

Platonic Defences of Socrates:

The *Apology*, *Symposium* and other works

By

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## **Abstract**

Does Plato defend Socrates in his dialogues? This is my main question throughout this paper which aims to prove that Plato indeed, at least in the examined works, defends his master. I examine in the following order Plato's *Apology*, the *Symposium*, the *Meno*, the *Euthydemus* and *Charmides*. The first two Platonic works comprise chapter one and two respectively, while the three following works compose chapter three. Each chapter includes an introduction, an analysis of my thesis statement and a short conclusion. In the close study of the five works above, my aim is to identify Plato's means of Socrates' defence (figures of speech, direct/ indirect defending arguments) against his formal and informal accusations (corruption of the young, impiety, relation to the Sophists). I also identify common traits between these and other Platonic works, while I compare them with works of other ancient scholars too (e.g. Xenophon). Providing the claims of many contemporary scholars, I hope to complete the picture of the Platonic defence.

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## Introduction

In this thesis, I examine Plato's desire to defend Socrates in several of his works. I will focus on Plato's *Apology*, *Symposium*, *Meno*, *Euthydemus* and *Charmides*. I have chosen the *Apology* and *Symposium* for two main reasons. First, these two works are undeniably Platonic (although I mention some pseudo-Platonic works) and include detailed information about Socrates and his beliefs. The *Apology* is actually the basic source regarding the trial of Socrates in 399 B.C. and consequently the best example of Plato's defence of Socrates against two major accusations, impiety and the corruption of the young. The *Symposium* is another Platonic defence presenting the philosophical way of life of Socrates. It is a dialogue on Love, which reveals details of Socrates' association with young men and especially with Alcibiades, a prominent personality in Athens of the fifth century. Alcibiades praises Socrates with a eulogy demonstrating Socrates' righteousness and true philosophical spirit.

Furthermore, *Meno* and *Euthydemus* are works which illustrate that Socrates is not a teacher, as many people believed he was, and compared him to the Sophists who tried to persuade and guide. According to Socrates, knowledge is a truth inside everybody, and his main purpose is to help people find it with his interrogative *elenchus*. In addition, Plato in *Charmides* defends Socrates regarding his second accusation, the corruption of the young. Although Socrates associated with young men like Charmides, Plato wants to present the association just as an element of philosophical inquiry. Despite the fact that Socrates does not provide a clear conclusion in the examination of temperance and he ends in *aporia*, "impassé" (as in many Platonic works), the developed matters and ideas are worthy of attention.

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Many ancient authors wrote about Socrates, a pivotal figure in Athens of the fifth century B.C. I decided to choose Plato as my main source, while at the same time I examine other ancient sources, including Xenophon, Aristophanes, and Thucydides. The close relationship between Plato and his ‘teacher’ Socrates is well known, and there is no doubt about the influence that Socrates exercised on him. This is the reason that led me to my own enquiry regarding Plato’s purposes in writing about Socrates. Is it actually about Socrates or are there any further purposes in choosing him as Plato’s mouthpiece? Are Plato’s works just a sign of admiration and support of Socrates and his ideas (since he had many opponents) or a way to advance his own philosophical ideas? I argue that Plato admired Socrates and followed his ideas, but when he became a mature philosopher himself, he advanced his own philosophical thought. Socrates had a crucial role in Plato’s life, since he affected Plato’s decision not to involve himself in Athenian political life, but to dedicate himself to philosophy.

Many scholars have admitted the difficulty in distinguishing Plato’s theories from those of Socrates (for instance Guthrie, 1969:325). Then the issue of the “historical” Socrates arises. Guthrie (1969:325) claims that Plato was a very different philosophical figure from Socrates, whereas Burnet and Taylor (1932:162) defend the historicity of the Platonic works. Some other scholars, like Vlastos (1991:46-7), Kahn (1981:320) and Prior (1997:114) assert that Plato’s works include historically accurate elements. However, my main point in this thesis is not to subject the Platonic works to scrutiny regarding their historicity.

In Chapter One, I analyse Plato’s *Apology*, the work in which he most clearly comes to Socrates’ defence. Plato wrote mostly dialogues, but this work appears like a monologue, since Socrates’ speech predominates. In 399 B.C., Socrates presents himself in front of 500 Athenian jurors in order to defend himself against the charges of Meletus, Anytus and Lykon. Socrates has

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been attacked also in the past (by his “old accusers”, *Ap.* 18c-e), but with no formal charge. These accusers believed that Socrates was “a criminal and a busybody, investigating the things beneath the earth and in the heavens and making the weaker argument the stronger and teaching others these same things” (19b-c). Aristophanes lampooned him years earlier in the *Clouds* with the same charges (19c). Xenophon in his *Apology* refers to the same accusations of impiety (*Ap.* 11) and corruption of the young (*Ap.* 19), and so does Diogenes Laertius, who adds to these the introduction of religious novelties (II.40). Clearly, Socrates was a person who kept the interest of many ancient writers. In my thesis, I present ancient and modern scholars who consider Socrates as a philosopher who believed in the gods, whereas some others assert that he believed in some gods or he was a complete atheist.

Furthermore, the *Apology* is a work in which Socrates defends himself and his ideas but does not necessarily try to save his own life. Socrates is not afraid of death and he has proved that in the past (for example, in the battle of Potidaea in 432 B.C., *Ap.* 39a).<sup>1</sup> His defence concerns the change that people must make in their lives according to god’s will that Socrates seems to have adopted. He (or Plato) presents himself to be a religious man who is urged by the god to show people their ignorance. I investigate whether he considered himself wiser in comparison to others or was truly devoted to gods and just wanted to question the Delphic oracle’s assessment that he was the wisest person (*Ap.* 21a-e). I also examine the difference between gods and deities, which is connected to the accusation of corruption and atheism.

Moreover, the unusual style of his defence is compelling. His whole “mission” was conducted in a unique manner, like his behaviour in front of the judges. He did not want to cry

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<sup>1</sup> Socrates fought also in the battles of Delium and Amphipolis (*Smp.* 219e-221a). His military service at Delium is also mentioned in *Laches* (181a-b).



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and beg for his acquittal; this was not his purpose. He asserted that his way of life was proper and that he was an honest man who had not previously been involved in court cases. He believed in justice and that the judges would take the right decision. The detection of common traits of Socrates among the five Platonic works, which I examine here, contributes to the conclusion that he is an exceptional Platonic figure.

In Chapter Two, I turn to detailed analysis of Plato's *Symposium*. This work comes after the *Apology* since Plato continues to defend Socrates mostly against the accusation of the corruption of the young and his unusual way of life. I examine all the apologetic hints, verbal and interpretative. Although I am not going to focus on the historicity of this work, some fictitious elements make obvious Plato's desire to defend Socrates.<sup>2</sup> The basic element is that the *Symposium* is a eulogy to Socrates from Alcibiades, the young man whom Socrates supposedly corrupted.

Alcibiades was a political and military man who was implicated in Athens' defeat by Sparta in the Peloponnesian War (431 B.C. – 404 B.C.). Many negative events happened (for example, the mutilation of the Hermai) that were related to Alcibiades. However, Socrates' unique character impressed Alcibiades and Alcibiades tried to benefit from him, despite Socrates' constant declaration of 'knowing nothing.' Moreover, due to Socrates' relationship with Alcibiades, the Athenians blamed Socrates for his influence on Alcibiades and the subsequent defeat of Athens.

In the *Symposium* Plato shows Alcibiades to be a person who desired the pursuit of worldly power and tried to seduce Socrates. Although Alcibiades had an attractive appearance,

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<sup>2</sup> The first fictional clue is that it is not a first-hand story, *Smp.* 172a-173b.

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Socrates associated with him only to show that the soul is superior to his looks. At this point, a reference to *Alcibiades I* demonstrates Socrates' sole interest in guiding the ambitious Alcibiades when he is entering politics, and not in seducing him (although the work may be pseudoplatonic). Therefore, Socrates may be an extraordinary but righteous figure (his constant thinking, his self-control and courage, 219e-221d).

Chapter Three deals with three other Platonic works, *Meno*, *Euthydemus* and *Charmides*. These works also include Plato's defences of Socrates. *Meno* contains a typical example of the Socratic *elenchus*; Socrates does not state his beliefs, but he tries to elicit answers through his interlocutors. Anytus is one of his interlocutors in this work, the person who led him to trial. People believed that Socrates was a teacher, and this is why they compared him to the Sophists. However, he did not consider himself a teacher since he asserted that knowledge exists inside people's souls (85b-d) and he just brings that to the surface. In addition, this work is another answer to the accusation of the corruption of the young, because Socrates teaches them nothing, unlike the Sophists, who defended their teaching abilities by receiving payment. Socrates claims that he never received money from his associates, showing in this way his ignorance and inability to teach.

The next work, *Euthydemus*, presents another opposition between Socrates and the Sophists with a similar context to *Meno*. Euthydemus is a Sophist who asserts his ability to teach others, specifically Cleinias (275a). Socrates knows that this is untrue, but he is willing to listen to their theory. Sophists are well known for their verbal devices and the influence they exercised on others. On the other side, Plato exalts the Socratic way of life, in contrast to the eristic art of the Sophists (288d). Therefore, the dialogue is a Platonic defence of Socrates regarding his ethical integrity and philosophical contribution, with his only aim being the improvement of

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people (282c). This aim is connected to the 'mission' which was assigned to him by the gods according to the Delphic oracle (*Apology* 20d-24e). He had to improve people's thinking but at the same time make them realise that human beings are not wise compared to the gods.

Chapter Three concludes with the Platonic dialogue, *Charmides*. It is a discussion on *sophrosyne* (temperance) between Socrates and Charmides, a handsome young man and later one of the Thirty Tyrants. Socrates seems to be interested in attracting him in order to see deeper in his soul, as he did with Alcibiades in *Alcibiades I*. Although there was a difficulty in defining the word *sophrosyne*, Plato's purpose is obvious. He wanted to show once again that Socrates did not teach others, especially young men, he just had conversations with them and therefore he did not corrupt them. Moreover, he was not responsible for their actions and the political situation of Athens.

In conclusion, in this thesis I connect mainly these five works on the basis of their common element, Plato's defence of Socrates against his accusations. I would like also to note that I use throughout my thesis the following translations: for the *Apology*, H.N. Fowler:1914; for the *Symposium*, R. Waterfield:1994; for the *Meno*, J.M. Cooper:1997; and for the *Euthydemus* and *Charmides*, B. Jowett: 1892.

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## Chapter One: The *Apology*

### Introduction

Plato's *Apology* ("Defence") is the most prominent and detailed work on the defence of Socrates against his two main accusations, the corruption of the young and his atheism. Socrates had been taken to court (399 B.C.)<sup>1</sup> in order to defend himself and his philosophical way of life. On this account, the reader has the opportunity to discover Socrates' life in detail. There is uncertainty regarding the authenticity of the words in this work, whether they are Socrates' or Plato's. Nevertheless, this thesis is not based on investigating the historical elements, but on finding the ways that Plato used to defend Socrates.<sup>2</sup>

Plato "wanted to live the philosophical life exemplified by Socrates,"<sup>3</sup> and this explains Plato's desire to write about him. Since Socrates exercised great impact on him, Plato "could see nothing improper in putting into Socrates' mouth some of the discoveries which in his eyes provided the final justification of Socrates's life and death."<sup>4</sup> They knew each other well,<sup>5</sup> since Socrates in the *Apology* declares Plato's presence at his trial (34a).<sup>6</sup> In addition, Plato's Socrates wanted to defend a philosophical way of life because he believed that this was the one worth

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<sup>1</sup> The court was called *Eliaia* or *Heliastic Court*, which was probably located in a large, covered public building at the extreme southeastern side of the Athenian *agora* (Brickhouse and Smith, 2004:74).

<sup>2</sup> Many scholars have commented on the "historical" Socrates. For example, Guthrie (1969:326) claims, "(Socrates') teaching is indissolubly linked with his whole personality", whereas some other scholars believe in the difficulty of examining the historical Socrates since the Socratic works have the influence of their authors (so they are probably fictions).

<sup>3</sup> Prior (1997:119).

<sup>4</sup> Guthrie (1969:326).

<sup>5</sup> According to Diogenes Laertius (III. 6.), Plato was a disciple of Socrates from around the age of 20 and onward.

<sup>6</sup> Burnet claims that the declaration of Plato's presence, as a witness, in Socrates' trial (*Ap.*34a1, 38b6-9) is important to Plato's defence (1924:63). Plato may not have recorded Socrates' speech, but he wanted to show that he definitely followed the Socratic way of thinking. Slings and de Strycker agree with this opinion, asserting that the *Apology* includes historical elements but not the exact words of Socrates (1994:5-6). However, Socrates often cannot be taken seriously. For example, Brickhouse and Smith refer to *Ap.*17a-d, when Socrates says to the jurors that he is not clever and has no experience of forensic speeches and procedures in court, but he reveals the opposite with his own speech (1989:53-7).

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living and it is superior to all the others (*Ap.* 38a). This statement is supposed to be Socrates', but perhaps it is Plato's; the important point here is the defence of Socrates and his philosophy.<sup>7</sup> This defence includes his ideas about truth and virtue in life, the way a person should improve himself and the proper structure of a democratic and just state, like Athens.

Furthermore, Socrates was a controversial but interesting figure. Plato's and Xenophon's descriptions of Socrates as a pious man gave the inspiration later on for his parallelism to Christ. Both of them appeared as revolutionaries with the same ending, their execution. Christ was crucified and Socrates drank the hemlock. In addition, during the Italian Renaissance, Socrates was believed to be "a subverter of traditional and civic religion."<sup>8</sup> In the following pages, Plato's defence of Socrates' innovative actions and beliefs becomes evident.

## **Section 17a- 19a: The early and the later accusations**

In the beginning of the *Apology* Socrates wants to emphasize the truth and integrity of his words (17b-c), despite the accusations against him for the opposite. He recognises himself as an orator only in terms of speaking the truth (17b, 18a). He shows his innocence, saying that this is his first time in court, although he is seventy years old and a politically active citizen (17d). He admits that he had many talks in the market place and elsewhere (17c-d), but only as a part of the Athenian life. It is completely different from speaking in a court, where he should speak and act in a specific manner (17d). Specifically, while he is trying to demonstrate his righteousness, he

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<sup>7</sup> Boys used to memorize poems of famous men in order to be like them (*Laws*, 811A). There is a strong possibility Plato did the same: He praised Socrates, one of the most famous men of his time, and later he, as a mature writer, enriched these ideas with his own. Shorey (1933/1962:22) agrees with the idea that Socrates is the inspiration and Plato the writer.

<sup>8</sup> McPherran (1996:3-4).

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requests an impartial hearing (18a). The speech of his opponents is refined and false, whereas Socrates' is improvised, conversational but true. He actually deprecates the rhetorical art of the Sophists who used to train carefully their students in making false speeches. The distinction between Socrates and the Sophists was difficult for the many, so Socrates has to remove their prejudices. He follows the legal procedures and speaks the truth, which is the responsibility of an 'orator'. Blyth (2000:1-2) comments that, since Socrates claims he is honest and the jurors did not recognize that and condemned him, they have failed in their duties. Socrates wanted also to test their devotion to virtue and justice (common practice for Socrates). Blyth believes this is his reason for not addressing all of them as judges (*dikastai*), but only those who acquitted him (40a).<sup>9</sup> Brickhouse and Smith (2004:76) provide some information regarding the Athenian juries which helps in the understanding of their role; they were volunteers who wanted to perform service in the courts mostly for economic reasons. Therefore, they were not necessarily aware of the true philosophic views of Socrates, but perhaps only of the slanders (18b).

One main factor for these prejudices is that Socrates had some previous accusers. Those first accusers were acquaintances of the judges a long time ago, and therefore they trust each other (18a-b, 18e). Their accusation (18e) was that, "There is a certain Socrates, a wise man, a ponderer over the things in the air and one who has investigated the things beneath the earth and

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<sup>9</sup> Martin (2006:75-6) refers to the four points of view regarding the various addresses (in the *Apology* and elsewhere): It is interesting that indeed in 40a it is the only time that Socrates refers to the judges as *Athenian dikastai* and not as *Athenian men* (17c). Some scholars (e.g. Maas) say that there were degrees of respect and the use of *Athenian dikastai* is the most respectful address. According to others (e.g. West, Stokes), *dikastai* was the usual form. Martin mentions also E. Dickey's opinion who discusses the various forms in the orators and that Socrates had his own style. Martin may accept the degrees of respect but not for the *Apology*. In p.77, he expresses his belief that the main factor for these differentiations was the personal preference each time and that the use of *Athenian dikastai* may not be so 'honourable' after all. In p.86-7, he concludes that it may show a) 'the significance of the case' or 'an emphasis on the responsibilities of the judges'. Although neither title should be surprising in the *Apology*, it is possible to be related to the judges' duties: those who acquitted Socrates are 'true' judges and the rest are 'wrong'.

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who makes the weaker argument the stronger.” Although this statement was a lie according to Socrates, he wants to try to prove that his prosecutors can easily mislead the judges. In addition, this old accusation is connected to the present one (19b-c), his interest in natural phenomena and his possible disbelief in the gods: “Socrates is a criminal and a busybody, investigating the things beneath the earth and in the heavens and making the weaker argument stronger and teaching others these same things.” From these lines, it is obvious that he knew some of his former slanderers, especially when he mentions that one of them is a writer of comedies (18d), a clear reference to Aristophanes, who slandered Socrates in his *Clouds*, as we see later in 19c. For Socrates, Aristophanes and the rest of the first accusers are more dangerous enemies than the later (he does not even name them), since they have been slanderers for a long time and Socrates had to defend himself in a short time (19a). According to Shorey (1933/1962:23-4), “The attacks of Aristophanes are motivated by something more than the desire to raise a laugh at a figure that lent itself to caricature.” He continues: “Socrates was for him a symbol of the new thought of the radical enlightenment” and therefore “a corrupter of youth.”<sup>10</sup> We should understand that Aristophanes was a great comic poet of fifth-century Athens and the attack on Socrates was not just for laughter. Comedy was “a civic institution,” and although *Clouds* in its present form is not the original play, Socrates should have at least some of the features mentioned in the play (Miller and Platter, 2010:152).

Socrates’ attempt to defend himself seems to be very difficult, but he does not have another choice. He has to obey the law and follow the procedure in court (19a). The only thing that he knows is that he is just and speaks the truth, and this is what he is determined to do now.

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<sup>10</sup> Apart from Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, the image of the eccentric Socrates is also found in *Frogs* (1491-9).

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Therefore, he does not seem to care so much about the result of the trial, but more about doing the right thing.

In addition, Socrates keeps saying that he knows nothing about the accusations and has nothing to do with these things (19c). He was a frequent interlocutor but he was not making speeches against the gods nor was he teaching for money (19d-e), like the Sophists, as I argue later. However, his constant questioning of all established beliefs made him look like a person who questioned religion, poetry and myth. In order to defend himself, he invoked the jurors themselves who were present many times in such conversations, to testify whether he had ever done this (19d). For him, it is not a bad thing for a wise man to teach, but he does not consider himself a wise man (19c); he has just a kind of wisdom, that is, human wisdom (20d).

### **Section 20c-23e: The origin of the slanders. Socrates' service to the god**

According to the oracle of Delphi in reply to Chaerephon's request to Pythia,<sup>11</sup> Socrates is the wisest man. Socrates is not a man who used to boast of such things, but there is a witness about this, Chaerephon's brother, since Chaerephon himself is dead (21a). The one certain thing for Socrates is that the oracle could not speak a falsehood, and therefore Socrates tried to understand it.<sup>12</sup>

Socrates will "try to show how he got this name and what produced the prejudice" (20d). The words 'name' (ὄνομα) and 'prejudice/slander' (διαβολήν) are controversial: some believe

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<sup>11</sup> Apollo speaks through the priestess Pythia.

<sup>12</sup> Many scholars (e.g. Blyth, 2000:15, Vlastos, 2001:288-9 and Waterfield, 2009:11) doubt the authenticity of the oracle: Maybe Plato (or Socrates) invented it in order to justify Socrates' mission, or it may be a legend from Greek mythology, with Socrates as the wisest but poor person (Chroust, 1957:32).



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that the second word is appositional to the first one since there is the additional ‘and’ (καὶ) between them.<sup>13</sup> Socrates connects his ‘name’ with wisdom (“I got this name, gentlemen, for no other reason than through some kind of wisdom,” 20d). Peterson (2011:19) mentions Burnet’s opinion according to which the name ‘wise’ is the slander itself. For Burnet this is also confirmed in 23a: “... so that many prejudices have resulted from them and I am called a wise man.” Burnet also claims that the reputation as a ‘wise’ person was not a laudatory one, at least in the fifth century, and this explains why Socrates wanted to get rid of this characterization. However, it is the oracle, not he, who is responsible for this title.<sup>14</sup>

It is especially during his *elenchus* (question and answer cross-examination) of people who were reputed for their wisdom that Socrates concluded that they were mistaken. Socrates obviously did not want the title of a ‘wise’ person, because he just proved that those with this reputation were without knowledge.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, these people got angrier and hated him, because Socrates tried to tell them the truth about their ignorance (21c-e). The contradictory thing was that Socrates did not know anything more. However, he knew one thing: that he knew nothing (21d), and this was his wisdom. He understood that he was becoming hated in this way, but he could not stop his inquiry, since he believed in the gods and the oracle of Delphi, showing once more that he was not at all an atheist (21e).<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the whole slander and dislike was a result of his faith in the gods. He concludes that god’s purpose was not to show that Socrates was the wisest of all; instead, he was just an example to enable people to realise that their wisdom

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<sup>13</sup> The words ὄνομα/ διαβολήν have various translations: For Taylor ‘appellation/calumny’, for Jowett ‘name of “wise”/ evil fame’ and for Fowler ‘reputation/ prejudice.’

<sup>14</sup> See Peterson 2011:19, and her notes 5 and 6.

<sup>15</sup> Peterson (2011:23-4).

<sup>16</sup> Socrates’ religious profile serves Plato’s defence of him. Burnet (1924:174) marks in his comment on 22a7 Socrates’ irony in the words ‘only to find the oracle prove quite irrefutable’. He also notes, “This use of ἵνα to introduce an unexpected or undesired result ironically regarded as an end is as old as Homer.”

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was of little importance. He was just helping god to find any wise people, but with no success (23b-c). Men of a specific expertise could not accept that they were not wise in some other fields and therefore they hated Socrates. They hated him even more when some young men, who wanted to be followers of Socrates, performed similar cross-examinations, and as a result, angered those under examination.

Nevertheless, his inquiry and the ensuing anger of the examined people intensified their will to accuse Socrates of the corruption of the young on the basis of his acquaintance mostly with Alcibiades and some other men, who seem to have put Athens in danger.<sup>17</sup> They felt embarrassed for themselves and they had to accuse the man who was responsible for the revelation of their ignorance. The convenient person in this case was Socrates, since in their opinion, Socrates was boasting about his knowledge. They also considered him a philosopher who dealt with supernatural things, calling into question the gods, which could be a substantial charge (23d).

Socrates repeats the fact that these slanders have long existed and it is very difficult for the jurors to accept another version of the events (23e). Socrates knows the difficulty of his

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<sup>17</sup> Dover (1970:283-4) mentions some participants in the mutilation of the Herms and the profanation of the mysteries who are all connected with Alcibiades and were members (more or less) of the 'Socratic circle'. Some of them are Axiochos, Adeimantos, Archebiades, Phaidros, Akumenos (father of Eryximachos) and Charmides (cousin of Kritias and uncle of Plato). Dover clarifies in p.284 that Eryximachos in the *Smp.* 185e-188e may be not the one connected with the mutilation, but a nephew or cousin of Akumenos. There were some demagogues, like Andokles, who wanted to prosecute Alcibiades because he "stood in the way of their secure leadership of the Assembly" (*Thuc.* 6.28.2). Dover notes on the basis of Thucydides that the above impieties were connected with political conspiracy against democracy. Therefore, the men involved and Socrates as their 'teacher' were considered guilty. Nails (2002:17-20) notes the names of people who had Socratic connections: Acumenus, Adeimantus of Scambonidae, Agariste III, Alcibiades III, Alcibiades of Phegous, Andocides IV, Axiochus, Charicles, Charmides, Critias IV, Samon, Diognetus, Eryximachus, Eucrates, Meletus of Athens and Phaedrus. Nails criticizes Dover who "downplays the political motivations behind the crime (contra MacDowell 1962)", but (she) concedes, "No doubt the prevailing feelings in 415 encouraged people to pay off old scores by incriminating personal enemies." Nails also mentions Furley's connections between the mutilation of the herms and the failure of the Sicilian expedition, which was disastrous for Athens, and therefore the anger against all the acquaintances of Socrates was expected.

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defence, although he keeps telling the truth (24a). It is odd, however, that Socrates claims the truth of his words throughout the *Apology*. Was it not obvious that a defendant should tell the truth in a court? Or is he repeating the claim just to persuade the audience and hide the truth?

### **Section 23e- 28b: Socrates' accusers and the accusations**

Socrates first mentions the names of his later accusers in 23e. Although Meletus was the official prosecutor and Anytus and Lykon the advocates (*sunegoroi*), Anytus earlier in 18b seems to be the leader of the three. It is interesting that each accuser belongs to a different profession, the poets, the artisans and public men, and the orators. Perhaps Plato wanted to present the difficulty of Socrates' defence against those who had great wisdom in their own field, but not in all sorts of matters, as they thought.

