had been whether someone should do violence to himself, Simmias reorients the question by making it personal rather than general.<sup>33</sup> Phaedo had previously cited Socrates’ apparent happiness before his death to explain not feeling pity for Socrates (58e), but even then Phaedo still felt sorrow at being deprived of his friend. Simmias may share this experience: Socrates’ apparent lack of distress at dying precludes feeling pity but perhaps reedifies the sorrow of such a loss. Socrates seems to recognize the accusation’s validity in his reply:

δίκαια, ἔφη, λέγετε: οἶμαι γὰρ ὑμᾶς λέγειν ὅτι χρή με πρὸς ταῦτα  
ἀπολογήσασθαι ὡσπερ ἐν δικαστηρίῳ. (63b)

You are both justified in what you say, and I think you mean that I must make a defense against this, as if I were in court. (tr. Grube)

While Socrates had generalized that the philosopher will be most willing to die, by addressing his friends in the second person plural (οἶμαι γὰρ ὑμᾶς λέγειν), Socrates

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<sup>32</sup> I have in mind here the tragic motif whereby dependents of the deceased manifest anger at the decedent’s recklessness and abandonment in addition to, or in place of, grief. Perkell (2008) provides an incisive discussion of a *locus classicus* of this trope, Andromache in *Il.* 7 and 24. Before Hector dies, she pleads with him that his pursuit of *kleos* in war is tantamount to abandoning his wife and son. She echoes this sentiment in her funerary lament in bk. 24. Similarly in *Ajax*, Tecmessa pleads that by choosing suicide Ajax will abandon her and condemn their young son to a life of ignominy.

<sup>33</sup> The accusation of leaving the gods derives from the earlier argument against suicide that framed human life as a kind of imprisonment or servitude imposed by the gods. Socrates had argued that the philosopher would gladly leave this condition whenever the gods ordered it. Cebes had inverted this argument by claiming that, since a philosopher is wise, he would recognize the happy position he enjoys as the servant of a superior master, i.e. the gods, and would therefore resent death, which would mean separation from his masters. Socrates will in turn defeat Cebes’ objection concerning escape from the gods by placing them in the afterlife to which the philosopher will depart. The question of abandoning his friends, however, goes unanswered.

latches onto the personal charge Simmias had just leveled and recognizes that his friends want him to defend his own behavior in relation to them. The discussion that follows does not rise to the eristic level of Socrates' defense in the *Apology*, but the justification Socrates is about to give for his carefree approach to death is clearly situated in juxtaposition with the *Apology*. Socrates will speak once again as if he is before the court (ἐν δικαστηρίῳ) and will try to speak more persuasively now than he did before his jurors (πειραθῶ πιθανώτερον πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἀπολογήσασθαι ἢ πρὸς τοὺς δικαστάς, 63b).

Socrates begins his defense by restating what he takes the accusation to be:

ἐγὼ γάρ, ἔφη, ὦ Σιμμία τε καὶ Κέβης, εἰ μὲν μὴ ᾧμην ἥξειν πρῶτον μὲν παρὰ θεοὺς ἄλλους σοφοὺς τε καὶ ἀγαθοὺς, ἔπειτα καὶ παρ' ἀνθρώπους τετελευτηκότας ἀμείνους τῶν ἐνθάδε, ἠδίκουν ἂν οὐκ ἀγανακτῶν τῷ θανάτῳ... (63b)

Simmias and Cebes, if I did not believe that I would arrive first among other wise and good gods, and also among dead men better than those here, I would do wrong by not resenting death.

In his formulation, Socrates recasts Simmias's charge from "taking death lightly" (οὕτω ῥαδίως φέρεις) to "resenting" (ἀγανακτῶν) death. The stronger verb ἀγανακτέω that Socrates uses here is a recurrence of an instance of the verb in the *Apology*:

τὸ μὲν μὴ ἀγανακτεῖν, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, ἐπὶ τούτῳ τῷ γεγονότι, ὅτι μου κατεψηφίσασθε, ἄλλα τέ μοι πολλὰ συμβάλλεται, καὶ οὐκ ἀνέλπιστόν μοι γέγονεν τὸ γεγονὸς τοῦτο, ἀλλὰ πολὺ μᾶλλον θαυμάζω ἐκατέρων τῶν ψήφων τὸν γεγονότα ἀριθμόν. (*Apol.* 35e-36a)

The fact is, gentlemen, that I am not angry at what happened – that you convicted me – for many reasons, among them that what did happen was not surprising to me. Rather I am quite amazed at the number of votes cast on each side.

The verb ἀγανακτέω appears in several critical passages in Plato's dramatization of Socrates' trial and death. It recurs twelve times in the *Phaedo*: ten times from 62d-69e during the discussion of death and the hope of an afterlife and twice in the closing

narrative section as Socrates prepares to consume the poison and provokes the grief of his friends. The usage cited above from the *Apology* is one of three occurrences and is the only of the three where Socrates is the active agent.<sup>34</sup> He explains here that he is *not* angry because the outcome was not unexpected (οὐκ ἀνέλπιστόν); in fact, he is surprised by how close the vote for conviction was. There are other reasons, too, he says, why he is not angry but does not explicate what these are. The proceeding passages, however, suggest to me that he relies on the same justification in the *Apology* to account for his not being angry as he will now do in the *Phaedo*: his expectation of a positive afterlife (εἰ μὲν μὴ ᾧμην ἦξειν πρῶτον μὲν παρὰ θεοῦς ἄλλους σοφούς τε καὶ ἀγαθούς, ἔπειτα καὶ παρ' ἀνθρώπους τετελευτηκότας ἀμείνους τῶν ἐνθάδε, *Phd.* 63b). The passages together suggest a connection between the emotions of anger and hope or expectation.<sup>35</sup> Socrates first says that he believes he will come to dwell in the afterlife (ᾧμην ἦξειν), but in the following clause uses the verb to hope (ἐλπίζω) and then to be confident (θαρρεῖν) to qualify his expectation of an afterlife. Rather than framing his “defense” as a rational justification of his beliefs, Socrates employs words that illustrate a connection between a claim to knowledge and a corresponding psychic state. If Socrates did not have confidence in the afterlife, then it would be right for him

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<sup>34</sup> The other two occurrences are at 34b: some jurors may resent Socrates’ style of speech and lack of usual courtroom trappings; and at 39d: the jurors who voted to condemn Socrates will resent his philosophic successors even more than they do Socrates himself. It should be noted that even in the cited example, though I and others write “I am not angry” in translation, Socrates actually uses an impersonal articular infinitive (τὸ μὲν μὴ ἀγανακτεῖν). The use of this construction may indicate a case of Socrates distancing himself from his internal emotional experience (or lack thereof).

<sup>35</sup> After the verb ᾧμην (*I believe*), Socrates uses a verbal and adjectival form of ἐλπίζω (*I hope*) in the clauses that immediately follow. At 63e, Socrates uses the verb θαρρεῖν (*to feel confident*), again about the probability of a good afterlife awaiting a dying philosopher. The terms ἐλπίζω and θαρρεῖν appear consistently in the *Phaedo* and its prequel dialogues in connection with the expectation of life after death; here my emphasis is on its contrast with ἀγανακτέω and the psychic implications of the distinction.

to feel upset at his death. Both verbs, ἐλπίζειν and θαρραεῖν, indicate an emotional state that is tied to or results from a particular belief about the future.<sup>36</sup>

It is worth asking how confident Socrates really is in his belief that a positive afterlife awaits him. Even in defending his present disposition toward death, he qualifies or limits his claim to certainty:

νῦν δὲ εὖ ἴστε ὅτι παρ' ἀνδρας τε ἐλπίζω ἀφίξασθαι ἀγαθούς—καὶ τοῦτο μὲν οὐκ ἂν πάνυ δισχυρισαίμην—ὅτι μέντοι παρὰ θεοὺς δεσπότης πάνυ ἀγαθούς ἤξειν, εὖ ἴστε ὅτι εἴπερ τι ἄλλο τῶν τοιούτων δισχυρισαίμην ἂν καὶ τοῦτο. (63b-c)

Now be assured that I expect to join good men, but even if I were not altogether certain about this, be assured if I am certain of anything in these matters, it is that I will join with the gods, who are completely good masters.

