

THE NEOPLATONIC SOCRATES

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THE NEOPLATONIC SOCRATES

EDITED BY

Danielle A. Layne and Harold Tarrant

PENN

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INTRODUCTION

Danielle A. Layne and Harold Tarrant

Or how, before this, could we examine anything else, either of the things that are or of those that come to be when we have heard Socrates himself say: “It seems ridiculous of me to consider the properties of other beings, when I do not know myself”?¹

—Proclus, *in Alc.* 6.12 (tr. O’Neill, modified)

In one of the most romantic dialogues of his corpus, Plato depicts Socrates walking barefoot in the waters of the Ilissus, coyly tormented by a seemingly benign conundrum: “Who am I, and what are my intentions?” Turning to the handsome Phaedrus and admitting his real difficulty with his lack of self-knowledge, Socrates famously wonders whether he resembles “a monster more complicated and more furious than Typhon or a gentler and simpler creature, to whom a divine and quiet lot is given by nature.”² Unable to solve the problem immediately, Socrates spends the afternoon conversing with the boy on the nature of love, the soul, and the life of the philosopher and, in so doing, sets the question “Who is Socrates?” on the back burner. Yet, as we all know, years later, in a setting dramatically different from this meandering stroll on a hot summer day, this very same difficulty was readdressed before his peers and countrymen, the Athenians, and they replied rather forcefully, sentencing the philosopher to death for corrupting the youth.

As history testifies, the Athenians were not the last to respond indignantly to the question “Who is Socrates?” Timon of Phlius, skeptic and disciple of Pyrrho, apparently believed that Socrates was a wicked dissembler, while Cato, the Roman statesman and Stoic, deemed him a seditious babblers.³ With satirical wit, Lucian,

in the imperial age, would unabashedly associate the philosopher with chicanery, branding Socrates a coward who would rather seduce boys than participate in the real affairs of the city.⁴ In contrast to such Athenian-like disdain, many others have felt the need to defend the philosopher and his activities, attempting at times to reconcile his beliefs with their own. Cicero famously regarded him as the father of the rival Academic and Stoic schools, while Julian, the last non-Christian Roman emperor, claimed that the son of Sophroniscus was more influential than Alexander the Great.⁵ In the Renaissance, Marsilio Ficino, a leader in the revival of Platonism, prolifically referred to Socrates' noble spirit and ability to save the youth, while in modern and contemporary philosophy Socrates' image and philosophical method have been invoked and heralded in the works of authors as esteemed as Hegel, Kierkegaard, Gadamer, and even the infamously cynical Foucault.⁶

Patently, opinion on "Who is Socrates?" and whether he was a Typhonic monster or a sage has been decidedly split. In contemporary scholarship on Socrates this question has been revived and comprehensively analyzed. In fact, the library stacks of most research universities testify to the wealth and abundance of secondary literature on Socrates, and, like well-worn war trenches, the daunting material in the field can overwhelm and perhaps even frustrate students. In Socratic studies alone, the army of topics includes questions concerning the sufficiency of virtue for happiness, the necessity of knowledge for the good life, the sincerity or irony of Socrates' avowals of ignorance, the (im)possible nature of akratic action, Socratic method, and, most prominently, the so-called Socratic problem in which scholars debate the possibility of discovering the thoughts and beliefs of the "historical" Socrates.⁷

Assuredly, one of the most important texts in Socratic studies is Gregory Vlastos's *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher*.⁸ Written at the end of a long and industrious career in ancient philosophy, this book marked the beginning of a radical resurgence in Socratic philosophy as Vlastos advanced many remarkable and provocative theses that attempted to wrestle with and uncover the "historical" Socrates. Inspired by Vlastos's pioneering work, in the early 1990s several editions and monographs devoted to understanding the life and work of the philosopher began to appear, expanding the already abundant repertoire of appraisals on Socrates in Plato's dialogues. Consequently, many interested students hoping to come to grips with the infamous question "Who is Socrates?" began turning to editions like Hugh Benson's *Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates*, K. J. Boudouris's *Philosophy of Socrates*, and William Prior's four-volume *Socrates: Critical Assessments* to navigate a path through this overloaded terrain of scholarship.

These volumes offered students and scholars a rich compendium of essays devoted to various issues, not the least of which was responding to the Socratic problem and the search for the true Socrates, that is, the historical answer to the question “Who is Socrates?”.

In the mid-nineties the quest for the so-called historical or true Socrates began to wane as specialists slowly forged the consensus that headway on the subject would not be possible without further evidence. In fact, many scholars voiced the opinion that the “Socratic problem” was a chimera, a Typhonic monster itself, as the literary genre that both Plato and Xenophon so eloquently employed, the *logoi sokratikoi*, allowed for considerable liberty and creativity, and thus neither of these authors could reliably be deemed the authentic voice of the historical Socrates.⁹ Accordingly, several experts maintained that what mattered in Socratic studies was not the discovery of the historical Socrates but rather the careful reconstruction of Socrates’ legacy and the ideas that inspired various philosophical traditions.¹⁰ One need only think of Paul Vander Waerdt’s edited volume *The Socratic Movement*, which, after examining Plato’s and Xenophanes’ depictions of Socrates, also included essays devoted to the philosopher’s influence on the Cynics, Stoics, and Skeptics. In fact, in recent years there has been a remarkable surge of scholarship that explicitly endeavors to track the history of the Socratic commentary inaugurated in the Academy and surviving into the present age. For instance, Lindsay Judson and Vassilis Karasmanis compiled a collection entitled *Remembering Socrates*, whose final two essays explicitly deal at length with the appearance of Socrates in later antiquity. Similarly, Donald R. Morrison opens his *Cambridge Companion to Socrates* with a very dense essay by Louis-André Dorion on the decline of interest in the Socratic problem, but also brilliantly ends with a piece by A. A. Long entirely devoted to Socrates in the Hellenistic and imperial ages. Continuing this trend, Michael Trapp’s two-volume *Socrates from Antiquity to the Enlightenment* and *Socrates in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* meticulously devotes itself to tracing the image of Socrates throughout the history of philosophy and even concludes with essays on Kierkegaard’s and Nietzsche’s attraction to this Athenian personality. Finally, one of the best publications aiming to give its readers a more comprehensive answer to the question “Who is Socrates?” is Sara Ahbel-Rappe’s and Rachana Kamtekar’s *Companion to Socrates*, which dedicates almost half of its 510 pages to the Socrates envisaged by later thinkers in the medieval, Renaissance, modern, and contemporary periods. In this volume essays range over a variety of topics, including analysis of typical Socratic problems in Plato’s dialogues, as well as more creative and stimulating theses like Socrates’ sage-like status in the Arabic tradition and his

methodological impact on Hegel. It closes with persuasive discussions concerning the philosopher's influence on contemporary teaching methods and even psychoanalysis.

In such circumstances the present-day student or scholar in Socratic studies hears a variety of voices, all of which are attuned to the immeasurable worth of the stonemason's son who challenged all comers to recognize that the unexamined life is not worth living. Nevertheless, it must be noted that despite this new wave of valuable resources in Socratic scholarship, there is a rather striking omission, a lacuna that assuredly resonates with anyone interested in the history of philosophy. Put simply, there seems to be an almost eerie silence with regard to the reception of Socrates in later antiquity; most predominantly in all of the publications mentioned above there is an unfortunate neglect of analysis on the reception of Socrates in the later Platonic tradition from the second to the sixth century CE. In other words, there is a marked neglect in engagement with the Neoplatonic rendering of Socrates. For example, both the Trapp and the Ahbel-Rappe and Kamtekar collections contain an assortment of essays spanning various contexts from Hellenistic and medieval Jewish literature to contemporary contexts, but, nonetheless, regardless of their comprehensiveness, there is not one paper devoted to the Socrates of later antiquity. Strikingly, more than half a millennium of commentary is passed over in silence.

This neglect is not completely unsurprising, as the oft-regarded father of this so-called school,¹¹ Plotinus, rarely analyzes the character of Socrates and, moreover, pays little attention to what most consider the genuinely Socratic dialogues, that is, the early aporetic works. Furthermore, the Neoplatonic curriculum, first organized by Iamblichus in the late third or early fourth century, focused less on dialogues that modern scholars would see as somehow "Socratic" (e.g., the *Apolo-gy* and *Euthyphro*) and more on texts like the *Timaeus* or the *Parmenides*, dialogues where Socrates has ceased to be the protagonist.¹² This tendency to bypass the 'Socratic' in the *Enneads* in general and in the Iamblichean curriculum in particular has led many scholars to conclude with W. Bröcker that this constitutes a *Platonismus ohne Sokrates*.¹³ For Bröcker it was clear that the Neoplatonic project stood counter to the Socratic tradition as it no longer valorized doubt and open inquiry but, in its lust to systemize Plato's metaphysics, seemed to white-wash both Socrates' association with skepticism and the ethical/political character of his divine mission. As Werner Beierwaltes neatly summarizes:

"Ohne Sokrates"—dies hieße: ohne *politisches Engagement* und ohne *politische Theorie*, die auf eine durch philosophische Ethik gerformte

Struktur der Polis hinwirken könnte, *und ohne Dialog*, ohne das Fragen in ihm, ohne das Bewußtsein des Nicht-Wissens dessen, was man wissen möchte oder sollte—beides gemäß dem Bild des Sokrates, wie es Platon geprägt hat. (Beierwaltes 1995: 97)

“Without Socrates”—this means: without *political engagement* and without *political theory*, which could contribute to a structure of the polis that is formed through philosophical ethics, *and without dialogue*, without questioning in dialogue, without the consciousness of the not-knowing of that which one would like to or ought to know—both [of these aspects are] according to the image of Socrates as Plato has formed it.

In sum, for Bröcker, the Neoplatonic tradition, with Plotinus as its quintessential representative, fled from the dangers of aporetic and political discourse in favor of building a highly elaborate, but ultimately ethereal, metaphysical system; and so, as a result of Bröcker’s enigmatic thesis, scholars began to echo his characterization of this tradition. As R. F. Hathaway was to conclude a few years later, the “decisive character of the Neoplatonic interpretation of Plato is its obliviousness to the genuine Socratic element in the dialogues.” Hathaway continues: “[The Neoplatonists] were predisposed to disregard the aporetic character of the dialogues and therewith an essential feature of what we mean by Socratic dialectic. It also means that they took Plato’s myths as dogmatic teachings in need of didactic exegesis rather than as Socratic elucidations of a certain kind bearing directly on the aporetic state of the moral questions.”¹⁴ In short, Hathaway, in tune with Bröcker, believed that the Neoplatonists did not understand the intricacies of Socrates’ methods and ignored his avowals of ignorance for the sake of systematizing Plato. As such, in Hathaway’s eyes, they were not faithful to this fundamental feature residing in much of Plato’s work and could be discounted not only as loyal adherents to the Socratic tradition but also, ultimately, as adherents to the Platonic tradition. To be sure, this undeserving characterization of the Neoplatonic project as “one without Socrates” only furthers the unfortunate stigma that this tradition did not authentically understand the Platonic dialogues but tirelessly transformed Plato’s philosophy for its own metaphysical and religious purposes. In the end, it is wrongly assumed that serious scholars of either Plato or Socrates need not engage with this odd anomaly in the history of Platonism, as nothing of real value can be gleaned from Neoplatonists; either they completely misunderstood Plato and Socrates, or their conclusions are irrelevant to contemporary debates.

To counter this image, this volume specifically tackles the idea that the Neoplatonists neglected the Socratic element of Plato's dialogues. As we shall soon see, several of them, especially in the later commentary tradition, analyzed and engaged with various Socratic subjects, including, but not limited to, analysis of Socrates' avowals and disavowals of knowledge, his irony, and his philosophical method, countering the thesis that this tradition kept its distance from the aporetic in Plato's dialogues. Furthermore, even if we are to take seriously the fact that Plotinus and other early Neoplatonists like Porphyry and Iamblichus rarely, if ever, discuss the life and methods of the son of Sophroniscus, they did, on the other hand, implicitly owe a debt to Socrates, particularly in their own use of open-ended philosophical discourse and their ceaseless commitment to the value of self-knowledge, virtue, and human happiness.¹⁵ As Andrew Smith argues, Plotinus, like Socrates, "possesses strong philosophical convictions and is driven at every stage to reassess and re-examine them."¹⁶ Overall, the *Enneads*, far from resembling a complex and closed treatise, emerges more as a kind of inner dialogue, stressing constant self-scrutiny and doubt not unlike Socrates. One should also note Plotinus's commitment to open-ended inquiry in his seminars where he notably encouraged his students to pose questions rather than dogmatically accept his theses.¹⁷ As Porphyry records, Plotinus's commitment to dialogue was so deep-seated that on one occasion he rebuffed a request that he, Plotinus, propound a longer treatise in lieu of debating with Porphyry. The account is worth quoting:

Once I, Porphyry, went on asking him for three days about the soul's connection with the body, and he kept explaining to me. A man, Thaumasius by name, entered the classroom, and declared that he wanted Plotinus to deal with general subjects, and that he should talk in such a way that what he said could be written down, because he could not stand these questions and answers exchanged between Plotinus and Porphyry. Plotinus replied, "But if we could not solve the problems Porphyry raises, we would be unable to say anything that could be written down (ἀλλὰ ἂν μὴ Πορφυρίου ἐρωτῶντος λύσωμεν τὰς ἀπορίας, εἰπεῖν τι καθάπαξ εἰς τὸ βιβλίον οὐ δύνησόμεθα)." (Porph., *Vita Plotini* 13, 12–16, tr. Armstrong)

Here Plotinus shows that the question-and-answer method is indeed at the very fundament of his philosophical practice, evidencing that at no time can he be regarded as one who irrevocably discarded one of the touchstones of the philosophical activity first heralded in the life of Socrates. Again it will be useful to turn to the exegesis of Beierwaltes:

Das *dialogische* Element im neuplatonischen Denken zeigt sich zwar nicht in der spezifischen literarischen Form des Dialogs, es ist aber für die mündliche Lehre bestimmend geblieben; als einen Spiegel dieses Vorgangs mag man das intensive Fragen ansehen, das die Traktate Plotins belebt, ohne daß jede Frage auch in eine abschließende oder abgeschlossene Antwort überginge. Die Gedanken Plotins sind auch nicht—entgegen wenig bedachten aber gängigen Formulierungen—in ein starres, Alles erklärendes *System* gepreßt, sie zeugen vielmehr von einer ihren jeweiligen Gegenstand inständig und meditativ umkreisenden Denkstruktur. (Beierwaltes 1995: 98)

The *dialogical* element in Neoplatonic thinking is certainly not manifest in the specific literary form of the dialogue, but it has remained decisive for oral teaching; one may view intense questioning as a mirror of these proceedings that enliven the tracts of Plotinus without every question also transitioning into a conclusive or definitive answer. The thoughts of Plotinus are also not—contrary to less thoughtful yet catchy formulations—compressed into a rigid *system* that explains everything; rather they testify to a structure of thought that imploringly and meditatively encompasses its respective object.