Taylor (1960:158-9), with a reference to Burnet, provides some information mostly on Anytus and his accusation. The 'crime' of Socrates (the corruption of the young) had been committed under the old democracy, before the archonship of Euclides; according to the "Amnesty," any mention of this period was prohibited. Therefore, as a supporter of the Amnesty, Anytus could not himself prosecute Socrates, so he chose Meletus to present the pretext above as the main accusation. Furthermore, Taylor agrees with Burnet, who claims that Meletus must be the same person who prosecuted Andocides the same year with the same accusation (the name Meletus is quite rare to believe the opposite).<sup>18</sup> The implications in both works about the

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<sup>18</sup> The source is the speech *Against Andocides*, under the name of Lysias.

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mutilation of Hermai and Alcibiades, who was a close acquaintance of Socrates, show that Meletus did not pay much attention to the Amnesty, whereas Socrates obeys the relevant law.

Socrates in 24c provides further explanations about his prosecution. The implication is that the Athenians believed in the traditional pantheon (θεούς) whereas Socrates believed in other religious novelties (καινὰ δαιμόνια).<sup>19</sup> Athenians who were interrogated by Socrates were looking to charge people who were challenging the established tradition, like Socrates, since religious change could agitate the socio-political balance.<sup>20</sup> In addition, Shorey (1933/1962:68-9) notes on the later line 27e-28a about the clause ὡς οὐ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἔστιν καὶ δαιμόνια καὶ θεῖα ἡγεῖσθαι, καὶ αὐτῷ μῆτε δαίμονας μῆτε θεοὺς μῆτε ἥρωας, οὐδεμία μηχανή ἐστιν, that the person who believes in spiritual things must believe in divine things too (like Socrates). He regards the second part of the clause as a complementary negative without further meaning. Moreover, there is an argument among scholars regarding the complete atheism of Socrates. Brickhouse and Smith (1989:30-1) express their disagreement with Burnet, Taylor and Allen who believe that the charge against Socrates did not concern his disloyalty to gods in general but to the gods of the Athenian state. They argue on the basis of Diogenes Laertius' (II.40) and Xenophon's words (*Mem.* 1.1.1), according to which, "the gods the state recognizes (Socrates) does not recognize" (there is a connection between νόμος and νομίζειν, so Socrates does not recognize the 'customary' gods). In addition, Brickhouse and Smith do not accept the distinction

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<sup>19</sup> There is a big discussion on the translation of the words *daimon* and *daimonion*. Many scholars do not distinguish them and translate both as 'spirits' or 'spiritual things/beings'. Guthrie (1969:402, n.1) stresses the difference between the noun *daimon* (δαίμων) and the adjective *daimonion* (e.g. τὸ δαιμόνιον σημεῖον). Therefore, it is not true when Meletus accuses Socrates on account of his *daimonion* and the introduction of new gods (31d), since it is not about 'a new god'. For this reason, I consider more appropriate the translation 'religious novelties'. Other Platonic references to Socrates' divine sign (*daimonion*) are in the *Republic* (VI.496c), the *Phaedrus* (242b), the *First Alcibiades* (105e-106a), the *Theages* (129e), the *Theaetetus* (151a), the *Euthyphro* (3b) and the *Euthydemus* (272e). Xenophon refers to it too in his *Memorabilia* (1.1.2) and *Apology* (13).

<sup>20</sup> Brickhouse and Smith (1989:18-19).

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between οὐ νομίζειν θεούς (“not to recognize the gods”) and οὐ νομίζειν εἶναι θεούς (“not to recognize that there are gods”) that the above scholars discern, since Socrates seems to use both (*Ap.* 26b-28a and 29a), and Meletus clearly says τὸ παράπαν οὐ νομίζεις θεούς, “you do not believe in gods at all,” 26c7). Therefore, Brickhouse and Smith consider Socrates to be a complete atheist. Things are complicated because serious political issues are hidden behind Socrates’ charge. The Athenians wanted to take revenge on the oligarchs for the rule of the Thirty Tyrants and their own unfavorable political and economic situation. Socrates was a friend (and a teacher too?) of the oligarchs (such as Alcibiades, Critias, Charmides) and so the perfect target. In addition, Socrates knows that many people considered him a Sophist (18b1-c1, 19a8-20a2). Therefore, for some scholars the accusation about Socrates’ atheism is just a pretext since the corruption of the young is the main accusation, whereas for some others it is the truth.<sup>21</sup>

McPherran (1996:8-9) observes that *elenchus* and *epagoge* (“inductive analogy”) made Socrates a rational person, which contrasts with his profile above as a person who came into conflict with others in order to obey an oracle (and thus be loyal to religion). Nowhere in the *Apology* did he look with scepticism upon the oracle, nor did he try to explain it rationally (despite the fact that he refutes the oracle in a way, since he questions people in order to

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<sup>21</sup> Waterfield (2009:32-3) notes that there were other trials of impiety as well besides Socrates’ in the fourth and fifth century (trial of Aristotle of Stagira, Theophrastus of Eresus, Andocides and Nicomachus). He mentions that some other scholars claim that these trials were due to “a conservative backlash at the time”, but Waterfield believes that there were political subtexts behind the accusations. The word ‘impiety’ is so vague that the judges had to assess the man and the crime on trial. A prosecution for impiety could mean not being a good citizen, since all the rituals were closely related to the goodness of gods and therefore the well-being of the whole Athenian state. Waterfield asserts (p.39) that Socrates might follow all the ritual obligations (according to Xenophon) but it did not imply his complete devotion to the gods. Plato’s Socrates believed in the goodness of the gods and doubted some traditional stories which included immoral behaviour (p.40). However, he was not the only one who was accused of introducing new gods (e.g. Phryne, Nino) and many others were dealing with polytheism. On the other hand, the introduction of new gods could affect the prosperity of Athens and there were no reason for changes (pp.44-5). Socrates was also an unpleasant arrogant figure because he excluded the others with his *daimonion* “in a most undemocratic fashion” (p.46). Waterfield concludes that the ‘impiety’ was a serious threat but political subtexts are possible too (p.47). Dover (1976:24-5) mentions many ancient authors who wrote about cases of impiety; however, Dover (1976:32) wonders whether they had enough evidence at their disposal.

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determine whether someone else was wiser). For McPherran Socrates is a ‘theist’ and ‘agnostic’ at the same time. He concludes (1996:10): “Socrates also still serves as a paradigm of the intellectual (even the religious) life for both the humanities and popular culture.” I share the same opinion with McPherran on Socrates’ controversial figure, rational but religious too (according to Plato’s demonstration). He was not completely an atheist; he just wanted to reform the religious convictions of his time, as Plato continued to do.

Furthermore, although until this point Socrates has been the main speaker, in 24d-25c he addresses Meletus, the main plaintiff, and starts a dialogue following his maieutic method. In order to defend himself, he tries to show that Meletus is a hypocrite because he does not care about the youth and the society of Athens. Drawing an analogy to horses, Socrates claims that only the horse trainers, and not the majority of people, are experts with horses. However, Meletus believes in the power of the many, that only Socrates is the corruptor of the youth while all the others improve them. Socrates is ironic towards this exaggeration, since it cannot be true and since Meletus is not able to understand that men (as horses) are in need of specialists (like himself in philosophy).

Although Socrates seems to be willing to understand Meletus’ way of thinking, he shows that his thoughts are illogical. Socrates defends himself by saying that he does not corrupt the youth voluntarily, and if he ever did something like that, he did it unwillingly. In this case, according to the law, they should give Socrates some guidance and not punishment in the court. Therefore, he should not be there at all (26a).

In 26b-c, the charge of corrupting the young is connected to Socrates’ belief in gods. Meletus charges that the corruption by Socrates occurs through teaching unacceptable things related to atheism. Until now, the idea was that Socrates believed in some deities, but now

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Meletus accuses him of not believing at all in gods (26c). Socrates then accuses Meletus of confusing him with Anaxagoras of Clazomene, a pre-Socratic philosopher who believed in the divinity of the sun and moon. Diogenes Laertius (II.7) writes that Pericles, who was Anaxagoras' student, spoke in defence of him, but Anaxagoras was exiled to Lampsacus for impiety and not put to death, as Socrates was. Taylor (1917:82) mentions the two aspects of Anaxagoras' accusations: according to the first and Sotion (D.L. ii. 12), his accuser was Cleon and the charge was *asebeia*, whereas according to the second one and Satyrus, Thucydides was the accuser and *asebeia* and Medism the charge. Taylor notes that the prosecution was either "part of the attack on Pericles by the more advanced democrats at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War" (according to Sotion), or concerned "the struggle by which Pericles originally rose to unchallenged political supremacy" (according to Satyrus). The two cases above seem to be similar, but Socrates was focused on the knowledge of the self and not on the natural phenomena. However, his interrogative method of inquiry was innovative and not easily accepted.

Socrates attributes to Meletus the adjectives ὑβριστής ("hubristic") and ἀκόλαστος ("undisciplined"), in order to denounce his depravity and deceit (26e). To confirm his characterizations he starts examining Meletus in front of the jurors. After a series of three examples, involving human beings, horses and flute-players, Socrates makes Meletus admit that if someone believes in the existence of divine things, then he believes in gods too. In addition, Meletus agrees that spirits are a kind of gods, so Socrates believes in gods, since he believes in spirits (27c-d). In order to understand Meletus' way of thinking, Socrates makes him seem an unintelligent person who contradicts himself. Meletus was not confident in his statements while Anytus 'used' and guided him. Socrates indeed admits in 28a-b that his enemies are not just

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Meletus and Anytus, but the hate of the masses. Furthermore, due to the long-term slander, Socrates feels that his defence is useless.<sup>22</sup>

## **Section 28c- 35d: The defence of Socrates' philosophy**

Socrates supported his philosophical beliefs until the end and was not willing to change them just to save his life.<sup>23</sup> Even if he would promise to stop his philosophical inquiries, he would continue them (29c-30b). He discovered the truth for himself and he wanted the same for others. Plato shared with Socrates the same way of thinking and wanted to defend him as a unique personality, but he also pursued the spread of his philosophy. To know that you know nothing is an everlasting ethical precept in life. Specifically, Socrates likens himself to demigods like Achilles, who knew that he would die if he killed Hector. Nevertheless, Achilles preferred to avenge his friend Patroclus than live a life as a coward (*Iliad* 18.70-104). In ancient Greece, eternal fame was one of the most superior aspirations, and Socrates had to remain steady to his principles and fight for them too (28c-d). He had proved in the past that he did not care about his life, since he fought at the battles of Potidaea (432 B.C.), Amphipolis (422 B.C.) and Delium (424 B.C.). By mentioning his participation in these battles, he presents himself as a patriotic and loyal citizen who followed orders and served his country. This is the reason for following the Delphic oracle and starting his inquiry without being afraid of death; he is as dedicated to his philosophy as he is to his city. Plato draws a parallel between these two situations to express Socrates' desire to 'fight' for his philosophy. Plato's military language is evident in many points

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<sup>22</sup> The matter of time Socrates had to face during his defence seems to be important for him, *Ap.* 19a, *Men.* 76e-77a.

<sup>23</sup> "There is no danger that it will stop with me", "You do not speak well...if you think a man...ought to consider danger of life or death" (28b), "wherever a man stations himself, there he must...remain and run his risks" (28d).



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(“the commanders stationed me,” “the god gave me a station with orders” (28e), “to desert my post,” “disobey” (29a-b)) in order to emphasize Socrates’ readiness to risk his life for his ideas under the ‘commands’ of Apollo (a good soldier cannot abandon his battle line, so Socrates does not wish to escape from the trial).

He also wanted to present himself as a true defender of his loyalty to the gods and his philosophy,<sup>24</sup> explaining to the judges that he respects their authority but above all, he respects the gods and their will. He cannot stop his inquiry even if he were asked to do it because his priority is the search for wisdom, truth and the perfection of the soul (29c-e). The Athenians should have the same priority since they are well known for their wisdom. Socrates (or Plato) in a skillful way tries to make the judges feel uncomfortable about their interest in wealth and reputation and lead them to the conclusion that his inquiry is beneficial to the whole city. For his purpose, he uses words with deep philosophical meaning, such as ἀρετή and ἀγαθά, and expresses the idea that “virtue does not come from money, but from virtue comes money and all other good things to man, both to the individual and to the state” (30b). Furthermore, they will “profit” (ὀνήσεσθε) by hearing him (30c). If they do not listen to him, they will harm themselves and not Socrates. He shows again his confidence in his ideas and his disregard for death (30c-d). Specifically, he picks very carefully words related to harm and death, like ἄν βλάψειεν (“for neither Meletus nor Anytus could injure me,” 30c) and ἀποκτείνειε, ἐξέλασειεν, ἀτιμώσειεν (“He might, however, perhaps kill me or banish me or disfranchise me,” 30d). The first one seems to

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<sup>24</sup> The words “philosophy”, “wise” and many others are controversial. Peterson (2011:38-39) believes that the accusers may have used these words in a different way than Socrates. For example, in 29d Socrates considers “philosophizing” as the examining of people and things, while the accusers give the meaning of theorizing on unknown things, like the gods or nature. Therefore, when Socrates refers to his philosophy, he means his effort to understand things that he is not aware of, and he certainly does not try to teach. Prior (1997:119) considers that Plato perhaps was the only one who understood so well Socrates and the meaning of his philosophy, and that this is the reason for defending him.

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be more important for Socrates, since it has the meaning of injury (ethical and psychological), while the other three have the meaning of physical damage. Nevertheless, he does not hesitate to mention again that his possible death is unjust (30d).

In addition, Socrates likens himself to a fly which disturbs a horse. Likewise, he tries to arouse common people by exhorting them all the time to find virtue (30e-31b). This is the reason that others are annoyed with him. However, he repeats that he does not do it in order to get money, and his accusers do not have any witness to testify the opposite. On the contrary, he has his proof, which is his poverty (31c).<sup>25</sup>

At this point, Socrates relates his unwillingness to enter politics to god's will. He claims that a divine voice that comes to him prevented his political involvement in order to save his life (31d-e). He always speaks the truth, which explains his many political opponents (thus implying that other politicians do not promote the truth). However, he prefers to express the truth and remain loyal to his beliefs, and so he chooses to do that in private conversations. The interesting thing is that Socrates did not stand aloof from the political life of Athens, since he was a member of the Assembly (*Boule*) at least once.<sup>26</sup> It was his choice to stay and act in Athens, a city that he loved and enjoyed (*Phdr.* 230b-d). He wants to prove now his obedience to the laws, without hesitating to juxtapose his political activity with the judges' (32b-c). Even when the Thirty Tyrants dominated the city, he was not afraid of death and thus he disobeyed their orders: when the Thirty ordered the unjust arrest of the wealthy Leon the Salaminian in order to seize his

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<sup>25</sup> He repeats that again later in 37c and 38a-b; see p. 24-5.

<sup>26</sup> "The Council (*Boule*) of 500 was divided for convenience into panels of 50 *prytaneis*, acting in rotation for one-tenth of the year each. Their duty was to prepare business for the *Ecclesia* (assembly of the whole people), and any proposal had to be considered by them before being brought before the *Ecclesia*" (Guthrie 1969:380, n.1).

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property, Socrates was the only one who refused to participate.<sup>27</sup> He defends the truth of his words by declaring that there were many witnesses to these facts (32e). He speaks with certainty, as though everybody knew his integrity.

Socrates provides more information regarding his activity, which is misunderstood. He explains (as he has done before) that he just asks questions of people regardless of their economic status and without promising them anything. He defends himself by repeating that he is nobody's teacher, so that he has no responsibility for anyone's behaviour. The claim that he is not a wise person (ἄγονός εἰμι σοφίας) and that he follows his maieutic method in his conversations with others is found in *Theaetetus* (150b-c) too.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the fact that he did not receive any payment proves that his conversations indeed were just public talks without any financial purpose (33b).

Socrates' speech becomes more persuasive when he invokes some of the men who were present at the time of the trial; he can use them as witnesses since many of them had been his interlocutors or the relatives of them in the past. In particular, he mentions Crito, Lysanias the Sphettian, Antiphon of Cephisus, Nicostratus, Paralius, Theages, Adeimantus, Aeantodorus and

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<sup>27</sup> Guthrie (1969:380) comments: "Critias and Charmides might well think that they could count on him...but they underestimated his attachment to legality." According to *Ep. VII* 325e, Socrates' condemnation led Plato not to enter politics. His only hope was either for philosophers to govern or for the political leaders to become more philosophic (326a-b).

<sup>28</sup> Long (1998:119) points out that "Plato, up to and including the composition of the *Theaetetus*, never stops rewriting the *Apology*." He continues: "In the *Theaetetus*, as in the *Apology*, Socrates defends his educational mission .... Socrates characterizes himself as someone dedicated to investigating the intellectual progress of young men" (p.122). In 143d-148d, Plato implies the accusation of the corruption of the young and in 150b-151d Socrates considers his art as "philosophical midwife" and he "runs over his career and mission in ways that seek to improve on, his account of himself in the *Apology*." "He makes it his business to attend to the souls of young men who are pregnant with ideas." His philosophical work is "divinely mandated" and he continues the inquiry further with some young men with the guidance of his *daimonion*. Those who do not want to admit their ignorance became angry towards Socrates. Long believes that these people did not see Socrates' "devotion to truth" and "pure good will." Therefore, in *Theaetetus* "Plato is once again defending Socrates and clarifying his significance for philosophy." According to Long, the "explicitness of Socrates' defence" and the "recasting of the official *Apology*" is evident (p.122).

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Plato (33d-34a). He shows his confidence and satisfaction that all of them are ready to defend him. If Socrates was indeed a corrupting influence, his ‘victims’ or their relatives would have come now for revenge, but that did not happen. Therefore, his accusers are liars, and not he.

Socrates draws to our attention that he displays a different behaviour in the court in comparison to other defendants. He is not willing to expose his family and make them plead with the jurors. Obviously, he is not afraid of death, as he has said before, but he took this decision due to his age and reputation (34e).<sup>29</sup> According to him, men who are scared of death are a disgrace to the state and should be condemned. Socrates understands that people are mortal, and this is the reason that he is ready to die in order to defend his divine mission (35a-b). At the same time, he proves that he is an Athenian citizen who contributes to the high esteem of the city (by not begging) and trusts the jurors’ decision (35c-d) which is based on justice and laws rather than pity. He expects jurors to be loyal to their oath and god’s will, so he proves once again that he is not an atheist. Obviously, possible prejudices always affected the verdict, and it did not have to do necessarily with the truth. Socrates is a defender of truth and he is willing to risk his life in order to express it.

### **Section 35e- 42a: The verdict**

Socrates’s defence ends at this point (35d). He has tried to defend himself for all the reasons above. The jurors need to cast their votes and announce the verdict. Socrates is surprised by the ratio between innocent and guilty votes, since he expected to lose by a bigger percentage (36a). He also wants to make fun of Meletus, who had the courage to confront him and would

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<sup>29</sup> See also p. 26, n.33: Xenophon’s opinion about Socrates’ disregard of death.

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have paid a fine for not receiving a fifth part of the votes if Anytus and Lykon did not accuse Socrates as well (36b). He becomes more sarcastic when Meletus proposes the death penalty, which reveals Meletus' true aim: to get rid of Socrates forever; exile or other penalty was not enough. He continues jesting and being ironic: he deserves a reward and not a penalty, since he did not do anything unjust; he seems to be proud of himself because he was not interested in fortune, military offices and public speaking (36b). He wanted to distinguish himself since his only care was the whole state and its perfection (36c). Socrates calls himself εὐεργέτης, “benefactor” (36d), spending his time urging each citizen to follow a just way of life. Therefore, he keeps defending his philosophy, although he faces the death penalty. However, he has to make a counter-penalty, so he proposes free meals in the *prytaneum*, like the honoured athletes who win at Olympic Games (36d). It is common for Socrates to make comparisons between himself and other heroes (like Achilles at 28c and Heracles at 22a),<sup>30</sup> since his ‘labour’ was to show the ignorance of others. Socrates likens himself to these heroes because he thinks of himself as a greater benefactor to the citizens than they are (he makes Athenians truly happy, and not just apparently so, 36d). Socrates must have been γreatly devoted to his philosophy and believed in its superiority, which he connects with happiness in many Platonic works as the ultimate goal in life.

The penalty proposed by Meletus provided Plato the opportunity to present Socrates as a man who ignores death for the sake of truth and his philosophy. He indeed might be indigent and wanted to prove his poverty at the same time (in contrast to the Sophists who used to accept payment). This is also the reason for his being unable to pay a fine as a penalty (37c), although Socrates' friends were willing to pay a fine of thirty minae (38b) even despite the crisis in

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<sup>30</sup> See also p. 81, n. 23 for other comparisons with demigods.

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Athens of 404-3 B. C. (at least Crito was quite wealthy). Although it seems there was a way to escape punishment, Plato wants to present Socrates as the deprived man who spent all his life in philosophy in order to maintain his principles and was not willing to betray them now.

Nevertheless, Socrates must have forced the issue while he seemed to be very sure about the verdict that he may even have wanted.<sup>31</sup> He probably could not propose any possible acceptable penalty, because it would be like accepting his guilt. He declares, “I never intentionally wronged anyone” (37a). With their offer his friends actually prove their trust in Socrates’ selfless attitude and virtuous service. The most important thing for Socrates is not his life, but his philosophy, his search for the truth, and his obedience to the laws, which Plato deliberately wants to demonstrate. Plato also stresses the factor of time in Socrates’ defence, because one day is not enough to examine someone’s personality and activity (37b). For Socrates, the only way to know himself and pursue happiness is by philosophising, since “a life without examination is not worth living” (38a).

Socrates was not a rich man. However, if he wanted to live longer and not to be condemned to death, he could have accomplished it. In Athens of the fifth century, there were two kinds of trial, *graphe* (“any citizen could bring a specific charge of wrongdoing”) and *dike* (“only the victim of an alleged crime could charge another with having illegally caused the harm”).<sup>32</sup> Socrates’ trial was a *graphe*: some *graphai* did not carry fixed penalties and therefore they involved an *agon timetos*, in which the jury had to decide between the proposed penalty of the prosecutor and the defendant. The proposal for meals in the *prytaneum* was the *antitimesis* (a counter penalty) of Socrates. It is almost impossible to consider that the jury would have agreed

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<sup>31</sup> Taylor (1960:166-167).

<sup>32</sup> Brickhouse and Smith (2004:73).

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with this penalty. Perhaps his ‘crime’ was not big enough to deserve death, but the jurors had to take a decision according to the Athenian laws.

Plato wished to demonstrate Socrates’ confidence about his defence speech and unconcern regarding a possible condemnation to death. Socrates does not care at all about his life, since he admits that he is “far along in life and close to death” (38c).<sup>33</sup> He wants mostly to defend his way of life. If he preferred his life over his loyalty to his principles, he may have been acquitted.<sup>34</sup> However, he feels that he made the correct choice between just and evil actions, which should present useful advice to younger men. There is always a way to escape death in a trial or battle, but this is not the point: The goal should be to stop wickedness (38e-39a). Socrates perhaps is alluding to the Sophists, who did not care about the truth, but only about victory in any kind of ‘battle’.<sup>35</sup> However, wicked people will receive their punishment too by their injustice (39b), which is a permanent punishment. These people need to improve themselves and not accuse Socrates of revealing their weakness.

Socrates does not blame anybody for what just happened. It was meant to be, since he had not received earlier any warning from his divine sign. He accepts his death as god’s will, showing once more his belief in gods (40a-b). He seems to have thought a lot about death and he concludes that death is something good because it may be similar to a sleep without consciousness (40c-d). If death is a transition of the soul from this world to the other where all

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<sup>33</sup> Xenophon in his *Apology* (6-7) seems to believe that this speech was not actually a defence. According to him, Socrates spoke in an ironic and boasting way because he wanted to cause his condemnation. He was old and he wanted to give an easy end to his life: και ὁ θεὸς δι’ εὐμένειαν προξενεῖ μοι οὐ μόνον τό ἐν καιρῷ τῆς ηλικίας καταλῦσαι τὸν βίον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ἦ ῥᾶστα.

<sup>34</sup> Taylor (1960:159-160) writes that if Socrates had not mentioned some incidents or stressed some positive ones, he might have been acquitted. He also had the chance to leave Athens while he was waiting one month for his trial.

<sup>35</sup> See p. 66, n. 8 about the Sophists’ victories in ‘battles’.

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the just people live, nothing is greater than this. He even declares his will continue his quests there! (40e-41c).

Socrates repeats that this death is almost desirable, since he is going to be rid of his problems (41d). Even at the end of his speech, the impression that Socrates gives is that he is superior to his accusers because he does not have evil feelings inside him in comparison to them. He is just a man who follows the decision of the jurors and the gods and expects the same obedience from his sons too (41e-42a).

## **Conclusion**

Plato's desire to defend Socrates against his formal and informal accusations is evident throughout the *Apology*. It is a speech made in defence of Socrates' conduct. Plato's defence occurs in various ways, for example, through his *elenchus* and verbal devices, such as irony, similes and further hints. Plato's Socrates is an extraordinary man who supports his ideas without being afraid of a possible trial and condemnation to death. For Plato, Socrates was a philosopher who could inspire other men, but he was not a teacher (like the Sophists), since he 'knew nothing'. Scholars have many opinions about Socrates' innocence. Whether he is innocent or not, one thing is certain: Plato wishes to demonstrate Socrates' integrity, his loyalty to gods and his only aim, which was the discovery and support of the truth. In the *Apology*, Plato defends Socrates against both of the main accusations, the impiety and the corruption of the young. In the *Symposium*, the second accusation is again confronted, this time in the eulogy of Love.