The final stage of his defense is that he has been eager throughout his whole life to attain wisdom and practice philosophy in the sincere belief that it is the right way to live. He demonstrates through rational argumentation why that is the case, but his final defense is not that he has reached the correct conclusion about the best way to live, but that he has eagerly lived the best life. His emphasis on his eagerness responds to the claim that he dies too carelessly; according to the argument, he does not die easily, but sees death as the culmination of having lived with zeal and eagerness to attain virtue, itself a mastery and redirection of the emotions. The emotions are central to his philosophic life: the eagerness reinforces his desire to pursue the philosophic life, and enacting virtue as a philosopher requires experiencing emotions in some way so that it is possible to master them in the right way.<sup>37</sup> The eagerness for philosophy that Socrates

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<sup>36</sup> Thucydides emphasizes the wishful nature of ἐλπίς (hope) as a central theme of the Melian Dialogue (V.84-116). The Melians say that they will rely on a hope in the justice of the gods to protect them in the confrontation with Athens while the Athenians, correctly as it turns out, reply that hope is futile if not accompanied by strength and resources.

<sup>37</sup> As Jaggar (1989) astutely observes, the skill of the *Phaedrus's* charioteer would be worthless without its horses.



points to here also recalls his use of the term φιλολογία in the *Theaetetus* (146a). His devotion to inquiry and its attendant emotions are integral to who Socrates is and is the source of the pleasure and admiration that his friends all feel for him.

Socrates employs two terms throughout his defense here that suggest his emotional state as he faces death: resentment (ἀγανακτέω) and good hope (ἐλπίζω and ἐλπίς). In his discourse, he frames these terms as opposite responses to death. The majority resent death because they are deeply attached to their corporeal lives, but for Socrates the belief that his soul, not his body, contains his permanent identity engenders good hope that a new life awaits his soul after his bodily death. An interesting feature of his discussion is how he frames resentment. Socrates begins with the premise that people do resent death and then constructs an argument that such feelings ought to be avoided. Although he speaks in generic terms on resentment, the fact that he turns to vivid, first-person discourse when he discusses good hope suggests that he also felt some degree of resentment toward death. In fact his good hope for the afterlife rests on the substitution of his present goods with preferable ones in the afterlife. But even to think that new friends or unmediated contact with the Forms awaits him in the afterlife requires an acknowledgement of the goods that he presently enjoys in life: his friends, his wife, his children, and so forth. Whatever new and better goods await him in the afterlife, death necessarily entails being deprived of his present goods.

*Republic* I again provides a useful point of comparison. When Socrates meets Cephalus, he proposes a topic of discussion with Cephalus that closely resembles his own recommendation to tell stories in the *Phaedo*. Socrates finds the chance to speak with “the very old” a good opportunity to inquire about the journey that he, too, will someday make as he approaches “the threshold of old age” (328d-e). The journey through life that Socrates asks Cephalus about is reminiscent of his own anticipated

journey into the afterlife in *Phaedo* (61d). As Cephalus begins describing his experience of old age, their conversation turns to the afterlife. After Socrates asks what Cephalus considers to be the greatest benefit of being wealthy, Cephalus replies that his wealth provides him the means to live honestly and pay all his debts, both to people and the gods. This, in turn, comforts the fear that men in their old age begin to experience as they recall stories about Hades and the punishments on offer there – stories that, as a younger man, Cephalus had not taken seriously (330d-331b). Cephalus then recites an axiomatic poem by Pindar:

“γλυκεῖά οἱ καρδίαν  
ἀτάλλοισα γηροτρόφος συναορεῖ  
ἐλπίς ἃ μάλιστα θνατῶν πολύστροφον  
γνώμαν κυβερνᾷ.”<sup>38</sup>

Sweet hope is in his heart,  
Nurse and companion to his age.  
Hope, captain of the ever-twisting  
Minds of mortal men (tr. Grube).

Cephalus believes that it is a near universal response to old age that people begin to recall stories about Hades and reflect upon them with genuine fear. They may even awaken from their sleep, like children having nightmares. If upon reflection, however, they find that they have led just lives, then “sweet good hope (ἡδεῖα ἐλπίς ἀεὶ πάρεστι καὶ ἀγαθὴ) nurses them and assuages their fears (331a). Many elements that Cephalus mentions here seem to capture the experience Socrates describes in the *Phaedo*. Socrates has begun to receive messages in his sleep that cause him to doubt his life’s work and lead him to take up a new musical form for fear that he will owe something to the gods. Socrates also proposes telling stories about the afterlife, perhaps to reaffirm his confidence that death has good things in store for him, not fearsome punishments as so

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<sup>38</sup> Pindar, *Fr.* 214 (Snell).

many myths describe. Children having nightmares also resembles Socrates' image of inner children who require soothing. Socrates' last speech in the *Phaedo* before the poison is administered is a gripping account of the journey that Socrates' soul will soon make to the afterlife. Storytelling of this sort serves as a charm for the frightened inner children and redoubles the belief that the fruits of a philosophic life will be reaped in the afterlife. Although Socrates does seem to overcome the anxieties about death that Cephalus introduces in the *Republic*, does humanizes him and allows him to share the universal foreboding and fear that the *Republic* passage describes. Without feeling the same emotions that everyone else does at that time of life, Socrates would be a flat, dimensionless caricature and could not believably inspire the love and devotion that all his friends have toward him in the dialogues. Finally, even in deploying his strategies to model a philosophic approach toward death, Socrates uses the tentative language of "good hope" in the afterlife that Cephalus had. As the opposite of fear, good hope must entail an emotional dimension, even if Socrates' hope rests on a foundation of solid argumentation.<sup>39</sup> Throughout his mock defense speech, Socrates points to this "good hope" in a rewarding afterlife to justify his apparent ease with dying.

In his defense speech, Socrates justifies a sort of life that he has doubtless pursued but could not fully realize; short of becoming a hermetic ascetic, no one could.<sup>40</sup> What Socrates emphasizes in this section is but one dimension of his manifestly complex personality. Insofar as Socrates has spent his life in a deliberate effort to

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<sup>39</sup> Gravlee (2020, p. 9) suggests that the model of hope in the *Phaedo* is more philosophical than hope generically because it rests upon firm arguments that provide a reasonable degree of certainty. Even so, what is hoped for cannot be claimed as secure knowledge. Hope can thus provide both epistemic and emotional comfort.

<sup>40</sup> We should compare the vision of a philosophic life that Socrates presents in his defense in the *Phaedo* with the vision of philosophy in the Digression of the *Theaetetus*, too. In both cases, Socrates paints a vivid portrait of an idealized philosophic lifestyle that his words and actions elsewhere in the same dialogues indicate he himself did not, and in many ways did not attempt to, pursue.

cultivate pure wisdom and purge the phenomenological influences of the body, he has indeed practiced for death, by which he means an existence as a disembodied soul capable of pure reason. What the dramatic action of the *Phaedo* reminds us, however, and what Plato has in fact shown us throughout his corpus, is that Socrates has not spent his life exclusively in the pursuit of a disembodied existence. Rather, he has a wife and children, friends, and a devotion to his city, all of which provide close emotional attachments to the human experience. We should keep in mind the performative aspect of Socrates' speech in his imagined trial here: in his effort to convince his friends that his apparently cavalier attitude toward death is the right one to take, he omits any evidence that might undercut his line of reasoning. Ultimately his defense is that he has tried to the greatest extent to live the type of philosophic life that he envisions in the passage (69a). He does not claim to have adhered to every aspect of the contemplative life; in fact, his own words and actions within the text indicate the many human attachments that remain significant to him. An advantage of my assessment here is that it seems to capture his friends' sentiments. Recall in the opening frame that Phaedo admired Socrates not because he believed that Socrates had achieved the ideal philosophic life that is endorsed in this portion of the text, but because Socrates lived such a life to the greatest extent anyone could. Socrates seemed happy and would fare well in the afterlife if anyone ever has. Even after Socrates' stirring defense of the philosophic life and his efforts to live it, Phaedo allows for some doubt in his otherwise idealizing account of Socrates' deathday. Despite his admiration, Phaedo's language concentrates on Socrates' humanity (άνηρ) and reveals a shade of uncertainty about the ultimate fate of Socrates' soul (μηδ' εἰς Αἰδου ἰόντα ἄνευ θείας μοίρας ἰέναι... εἴπερ τις πώποτε καὶ ἄλλος). After witnessing Socrates' last day, his human character remains what Phaedo and the others most strongly remember about him.

## 6. Laughter and comic allusions in the *Phaedo*

The many instances of laughter and comedy that punctuate the text add another dimension of emotional closeness. Socrates laughs and makes jokes, and his friends laugh despite the sense of loss that dominates the day. In this section, I analyze a few instances of laughter, the emotional and dramatic context in which it occurs, and the overall effect these elements have on Plato's composition. Allusions to comic poetry reveal the lasting resentment and indignation of Socrates and his circle of philosophic friends toward hostile comic depictions. At the same time, laughter serves to lighten the dramatic tension of the *Phaedo* and remind its readers that engaging in philosophic discourse with Socrates was a pleasurable experience. Laughter alleviates grief and serves a therapeutic role for Socrates and his friends.