Continuing his defense, Beierwaltes further trivializes the idea that Neoplatonism is a Platonism without Socrates, reminding his readers that the later Platonic tradition is Socratic simply insofar as its project readily endorses and continues the Socratic injunction “Know thyself.” Of course, as many scholars of Neoplatonism readily highlight, Plotinus and his immediate predecessors like Porphyry would formulate a uniquely ontological hermeneutic of this maxim, but not one that would run counter to the Socratic project. As Beierwaltes concludes, “Wenn also Selbst-Gegenwart des Menschen durch das Erkennen seiner selbst (d h. seines eigentlichen Selbst, des Geistes) allererst den Zugang zur Gegenwart des Seins *im Denken selbst* eröffnet” (“If, therefore, the self-presence of man is opened up through the knowledge of himself (i.e., of his authentic self, of the spirit), then the access to the presence of Being is opened up first and foremost *in thinking itself*” (Beierwaltes 1995: 109). As one may assume, for Plotinus true self-knowledge arises when one shuns the sensible and begins to care for the soul, discounting, as Socrates would readily lambast, the goods of the body such as health, wealth, and physical beauty. Plotinus regards such an outward leaning tendency as a kind of perverted self-care, a myopic “playfulness” that ignorantly or childishly looks to

the “outside shadow of man.” Rather strikingly, Plotinus explicitly invokes Socrates in his attempt to explain this perversion when he writes, “And even if Socrates too may play sometimes, it is by the outer Socrates that he plays.”¹⁸ Here, Plotinus’s quick mention of Socrates is itself a call to recognize the urgency of turning inward in serious contemplation, that is, to know oneself. In this statement Plotinus also implicitly reminds his readers of Socrates’ characteristic banter, his penchant for irony. Not unlike Alcibiades’ Silenic portrait in the *Symposium*, Plotinus suggests that Socrates’ immediate appearance evidences one persona, it appears playful and is immersed in the world of sense, but this is only the external mask of the philosopher. Once one investigates within, one will uncover Socrates’ seriousness and with it his wisdom and virtue. Moreover, we could also add that the Socratic aporetic impulse in Plotinus is mediated through the Neoplatonist’s own recognition of the limits of human discursivity and knowledge. Ultimately, then, his entire philosophical project implicitly endorses the Socratic rejoinder to recognize one’s ignorance or inability to ascend the heights of knowledge via clutching at mere human wisdom, as true philosophy “pursues what is venerable, not what is arrogant.”¹⁹

With these general points in mind, readers of Plotinus still might be disappointed with the fact that of the thirty-four occurrences of Socrates’ name in the *Enneads* only the passage above on the philosopher’s “outward play” refers to Socrates as anything more than an example of a concrete individual or a placeholder in a logical argument concerning all individuals. Yet, while this silence regarding Plato’s main protagonist is odd for one who adheres to the Platonic tradition, it should not lead us to the hasty simplification that Plotinus is a philosopher for whom the Socratic character of philosophy itself has been lost. Spyridon Rangos attempts to explain why Plotinus’s silence with regard to Socrates should not alarm the reader of the *Enneads* or signify any greater meaning. Emphasizing Plotinus’s penchant for ascribing the views of Socrates in Plato’s dialogues solely to Plato, Rangos writes:

Even when, as is frequently the case, the views that Plotinus ascribes to Plato are expressed through the mouth of Socrates, Plotinus seems both unwilling to refer to Plato with the character’s name and uninterested in drawing inferences about Socrates from Platonic evidence. But no conclusions concerning Plotinus’ opinion about Socrates can be drawn from this omission. For, with one single exception justified from within the context, the standard practice of Plotinus is precisely this: no Platonic characters are mentioned by name although it is often the case that Plotinus ascribes

to Plato views voiced through, for instance, Timaeus or the Eleatic Stranger.²⁰

Suggestively then it seems that Plotinus's motivations were primarily philosophical versus philological or historical, and as such the Neoplatonist was not interested in valorizing Socrates or understanding his historical personality. Plotinus, unlike the Stoics, may of had little interest in explicitly positioning him, or anyone else for that matter, as the ideal sage, because his motivation was ultimately a personal search within himself so that he might live the authentically philosophical life as opposed to describing it in the life of another. In short, perhaps like Socrates, Plotinus desired to be an iconoclast who withdrew from valorizing all but those texts that inspired him to question and engage in the study of reality, and as such he did not need to engage with the life and methods of Socrates. Finally, it should be recalled that, alongside recording that Plotinus and his school in Rome celebrated the birthdays of both Plato and Socrates, Porphyry, in his *Life of Plotinus*, records the words of the Delphic oracle, "No one was wiser than Socrates," just before recounting Apollo's own veneration of the divine Plotinus. In this invocation Porphyry gracefully substantiates his master's place as a true teacher and servant of Apollo, a tradition that is indebted, as Porphyry highlights in quoting the *Apology*, to Socrates.²¹

Following Plotinus, the early Neoplatonists, like Porphyry and Iamblichus, also remain relatively quiet with regard to Socrates. Porphyry himself may even have maligned Socrates in his *History of Philosophy*, offering, as Socrates Scholasticus relates, an account one would expect from a hostile critic like Meletus or Anytus.²² Nevertheless, one should exercise caution when it comes to Porphyry's supposed disdain of Socrates in his *History of Philosophy* as the evidence needs to be mediated (1) by the fact that it depends on various Christian authors who may have had their own reasons for disparaging Socrates, and (2) by his praise and use of Socrates in *De abstinencia*, which paints a very different picture of the philosopher by including him in a list of the seven sages of Greece, venerating his disdain of pleasure, and extolling his commitment to the Olympian gods.²³ As for Iamblichus, the Syrian does not, in his extant work, explicitly discuss the character of Socrates, mentioning him only once and seemingly out of context at *De myst.* I 8, 6. Nevertheless, given that Iamblichus was said to have written extensive commentaries on various Platonic dialogues, we can explain Iamblichus's silence on Socrates in terms of the loss of these invaluable texts. In fact, in the scattered fragments that we possess Iamblichus seems to have analyzed Plato's Socrates on a regular basis. For example, according to surviving scholia, Iamblichus described

Socrates as one who is analogous to the Olympian deity Zeus,²⁴ whereas Hermias, a later Platonic commentator, describes Iamblichus as regarding Socrates as one who can ascend the “ladder of love” and commune with the Beautiful itself while still retaining the ability to return to the levels below.²⁵ While this evidence is scant, it should nevertheless be noted that Iamblichus’s canonization of the Platonic dialogues into a set curriculum would keep the commentary tradition alive and stimulate later Neoplatonic authors to engage in extensive discussion of Socrates. As we shall see, Iamblichus is the last Neoplatonist to hold his tongue: Syrianus, Hermias, Proclus, Olympiodorus, and even Simplicius overtly engage Socrates and the Socratic character of Platonism in their commentaries.

Having discussed the silence of Socrates in Plotinus in particular and the early Neoplatonists in general, we should also counter the so-called neglect of Socrates in the later Neoplatonic curriculum, as this will provide evidence of why there seems to be a sudden rekindling of interest in Socrates in later antiquity. Here we shall concede that the late commentators underutilized texts like the *Apology*, but, nevertheless, it should be stressed that in the dialogues that they championed Socrates still stars in three out of every four texts. Specifically, in the first cycle of ten dialogues (*Alcibiades I*, *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Cratylus*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, and *Philebus*) only the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* lack the overwhelming presence of some version of “Socrates.”²⁶ In fact, the *Alcibiades I*, a dialogue whose authenticity is much debated in contemporary scholarship,²⁷ fulfills many of our expectations of a “Socratic” text insofar as it:

1. Raises questions about the identity of a virtue, in this case justice, and also about the identity of friendship (126c);
2. Invites definitions of self-care and of the human being (127e–128a);
3. Displays Socrates expertly wielding the elenchus over Alcibiades’ often naive attempts to answer a whole series of embarrassing questions that go straight to the heart of Alcibiades’ moral identity;
4. Highlights the value of *aporia* and the importance of admitting ignorance.

Several later Platonists, including Proclus and Olympiodorus, wrote commentaries on this dialogue, which, regardless of its authorship, is an example of a *logos sokraticos*. In fact, according to Proclus, this dialogue, above all others, emphasized the peculiarly Socratic theme of removing the conceit of knowledge, as the philosopher consistently forces Alcibiades to recognize that he is morally ignorant despite thinking he knows the good, the just, or the true. In their respective commentaries on this dialogue neither Proclus nor Olympiodorus dismisses the

aporetic element of this interchange but rather embraces such perplexity as part of the path toward the philosophical life. More important, both laid a strong emphasis upon observing the character and actions of Socrates insofar as his very manner stimulates wonder and the introspective turn to self-examination, and consciousness of innate resources residing within the soul.²⁸ As Proclus writes of Alcibiades' own curiosity and reaction to the philosopher, "To long to learn the reasons for Socrates' behavior is to become a lover of the knowledge pre-existent in him."²⁹ In short, this seemingly simple movement toward self-knowledge stimulated by Socrates' confession of ignorance is the beginning of *all* philosophy, and, thus, both Proclus and Olympiodorus praise the place of the *Alcibiades* in Iamblichus's curriculum.³⁰

Furthermore, as Danielle Layne argues in Chapter 5 of this volume, one must understand the basics of Neoplatonic hermeneutics to appreciate how this tradition understood and responded to the character of Socrates. Unlike the developmentalist wing of Platonic scholarship, the Neoplatonists followed Socrates' comments in the *Phaedrus* and read the dialogues as unified organic wholes, which, like all organisms, are complex—and therein less comparable to mere abstract arguments on paper than to real flesh-and-blood individuals. What becomes manifest in this kind of exegesis is that overall the Neoplatonists took seriously the "literary elements" of the dialogues and, as such, often focused on how every character contributes to an understanding of the dialogue as a whole. Consider Proclus's commentary on the *Timaeus* in which Proclus decidedly argues that Plato expertly crafted the dialogue to be both Pythagorean and Socratic in character. As Proclus writes:

So if there's anywhere else that he has combined the distinctive features of Pythagorean and Socratic, then he obviously does this in this dialogue too. In the Pythagorean tradition it contains loftiness of mind, intuition, inspiration, a tendency to link everything with the intelligibles. . . . From the considerate Socratic [manner] it possesses approachability, gentleness, a tendency towards demonstration, to study reality through images, to moral content, and so on. (Proclus, *in Tim.* 7.25–8.1, tr. Tarrant).³¹

Considering it an expertly crafted combination of both the Socratic and the Pythagorean, Proclus believes that the *Timaeus* as a whole is elevated to perfection. In this way Proclus provides evidence that by no stretch of the imagination could he believe, contra Hathaway's estimation, that one could understand or even appreciate Plato's work without recognizing the Socratic element even in a

dialogue like the *Timaeus*. In fact, later in this commentary Proclus makes a startling observation about *logoi sokratikoi* in general, arguing that a good rendition, like Plato's, must capture the spirit of the philosopher if it hopes to promote his teachings. Writing on the nature of poetry and imitation, Proclus confesses that

... inner dispositions obviously make a difference to speeches. Accordingly we ridicule those who have written defense-speeches of Socrates—most of them apart from Plato—because they haven't preserved the character of Socrates. Yet when they are recording this basic story, how Socrates was accused and defended himself and met with such and such a verdict, they wouldn't deserve of ridicule; rather it is the failure to capture a likeness in their imitation of words that shows up the imitators as ridiculous. (Proclus, in *Tim.* 65.22–28, tr. Tarrant)³²

Even Syrianus, Proclus's venerable master, clearly distinguished between the historical Socrates and the character portrayed in Plato's dialogues, and ultimately concluded, on the basis of Plato's virtue, that Plato's portrait of Socrates was authentic. Furthermore, while acknowledging that the dialogues cannot be altogether historically accurate, "for Plato could not have checked every small detail, such as that Socrates bent his leg," the anonymous author of the *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* argued that Plato's dialogues accurately depict the historical Socrates, as otherwise the dialogues would not be "true to life" and thus would not be effective in stimulating readers to the examined life.³³ Striking for contemporary scholars, we see that the Neoplatonists are in agreement with Vlastos, as they also seem to argue that Plato truly captured the Socratic character in his work.³⁴ Yet, in contrast to Vlastos, authors like Proclus never believed that this was limited to certain dialogues, for example, the shorter aporetic dialogues; rather, Proclus would argue that this Socratic element was present in all the dialogues in which Socrates is present, even as a secondary character. To be sure, in light of their hermeneutical strategies that preserve the integrity of the literary or dramatic devices like character, the Neoplatonists very rarely conflated Socrates with Plato.³⁵ Rather, they typically regarded him as a distinct individual whose play with other characters like Timaeus contributes to the meaning of the text as a whole. In this way, the Neoplatonists avoided a problem that dogs much commentary in Socratic studies, that is, the need to reconcile Socrates' voice with Plato's. For this tradition, Plato's voice can only be gleaned by looking to the dialogue as a whole versus dissecting or extracting the arguments of any one character in the text. Of course, this approach is in tune with recent secondary literature that not only con-

centrates on what Socrates says, the overt philosophical arguments, but also analyzes why, how, and to whom he speaks, not to mention the significance of where and when he speaks.