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## Chapter Two: The *Symposium*

### Introduction

Plato's *Symposium* is one of the most detailed works of Plato about Socrates and his life. Therefore, this work will contribute to my inquiry regarding Plato's use of Socrates. I argue that Plato had an important reason for attributing certain features to Socrates: to defend Socrates against his two main accusations, the corruption of the young and his impiety. This may not be the overt topic of the *Symposium* (it is Eros), but Plato implies his defence very artistically. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Plato aspired to defend Socrates because Socrates was his mentor, and to preserve his memory as a just man whose ultimate goal was the happiness of all people.<sup>1</sup> However, Plato also wrote about his teacher because he wanted to express his own philosophical ideas through Socrates' mouth. I examine the case for both being valid.

According to Hunter (2004:113-5), "The *Symposium* has always been one of Plato's most read, most influential, and most imitated works." He asserts that the *Symposium* has been discussed many times because of its topic, *eros*, and the various aspects of sexual life in ancient Greece. In addition, the dialogue is popular because it is easy for everybody to read without any special philosophical skills. He also notes that this work depicts the flourishing life of classical Athens of the fifth century (philosophy, science, political life) compared to the years later with the decline of Athens. I agree that the *Symposium* will always be interesting and entertaining because of its timeless topic of love, but it is more than an erotic work. A person may start from loving another person, but his final aim must be the desire for inner beauty and wisdom. Plato chose Socrates as the ideal philosopher to talk about reaching this goal in our lives.

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<sup>1</sup> Waterfield (1994:xii) mentions Socrates' possible resemblance with God regarding their common aim: to create a spirit of unconditional love among people (there are many kinds of love, as Socrates mentions in the *Symposium*).

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Furthermore, I focus on Plato's apologetic hints in the *Symposium* and on finding its common traits with the *Apology*. I claim that Plato in both works presents Socrates as an extraordinary figure but without guilt for the accusations brought against him. Plato proves that throughout this work and especially with Alcibiades' speech at the end, which is actually a eulogy to Socrates. Although the *Symposium* is ostensibly a praise of *Eros*, there is a close connection between *Eros* and Socrates, which I discuss later on.

### **Socrates: The central figure in the *Symposium***

In ancient Greece, a symposium (*symposion* < *syn*+*pinein*, "to drink together") was an occasion for a drinking gathering of aristocratic men. They used to drink, enjoy themselves and discuss important issues.<sup>2</sup> Plato's *Symposium* is a dialogue about a gathering in Agathon's house after the victory of the tragic poet in a dramatic competition the previous day (Lenaea of 416 B.C.). Plato's *Symposium* is based on a second-hand story (*Smp.*172a-173b)<sup>3</sup> which was narrated a long time after the actual symposium (173a5), when Agathon no longer lived in Athens (172c3).

The *Symposium* is probably Plato's fiction, despite the excellent blend with some historical elements. His dramatic power may make the reader think that everything Plato writes is historically true, although it is obvious that sometimes cannot be. The reader must follow the flow of Plato's thought and examine his philosophical ideas. Furthermore, it is crucial not to seek

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<sup>2</sup> A good description of a *symposium* is in Hunter's book (2004:5-7): The symposium's rules, libations, the influence of Dionysus and his wine, the *symposiarchos*, music, sexual jests etc. help our understanding of the night's mood.

<sup>3</sup> The first clue for the fictitious character of the *Symposium*.

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final answers, because some questions will always remain unanswered. The quest is more essential.<sup>4</sup>

From the beginning of the *Symposium*, it is clear that Plato aims to focus on Socrates. He is definitely the central figure of this work due to his extraordinary character (his ἀτοπία, 175a10, 215a2). Socrates usually has an unkempt appearance, but that day he looked surprisingly good. The day before the symposium, he did not go to the festival in order to avoid the crowds, but the day after he decided to go to Agathon's house. Furthermore, the previous day, he did not drink, unlike the rest of the men who were now present in the symposium. Plato wants to pay attention to Socrates in any way he can. He starts with Socrates' physical appearance and behaviour and he ends with his deeper ideas. Although all the other participants are eminent aristocratic men, Socrates stands out; they did not act differently the day of the symposium nor did they distinguish themselves with their speeches. They all praised Love and approached basic aspects of it, but Socrates came closer to the most complete definition of it (he actually represents Love, as I argue later on).

During the symposium, the prominent guests decided to make speeches on Love (177a-e), first Phaedrus, then Pausanias, Eryximachus, Aristophanes, Agathon, and last Socrates. Plato probably made Socrates the last speaker in order to show his prominence and allow him to draw upon the previous speeches ("we won't complain (about the order of the speeches), as long as the earlier speakers do their job well enough," 177e). Phaedrus, an admirer of Socrates, claims that

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<sup>4</sup> Kahn (1996:38) wonders himself "why do so many of the dialogues end in an *aporia* where no satisfying conclusion seems to be reached?" Later, on p. 41 he concludes, "Plato created an essentially new form, the *aporetic* dialogue with a pseudo-historical setting." The same *aporetic* format appears in the *Meno* (see pp.53- 54 below) and the *Charmides* (see p. 96). In p. 98 below, I mention Newall's opinion on this matter ('the intelligent reader is left to draw the conclusion') and Tuckey's (Plato wants to remain true to 'Socrates' undogmatic method'), regarding *Charmides*; however, I believe these explanations can apply to all Plato's *aporetic* dialogues.

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they need to find Love's origins in order to clarify its importance (178a-b), because it is a motive for great things, even for sacrifice (179b). Pausanias was a lover of Agathon, Eryximachus a proponent of medicine, Aristophanes a comic poet and Agathon a great Greek tragedian. All of them—very important men—undertook to explain the notion of *eros* with their speeches, leading to Socrates' speech about *eros*. The upward order of the speeches is similar to the ladder of Love (upward movement in order to be closer to Love itself) that obviously Plato claims.<sup>5</sup> Socrates' speech appears to be the dominant one among the previous speeches, and this is more apparent because of its place in the dialogue, directly after Agathon's speech, which impressed even Socrates (198b-c).<sup>6</sup>

Plato presents Socrates teasing Agathon that Agathon cannot get some of Socrates' wisdom by just sitting next to him (175e). Only original philosophical thought can contribute to the attainment of wisdom. Socrates proved that with the time he devoted to thinking. While he was heading to Agathon's house, he fell behind because he was lost in his thoughts; in spite of Aristodemus' exhortation to move on, Socrates could not let pass the chance for thinking (174d). Even when he arrived at his destination, he stood for a while in a neighbor's porch just to think (175a). Aristodemus comments that this is common behaviour for Socrates (175b). Later, Alcibiades mentions in his speech that Socrates stood thinking a whole day and night at the battle of Potidaea (432 B.C.), while the others were trying to sleep (220c-d). Plato presents Socrates as an intellectual force, which will lead closer to wisdom. In addition, Plato chooses very carefully specific people to represent certain ideas; if this is the case here and Socrates represents

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<sup>5</sup> See the *scala amoris* in Scott's theory (pp.46-7 below). Scott (2000:32) believes that Socrates is at the end of the ascent, since not only Alcibiades but also Socrates himself is going through all these stages. I assume that Socrates with his speech in the *Symposium* wanted to help Alcibiades and the rest to 'climb' this ladder in order to improve themselves philosophically. Therefore, they need to put aside wealth, the love of other bodies and the rest of their possessions (216e) in order to reach the goal of Love and Beauty in their souls.

<sup>6</sup> More details about the order and the connexion of the speeches at pp.33-4 below, n.9, Bury's and Taylor's notes.

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philosophy and Agathon tragedy, then Plato may imply the superiority of philosophy over tragedy. This feeling of Socrates' superiority made the irritated Agathon conclude that he and Socrates need Dionysus to judge who is the wisest. Indeed this is going to happen later.

The drunk Alcibiades appears suddenly at Agathon's door and asks permission to enter (212e). He has come to apologise for not congratulating Agathon for his win the day before and he wants to put garlands on him. However, when he realises Socrates' presence, he takes some ribbons off Agathon's chaplet in order to make one for Socrates too (213e). I examine Alcibiades' role in the *Symposium* in detail later, but it is obvious that Alcibiades (or Dionysus, if Alcibiades appears as Dionysus) wants to praise Socrates as well. Besides this, Alcibiades decides to deliver a eulogy to Socrates instead of to Love, confirming constantly the truth of his ensuing words (214e).

Phaedrus, the first speaker, states that Love leads people to happiness and to a high level of state organization due to a feeling of shame in front of lovers (178e-179b).<sup>7</sup> In addition, it is a powerful feeling between men and women that gods value highly (179d, 180a-b), since Love is itself a god who helps people obtain virtue and happiness (180b). Pausanias then disagrees with the existence of only one Love (180c) and distinguishes between Heavenly and Common Love (180c-e). However, only the 'proper' Love will reach virtue and honour. Pausanias also gives more information about the relationship among men, the lover (ἐραστής) who makes the loved

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<sup>7</sup> Plato refers to a description of Homer (a common element in the Platonic works, see p.86 below, n.20 and p.91): Love provides 'might' to some heroes; Waterfield (1994:76) gives the example of Diomedes at *Iliad* 10.482. Plato usually depicts Socrates as a hero (see p.81 below, n.23), so I assume that, since Socrates is full of love, he may be a hero in this case too (a specific reference to Achilles in *Smp.*179e, 180b). Therefore, Socrates is ready to strongly support his feelings for his lovers and any kind of love he feels (e.g. for his philosophy), as he proved with his condemnation.

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(ἐρώμενος) wiser, and the loved who makes the first happy in various ways (he probably had in mind his own relationship with Agathon; he was the loved one and Agathon the lover).

After Pausanias it is Aristophanes' turn to speak, but due to hiccups he is unable. Thus, Eryximachus takes his place. He completes Pausanias' speech by saying that Love is not only among humans but also among plants and animals (186a). Love can be everywhere, in any aspect of life: athletic, medical, and musical. Plato tries to exculpate love (and Socrates), distinguishing the two aspects of it (based on healthy and sick bodies, 186b): Socrates does not feel physical love for boys, but he is concerned deeply about their souls. In addition, in 186d Eryximachus says: "(The expert) should be capable of reconciling extremes of hostility between the bodily elements, and of making them love one another." There is also a reference to Asclepius as the Doctor of the Body (186e) and a possible relation with Socrates, who is the Doctor of the Soul (with the help of Philosophy), at least in Plato's mind<sup>8</sup>: Both can create a peaceful balance among the opposite elements in body and soul respectively. Furthermore, it seems that Eryximachus adds more elements to Pausanias' speech, and Pausanias to Phaedrus'. Following this pattern, we expect Aristophanes' speech to be enriched with more or different information (Eryximachus actually declares this expectation: "Aristophanes, it's up to you to remedy any defects," 188e).<sup>9</sup> His hiccups have stopped and he explains the importance of

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<sup>8</sup> See pp.90-1 below to another reference of mine to Socrates as a Doctor of the Soul.

<sup>9</sup> Bury (1909:lii) writes about the order and connexion of the speeches, which is not random. First, he separates the first five speeches (First Act) from Socrates' speech (Second Act) and Alcibiades' speech (Third Act). Some have claimed an ascending importance among the first five speeches, but Bury considers the critique of the next to the previous speaker in the symposium as "a rhetorical trick of method" (p. liii). Bury also mentions Steinhart, who classes the speeches in pairs (according to the ethical-physical-higher spiritual aspect of *Eros*), but Bury disagrees with Socrates' ranking with someone else (p. liv). He agrees with Hug's view regarding Plato's "artistic considerations" and he thinks that it is better to draw conclusions on the basis of the text. Socrates declares that he will make his speech in his own way (199a-b), distinguishing it from the others, and so Socrates' speech cannot be paired with another speech (p. iv). Bury concludes that Phaedrus is the first speaker, because he is "the primary inventor of the theme" (p. lvi). Taylor (1960:212) claims too that Phaedrus' speech is the first one since it is a "commonplace" which leads "by a proper *crescendo*" to Socrates' speech. In addition, Taylor believes that Plato

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interpersonal relationships through a myth: men are looking for their other half because Zeus in the past decided to cut them in two (189d). Men desire to find their other half not only for sexual intercourse but in order to help each other in other aspects of life (191c). Plato implies the beneficial contribution of Socrates in others' lives, especially the young men who need a guide and "were sliced from the male gender" (191e, a reason which excuses the presence of a man in other men's lives). Therefore, nobody can accuse Socrates of the sexual or ethical corruption of the young, since the relationships between men seem to have started a long time ago, before Socrates' time.<sup>10</sup>

Eryximachus recognizes the significance of Aristophanes' speech, declaring that if Agathon and Socrates were not the next ones, they would not need to add anything to his conclusions (193e; thus, he confirms the idea of an upward development in the discussion). It was well known that Agathon and Socrates were great speakers and their words were worth hearing (Agathon just won the first prize the previous day at Lenaea). To be able to persuade the masses and the judges (either through the truth or not) was a very important skill in ancient Athens. Socrates is ironic towards Agathon in stating that anyone who follows Agathon should be afraid of his own less impressive speech (194a). He is also craftily accusing Agathon of paying attention only to the ones considered 'wise' and not to the common people, including

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made the character of Phaedrus in the *Smp.* similar to the one in *Phd.* Pausanias' and Eryximachus' speeches have some common points, so they should be in the middle and there is left only the fourth place for Aristophanes. Plato perhaps places Aristophanes just before Agathon to show the juxtaposition between comedy and tragedy (Jowett's opinion too). According to Bury, Socrates' speech has to be distinguished from the others, since the other five "are men of *unphilosophic* mind" (Ivii). He concludes that Plato's aim was "to exhibit the general results of sophistic teaching" and that with Alcibiades' speech wants to present "a vivid portrait of Socrates as the perfect exemplar of *Eros*" and defend Socrates against his accusations (Ix). In order to deliver such a speech, Alcibiades includes many element of the previous speakers (Ix, Ixii) which proves that the place of his speech was not random.

<sup>10</sup> See in Hunter (2006:243) Brisson's notes about the Athenian custom and the matters of *paidēraistia* ("a social convention which appears as a response to the quest for knowledge," 229) and *philosophia* (the quest for knowledge).

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himself too (194c; implying that Socrates does the opposite). These words certainly have touched Agathon, but he is not discouraged and goes ahead with his speech (194e). He declares his wish to differentiate his speech from the previous ones (194e): he wants to clarify first Love's identity and then its contribution to people's lives (195a). According to Agathon, Love is young and the most beautiful of all gods, and he is able to bring happiness, peace and friendship (195a-c). In addition, Love is embedded only in the 'soft' souls of men (195e), as in Socrates', confirming once again the emotional and non-sexual aspect of Love. It is also related to integrity, self-discipline, courage, and overall it is the supreme pleasure (196b-d). Love benefits people and motivates them to deal with poetry even if they did not know anything about it in the past (196e). All gods developed their skills due to Love's effect, and so beauty was born in the human and divine level (197a-b). These are probably Plato's ideas regarding the Forms, like the Form of Beauty, which Plato implies in many of his works. Lastly, Agathon adds for Love that it causes "peace among men, calm on the open sea undisturbed by breath of air, wind's stillness at the end of day, and sleep for those with cares" (197c).<sup>11</sup> Although Agathon received applause, Socrates continues his irony towards him ("Don't you think ... that I was being prophetic when I claimed ... that Agathon would speak brilliantly and that I'd be at a loss for words?" 198a). It becomes more evident when he mocks Agathon's sophisticated language (198b; a typical element of the Sophists) and he clearly states the name of Gorgias (198c), declaring their resemblance. Socrates' speeches are not based on absurdities but on the truth (198d, 199a, 201c), but this is not easily apparent to most people (199a). Hunter (2004:36-7) notes the "rejection of encomium" (since it is irrelevant to the truth and includes only unreal praising comments) is "of a piece with

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<sup>11</sup> Waterfield 's translation (1994:35). Although the origin of these lines is uncertain (see Waterfield's relevant note at p.83), the style of these words (metres, structure, absurdities) is similar to the Sophist Gorgias'. This can be an additional element to the irony Socrates shows towards Agathon and the Sophists, as he does in other Platonic works (e.g., it is obvious in *Euthd.*)



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the Platonic Socrates' rejection of 'rhetoric' elsewhere, most notably in the *Gorgias*." The political speeches were full of lies, which prove the ignorance of the speakers. The truth expressed by Socrates in the *Symposium* (199b) is the same that he claimed in the *Apology* (17a-c), which is in contrast with his prosecutors' lies. Thus, Plato is defending Socrates, since most people did not realize his value, while the language of ignorant 'experts' impressed them.

In order to examine Love and draw his conclusions, Socrates starts his *elenchus* (cross-examination) of Agathon, applying his dialectic method.<sup>12</sup> Examination of Agathon and not someone else shows again the significance of Agathon. However, Socrates makes him admit that he was wrong regarding Love: although Agathon said earlier that Love is beautiful, Socrates proves that Love is without beauty, since people love what they have not acquired yet. Therefore, before Love obtained beauty, he had ugliness (201a-b). As a result, Plato presents Socrates as intellectually superior, especially when Agathon admits the difficulty of arguing with Socrates (201b).

Furthermore, Plato shows Socrates speaking the truth about Love, not because all ideas are his own, but because they are Diotima's, an imaginary figure who is presented as a wise woman (201d). Her ideas are transmitted through Socrates, so he himself declares that he knows nothing (as he did in the *Apology*). Therefore, Socrates draws correct conclusions, not due to his personal excellence but because he relies on Diotima's words which are supposed to be true, since she is wise.

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<sup>12</sup> Socrates later in 201e stresses the importance of *elenchus*, since Diotima, who is wise, used the same procedure on Socrates during their conversation.

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## Socrates represents Love

In 201d-204c, Socrates will try to repeat Diotima's words regarding Love.<sup>13</sup> First, the conclusion of Socrates' talk with Agathon earlier was that Love is ugly and bad (202d, 203c-d). I note here that Socrates was not a beautiful man and was perhaps an unpleasant figure to some people. However, Diotima claims that things may be somewhere between two conditions. It is wrong to say that Love is either beautiful or ugly, good or bad (201d-202b). She also believes that Love is a spirit (*daimon*), dwelling between humans and gods and actually the means for their communication (202d-e). We can recall from *Apology* that Socrates was the mediator between the Delphic Oracle and the common people. He did not consider himself a wise man either in the *Apology* or in the *Symposium*. However, he always pursued knowledge as Love did (203d). He loves knowledge in contrast to the ignorant people who do not (204a).<sup>14</sup> According to Diotima, Love was the child of his father Resource and mother Poverty, and so his father is wise but his mother not (203b-c). Socrates definitely had a kind of wisdom (he assumes that he has human wisdom, *Ap.*20d) but he continues looking for more. In addition, Love and Socrates are similar in terms of their economic status (neither wealthy nor destitute) and their extraordinary

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<sup>13</sup> Dover (1980:1-2): Love is φίλια < φιλεῖν. It can be a sexual feeling or a friendly affection. *Eros* (ἔρως): Any strong desire, mostly for a sexual partner. It can be the feeling or the deity depending on the content. *Eros* is a strong desire for a person who is beautiful (καλός) in his external appearance initially, but later on in his soul (211e). Hunter (2004:15-18) attempts to define the word *Eros/eros* too; *Eros* with capital letter is just to distinguish it from the desire *eros*, referring to the god. The latter is "an invasive force," "requires rapid satisfaction in sexual release," "a response to visual beauty," it "forces people to do things which they...know to be wrong" and it "is responsible for the continuation of the human race (Euripides, *Hippolytus* 449-50) and can bring great pleasure."

<sup>14</sup> Waterfield (1994:85-6) notes that 'love of knowledge' in Greek means *philosophia*. In addition, he considers Socrates' expertise on Love ((ὄς οὐδέν φημι ἄλλο ἐπίστασθαι ἢ τὰ ἐρωτικά (177d), ἔφην εἶναι δεινὸς τὰ ἐρωτικά (198d)) to be the same with the knowledge of his ignorance. His ignorance actually leads him to seek more knowledge.

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features of being shoeless, vagrant and unattractive. They are also both attracted to beauty; Love towards Aphrodite and Socrates towards the handsome Alcibiades (203c-d).<sup>15</sup>

Socrates did not have physical beauty but he certainly had beauty of mind. The conclusion from Diotima's words is that Love gives birth in beauty of body and mind (206b-c). When there is Love between men and women the result is reproduction (206c). However, there is not just one kind of procreation; there is also the intellectual one (Plato perhaps wants to excuse love between men, like Socrates and Alcibiades), whose result may be beauty of mind, which is also very important. There is reproduction inside a person too, who changes emotionally and mentally through the years and continues looking for the beautiful and good in life (207e). Of course, there is reproduction when a child is born and therefore it is the extension of ourselves (207d-208b; the same for animals). People are then closer to wisdom, immortality and happiness (the wisdom of the older is imparted to the younger), which seems to be the greater end in life (206c, 207a, 208e). However, the process of procreation (mentally and physically) is the object of Love and not beauty itself (206e).

Although the relationship between men was not a new thing at all in ancient Greece of the fifth century,<sup>16</sup> Plato provides us with details to understand better Socrates' intellectual love towards Alcibiades. Love is divided into Common Love, as I mentioned above, when there is reproduction of the body, and Heavenly Love, when there is reproduction of mind. In Heavenly Love, the process is very important because ideas can be reproduced through generations and therefore remain immortal. In order to reach the goal of Love, a young boy needs to understand

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<sup>15</sup> Waterfield (1994:85) underlines the similarity between Love and philosophy and the personification of Socrates as philosophy. He also claims the personification of Socrates as Love later in Alcibiades' speech.

<sup>16</sup> Dover (1980:3): The Athenians were used to homosexual relations because their ancestors were too. In their society, relationships between men were easier than between men and women, due to the duties of the latter inside the house.

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that the beauty of mind is more important than a beautiful body. Plato supports the same idea in the *Apology*: the priority must be the perfection of the soul with the further aim of wisdom and truth, and not the well-being of the body with the acquisition of wealth (29d). Beauty of mind is also stronger, since one can never lose it, in comparison to physical beauty. Gradually, the loved boy, with the help of his lover, will become a lover of knowledge, and when he becomes the wise lover, he will impart this knowledge to his loved one. The loved man will gratify sexually his older lover and their relationship will become strong and philosophically productive during their common ascent to wisdom, virtue and Love.

A similar relationship developed between Socrates and Alcibiades, and now in the *Symposium*, the young Alcibiades gives an *encomium* to the older and wiser Socrates instead of Love directly.<sup>17</sup> Obviously, this contributes to my conclusion that Love may actually be Socrates.

### **Alcibiades' eulogy to Socrates**

Alcibiades has a crucial role in the *Symposium*. He appears suddenly at Agathon's house, drunk and supported by a pipe-girl from a street party (212d). There was a sense that the dialogue among the aristocratic men had ended with Socrates' speech, but Alcibiades enters in order to give more information about Socrates and their relationship.

Despite his sudden and drunken appearance, he is more than welcome to their gathering. Waterfield (1994:90) notes that Alcibiades comes in wearing a chaplet over his head like the god Dionysus, and the warm welcome is due to his good looks like "the sudden appearance of true

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<sup>17</sup> Shorey (1933/1962:7) states that Alcibiades' eulogy is actually Plato's eulogy to Socrates. If the *Symposium* is a fiction, Plato wrote the story according to his own intentions. His main aim as we understand was to defend his master, as Alcibiades could do too.

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beauty in Diotima's speech (210e)." He indeed seems to symbolize Dionysus, since Dionysus is young, beautiful and the joyful god of wine (the Dionysus who was a child of Zeus and Semele and remained forever young).<sup>18</sup> Like Dionysus, who used to be followed by Bacchae, Alcibiades was also escorted by revelers. Moreover, a beautiful person is always welcome, but there is a further purpose in his visit: Waterfield points out the insignificance of Alcibiades' physical beauty in comparison to Socrates' intellectual beauty.

From the very beginning, anyone can recognize the special relationship between Alcibiades and Socrates. Alcibiades seems to be jealous when he sees Socrates sharing the same couch with Agathon and he overreacts (213b-c): he cannot believe that Socrates is present too, and his first thought is that Socrates is there for him. He does not even hesitate to blame Socrates for sitting next to the handsome Agathon. Signs of jealousy are typical of erotic behaviour and therefore they give the first clue about their relationship. Socrates then admits his affair with Alcibiades and he asks for help from Agathon as if he were their mediator (213d).

After these first awkward moments, Alcibiades wants to show his admiration for Socrates. He considers Socrates to be a person of high esteem who wins all his arguments and not just in tragic competitions, as Agathon did (213e). With this statement, he implies not only the superiority of Socrates over Agathon, but also the superiority of philosophy over tragedy that I have mentioned earlier. It starts becoming clear that Alcibiades (or Plato) desires to defend Socrates and philosophy. This explains the placement of Alcibiades' speech at the end. Although he missed Socrates' (Diotima's) speech, he knows everything about it. He is like a god who can

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<sup>18</sup> Segal (1982:12).

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recognize the true beauty and wisdom in Socrates' figure, and this should be the final impression.

Scott (2000:25-6) gives his own explanation regarding the function of Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium*. First, he marks the purpose of defending Socrates against the accusation of corrupting the young, since Alcibiades was one of his closest associates (and therefore Alcibiades proves that Socrates did not corrupt him). Secondly, the presentation of Socrates' virtues is an *apologia* itself and serves Plato's aim. Scott remarks that some scholars (like Dover) believe in the complementarity of Socrates' and Alcibiades' speeches, since the theory of Diotima can be clarified with Alcibiades' examples about Socrates' virtuous behaviour, to many of which he was a witness.