In the *Apology*, Socrates names Aristophanes as the most detrimental of his "old accusers" (*Apol.* 18d, 19c). Socrates' appearances as an object of ridicule in comedy recur throughout the dialogues relating his trial. At 3c-e of the *Euthyphro*, Socrates draws a contrast between public ridicule and public hatred. Euthyphro expresses dismay that his alleged expertise in divination only prompts laughter among the Athenians (3c), to which Socrates replies that being laughed at "does not matter" (3d) and is "nothing unpleasant" (3e). If, as proves to be the case, the jurors are serious about prosecuting Socrates, however, then they pose a real danger. As we move on to the *Phaedo*, we find two allusions to comic poetry like the *Clouds* in the early stages of the dialogue.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> As a caveat to my analysis of the relationship between Plato's text and the *Clouds*, recall that Socrates appeared as a character in several comic performances in the 420s and 410s BC. However, since the *Clouds* is the only extant play, and the text that comes down to us is a revision that Aristophanes intended to circulate in written form, and Plato's Socrates makes an explicit reference to the *Clouds* at *Apol.* 19c, it is plausible to suppose that the *Clouds* held the most influence over Plato's thinking and serves as a literary foil in those Platonic texts that chronicle Socrates' trial and death, i.e. the tragic consequence of portrayals like those in the *Clouds*.

Near the beginning of Socrates' mock defense, Simmias laughs (καὶ ὁ Σιμμίας γελάσας, 64a) although he had not been in a "laughing mood" or inclined to laughter ("νή τὸν Δία, ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατες, οὐ πάνυ γέ με νυνδὴ γελασεῖοντα ἐποίησας γελάσαι", 64b).<sup>42</sup> Forms of the verb γελάω (to laugh) recur three times in this sentence at 64a-b, a repetition that indicates the importance of laughter in the text. Simmias' comment in turn demonstrates the complex mixture of emotions that Phaedo had mentioned in his introductory frame. The fact that Simmias further says that Socrates made him laugh indicates the influence that Socrates has on his friends' emotions and an explicit awareness of them. Simmias proceeds to explain why Socrates' comment had provoked laughter:

οἶμαι γὰρ ἂν τοὺς πολλοὺς αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἀκούσαντας δοκεῖν εὖ πάνυ εἰρησθαι εἰς τοὺς φιλοσοφούντας—καὶ συμφάναι ἂν τοὺς μὲν παρ' ἡμῖν ἀνθρώπους καὶ πάνυ—ὅτι τῶ ὄντι οἱ φιλοσοφούντες θανατῶσι, καὶ σφᾶς γε οὐ λελήθασιν ὅτι ἄξιοί εἰσιν τοῦτο πάσχειν. (64a-b)

For I think the majority on hearing this would think it describes philosophers well, and the people back at home [i.e. in Thebes] would agree completely that philosophers desire death, and the majority would say they deserve to suffer it besides.

Simmias captures two distinct but related elements of public sentiment toward philosophy. His first comment, that most people would agree that philosophers desire death, recalls the comic portrayal of Socrates and his students in the *Clouds*; the fact that Simmias specifies that the majority in his home city of Thebes hold this view indicates that the sentiment was not limited to depictions on the Athenian stage. The comic trope that Simmias recalls here, that philosophers live with their heads in the clouds, or pressed to the earth, and in every other way detached from the business of a normal

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<sup>42</sup> Grube translates the quoted line: "By Zeus, Socrates, you made me laugh, though I was in no laughing mood just now" (in Cooper 1997, p. 55).

citizen, corresponds to the harmless laughter that Socrates mentioned to Euthyphro.<sup>43</sup> The second sentiment, that philosophers deserve to die (ἄξιοί εἰσιν τοῦτο πάσχειν), is the dangerous permutation of a fundamental fear and misunderstanding of philosophic activity that provoked Socrates' death sentence. The final line of his comment segues into the danger such comic portrayals might foment, which is precisely how Socrates says the pervasive slanders against him had originated in Athens (*Apol.* 18d, 19c).

Socrates had already done what he could at the trial to convince the jurors that the view Simmias attributes to the majority was incorrect. In the *Phaedo*, however, his purpose is to instruct his friends on the true aims of philosophy, which they, too, have misunderstood, and which are ironically embedded in the otherwise misguided view of the majority. Without real understanding of what they mean, the majority nonetheless speak something of the truth when they characterize philosophers as they do:

καὶ ἀληθῆ γ' ἂν λέγοιεν, ὦ Σιμμία, πλήν γε τοῦ σφᾶς μὴ λεληθέναι.  
λέληθεν γὰρ αὐτοὺς ἢ τε θανατῶσι καὶ ἢ ἄξιοί εἰσιν θανάτου καὶ οἴου  
θανάτου οἱ ὡς ἀληθῶς φιλόσοφοι. (64b)

And they would speak the truth, Simmias, except that they are unaware what they are really saying. For they are unaware how philosophers really are nearly dead or why they deserve death or the sort of death it is they deserve.

Although Socrates will not attempt to persuade the majority as he was forced to do in his trial, he latches on to Simmias' comment on comic portrayals of philosophers to identify three questions (ἢ τε θανατῶσι καὶ ἢ ἄξιοί εἰσιν θανάτου καὶ οἴου θανάτου οἱ ὡς ἀληθῶς φιλόσοφοι) that he will answer for his intimate, philosophic circle.

The second allusion to comic depictions of philosophers appears after Socrates has completed his defense and transitions to a discussion of whether the soul is in fact

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<sup>43</sup> *Theaetetus* 174a recounts the story that Thales fell into a well because he was so engrossed in looking at the sky that he failed to watch his step. Dover (1968, p. xxxvi) argues that this well-known anecdote also influenced Aristophanes' caricature of natural philosophers in *Clouds*.

immortal. Cebes asks to hear Socrates' opinion on the topic, and before Socrates begins the discussion he comments:<sup>44</sup>

οὐκουν γ' ἂν οἶμαι, ἦ δ' ὅς ὁ Σωκράτης, εἰπεῖν τινα νῦν ἀκούσαντα,  
οὐδ' εἰ κωμωδοποιὸς εἴη, ὡς ἀδολεσχῶ καὶ οὐ περὶ προσηκόντων τοὺς  
λόγους ποιούμαι. (70b-c)

Well I should think, Socrates said, that no one who heard me now, not even a comic poet, would say that I am prattling on or talking about things that don't concern me.

Once again, Socrates uses language reminiscent of the *Apology* and his response to slanders leveled against him in comedy. Early in the *Apology*, Socrates says:

τοιαύτη τίς ἐστίν: ταῦτα γὰρ ἐωρᾶτε καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν τῇ Ἀριστοφάνους  
κωμῳδία, Σωκράτη τινὰ ἐκεῖ περιφερόμενον, φάσκοντά τε ἀεροβατεῖν  
καὶ ἄλλην πολλὴν φλυαρίαν φλυαροῦντα, ὧν ἐγὼ οὐδὲν οὔτε μέγα  
οὔτε μικρὸν πέρι ἐπαῖω. (*Apol.* 19c)

It is something like this. For you have seen these things yourselves in Aristophanes' comedy: some Socrates being carried about there, claiming to walk on air, and spattering a lot of other nonsense, about which I don't know the first or last thing.

Plato has Socrates use a different verb for "talking nonsense" in each text: φλυαρέω in the *Apology* and ἀδολεσχέω in the *Phaedo*. Forms of both of these verbs appear in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, however, so both passages in Plato are in conversation with comedy, and in particular the *Clouds*, as a source of false comic depictions of Socratic activity. First φλυαρέω from the *Apology* appears as a noun in a line spoken by Socrates:

Σω. αὐταὶ γὰρ τοὶ μόναι εἰσὶ θεαί, τᾶλλα δὲ πάντ' ἐστὶ φλύαρος. 365

For these alone are goddesses; all the others are nonsense.

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<sup>44</sup> Konstan (2010b), p. 75, points to this passage as an explicit reference to the negative attention Socrates received for his philosophic views: In the *Phaedo*, Plato refers once more to the attacks on him levelled by comic poets, in connection with his attempt to prove that the soul survives the body. Socrates says at 70c: "I do not think that anyone who hears me now – even if he should be a comic poet – will claim that I am babbling and making speeches about irrelevant matters."