Given this manner of reading the character of Socrates and the dialogues as a whole, the Neoplatonists were able to reconcile the various contradictions that the philosopher seemingly makes throughout Plato's corpus. Like all dynamic characters, Socrates can change his methods and even meanings to accord with those to whom he is speaking and the subject matter at hand. In this vein, Harold Tarrant explicates, in Chapter 10 of this book, that Neoplatonists such as Hermias and Olympiodorus were quite conscious of the plurality of Socrates' voices or styles of speaking throughout individual dialogues as well as the entire corpus. As Tarrant writes on Olympiodorus's commentary on the *Alcibiades I*:

Olympiodorus . . . recognizes within three major sections of the [*Alcibiades*] three separate roles for Socrates as protagonist. In the first major section, to 119a, he employs elenchus in order to demonstrate to Alcibiades his shortcomings; in the second, to 124b, he employs protreptic discourse; and in the remainder he operates as the philosophic midwife, helping Alcibiades towards a correct understanding of the kind of creature that he really is in himself. Elenchus, protreptic, and midwifery all receive extensive discussion in the modern literature on Socrates, so that what Olympiodorus sees as the role of Socrates here may be regarded as genuinely Socratic.

Through the use of computer analysis Tarrant intends to demonstrate that the Neoplatonists were well aware of real differences in Plato's language that reflect the broader difference between what is in some sense "Socratic" and what is Platonic, and between the different styles or registers invoked in Socrates' use of question and answer as well as in more divinely graced moments of mythmaking. In fact, according to Tarrant, the Neoplatonists recognized that while Socrates was not, like Plato, a divinely inspired author (for he failed to record his philosophy), he was nevertheless a divinely inspired partner in conversation, committed, first, to self-examination and, second, to the examination of others. Consequently, they took seriously his divine mission described in the *Apology* while never feeling the need to reduce this activity to one method, voice, or style. Rather, Socrates could speak soberly or divinely depending upon the context, situation, and intentions of Plato as author.

Moreover, as Griffin shows in his chapter, "Hypostasizing Socrates," (Chapter

6) the Neoplatonists, despite acknowledging a plurality of “Socratic voices,” still had a single, consistent story to tell about Plato’s dominant protagonist, and they consequently regarded Socrates as more than a mere literary device or character. Rather, Plato made Socrates a dynamic symbol that in some way mirrored the intelligible realm. For the Neoplatonists it was through Plato’s consistent use of images, icons, and symbols that one is given the ability to depart from the mere perceptions of the senses and journey toward the intelligible realities grasped only by the mind. According to Griffin, Socrates is made to stand for the same level of being and knowledge in each dialogue, and thus, regardless of whether one is just beginning one’s journey through the Iamblichean curriculum or finishing the cycle with *Parmenides*, every reader is compelled to see Socrates as a pedagogical symbol that lures all from material reality to the immaterial Good. While integrating Plato’s doctrine of mimesis into Neoplatonic exegetical methods, Griffin shows that through a study of Socrates’ behavior in each dialogue readers are induced to emulate his example as well as to follow in the footsteps of his interlocutors’ transformations. As Proclus writes concerning the reason Plato wrote dialogues rather than treatises: “Plato . . . gives us an outline impression of our duties through dramatic depiction of the best men, an impression that has much that is more effective than what is committed to lifeless rules. That is because dramatic imitation informs the lives of the listeners according to its own distinctive character.”³⁶

To be sure, in this commitment to imitating Socrates, the Neoplatonists felt compelled to detail and study Socrates’ methods and forms of arguing, including but not limited to the now routinely discussed Socratic elenchus. For example, Olympiodorus treats of the Socratic elenchus in his commentary on Plato’s *Gorgias* and *Alcibiades I*, while Proclus not only discusses the elenchus in detail in his commentary on Plato’s *Alcibiades* but also situates its place within the various other forms of Platonic dialectic during his commentary on the *Parmenides*.³⁷ Yet, regardless of this stunning display of material on late antiquity’s interpretations, many students of Socratic scholarship still fail to realize that long before Robinson’s and Vlastos’s work on the subject, many Neoplatonists already identified Socrates’ preferred mode of examination with the question-and-answer method characterized by refuting false beliefs, and, furthermore, argued that its intent was far from sophistic insofar as it restored the health rather than harmed the souls of its recipients. Seeing the elenchus as a combined moral and intellectual service, Olympiodorus, as François Renaud shows in Chapter 8, “The Elenctic Strategies of Socrates: The *Alcibiades I* and the Commentary of Olympiodorus,” saw Socrates’ method as intended to heal its recipients from the diseases of the soul

caused by holding false or inconsistent beliefs.³⁸ What is so arresting about Olympiodorus's reading of the Socratic method is the insistence that the elenchus, contra Vlastos, is neither a constructivist nor a deconstructivist truth-seeking device but a purgative/psychagogic activity. Furthermore, for none of the late commentators was the elenchus ever considered to be at odds with the other methods utilized in the dialogues; it was in fact one of several types of Socratic inquiry into the nature of things. As Akitsugu Taki has persuasively argued elsewhere, the concept of Socrates' dialectic could readily embrace both the elenchus and other styles of argument in which the philosopher is engaged in the dialogues of Plato.³⁹

Olympiodorus's characterization of Socrates as one who intends to heal the human soul had been foreshadowed earlier in the tradition by Hermias. In his *Phaedrus* commentary, Hermias had asserted that "Socrates has been sent down to the world of generation, in order to benefit the human race."⁴⁰ As Christina-Panagiota Manolea argues in Chapter 4, "Socrates in the Neoplatonic Psychology of Hermias," this shows once again how the Neoplatonists from Syrianus to Olympiodorus prominently positioned Socrates as a kind of heroic personality and venerated his methods as necessary preliminaries to the philosophical life. In her work Manolea emphasizes how Hermias/Syrianus argued for Socrates' ease in communing with the divine and his preeminent ability to purify those in need. Through close analysis of Neoplatonic psychology we are led to realize that for Neoplatonists like Syrianus, Socrates had a decisively positive influence on his companions' struggle to cultivate their own souls in not only contemplating the divine cosmic soul but also ascending from the merely sensible level of existence.

For those interested in the role *erôs* or love plays in Socratic teaching, James Ambury's "Socratic Character: Proclus on the Function of Erotic Intellect" (Chapter 7) turns to Proclus's commentary on the *Alcibiades I*. Here Ambury examines the infamous relationship between the barefoot philosopher and the budding young socialite, eloquently arguing that for Proclus Socrates is far more than an intellectualist concerned with propositional truth. Rather, he is a divine lover who looks with philosophical vision on his beloved, taking Alcibiades as an image of Beauty itself. In this characterization of Socrates' activities it becomes clear that Alcibiades already confronts the fact that for Socrates his physical beauty, his character, and all his virtues are nothing more than an appearance or image of something more substantial, but inaccessible to sense perception. In this examination we see the archetypal Platonic/Neoplatonic theme that true knowledge has very little to do with sense perception but much to do with the activity that transcends it, that is, dialectical inquiry, which for Proclus was the erotic activity characteristic of Socrates.⁴¹

To be sure, long before Proclus the problem of characterizing and understanding Socratic love was prominent enough in Platonism to have already raised a few eyebrows of suspicion in the earlier so-called Middle Platonic tradition. Some had questioned whether the philosopher exploited the youth for sexual gain. The incitement of others to potentially harmful sexual activity made some wonder whether Socrates could not justly be accused of undermining traditional family relations: a potential charge to which Plato's *Republic* gives additional credibility. Thus Geert Roskam's "Socratic Love in Neoplatonism" (Chapter 1) highlights these two contrasting attitudes that one might take toward Socrates' erotic affairs, beginning with the worldly and almost biting realism of Lucian, always keen to display the vices of notable philosophers, and then focusing on the almost puritan picture Hermias paints. Roskam slowly sketches out Hermias's defense of Socratic love, arguing that the philosopher's intentions were always higher and nobler than corporeal indulgence. Roskam admits near the end of his chapter that Hermias's view of Socrates is quite problematic for the contemporary reader because it refuses to stain the philosopher with any association of true human sexuality, but Roskam reminds us that this Neoplatonic portrait allowed more liberties in reconstructing Socrates *sui generis*. He poses the thoughtful question whether contemporary readers are actually acting differently, reminding us that like the Neoplatonists we have a view of the philosopher that is conditioned by time and context. As he writes: "If our claim to do more justice to both Plato's and Xenophon's picture of Socrates (and to that of Aristotle and Aristophanes) is not entirely unjustified, we may do well in any case to avoid the arrogance of cultural or intellectual superiority and recognize that our own view is not free from bias either."

In this same vein of contemporary interpretive critiques, within the history of modern classical and philosophical scholarship, Socrates has often been heralded as the champion of reason over faith. Despite recent challenges from some scholars,⁴² this view of Socrates as a precursor to Enlightenment philosophy remains the predominant perspective today.⁴³ Yet as John Finamore and Crystal Addey reveal in Chapters 2 and 3 of this volume, philosophers throughout antiquity regarded Socrates as a man of knowledge and reason indeed, but also as a holy man or sage, even an inspired mystic or seer whose commitment to the divine fueled all of his activities. Their respective chapters show how the Middle Platonic to Neoplatonic portrayal of Socrates and his daimonion offer interesting alternatives to those who simply associate Socrates' divine voice with a secular notion of consciousness. Rather, in these Platonic traditions, Socrates becomes the fullest culmination of the philosophical life not simply because he is suprarational but

precisely because he hears the voice of his daimonion. According to Finamore, the Middle Platonist philosophers Apuleius and Plutarch claimed that his ability to hear the voice arose from the purified and divinely graced nature of his way of life, and accordingly their claims laid the groundwork for later Neoplatonic demonology.⁴⁴ Building on this, Addey focuses on the Neoplatonic interpretation of Socrates' daimonion that emphasizes the philosopher's constant and undying submission to his *divine voice*. Addey argues that for the Neoplatonists Socrates epitomizes the human potential to participate in divine wisdom and, ultimately, to become "like a god," the prototypical activity of the virtuous individual for the entire Platonic tradition.

The Neoplatonists also had plenty to say with regard to other routine subjects in Socratic studies, as they often voiced their opinion on subjects such as Socratic knowledge and ignorance. Yet one should be warned that on these subjects most Neoplatonists would disagree with contemporary scholars who feel comfortable associating Socrates with either skepticism or irony. As Layne argues elsewhere, the Neoplatonists, like Vlastos, similarly attempted to "save" Socrates from deceptive irony and skepticism by appealing to various forms of knowing as well as grades of not-knowing so that Socrates may avow both knowledge and ignorance without contradiction.⁴⁵ Specifically, Olympiodorus and the anonymous author of the *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* simply distinguished human and divine knowledge, and Socrates' confessions of ignorance are attributable to this distinction. The anonymous author maintains that "when he says 'I know nothing,' he is comparing his own knowledge to that of divine beings. That knowledge is different from ours: ours is knowledge and nothing else, God's is effective; it apprehends by simple intuition, while ours depends on causes and premises."⁴⁶ Proclus, on the other hand, furthered the teachings of Syrianus by arguing that the form of ignorance and the corresponding form of knowledge of Socrates center primarily on the distinction between the objects of knowledge vis-à-vis matters of flux and sense versus intelligible realities.⁴⁷ For Proclus and Syrianus, what Socrates knows he knows through dialectic and contemplation of the eternal reasoning principles in our souls, and what he does not know simply refers to the inability of all individuals to know sensible particulars.⁴⁸ Ultimately, all these differences between forms of knowing and kinds of ignorance allow Proclus and others like Olympiodorus and Hermias to contend that there should be no "doubtful weight attached to Socratic knowledge."⁴⁹ Because of this, many of these commentators were able to insist that any use of irony by the philosopher should be understood as an appropriate pedagogical technique transforming the lives of those in need of salvation.⁵⁰ As Olympiodorus would argue, there is a pedagogical or valid moral

purpose to Socrates' use of irony, and so he concludes that while Socrates may speak with irony, this does not mean that there is no truth in his statements. Rather, as Vlastos would have preferred, his irony is complex and aims at the good of his interlocutor.⁵¹

Finally, even if one were still in sympathy with those who believe that Neoplatonists were oblivious to the Socratic element in Plato's dialogues, it should be noted that none of the Neoplatonists, including Plotinus, could avoid responding to or engaging in problems that were typically Socratic. Socrates' infamous denial of akratic action in particular is normally deemed to be a peculiar Socratic axiom as even Aristotle ascribes this view to him.⁵² In arguing against Socrates, Aristotle instigated a debate that was to be inherited in various Hellenistic traditions, not least among the Stoics. Particularly Epictetus, a Stoic extremely influenced by the life and death of Socrates, often defended and attempted to explain how reason cannot be overpowered by desire and in so doing inspired another late Neoplatonic author, Simplicius, to expend a considerable amount of effort on unpacking the perennial problem of whether weakness of will was possible. As Marilyn Lawrence shows in Chapter 9, Simplicius, like both Socrates and Epictetus before him, was committed to both the identification of knowledge with virtue and the complex thesis that to know the good is to do the good. In light of this, Lawrence maintains that Simplicius offers in his commentary on Epictetus's *Encheiridion* a stunning explication of this typical Socratic difficulty.