Nussbaum has an interesting opinion on Alcibiades' appearance at the end of the dialogue (1986:184-5). She points out that the attention of the audience turns to Alcibiades and his physical beauty, showing the human vulnerability to external factors (such as beauty), and undermining simultaneously Diotima's ladder of Love (to love Beauty itself and not particular kinds of beauty, 210a-212c). Plato wants to present Socrates as the righteous person who establishes relationships with other people by aiming at their soul (here at Alcibiades'), but according to Nussbaum it is very difficult to resist physical passions. However, "in the name of true goodness" (1986:167), sometimes it is necessary to refuse these passions.

In addition, Alcibiades (or Plato) presents a Socrates who never gets drunk, regardless of how much he drinks (214a, 220a). Waterfield claims that Plato wanted to show that "Socrates is as impervious to Alcibiades' charms as he is to wine" (1994:93). This is a part of his extraordinary personality too. Alcibiades undertakes to deliver a eulogy to Socrates, because he thinks that Socrates will be jealous if he praises someone else besides him (214d). Of course, he

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may have said that for several reasons. Perhaps he does so because of their affair and the jealous feelings that have been developed, and because it was Plato's goal to present the uniqueness of Socrates and his ideas through Alcibiades. Alcibiades achieves that by saying one more time that, like a Satyr, Socrates bewitches others with his words (215b). He likens Socrates especially to Marsyas, the flute-playing satyr, who fascinates people with his melodies. He also adds that in light dressing and bare feet during harsh winter, Socrates showed his self-control and courage, getting out of the battle at Potidaea safely and saving Alcibiades too (220a-e). In addition, Alcibiades describes Socrates' serenity and strength, comparing it to Laches', on their way back to Athens from Delium in 424B.C. (221a-c). Moreover, he asserts that no human being can be compared to Socrates (221d), since he is out of the ordinary (οἷος δὲ οὐτοσὶ γέγονε τὴν ἀτοπίαν ἄνθρωπος). He repeats that Socrates can be likened only to Sileni and Satyrs, as a semi-god, because he is self-possessed and confident in difficult situations, as in the battle cited above. He is also able, like Sileni, to capture others with his charming arguments.<sup>19</sup> In conclusion, it is obvious that Plato attempts continuously to show the beauty and power of Socrates' words in contrast to anything else. This is the reason for preferring Socrates and his intellectual beauty over Alcibiades and his physical beauty.

In a closer examination of Socrates' and Alcibiades' relationship, we can see how valuable was Socrates' influence. It was not just a love relationship but also an essential transmission of knowledge. Socrates was trying to teach Alcibiades the philosophical way of life, but Alcibiades was not always obedient to his advice. Socrates stands out for his exemplary conduct, and this explains Alcibiades' shame when he meets him (215e-216d). He obviously was not proud of his way of life and he wanted to avoid Socrates: "(Socrates) made me think that the

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<sup>19</sup> In Plato's *Meno* (80a) Socrates "numbs" Meno, as a stingray does.

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life I lead isn't worth living" (215e); "He is the only person in the world in whose company I've felt ...shame" (216a-b). He also did not like to obey someone else's advice; instead, he preferred to be the one who was in control in his life (216a). Even in this symposium, he entered suddenly and put himself in charge about the amount and the strength of wine (he became the *symposiarchos*), and he even changed the topic of their conversation! Plato presents him in this way as a person who asserts himself and makes others accept this attitude (213e). Nevertheless, Socrates is not responsible for that (maybe the rest of the Athenians are, who allowed him to act in an overbearing way). Accordingly, Alcibiades' inability to follow a philosophical way of life made him avoid the philosopher: "I make myself block my ears and run away, as if I were escaping the Sirens" (216a); "I act like a runaway slave and keep away from him" (216c).

However, Alcibiades admits that he knows Socrates very well and his erotic feelings towards him make it too difficult to avoid him (216b-c).<sup>20</sup> Alcibiades' feelings are mixed, because on the one side he knows that Socrates advises him for his own good (216a), but on the other side, Alcibiades enjoys the life of a famous politician and neglects his intellectual culture (216b). Therefore, Alcibiades has tried to avoid him on account of the rumors about Socrates' interest in handsome men (216d). He thought to seduce him with his good looks; they wrestled together in the gymnasium, he invited Socrates to private dinner, but nothing happened (217b-d). Even the night of the *Symposium*, when they lay together, Socrates ignored his charm (219c). According to the *Symposium*, Socrates was not interested in physically seducing young men, and Alcibiades is a witness. The only interest that he had was the philosophical improvement of people that he associated with, and nothing more. Plato wants clearly to present a self-restrained

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<sup>20</sup> Waterfield (1994:92) describes Alcibiades' feelings as a mixture of love and loathing. He also notes the opinion of contemporary and later commentators, according to which this reaction must have been "what Plato thinks Athens should feel at having killed Socrates."



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Socrates. Nonetheless, Alcibiades admits that he “has been bitten” by philosophy (217e), and he continues with an erotic confession to Socrates (218c-d). Alcibiades is grateful mostly for Socrates’ assistance in becoming a better person (218d).

Plato also presents Alcibiades as a drunk person (in contrast with Socrates, on whom wine had no effect, 214a, 220a), who cannot control himself or his thoughts (212d). He is also a leading figure who has difficulty in dealing with the admiration of the masses (216b) on account of his good looks, which made him popular. Thucydides provides the same image of a young man who was devoted to personal pleasures. Nicias implies and disapproves of the traits of his political enemy, Alcibiades. He is a young person (doubts about his abilities because of his age) who pursues the war in Sicily just because he desires to be a conqueror and to indulge his taste for horses at the public expense.<sup>21</sup> Thucydides notes Alcibiades’ passion to become a military commander but his desire for money and glory could be disastrous to Athens.<sup>22</sup>

All these desires of Alcibiades are also presented in *Alcibiades I*, a dialogue between Socrates and Alcibiades.<sup>23</sup> Socrates tries to persuade Alcibiades, the young ambitious man, that Alcibiades is in need of him (105d-e). Alcibiades desires to enter public life and to give advice to the Athenians about their actions during the Peloponnesian War. He has an inordinate opinion of

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<sup>21</sup> *Thuc.* 6.12.2: “And if there be any man here, overjoyed at being chosen to command, who urges you to make the expedition, merely for ends of his own—especially if he be still too young to command—who seeks to be admired for his stud of horses, but on account of its heavy expenses hopes for some profit from his appointment, do not allow such an one to maintain his private splendour at his country's risk, but remember that such persons injure the public fortune while they squander their own, and that this is a matter of importance, and not for a young man to decide or hastily to take in hand” (Perseus digital library at Tufts).

<sup>22</sup> *Thuc.* 6.15.2: “By far the warmest advocate of the expedition was, however, Alcibiades, son of Clinias, who wished to thwart Nicias both as his political opponent and also because of the attack he had made upon him in his speech, and who was, besides, exceedingly ambitious of a command by which he hoped to reduce Sicily and Carthage, and personally to gain in wealth and reputation by means of his successes” (Perseus digital library at Tufts). In *Thuc.* 6.28 there is the accusation against Alcibiades for the mutilation of the Hermai and the mockery of the Eleusinian Mysteries.

<sup>23</sup> This work was considered to be Plato’s by the ancient Greeks, but in 1836 Schleiermacher considered it “very insignificant and poor” (cited in Denyer 2001:15). After his statements, the work has been under suspicion.

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himself, but Socrates shows him that he is not truly aware of himself and his capabilities (106a-119a). In this work, as in the *Symposium* and Thucydides' *History*, Alcibiades is proud of himself on account of his beauty, lineage and wealth (104a-c).

Nevertheless, he has not been educated about justice and injustice, essential concepts in peace and war (*Alc. I* 106c-113c). According to Socrates, a man who knows either must have been taught by a master or have enquired for himself. Alcibiades never considered himself ignorant or had a real master, so he is in need of Socrates. Socrates will help Alcibiades know the truth about himself (105e, 118b, 124b-c), even if Alcibiades has to humiliate himself first. Knowing your mind and soul is superior to the beauty of the body. The body is just an "instrument" for living, but the real self is the soul.<sup>24</sup> Socrates loves Alcibiades' body only because it belongs to Alcibiades. Furthermore, there is need to take care of and improve oneself, looking deep in the soul where the divine part is (129a-133c). Only in this case can a person himself be benefited, as well as the state.

Although the authenticity of *Alcibiades I* is under suspicion, Plato's principle about the superiority of mind over body is the same as that in the *Symposium* and the *Apology*, while the defence of Socrates is obvious in all three works. The idea that Plato tries to establish is that Alcibiades was a powerful man, but without the philosophical guidance of Socrates, he was unable to succeed. Alcibiades' unethical actions led to Athens' defeat in the Peloponnesian War with Sparta, but Plato considers Socrates blameless for that.<sup>25</sup> Socrates tried to direct Alcibiades in the right path and create a noble bond with him<sup>26</sup> and with other young men. This kind of

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<sup>24</sup> Guthrie (1969:395).

<sup>25</sup> See p.13, n.17 the comments of Dover (1970) and Nails (2002) on the men involved in the mutilation of the Herms and the profanation of the mysteries just before the Sicilian expedition.

<sup>26</sup> Guthrie (1969:391-2).

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interaction could be helpful to state and individuals as well, but he did not reach his goal in the case of Alcibiades. Therefore, Plato aims to exculpate Socrates from any unscrupulous act of Alcibiades.

Nonetheless, there is another interesting opinion on this matter. Scott (2000:34-5) considers that Socrates was in need of a lover in order to reach the end of the *scala amoris*. He has distinguished the six stages of *eros* in Socrates' speech (*Smp*.210a- 211d). According to Socrates, in the beginning, a person can love the beauty of one body and then all beautiful bodies, especially if this ascent is for himself and he does not care so much about individuals. However, he can love someone's soul along the way and then the beauty of souls in general. Socrates may have been attracted by Alcibiades at first, but he transformed himself and abandoned gradually his erotic feelings. Socrates was almost at the end of his ascent, so he did not care for external beauty but for the soul. Consequently, despite the fact that Alcibiades accused Socrates of loving others (Charmides, Euthydemus and others, *Smp*.222b) and in this way showed his jealousy, this was not Socrates' purpose. According to Scott, Socrates and "his *logoi* are not aimed at any one individual in particular."<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, Nichols (2007:503-4) develops (on the basis of Bloom's opinion) even more the idea that Socrates (or Plato) chooses Alcibiades. Alcibiades was the young aspiring man who did not want to follow the conservative rules of the local society. Because of his universal ambitions, he was not the exemplar of a good citizen. Socrates was also unique in his own ways. Nichols suggests that Socrates chose Alcibiades because he escaped from the restrictions of his city, as philosophy does. Someone who wants to philosophize has to be open-

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<sup>27</sup> Scott (2000:34-35).

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mined and look for the truth beyond specific rules and stereotypes. (This is actually a basic Platonic idea: the ideal politician has to be a philosopher first, *Rep.* 473c11-d6.)<sup>28</sup>

At the end of the *Symposium* and after Alcibiades' crucial speech, Socrates, Agathon and Aristophanes stayed awake, drinking and carrying on a conversation. (The sleepy Aristodemus was also present, another clue for viewing the *Symposium* as a fiction, since Aristodemus was unable to record their words exactly.) These three men obviously represent philosophy, tragedy and comedy respectively. Socrates tried to persuade the other two that a person could combine writing comedies and tragedies. Is Plato referring to a specific person? I believe that he implies philosophy's superiority by showing that Plato is the one who can combine elements from tragedy and comedy. Waterfield (1994:95) points out in his note on 223d the difference between serious Diotima and humorous Alcibiades, adding that "Plato has the comedian Aristophanes tell a tragic tale of man's original sin and its consequences, and the tragedian Agathon gives a speech which is not meant to be wholly serious (197e)." Hunter (2004:9-13) also perceives this "seriocomic mode" in Plato's writing. Socrates is funny while he plays with his interlocutors, and serious at the same time (216e). In addition, his comparison to ugly Sileni (215a) and Alcibiades' jesting about his rejection by Socrates (219c) add a comic tone to the story. At the

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<sup>28</sup> Plato seems to have followed the example of his master in imparting his knowledge. He tried to introduce Dion to philosophy, as Socrates did for Alcibiades (Denyer, 2001:12). Plato in 387 B.C. fell in love with a young man called Dion, who was a relative of the tyrant of Syracuse. Indeed, there are many common elements between these men, with the difference that Dion was absorbed more by philosophy than Alcibiades. Later Dion introduced Plato to Dionysius, the new tyrant of Syracuse who was initially interested in philosophy, but it proved to be not a pure interest. I think that Plato may have tried to defend Socrates' attempt to educate Alcibiades because at the same time he wanted to defend his own relationship with Dion and Dionysius. Perhaps he wanted to show that sometimes the teacher fails to educate a student completely, especially when the student has political interests. However, it would be a great achievement if someone could inculcate a philosophical spirit into a politician, and this may have been Socrates' and Plato's thought and aim. Denyer (2001:13) also mentions that Plato was irritated by Dionysius' attempt to write a philosophical handbook or by anyone who tried to write something similar. In accordance with the famous inscription at Delphi "know thyself," Plato believed that someone should not declare that he has knowledge about something, if he does not; and he insisted that Dionysius knew nothing about philosophy. This phrase is also mentioned by Socrates in *Alcibiades I*, as a command to Alcibiades. It was very good advice, but neither Alcibiades nor Dionysius followed it.

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end of the symposium, Aristophanes and Agathon fall asleep, in contrast to Socrates who gets up, goes to the Lyceum and continues his day as usual.

## Conclusion

Although the *Symposium* looks like a series of speeches that have as their topic the eulogy to Love, it is more than that: Plato defends Socrates against the accusations of his corruption of the young and his relationship with the Sophists. Throughout the *Symposium* and especially through Alcibiades' speech, Plato presents Socrates as an extraordinary figure due to his physical appearance and unique philosophical way of life. According to Alcibiades, no human being can be compared to Socrates because of his ἀτοπία (221d). Socrates does not boast of his knowledge, as many accused him of doing, because he simply declares his ignorance (as in the *Apology*). He only knows about τὰ ἐρωτικά (177d) which actually forces him to search for further knowledge. Socrates loves knowledge, unlike the ignorant people who do not (204a). Socrates just transfers Diotima's words in his effort to improve others (206c-207e). He cares about other people, and his acquaintance with other men has only one aim: the perfection of their soul and the attainment of truth and wisdom (as in the *Ap.* 29d). Socrates always claims the truth (*Smp.* 199b, *Ap.* 17a-c) as Alcibiades does here (214e)—but in contrast to the rest of the speakers— and he goes through the process of Love himself (according to some scholars, e.g. Scott). Socrates starts from loving the beauty of one body and he ends up in loving the souls of more than one person. Thus, Socrates only beneficially contributes to others' lives (186d-e, 191e). In *Smp.*, *Ap.*, and *Alc. I*, the superiority of mind and soul is evident and Socrates makes the same point clear in the *Meno* too. Furthermore, Alcibiades with his *encomium* to Socrates

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expresses his admiration to him (213e); Socrates is an extraordinary man because he never gets drunk (214a, 220a), he bewitches others with his words (215b) and his self-control and courage are evident (220a-e). Alcibiades was one of the persons whom Socrates supposedly corrupted, and now Alcibiades comes forward to defend him. Thus, Alcibiades is the living proof of Socrates' innocence regarding his corruption of the young. In addition, Plato presents Socrates as not being responsible for Alcibiades' overbearing behaviour, since Alcibiades was trying constantly to avoid Socrates and the philosophical way of life (215e-216d). Thucydides in his *History* and the writer of *Alc. I* confirm Alcibiades' desire for money, glory and leadership. Despite Alcibiades' inability to follow Socrates' philosophical advice, Plato presents Alcibiades as grateful for Socrates' assistance in becoming a better person (218d).

Regarding the accusation of Socrates' relationship with the Sophists, Socrates is clearly ironic towards them, here in the *Smp.* towards Agathon (194a). Socrates and Plato were opponents of the Sophists' rhetorical teaching and their compromising of the truth in order to reach only specific goals: teaching the young rhetorical tricks to win arguments. Agathon uses sophisticated language that Socrates and Plato opposed, and Socrates actually mentions the resemblance between Agathon and the famous Sophist Gorgias (198a-c). Furthermore, Plato implies Socrates' intellectual superiority over Agathon (201a-b) and probably the superiority of philosophy over tragedy respectively. The order of the speeches does not look random either, so Socrates as the last speaker is superior (for all the reasons above), and Alcibiades' speech fulfils the *Symposium* as a eulogy to him. Most of the ideas presented here appear in the *Meno* too in terms of Socrates' defence by Plato.

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## Chapter Three: a. The *Meno*

### Introduction

*Meno* is another Platonic work where Plato attempts to defend Socrates against his formal and informal accusations, already known from the *Apology*: the corruption of the youth, his atheism and the accusation that he is a Sophist. In addition, Plato wants to present Socrates as a wise man but humble at the same time. Socrates asserts that he has no knowledge; his interlocutors are those who will reach all the conclusions of an inquiry.

This dialogue is based on Meno's question to Socrates, whether virtue (*arête*) can be taught. Plato will show that Socrates cannot answer this question, unlike the Sophists. The interesting point here is that Meno is a follower of the Sophists (in 71d he admits that he shares the same ideas with Gorgias who taught in Thessaly), but at the end of the dialogue, he will be wondering about the Sophists' ability to define virtue. It is difficult to answer whether virtue can be taught or not, since there is not initially a clear definition of virtue. On the other hand, Anytus, Socrates' main accuser in *Apology* and one of his interlocutors in *Meno*, is a critic of the Sophists, but Socrates is not one of them, so Anytus should not oppose him. Furthermore, although Meno is an aristocrat and handsome man, Socrates will prove his resistance to his good looks (as he did with Alcibiades in the *Symposium*). Socrates does not try to corrupt him; he will just show Meno a critical way of thinking before Meno accepts any idea of the Sophists or anyone else. Socrates in the *Meno* also expresses belief in gods, since he concludes that virtue is a divine gift (71d).

*Meno* therefore consists of a Platonic defence of Socrates with common elements to the *Apology*, *Symposium*, *Euthydemus* and *Charmides*, as I will explain. Plato, through each of these

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works, fulfils the portrait of a wise but modest Socrates, who is distinguished from all others by his unique way of thinking.

## **Socrates is not a Sophist**

From the beginning of the *Meno*, Socrates insists on the difficulty of answering whether or not virtue can be taught, since there is not initially a definition of this notion (71b). Meno asks Socrates because he is certain that Gorgias taught his ideas in Athens and Socrates was probably present (71c). People commonly deemed the Sophists to be intellectual experts, because they were not aware of their ploys. However, Socrates could recognize them, since he knew that their ultimate goal was payment<sup>1</sup> and the exercise of influence over their audience. In addition, Guthrie (1969) points out that “the elaborate epideictic rhetoric of the Sophists aimed at something further. It was agonistic, competing for prizes in set contests as did the poets, musicians and athletes” (43); “In Athens in the mid fifth century to be an effective speaker was the key to power” (44). This was the big difference between the Sophists and Socrates: as I have mentioned in the first chapter, Socrates was poor and his interests were just philosophical. This is the reason that Plato or Socrates in this dialogue wants to defend his identity as a non-Sophist with utterly different ideas and goals. As Guthrie records and as I can detect in *Meno*, the Sophists had no interest in nature or divine spirits (46). They believed in monism and empiricism (47), which do not agree with Socrates’ ideas (like “recollection”).

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<sup>1</sup> Guthrie (1969:42) cites the prices of admission for a performance by Prodicus in *Ax.366c* (½, 2 and 4 drachmas). He also mentions the inferior position that Socrates felt that he was in: “Socrates laments that his knowledge of correct diction is inadequate because he had only been able to afford the 1 dr. lecture of Prodicus and not the 50dr. one.” Guthrie (1969:42, n.1) mentions that the 50 dr. probably were not enough for a whole course. Therefore, we can assume that Socrates was probably poor.



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Meno asks Socrates whether virtue can be taught, thinking that he will answer it easily, as the Sophists did. In the past, Gorgias, one of the greatest Sophists, had given the answer to him, but Meno cannot recall it now. Probably Sophists would readily answer every question, showing in this way their knowledge. However, Socrates does not reply hastily, because an answer should be the result of a logical process. Specifically, it is not Socrates but his interlocutors who will give answers. Furthermore, Socrates, through a series of simple examples, will help Meno to give some basic definitions, which will lead to a definition of virtue (it is still uncertain whether they can reach this goal or not).

Socrates is impressed by Meno's interest in philosophical matters and attributes it to the Sophists' influence in Thessaly, where Meno comes from. He refers especially to Gorgias, who taught in Thessaly and elsewhere (70b). However, Socrates' tone is ironic, and this is the first sign in this work that he was opposed to the Sophists. He speaks ironically about their readiness to answer any question. The Sophists consider themselves wise, in contrast to Socrates. His attempt also to answer Meno, one of the Sophists' followers, makes his task harder, although he does not promise an answer. Socrates does not force others to draw specific conclusions; his theory of "recollection," which is first introduced in *Meno*, promotes a "democratic" form of inquiry: Socrates interrogates a simple slave who had no special education or aristocratic lineage; Socrates' talks were free of charge and available to anybody, unlike the Sophists' practice. Meno and the slave were not familiar with the Socratic theory of recollection, and this explains why Socrates chose them to demonstrate his theory.

Socrates continues to doubt the wisdom that the Thessalian people suddenly obtained and the Athenians 'lost'. Socrates is one of the Athenians who are unaware of the definition of virtue

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and whether it is teachable (71a-b). Furthermore, Socrates pretends in an ironic way<sup>2</sup> that he does not remember whether Gorgias knew anything about virtue when he met him (71c-d). Socrates is indifferent to the Sophists' beliefs and therefore he would like Meno to draw his own conclusions. In Plato's view, the Sophists, with the power of their impressive language, used to mislead people and most of them, like Meno, did not examine the truth of their words.

Meno seems to believe that there are many kinds of virtue, depending mostly on the sex, age and the political status of a person (71e-72a). Although Meno is an aristocrat with sophistic education, he thinks that it is very easy to define a notion, just from daily examples without further explanations. However, Socrates, as a philosopher, examines such notions more deeply, and this explains his intense irony: "I seem to be in great luck, Meno; while I am looking for one virtue, I have found you to have a whole swarm of them" (72a-b). Furthermore, during their attempt to define virtue, Socrates tries to find the common elements in all virtues, drawing an analogy with the shape of a thing; according to him, certain shapes must have common features, but Meno cannot define them. This is another difference between Socrates and the Sophists: the Sophists may distinguish things/people who have something in common (here virtue), but they are unable to explain it: "You do not understand that I am seeking that which is the same in all these cases?" (75a).

Socrates continues his opposition to the Sophists and specifically to Prodicus: Socrates examines notions as a philosopher who cares more about their common meaning, but Prodicus is interested more in the distinctions between similar words. In *Meno* (75d-e) Socrates gives

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<sup>2</sup> Klein (1965:44) is certain about Socrates' irony, because of the pun *ou pany eimi mnemon, o Menon* (71c, "I am not altogether remembering, Meno"). Klein thinks that Socrates may have wanted to liken himself with *mnemon*, which was the nickname of King Artaxerxes II. According to Xenophon's *Anabasis* (II.6.29) the king was probably an enemy of Meno, so with this phrase Socrates says ironically that he is not Meno's enemy.

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examples of the words *τελευτήν, πέρας, ἔσχατον* that have the same sense of “ending” for him, unlike the different view of Prodicus. In addition, in 76c-d, Socrates defines colour after the manner of both Prodicus and Gorgias, showing in this way that there are two different aspects. Meno prefers and understands better Gorgias’ definition, since this is the way of thinking he is used to. Socrates does not accept Gorgias’ views, but there is not enough time to explain his definition to Meno, since Meno needs to leave Athens before the Eleusinian Mysteries (76e-77a). Socrates had mentioned the matter of the short time available in the *Apology* (19a) too; he seems to believe that if he had more time at his disposal, he would express more clearly his ideas. I understand this as an effort by Plato to defend Socrates: many people could not follow the Socratic way of thinking from the beginning (here Meno, in the *Apology* the judges), but it may be possible, if there was more time available. Socrates did not prepare his talks with young men ahead of time, because he did not plan them (since he knew nothing), unlike the Sophists who used to promise any kind of education after payment of a fee.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, Socrates expresses his strong opposition to Meno, since Meno is trying to define virtue on the basis of smaller undefined elements, like justice (79b-c). This is the actual sophistic way of thinking that Socrates is opposed to. It is a similar example to what Socrates and Meno were saying earlier about “shape,” and they agreed not to try defining a notion without defining first its smaller pieces. Meno was also attempting to give answers without being himself

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<sup>3</sup> Joyal, McDougall and Yardley (2009:72-4) provide some of the ancient texts (Pl.*Ap.*20a2-b9, Pl. *Hp. Ma.*282b4-e8, Pl. *Crat.* 384b1-c2, [Pl.] *Ax.* 366c1-3, [Pl. *Alc.*1 119A1-6, D.L. *Life of Prot.* 9.52) that prove Sophists’ payment. Each Sophist’s fee was according to his reputation. Kerferd (1981:24-26) notes that the term ‘Sophist’ in the beginning had the meaning of a wise person and it was not derogatory at all, but in the second half of the fifth century things changed: The Sophists became professionals by receiving fees. However, the problem was not the fees (since all those who provided goods, used to get money), but that the Sophists “sold instruction in wisdom and virtue.” In addition, the Sophists did not have the freedom to choose their students, and on the other hand, the education that these students were receiving was an issue too. For example, Protagoras was promising to produce successful politicians (*Prot.* 319a1-2) and this high and —dangerous sometimes for Athens—goal resulted in the hatred of many people, intellectuals and non-intellectuals and in many prosecutions as well, like Socrates’.