Socrates had just brought the chorus of clouds on stage and introduced them to Strepsiades. He then claims that the clouds alone are divinities and that all others are φλύαρος. Strepsiades is rightly incredulous and asks whether Zeus is a god (366). Aristophanes' Socrates then denies that Zeus exists at all (ποῖος Ζεύς; οὐ μὴ ληρήσεις: οὐδ' ἔστι Ζεύς, 367) and explains that all phenomena attributed to Zeus are in fact produced by the divine clouds (369-407). The phrase ἄλλην πολλὴν φλυαρίαν φλυαροῦντα in the *Apology* then does not simply mean "talking a lot of other nonsense," but carries over the connotation of making atheistic claims from Aristophanes.

Morphological derivatives of the verb ἀδολεσχεῖω, which Socrates uses here in the *Phaedo*, appear twice in a single passage at the end of the *Clouds*:

Στ. οἴμοι παρανοίας: ὡς ἐμαινόμεν ἄρα, ὄτ' ἐξέβαλλον τοὺς θεοὺς διὰ Σωκράτη.	1476
ἀλλ' ὦ φίλ' Ἑρμῆ μηδαμῶς θύμαινέ μοι μηδέ μ' ἐπιτρίψης, ἀλλὰ συγγνώμην ἔχε ἐμοῦ παρανοήσαντος ἀδολεσχία:	1480
καί μοι γενοῦ ξύμβουλος, εἴτ' αὐτοὺς γραφήν διωκάθω γραψάμενος εἶθ' ὅ τι σοι δοκεῖ. ὀρθῶς παραινεῖς οὐκ ἔων δικορραφεῖν, ἀλλ' ὡς τάχιστ' ἐμπιμπράναι τὴν οἰκίαν τῶν ἀδολεσχῶν.	1485

Oh, I must have been completely out of my mind,  
to think I rejected the gods because Socrates told me to.  
Unbelievable! What was I thinking? Dear, dear Hermes,  
take pity on me, please be kind, don't destroy me now.  
I know I behaved like a raving maniac, but it was all because of them  
and their philosophical drivel. I need you now, help me, tell me  
what can I do to redeem myself? Should I file a lawsuit against them?  
What? What can I do?  
Yes, that's it, that's exactly right,  
I'm not going to fiddle around with lawsuits, no, I'll burn  
those babbling bastards out, that's what I'll do! Xanthias! Xanthias!  
Come here at once and bring the ladder and an axe! (tr. Meineck)

Strepsiades, by now having recognized Socrates as a blasphemous instructor, asks Hermes for pardon (ἀλλὰ συγγνώμην ἔχε).<sup>45</sup> After all, he claims, he had been driven out of his right mind by corruptive discourse (παρανοήσαντος ἀδολεσχία). With his wits and orthodox beliefs in the gods restored, Strepsiades now encourages the play's destructive resolution: "as quick as you can, burn the clever-talkers' house!" (ἀλλ' ὡς τάχιστ' ἐμπιπράναι τὴν οἰκίαν τῶν ἀδολεσχῶν, 1484-5). Once again, the verb that Plato chooses had been imbued with a specific connotation of Socratic wrongdoing by Aristophanes. With Aristophanes' use of the word in mind, Socrates' use of the verb ἀδολεσχῶ at *Phaedo* 70b again carries a stronger connotation: "not even a comic poet could accuse me now of speaking corruptively" is the true force of Socrates' statement.<sup>46</sup>

The allusions to Aristophanes at this juncture of the *Phaedo* help to shape the tone and raise the stakes of the discussion. Although Simmias found humor in Socrates' jesting allusions to the comic persona that Aristophanes and other comedians had crafted for him, the connotations of the allusive words that Socrates includes, both here and earlier in the *Apology*, capture a sense of anger and indignation at how he has been misunderstood. Although Socrates comments in the *Euthyphro* that being laughed at is not particularly distressing, the context in which he deploys the words of Aristophanes in the *Apology* and *Phaedo* suggest that Socrates in these texts also harbors a submerged resentment, which more closely comports with the anecdote of the historical Socrates'

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<sup>45</sup> The term συγγνώμη that Strepsiades uses in this passage is significant for his abdication of culpability. While the term is sometimes translated as "forgiveness," Konstan (2010a, pp. 29-31) notes that the term is generally used of involuntary acts and therefore does not involve anything to forgive. Since Strepsiades' defense here is that he was corrupted by the destructive instruction of Socrates, the blame should be placed upon Socrates while Strepsiades deserves pardon for his involuntary actions.

<sup>46</sup> Kidd (2014, pp. 9-10) astutely notes that Socrates' characterization of Aristophanic parody as "nonsense" glosses over the fact that such "nonsense" proved "substantial and causal to the highest degree" in effecting Socrates' condemnation. My interpretation suggests that Socrates shows an awareness of the destructive power of comic parody and the full social implications of "speaking nonsense," which in this case means "sharing non-conforming or destructive ideas."

reaction to the original staging of the *Clouds* in 423 BC.<sup>47</sup> That Socrates incorporates Aristophanic terms with charged, anti-philosophical connotations into his own words at key junctures in the Platonic texts suggests that he has deeply internalized the language of the slanders against him. Plato makes use of the comic allusions in order both to humanize Socrates and provide him one final opportunity to correct the erroneous comic depictions of his philosophic activity in front of an audience who are genuinely receptive. Indeed, if Socrates does not feel resentment about the fact that he is about to die, as he maintains in his mock defense (63b), the way in which Plato has him incorporate allusions to comedy suggests that Socrates had at least internalized the negative views perpetuated about him. It is perhaps too strong to read the comic allusions as resentment, but Socrates' facility in deploying them is indicative of an intense interest in the popular misconceptions that led to his demise. Even if the view of the majority did not influence him, Socrates was still deeply aware and affected by it.

Laughter, in contrast to the comic allusions that may reveal latent resentment, punctuates the conversation in the *Phaedo* as an enactment of the pleasure that Phaedo primed his listeners to find in his account. Laughter may seem out of place in a dialogue that leads toward the inevitable and tragic death of its protagonist, but laughter and tears often occur simultaneously in Greek literature; Seaford writes that these expressions "embody release of tension."<sup>48</sup> Grief is often accompanied by laughter that can be paradoxically pleasant when one is confronted with pain. Seaford points to *Iliad* VI, where he writes that Andromache's anticipatory grief for Hector is accompanied by

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<sup>47</sup> The anecdote is found in Aelian (*VH* ii.13) and has commonly been misconstrued to say that Socrates was amused by the production. In fact, however, Aelian writes that Socrates demonstrated great contempt for comedy and the Athenian audience: "... in order to put an end to the foreigners' ignorance, he stood up and remained standing in full view throughout the play as the actors performed it. So great was Socrates' contempt for comedy and the Athenians" (tr. Wilson).

<sup>48</sup> Seaford (2017), p. 27.

laughter that “expresses the joyful solidarity of the family destroyed by the death.”<sup>49</sup> Moments of laughter in the *Phaedo* similarly provide release from the intellectual tension at key moments and serve as a reminder that Socratic inquiry is pleasurable and being with Socrates provides joyful comfort. I present two illustrative passages below.

At 84c-85b, a dramatic interlude occurs after Socrates has made a set of arguments for the immortality of the soul. Simmias and Cebes are reluctant to voice their objections because they fear upsetting Socrates, especially at this critical time in his life, to which Socrates responds by laughing quietly (84d). Socrates then introduces the image of the swan and explains that he is speaking prophetically and does not regard his present situation as a misfortune. Socrates thereby reassures his friends that he is receptive to their objections and underscores that it is especially critical to him now that he understand the matters at hand as clearly as possible. Simmias agrees that they must see the argument through to the best of their abilities and then state his concerns, in reply to which Socrates looks at his friends and smiles in a familiar manner (διαβλέψας οὖν ὁ Σωκράτης, ὥσπερ τὰ πολλὰ εἰώθει, καὶ μειδιάσας, ..., 86d). The recurrence of Socrates’ familiar glance here underscores its significance earlier in the text (62e). In both cases, this subtle gesture calms and reassures his friends who are otherwise reluctant to press what they perceive as a potentially distressing line of inquiry.<sup>50</sup> Socrates’ mannerisms have such an effect on his friends in part because the gestures and cues are familiar. *Phaedo*’s audience in turn better understands what sort of person

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<sup>49</sup> Seaford (2017), p. 29.

<sup>50</sup> Liebert (2020, p. 460) notes that, while Socrates remains nearly motionless for most of the dialogue, “his corpse-like pose only makes *Phaedo* more attuned to the slightest signs of organic life in him.”