Assuredly the late commentators offer a rich variety of perspectives on Socrates, and even if one cannot entertain their portrait(s) of him, one should not ignore the extensive pains these thinkers took to catalogue the particular debates and interpretations concerning Plato and his main protagonist—Socrates. No doubt, more than writers in any other tradition, commentators such as Simplicius, Olympiodorus, Proclus, and Hermias not only carefully analyzed the contradictions and enigmas associated with the character of Socrates but also argued against the conflicting perspectives of the Skeptics, Stoics, and early adherents of the Platonic tradition, thus preserving many of the debates in which we continue to participate to this day. Regardless of only being concerned with Plato's Socrates, Neoplatonists, just as much as Epictetus or Middle Platonists like Apuleius, are a part of the Socratic tradition, as they too capture an image of Socrates which informed their way of life. In their various projects and commentaries on a manifold of Plato's dialogues and thus a manifold of Socratic images, they continued to carry the torch of the examined life and, accordingly, offer an enriching and complex portrait both useful and inspiring for scholars in Socratic studies. We hope that this volume will give these interpreters at least a whisper of their voice,

allowing contemporary students and researchers a chance to observe their rich and often convincing analysis of Socrates. To guide readers we have attempted to order the book both chronologically and, when possible, thematically. We open with an analysis of Lucian's biting portrayal of Socrates and Hermias's defense in Roskam's "Socratic Love in Neoplatonism." Subsequently, we further wind our way into Middle Platonism in Finamore's "Plutarch and Apuleius on Socrates' Daimonion," before turning to the detailed commentaries of Hermias, Proclus, and Olympiodorus in the chapters of Addey, Manolea, Layne, Griffin, Ambury, and Renaud. Lawrence's chapter on *akrasia* and Simplicius leads us to one of the final authors of this period before we come to Tarrant's "Many-Voiced Socrates: Neoplatonist Sensitivity to Socrates' Change of Register." We recognize that the ensuing chapters are not an exhaustive study of the portrait of Socrates in late antiquity and so have closed this volume with a short epilogue discussing some of our conclusions. We further note some of the possibilities for future paths of research, hoping that this volume will act as a catalyst for future attempts to answer the question "Who is Socrates?" in late antiquity.⁵³

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CHAPTER 1

Socratic Love in Neoplatonism

Geert Roskam

Introduction: A Tricky Question

In his famous speech at the end of Plato's *Symposium*, Alcibiades aptly expresses his feelings of perplexity concerning Socrates. He complains that it is far from easy to recount in detail the latter's singularity (ἀτοπία)¹ and assures his listeners that Socrates in outward appearance may look like an ugly satyr but in actuality has inside himself divine images of pure gold.² This duplicitous characterization fits in very well with Alcibiades' own character (and with his drunken condition) but also perfectly suits the figure of Socrates and his notorious ambivalence. The opposition between outward ugliness and inner beauty is only one of the many contrastive elements that Socrates reconciled in his own person, a feat that often makes him an impalpable figure. One need only think of the admirable balance of παιδιά and σπουδή, frequently combined and crystallized in his notorious irony that so troubled Thrasyarchus—and many later critics.³ Moreover, despite the fact that the god at Delphi declared that nobody was wiser than Socrates,⁴ and regardless of his repeated victories in intellectual debates, Socrates, time and again, underlines his own ignorance. He was a brilliant dialectician but also a brave soldier. He was known to be a heavy drinker but also a rigorous ascetic.⁵ He consistently avoided engaging in politics yet claimed to be the only true politician in Athens.⁶

It is not difficult to go on for a while like this, combining different, seemingly opposing elements of Socrates' life and character, but the items above already suffice to understand Alcibiades' perplexity. In many respects, Socrates seemed a walking contradiction, and it is particularly difficult—not to say impossible—to

do full justice to all aspects of his intriguing personality. It is hardly surprising that many of these oppositions reappear in later ancient thinking about Socrates, sometimes even in a more radical form. Several philosophical schools that endorsed diametrically opposed views claimed to be the heirs of Socrates (Cynics and Cyrenaics, Stoics and Skeptics), and all sects elaborated diverse images of him. He was both despised as an Attic clown (*scurra Atticus*—the Epicurean view)⁷ and admired as the model par excellence of virtuous conduct (in the so-called *Exemplum Socratis* tradition).⁸ He was regarded as a would-be tyrant⁹ and as an inspiring paradigm of resistance against tyrants.¹⁰

Each age and each author thus developed their own view of Socrates. We may here recall and apply the insights of reception studies, which have rightly stressed the importance of the receiving context.¹¹ Socrates was no monolithic, fixed figure that remained far beyond each attempt at interpretation, a kind of eternal and sublime paradigm that always had to be imitated in the same way. Each period with its divergent social, literary, and/or ideological contexts creates a different image of Socrates, on the basis of creative reinterpretation and refiguration of the data provided by the ever-growing previous tradition. Later interpretations of Socrates can only be understood correctly through a careful study of the dynamics of this process of innovative adaptation.

This also holds true for the Neoplatonic view of Socrates. The Neoplatonists often gave attention to the figure of Socrates;¹² even a quick search in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* reveals that his name occurs very frequently in the work of most Neoplatonists. Yet the *TLG* is not always the best place to start, and in this case I believe it is not. In fact, hardly any conclusion can be derived from the mere frequency of the name—it may often refer to Socrates as a character in one of Plato's dialogues—and moreover, crucial passages about typically Socratic issues risk neglect. A broader approach is needed in order to examine whether the Neoplatonists could give a place in their systematic and well-structured philosophy to the philosopher who so eagerly looked for definitions but seemed to escape such definition himself. What is their image of Socrates, and how did they interpret his philosophical thinking? Did they still take him seriously as a contributor to philosophy, or did Plato and later Platonists necessarily take precedence over him? The present volume offers a rich and nuanced answer to these questions.

In this contribution, I deal with one aspect of this large question: how did the Neoplatonists think of the topic of Socratic *eros*? This is no doubt a very important aspect of Socrates' portrait: erotic matters, indeed, were the only things Socrates claimed to know,¹³ and in all likelihood his penchant for beautiful youths did not go unnoticed in Athens. At the same time, Socratic *eros* also raises a particularly

tricky problem. Already in the fourth century BCE there arose a debate about the question of how this Socratic love should be understood precisely. It is not clear whether Socrates' fondness for handsome young lads laid the basis for the later formal accusation of corruption of the youth.¹⁴ Nevertheless, in later ancient literature, the perfectly honorable and chaste intention of Socrates' love was often emphasized, as a reply to explicit or implicit attacks. Maximus of Tyre, for instance, devoted no fewer than four speeches to this topic, in which he emphasized that Socratic love concerned the beautiful souls of the young men and that he tried to make them virtuous in leading them toward true Beauty.¹⁵ Favorinus dealt with the issue in his work *On Socrates and His Erotic Art*, which is, unfortunately, no longer extant.¹⁶ In such contexts, two important questions were raised:

1. How honorable was Socratic love? Is all this philosophical talk not merely a façade in order to conceal the pursuit of base corporeal pleasures?
2. How fruitful was Socratic love? Even if this love was honorable, did the young really derive some benefit from it? The classic case in this context is, of course, Alcibiades, the gifted young "pupil" of Socrates who turned out to be so harmful for his native city.

In this chapter, I focus on the first question¹⁷ and in particular examine the answer of the Neoplatonists. Interesting information on this topic can be found in Proclus's *Commentary on the First Alcibiades* and in Hermias's *Commentary on Plato's Phaedrus*. I especially focus on the latter and examine both Hermias's interpretation of Socratic love in general and his position toward the specific problem of its corporeal or incorporeal nature. But first I shall begin with a brief reference to a nonphilosophical author and exponent of the late rhetorical tradition. In my view, this concise side step is interesting because it introduces a radically different perspective, situated in an entirely different context. This author in fact throws a completely different light on the problem of Socratic *eros*, explicitly clarifying the stakes at risk in wagering on Socrates' avowal of only having virtuous intentions in his love affairs. As such, this different perspective may be of considerable help in illustrating, by way of contrast, the peculiarities of the Neoplatonic view.

A Humorous Challenge

The author I mean is Lucian. In his *True Story*, the narrator gives an extensive account of his long journey that also brought him to the Isle of the Blessed. There, he met Socrates, who was engaged in a discussion with several beautiful young men.¹⁸ A little later, he discusses the sexual customs that prevail there. Everybody has intercourse with both men and women, before the eyes of all and without any sense of shame. "Socrates, the only exception, used to protest that he was above suspicion in his relations with young persons, but everyone held him guilty of perjury. In fact, Hyacinthus and Narcissus often said that they knew better, but he persisted in his denial."¹⁹ This is Lucian all over. He likes to expose with a smile the inconsistency and conceit of self-declared philosophers, but also to wipe the floor with the high reputation of distinguished thinkers.²⁰ The motives and background of their dignified and often admired behavior is more than once called into question. Socrates' consistent bravery in the face of death, for instance, is elsewhere unmasked as the outward display of feigned boldness for the sake of acquiring a great reputation.²¹ The issue of high-minded Socratic love is mercilessly attacked as well. In the passage just quoted, Socrates' claim of pure chastity obviously does not merit the slightest credibility. Even at a moment when there is no need for disguise or denial, Socrates stubbornly refuses to remove his mask, which, of course, suggests how great his concern for external appearance actually is. The fact that he apparently added oaths to his denial makes his conduct even more blameworthy, and posthumously demonstrates that Meletus was right to bring him to trial for impiety.

Moreover, this passage also contains a clever modification of the previous tradition. In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates can confidently claim that his accusers are unable to provide witnesses, whereas he can provide many.²² And in the *Symposium*, Alcibiades of course appears as the witness *à décharge* par excellence. Lucian, however, does provide witnesses for the prosecution, and quite reliable ones. It is clear that their frequent and joint testimony (πολλάκις . . . ὁμολόγουν) even further undermines Socrates' case.

This passage from Lucian's *True Story* derives much of its poignancy and humor from the previous debates on Socratic *eros*.²³ If these debates only acknowledged the existence of a little smoke, Lucian's satiric genius kindles it into a great fire. And his presentation, even if (or perhaps precisely because) it prefers a kind, seemingly innocent smile to sharp, biting criticism, may well have been more dangerous than serious discussions or puritan protests, at least for a public of nonphilosophical readers. After all, many may well have concluded that Lu-

cian's view in this particular passage, humorous and fictitious though it was, was not without plausibility.²⁴

Hermias's View of Socrates

Whether or not that is true, the Neoplatonists certainly disagreed. The evidence suggests that there was little place for pederastic activities among philosophers from Plotinus on, and consequently Socrates, who had for generations been depicted as a philosophic model, needed to be depicted as strictly a lover of souls and of all else that is higher. Hermias of Alexandria would no doubt have sided with Socrates and indignantly have rejected the allegations of Hyacinthus and Narcissus as base slander. He develops his own²⁵ interpretation of Socratic love throughout his *Commentary on the Phaedrus*. In his view, the central subject of Plato's *Phaedrus* is beauty of every kind (τοῦ παντοδαποῦ καλοῦ).²⁶ The whole dialogue deals with the gradual ascent toward true Beauty, from the lowest level (corporeal beauty) via the beauty of speech to the beauty of the soul, while finally ascending to intellectual beauty. Hermias thus clearly reads the *Phaedrus* through the lens of Plato's *Symposium*.²⁷

This general interpretation entails a fundamental tripartition in the *dramatis personae* of the dialogue. Lysias is the symbol of the base lover who is only interested in corporeal pleasure, Phaedrus occupies an intermediate position (as a lover of beautiful speech), and Socrates is the paradigm of the true, pure lover. There is no need to expand upon this basic tripartition, which underlies the whole commentary, but it may be worthwhile to pause for a brief moment to take notice of an interesting complication of this scheme. The general structure of Plato's dialogue requires a kind of "duplication" of the figures of Socrates and Phaedrus. Socrates, as is well known, delivers two speeches in the *Phaedrus*: first a relatively short refutation of Lysias's speech, then a longer palinode. In Hermias's view, the first speech deals with prudent *eros* in the soul, the second with intellectual beauty. In the second speech, then, Socrates expresses his own convictions, whereas he delivers the first speech only for Phaedrus's sake, in order to purify him.²⁸ This has important implications for Phaedrus, who is indeed purified after the first speech and can listen to the next as a different person.²⁹

Against this general background, we can now turn to Hermias's commentary on *Phaedrus* 236e1–237a5. After Phaedrus has threatened never to recite another speech to Socrates, the latter declares that he is willing to deliver a speech on *eros* because as a lover of discourses he cannot give up the feast (θοίνης) of listening

to them. He will, however, speak with his head covered (ἐγκαλυψάμενος ἑρῶ), so that he does not have to look at Phaedrus and get into difficulty through shame. Here is the beginning of Hermias' interpretation:

For how would I be able (236e7–8)

Instead of: for how can I not [a] benefit (εὐεργετεῖν) the souls and operate according to [b] my purifying power (καθαρτικὴν δύναμιν)? And “the feast” (ἡ θοῖνῃ) signifies [c] his great providence and eagerness to [d] lift up the youth who is [e] ready for it (τὸν ἐπιτήδειον ἀνάγειν νέον). For the feast indicates the fullness of his providential power (τῆς δυνάμεως τῆς προνοητικῆς) and of his operation according to the divine kind, and his likeness with the gods. And Socrates delivers his speech with his head covered [f] because he is going to do things that are inferior to, and lower than, his own state of mind. For the operation proper to him is the enthusiastic erotic operation, which he will show in the palinode. (47.18–26)

This interesting passage contains the core of Hermias's picture of Socrates.