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first perplexed (in *aporia*), but now Socrates manages to put him into great perplexity (80a) in order for Meno to find answers by himself. Socrates declares that he is always the first to have doubts about an issue and start an inquiry (80c-d).

Socrates emphasizes the importance of enquiry and learning, since these two produce “recollection,” crucial for answering all questions. While Plato (or Socrates) is trying to explain his theory about recollection, he asserts that his way of questioning, not Gorgias’, is correct, the one that Meno accepted earlier. He supports his opinion by saying that an enquiry makes people active and not idle (if they accept passively Sophists’ ideas, 81d-e and 86b-c). Anyone can find the truth inside him, since the soul knows everything, and so he can learn and give answers to his questions (the importance of a man’s soul is also in *Alcibiades I* 130c, 130e, 133b-e). Therefore, although Socrates asserts that he has no knowledge, he is willing to conduct enquiry with Meno because of his belief in recollection.

Subsequently, Socrates will ask Meno to bring in one of his servants in order to clarify his theory of recollection to Meno. Socrates would like to prove that the servant has knowledge inside him because of the pre-existence of the soul and not because of any teaching (82a). Socrates applies his dialectical method on the servant while he is asking him questions about a geometrical problem. The slave has never been taught geometry, which is the reason why Socrates chose him. The result is the same as that in Meno’s case: the slave replies according to his opinion and on the basis of his internal knowledge (85b, 85d). Socrates wants to clarify that recollection has nothing to do with teaching (81e-82a); the only thing Socrates does is to ask questions and the interlocutor answers relying on his remembering (82e). Socrates expresses constantly his will just to ask questions and not teach anything, while he agrees with Meno about the beneficial result of the recollection on the slave (84a-c). Socrates reveals the slave’s

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ignorance despite the slave's previous confidence about his knowledge. Socrates gives a chance to the slave to be closer to the truth through recollection and to feel grateful about it (84c).

Socrates also wants to distinguish himself from the Sophists by stressing that the interlocutors find the answers inside themselves despite Socrates' order of questions (85c-d; the Sophists need to follow a specific order of questions, otherwise the result is different). Thus, Socrates is neither a teacher nor a suborner; he just helps others to elicit answers by themselves.

Meno wanted a proof earlier about recollection and now he has it (85b-c). The outcome of this talk is that either the slave always had knowledge inside him or his soul obtained it in another life (85d-86a). Therefore, Socrates (or Plato) comments (86b) that there is nothing wrong with enquiry when somebody is looking for answers (justifying in this way his own enquiry, for which he was accused). In terms of his defence, Socrates wants to include Anytus in their conversation, who happened to be there (89e-90b). I will examine his role in detail later, since he was the major accuser of Socrates. Socrates does not believe that there are teachers able to teach virtue (89d), unlike the Sophists who believed that about themselves. He expresses his opposition to those who claim to know how to teach it, and especially those who require money for it. He did not reveal from the beginning to whom he was referring, but his ironic tone is obvious; at the end, he reveals that these are the Sophists, who proclaim to be teachers and belong to all the Greeks (91b-c). Socrates cannot be one of them, since he differs from them in so many respects. In addition, Anytus' opinion shows his agreement with Socrates. He does not even hesitate to describe them as a ruin (λώβη) and corruption (διαφθορά) for people (91c). While Anytus is expressing his dislike of the Sophists, Socrates becomes intensely ironic, criticizing some of the most famous Sophists, like Protagoras (91d-92a). Socrates comments about him: "I find I cannot believe you, for I know that one man, Protagoras, made more money

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from this knowledge of his than Phidias who made such notably fine works...but the whole of Greece has not noticed for forty years that Protagoras corrupts those who frequent him and sends them away in a worse moral condition than he received them ... his reputation stood high; and not only Protagoras but a great many others .... Are we to say that you maintain that they deceive and harm the young knowingly, or that they themselves are not aware of it?" (91d-92a). However, Anytus is certain about the result of their teaching, which is the corruption of the youth. He even stresses the dissatisfaction of parents and the city as a whole who did not send them away. The Sophists, not Socrates, are responsible for the corruption of the youth, since it is clear that Socrates is not one of them.

## **Socrates does not corrupt Meno**

In *Meno* Socrates is a man with some knowledge based on his life experience. He did not boast about his ideas and he did not try to persuade Meno or others to agree with him. It was Meno who approached Socrates and asked for answers to his basic question on virtue. Furthermore, Socrates is willing to have a dialogue with him, but Meno, not Socrates, has to find the answers. He is not arrogant, pretending, like Gorgias, that he knows everything (70b); he is open to possible answers that he examines separately and carefully. Socrates does not force Meno to accept his ideas and so he does not corrupt him in any way. Conversely, the Sophists influenced deeply the young, since Meno's ideas here are clearly Gorgias'.<sup>4</sup> Scott (2006:60-61) agrees about Meno's "intellectual laziness," since he could not give by himself a definition of virtue. Meno thinks it is easy to define, but obviously only in terms of recalling what others said

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<sup>4</sup> Klein (1965:45) characterizes this adoption of ideas as "education."

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in the past (71e, 72a). Socrates, on the contrary, is humble and hesitates to give straightaway a definition, despite his reputation as a wise man. He needs to do a careful examination and reach the best possible answer. Scott observes also Meno's inability to understand Gorgias' teaching. Not only are the ideas not Meno's, but he seems unable to comprehend them too. He may understand some of them, but he cannot formulate a unitary definition of virtue. Therefore, Meno (and probably other students of the Sophists) could not assimilate their teaching. However, in his dialogue with Socrates, Meno tries to elicit his own answers, due to Socrates' patience and detailed inquiry. Scott (2006:64) also notices Meno's inclination to have "an immoralist conception of virtue," which explains also his breach of their agreement: in 75b, Socrates agrees to define surface if Meno defines virtue, but in 76a, Meno asks Socrates to define colour too. Meno is not a random choice as a protagonist in this work. He is a follower of the Sophists and acts like a tyrant (76b-c), asking imperatively for answers, in contrast to Socrates, who thinks logically without other influences. In addition, Socrates was trying to explain every day in the marketplace that "an example is not a definition and that yet a definition must meet the test of examples" (Sesonske and Fleming, 1965:85). This is what he tried also to do with Meno. His quest with Meno was based on many examples in order to reach a complete answer regarding virtue. The final definition should apply in all cases at the same time.

Furthermore, Socrates (or Plato) in *Meno* highlights the significance of recollection, which brings the soul closer to the eternal truth (81a-82a). Socrates' theory derives from the beliefs of holy people, like priests, priestesses and the famous poet Pindar (81a-c), so it is not exactly Socrates' (as in the case of Diotima's ideas in the *Smp.*), which shows once again that Socrates is not a teacher. Everybody can find knowledge in his soul, because the soul is eternal and has seen everything in the present and the other world. The soul probably could give answers

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on virtue and all the important matters. The key to recollection is μάθησις (the process of learning) which requires comprehensive investigation and not controversial arguments. Socrates defends the theory of recollection, since it makes people inquisitive (in comparison to the sophistic way of teaching, which creates passive acceptors of theories, like Meno). On account of all the above, Socrates not only does not corrupt Meno, but he also helps him to have an inquiring and critical spirit (the same happens also with Meno's slave, who is the person who illustrates the theory of recollection). This is the reason that we can characterize *Meno* as a dialogue of search, as a good example of investigation.

At this point, I can detect some common elements between the *Meno* and the *Symposium*. Meno is a man who tries to find virtue in life, but after a short talk with Socrates, he feels embarrassed and becomes angry (80a-d). He ends up in *aporia* because of his inability to follow Socrates' thought or because the Socratic way of thinking is not what he expected. Meno may be confused because he finds some truth in Socrates' words, but he does not know how to get answers (Sophists always gave answers). In the *Symposium* (216b-c), Alcibiades is a young man who also desires to obtain some of the famous Socratic wisdom, but it is not easy and he becomes angry too. He does not even want to have Socrates in his presence. This reaction to Socrates was common, since many people could not understand his peculiar way of living and thinking. His beliefs and way of thinking were unusual at that time and it was not easy to accept them. It was also then that the democracy had just been restored in Athens and nobody wanted something new to overthrow it. This is the reason that his close student Plato wanted to defend him; Plato was the person who understood him deeply and developed his theories further in years that followed.



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Another similarity between the *Meno* and the *Symposium* is that the protagonists and interlocutors of Socrates, Meno and Alcibiades respectively, were charming young men. As is well known, one of the accusations against Socrates was the corruption of the young. Plato in both dialogues wanted to show that Socrates did not corrupt the young. He depicts Socrates as a mature man who cares more about the human soul than the human body. The *Symposium* itself, as I wrote in chapter two, is a eulogy of Socrates, by the Platonic Alcibiades. In *Meno* there are some points where Socrates mentions Meno's beauty and erotic life. In 76b, Socrates attributes Meno's peremptory tone to his good looks, a sign that he was spoiled by his admirers. Socrates may have admired him as well and agreed to answer after the manner of Gorgias in order to become more comprehensible. However, he probably does it, not because he cannot avoid Meno's order, but because he wants to prove to Meno that the definition of colour that Socrates just gave is not truly the best, though it seems to be to Meno, just because he is accustomed to the sophistic way. I can detect an ironic tone when Socrates quotes Pindar's famous phrase 'comprehend what I state' (76d) and gives a definition of colour based on Empedocles' ideas. Klein (1965:68, n.40) supports this idea and connects Socrates' quotation with Aristophanes' *Birds* 945, since there is a demand for fancy complementary definitions in both of them: "In the *Birds*, Peisthetaerus despoils the priest of his tunic to satisfy the poet; in the dialogue, Socrates takes from the priestly Empedocles words that are going to please Meno." Socrates does not even agree with the definition of colour that he just gave (76d, "It is not better, son of Alexidemus, but I am convinced that the other is"), but he formulates it in the way best-suited for Meno and the Sophists (76d, "Perhaps it was given in the manner to which you are accustomed"). Klein (1965:69) believes that Meno is so used to such "grandiose" answers, like those of the Sophists, that perhaps he did not pay attention to Socrates' words. Klein also stresses the results of

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Gorgias' pedagogy, which Socrates had noticed and did not agree with, namely, the passive acceptance of ideas.

Meno is angry up to this point (80a), since he is in a state of perplexity (*aporia*) and feels humiliated by Socrates. For that reason, he retaliates by likening Socrates to a torpedo and a magician. Meno wants to mention Socrates' ugly appearance and his ability to 'numb' people with his words, which Meno considers to be bad. Socrates appears to have a similar kind of effect on Meno in the *Meno* as on Alcibiades in the *Smp.* (215d-216b). Meno and Alcibiades seem both to be overwhelmed by Socrates' arguments and to be in a similar condition of numbness. Furthermore, in *Meno* Socrates replies by calling him cunning, like all the Sophists (80b). However, Socrates does not apply a simile to him (80c). Meno would expect a pleasant simile that is suitable to attractive people, but Socrates resists. Klein (1965:90) gives an interesting explanation why Socrates does not draw a picture of Meno: Socrates will reveal some unpleasant details about Meno later on, so he decides to stop for now the exchange of bad characterizations.

### **The role of Anytus in the *Meno***

Up to 89e, Meno believes that there must be teachers of virtue, since virtue is knowledge, in contrast to Socrates, who thinks that there are not. In order to continue their investigation, Socrates asks Anytus to join their conversation. Anytus, son of Anthemian, is a prominent and well-educated Athenian politician who should know what a virtuous man is. It is important that Anytus was also one of the main prosecutors of Socrates, whose name is mentioned many times in Plato's *Apology*. For that reason, it is clear that his presence is not random in this work.

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Socrates welcomes Anytus in the discussion with Meno, not because Socrates was a friend of Anytus. In 90a, Socrates praises Anytus' father, who was rich and wise, but not Anytus himself. When Socrates is referring to him (90b), he says that the people of Athens have the impression that he was an educated man with great skills, and for that reason, they elected him into the highest offices. The reason that Socrates mentions the Athenians, but not himself, may imply that he does not agree with them. Later on, Socrates continues to talk about virtue and the Sophists, whom he knows that Anytus is against. He starts with the consensus view that there are experts in each craft and people pay them in order to teach it. The Sophists are the teachers of virtue since they promise to teach it to all the Greeks as long as they are paid for it (91b). This hypothetical conclusion of Socrates makes Anytus furious because he thinks that the Sophists harm and corrupt people (91c). Now the reader can be assured one more time that the Sophists are the corrupters and that their only interest is payment (a well-known example is Protagoras). Anytus contributes in a way to the defence of Socrates by expressing his indignation against them and showing how persuasive was their rhetorical power, which made parents entrust their children to them. Anytus' speech against the Sophists makes Socrates seem innocent, since he does not promise to teach; he is not paid, and most importantly he does not corrupt the youth in any way. Anytus seems certain of all the above, despite the fact he has never met the Sophists. Socrates disapproves of this attitude, since Anytus is accusing someone without even knowing him. He is obviously trying to reach the conclusion that Anytus should not accuse Socrates too for being one of the Sophists, without knowing him personally (and therefore that he should never go on trial).

Socrates and Anytus continue their discussion whether virtue is teachable. Anytus seems to consider many Athenians as virtuous, but he does not reply whether these men are able to

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teach their virtue. For that reason, Socrates cites some of the most important men whose sons have turned out to be less virtuous: Themistocles, Pericles, Aristides, Thucydides and their sons. All of them may be virtuous themselves, but not necessarily good teachers. Of course they all tried to impart their knowledge, but without result, because virtue is apparently not teachable. However, they were able to teach them other technical skills or martial arts that are teachable (93a-94e). Socrates has difficulty in answering Meno's question about virtue, because he may have aimed at two goals: first, that it is uncertain whether virtue is teachable and that the teaching of it is not as easy as the Sophists used to claim, and second, he may have wanted to humiliate Anytus by implying his inferiority to his honourable father. Socrates seems to have accomplished both of his goals, since Anytus became angry at the end of their discussion.

Anytus was an Athenian conservative who despised the Sophists and any innovative idea which could harm the democracy in Athens. Plato presents him as a man who rejects anything different without trying to examine each thing separately. He is aware neither of the Sophistic theories nor of the Socratic ones. He indeed seems to have different views from Socrates, like the idea of the transmission of virtue through generations, but he is definitely unaware of all the philosophical ideas of Socrates and the purpose of his conversations with other Athenians. He has no right to accuse Socrates of the corruption of the youth, but he should have accused the Sophists instead.

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## **b. The *Euthydemus***

### **Introduction**

*Euthydemus* is a Platonic defence of Socrates which presents a portrait of him as a philosopher who is unlike the Sophists. It is true that the Platonic Socrates was an acquaintance of the Sophists and their work, but he was always opposed to them. The reader of *Euthydemus* can ascertain many differences between Socrates and the Sophists which reveal Plato's desire to acquit Socrates of basic charges (his identity as a Sophist, corruption of the young) that have been mentioned in all the previous Platonic works in this thesis. In addition, the contrast between Socrates and the Sophists becomes clearer in *Euthydemus* than in any other Platonic work. Although *Euthydemus* is a less popular dialogue, I believe in its importance due to its focus on dialectical and eristic procedures and its artistic merit that I will show later.

In *Euthydemus* Socrates narrates to his old friend Crito what happened the previous day at the Lyceum, one of the main gymnasiums in Athens, where Socrates used to meet young men. Socrates meets the young Cleinias, the prominent Sophists Euthydemus and his brother Dionysodorus,<sup>1</sup> and some followers that day. They start having conversations on various topics, mostly about virtue, wisdom and happiness. The Sophists claim that they could transmit virtue to young people (273d), including Cleinias,<sup>2</sup> while Socrates raises many questions about the achievement of this goal. It is clear that the sophistic way of teaching is anti-pedagogical and

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<sup>1</sup> The two Sophists were natives of Chios who had migrated to Thurii, then were exiled and travelled around Greece and then to Athens (*Euthd.* 271c) in order to continue teaching martial arts and start teaching sophistry (*Euthd.*272a). Xenophon (*Mem.*3.1.1) notes Dionysodorus' intention to teach generalship in Athens (Nails (2002:136-7)). Nails (2002:152) also mentions that Euthydemus "developed an independent reputation as a sophist."

<sup>2</sup> To Crito's son, Critoboulos too, if his father will be convinced that the Sophists are the best teachers (271b, 306d).

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completely opposite to the Socratic ‘protreptic’. The Sophists follow the ‘eristic’ method,<sup>3</sup> whereas Socrates follows the methods of dialectical philosophy. The two Sophists use many ‘sophisms’ to lead Cleinias and all those who are present to their own ambiguous conclusions.<sup>4</sup> With the help of Ctesippus,<sup>5</sup> who interferes at some points, Socrates reveals the result of sophistic teaching, which is the corruption of the young and the acquisition of wealth (277d-278b, 304a, and 304c). In this way he shows himself to be not an unscrupulous but a sympathetic man who wants the best for young people (277d, 288d). In the epilogue of *Euthydemus* Socrates is a strong exponent of dialectic who does not force others to follow it; he just exhorts them to examine in depth what philosophy is and gives them the freedom to decide whether it is worth the time (307b-c). During the demonstration of the differences between Socrates and the Sophists, there are two references to gods and spirits: in 272e to his divine sign (his *daimonion*, known also from *Ap.* 31c) which guides him, and in 302c to his belief in gods (both are crucial, since his faith in gods had been questioned a lot (*Ap.* 26c)).

In the following pages, I draw frequent comparisons between Plato’s *Euthydemus* and other works, especially the *Meno*. Many common elements need further discussion, since they show the continuous desire of Plato to defend Socrates.<sup>6</sup> In both works two young men, Cleinias and Meno, raise questions about virtue and other important aspects of life, while Socrates and the Sophists express their different opinions on these subjects.

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<sup>3</sup> “The ‘eristic philosophy’ is an irresistible method of disputation by which every statement, true and false alike, could be refuted with equal certainty” (Gifford (1905:1)).

<sup>4</sup> Taylor (1960:89) comments that *Euthydemus* “has more of the spirit of broad farce than any other work of Plato; it would be possible to see in it nothing more than an entertaining satire on ‘eristics’ who think it a fine thing to reduce every one who opens his mouth in their company to silence by taking advantage of the ambiguities of language.”

<sup>5</sup> An enthusiastic admirer of Cleinias.

<sup>6</sup> Sprague (1962:2) comments that the eristic art of the Sophists was of great importance for Plato, because it was a rival to his dialectical method. He had to show the superiority of dialectic to eristic.

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## **Differences between the Sophists and Socrates: The Sophists' eristic art against Socrates' dialectical philosophy**

It is obvious throughout the *Euthydemus* that the Platonic Socrates is unlike the Sophists in terms of their relationships with the young. Plato wants to present once again the arrogant behaviour of the Sophists (because they know everything) in contrast with Socrates who claims that he knows nothing (a basic claim in the *Apology*, 19c). This is the reason that Socrates asks for more information regarding their promise to teach (273d-274a, 274d-275a), giving Sophists in this way the chance to prove it. However, Socrates knows beforehand their absurd methods, which explains his constant irony.

In the beginning of the *Euthydemus*, Socrates answers Crito's question "with whom he was conversing" in the Lyceum the previous day.<sup>7</sup> Socrates mentions the names of the young Cleinias and the two Sophists, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. Crito was not familiar with these Sophists, so he gives Socrates the chance to talk about them (271c). Socrates' words about the Sophists are full of irony. He refers to their origin and their great skills by calling them *pancratiastai*,<sup>8</sup> in the sense that both of them<sup>9</sup> are ready for any kind of fight, with their body or mind. He "praises" them in terms of their remarkable knowledge (271c) and in terms of fighting just with their bodies or in armour in warfare (271d). They can even teach all this knowledge for pay. In addition, they are great in legal combat by composing effective speeches for the court and

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<sup>7</sup> Rappe (2000:283, 285) reveals another aspect of the word 'Who' (271a) in Crito's question: 'Who' does not apply here just to the two Sophists, but it is closely related with 'Socratic self-inquiry.' Self-inquiry is the basis of Socratic elenchus, and this is the reason Plato starts the dialogue with the question 'Who?' as part of it. Socrates 'met' his own self and tries to find answers inside him. Self-knowledge let Socrates and his interlocutors realize the knowledge that they already have or not (therefore, they understand whether they have virtue or not).

<sup>8</sup> Socrates refers to the Sophists as 'powerful athletes' who can win any kind of attack, mostly verbal battles. Therefore, Socrates implies the difficulty in 'defeating' the Sophists, since they use all their rhetorical 'weapons'.

<sup>9</sup> The dual number (γεγόντων, τοῖν ἀνδρῶν) shows that these skills applied to both of the Sophists.

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refuting arguments, even those that are true (272a-b). Socrates does not even hesitate to express his wish to be one of their students (272b) and advises Crito to do the same (272d). But Socrates criticizes their promise to teach anybody to a high level and in a short period, since the Sophists themselves obtained this knowledge within one year and are now experts (272b). Socrates also mentions the name of Connus, his music teacher and harp-player (272c). Hawtrey (1981:46) suspects that Socrates here refers to Ameipsias' *Connus*, a comedy that was produced at the same time as Aristophanes' *Clouds*, with Socrates as one of the characters. In *Clouds*, Strepsiades wishes to learn the rhetorical art from Socrates, but it is difficult since he is at an advanced age and his memory is fading. Socrates orders him to leave, and Strepsiades' son replaces him (780-790). In *Euthydemus*, while he urges Crito to become a student of the Sophists as well, he proposes to use Crito's sons as bait (272d). Socrates probably implies that it is easier for young men to become students of the Sophists than it is for older men. Hawtrey (1981:47) mentions a similar reference in Plato's *Sophist* (223b), where the art of the Sophists is "a hunt after rich and promising youths." Therefore, through Socrates' irony there is an implication about their payment. Socrates' ironic tone is evident throughout *Euthydemus* and prepares the reader for the subsequent dispute between Socrates and the Sophists.

When Crito asks Socrates to tell him about the special knowledge of the two Sophists, Socrates starts a description of what occurred in the Lyceum. He was sitting alone in the *apodyterium* (dressing room) and when he was about to leave, suddenly his divine sign stopped him (272e). Then, the two Sophists entered with their followers. If there were not this divine power to make him stay, he would have missed his important conversation with the two Sophists, Cleinias and the others. It is obviously the same divine sign that Socrates had mentioned in the *Apology* (31c-d) that always holds him back for some reason. Plato desires to



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defend Socrates' faith in the gods by implying that Socrates did not pursue this conversation, but it was god's will to happen. Plato 'providentially' presents Socrates as sitting alone in the dressing room (272e) and as deciding to stay in order not to miss the chance to talk with the two Sophists and to draw a contrast between him and them.

In 273d Euthydemus reveals for the first time in this work that he and his brother Dionysodorus no longer deal with the art of fighting or the law, but just with the teaching of virtue. It is the same topic that Meno and Socrates examined in the *Meno*, without a definite conclusion about its definition and whether it can be taught. Meno implies that the Sophist Gorgias believed that virtue is teachable (70b, 71d), and in this work now, Euthydemus claims the same for himself. In 273e- 274a Socrates expresses his surprise and doubts as he did in *Meno* (71c, "I don't think I've met anyone else who knew what it [virtue] was"). However, the Sophists are ready to present their art and to teach anyone who wants (274b). Hawtrey (1981:52) stresses the use of the verb ἐπιδεικνύναι ("exhibit," ἐπιδείξοντε in 274b), which implies a free advertisement. He also mentions Socrates' warning to the Sophists in 304a not to give free samples of teaching. I assume that this kind of advertisement would increase the number of their potential students and therefore their profit.

From the beginning of this work, Plato includes Ctesippus, a young and handsome man (273a) who was present that day and very interested in the conversation, probably because he was one of Cleinias' lovers (274b-d). Plato 'uses' him in order to show that relationships between lovers were often productive (here the presence of Ctesippus becomes an educational motive for Cleinias, 282b, 300c). In addition, Ctesippus greatly supports Socrates and is opposed to the Sophists throughout the dialogue.

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Socrates continues to doubt whether virtue is teachable and whether the two Sophists are suitable teachers (274e); this is the reason he urges both of them to start an exhibition of their abilities. Socrates expresses similar doubts in *Meno* (87b): it is impossible to make a statement about virtue, if there is not first an assumption for further argument. He needs first to examine whether virtue is different from or similar to knowledge and then examine if it is teachable or not. Therefore, knowledge is a necessary precondition for virtue. Socrates probably expects Euthydemus and Dionysodorus to present some preconditions too:<sup>10</sup> ‘can you made a good man of him only who is already convinced ... or of him also who is not yet convinced because he does not think ... that you are teachers of it?’ (274e). In *Euthydemus* 275a, the Sophists are very confident about engaging men in philosophy and in the study of virtue, in contrast with Socrates, who never boasts of his knowledge and teaching skills.

Although there is already an obvious contrast between Socrates and the Sophists, more elements come to fulfill Socrates’ portrait. He shows his care about the young by asking the Sophists to prove to young Cleinias the necessity to be a philosopher and to study virtue (275a). Socrates asks them to accept this challenge, because he knows that this is not their goal in teaching and they are not able to prove it. Furthermore, Socrates seems to be interested in the principled education of all young people, but especially of Cleinias, since he is still young (he repeats that more than once in 275a-b) and has not been influenced yet. Socrates mentions that Cleinias is cousin of Alcibiades for a specific reason: he does not want Cleinias to be corrupted like his cousin because he cares about his goodness. The use of first person plural (φοβούμεθα, ἡμᾶς, 275b) perhaps shows an intimacy between Socrates and Cleinias, and that the older man

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<sup>10</sup> Sprague (1962:2, and n.1) stresses a main difference between *dialectic* and *eristic*: “the *dialectic* contains its own justification” and it does not need any auxiliary art in order to follow virtue. However, the *eristic* is in need of premises in order for the conclusions to be valid.