Socrates was through reperformance, an effect which likewise inspires a sense of intimacy and admiration in Plato's reader.<sup>51</sup>

A second passage, which is critical for the philosophic argument of the *Phaedo*, occurs from 96a-103a. After the main dramatic interlude of the *Phaedo*, which begins at 88d and is discussed in the next section, Socrates gives an account of his own intellectual journey. After studying the theories of others as a younger man, which he found complicated and unsatisfactory, Socrates developed his belief in the Forms. Although he defends his theory valiantly and with it finally convinces his friends that the soul is indeed immortal, Socrates describes his belief in strange terms:

... τοῦτο δὲ ἀπλῶς καὶ ἀτέχνως καὶ ἴσως εὐήθως ἔχω παρ' ἐμαυτῶ...

... but I simply, naively, and perhaps foolishly cling to this [belief]...  
(100d, tr. Grube)

Socrates begins the account at 96a as a young man who seeks complicated theories that ultimately do not hold up to scrutiny and ends his account as an old man with a simple belief in his own theory that proves immensely profound. We may see in Socrates' autobiographical narrative a close parallel to the way in which he describes his friends at 78a. They may, like Socrates did, search the whole of Greece for someone who can teach them. Likewise, however, they may find that they themselves possess the skill to charm their child-like fears of the unknown. Socrates, now at the end of his life, repeats his own arguments to himself to satiate the desire for understanding that motivated his intellectual pursuits in his youth.

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<sup>51</sup> Halliwell (2008, pp. 278-283) notes that the laughter in the *Phaedo* is especially significant because it marks the only time in Plato's dialogues that Socrates openly laughs. The effect, Halliwell writes, is that Plato "foreground[s] Socrates' capacity for a gentle, philosophically positive laughter – amidst the intermittent but much less secure laughter of his friends – at the very juncture of final preparations for death" (p. 283).

When Cebes responds to the question Socrates poses about his theory of Forms at 101b, he does so with laughter (καὶ ὁ Κέβης γελάσας, ἔγωγε, ἔφη). If the narrative that Socrates was in the midst of telling about his own intellectual journey served as a paradigm for his friends, then the fact that Cebes responds with laughter, marks the scene as an instantiation of the charming that he had requested at 77d. As the discussion of Forms progresses further, Phaedo includes once again the fact that Socrates smiled (καὶ ἅμα μειδιάσας, ἔοικα, ἔφη, καὶ συγγραφικῶς ἐρεῖν, ἀλλ' οὖν ἔχει γέ που ὡς λέγω, 102d). Here the act of smiling parallels Cebes' laughter a few moments before and reveals the general sense of pleasure that modulated the sentiments of grief and loss that dominated the day.

### **7. Dramatic interlude: Socrates reassures his friends and himself**

For most of the *Phaedo*, Socrates' perceived nobility and fearlessness ease the sorrow of his friends and make what by all accounts ought to have been a completely painful experience one that provoked pleasure as well (58e-59a). Socrates' ability to soothe is put to the test at a critical moment in the dialogue. When it appeared that Socrates' argument for the immortality of the soul had failed, Phaedo interrupts the flow of his narration and tells Echecrates that he and the others present "were all depressed" (89c). Echecrates too is affected by listening to Phaedo's account in a way that mirrors the emotions of Socrates' friends. He had previously shared in the pleasure of remembering Socrates. He now reinforces the weight of this moment in the dialogue by expressing sympathy (συγγνώμην γε ἔχω ὑμῖν) and saying that he too is worried about the fate of the argument (89c). This shared experience points to the effect that a dramatic retelling has of capturing the emotions of the audience. Phaedo then says that he has never

admired Socrates more than in that moment because Socrates so deftly handled both the philosophic objection and the emotional distress of his friends:

Καὶ μὴν, ὦ Ἐχέκρατες, πολλάκις θαυμάσας Σωκράτη οὐ πρόποτε μᾶλλον ἠγάσθην ἢ τότε παραγενόμενος. τὸ μὲν οὖν ἔχειν ὅ τι λέγοι ἐκεῖνος, ἴσως οὐδὲν ἄτοπον· ἀλλὰ ἔγωγε μάλιστα ἐθαύμασα αὐτοῦ πρῶτον μὲν τοῦτο, ὡς ἠδέως καὶ εὐμενῶς καὶ ἀγαμένως τῶν νεανίσκων τὸν λόγον ἀπεδέξατο, ἔπειτα ἡμῶν ὡς ὀξέως ἦσθετο ὁ πεπόνθειμεν ὑπὸ τῶν λόγων, ἔπειτα ὡς εὖ ἡμᾶς ἰάσατο καὶ ὥσπερ πεφευγότας καὶ ἠττημένους ἀνεκαλέσατο καὶ προύτρεψεν πρὸς τὸ παρέπεσθαί τε καὶ συσκοπεῖν τὸν λόγον. (89a)

Echecrates, I have often wondered at Socrates, but never did I admire him more than then. That he had an answer ready was perhaps to be expected; but what astonished me more about him was, first, the pleasant, gentle, and respectful manner in which he listened to the young men's criticisms, secondly, his quick sense of the effect their words had upon us, and lastly, the skill with which he cured us and, as it were, recalled us from our flight and defeat and made us face about and follow him and join in his examination of the argument. (tr. Grube)

Phaedo comments in retrospect that Socrates received the objections pleasantly and gently and then “cured” his friends from the anxiety they had begun to feel. Socrates’s strategy for consoling Phaedo in particular is, first, to stroke his hair, a physical gesture of comfort, and then to urge Phaedo not to become a misologue (89b-d). Socrates explains to Phaedo how one becomes a misologue: when an appealing argument fails to hold up under examination, one’s impulse is to blame the argument itself instead of recognizing the speaker’s lack of skill in defending it. Socrates’s message to Phaedo is to trust in the possibility of recovering the argument and not generalize that *all* arguments are wrong because one discussion leads to failure. The evolution of misology that Socrates describes here accords closely with his description of the anger and hostility that young men feel when he tests their ideas in the *Theaetetus* (155c-d). It is not hard to see how this admonition corresponds to the present situation in the dialogue: although Socrates’s argument is in danger of failing under the challenges of Simmias and Cebes, Phaedo must not give up on philosophy and the possibility of recovering the argument

at a later time. This moment in the dialogue reveals a case of displacement: Socrates urges Phaedo to look to the general rather than the specific and pursue philosophy on his own, with or without any one specific role model.

The tension between Phaedo's memory of Socrates and his actual experience re-emerges from the next passage, however. Socrates reveals that he, too, is distressed<sup>52</sup>:

(Socrates speaking): ὡς κινδυνεύω ἔγωγε ἐν τῷ παρόντι περὶ αὐτοῦ τούτου οὐ φιλοσόφως ἔχειν, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ οἱ πάνυ ἀπαίδευτοι φιλονείκως. καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι ὅταν περὶ τοῦ ἀμφισβητῶσιν, ὅπη μὲν ἔχει περὶ ὧν ἂν ὁ λόγος ἦ οὐ φροντίζουσιν, ὅπως δὲ ἅ αὐτοὶ ἔθεντο ταῦτα δόξει τοῖς παροῦσιν, τοῦτο προθυμοῦνται. καὶ ἐγὼ μοι δοκῶ ἐν τῷ παρόντι τοσοῦτον μόνον ἐκείνων διοίσειν· οὐ γὰρ ὅπως τοῖς παροῦσιν ἅ ἐγὼ λέγω δόξει ἀληθῆ εἶναι προθυμηθήσομαι, εἰ μὴ εἴη πάρεργον, ἀλλ' ὅπως αὐτῷ ἐμοὶ ὅ τι μάλιστα δόξει οὕτως ἔχειν. (91a)

For I fear that I am not just now in a philosophical frame of mind as regards this particular question, but am contentious, like quite uncultured persons. For when they argue about anything, they do not care what the truth is in the matters they are discussing, but are eager only to make their own views seem true to their hearers. And I fancy I differ from them just now only to this extent: I shall not be eager to make what I say seem true to my hearers, except as a secondary matter, but shall be very eager to make myself believe it.