[a] First of all, Socrates' approach to Phaedrus is characterized as beneficent. The paramount importance of this theme already appears from the very first sentence of the commentary, where Hermias states that Socrates was born in order to benefit the race of men and the souls of the young.³⁰ This brief opening sentence can, to a certain extent, be regarded as programmatic, in that it immediately reveals the overall orientation of Hermias's interpretation of Socrates. Socrates indeed belongs to the group of generous people (εὐμετάδοτοι)³¹ and wants the good for everyone.³² Furthermore, the particular emphasis on the young in this opening sentence is quite remarkable. The combination of mankind in general and youth in particular occurs elsewhere in the commentary³³ and reflects a traditional issue in the debate about Socrates. Especially interesting in this context is Hermias's insistence on Socrates as a person who really cares for the youth.³⁴ This is a clear recollection of Plato's *Apology*, where Socrates explicitly deals with the topic and refutes Meletus's claims in this field.³⁵ This, we may add, is not the only allusion to the *Apology*. There is also the veiled allusion to the famous oracle about Socrates³⁶ and the story about Isocrates, who blamed Anytus and Meletus for having killed Socrates and sent those who were interested in philosophical instruction to them with the brief comment, “Educate the young!”³⁷ This is not the place to pursue this topic in detail, but the influence of Plato's *Apology* on Hermias's general view of Socrates is a topic that may well repay closer study.

[b] Second, Hermias ascribes a purifying power to Socrates. Very often

throughout the whole commentary, Socrates' approach is indeed characterized as purifying,³⁸ and this purification is regarded as a kind of salvation. By deterring the young Phaedrus from the lower, sensible realm and guiding him toward the higher, intellectual level, Socrates indeed rescues him. This rescue has a clear moral component: the young man is brought into harmony with himself,³⁹ and his shortcomings are corrected.⁴⁰ In this respect, Hermias's view does not merely combine Platonic and Neoplatonic elements but also interestingly recalls the position of Aeschines of Sphettus, who closely connected Socratic *eros* with moral improvement.⁴¹

[c] Moreover, Socrates' beneficent and purifying approach is often described in terms of providential concern.⁴² In the opening sentence of his commentary quoted above, Hermias remains rather vague about who sent Socrates down to be born, but elsewhere in his work, he suggests that Socrates is a kind of instrument of divine providence and as such juxtaposes him to demons.⁴³ In that respect at least, Hermias's view of Socrates almost recalls Epicurus's famous characterization of the sage who lives as a god among men.⁴⁴ Socrates has divine thoughts, is loved by the gods,⁴⁵ and as such qualifies as the reliable guide par excellence who shows the way to the most sublime Neoplatonic heights.

[d] Socrates indeed "lifts up" the young Phaedrus and introduces him to the intellectual level. The verb *ἀνάγω* and related words (*ἀναγωγή*, *ἀναγωγικός*) very often return throughout the whole commentary. The use of this vocabulary of ascent not only fits in very well with Hermias's general interpretation of the *Phaedrus* (viz., its *σκοπός* and overall structure) but also opens up a very interesting perspective into which the above-mentioned aspects of the Socrates figure can easily be integrated. Lifting up the soul is Socrates' main purpose. His love for Phaedrus is *ἀναγωγὸν καὶ σωστικόν*,⁴⁶ his present life *καθαρτικὴ καὶ ἀναγωγός*,⁴⁷ and the principal cause of this *ἀναγωγή* is the gods.⁴⁸ Hermias thus alternately combines different elements into a whole cluster of ideas that mutually complete each other and together yield a rich and consistent picture of Socrates.

[e] Socrates thus lifts up the young man, who is himself ready for it. The term *ἐπιτήδειον* is of course primarily relevant for Hermias's interpretation of the figure of Phaedrus, the *ἀνάγεσθαι μέλλοντα*,⁴⁹ yet it is not without importance for the figure of Socrates either. The presence of this term may perhaps suggest the feasibility of Socrates' project and the success of its final outcome, and in any case, it recalls that Socrates did not operate carelessly. He indeed took care to focus on those who were really ready to listen to his purifying and anagogic voice. For the moment, this brief observation will suffice, but I shall soon come back to this.

[f] There remains, however, one problem with the above picture of Socrates:

it seems to be at odds with the first speech of Socrates in the *Phaedrus*. This speech, with its emphasis on prudence, has a beneficent and purifying character, to be sure, but it lacks any obvious anagogic divine inspiration that lifts up the young Phaedrus to the higher, intellectual realm. If that is true, the text of Plato's *Phaedrus* may already overturn Hermias's general view of Socrates. Hermias solves this problem in a particularly ingenious way: he interprets the fact that Socrates speaks with his head covered as an indication that he descends to a level that is inferior to his own. Socrates is not really interested in the prudent *eros* of the soul (or at least not exclusively), but he elaborates this perspective for Phaedrus' sake. It is only because he wishes to benefit Phaedrus that he temporarily leaves his own higher level. Elsewhere in the commentary, this idea is further illustrated by two well-chosen comparisons. Socrates operates just like the contemplative philosopher who, for a while, engages in politics in order to serve the public interest.⁵⁰ He also resembles the demiurge of the *Timaeus*, who addresses the younger gods and then withdraws to his own level.⁵¹ This is cleverly done. Hermias succeeds in maintaining his view of Socrates in a thoroughly Platonic way. Not only is he able to show that the text of the *Phaedrus* contains an element that supports his view, he also manages to draw striking parallels with well-known ideas from two of the most important dialogues in the *Corpus Platonicum*. Moreover, this interpretation also allows him to do justice to a typically Socratic element in this corpus. He regards Socrates' discussion of Lysias's speech (which precedes his own first speech) as a mixture of play (παίζειν) and earnestness (σπουδάζειν). Socrates is merely playing, in that he descends from his own intellectual level but is at the same time earnest because he saves the young man.⁵² The concept of παιδιά had long been associated with Socrates,⁵³ and the combination of σπουδαῖα and γελοῖα is no less traditional.⁵⁴ Hermias's interpretation of this specific passage from the *Phaedrus* may seem strange and unconvincing to the contemporary interpreter, but it should not be regarded as an easy ad hoc argument. His exegesis is perfectly consistent, thoroughly Platonic, and even contains a distant echo of a genuine Socratic element.

Socratic Love Systematized

The whole passage quoted above thus illustrates the core of Hermias's picture of Socrates: through his purifying power and providential care, Socrates saves the young Phaedrus by lifting him up to the intellectual realm of true Beauty. It is this view of Socrates that permeates the whole commentary. Through a systematic and

careful exegesis of Plato's arguments, Hermias tries to show how systematically Socrates actually proceeds.⁵⁵

First of all, he fully takes into account the specific nature of his interlocutor. This implies that he adopts a fundamentally differentiating approach. The importance of this element should not be underestimated, as it is introduced by Hermias at the very outset of his commentary. After providing a broad characterization of Socrates in the first part of the opening sentence (discussed above), Hermias goes on to argue that Socrates benefits each soul in a different way, in accordance with the differences in character and pursuits.⁵⁶ The strong emphasis on this differentiating approach, and its programmatic prominence at the beginning of the work, is not really surprising, because it is in fact a very interesting exegetical parameter. It allows Hermias to interpret different dialogues, and different sections from one dialogue, against the same general background. More precisely, it enables the Neoplatonic commentator to maintain his general view of Socrates and trace back the differences between the dialogues to the different natures of Socrates' interlocutors. In this particular case, Phaedrus is interested in rhetoric, and Socrates will lead him toward true rhetoric, that is, philosophy.⁵⁷

This differentiating approach presupposes that Socrates takes the condition of his interlocutor as his point of departure. We already saw that this is the reason he descended from his own intellectual level in order to deliver his first speech for Phaedrus's sake. Furthermore, he appeals to Phaedrus by imitating his daintiness,⁵⁸ makes use of a sublime style,⁵⁹ and avoids eristics in his refutation of Lysias.⁶⁰

Finally, Socrates follows a step-by-step method in dealing with the young man. His purifying therapy is preceded by a careful diagnosis of the latter's condition, which appears already in Socrates' first question to Phaedrus, "Where do you come from?"⁶¹ This diagnosis will help Socrates in adapting his treatment to the specific needs of the young man. Furthermore, Socrates also stimulates his young friend to play an active role in his own cure, confining himself to the removal of (unspecified) impediments (τὰ ἐμπόδια), so that Phaedrus himself can find the truth.⁶² With this reference to Socratic maieutics, Hermias incorporates yet another important aspect from the previous tradition into his picture of Socrates.

The above discussion of Socrates' differentiating and systematic approach is only a brief and broad outline of Hermias's interpretation. Extensive sections of the commentary contain a great wealth of relevant information requiring close analysis. Such a detailed study, however, would far exceed the more limited scope of this chapter. Yet there is one important point that should not go unnoticed here. Hermias's view of Socrates' method bears a striking resemblance to the view that Proclus elaborates in his *Commentary on the First Alcibiades*. As a matter of fact,

the influence of the *Alcibiades I* on Hermias's interpretation of the *Phaedrus* can often be felt throughout this commentary. Poignantly, the *Alcibiades I* is mentioned several times,⁶³ and the topic of Socrates' self-knowledge occasionally turns up⁶⁴ and provides a thematic link between both dialogues. Especially important is Hermias's exegesis of *Phaedrus* 257a7–8, where Socrates talks about the art of love (τὴν ἐρωτικὴν τέχνην). Hermias here makes use of the *Alcibiades I* in order to distinguish between three successive steps: we should first examine the man worthy of our love (τὸν ἀξιέραστον), then silently wait until he is ready to understand philosophical discourse, and finally, when this moment has come, teach him erotic matters and arouse his love in return.⁶⁵ This general, schematic survey can easily be applied to Socrates' approach as it is analyzed throughout Hermias's commentary, and the many striking parallels with Proclus's view⁶⁶ further support the hypothesis that Hermias interprets Socrates' erotic treatment of *Phaedrus* against the background of the *Alcibiades I*. If that is true, this observation has important consequences for understanding Hermias's exegetical method as a whole. We may well conclude that the *Alcibiades I* was no less important than the *Symposium* for Hermias's interpretation of the *Phaedrus*. Whereas the *Symposium* provides the overall perspective from which the dialogue as a whole should be understood, the *Alcibiades I* throws light on the specific argumentative and purifying strategies used by Socrates. In Hermias's view, the three Platonic dialogues apparently complete one another and together illustrate what should be understood by the art of Socratic *eros*.⁶⁷

Honi soit qui mal y pense . . .

It will be perfectly clear by now that corporeal love has no place at all in Hermias's understanding of Socratic *eros*. Such love can only be found at the level of the wicked Lysias: it is unbridled, harmful, and only interested in material and perceptible beauty. Even *Phaedrus* surpasses this level, being interested in the beauty of speech. *A fortiori*, Socrates has nothing to do with it, as appears, for instance, from the fact that he never leaves the city. This in fact means, according to Hermias, that he always stays at his intellectual level.⁶⁸ In short, corporeal passion is entirely alien to him.

Before analyzing Hermias's position in more detail, it will be useful to briefly look at Proclus's view as it throws additional light on several of Hermias's interpretations. Like Hermias, Proclus emphasizes in his *Commentary on the First Alcibiades* that the true lover only loves the soul of his beloved, not his body, and

thus approaches his beloved only when the latter's beauty has withered away.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the lover continues to keep a certain distance from him, and does not touch him (μήτε ἀπτόμενος αὐτοῦ) or associate (προσομιλῶν) or even talk with him if it is not the right opportunity to benefit his soul.⁷⁰ This picture of the perfect lover even makes its influence felt on Proclus's interpretation of Alcibiades. Proclus indeed points out that the young man did not completely reject the company of all his wicked lovers but only talked to them and utterly refused to be touched or to participate in symposia and wickedness.⁷¹ It is important to note that Proclus puts forward this view in the context of his exegesis of the very first sentence of the *Alcibiades I*. This sentence, however, contains no information at all about Alcibiades' conduct, nor does it explicitly introduce the topic of Socrates' attitude to Alcibiades' beauty. In that sense, Proclus's insistence on the absence of all bodily contact is quite remarkable. This seems to be an obvious and typical case of overinterpretation or *Hineininterpretierung*, which helps Proclus in establishing his general interpretative framework. He is keen to be absolutely clear on this point and thus develops a fairly radical position. All bodily contact is denied: the perfect lovers do not even touch one another.⁷²

It is not really surprising that Hermias basically adopts the same view, since this, in fact, is the inevitable and obvious conclusion of his whole picture of Socrates. Indeed, it is hard to see how a Socrates who uninterruptedly dwells in the intellectual realm can still be involved in bodily contacts. Yet Hermias has a problem. He is confronted with an embarrassing passage in the *Phaedrus* that at least suggests the existence of such bodily contacts between lovers. He does not really discuss the whole problem in detail but cannot simply ignore it either. He prefers to clear the potentially explosive passage of its mines by inserting here and there a few strategic remarks and specifications.