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tries to protect the young. In addition, he wants to show how easy it is for someone to influence others, especially the young (like Alcibiades). How could Socrates be responsible for Alcibiades' corruption, as he was accused, and for which he was finally sentenced to death (*Ap.* 25a-b)?

One crucial difference between Socrates and the Sophists appears at this point. Socrates is a real educator who is concerned about the soul of Cleinias, while the Sophists are concerned only about the exhibition of their abilities and the acquisition of wealth. The arrogant and unfriendly Euthydemus, who is ready to start a conversation with Cleinias, seems sure about the outcome, since he demands Cleinias to answer specifically his questions (“There can be no objection, Socrates, if the young man is only willing to answer questions,” 275c). Euthydemus does not care whether Cleinias would have any further questions. Cleinias needs to answer the questions as put, and therefore the conclusion is the one that the Sophists aim at (a typical feature of the Sophists' eristic art). It is clear that the Sophists used to approach young men in a compelling manner without giving them the chance to express their thoughts or doubts. Socrates, who gives a picture of such an approach, confirms this conclusion: “for his friends often come and ask him questions and argue with him; and therefore he is quite at home in answering” (275c). Thus, the Sophists wanted someone willing to answer their questions (like Cleinias), to lure more students and be more profitable.

Euthydemus interrogates Cleinias with a question regarding whether the wise or the ignorant are those who learn (275d, *πότεροί εἰσι τῶν ἀνθρώπων οἱ μαθάνοντες, οἱ σοφοὶ ἢ οἱ ἀμαθεῖς*). Euthydemus starts with a sophism, which involves the ambiguity in *μαθάνοντες* - *σοφοὶ* - *ἀμαθεῖς* (words with two or more different meanings). The choice of the words is very important to the Sophists, because there is “a static opposition between is and is not” (Sprague: 1962:17). Sprague claims that the Sophists believed in a metaphysics and a logic which is

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opposed to any change. In addition, the eristic art of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus is part of the Eleatic logic, which also does not leave space for change. Therefore, the Sophists' aim is not to teach others, because teaching must include improvement in order for the students to become more educated and virtuous. In teaching, the most important part should involve the arguments and not the terminology (according to Socrates' philosophy). The Sophists, with their focus on terminology, will never prove that they can teach virtue.

While Euthydemus is unconcerned about the nervous Cleinias, Socrates tries to encourage him to answer with confidence and without fear (275e), and to be cautious with the Sophists (276a). In this way he shows his support and eagerness to help. Euthydemus asks questions about what is and is not. These look like "Meno's paradox" in *Meno* (80e): a man cannot investigate what he knows (because he already knows it) and he cannot investigate what he does not know (because he does not know what to look for). In *Meno*, this paradox is answered by the theory of recollection. Everybody can obtain knowledge by recalling the knowledge that he has inside him (81d). Therefore, according to Socrates (or Plato), knowledge or virtue is not teachable, but something related to the experiences of the soul.

Regarding the first question of Euthydemus, Cleinias answers that the wise people are those who learn and he admits the presence of teachers. Euthydemus concludes that the ignorant are those who learn. Everybody laughs and applauds him (276b), but Euthydemus does not try to stop it in order for Cleinias not to be humiliated. The portrait of Euthydemus is certainly not of an educator who is unhappy with the failure of his students. Then, without giving Cleinias some time to think, Dionysodorus challenges him too and wins his argument. The demonstration of the Sophists' abilities makes the crowd laugh again, except Socrates and some others (276d). Cleinias must have felt embarrassed, but the Sophists do not seem to care. Dionysodorus

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continues with a third question, being sure that Cleinias will not give the correct answer, since his question is again eristic and includes homonyms: Πότερον γὰρ οἱ μανθάνοντες μανθάνουσιν ἢ ἐπίστανται ἢ ἂ μὴ ἐπίστανται; (“Do those, [said he] who learn, learn what they know, or what they do not know?,” 276d). Cleinias has to choose between just two options.

Dionysodorus continues the interrogation, and it is important to pay attention to the simile between the argument and a ball (277b): Dionysodorus takes up the argument from his brother and he is ready to ‘throw’ it at Cleinias and see if he is going to ‘catch’ it. Probably this was just a pleasant game for the Sophists, despite the fact it was about the education of Cleinias and the young in general. Cleinias feels that he is losing the ‘game’ but there is no point in opposing the Sophists, so he prefers just to nod affirmatively. The two Sophists declare that the wise do not learn (276b), but neither do the ignorant (276c). In addition, people do not learn what they do not know (277a), but neither what they already know (277c). It seems that there are not many opportunities for learning according to these Sophists. Socrates hopes that Cleinias and the rest of the young can realise the emptiness of the Sophists and do not associate philosophy with their eristic art.<sup>11</sup> Socrates is a dialectic philosopher and at no point does he resemble the Sophists.

Plato continues to liken the conversation between the Sophists and Cleinias to wrestling, demonstrating the tension of the moment and the aim of Euthydemus, which was to defeat his opponent (277d). In contrast to such a verbal battle, Socrates always promotes a cooperative and

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<sup>11</sup> Taylor (1960:92-93) claims that the two Sophists “are borrowing and degrading the logical method of Zeno. In Zeno’s hands, the deduction of apparently contradictory conclusions from the same premises had a legitimate object. The intention was to discredit the premises themselves.” In his n.1 he adds that Zeno was responsible for *antinomies*, showing that “the affirmation and denial of the same preposition are equally impossible.” Taylor also reminds us that the two Sophists were from Thurii, where they must have met Eleatics. In addition, he stresses the pleasure that the Sophists must feel every time they entrap their interlocutor into contradicting himself “by mere neglect to guard against ambiguity in words,” since their only aim was to gain public admiration.

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productive search. Socrates here once again tries to encourage Cleinias with his sympathetic words and reveals the real purpose of the Sophists. Socrates explains the meaning of sophistry, and he likens Sophists' 'play' to the initiation into mysteries. Sprague (1962:8) stresses the inability of the Sophists to prove any connection between learning and virtue and claims that their exhibition was just a game of words. Socrates affirms that point by mentioning the name of the Sophist Prodicus (277e) and his game with homonyms. He also mentions Prodicus in *Meno* (75e), *Apology* (19e) and other works.<sup>12</sup> He wants to present the difference between him and the famous Sophist: Socrates as a philosopher seeks the single definition of words, while Prodicus prefers to use one word (like 'learn' in 276d) with many different meanings (without explaining which meaning he uses every time) in order to confuse his interlocutor. Socrates mocks the eristic ways of Prodicus and the rest of the Sophists by declaring that this game (παιδιά, 278b) of words does not produce any knowledge, and the young must be careful when they interact with them. In addition, Socrates humiliates the Sophists by ignoring what they said until now and showing that the real interest is only in the examination of virtue (278c-d).

Thus, Socrates decides at this point to start a conversation with Cleinias in his own way. Using the equivocal expression εὖ πράττειν ("to fare well" or "do well"), he asks him whether all people wish to prosper. Sprague (1962:10) notes that Socrates does not want to confuse his interlocutor by this ambiguity despite the fact he usually uses synonyms, like εὐτυχεῖν or εὐδαιμονεῖν for εὖ πράττειν, and ἐπιστήμη or φρόνησις for σοφία. However, he is able to use

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<sup>12</sup> In *Meno* 75e, Socrates mentions the example of the word τελευτή (end) in order to show that there is no problem replacing it with similar words like πέρας or ἔσχατον. However, Prodicus insisted upon the distinction between expressions that have the same meaning, and Socrates knew that Prodicus would have an argument about this example too. In Plato's *Apology* 19e, Socrates emphasizes payment for Prodicus' teaching (he does not accuse him on that basis, but Socrates declares that he personally does not accept any pay). In Plato's (?) *Hippias Major* 282c, Socrates mentions the large amount of money that Prodicus had earned from teaching. In the *Phaedrus* 267b, Socrates refers to Prodicus who claims that he had discovered the art of proper speech. See also *Prt.* 337c and *La.* 197d for Prodicus' specialty in distinguishing synonyms.

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synonyms because the general meaning for all of these words is the same and there is no great difference in using any of them. In contrast, the Sophists hesitate to use synonyms, but instead they use equivocal expressions (275d, 276d, 283d, 283e) and other fallacies.<sup>13</sup> Socrates seems not to have prepared his talk with Cleinias and he certainly tries to exhort Cleinias to find the means that lead to prosperity, which is an aim of philosophy (279a). While they are searching for prosperity, they agree to include wealth, health, beauty, good birth and other talents in the necessary means. Then they add a second rank of good things, like temperance, justice, courage. Lastly but not least, they include wisdom, which is connected with prosperity (279d). Wisdom is the superior good because it will bring all the goods above and prosperity as well. So according to Socrates, wisdom is prosperity and the goal of all people should be a higher wisdom with the help of philosophy. The only requirement for the attainment of prosperity is the right use of good things (280e), which depends again on wisdom (281b). In conclusion, Plato defends Socrates and philosophy at the same time by demonstrating that wisdom is always necessary in any aspect of life (280a).

Furthermore, Socrates advises the young to gain wisdom from their family, friends, strangers and lovers (282b). As I have mentioned above (p.38, n.16), in Athens in the time of Socrates and Plato, it was common for young people to develop a close relationship with their older educators and become their ‘slaves’ in honorable terms. Plato suddenly mentions the relation between wisdom and love relationships in order to exculpate Socrates from the charge of

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<sup>13</sup> Rappe (2000:286) asserts that the Sophists’ fallacies are a means of *antilogia* that give them a dialectical advantage. She also comments that Socrates must have tried hard to distinguish his methods from the Sophists’, and so Plato “is jealous of the Socratic reputation, refusing to allow it to fall into the wrong hands.” She adds that the sophisms contribute to the picture of the Sophists as illogical and at the same time prevent the Sophists’ self-definition. Gifford (1905:38-40) notes such fallacies: the fallacy of omitting all limitations and the fallacy of *a dicto secundum quid ad dictum simpliciter* (“from a saying [taken too] simply to a saying according to what [it really is],” an argument based on a generalization throughout 293c-299a), the ambiguity of a proposition (παρ’ ἀμφιβολίαν, 301d), the ambiguity of a term (παρ’ ὁμωνυμίαν, 301a4 and 301a6) and many other verbal devices (the generalization by concepts, 301a; the fallacy of definition, 285e9, and of predication, 300e3).

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corrupting the young, since the young lover was trying to pursue wisdom, the greatest gift.<sup>14</sup>

Socrates then connects wisdom to teaching (282c), and Cleinias accepts the connection immediately. Socrates has examined this topic with Meno in *Meno* 87c and does not need to discuss it further here. Some commentators interpret Cleinias' spontaneous acceptance as the result of Socrates' exhortation. However, Hawtrej (1981:92) asserts that Cleinias accepts that wisdom is teachable only because it was a truism to him and to most Greeks. It was not questionable whether knowledge can be taught or not.

When Socrates asks Dionysodorus to prove how Cleinias can be a wise man (283c-d), Dionysodorus uses a sophism. Cleinias is not wise yet, but Socrates and his family want him to be. The Sophist plays with words and asserts that those close to Cleinias want him to be someone else and so his current self to disappear. He repeats the phrase ὃ δ' ἔσται νῦν twice (283d 2, 283d 5), but he refers to two different situations: the first is about "not being" wise, and the second is about "not existing."<sup>15</sup> The cunning Dionysodorus tries to deceive Socrates and prove that Socrates does not aim at the good of the young. The frustrated Ctesippus accuses Dionysodorus of telling lies, and Euthydemus defends his brother and their ideas with another fallacy of equivocation. Euthydemus plays with the phrase τὰ ὄντα (284b 2), which has two meanings, 'being' and 'reality, truth'. Ctesippus believes that a man only speaks about a thing that exists but Euthydemus tricks him and accuses him of saying that a man speaks the truth (Sprague

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<sup>14</sup> The same thought is found in the *Symposium*, in Pausanias' speech (184b-c): Pausanias says that Athenian society accepts the relationship between a lover and his boyfriend, as long as the latter increases his knowledge and improves himself. The aim of this 'voluntary slavery' is goodness, and therefore it is not reprehensible.

<sup>15</sup> Taylor (1960:95) comments that this argument derives from Eleatics and specifically from Parmenides; it also explains the repetition of the Sophists' origin (from Thuri, 283e). In connection with *Euthd.*, Guthrie (1969:316-7) writes about the *Double Arguments (Dissoi Logoi)*, the work of an unknown writer about 400 B.C., as worth mentioning because it includes many sophistic tricks. Guthrie assumes that it is a student's textbook of a Sophist, because his arguments look like Protagoras', with two contradictory aspects on every subject (as here in *Euthd.* 283c-d and 286b-c, *R.* 479 and *Tht.* 152d, 155 b-c).



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1962:15-16). About the confusion above, Sprague adds, “when combined with the Eleatic denial of the real existence of what is not, [it] leads irresistibly to the denial of falsehood.”

Euthydemus continues with the equivocation on ποιεῖν (284c1, two meanings: “do” and “make”) and Dionysodorus on the phrase ὡς ἔχει (284d1 and d5, ‘speaking of things as they are’), but then he distinguishes the good and bad things (284d3, εὖ ἔχει and κακῶς ἔχει). It is obvious to Ctesippus that Dionysodorus’ argument makes no sense and that Ctesippus can play with words too (‘good people speak (or name) evil of evil things and of evil people and they speak (or name) frigidly of the frigid and call their way of arguing frigid’, 284d-e). Ctesippus has an important role in the defence of Socrates, since he is opposed to the Sophists and agrees with Socrates’ view on philosophy.

Socrates wants to alleviate the tension between Dionysodorus and Ctesippus and so he recalls the Sophists’ promise to turn bad people into good ones (285a-c). His tone is ironic but he is willing to offer himself for an examination in order to become a better person (Ctesippus too in 285d, supporting in this way Socrates). The simile between the Sophists and Medea of Colchis (285c) reveals the deceit of others by the Sophists, like the daughters of Pelias who were deceived by Medea into slaying their father.<sup>16</sup>

In 286a-287b, Plato satirizes a long sophistic argument whose purpose is to deceive Socrates and the others. The Sophists argue about the necessity of speaking the truth, the absence of ignorant men and the impossibility of falsehood.<sup>17</sup> Socrates is so surprised to hear these assertions that he questions the Sophists and their role (287a): if the impossibility of falsehood is

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<sup>16</sup> Euripides *Medea* 485a.

<sup>17</sup> Rappe (2000:287 and n. 28) states that the doctrine ‘the falsehood is impossible’ derives from the Antisthenean paradox that Plato wants to mock in this dialogue. In addition, it is clear that it was Plato’s and not Socrates’ intention to do that, since “Antisthenes at the time of the dramatic date had not yet formulated this doctrine.” It is also said that Antisthenes wrote “the anti-Platonic polemic, Sathon, in revenge.” Therefore, Plato defends here not only Socrates but also his own ideas (through Socrates’ voice).

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true, then there is no need for the Sophists to teach. According to Sprague (1981:112), “The evidence of the senses is dismissed as being opposed to reason; here, as elsewhere in this central part of the dialogue, we see Plato’s Socrates in presumed support of a kind of empirical approach, as against the Eleatic approach of the sophists, which always prefers the presumed evidence of reason to that of common sense.” The Sophists, essentially, contradict themselves since they asserted earlier their ability to teach virtue (273d, 275a). However, because they cannot prove it, they try to avoid Socrates and his constant question about teaching (287b). Socrates’ irony is intense: he calls the Sophists “wise” (σοφῶν, 287b) and Dionysodorus “universally skilled in discussion” (πάσσοφός, 287c), and he accepts that Dionysodorus is the one who ‘rules’ (σὺ ἄρχεις, 287d). The following scene between Dionysodorus and Socrates proves the absurdity of the sophistic arguments (“are the things which have sense alive or lifeless?,” 287d) by using one more equivocation (the verb νοεῖν based on Socrates’ phrase τί σοι ἄλλο νοεῖ τοῦτο τὸ ῥῆμα, “Tell me if the words have any other sense,” 287c). However, Socrates knows how to use tricks too, if he wants to, and he ambushes Dionysodorus by mentioning Dionysodorus’ earlier claim of the impossibility of falsehood when a man speaks (287e). Ctesippus in his turn addresses the two Sophists “in the language of prayer,” with as many titles as possible, as though they are gods. Hawtrey (1981:117) comments: “Plato’s sarcasm is at its bitterest.” Furthermore, Socrates continues to speak ironically about the Sophists with another simile between them and the ever-changing Proteus (288b-c),<sup>18</sup> because they avoid answering about virtue.

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<sup>18</sup> In Homer *Od.* iv. 385: ἀθάνατος Πρωτεύς Αἰγύπτιος, ὃς τε θαλάσσης πάσης βένθεα οἶδε and in *Od.* iv. 456: ἀλλ’ ἦ τοι πρῶτιστα λέων γένετ’ ἠυγένειος, αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα δράκων καὶ πάρδαλις ἠδὲ μέγας σῦς· γίγνεται δ’ ὑγρὸν ὕδωρ καὶ δένδρεον ὑψιπέτηλον· ἡμεῖς δ’ ἀστεμφέως ἔχομεν τετληῖσι θυμῷ. Proteus was changing figures in order to avoid violence, which was necessary for prophecy.

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Socrates cares about the education of the young, and therefore he tries to put an end to the Sophists' chatter and to continue his educational talk with Cleinias (288d) from the point where they had stopped earlier in 282d. Socrates urges Cleinias to concern himself with wisdom and virtue, which was the initial protreptic purpose of this conversation. In addition, he is a philosopher who always raises the importance of wisdom instead of money (288e) and wants to impart his ethical principles to the young. In addition, according to Socrates, knowing when and how to use wisdom is the greatest ability (289a-b). While Socrates searches for the ultimate wisdom, he distinguishes it from other kinds of arts (like lyre playing) because in these cases there is just the art that the artist makes (ποιεῖν) and knows how to use (ἐπίστασθαι χρῆσθαι) (289b). Cleinias then replies to Socrates with many insightful observations, which shows that Socrates' exhortation to philosophy was successful (289d-290c). This success becomes more evident when Crito shows his surprise at Cleinias' thoughts (290e).

Furthermore, while Socrates narrates to Crito his inquiry with Cleinias, in order to find the ultimate wisdom, they agree that 'nothing can be good but some sort of knowledge' (292b), and Socrates adds that 'a knowledge confers no other knowledge but itself' (292d). These ideas about the ultimate good in life that leads to happiness are mostly found in Plato's *Republic* (Book VI, the form of Good); Plato connects his philosophy of knowledge with his philosophy of living well and expresses it through the voice of Socrates as the suitable person. In *Euthydemus*, despite Socrates' and Cleinias' efforts to find the ultimate knowledge, they are in a dead end (293a); Socrates criticizes the Sophists who did not contribute to the solution of this critical inquiry since they do not realise the importance of the matter (293a and earlier in 288a).

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In 293b-c, Socrates starts narrating to Crito the Sophists' answers. The Sophists prove once again their inability to comprehend superior notions,<sup>19</sup> in comparison to Socrates, who reached earlier through his dialectical method the connection of the kingly and political art with philosophy. Plato's aim is to stress the great distance between Socrates and the Sophists; Socrates' argument is heading to a final point, whereas the Sophists' fallacies are completely illogical and without clear conclusions. Their sophism here is based on the principle of contradiction ("And would you admit that anything is what it is, and at the same time is not what it is?," 293b). They believe that, since Socrates has knowledge, he knows everything ("and must you not, if you are knowing, know all things?," 293c). Socrates' refusal on this matter and effort to prove his possession of only some knowledge shows his complete opposition to the Sophists.<sup>20</sup> In addition, Socrates' support of continuous knowledge contradicts the 'universal' and static knowledge of the Sophists.<sup>21</sup>

Euthydemus and Dionysodorus are such devoted followers of the Eleatic doctrine that they do not even hesitate to declare their ability to do almost anything (some knowledge implies universal knowledge: repairing shoes, knowledge of stars, dance, 294b-e). Ctesippus contributes to the investigation by questioning their abilities and asking for evidence (294b), but the two Sophists do not provide any essential proof; they just assert that they know everything (294d-e). They also believe that Socrates has universal knowledge, an idea completely irrational, since it is without awareness of the person involved (Socrates' irony in 295a). The Sophists' aim becomes progressively clearer: they do not make their interlocutor understand, but they want only to lead him to specific outcomes, without even paying attention to his answers (295c). Dionysodorus

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<sup>19</sup> See also p. 83, n. 28 below.

<sup>20</sup> Taylor (1960:100, n.1) asserts that this sophism derives from "the Eleatic doctrine that there is no half-way house between 'what is' and blank nonentity, transferred from physics to logic."

<sup>21</sup> See also p. 81, n. 25 below.

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supports his method by accusing Socrates of chatter, whereas Plato mentions once again Dionysodorus' tricks with words (295d). Socrates admits ironically his inability to learn now and in the past (295d-e, 296a), giving in this way the chance to the Sophists to continue their 'experiment' with him. However, Euthydemus' anger when Socrates does not reply briefly and adds more words than he should reveals Euthydemus' premeditated choice of words and ideas (296a). Furthermore, Socrates declares that he is forced to follow Euthydemus' rules ("since I am required to withdraw the words 'when I know'"; "Well, then, I said, I will take away the words that I know," 296b). Euthydemus presumed that he fulfilled his goal to prove to Socrates that he always knew everything (296c-d), since Euthydemus can do it whenever he wants ("if I am of the mind to make you," 296d).<sup>22</sup>

The Sophists follow so strictly the words that they have planned to say that they even contradict themselves when something does not go according to their plan (Socrates has questions for them because he wants to investigate matters more deeply). In 296e, Socrates asks whether the good men are unjust, and Euthydemus replies that they are not. However, when Socrates asks how he has this knowledge, Dionysodorus gives an unsuitable answer, according to Euthydemus. Plato probably wants to reveal Euthydemus' superiority: he is the chief speaker and smarter than Dionysodorus (297a). In addition, they do not even agree between themselves, obviously because their sophisms do not have a basis. Plato represents Socrates as being in a

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<sup>22</sup> Hawtrey (1981:156) notes, "the skilled eristic can extract any answer that he wishes." (The Sophists throughout the *Euthydemus* lead the conversation and expect a yes or no to their questions). However, Hawtrey considers these words (based on Winckelmann's suggestion) as "a reference to Plato's belief that a skillful questioner can draw knowledge out of an apparently ignorant ψυχή: *Phd.* 737ff. ἐρωτώμενοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι, ἐάν τις καλῶς ἐρωτᾷ, αὐτοὶ λέγουσιν πάντα ἢ ἔχει."

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similar position to Heracles (297c-d)<sup>23</sup>: Heracles had to fight against Hydra,<sup>24</sup> the she-Sophist (similar to Euthydemus, who was sitting at the right side of Socrates) and a second monster, a sea-crab, who was also a Sophist (similar to Dionysodorus, who was sitting at the left side of Socrates).<sup>25</sup> There is also a comparison between Iolaus, Heracles' nephew, and Ctesippus, present in the discussion.<sup>26</sup> Socrates believes that Dionysodorus tries to distract him so that Euthydemus can evade Socrates' question regarding whether and how the good men are unjust. Indeed, Euthydemus does not reply, but instead Dionysodorus asks Socrates whether Iolaus was 'more nephew' of Heracles or Socrates (another example that they support each other by distracting Socrates). Dionysodorus tries to prove that Iolaus was a nephew but at the same time was not (similar to the previous sophisms). His sophism is not successful, since Socrates replies again with more than one word and complicates the matter (Dionysodorus asks him whether Patrocles is Socrates' brother, but Socrates replies that he is his half-brother, instead of answering with yes or no, 297d-e).

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<sup>23</sup> Jackson (1990:378 and n.3) remarks that the heroic simile with playful effect is common in Plato (*R.* 423c-e, *La.* 196d, *Smp.* 198c). There is great irony at this point, since the two Sophists are usually considered warriors and specifically military trainers, as Socrates mentions in 271c-d and 277d. Jackson (n.6) also mentions that Heracles was a common figure in Old Comedy, and Socrates frequently refers to him. Plato wanted to add a comic spirit to the contrast between Socrates and the Sophists in *Euthydemus*. Furthermore, Socrates in *Apology* likens himself to Achilles (28c) and to Heracles (22a), both great heroes in mythology. Socrates' mission was to show the ignorance of others, such a difficult goal that it could be compared to one of Heracles' Labors.

<sup>24</sup> According to Jackson (1990:378-9), the Hydra represents sophistry (like the peddler in *Protagoras* 313c and the man-hunter of the *Sophist* 223b). Each of the Hydra's head is a sophistic argument; when Socrates (like Heracles) tries to refute it, then another fallacy (head) appears with great speed. The brothers' duality (like the two monsters) worsens Socrates' situation.

<sup>25</sup> As a supporter to Euthydemus. It is interesting that Plato mentions that this sea-crab just arrived from the sea (297c), like Dionysodorus who just recently started teaching virtue (271c, 272b). Jackson (1990:380, n.11) suggests that it may be a contrast between Socrates' lifelong search for knowledge and virtue and the Sophists' recent puzzling arguments.

<sup>26</sup> Socrates declares that he is in no need of his Iolaos, i.e. Ctesippus (297d). Jackson (1990:381-2) first mentions De Vries' opinion on this matter: Ctesippus has not entered the conversation yet, and therefore he is "a fictional and neutral source of help." Jackson then expresses his own opinion: it is not certain whether Ctesippus is Socrates' ally. He stayed in the gymnasium to see his lover Cleinias; this love makes him mad at some points in the dialogue (283c, 284d) and able to do anything (he even imitates the Sophists, e.g. 299e). Therefore, he may not be the best ally for Socrates.