In this passage Socrates makes a critical revelation. While his usual attitude is that he cares only about the truth of any argument, here he confesses that he is emotionally invested in the outcome of the discussion.<sup>53</sup> In the hours before his death, he wants to reassure himself first of all that his belief in the immortality of the soul is justified. The gestures of kindness that Phaedo recalled therefore seem to show Socrates consoling himself at the same time he consoles his friends, although Phaedo seems in retrospect unaware of the degree of Socrates's distress. Socrates then models displacement and

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<sup>52</sup> Morgan (2010, p. 71) captures what is at stake for a genuinely distressed Socrates: "The danger in the *Phaedo* is that Socrates' closeness to death will make him 'inspired' in a bad way, give enigmatic accounts that will escape rational investigation, return to the 'mythological' model represented by the proem to *Apollo* and the versified fables."

<sup>53</sup> This passage stands in especially stark contrast to *Crito* 46b, where Socrates famously claims that then, as always he will follow on the argument that seems best upon critical reflection.



redirection of emotion in the argument that follows: he admits that he is emotionally invested in the outcome, but tells his companions to care only for the truth so that he can be confident the end product of the discussion is true.

Socrates seems to confirm that he had undertaken the *Phaedo's* discourse in order to console his own anxieties near the end of the dialogue. After Socrates makes the arguments that save his premise from Simmias and Cebes's objections, the time comes for Socrates to drink the poison and end his life. When his friends are unable to hold back their outpouring of grief, Socrates rebukes them:

ὅτι δὲ ἐγὼ πάλαι πολὺν λόγον πεποίημαι, ὡς, ἐπειδὴν πῖω τὸ φάρμακον, οὐκέτι ὑμῖν παραμενῶ, ἀλλ' οἰχήσομαι ἀπιὼν εἰς μακάρων δῆ τινας εὐδαιμονίας, ταῦτά μοι δοκῶ αὐτῶ ἄλλως λέγειν, παραμυθούμενος ἅμα μὲν ὑμᾶς, ἅμα δ' ἑμαυτόν. (115d)

Though I have just spoken at length how, when I drink the poison, I will no longer be present with you, but will leave, departing into the good fortunes of the blessed, still I seem to him [Crito] to have said these things in vain, to console you at the same time as myself.

Socrates's tone here is ostensibly sarcastic, since he takes himself to have proven that he will depart to the afterlife, but another irony is that he was speaking in an effort to console himself, as he said in the preceding passage. In fact Socrates seems to have revealed his emotional distress at all three phases of the dialogue: in his comment at 60a on his *physical* pleasure and pain that at least mirrored his friends' mixture of *psychic* pleasure and pain; explicitly so in explaining his eagerness to defend his argument successfully while "not in a philosophic state of mind" at 91a; and at 115d as he chides his friends for showing grief.

## 8. Socrates' final charm: the myth of the afterlife

It is not until the *Phaedo's* final section of discourse before the jailer interrupts to begin administering the poison that Socrates turns to the promised topic of conversation, and

the one most fitting for a man about to die, the afterlife and the soul's journey there. The discussion leads circuitously but inescapably to this point. The myth is the promised culmination of the drama, the epistemic framework within which all the elements of the preceding discourse fit and take shape. Socrates promised his friends that he would describe the soul's journey to the afterlife, and the trajectory of the discourse serves as an enactment and demonstration of the very journey described in the myth. The path has been long, with false starts and departures, but at last reaches its destination.

In contrast to his many ironic protestations of ignorance or fear, the *Phaedo* exposes Socrates' genuine distress and shows how he reassures himself that his life has indeed been worth living as it reaches its end. The asymmetry between Phaedo's narratorial voice and the private sentiments that are suggested by Socrates' words and actions exposes the dialogue's complexity. While Socrates' friends, according to Phaedo's narration, admired the calm they perceived Socrates to exude, Socrates' own words, as we have seen, point to internal fears and doubts that he sets out to overcome. Thus, while Simmias, Cebes, and the others lament "as if [they] had lost a father" (116b) and no longer have "a good charmer for these fears" (78a), Socrates himself experiences the same fears and aims to resolve them through the day's discussion.

The death scene that follows Socrates' story raises doubts whether Socrates really convinced his friends that the soul is immortal. Crito in particular earns rebuke from Socrates for asking how Socrates should be buried since, according to the conclusions drawn from the day's discussion, all present should understand that Socrates is *not* his body, but *is* the soul trapped inside it. Therefore the body that remains in the prison is not Socrates and no longer contains Socrates. I noted above that the comment Socrates makes in reply to Crito at 115d may reinforce my view that Socrates' goal in the day's discussion was to alleviate his own anxieties as much as to comfort his friends, and the

transitional comments before Socrates begins telling his final story at 107b also reveal a conflicted Socrates.

After Socrates makes his final defense of his claim that the soul is immortal and indestructible, Simmias says that, while he has “no remaining grounds for doubt” (107a) concerning what Socrates has just said, he still is bound to have some “private misgivings” (107b). In this case, Socrates does not rebuke his friend for expressing remnant uncertainty; instead, he agrees that Simmias’s attitude is justified. Although they have found the arguments convincing, further and perhaps interminable revision is necessary in order to perfect them. It is at this point that Socrates changes modes of speech; he will now tell his long-promised story about the soul’s journey to the afterlife.<sup>54</sup> That Socrates changes modes of speech at the end of the dialogue seems a fitting conclusion; the course of the discussion comes full circle and Socrates once again is a storyteller, as he had been in the dialogue’s opening scene.

I set aside the details of Socrates’ account of the afterlife and instead draw attention to the way in which he tells the story and its intended effect. Despite the vividness of his story, Socrates bookends his account by denying authorship (107d, 108c, 108e) and denying that his story is true (114d). Socrates has been “convinced” by some anonymous source that the story is a credible facsimile of how nature must truly

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<sup>54</sup> Thesleff (1967) presents a study of the style of Plato’s composition with an emphasis on the modes of speech deployed in the dialogues. He notes a shift from “discussion or conversation” to “dialogue approximating to monologue” and “monologue or continuous exposition” at 107c (pp. 133-4). The three sustained sections of monologue (or approximately monologue) in the *Phaedo* appear from 63e-69e (Socrates’ imagined trial), 78b-84b (Socrates on metempsychosis and the divine nature of the soul), and 107c-115a (the soul’s journey to the afterlife). Taken together, these passages outline Socrates’ rhetorical strategy. He first answers their charges and outlines a vision of the philosophic life that he has attempted to lead; then demonstrates through rational discourse why his approach to life is justified; and finally deploys storytelling to weave together his vision of a life of inquiry with a vision of the soul’s promised rewards in the afterlife.

be, and, because “one should repeat the story to himself as if an incantation, [Socrates has] been prolonging [his] tale” (114d).

The notion of “repeating the story as if it were an incantation” here seems to be a recurrence of the image of Socrates as charmer of his friends’ souls earlier in the dialogue (77d). In response to his friends’ sense of impending loss of the one person who could charm their souls, Socrates urges them to spare neither time nor expense in finding another charmer. Strikingly, as we noted before, Socrates cautions them that they may find after this exhaustive search that they are best able to soothe themselves. Since the myth that Socrates tells in the final pages of the *Phaedo* also serves as an incantation, Socrates’ deliberate, prolonged repetition of it seems to be an enactment of the self-soothing he had urged his friends to pursue earlier in the text. If Socrates is unwilling to say that his story is true *per se*, however, then in what way is it soothing?

In the trial passage that I discuss above, Socrates establishes the standard of “good hope” for a reward in the afterlife as sufficient grounds to leave his friends “too lightly.” When he discusses the effect of telling his story at the end of the dialogue, Socrates turns once again to the standard of hope (“καλὸν γὰρ τὸ ἄθλον καὶ ἡ ἐλπίς μεγάλη” 114c). After making the most extensive and persuasive arguments for his position that he (and perhaps anyone) can make, Socrates concludes his story of the afterlife by saying:

τὸ μὲν οὖν ταῦτα δισχυρίσασθαι οὕτως ἔχειν ὡς ἐγὼ διελέλυθα, οὐ πρόπει νοῦν ἔχοντι ἀνδρὶ: ὅτι μέντοι ἢ ταῦτ’ ἐστὶν ἢ τοιαῦτ’ ἄττα περὶ τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν καὶ τὰς οἰκίσεις, ἐπεὶπερ ἀθάνατόν γε ἡ ψυχὴ φαίνεται οὕσα, τοῦτο καὶ πρόπειν μοι δοκεῖ καὶ ἄξιον κινδυνεῦσαι οἰομένῳ οὕτως ἔχειν—καλὸς γὰρ ὁ κίνδυνος—καὶ χρὴ τὰ τοιαῦτα ὥσπερ ἐπάδειν ἑαυτῷ, διὸ δὴ ἐγωγε καὶ πάλαι μηκύνω τὸν μῦθον. (114d)

“no sensible man would insist that these things are as I have described them, but I think it is fitting for a man to risk the belief, for the risk is a

noble one, that this, or something like this, is true about our souls and their dwelling places..." (tr. Grube).