The *Phaedrus* passage is to be found near the end of Socrates' palinode. Socrates there describes how the lover and beloved overcome their initial inhibitions and begin to meet. The beloved then receives various services and gifts from his lover, as if the beloved were a god.⁷³ This still looks innocent enough, yet Hermias deems it necessary to underline at this point already that this service does not concern generation and should not be understood as lowering (καταγωγόν) and corporeal (σωματικήν). The beloved is worshipped⁷⁴ as a statue of a god—just as Alcibiades was worshipped by Socrates.⁷⁵ This amounts to a flat denial of the lover's possible interest in the body of his beloved. Yet this flat denial is supported to a certain extent by two well-chosen comparisons that have a certain argumentative value. The comparison with the worship of a statue of a god is particularly successful here, in that it indeed evokes the respectful distance between both poles

that also characterizes the love relation that Hermias has in mind. The comparison with the relation between Alcibiades and Socrates is a different story. Hermias refers to it without further explanation, as if it were evident. And evident it no doubt was, if not to Lucian, then at least to the Neoplatonist circles that Hermias addressed. Here our brief discussion of Proclus's view proves relevant for the first time. It is important to recall that Proclus proposed this interpretation in the context of his reading of the *Alcibiades I*. We know that a reading of precisely this dialogue usually opened the whole Platonic curriculum.⁷⁶ This implies that students were long familiar with this view when they turned to the *Phaedrus*. They had long learned to regard Socrates as an ideal lover and to interpret the relation between Socrates and Alcibiades against that background. This explains why Hermias can confine himself here to a mere allusion. His comparison presupposes the knowledge acquired in an earlier phase of the Platonic curriculum.

Back to the *Phaedrus*. Socrates tells how the beloved is astonished by the goodwill that he receives at close quarters (ἐγγύθεν) from his lover. They continue to meet and even touch each other (πλησιάζει μετὰ τοῦ ἅπτεσθαι) in the gymnasium and elsewhere.⁷⁷ Again, Hermias takes the sting out of the passage by means of a few well-oriented comments. The term ἐγγύθεν derives its raison d'être from the beloved's interest in hearing the words of his lover and as such shows that the good is close at hand for those who are willing to share in it.⁷⁸ The enthusiasm of the beloved can be traced back to his observation that he is loved not for his corporeal beauty (οὐ σωματικῆς χάριτος ἔνεκα) but in view of a useful result (ὠφελείας ἔνεκα).⁷⁹ Nevertheless, for all his insistence on the lover's lack of interest in the body, Hermias cannot but admit that the lovers at least *touch* each other: the true lover, though touching, touches with self-control (ὁ γὰρ γνήσιος ἐραστὴς καὶ ἀπτόμενος σωφρόνως ἅπτεται).⁸⁰ The participle ἀπτόμενος suggests a reluctant concession inspired by Plato's text.⁸¹ Hermias's reserve can easily be explained by his general view of Socrates and can also be understood against the background of Proclus's radical denial of bodily contact discussed above. Hermias is forced to be somewhat less radical than Proclus here, and he once again finds support for his view in the relation of Socrates and Alcibiades. He now alludes to the famous passage from Plato's *Symposium* where Alcibiades relates how he exercised with Socrates and somewhat later even ended up in bed with him.⁸² For more than one reason, this is an interesting parallel. First of all, the outcome of the whole story is widely known, and Socrates' conduct fully emphasizes the meaning and relevance of the word σωφρόνως (and also makes it more concrete). Second, both in this *Phaedrus* passage and in the corresponding section from the *Symposium*, the initiative to pursue physical contact is taken by the beloved.⁸³ That surely facilitates the

concession that some bodily contact may after all be involved, and it may even be regarded as an implicit confirmation of Hermias's general picture of Socrates.

Yet this is not the final word. Hermias now comes to the most embarrassing passage in the *Phaedrus*. Socrates is describing how the beloved gradually begins to love in return: "Like the lover, though less strongly, he desires to see his friend, to touch him, kiss him, and lie down by him; and naturally these things are soon brought about."⁸⁴ In the end, then, lover and beloved are lying together (cf. also ἐν συγκοιμήσει in the following sentence). *Exit* the chaste Neoplatonic Socrates? Hermias begins by frankly acknowledging the problem. The term συγκοιμήσει apparently refers to both the self-controlled lover and the lover who lacks this self-control, and thus the passage risks containing a sense that is rather shameful (οὐ γὰρ ἄνευ ὑπονοίας αἰσχρᾶς ἐστὶ τὰ λεγόμενα).⁸⁵ Modern commentators may wonder whether Hermias is not unduly or unnecessarily embarrassed here. After all, Socrates in his palinode goes on to distinguish between two alternatives: a philosophical one, where reason prevails, and a less honorable, nonphilosophical one, where the two lovers give in to their unruly horses and "accomplish that which the many call blessed."⁸⁶ In that sense, this passage does not really question Hermias's picture of the true lover. Yet Hermias seeks to avoid any interpretation that involves a sexual meaning, even with regard to the nonphilosophical alternative. His interpretation of Socrates' vague phrase τὴν ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν μακαριστὴν αἵρεσιν is typical in that respect: it seems to point to shameful pleasure, but it can also be understood allegorically as a lifting up of the soul out of sensible things.⁸⁷ The reference to the lovers' lying together should likewise be understood allegorically. The philosophical horse reaches beauty through the Ideas and despises sensible beauty as implicated in matter. The nonphilosophical horse, on the other hand, thinks it is possible to reach the intellectual through the sensible. This direct contact with the sensible, however, does not necessarily involve "shameful" conduct and can rather be compared to the embraces of fathers, children, and brothers.⁸⁸ The fact that Socrates himself calls even these nonphilosophical lovers "winged" fully supports this allegorical interpretation.⁸⁹

This is Hermias's last word on this topic. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato allowed his Socrates to consider the experience of bodily love as at least a possibility, if only for the less noble, nonphilosophical lovers. Hermias could not go that far. It is interesting to see how he is prepared to explore in his commentary the boundaries of Socratic *eros* and even to grant a few concessions: the lovers may touch each other (though σωφρόνως) and may even lie together, perhaps. But he is not prepared to admit the spark of corporeal, sexual pleasure. That was a flame that should not be fanned.

Conclusion

In his *Commentary on the Phaedrus* Hermias provides a consistent and high-minded picture of Socrates and Socratic *eros*, based on a careful reading of the Platonic dialogues (especially the *Phaedrus*, the *Symposium*, and the *Alcibiades I*). Socrates appears as a kind of instrument of divine providence who benefits his young interlocutor and the community at large through his purifying, anagogic, and remarkably systematic and well-considered approach. His well-known love for young, beautiful lads has nothing corporeal about it, but lifts up the soul of the beloved toward the divine realm of true, intellectual Beauty.

Is this a reliable exegesis of Plato's dialogues and a credible interpretation of the figure of Socrates? It is obviously at odds with many aspects of our own contemporary understandings of Socrates and his thinking, but is it necessarily less convincing?

To a certain extent it is indeed. There can be little doubt that Hermias neglects several aspects that were probably part and parcel of Socrates' self-understanding as a philosopher. To give but one example: the theme of Socratic ignorance. This topic receives much attention in Proclus's *Commentary on the First Alcibiades*,⁹⁰ but is hardly touched upon by Hermias, who usually presents Socrates as knowing.⁹¹ This difference between Proclus and Hermias cannot be explained merely by the different intellectual and/or moral level of the dramatis personae of the dialogues they are commenting upon—Hermias's *Phaedrus* is not significantly better than Proclus's *Alcibiades*. It may at least partly be traced back to their understanding of the general σκοπός of the respective dialogues: in Proclus's view, the *Alcibiades I* is about self-knowledge, where the topic of ignorance is particularly relevant. Yet Hermias could have introduced and discussed the issue of Socratic ignorance in the *Phaedrus*,⁹² as the dialogue opens with one of his most infamous denials of self-knowledge, but apparently Hermias is preoccupied with other subjects. Another element that is neglected in Hermias's *Commentary on the Phaedrus* is Socrates' emphatic denial of being a teacher. Hermias does not ignore this famous aspect of Socrates' thinking,⁹³ yet throughout his commentary he considers him as a kind of ideal teacher and occasionally even calls him so.⁹⁴ Such a characterization is, of course, very well in line with his general interpretation of Socrates but can hardly be reconciled with Socrates' straightforward position in Plato's *Apology*.⁹⁵ Finally, Hermias's view of Socrates as the contemplative philosopher who only temporarily leaves his own intellectual level in order to benefit other people may recall the philosopher from Plato's *Republic* who returns into the cave. But it emphasizes a very different aspect of this descent from another

famous ancient view of Socrates, that is, Socrates as the man who brought philosophy down from heaven to the cities.⁹⁶

These are only a few among today's central Socratic themes that are neglected in Hermias's view of Socrates. Other themes are emphasized at their expense. Typical in this respect is Hermias's insistence on Socrates' systematic approach. Contemporary readers of Plato may find it quite implausible that all the details of Socrates' discussion with Phaedrus, including even his way of addressing the young man, have a deep philosophical meaning and purpose. The image of Socrates as a sublime thinker who never loses contact with the intellectual realm seems miles away from the socializing, convivial Socrates of Plato's *Symposium* or from the Socrates we find in Xenophon's writings.

In many respects, then, Hermias's view of Socrates is quite problematic for the contemporary reader. That is not to say, however, that it deserves no credit at all. In fact, Hermias succeeds in doing justice to several important aspects of the traditional picture of Socrates. Some of them are only mentioned in passing, others figure much more prominently in his commentary. They are all broken up by the prism of Neoplatonic exegesis and then reassembled again in order to reconstruct a Socrates *sui generis*. The fundamental question, however, remains whether we are actually acting differently. It is useful to return, at the end of this chapter, to the insights of reception studies with which we began. These enable us to understand the Neoplatonist view of Socrates as only one possible interpretation, strongly conditioned by its own time and context, but they also force us to acknowledge the relative character and limits of our own view. If our claim to do more justice to both Plato's and Xenophon's picture of Socrates (and to that of Aristotle and Aristophanes) is not entirely unjustified, we may do well in any case to avoid the arrogance of cultural or intellectual superiority and recognize that our own view is not free from bias either. Hermias's typically Neoplatonic oversensitivity to the religious dimension of the Socrates figure and his no less typical characterization of Socrates' discussions as a kind of rigorous moral therapy are not necessarily more biased than some more recent interpretations of Socrates that tend to bracket the religious dimension altogether. Occasionally, the Neoplatonic interpretation can, for all its bias, even reveal relevant details that we overlooked ourselves. In that sense, a careful study of the Neoplatonists' views of Socrates does not merely show the lacunas in their interpretation but may ideally help us to detect some in our own as well.

CHAPTER 2

Plutarch and Apuleius on Socrates' Daimonion

John F. Finamore

Introduction

The topic of the nature of Socrates' daimonion found renewed interest in the Middle Platonic period. We are fortunate to possess two works from this period on Socrates' personal daimon by Plutarch (c. 46–120 CE) and Apuleius (c. 125–c. 180 CE).¹ Plato tells us that Socrates listened to a daimon, which he describes as a sort of voice that prevents Socrates from performing certain actions.² In this chapter, I wish to examine how these Middle Platonic philosophers interpreted Socrates' divine sign and in what context they made their investigation.

First, however, we should consider the difference between the ancient and modern conception of the daimonion problem. In a recent book, various philosophers have considered the possible problems raised by the specter of Socrates' divine inner voice.³ In the introduction to that volume, Smith and Woodruff summarize the issue involved as one between Socrates' religious beliefs and his use of rationality and logic in his elenchus. They isolate three possible positions: the two sets of belief (religious and rational) are consistent with each other, Socrates' religious beliefs trump his rational elenchus, or his rational argumentation trumps his religious beliefs.⁴ Authors in the anthology argue for one or the other of these three positions. It should be noted here that these philosophers are concerned with a matter of consistency: how to reconcile the two seemingly contradictory sides of Socrates' personality. The reason that the question becomes framed this way is that the dominant philosophical position on Socrates in contemporary analysis pivots on the characterization of him as a purely rational thinker.⁵

The ancients came to the table with a different set of questions. There was no

controversy about the existence of daimons, since evidence could be found in Plato's dialogues:

1. *Phaedo*, 107d–108c: the daimon in charge of the deceased person's soul guides it in Hades.
2. *Symposium*, 202d–203a: daimons act as intermediaries between gods and mortals.
3. *Republic*, 620d: each soul is allotted a guardian daimon to watch over it in life.
4. *Phaedrus*, 246e–247a: daimons follow along in the great circuit of the gods and souls in the heavens.⁶
5. *Epinomis*, 984b–985c: daimons dwell in the air, intermediary between gods and mortals. They feel affections, including love for good human beings and hate for evil ones.

Thus the ancients had no problem with the concept of a daimon advising Socrates. Rather the question was how the daimon did so, what the nature of the daimon was (was it part of Socrates himself or separate from him?), and what did the fact that Socrates had a personal daimon say about Socrates as a philosophical role model for our lives?

We know very little about what Platonists before Plutarch thought of the Socratic daimon. Xenocrates, third head of the Academy, believed that daimons were intermediary between gods and mortals (*apud* Plutarch, *De Def. Or.* 416cd) and that some daimons were evil (*De Is. et Os.* 361b).⁷ About the Socratic daimonion he is silent.⁸ The first Platonist to discuss the daimonion is Plutarch.