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The Sophists continue their fallacies and the use of equivocations (like the word ‘father’ who has two aspects, ‘father of specific kids’ and ‘father in a general sense’), trying to conclude that Socrates has no father, that any father is the father of all and that the father of Ctesippus’ dogs is his father too (297e-298d).<sup>27</sup> Along with Ctesippus, who is involved in the conversation, the Sophists continue the use of equivocations. Ctesippus argues that men want as many things as they can get (medicine, arms, gold: ὁ ἄνθρωπος δεῖται πολλῶν ἀγαθῶν, 299a), in all times and in all places (ἀεί καὶ πανταχοῦ, 299d), but the Sophists want to prove the opposite. Ctesippus in his reply uses a clever equivocation, showing that he can play this game too: the Scythians reckon those who have gold in their own skulls to be the happiest and bravest of men and they drink out of their own skull (299e), using the ambiguous pronoun ‘their’ similarly to the Sophists’ use of ‘yours’ in 298e. Euthydemus replies with another ambiguity, τὰ δυνατὰ ὁρᾶν (300a), which means either ‘possible to see’ or ‘able to see’, the absurd phrase that ‘our garments have the quality of vision’ (300a), and the sophism σιγῶντα λέγειν (300b), which means ‘a silent person speaking’ or ‘speaking of silent things.’ Ctesippus has still an unanswered question regarding how it is possible for those who speak to be silent (300b). Euthydemus replies with the sophism τὰ λέγοντα σιγᾶς (300c, ‘to be silent when you speak’ or ‘to be silent for things which talk’) similar to σιγῶντα λέγειν (300b). Dionysodorus then wants to reply to Ctesippus’ question whether all things are silent or speak, and gives the contradictory answer of ‘neither and both’ (300d), which shows Dionysodorus’ defeat in this ‘eristic’ game. His naïve answer reveals his inferiority to Euthydemus, as does the fact that every time Dionysodorus is in a difficult position in his discourses with Socrates or Ctesippus, his brother intervenes and starts talking. Ctesippus’

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<sup>27</sup> Rappe (2000:286-7) claims that it is Antisthenes who may be the father of the Dogs (Cynic philosophers). In order to support her idea, she provides some lines from other works where she is certain of the Antisthenean reference (*Euthd.* 285e2, Aristotle’s *Metaph.*1024b32 and *Top.* 104b21, Alexander in *Arist. Top.*; in *Arist. Metaph.*, and Proclus in *Pl.Crat.*

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agony was great during this ‘battle’, because his lover Cleinias was present (300c) and at the end he is pleased with Cleinias’ approval (300d). Thus, Ctesippus showed his best self in terms of a love relationship. In addition, Plato demonstrates how easy it is for someone to speak like the Sophists if he follows the above sophistic devices.

Plato presents all these sophisms in *Euthydemus* in detail, in order to make it possible for the reader to distinguish the different verbal methods and the aims of Socrates and the Sophists. The Sophists direct their interlocutor, do not let him develop his answers as he likes, and many times contradict themselves, without even realising it. Their purpose is only to win verbal battles that have nothing to do with philosophy. On the other hand, Socrates remains steady in his beliefs, tries to make others obtain virtuous values, without exchange of money, but with the sole aim of their philosophical improvement. Moreover, in 301a, there is a twist in the discussion, where Dionysodorus asks Socrates whether the beautiful is different from the many different things.<sup>28</sup> Dionysodorus again expects an answer of either yes or no according to the monism, but Socrates replies that ‘they are not the same as absolute beauty, but they have beauty present with each of them’. Until now, Dionysodorus was dealing with universals and particulars, but now he deals just with particulars, like an ox and himself. Socrates shows his strong opposition to Dionysodorus by refuting any relation to him while showing preference for the ox!<sup>29</sup> Socrates speaks once again ironically about the Sophists’ wisdom by expressing his interest in obtaining it (301b), and by adding that they are carrying out their disputation in excellent style (301c) and at

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<sup>28</sup> Sprague (1962:25) claims that this phrase is a reference to the theory of Forms, which is different from the Eleatic theory. Likewise, Mohr (1984:296-7) states that 300e1-301c2 seems to be about some form of the Theory of Forms. Plato uses words in the singular (like τὸ καλόν instead of τὰ καλὰ) as individuals and not as common aspects of phenomena.

<sup>29</sup> Socrates had to choose between Dionysodorus and an ox (who were hypothetically standing next to him) due to Dionysodorus’ use of the ambiguous word παρῆναι (‘be near to’ or ‘be present in’).



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a high level of wisdom (301e, he compares them to expert craftsmen, perhaps also in order to ‘compliment’ them after their defeat).

The matter of recognizing the wisdom obtained from Socrates arises again (“would you recognize it, Socrates, he asked, if it came to be your own?,” 301e) as it did in *Meno* (“or even supposing, at the best, that you hit upon it, how will you know it is the thing you did not know?,” 80d). The meaning is the same, however: in the *Meno* the answer is recollection, whereas in *Euthydemus* Socrates replies that he knows whatever belongs to him. Dionysodorus tries to trick Socrates and force him to admit that he wants to sacrifice his own things to any god he pleases (302b). This point is crucial, since Plato demonstrates clearly the trap that Socrates got in and his desperate effort to escape, when Dionysodorus asks him whether he has an ancestral Zeus. Socrates is forced to deny it, so Dionysodorus accuses him of being without ancestral gods and anything essential for an Athenian. This is a great opportunity for Plato to defend Socrates for having gods, shrines and following the religious precepts of Athens (302c). In addition, Socrates has the opportunity as a good citizen to express his knowledge of the official lineage of the Athenians (302c-d). Dionysodorus takes advantage of his answer, and since Socrates admits that these gods have a *psyche* and are ‘his’, while everything that belongs to him is at his disposal, he can handle his gods similarly to his other possessions (302e-303a).

Plato must have felt great repulsion for the Sophists, since, after Ctesippus’ last effort to defend Socrates against the illogical arguments of the Sophists, the latter mock Ctesippus’ address to them as ‘Heracles’ and they try to turn it into a sophism (303a)! Ctesippus expresses his indignation and leaves the conversation. The Sophists not only have tried at the end of their eristic display to add one more sophism, but they included the name of gods and heroes like Heracles. The Sophists are the ones who show impiety to the gods in order to win an eristic

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competition in contrast to Socrates who appears to be the pious man here. Furthermore, Socrates wants to convey the mood of the moment to Crito: the Sophists had many followers who were very excited after their speeches and applauded them with great enthusiasm.<sup>30</sup> For most Athenians, the eristic speeches were similar to the Socratic ones, because they had the same format of question-and-answer, but probably they were unaware of the different ideas behind them: the Sophists aimed at victory in arguments whereas Socrates sought the truth. This is a way for Plato to demonstrate the false correlation between Socrates and the Sophists, and a chance at the same time to distinguish them. Socrates does not hesitate to accuse them of not caring for the multitude, while their listeners hesitate to declare their inability to use sophisms and decide to follow them (303d). Socrates is opposed to the Sophistic behaviour towards the crowd, whereas he deals with individuals and is concerned with their welfare. In addition, Socrates probably questions the Sophists' refutation of the beautiful side of things in life (the beautiful, the good, and the white), and their assumption that they are so convincing that they leave no space for further discussion.<sup>31</sup> Socrates warns them not to use their art in public speaking, because people may learn it fast and then they will not give them the proper fee (304a). He repeats his desire to become one of their students (304b), and he exhorts Crito too, since everybody can become just with payment of a fee (304c).

As a last effort by Plato to defend Socrates and distinguish him from the Sophists, he mentions a narration by Crito to Socrates, when he met a man,<sup>32</sup> considered to be wise, on the

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<sup>30</sup> In Plato's *Republic* (6.492b-c), there is a similar enthusiastic mood among the followers of the Sophists: they are unable to resist the Sophists' eristic power and the power of the masses.

<sup>31</sup> Sprague (1962:30, n.17) proposes that the Sophists refuted the existence of beautiful things because of their monism and their subsequent attack on the Theory of Forms (301).

<sup>32</sup> Shorey (1933/1962:262) claims that the critic of Socrates is either Isocrates or a man of Isocratean type. However, on the basis of a phrase of Isocrates (*Panath.*22), he does not believe that the style satirized is that of Isocrates. After providing some examples from other works (*Hp. ma.*, *Menex.*, *Ap.*, *Smp.*), Shorey concludes that the phrase in the parenthesis in 304e is more "a description of a style than an assurance of literal quotation."

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street: this man was wondering why Crito did not attend the Sophists' talk whereas he himself did. This man expressed his dislike at what he understood as philosophy and was especially surprised to see Socrates there (304e-305b). However, Crito tried to defend philosophy as 'a beautiful thing', 304e ("he is wrong and so is anyone else who decries it," 305b). In an effort to reveal the identity of this man, Socrates assumes that he is one of those who declare themselves to be the wisest, and their only obstacle to become 'leaders' (political or philosophical, depending on their interest) are the true philosophers, like Socrates (305c-d). Socrates had many enemies who wanted to get rid of him for various reasons (and this led to his conviction). The important thing was not who this specific man was, but that he considered Socrates to be one of the Sophists, as Anytus did in *Meno* and as he did along with the other accusers in the *Apology*.

Crito in *Euthydemus*, despite his belief in the superiority of education, expresses his worries about the education of his children and the role of philosophy (306d-e, showing his confusion too between Socrates' philosophy and the Sophists' eristic art). Crito's concern about his son's upbringing reminds us of Socrates' earlier fear for the possible corruption of the young Cleinias (275a-b). Plato connects the fear of these two men in order to link it with the accusation against Socrates about the corruption of the young in *Ap.* 25a-b and to demonstrate Socrates' innocence, since he truly cares about them. Socrates responds to the ambiguous notion of philosophy by expressing his general opinion: "as in every trade, the worthless are the many, whereas the good workers are few and worth any price" (307a). The dialogue closes with the exhortation of Socrates to Crito to investigate deeply the real philosophy, and if he finds it worthless, then not to let his children deal with it (307b-c). According to Sprague (1962:33), the results of *Euthydemus* are "the recommendation of philosophy as dialectic and the rejection of philosophy conceived as eristic."

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## c. The *Charmides*

### Introduction

*Charmides* or *On Temperance* / *περὶ σωφροσύνης* (written probably around 380 B.C.E)<sup>1</sup> is one of the most perplexing Platonic dialogues since it covers a wide range of themes. The subject of this dialogue is *σωφροσύνη*,<sup>2</sup> a Greek notion that may refer to temperance, sobriety, moderation or discretion.<sup>3</sup> However, here are some of the other themes detected in the dialogue: Socrates' relation with some of the oligarchs, especially Charmides and Critias, Plato's kinship with these two men, the ideal state, the Greek ideal of beauty and goodness (in the person of Charmides) and the rhetorical art of Critias.<sup>4</sup>

In this thesis, I focus more on Socrates' philosophical debates, his integrity, and his military bravery, where Plato defends him against the accusation of the corruption of the young. Socrates appears as an honoured soldier who has just returned to Athens from the battle of Potidaea in 432 B.C. and shows great interest in the current state of philosophy. He cares about his city and the young Athenians, and he looks forward to starting philosophical conversations with them. *Charmides* is a reported conversation between Socrates, Critias and the young

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<sup>1</sup> Brickhouse and Smith classify *Charmides* in the early Platonic dialogues, those which were written after Socrates' death but before Plato's first trip to Sicily in 387 B.C.E. (*The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: "Plato – Dating Plato's Dialogues"). Tuckey (1968:2-3) mentions that the dialogue was written "between Socrates' death and the foundation of the Academy, when Plato was suffering from a profound disillusionment about public affairs."

<sup>2</sup> Tuckey (1968:17) comments that Plato selected *σωφροσύνη* "because of its wide meaning and its aristocratic connotation."

<sup>3</sup> Lamb (1927:3) notes that "the intellectual element in the Greek virtue of 'temperance' is not only recognizable from the beginning of the conversation, but increasingly prominent as the argument proceeds." He mentions also that *sophrosyne* is related to 'practical wisdom or prudence', while he gives the original meaning of the word in his n. 1: "The wholeness or health of the faculty of thought (*φρονεῖν*)."

<sup>4</sup> I examine later whether his art is similar to the Sophistic one.

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Charmides. The choice of Socrates' interlocutors is not random: Charmides<sup>5</sup> and Critias<sup>6</sup> were prominent figures in Athens in the fifth century and both became members of the Thirty Tyrants. Socrates was accused of sharing the same ideas with the oligarchs, and being responsible for the education and corruption of the two men above.<sup>7</sup> Plato defends him by showing that Socrates was not their teacher and therefore was not involved in the fall of democracy in Athens.<sup>8</sup> The aristocrats were responsible for the deterioration of the Athenian state (at least those who became members of the Thirty), since aristocratic traditional beliefs were deeply embedded (as is clear through Critias' and Charmides' speeches) and undermined democracy. It is of great interest that, although Plato was a kin of Critias and Charmides, he supports his mentor, Socrates. I examine throughout this section the means of Plato's defence.

Although *Charmides* is one of the least studied Platonic dialogues, I underline its importance due to its contribution to the defence of Socrates as a just and loyal Athenian citizen

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<sup>5</sup> According to Tuckey (1968:17), Plato explains Charmides' involvement with the Thirty Tyrants by his lack of true education, which comes through Socrates' teaching. Charmides, as an aristocrat, has all the requirements to be a great political leader (an inborn virtue, his relation to Solon, 155a) if he follows Socrates. Therefore, the need for association with Socrates becomes more intense; an ideal state could be born establishing the traditional beliefs "on a new and rational foundation" and "combating all sophistic ideas."

<sup>6</sup> The choice of Critias is certainly not random: He was Callaeschrus' son and first cousin of Plato's mother, Perictione. He also became a leading and violent member of the Thirty Tyrants (Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.12, "Among the associates of Socrates were Critias and Alcibiades; and none wrought so many evils on the state. For Critias in the days of oligarchy bore the palm for greed and violence"). Tuozzo (2011:55) notes that in Xenophon's *Mem.* Critias lacked temperance, and therefore there is irony in Plato's decision to make Critias Socrates' main interlocutor in *Charmides*. However, Tuozzo (2011:57-8) notes that Critias was an important thinker and writer whose thought needed further development; Plato chose him as an interlocutor due to this positive evaluation. In addition, Jenks (2008:19-20) considers Critias and Charmides as the most unsuitable persons to define temperance and therefore it is Plato's strategy (Plato used to choose unlikely persons who lacked the examined virtues every time, in order for Socrates (a) to transmit to them the virtue and improve them and (b) to make everybody understand the nature of each virtue).

<sup>7</sup> Guthrie (1969:380) mentions Socrates' refusal to obey the Thirty Tyrants (by failing to arrest Leon of Salamis). Critias and Charmides were indeed members of Socrates' circle, and they wanted to involve him in their violent actions. However, Socrates did not follow them due to his commitment to the law.

<sup>8</sup> Tuckey (1968:15-16) underlines Plato's problem: Critias was not a conventional aristocrat; he had many of the aristocratic biases but he was also under the influence of sophistic teaching. Critias belonged to the natural ruling-class of Athens and his desire to govern became more evident when he became one of the leading members of the Thirty Tyrants.

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who did not corrupt the young. The dialogue includes the typical Socratic *elenchus* and it ends in *aporia*. Socrates investigates σωφροσύνη through a number of rejected hypotheses with the help of Critias and Charmides, though he is not trying to impose his own beliefs. This is one of the reasons that they do not reach any specific definition of temperance at the end of the dialogue. In addition, although Socrates does not force Charmides to follow him, the young man decides to do so with the consent of his guardian, Critias.

### **Socrates is neither a teacher, nor a corruptor**

Socrates has just arrived back in Athens after service in the army and the battle of Potidaea.<sup>9</sup> He headed to the palaestra of Taureas in order to meet his friends and know about the situation in Athens. First, he meets his loyal friend Chaerephon,<sup>10</sup> who is very surprised because he did not expect to see Socrates again (153b). According to the news, many men had died in the battle, thus attributing to Socrates the quality of a loyal Athenian citizen who sought to defend his city (153c).<sup>11</sup> Chaerephon is impressed and pushes him to sit down next to Critias and provide them details about the battle. After Socrates narrates some of his experiences in the battle, he expresses his concern about Athens and the state of philosophy (despite his suffering, he did not lose his philosophical passion). Jenks (2008:28) suggests that Plato does not focus on Socrates' military skills "because he is embarrassed by Athens' imperialistic intemperance" (he just lets others talk about it). Furthermore, Socrates is especially interested in wise or beautiful youth (153d), in terms of their philosophical education. Critias mentions his cousin Charmides,

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<sup>9</sup> A battle in 432 B.C.E between Athens and a combined army from Corinth and Potidaea, along with their various allies. The Athenians laid siege to Potidaea and thus the Peloponnesian War started (431-404 B.C.E).

<sup>10</sup> Chaerephon is also mentioned in Plato's *Apology* (21a), see p. 11 above.

<sup>11</sup> Alcibiades praises Socrates' contribution to the battle of Potidaea in his speech in *Smp.* 220a-e, revealing Socrates' self-control, courage and interest in the safety of others.

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highlighting his remarkable beauty. Socrates recalls him and his beauty, even as a young boy, and declares now his awe for his looks (154c-d; Socrates' admiration is expressed with Charmides' comparison to a statue and coupled with the great number of his admirers). However, whereas everybody is astonished by Charmides' good looks, Socrates exalts as superior the beauty of the soul, if there is any in the case of Charmides (154e). Therefore, Socrates does not care only about the outward appearance but even more about the soul,<sup>12</sup> calling attention at the same time to this important matter ("Then, before we see his body, should we not ask him to show us his soul, naked and undisguised?", 154e). Critias praises Charmides for his talent in philosophy and poetry,<sup>13</sup> which Socrates attributes to his inheritance from his ancestor, Solon. In order to meet Charmides personally and ascertain his exceptional features, Socrates asks that he be summoned, while Socrates pretends to be a physician suitable for Charmides' headache (155e).<sup>14</sup> Socrates then describes the general and his personal upheaval that prevailed with the arrival of Charmides, highlighting once again Charmides' remarkable beauty, which Socrates managed to resist (155c). While it was normal to feel nervous in the presence of a handsome man, and indeed Socrates caught sight of the inside of Charmides' garment, at the end he controls himself (the lust for the young man is also expressed clearly through Socrates' simile to a hungry lion and Cydias' saying in 155d).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Socrates expresses the same belief in *Ap.* 29e-30b.

<sup>13</sup> Jenks (2008:23) comments that Critias and Charmides are probably confused regarding the skills of the *Charmides*, since poetry and philosophy are "incompatible" (he is basing his opinion on Plato's *Ion*, *Meno* and *Republic X*).

<sup>14</sup> Is this just a pretext to summon Charmides or a hint at Socrates' quality as a Doctor of the Soul? I argue for Plato's desire to prove the second one. According to Jenks (2008:23), some scholars consider this headache as "symptomatic of a hangover", therefore "lack of self-control" and temperance. If they are right, I suspect that Plato had the same idea in the *Symposium* too, with the drunk Alcibiades who joined the symposium after a street-party.

<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Socrates manages to control himself towards Alcibiades in the *Symposium*, 222c-223a.

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Furthermore, Socrates presents a special leaf with a spoken charm to be the cure for Charmides' physical sickness (155e). Socrates was not a physician of the body but a Doctor of the Soul, so obviously that charm included words of philosophy able to cure the soul. Charmides presents Socrates to be well-known to the public and to himself too (it is not clear whether the rumors about Socrates were good or bad; however, if Charmides had a bad impression of Socrates, he probably would not continue the conversation with him). In the next lines, it becomes even clearer that Socrates is the Doctor of the Soul (or at least he wants to be). According to the charm that he received from one of the physicians of the Thracian King Zalmoxis,<sup>16</sup> a cure should always include the body and the soul. The whole is superior to the part and the cure has to be effected by specific charms in order for temperance to be implanted in the soul (156c-157a). It becomes evident that Socrates is a man who is not interested in physical needs but focuses on the soul. He wishes to cure Charmides' soul and not to corrupt him in any way.<sup>17</sup> In addition, it is clear from the beginning that temperance must be an essential quality, since it is associated with the body and soul as a whole,<sup>18</sup> justifying hence the purpose of their following investigation. Critias encourages the cure of Charmides' soul, showing his trust in Socrates (157c-d). In addition, Critias praises Charmides for his temperance and Socrates for his family heritage. The acknowledgement of Charmides' modesty provides a motive for Socrates to start an examination of him.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Socrates refers to Zalmoxis as a god, able to give immortality. Herodotus refers to him as a man, slave and student of Pythagoras, before he became a god (IV.94-7).

<sup>17</sup> Socrates seems to follow the divine orders of Zalmoxis, as he did in the *Symposium* with Diotima. These wise words are not his own, he just transmits them. Socrates' behaviour here is consistent with Plato's presentation of him as a person who knows nothing.

<sup>18</sup> In Plato's *Prot.* 330a-b, Socrates is opposed to Protagoras, who argues for distinction of the virtues and parts of the body.

<sup>19</sup> Newhall (1900:xiii) comments that the introduction (153a-158e) of the *Charmides* is long enough, because it "not only lays down foundation principles for the philosophic discussion, but it serves to present living examples of temperance, alike in the youthful Charmides to whom the world is yet untried, and in the more mature Socrates, who has withstood the temptations of his own perverse nature."



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The discussion on temperance then starts and Socrates asks Charmides to define the virtue that he is supposed to have (159a). Socrates asserts that if Charmides has temperance, then he should have some “intimation of her nature and qualities” (159a). Charmides gives his own first definition, according to which “Temperance is quietness and slowness” (159b).<sup>20</sup> They both agree that temperance is a noble quality, but Socrates argues through some examples that quietness and slowness are not always good (159c-160b). The Socratic *elenchus* has begun with Socrates’ brief questions and Charmides’ affirmative answers. Socrates is presented as a patient investigator who gives his interlocutor a second chance to think until they both reach a clear definition. Charmides presents a second definition: “Temperance is modesty” (160e). Socrates, on the basis of Homer’s phrase “Modesty is not good for a needy man” (*Od.* 17.347), rejects modesty as the definition of temperance (161a). Then Charmides recalls another definition that someone told him in the past: “Temperance is doing our own business” (161b).<sup>21</sup> Charmides is a young and inexperienced man and thus he relies on others’ experience and wisdom.<sup>22</sup> Socrates examines the truth of this definition, but he considers it a riddle (161c). He rejects this claim through an example from the classroom. Students, like all people, deal many times with affairs of others, showing the impossibility of the above words and the foolishness of the person who expressed that opinion (162a-b).

In addition, Socrates seems to believe in the utility of temperance, since he connects it with a well-ordered state. Up to this point, Socrates looks very confident in his argumentation, despite his first nervousness in front of the handsome Charmides. As a philosopher with the

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<sup>20</sup> Tuckey (1968:16) connects this first definition with the aristocratic bias for moderation and self-control.

<sup>21</sup> Charmides mentions that he was told this definition (ἀνεμνήσθην ὃ ἤδη του ἤκουσα λέγοντος), as in Plato’s *Laches* (ὁ γὰρ ἐγὼ σοῦ ἤδη καλῶς λέγοντος ἀκήκοα, 194c), behaviour that can be explained due to his young age.

<sup>22</sup> Jenks (2008:27) has another opinion on the matter: He claims that Charmides’ dependence on someone else (here on Critias) reveals actually his intemperance.

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mystic qualities of a physician, Socrates knows how to support his ideas with examples or references to famous verses. This combination (philosopher–mystic physician) is one of the things that makes *Charmides* a very interesting dialogue.

Charmides is a polite interlocutor who calmly accepts Socrates' ideas. However, Socrates or Plato needs a more dynamic respondent,<sup>23</sup> in order to express all the points he desires. Therefore, having formulated the third definition and implying that Critias was the original thinker of it, Plato replaces Charmides in the conversation with an older and more educated person in order to defend his idea (162c-e).<sup>24</sup> Socrates defends his argument that people (for example artisans) do things not only for themselves but are still temperate,<sup>25</sup> while Critias claims the opposite by referring to Hesiod's words, that "work is no disgrace" (*Works and Days*, 311). Critias' objection is related to the use of the words *πράττειν* (making), *ἐργάζεσθαι* (working) and *ποιεῖν* (doing). According to him and Hesiod, the first two notions are about noble and useful works and so they cannot end with disgrace, while 'doing' may become disgrace sometimes when it does not involve beauty, *τὸ καλόν* (163a-c).<sup>26</sup> These distinctions are unclear to Socrates and remind him of Prodicus' distinctions between words.<sup>27</sup> Plato perhaps wanted to show that Critias had similar ideas to the Sophists rather than to Socrates,<sup>28</sup> and thus he is not a student of

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<sup>23</sup> For some other reasons that Plato chose Critias as an interlocutor, see above p.88, n.6.

<sup>24</sup> Newhall (1900:xvi) attributes Critias' definition ('doing one's business') to his aristocratic prejudices: "if each man minds his own business, the nobles will rule and the rest must obey."

<sup>25</sup> I understand that Socrates could not agree with Critias in any way, since Plato wants to present Socrates as a democratic man who contributes to the common good (apart from the corruption of the youth, Plato had to defend Socrates against the accusation of his possible oligarchic beliefs).

<sup>26</sup> Tuckey (1968:16-17) ascribes Critias' opinion that the work of shoe making and prostitution is at the same rank (163b) to his remaining aristocratic prejudices. He indeed rejected some of them but he did not replace them with other positive ideas.