Plato writes Socrates' last act before the death scene as one that relies on the persuasive power of a story that is allegorical to justify his confidence in the philosophic life he has lived. Although Socrates will soon after say that his body is separate from his true identity and has throughout the dialogue diminished the importance of bodily sensations (115c-d), what he ultimately turns to is a story that puts the soul's journey in very physical terms, complete with a detailed cosmology of earth and the entire universe and accounts of where the soul goes to receive reward or punishment. Although he is reluctant to claim that he thinks his vision of the afterlife is true, his hope and faith lies in a new life that is separate from the body but is still conceived of from the viewpoint of a physical being that travels through time and space to receive rewards and especially punishments that are essential of a corporeal nature. Socrates believes he will make new friends (or be reunited with old ones?) and even join the presence of the gods in the afterlife. The vindication of his seventy years spent in Athens will be to relive his life in essentially the same way permanently in Hades.

One detail of the mythical account of the afterlife that merits attention in my analysis of emotions is this. After a soul that is irredeemably corrupted has endured a cycle of punishment, it returns to the gathering place to be judged once again. What is noteworthy is that the soul of the wrongdoer is judged by its victims instead of an impartial arbiter. This is unique to the *Phaedo's* afterlife myth. In *Gorgias*, a panel of impartial (and naked) judges hand down one eternally binding verdict on the basis of a complete knowledge of the soul's deeds during its human life (*Gorg.* 523d-e). The *Republic's* "Myth of Er" aligns more closely with the *Phaedo's* account insofar as the souls reincarnate after a period of reward or punishment, but in that story, every soul

serves the same term of one thousand years before entering a new life (R. 615a, 621d). The *Phaedo* myth is unique, then, in ceding power to the victims of the crime to decide whether the evildoer has sufficiently paid the penalty.

Making the victims into judges in the afterlife carries marked significance in the thematic landscape of the dialogue. When Socrates put himself on trial earlier in the dialogue to answer the charge that he “leaves his friends too lightly,” the victims served also as the judges since Socrates had to convince the same friends he was alleged to be harming that he was justified to hold the attitude he did toward leaving them.<sup>55</sup> But the mythical narrative also looks back to the *Apology*. Socrates’ civic life was always a perilous, reciprocal series of judgements and tests. Socrates tested as many fellow citizens as he could engage in conversation, and those citizens in turn developed resentment that culminated in their determination of his guilt. As Socrates ends his final speech and departs the courtroom, he makes a grave prediction that a reckoning awaits those who found him guilty and condemned him to death at some undetermined point in the future. In the immediate context of the speech, he asserts that his angry friends will assail Athens more vehemently than Socrates himself had ever done, but given that he then closes his speech - his final piece of public discourse - with yet another imagination of the afterlife, it is, I think, plausible that Socrates also warns those who convicted him that they will answer for their injustice in Hades.

Although this is the first time that any text bears witness to Socrates telling the exact story that he does in *Phaedo*, the fact that he claims to “repeat this story like an

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<sup>55</sup> Liebert (2020, p. 451) writes that Socrates’ defense of the philosophic life is “from the survivor’s point of view jarringly insensitive. For Socrates completely ignores the suggestion that he owes a debt of care to his disciples and seems to abdicate his responsibilities as a philosophic mentor.” I would note that Socrates *seems* to abdicate his responsibilities; his words and gestures in the remainder of the dialogue show he in fact fulfilled them.

incantation" must mean that he has told it to himself before. Notably, Socrates tells eschatological myths in several Platonic dialogues for a range of rhetorical purposes. What is more, he claims to have heard this story "from someone," so the basic structure of the story must have been in his mind for some time - certainly more than the month that has passed since the *Apology*. It is reasonable, therefore, to see a deep, personal undercurrent in the trajectory of Socrates' story. As his friends sat in judgement of him earlier that day, so Socrates, the victim of an unjust verdict, will sit in judgement of those who condemned him in the afterlife.

When Socrates concludes his mythical narrative of the soul's journey to Hades, he admits that the tale is allegorical and not to be taken literally. Nonetheless, he has been convinced by "someone" that the story comports with the true nature of reality. Moreover, the prospects of the story being essentially true - that the soul does live a rewarding life after the body's death - is grounds for "great hope" (114d). That Socrates hedges the myth's truth in uncertainty is consistent with Socrates' usual reluctance to claim definitive knowledge of anything. But the way in which he discusses the myth's function also offers insight about the complex psychic interaction between hope, belief, and knowledge. Socrates repeats this story to himself like an incantation; this comment, taken in light of the framing comments he made much earlier (61e), that telling stories about the soul's journey to Hades is appropriate for one about to die, indicates one purpose of storytelling. Socrates' circumspection about the truth of the story is not merely a ploy of irony, as many of his protestations of ignorance may well be, but indicates that the purpose of the story is to reinforce his beliefs with the hope of a reward.

Although Socrates rebukes his friends for crying and acting unseemly after he drinks the poison and the reality of the moment fully strikes them, he is much gentler

on them just a few moments before. After he explains that he tells himself the story he had just shared to fortify his own beliefs, he tells his friends that they, too, should repeat the story so that they will eventually come to believe it. In fact, he says, it is not important whether they believe it now. What matters is that they believe it in the future, before their own moments of death (115b-c). The comment suggests that Socrates sees studying philosophy and caring for the soul as a lifelong process with a specific goal in mind: to accept and embrace the proposition of the soul's afterlife wholly by the end of one's corporeal lifespan. His concession that this process is both gradual and difficult makes the scolding tone of his rebukes a few moments later appear less straightforward. If, as Socrates had just said, it is not important that his friends believe his story right now, why should he rebuke them for showing grief, which he takes as a sign that they are unconvinced that he will live in the afterlife, a few minutes later? One possibility is that Socrates' fears is not so much that his friends lack belief, but that their outpouring of emotion in the gut-wrenching moment of his death will weaken the good hope that he has worked so hard, through the conversation of this day and throughout his life, to cultivate and reinforce.<sup>56</sup>

This seems to be the reason why he had the women escorted out, at least.<sup>57</sup> If Socrates is really about to die with complete equanimity, why should it be so disruptive to him to witness the unseemly behavior of the women? Surely for a man who has demonstrated throughout the day's conversation how much he loves and cares for his friends, and they him, the sight of his sobbing wife and young children must elicit grief

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<sup>56</sup> Liebert (2020, p. 459) writes of Phaedo that "much as he wants to believe in Socrates' arguments...he cannot relinquish his attachment to the physical person of Socrates, to his living presence as a unique, embodied individual." In the closing scene especially, her observation applies to all of Socrates' friends.

<sup>57</sup> 117d-e (tr. Grube): "What is this," he said, "you strange fellows. It is mainly for this reason that I sent the women away, to avoid such unseemliness, for I am told one should die in good omened silence. So keep quiet and control yourselves."



and sorrow.<sup>58</sup> To be sure, the appearance of dying undistressed is important to Socrates, since Phaedo and the others force him to defend how lightly he takes death. But Socrates also reveals how present and connected he is with his friends and how passionately he cares for them throughout the *Phaedo*. His words and gestures demonstrate this, as does his friends' immense sense of loss "as if [they] had lost a father" (116b). If his friends really did believe that Socrates was unmoved by dying and leaving his friends, why would they continue to look so admirably upon him? Although Socrates may really have been convinced that he was about to enter a new and far better life after death, he still fully lived in the present. And that present entailed immense pain and grief. Even if suffering with magnanimity, Socrates shares in the sorrow and sense of loss felt by those around him. Deflecting and modulating this sense of grief with humor, levity, and compassion made a profound impact on his friends throughout the day's conversation. Socrates thus mitigates the emotional toll of his tragic death on his family and friends.

The concluding myth of the *Phaedo* is the culmination of the day's discussion and deftly unifies the disparate dimensions of Socrates' personality and intellectual pursuits. The content of the myth gives life to the cold, rationalist view of philosophy that Socrates seemed to endorse earlier in the text. The way in which Socrates frames it, and the conviction with which he narrates it, meanwhile, give life to Socrates. Perhaps more than Plato had already done throughout the text, he reveals to us in this final depiction

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<sup>58</sup> Gill (2018) examines the affinity between modern theories of cognition and the ancient psychological theories, including that in Plato's *Timaeus*. While Gill points singles out the *Phaedo* as a text that relies upon mind-body dualism, he writes that the *Timaeus* mitigates this dualism by attributing motion to the immortal psyche and embodying parts of the soul in the human body – the heart, for example, corresponds to the spirited soul. I think it is plausible to see this theory at work in the *Phaedo*, too, because of its emphasis on physical expressions of psychic sentiments. Observing the sorrow of his family and then feeling a similar pain in turn is also plausible, especially if we consider the close parallel between Socrates' physical pain and his friends' emotional distress earlier in the text.

of Socrates' life what it was really like to know and be with Socrates. For a man so complex, yet admirable, coming to know him has entailed for so many readers a further desire to understand the essential, philosophic ideals he explored by reanimating him through reperformance of the texts.