Why were Plutarch and Apuleius interested in this Socratic daimon? Their interest, unlike that of modern scholars, centered on what they saw as Platonic demonology: where did the Socratic daimon fit into the hierarchy of gods, superior classes, and souls? They speculated about what this daimon might be, how it was related to other sorts of daimons (and, indeed, to souls and ghosts), why Socrates had a daimon, and what benefit he gained from it. Thus, through works on the daimonion authors could explore Platonic demonology, psychology, and eschatology. By examining Apuleius's and Plutarch's treatment of the Socratic daimonion, I hope to show how each framed the traditional elements of the daimonion story and thereby created his own unique perspective on the role of daimons and souls in Platonic philosophy.

There seems to be a set of traditional topics that authors might choose to discuss:⁹

1. Is the daimonion a voice?
2. Can it be seen?
3. Can the daimonion more naturally be described in some way, for example as snippets of overheard conversations or as a sneeze?
4. Is there a relationship between Socrates' wisdom and his personal daimonion?
5. How does the daimonion fit into the demonological hierarchy?
6. Is the daimonion a soul or some higher class of being?

My contention is that an individual author can use these topics to discuss philosophical ideas of his own. Thus, writing an essay on the daimonion is on a par with, for instance, Proclus writing on the *Parmenides* of Plato. It is a traditional investigation covering traditional topics, but it is also a means of pursuing one's own independent philosophical interests.

Apuleius of Madaura

Although most famous for his novel *The Golden Ass*, in which the main character, Lucius, is transformed into a donkey because of his curiosity about magic, Apuleius wrote several philosophical treatises as well, including an epideictic speech *On The God of Socrates (De Deo Socratis)*, which was delivered in Latin to an audience in North Africa. Although it is meant to appeal to a large audience, it contains an overview of Apuleius's demonology and the place occupied by Socrates' daimonion.

Apuleius lays out his speech in three main sections.¹⁰

1. Division of the Platonic universe into (a) gods (invisible and visible), (b) daimons, and (c) human beings, with an explanation of the intermediary role of daimons (I.114–XII.147).
2. Daimons and souls: their nature and classification, culminating in the daimonion of Socrates (XIII.147–XX.167).
3. Protreptic conclusion: one should live a life of virtue as Socrates had done (XXI.167–XXIV.178).

Even a cursory glance makes clear that the amount of space devoted to daimons (eleven pages) and (within those pages) to the daimonion itself (five pages) is small compared to the rest of the speech (the whole is thirty-two pages).

Nonetheless, Apuleius makes the daimonion the centerpiece of his work. The preliminaries about the threefold universe of Plato (gods, daimons, and human beings) lead directly to the discussion of daimons, which in turn culminates in the daimonion of Socrates. Socrates had the benefit of this daimonion because of his pure and virtuous life, and so the passage on the daimonion triggers the exhortation to virtuous living at the end.

Having explained that the gods dwell in the ethereal realm while human beings live on the earth and that the two do not come into direct contact with each other (in keeping with the strictures of Plato's *Symposium* 202d–203a), Apuleius begins this middle section by showing how the daimons are intermediaries: “For they are between us and the gods both in location and in the character of the mind implanted in them, for they have immortality in common with those above them and passion with those below them” (XIII.147).¹¹ Daimons, then, are immortal but suffer from emotional disturbances just as we do. In particular, Apuleius tells us, the daimons feel joy and sorrow, delight and anger at sacrifices and rituals. Thus, as they are intermediaries between us and the gods, their passionate nature must be taken into account when we sacrifice and enter into religious acts (XIV.148–150).¹²

Apuleius then moves on to a Latin classification of the various kinds of daimons, tying the classification directly to the topic of Socrates' daimonion: “It is better rather to discuss this topic in Latin, the various kinds of daimons named by philosophers, so that you might know more clearly and fully about the sign of Socrates and his friendly divinity” (XIV.150).¹³ The classification that follows culminates in the Socratic daimonion, showing that the daimonion is the highest form of daimonic entity. The classification is threefold: daimons that dwell in a living human being, those that after the death of the body live separately on their own, and those that never belonged to a human body.

The first class of daimons Apuleius names the *Genii*, a Latin term for the male family (*gens*) spirit that exists in the forehead of the male leader of each Roman family.¹⁴ Apuleius applies the term to the inborn rational soul in each of us: “That rational soul which is in each person, although it is immortal, nevertheless in some way is born with the human being” (XV.151).¹⁵ Note that here the so-called daimon is actually the human rational soul or intellect imagined as a separate—and separable—part of the human being. Plato laid the groundwork for this conception in his *Timaeus*, when he wrote that human beings are truly happy (εὐδαίμων, literally, “having a good daimon”) after having cared for their immortal rational soul and having ordered properly their indwelling daimon (90c4–6).¹⁶ Plato, of course, is not claiming that the rational soul is literally a daimon but is rather emphasizing that it is the highest faculty in the human being, its “divine

part.” There is no reason to believe that Apuleius is thinking differently. This classification of daimon is, in essence, very different from the daimons of the *Symposium*. And indeed, as we shall see, those daimons are reserved for the final class. The *genius*, then, in keeping with the tripartite division of the soul in the *Timaeus*, is the only immortal part of the soul-body complex and to that degree is daimonic.¹⁷

The second class, which Apuleius terms *Lemures*, is conceived as the rational souls in the first class that have been severed from the body at death. Apuleius subdivides them into three further categories:

Of these *Lemures*, then, the one which has been allotted a care over its descendants and takes possession of the home with a peaceful and calm presence is called the *Lar familiaris*. The one, however, which because of opposite conduct in life is punished with no abode and with unfixed wandering like some kind of exile—an empty source of fright to good human beings but harmful to bad—this kind most call *Larvae*. When, however, it is uncertain which function falls to any of these [daimons], whether it is a *Lar* or *Larva*, it is called a *Deus Manes*, but of course the name of “God” is added for the sake of honor. For indeed they only call those [daimons] “gods” which, after they have governed the course of their life justly and prudently, because of their divine power human beings commonly attend to and endow with rites and temples, such as Amphiaraus in Boeotia, Mopsus in Africa, Osiris in Egypt, others in other places in the world, and Asclepius everywhere. (XV.152–154)¹⁸

There are then three sorts of *Lemures*.¹⁹ The *Lar familiaris* refers specifically to a good daimon that guards the household. Apuleius treats the *Larva* as problematic not for good people but only for the bad. This is not strictly an evil daimon, then, since it does not do harm everywhere.²⁰ It is more akin to the punishing daimons who direct their penalties at those who deserve it. The third category, *Deus Manes*, includes what we might call heroes—souls of the deceased who, in their lives, were beneficial to humankind and so are worshipped for the past and continuing good that they do.²¹ These are three groups of human souls that spend their after-life helping (or justly punishing) those still alive on the earth. Strictly speaking, we have not a demonology but a hierarchy of ghosts.

In these first two sets of daimons or souls—those that belong to living human beings and those that have continued existence after the death of the body—we can see a connection. We are all daimons—or more accurately, we all contain a

daimon in ourselves, our intellect. When we die, this immortal daimon carries on without a body. We may (if we led good lives) become guardians of our families, or (if we led especially good lives) daimons that receive worship, or (if we did not lead good lives) homeless, wandering daimons who nonetheless do the work of the gods by harming evil human beings. It should be clear that these are not exhaustive categories. What of human beings who lived a moderately good life? Are we to assume that they undergo transmigration and are immediately reborn? What of the exceptionally bad? Are they forever locked away in Tartarus? And do the exceedingly good ever escape the cycle of births altogether? Apuleius does not say. His emphasis is not on explaining what happens to all sorts of human souls but rather on expounding a hierarchy of the souls of the dead that return to earth. There is again a Platonic source for such a concept, in the *Phaedo*, when Plato says that some souls are so enmeshed in matter that they can be seen for a short time after death haunting graveyards.²² Apuleius, of course, has a much wider array of ghosts in mind, and by allowing the term “daimon” to be applied to the human intellect, he finds a way to expand the hierarchy of returning souls beyond what Plato had envisioned. We would be right to assume that Apuleius is adapting the tradition to accentuate concepts that are akin to his own magical/philosophical beliefs. We shall return to this point shortly.

Apuleius discusses the third category of daimon in XVI.154–XX.167, a superior class of daimons that has never been in a human body. This group includes those that are our guardians and that preside over our judgment after death.²³ In this final judgment these guardian daimons support us when we are truthful but also indicate when we are lying. Apuleius encourages his audience therefore to conduct their lives in accord with this daimon, since it can help us to make appropriate choices (XVI.154–156).

This third class, then, includes only fully separate daimons that are not naturally a part of the human being. They are daimons par excellence, the kind we find in Plato’s *Symposium* (202d11–203a7), intermediaries between gods and human beings. Apuleius next turns to Socrates’ daimonion.

Therefore is it strange if Socrates, a man especially accomplished and wise, even according to the testimony of Apollo,²⁴ recognized his own god and cultivated it, and as a result his guardian—I might almost say his household Lar because of their close association—prevented all things that ought to have been prevented, guarded against all things that ought to have been guarded against, and gave forewarning about all things concerning which he ought to have been forewarned? And [is it strange] if at

any point the proper functioning of his wisdom had ceased and he was in need not of counsel but of a sign that when he was blocked by doubt he would stand firm by divination? (XVII.157)²⁵

There are several points to note here. Socrates is a man known for wisdom, and so would naturally take stock of and care for his guardian daimon. This fact entails that the daimon and Socrates are naturally bound to each other, much as military men in the same unit (*contubernium*), and so he is attuned to what his daimon urges and (conversely) the daimon is attuned to his needs. Thus, the daimon is poised to render help especially when Socrates' acclaimed wisdom is insufficient to give him an indication of the correct action to take. In such cases, he needs not advice (*consilium*) but a supernatural sign (*praesagium*) that, as it were, shores him up by a judgment that does not depend on reason but is more akin to prophetic indication (*divinatio*). As such, the daimonion triggers a nonrational response that prevents Socrates from engaging in bad or harmful actions.

Apuleius continues (XVII.158–XVIII.162) by pointing out examples in Homer that show that wisdom (*sapientiae officia*) and divination (*divinatio*) are often disassociated (*distributa*)²⁶ from one another (XVII.158–162). Here two of Apuleius's examples are especially pertinent. When the Greek fleet was calmed at Aulis, it was not men of highest wisdom (*illa sapientiae Graiae summa cacumina*, XVIII.160), Odysseus and Nestor, who spoke but rather Calchas, who “by his own divinatory ability turned the winds aside and brought the ships back to the sea” (*sua divinatione et tempestates flexit et classem deduxit*, 161). Also among the Trojans when the situation required divine aid (*cum divinatione res indigent*, 161) the wise senate was silent (*tacet ille sapiens senatus*, 161) and the people attended to “the thankless auguries of Helenus or the unbelieved prophecies of Cassandra” (*aut ingrata auguria Heleni aut incredita vaticinia Cassandrae*, 162). The point in both examples, as it is in the case of Socrates and his daimonion, is that there are times when wisdom will not offer the solution, and supernatural aid is necessary. This aid is akin to the divinatory art (*divinatio*) in that it is beyond the rational and from a divine source.

Apuleius then returns to Socrates. When his wisdom was insufficient, he would listen to his daimon, who would deter him from actions (XIX.162–163). Citing *Phaedrus* 242b8–c3, where Socrates says that his daimonion keeps him from recrossing the Ilissos River until he has recanted his earlier speech on Eros, Apuleius says: “In such situations he used to say that he heard a certain voice arising by divine agency—for thus it is in Plato's text—lest anyone think that he had taken omens from those speaking in their common way” (XIX.163).²⁷ The phrase

vox quaequam, “a certain voice,” is Apuleius’s translation of Plato’s *τινα φωνήν* (*Phdr.* 242c1–2), which Apuleius interprets to mean that Socrates listens to neither a common nor a human voice (*non usitatam vocem nec humanam significari*, XX.165). Thus, Apuleius argues that the daimonic voice is specific and not the result of Socrates hearing random words spoken by people nearby, which Socrates would then interpret.²⁸ Rather, Apuleius asserts, “it demonstrates that there was something unusual or arcane about it, just as Socrates says about [the voice], which he used to say arose from divine agency for him and occurred at critical times” (XX.166).²⁹

Having established that Socrates’ daimon is not a chance occurrence arising from overheard conversation but a true daimonic voice that keeps him from certain actions, Apuleius continues by going beyond what we find in the Platonic dialogues and claiming that Socrates had seen the daimonion as well.³⁰ Apuleius is well aware that he is advocating an unusual position,³¹ and his arguments are weak, as Beaujeu attests.³² Harrison is probably correct that the view expresses a concept that is dear to Apuleius: a personal relationship with gods and daimons.³³ We should also note that daimons made themselves apparent in ancient rites and magic. Apuleius cites (XX.166–167) the Pythagoreans for support for the visibility of daimons.³⁴ The concept of seeing one’s daimon would not seem strange, and it is likely that Apuleius himself had firsthand experience. Apuleius is again adapting the evidence available to suit his own beliefs.

There are several salient points raised by Apuleius about Socrates’ daimon. It is of the highest and best class of daimons, those never associated with a body. It nonetheless has a firm foundation in Plato’s concept of a guardian daimon. Apuleius implies that few receive messages from their daimons because one must be attuned to it, living the correct philosophical life, as Socrates had done. If we purify our minds, we can reap the benefits. Socrates’ daimon gave him advice on what to avoid under circumstances when rational thought alone would not have sufficed. It is a divine voice, and no natural explanations (such as overhearing and interpreting chance remarks) will suffice to explain it. Finally, Socrates had such great wisdom that he was coequal to the gods and thus could even see his daimon.³⁵

Apuleius has adapted the tradition of the Socratic daimonion and highlighted those aspects that suit his own personality: an explanation for ghosts and a more vivid relationship with one’s personal daimon. Even as he stands firmly in the Platonic tradition, his own character shines through. We should therefore expect to find a similar use of the traditional evidence in Plutarch.