<sup>27</sup> See p. 73 above, especially n. 12. Tuckey (1968:20) also comments on Critias' effort to defend his idea, since he believes that a false interpretation of it happened. He considers both the distinction between *ποιεῖν* and *πράττειν* as well as the reference to Hesiod as sophistic.

<sup>28</sup> Newhall (1900:xvi) asserts that "Critias was, however, as much devoted to the sophists as to Socrates, as appears in the *Protagoras*, where he mediates between them (336E)." Charmides also appears as one of the most devoted friends of Socrates in *Smp.* 222a, while he goes with his guardian to hear the Sophists in *Prot.* 315a. Furthermore,

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Socrates. Tuozzo (2011:67-70) has a similar opinion to Newhall (n. 28) about Critias. He had developed a “technological sophistry” and an “egoistic hedonism” that were related to his political activity. Critias had the ethical education of an aristocrat and was at the same intellectual level with the Sophists, but he did not receive any payment for his associations. Tuozzo does not consider Critias as a Sophist, but he concludes: “The *Charmides* is the place where Plato shows us how Socratic knowledge differs *toto caelo* from Critias’ sophistic idealization of craft knowledge” (2011:69). In addition, Guthrie (1969:301) seems also to believe that although Critias was not a paid teacher, he shared similar ideas with Protagoras, Democritus and other Sophists. He did not believe either in the inherent existence of laws in people or of religion, but the only aim of their invention was the prevention of unlawful actions.<sup>29</sup>

At the end, Socrates suspects that Critias means that ‘doing good things is temperance’, and Critias agrees (163e). However, Socrates has an objection to whether a doctor is able to know beforehand the absolute best treatment for every patient (and for himself too). Therefore, a doctor (or an artisan) can be temperate without even knowing it (164a-c). Critias is ready to retract his words because he does not want to admit that a temperate man does not know himself. Self-knowledge appears to be very important to Critias and to everybody, and he supports his argument by mentioning the relevant inscription “Know thyself” at Delphi (164d). Critias claims that self-knowledge is closely connected to temperance, and this inscription is actually god’s greeting to visitors. Therefore, Critias now wants to define temperance as self-knowledge (165b).

At this point, the reader can realise that Socrates did not force Critias to change his mind.

Moreover, Socrates is not a teacher and wants immediately to clarify his role: he had planned

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Newhall underlines that, despite the cruel side of Critias as a member of the Thirty Tyrants, Plato wants to show a more agreeable side of him, probably because (as Newhall mentions in p. xv) Critias was “one of the most versatile and gifted men of Athens .... successful in tragedy and elegy... and an able orator and historian.”

<sup>29</sup> See also Tuckey’s comment on p. 88, n. 8.

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nothing beforehand, but he investigates the matter of temperance with the help of Critias (165b-c). He always tries to find the truth in cooperation with his interlocutor, since he ‘knows nothing’ (his basic claim in *Ap.*). Socrates wants to distinguish himself from the Sophists, who came to questions with prior knowledge (like Euthydemus and Dionysodorus in *Euthydemus*). Socrates does not like hasty conclusions, but rather a thorough investigation (165c). For that reason, Socrates decides to start a conversation of the relation between temperance, science and medicine. If temperance is a kind of knowledge, then it must be a science (ἐπιστήμη, τέχνη), like medicine. Critias believes that temperance is the science of a man’s self and Socrates wonders about the good effects of temperance. In addition, Critias claims that each science is different, while Socrates distinguishes the science itself from its product (166b). Critias adds that wisdom especially differs, by claiming that wisdom is a science of others and of itself. Critias claims that Socrates insists on refuting him, but Plato makes Socrates declare his own purpose: the examination process is beneficial not only to himself but also to all mankind (166d). Socrates actually refutes himself too, so he needs to know himself first, as the science needs to know itself (this idea agrees with his constant apothegm, “all I know is that I know nothing”). He is a just man who cares about others and the discovery of truth. He is not interested in “winning” this verbal battle (as the Sophists are); the important thing is the process of *elenchus* and not necessarily the results of it (166e; this may be the first hint in this dialogue of having no clear conclusion at the end, which is usual in many Platonic dialogues).

Critias’ objections show that he is the formidable interlocutor that Plato needs in order to make the dialogue intriguing. In order to reach some conclusions on temperance, Critias asserts that temperance is the only science that is the science of itself and of the other sciences (166e). Therefore, Socrates assumes that it is also science of science and of the absence of science

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(167a). This analysis of self-knowledge seems similar to Socrates' ignorance in the *Apology* (e.g. 21b, 23b): he was able to realise not only his ignorance but to expose that of others as well. Therefore, he became a hated person, and thus Plato tries through his dialogues to explain the need for this knowledge. In addition, Plato believes that Socrates is the most suitable person to communicate this knowledge, since Socrates alone has it.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Socrates admitted earlier that he had not planned any of his arguments beforehand and now he proves it once again: He declares his state of *aporia* (167b), a crucial part of the *elenchus* and motive for further investigation. Through a series of examples (vision, desire, love, fear, opinion), they both agree on the impossibility of the knowledge of what is known and what is not, which explains the *aporia*. This is indeed the point of a philosophical conversation according to Socrates: to detect any false knowledge and try to restate all arguments for the sake of truth. Furthermore, Socrates disputes the possibility of something to be itself and its objects at the same time (168c-169a). Thus, he cannot accept the idea of 'science of science' until he investigates the matter and its usefulness (Socrates examines notions in depth, unlike the Sophists who examine only at a superficial level).

Critias is now in *aporia* too (169c-d), but he cannot admit it, because of his reputation of always prevailing in conversations. However, Socrates does not want to humiliate him, but he continues the discussion (unlike the Sophists who do not care about their interlocutor; instead they laugh and mock others, as in *Euthd.* 276b). Socrates needs to examine each aspect of the matter carefully; he hypothetically agrees with the proposal that σοφροσύνη is knowledge of knowledge (therefore self-knowledge) but he has an objection about the knowledge of ignorance.

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<sup>30</sup> Tuckey (1968:99) refers to *Gorgias* and *Alcibiades I*, because Plato expresses through them his belief in Socrates as the "only real statesman of his time": "Socrates attempted to make men good not by teaching them anything but by convicting them of ignorance and urging them to tend their souls" (knowing oneself means knowing what is good).

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Critias claims that these two are the same, but Socrates disagrees in a polite manner (170a).

While Socrates tries to explain his objection to Critias, he argues that the knowledge of specific fields (like health or law) is essential (knowing about knowledge or ignorance is not enough, 170c-d). The knowledge of knowing is possible, but not the knowledge of what one knows. The knowledge of just knowledge does not make sense, thus there is need for a specific subject.

Therefore, Socrates concludes, through an example in the medical sector, that it is possible for a temperate man to know that he knows (himself and others), but not the subject of the knowledge (170d). Although knowledge of a specific subject seems to be crucial for the happiness of all (171d-172a), the knowledge of knowledge still has some value, because it probably contributes to the better understanding of the specific areas of knowledge (172b-c). Socrates does not even hesitate to express the possible failure of his conclusions up to this point (172c-e). This acknowledgement reveals Plato's purpose to present Socrates as a man who admits his mistakes, who is willing to correct them and to support the need for deep investigation of any matter (173a).

Socrates' question regards the existence of self-knowledge and therefore temperance; if there is temperance in all aspects of life (everybody does what he really knows), everything would prosper in a city-state. However, an ideal state is just a dream (reference here to a quote in *Od.* 19.560-7: Dreams have two possible sources, real and fake ones), and so is the definition "knowledge of knowledge" (173a-b).<sup>31</sup> Moreover, Socrates claims that this knowledge does not imply happiness, despite Critias' objections (173e). Critias states that the knowledge that allows him to distinguish Good from Evil<sup>32</sup> brings him happiness (174b), whilst he refutes actually all of

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<sup>31</sup> Despite the difficulty of safe conclusions in this dialogue, many important points have been raised that make *Charmides* appealing; the image of an ideal state is the main topic of Plato's *Republic* as well.

<sup>32</sup> According to Tuckey (1968:91-3), this definition completes Critias' first definition, 'doing what is good' (163e). In order to do the good thing, it is necessary to know what this is. He also notes (on the basis of Bonitz) that Plato

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his previous claims! (174c). Therefore, Socrates concludes that a specific knowledge is beneficial (the knowledge of Good) and not just the ‘knowledge of knowledge’, as temperance (175a). He admits once again his fault in making such assumptions, which resulted in insistent conclusions. He does not even hesitate to declare himself a bad inquirer (175d). Socrates is mostly sad because he proved himself unable to help Charmides, who most likely has temperance. However, Socrates assures him that temperance is a great good and the more self-controlled Charmides is the happier he must be. Nevertheless, Charmides decides to become Socrates’ student and to listen every day to his “charms,” with the consent of Critias (176b-c). Charmides’ persistence (and Critias’ encouragement) to follow Socrates’ “charms” reveal Plato’s wish to show that there is only a beneficial side to these “charms” and probably to draw a contrast with the Sophists’ “charms.”<sup>33</sup>

Plato through Socrates gives no definite conclusion regarding temperance at the end of the dialogue. Scholars have expressed many opinions on this matter. Newhall (1900:xxi-xxii) notes: “Plato, however, by leaving the investigation unfinished, shows clearly that this course will not lead us to the truth, and Socrates declares that all their labor was in vain.” However, when they reach a conclusion close to the knowledge of Good and the Evil, Socrates seems to be pleased that at least they connected temperance to knowledge. Newall adds: “... as in other early dialogues, the intelligent reader is left to draw the conclusion. Charmides, by his determination

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includes the word ‘good’ in the definitions of temperance and he rejects the ones that do not relate temperance with virtue.

<sup>33</sup> Plato seems to use frequently the word ἐπωδή (in different cases and numbers; twelve times appear in *Charm.* mostly in 155e-158b, 175e-176b, in *Laws* 2.659e, 10.909b, in *Euthd.* 289e-290a, in *Rep.* 2.364b etc.) to declare that there are beneficial ‘incantations’ in contrast to others which are used by ‘all-wise’ magicians who try to deceive people (*Rep.* 1059d). He also uses the word φάρμακον that will heal the soul and body of men (*Criti.* 106b, *Tht.* 167a, *Crat.* 405b etc.).

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to follow Socrates, and Critias by his approval of this course, show that they understand the true meaning veiled by the Socratic irony, and are satisfied with the results.”

Furthermore, Tuckey (1968:94-5, 81) claims too that Plato does not draw a conclusion, since he wants to remain true to “Socrates’ undogmatic method.” As in all of his early dialogues, Plato does not like to be dogmatic and provide a straight conclusion; he clarifies some arguments, he gives some hints about possible answers, but the outcome is never explicit. Tuckey mentions Schirlitz’s view, who “finds in the internal structure of the dialogue considerations which would prevent Plato from producing a complete definition.” More specifically, according to Schirlitz, Charmides’ temperance is not clear in the beginning of the dialogue, because a) Charmides could not say that he does not have temperance, since Critias vouched for his ability earlier (157d), and b) if Charmides affirms that he has temperance, there would be no reason for Socrates’ ‘teaching.’ Therefore, with the current unclear ending (since not even the older men manage to define temperance, 176a), there is need for further inquiry about temperance with Socrates while Charmides is ready for it.

On the basis of Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* and Plato’s *Charmides*, Tuozzo (2011:55) refers to Critias’ lack of temperance as a possible explanation for the failure to reach a definite conclusion. This lack is probably responsible for Critias’ ambiguous answers and Charmides’ final decision to join the oligarchic regime,<sup>34</sup> despite his first agreement to follow Socrates.

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<sup>34</sup> Tuozzo (2011:54) provides Xenophon’s words as evidence for the vicious character of Critias (*Mem.* 1.2.12). Tuozzo also mentions that there is no such bad characterization in ancient texts for Charmides, but “he was one of the ten men who administered the port, Peiraeus, under the Thirty” (see also n. 5 at p. 54, Tuozzo’s reference to the *Seventh Letter* 324c about the rule of fifty-one, instead of thirty). In addition, he mentions Charmides’ death in a battle between the Thirty and the democrats, “when he returned from exile in order to fight for control of the city.” Tuozzo also assumes that “by the time of his [Charmides’] participation in the regime, he had come to share the vicious character of his leaders.”



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Tuozzo underlines Charmides' role in this dialogue, which is actually to choose between Socrates and Critias, the "Virtue" and the "Vice" respectively.

Plato obviously defends Socrates in *Charmides* for many reasons. When he wrote this dialogue, Plato was disappointed by the violent behaviour of the Thirty Tyrants and especially by his close relatives, Critias and Charmides. Despite his aristocratic lineage and his early will to involve himself in politics, at the end he changed his mind. The illegal arrest of Socrates and his final sentence was enough for him to reconsider and focus on the defence of his teacher and the foundation of his Academy (Tuckey 1968:2, 95) on the basis of Socrates' ideas. Plato believed that the sons of noble families (like Charmides and himself) had inborn excellence, but he started to be concerned when the aristocrats became governors. It is true that Socrates unsettled the traditional law and morality of the aristocrats, but he should not be blamed for all the changes that occurred in the early city-state (Tuckey 1968:12-4). Hesiod's 'working-class morality', 'Homer's ideal' and 'Pindar's athletic—in fact the whole aristocratic ethos' were embedded in Athens. However, the situation started to change; every man without relevant education could be in the political scene. The rise of democracy created the "sophistic movement," which together with "the new spirit of scepticism which came from Ionia, tended to undermine the authority of law." Tuckey (1968:97) refers to Schönborn, who claims that Plato believed in some remaining aristocrats who could still save the country with proper training in temperance.<sup>35</sup> Tuckey adds that Plato in *Charmides* "calls for renunciation of the mistaken principles of domestic pedagogy as well as of the fashionable craze of sophism."

In conclusion, Socrates was indeed an important man in the social scene of Athens (nobody can deny this); however, the restored democracy could not accept Socrates' innovative

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<sup>35</sup> Guthrie (1969:381) comments: "Plato himself, who had every reason for disliking them (the oligarchs), pays tribute to the moderation with which they conducted themselves after the restoration."

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ideas, and they wanted to ensure a modest stability in the future. The result was his condemnation, and Plato, disappointed, desired to express Socrates' innocence and great contribution to philosophy.

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## Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to explore how Plato defends Socrates in his works against his formal and informal accusations (impiety, corruption of the young, Socrates' relation to the Sophists and new learning). I distinguished and examined five Platonic works, the *Apology*, the *Symposium*, the *Meno*, the *Euthydemus* and the *Charmides*. The reason I initially chose these ones was their common points, since all five of them can be characterized as apologetic works. After a detailed examination of these works, I discovered that they indeed have similar arguments and aims, with an emphasis on the defence of Socrates over the charge of the corruption of the young.

I started with the examination of the *Apology*, since it is Plato's most apologetic work. It includes all the details on the background of Socrates' case: The time and place of Socrates' trial, his mission from the gods, his plaintiffs, his accusations, the political situation of Athens at the end of the fifth century and its effect on Socrates' condemnation. Socrates was accused of being a natural philosopher (18e, 19b-c), and so his philosophy was thought to be opposed to the traditional religious beliefs. However, Plato proves that Socrates was a religious man mainly because his interrogation of others was a part of his mission that was assigned to him by Apollo through the Delphic Oracle (21a-e). Socrates followed the oracle because he was a righteous and modest man but he was sceptical of the oracle's statement that he was the wisest person. Of course, he did not want to question the oracle, so he was actually obliged to examine other men who were considered wise. In addition, Socrates' plaintiffs accused him of teaching his philosophical theories, but Plato clarifies that he is not a teacher, since he 'knows nothing' (21d). Plato makes a strong contrast between Socrates and the Sophists to prove that Socrates is not a teacher. Socrates does not "make the weaker argument the stronger" (19b), implying that

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Sophists do it (this is very evident in *Euthd.* too, where an actual representation of the Sophists' interrogation occurs). Socrates is not a paid teacher (19d-e), and he is actually a poor man (he mentions many times his poverty; 31c, 37c, 38b). The only thing he declares to know is his ignorance, which is just a kind of human wisdom (20d), and can be remedied through learning. Socrates exhorted others to philosophical knowledge because this is the only way to prevent the ignorance of ignorance and find the truth. The truth ultimately leads to happiness and this was what Socrates wanted to show to others through all his interrogations, justifying his belief that 'a life without examination is not worth living' (38a). In the *Symposium* Plato also wants to promote the aim of happiness through Love (180b, 195a-c, 206c, 207a, 208e), and this is what Socrates tried to do: to 'love' others in his unique way in order to help them reach happiness and not to corrupt them in any way. Moreover, in the *Charmides* Socrates and Critias also discuss the kind of knowledge which is able to bring happiness in life (171d-172a, 174b). According to the above, Plato in the *Apology* seems to reply to each of the charges brought against Socrates.

In the *Symposium* Plato defends Socrates mostly against the charge of the corruption of the young. Plato chooses Alcibiades to give an *encomium* to Socrates mainly because the Athenians thought of Alcibiades as one of the young whom Socrates supposedly corrupted. Nevertheless, Alcibiades has only good things to say for Socrates (for example his admiration for Socrates' courage and self-control, 220a-e, and his influential words, 215b). Alcibiades provides evidence that Socrates did not indulge in Alcibiades' good looks (217b-d, 219c); thus, the accusation of corrupting handsome young men is not valid. Despite Socrates' extraordinary character (*atopia*, 214a, 220a), Alcibiades praises him by saying that nobody can be compared with him (221d). Alcibiades' words of praise and his inappropriate behaviour (he is a man who drinks to excess and easily can be seduced by the adulation of the masses, 212d-e, 216b) prove

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that it was not Socrates who was responsible for Alcibiades' dishonest actions, but Alcibiades himself. If Alcibiades considered Socrates responsible for his faults, he would be the first one to accuse Socrates. Plato wants to clarify also here that Socrates was not a teacher (and thus he did not corrupt Alcibiades or anyone else), since he pursues knowledge in contrast to the wise people who do not (204a), and so he is not wise. Plato reinforces Socrates' profile as a non-teacher by drawing a contrast once again with the Sophists (for example, Plato is ironic towards Agathon who shows the influence of sophistic rhetoric, 198a, 198b-c).

Furthermore, Plato presents Socrates as an intellectual force, which will lead closer to wisdom. Socrates personally knows only about τὰ ἐρωτικά (177d, the 'ways of love'), and he always seeks more knowledge, like Love (203d). Socrates is an exemplar for the young, not a corruptor: he promotes love in all levels, which is related to self-discipline and pleasure (196b-e), and thus Socrates cares about the happiness of everybody, as in the *Apology*. Socrates urges the young through Diotima's words to follow Love in order to obtain beauty in mind and soul (206b-c). At this point, Alcibiades has one more role through his contrast to Socrates: the superiority of mind and soul (Socrates) over the body (Alcibiades).

In the next dialogue, *Meno*, Plato presents Socrates as carrying on a discussion with Meno regarding his question "whether virtue can be taught." Initially, Meno was the one who asked Socrates to start this conversation. Socrates is willing to examine the matter, without promising any answers, since he is not a teacher. Meno is actually the person who should give the answers through the method of 'recollection' (80c-d, 81d-e, 86b-c) which promotes the process of learning. Once again Plato defends Socrates as a non-teacher and expresses his irony towards the Sophists and their methods (for example, they give hasty answers, 70b; Socrates' great opposition to Prodicus, 75d-e, and Protagoras 91d-92a).

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In addition, Plato deliberately chooses Meno here (like Alcibiades in *Smp.*) for two main reasons. First, Meno was a follower of the Sophists (71d) but, through his enquiry with Socrates, he realizes the Sophists' inability to define virtue. Second, he is handsome (76b, like Alcibiades), but Socrates resists and does not try to corrupt him in any way. On the contrary, Socrates tries to recommend a critical way of thinking to Meno but on the basis of Meno's own internal knowledge. Socrates' ideas here derive from holy people and Pindar (81a-c), so he does not claim that he is wise (a common point about his wisdom in *Ap.* and *Smp.*, since here his ideas are actually Diotima's). In addition, Socrates' method is democratic in contrast to the Sophistic one, since Socrates led others to draw their own conclusions, and his talks were free of charge (Sophists received payment, 91b) and open to everybody, even to slaves, like Meno's. The role of the slave in the dialogue is to prove the theory of recollection (82a, 85b, 81e-82a, since he did not receive any teaching in his life) and thus that Socrates is not a teacher. Plato presents the slave as being closer to the truth through recollection (81a-82a, 84c), which is the greatest aim of Socrates. Socrates aimed at a good cause, so he is not a corruptor.

Furthermore, Plato's defence is also evident through the choice of Anytus as interlocutor in this dialogue. Anytus was one of Socrates' plaintiffs and he realizes now that Socrates was neither one of the Sophists nor a corruptor. Plato demonstrates Anytus' superficiality once again by showing his inclination to reject anything unfamiliar without prior examination (he was not aware of the Socratic or the Sophistic ideas, but he was eager to accuse both). In the *Meno*, Plato's main apologetic purpose is to focus on the accusation regarding the corruption of the young and not so much about Socrates' religious profile: the only relevant reference in this dialogue is Socrates' claim that virtue is a divine gift (71d).

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In the *Euthydemus*, the contrast between Socrates and the Sophists, here Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, becomes more intense in order for Plato to distinguish Socrates from them and acquit him on the basic charge of corrupting the young. *Euthydemus* is a sarcastic dialogue full of irony towards the Sophistic methods (some sarcastic points are in 271c-d, 288b-c, 272a-b). The topic of the conversation is virtue, similar to *Meno*. The Sophists declare their ability to teach virtue (274b) and actually to refute any argument, since they consider themselves experts (272b), receiving payment for their services (272a-b, 288e). Their ability to convert an argument in any way they want reminds us of the accusation against Socrates in the *Apology* (18e, 19b-c): “(Socrates) makes the weaker argument the stronger.” Plato actually reverses the accusation to the Sophists here and blames them. In addition, Plato devotes a lot of time in presenting an abundance of Sophistic fallacies and sophisms (for example, 275d, 297e-298d) in order to make clear the distance between the eristic art of the Sophists and the dialectical philosophy of Socrates. According to Plato, Sophists’ methods are anti-pedagogical and aim at corruption and the acquisition of wealth (277d-278b, 304a, 304c), whereas Socrates wants to discover the truth (277d, 288d).

The scene of the discussion is similar to *Smp.*, *Men.* and *Chrm.* There is a young man who is confused regarding the methods of Socrates and the Sophists. In *Euthd.*, the young man is Cleinias (275a-b) whom the Sophists try to influence while Socrates tries to protect. Socrates cares about Cleinias’ soul and warns him to be cautious with the Sophists (276a). Another important difference between the Sophists and Socrates is that the Sophists aim only at winning ‘verbal’ battles (277d) whereas Socrates aims at wisdom (through learning) which leads to prosperity (279d, 280a, 281b). Socrates once again is a righteous man who is concerned about the well-being of others.

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Furthermore, another young and handsome man, called Ctesippus, appears in the dialogue (273a) in order to support Socrates against the Sophists and to become an educational motive for Cleinias (282b, 300c), since there were feelings of love between them; the power of love can work positively, as in *Smp*. At the end of the dialogue, Plato wants to underline once again the distinction between Socrates and the Sophists with the example of a man who was confused about the meaning of philosophy (306d-e). The above differences between Socrates and the Sophists were not clear to the Athenians and Plato desires to present them to Socrates' favour. Even at the very end of the *Euthydemus* (307b-c), Plato shows that Socrates did not force anybody to follow his philosophy; he just exhorted people to examine the value of philosophy.

The last Platonic work examined in this thesis is *Charmides*. Plato's purpose is to show that Socrates was not Charmides' or Critias' teacher and thus not a corruptor. Plato creates a favourable profile of Socrates, who expresses his concern about Athens and the state of philosophy during his absence in battle (153d). Socrates is ready to investigate 'temperance' through a number of rejected hypotheses (159b, 160e, 161b) with the help of Critias and Charmides; his customary behaviour is to go through an enquiry together with his interlocutors and not to lead them into predetermined conclusions (the most obvious evidence for this is that he could not reach a specific result at the end of the dialogue, 176a). The important thing for Socrates is for him and his interlocutors to be in a state of *aporia* first (as here, 167b), and then to follow the process of *elenchus* (166e). Another common point with the dialogues above is that Plato chooses again a young and handsome man, Charmides, in order to give the chance to Socrates to resist his beauty (155c-d) and prove the superiority of mind and soul over body (154e). Socrates pretends to be a physician suitable for Charmides' alleged headache (155e) and claims that a cure concerns not only the body but the soul too. This cure is a herb and a 'charm'



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that Socrates received from one of the physicians of the Thracian King Zalmoxis; thus these words do not reflect Socrates' knowledge (the same motif in the *Smp.*: he just transmits Diotima's words; this motif is also consistent with his claim to 'know nothing' in *Ap.*). Plato presents Socrates as caring about others (here he is willing to cure Charmides), and Critias encourages the cure of Charmides' soul, showing his trust in Socrates (157c-d).

The issue of self-knowledge is raised in the *Charmides*, and together with Critias Socrates connects it with temperance (165b; it is similar to Socrates' ignorance in *Ap.* 21b, 23b). Socrates did not promise any results regarding Charmides' care, and he himself is in a process of learning. Despite Socrates' inability to define temperance, Charmides is desirous to follow Socrates' charms (176b-c), showing that the process of learning can be continued for all the participants in an enquiry. In conclusion, Socrates did not harm anybody; he sought to find the truth even for himself, and the accusations expressed in the *Apology* are shown not to be valid.

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