That a dialogue containing such heavy emotion and extensive talk of death should also be so frequently punctuated with pleasure, smiles, and laughter speaks to Plato's intentions in composing the text. A principle that Plato's speakers invoke throughout his corpus is the maxim that nothing is good or bad in itself but receives its ethical quality from the way in which it is used. In *Republic* I, Cephalus makes this point about wealth: "A good person wouldn't easily bear old age if he were poor, but a bad one wouldn't be at peace with himself even if he were wealthy" (330a, tr. Grube). The composition of the *Phaedo* perhaps reminds us that the same is true of philosophic discourse. The activity itself is not useful or productive if not done in the right way. Despite the weight of grief hanging over the entire conversation, Socrates and his friends repeatedly manifest joy and pleasure through their laughter and other physical cues. What brings Socrates back to life and makes the events of his final days, and of his life in general, so timeless and compelling is the emotional experience that arises from either being in his presence or re-enacting his encounters. The brilliance of Plato's composition here, then, is that he puts the reader in the same position *Phaedo* had been, albeit a degree removed. Where *Phaedo* had found it most pleasant first to be with Socrates and, after his death, to remember him in conversation, Plato intends his reader to find pleasure alongside anger, grief, and other emotions in reading and coming to know Socrates through the dialogues. A difficult question that faces Plato's reader is

why he chose the dialogue form when the treatise was a perfectly viable choice.<sup>59</sup> In the case of the *Phaedo*, only the dramatic form, with all its emotional cues and layers of knowledge and understanding, can achieve the goal of memorializing Socrates as well as his thought.<sup>60</sup> Only the subtlety and complexity of the dialogic form can transcend the gulf between Plato and his reader to recreate the momentous events in Socrates' life.

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<sup>59</sup> Press (2018), p. 10 explains the relevance of this question: "Most important, the new Platonism reads the dialogues dialogically, which is to say examining literary and dramatic elements as, in various ways, constitutive of Plato's philosophy, rather than as treatises *manquée*, as had been commonly supposed at the mid-century."

<sup>60</sup> Liebert (2020, p. 449) points out that both within the text and in its effect upon its audience, "the commemoration of Socrates becomes a collective endeavor to ameliorate the pain suffered by Socrates' survivors."

## Conclusion

### An Emotional Image of Socrates

No matter how far the philosophic mind in Plato's dialogues flies above the human world, Howland writes, Socratic inquiry always "returns to the ordinary or everyday in which ensouled bodies – and *only* ensouled bodies – find themselves."<sup>1</sup> Howland's words point to a paradox that perhaps has sustained readers' interest in Plato over the centuries. Through the words of Socrates, Plato envisions a world of ideals that exists outside human experience. And yet, the charming human dimensions of the dialogues are inescapable. Plato's reader sees philosophy "literally embodied in Socrates."<sup>2</sup> In this dissertation, I have examined this embodied Socrates and shown that his embodied experience includes a full range of social connections and human emotions.

We began with the *Theaetetus*, which established that all Socratic discourse relies upon a deep emotional connection between Socrates and his interlocutors. Although the dialogue serves to memorialize both Socrates and Theaetetus, the tragic reality of Socrates' impending trials looms large in the text. For one, the intimacy that Socrates fosters with his interlocutors also endangers him. The pain that Socrates stimulates as part of his maieutic method is liable to prove intractable and lead his associates to turn on him in rage. The pain and rage that Socrates can provoke, meanwhile is not limited to those with whom he is directly involved in discourse. In the Digression, Socrates envisions the inevitable, irresolvable conflict between philosophy and rhetoric. The philosopher in the Digression is so abstracted from civic life that he borders on caricature; even still, the parallels with Socrates' tragic destiny are inescapable.

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<sup>1</sup> Howland (1998), p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Howland (1998), p. 19.

Omitting the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, we resumed the narrative of Socrates' trial in the *Euthyphro*. Socrates reveals little about his own emotions in the dialogue, but he does reflect upon the hatred and envy that his countrymen direct at him. As the elenctic examination proceeds, Socrates also endorses viewpoints about traditional religion that may not have been altogether new but were nonetheless subversive and emotionally provocative. He effectively enacts behaviors that his judges deemed sufficient deviant and distressing to warrant his conviction and execution. As Howland writes, Socrates "loosens the traditional bonds which bind the Athenians together into a political community, but fashions no new bonds for the polis."<sup>3</sup>

In the *Apology*, Socrates attempts to convince his countrymen that his provocative discourse – which Socrates acknowledges causes his interlocutors pain and discomfort – is the best therapy available for the city's ills. He goes so far as to portray himself as a messianic figure anointed by god to set the city on the right course. As a prophet, however, Socrates incurred only resentment, for all that he could assure the Athenians of was his own ignorance – an ignorance that paradoxically made him wiser than anyone. A key theme running through the *Apology*, however, is the deep devotion that Socrates feels toward his city and an unrelenting hope that his philosophic mission might succeed. When the verdict comes down, however, this hope is redirected toward the afterlife, where Socrates envisions rewards for his pious behavior and imagines the god will punish those who wronged him. Socrates never left the city and remained wholly devoted to it, yet his mind looks constantly to the immortal realm beyond it. The *Apology* offers a convoluted picture at best of how Socrates hoped to improve his fellow

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<sup>3</sup> Howland (1998), p. 33.

citizens, but it provides us a vivid account of the many ways in which Socrates transcended traditional life.

If the dialogues covered in this dissertation show Socrates' progressive loss of agency, this may be clearest in the *Crito*. Socrates' friend arrives before daybreak and forces upon Socrates an impossible decision. Like the idealized philosopher of the *Theaetetus*, Socrates is ill-equipped to act quickly. Rather, his custom is to examine an issue from every possible viewpoint and only after to act. Socrates turns to his usual discourse to delay Crito's call for action, but Socrates remains constrained. Not only is he imprisoned, as an alternative to which Crito offers a life as a fugitive or exile, but his accustomed dialectic inquiry is bookended by incursions of external authority. The dialogue begins with a brief account of an ambiguous dream and concludes with a forceful rebuke of the planned escape in the voice of the Laws of Athens.

Having remained imprisoned, Socrates at last approaches the death that will liberate him in the *Phaedo*. The grievous occasion of his deathday is modulated by jovial discourse with a large group of his closest friends – with the notable exclusion of Plato himself. *Phaedo* and the other companions felt the grief that one would expect under the circumstances, but their admiration of Socrates also provided pleasure. Socrates, meanwhile, reveals some of the most intimately human aspects of his personality throughout the dialogue. Although he argues in *logos* that a philosopher should not fear death but welcome it, he also laughs, comments on the physical pain caused by his shackles – a physical symbol of constraint – and consoles his companions with words and touch. The explicit teaching of the dialogue is that a philosopher gains immortality through death and transcendence to the realm of pure soul, but the dialogue also shows that Socrates' uncanny sensitivity and his friends' enduring admiration earned him a literary immortality that preserves not only his arguments but also his mannerisms,

humor, and stories that endeared him to so many.<sup>4</sup> The *Phaedo* provides the most intimate portrayal of Socrates and obliterates the hatred and envy that caused him to die in the prison.

An emotional Socrates is not only to be found in the five dialogues covered in this dissertation, and further investigation of Plato's Socrates will add to the complex image of Socrates that I have uncovered. I foresee further research proceeding in two directions. First, it remains to provide a close literary study of the Socrates in each Platonic dialogue and explain how recognizing emotions broadens our appreciation of Plato's texts. Second, the embodiment of emotions in the dialogues contributes to a broader understanding of the emotions in Plato's theory of human nature. I plan to pursue both avenues in my future work and hope that this dissertation has sufficiently demonstrated the value of an emotionally complex Socrates that other readers of Plato will also take a deeper interest in the lesser explored aspects of his personality.

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<sup>4</sup> Saccarelli (2007, p. 540) captures this sentiment well in describing Socrates' truth as "experiential and incommunicable."

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