Plutarch of Chaeronia

Plutarch also wrote a dialogue on the topic of the Socratic daimonion, *De Genio Socratis*. Plutarch's discussion covers many topics that we have encountered in Apuleius's oration. There is an additional problem in dealing with Plutarch's work. Since it is written in dialogue form, with a good many interlocutors, it is not easy to tell which speaker or speakers represent Plutarch's thought.

The dialogue begins with the Athenian Archedamus³⁶ asking the Theban Caphisias, the brother of Epaminondas, to recount the story of the Theban Revolt of 379 BCE, when the Thebans cast out the Spartans who were occupying their city. The remainder of the dialogue is Caphisias's recounting of the events. The dialogue therefore combines an exciting historical tale with philosophical discussions of Socrates' daimonion. Although there have been several attempts to connect the two major themes of the dialogue, there is no consensus on the connection or indeed on whether there is any connection at all.³⁷

For our purposes, only the philosophical passages are of importance. I shall therefore not engage in a discussion of the historical sections and shall concentrate on the philosophical parts.³⁸ After the introductory section 1, the dialogue introduces several characters and the theme of seeking aid from the graves of the dead (2–9). In particular, an unnamed Pythagorean is visiting Thebes (his name will later be revealed to be Theanor), and he has been conducting a ritual at the grave of Lysis, the Pythagorean teacher of Epaminondas. We are told that he planned to transport the bones of Lysis to Italy, if no divine sign opposed him (579F). This brings us to the first of two philosophical discussions in the dialogue (579D–582C).

The Theban Galaxidorus vehemently opposes the idea of such superstition (δεισιδαιμονία, 579F) and argues that philosophers should rely on rational demonstration, as Socrates had done (579F–580B). The seer Theocritus counters Galaxidorus by reminding him of Socrates' daimonion, recalling a time that he had seen Socrates stopped in his tracks by the daimonion. Socrates had thereby avoided a wild herd of pigs marauding in the streets of Athens (580C–F). Galaxidorus responds in a way familiar from Apuleius, arguing that it may not be the daimonion that moved Socrates but rather his use of “some part of common divination” (τῆς κοινῆς μόριόν τι μαντικῆς,³⁹ 580F10) that “can tip the scale in matters unclear and obscure to reason” (ἐν τοῖς ἀδήλοις καὶ ἀτεκμήρτοις τῷ λογισμῷ ῥοπὴν ἐπάγειν, 580F11–12). Thus, he continues, “a sneeze or a chance utterance or some such sign” (παρμὸς ἢ κληδὼν ἢ τι τοιοῦτον σύμβολον, 581A2–3) can also decide which course one should follow. Polymnis, the father of Epaminondas

and Caphisias, then says that he had heard from Terpsion that Socrates' daimonion was a sneeze. Yet, he goes on to cast doubt on that explanation by raising the obvious point that Socrates called it a daimonion and not a sneeze. Frustrated by the identification of the daimonion with a sneeze or chance, Polymnis remarks that such a medium would not have been appropriate for a man as wise as Socrates (581A–581E).⁴⁰

It seems clear that Galaxidorus is brought on as a catalyst for the discussion about the Socratic daimonion, for his arguments are not very good—and to some degree self-contradictory.⁴¹ He begins with the argument that Socrates is a rational philosopher and winds up arguing that Socrates could be swayed by sneezes or by words that he had randomly overheard from other people's conversations. Galaxidorus receives no support from any of the other interlocutors, and it is left to Simmias to refute him. So little weight is given to Galaxidorus's argument that the refutation actually occurs when the narrator Caphisias is away, and so the reader is not party to it.⁴²

This is well in keeping with Apuleius's view of the daimonion. Neither philosopher allows that the sign is mere *cleidonomancy*, but both agree that Socrates' wisdom places him in a special category of human beings.⁴³ Further, they both agree that when reason is insufficient to allow a decision, then some sort of supra-rational approach (*divinatio*, *μαντική*) is needed.

After a return to the historical narrative (582C–588B) and before the dialogue concludes with the narrative of the successful revolt (594A–598F), the philosophical discussion concludes (588b–594A). It is this passage that we must consider next, but before doing so we should note that once again the amount of space dedicated to the main topic of the daimonion is a small percentage of the total work. The dialogue covers twenty-four pages (575A–598F), of which ten are devoted to the daimonion (580C–582C and 588B–594A). As with Apuleius's speech, this fact does not seem to diminish the importance of the daimonion or of its relationship to philosophy.

Caphisias returns to the discussion between Galaxidorus and Simmias already in progress, and he will now relate the three speeches of Simmias (588C–589F), Timarchus (as told by Simmias, 590A–592F), and Theanor (593A–594A).

As is well known, Simmias is said in the *Phaedo* to be a follower of Socrates and to have been present at his death. Plutarch treats him with respect, and Simmias is most likely to be Plutarch's intended mouthpiece in the dialogue. He sets out to rebut Galaxidorus's arguments and to give a reasonable explanation of the working of Socrates' daimonion.⁴⁴

Simmias reports that although Socrates had never explained the daimonion to

his followers, nonetheless they were able to ascertain that it was “not a vision but some perception of a voice or understanding of a thought that joined together with him in some strange way” (588C10–D2).⁴⁵ Simmias compares this to a dream in which one seems to hear speech but does not. This ends the idea that the daimonion is a vision, but it also gives a new sense as to how it could be a voice, since it is clearly not a normal voice. It becomes rather a kind of thought (νόησις, 588D3).⁴⁶ Later (588E), Simmias equates the reception of sound to a blow (πληγή, 588E4) that strikes the ears. It is the blow that is missing here in the conception of the daimonion because the so-called voice is actually the thought of the daimon that moves Socrates’ “naturally adapted soul” (τὴν εὐφύᾳ ψυχὴν, 588E7).⁴⁷ Socrates’ soul, we are told, is without bodily taint and so is receptive to the thoughts coming from the daimonion.⁴⁸ This is no surprise, Simmias adds, for if the soul can move the body, then a superior mind can move an inferior one (588F–589B). This superior (κρείσσων, 589B5) and more divine (θειότερος, 589B5) mind, we are told, exists separately from the mind of Socrates (θύραθεν, 589B6). We see, therefore, that we are in the third class of daimons mentioned by Apuleius, the ones that have had no part of life in a human body. These are in fact the daimons of Plato’s *Symposium*, intermediaries who convey messages and gifts between gods and human beings.

Simmias’s response to Galaxidorus is now complete. Socrates’ daimonion can be associated not with a sneeze or chance remark but rather with a kind of voice, as Plato had said, though not a kind of voice that we usually meet. The daimonion is a daimon of the highest order, and it is connected (as spiritual beings are wont to be) via its mind and our minds, if our own minds (like Socrates’) are adapted to the daimonic mind through philosophy (separation of soul from body). We can imagine this operating on the principle of like moving like, which in turn adds greater importance to our own adaptability.

At this point, Simmias hesitates about offering evidence from a vision that Timarchus of Chaeroneia had when visiting the Oracle of Trophonius in Lebadeia. He says that the story is more akin to myth or fiction than to a rational account,⁴⁹ but the seer Theocritus insists on hearing the account since “myth somehow touches on truth” (ἔστιν ὅπη ψαύει τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ τὸ μυθῶδες, 589F10–590A1).

What are we to make of Timarchus’s tale? There are several reasons to think that it does not represent Plutarch’s own view. First, Simmias is reluctant to narrate the story, and he himself explicitly identifies it as more μῦθος than λόγος. Theocritus, who claims that τὸ μυθῶδες has value, is a seer and so more likely susceptible to mythic tales. Timarchus himself is a doubtful witness. Simmias describes him as young and spirited, new to philosophy, and overeager to know

about Socrates' daimonion.⁵⁰ He is almost certainly a fictional character, and so specifically created by Plutarch to undergo—and believe—the experience he related.⁵¹ Finally, as we shall see, the tale is incompatible with Simmias's account.

In the tale, Timarchus, after he has descended into Trophonius's cave, feels his soul separate from his body⁵² and has a vision of the planets above him and the earth below (590B–591A). A disembodied voice⁵³ asks him what he wishes to know (591A) and then begins to explain the vision (591A–C). When Timarchus says that all he can make out are ascending and descending stars (591CD), the unseen voice explains that the stars are in fact daimons, that is, rational souls or intellects. When these combine with flesh and passions (σάρκι μυχθῇ καὶ πάθεσιν, 591D) they become irrational. Of these, some are totally enmeshed in the irrational life but others are only partially mixed and keep their intellect somewhat (πῇ, 591D10) separate and above (591DE). The part that combines with the body is called “soul,” while the part that stays above is called “daimon,” and it is external to the soul/body complex (591EF). The daimon controls the soul, in keeping with the *Phaedrus* myth, by pulling on it (as it would a horse) and causing pain so as to educate it toward action in accordance with reason (591F–592C). These souls take a while to train, but: “The class that is prophetic and inspired arises from those that are from the beginning, i.e., from birth, tractable and obedient to their own daimon” (592C6–8).⁵⁴ The voice gives Hermodorus of Clazomenae⁵⁵ as an example of this type, who like a shaman could regularly leave his body behind in his home as his daimon or intellect traveled (592C–E). The voice explained the phenomenon this way: “The soul did not leave the body, but always yielding to and letting go of its bond to the daimon permitted it [i.e., the daimon or intellect] to travel and roam about so that it might report the many things it saw and heard” (592D4–8).⁵⁶ Although the imagery and vocabulary in this passage are drawn from the *Phaedrus*, the psychology is that of the *Timaeus*. The rational soul/daimon may be completely submerged in the body or may be maintained outside, floating like a cork and making contact with the head (591D7–E4). The head, of course, is the seat of the immortal, rational soul in the *Timaeus*. The soul that is sunk in the body that includes the passions is the lower mortal soul in the *Timaeus*, the spirited and irrational aspects. The difference here in Plutarch's text is that the rational soul is called a daimon. We have seen this kind of terminology in Apuleius as well in his first class of daimons, that is, in the class of daimons that are still in a living human body. Here in Plutarch also this class of daimon is simply another way of looking at the rational soul, and as we saw the terminology derives from the *Timaeus*, the text that Plutarch is following here. This is why Plutarch has the voice tell Timarchus that some souls are *somewhat* mixed yet leave their purest part (i.e.,

the daimon) *somewhat* outside.⁵⁷ Since the rational soul resides in the head according to the *Timaeus*, the separation cannot be complete.

This brings us to the inconsistencies between the views expressed in Simmias's speech and those expressed in Timarchus's vision. For Simmias, what separates Socrates from the mass of humanity is his exceptional philosophical wisdom. He has his own rational soul, which he uses well, but he also has available to him his own daimonion, a kind of guardian daimon, that can provide suprarational advice. Timarchus's vision, however, presents a different picture. The daimon is now identified with an individual human being's own rational soul. It resides in the head, and it is not a separate daimon in its own right, a daimon like those described in Plato's *Symposium*. Plutarch therefore could not have been endorsing Timarchus's account. Rather, Plutarch was raising another interpretation of the word "daimon." As we can see from Apuleius, this sort of explanation was available to Middle Platonists. In Apuleius's hierarchy of daimons this sort of daimon was inferior to the Socratic daimonion, of a different kind altogether. Most probably, Plutarch would have agreed. We can now understand why Simmias was reluctant to relate Timarchus's myth. The kind of daimon described in Timarchus's vision might well be equivalent to the sort of mind that Socrates possesses, but it cannot be equivalent to the separate daimon that gives him advice.⁵⁸

After Simmias has told Timarchus's tale,⁵⁹ he asks Theanor for his opinion.⁶⁰ Theanor is a Pythagorean from Croton, a *xenos* of Epaminondas, who has come to Thebes to see about bringing the body of his fellow Pythagorean Lysis back to Italy (582E–583C). As we have seen, after he spent a night in Lysis's tomb, a voice dissuaded him from taking the body since it was being well cared for in Thebes. He had also decided that Epaminondas now possessed Lysis's guardian daimon and that Lysis was about to be reborn with a new daimon (585E–586A). This portrait shows Theanor as a philosopher with a bent toward the supernatural. Like Timarchus, he seems susceptible to miraculous tales. Also like Timarchus, he was probably not historical.⁶¹

Theanor's speech does not inspire confidence. He begins rather pompously by agreeing wholeheartedly with both Simmias's speech and Timarchus's tale without saying why or in what respects he does so. He then turns to his own conception that the gods care especially for some human beings and not for others, just as herders and breeders prefer some animals over others. He then ties this notion to the idea that the gods have developed signs by which to communicate with their chosen, much as dog trainers use whistling and clacking their tongues to control the dogs that they have trained (593A–C). He then cites the example of Helenus's understanding of the gods' plans from Homer, and then continues with yet another

analogy, this time to kings (who speak directly to their favorites) and to “the divine” (τὸ θεῖον, 593C13), who speak directly only with the few who know the divinatory art (593CD).

Theanor next turns to daimons. Citing Hesiod (*Erga* 122–126), he states that the deceased who have escaped the cycle of birth become daimons and (like retired athletes) watch over human beings who are making similar progress (593DE). Daimons, he says, do not aid every soul. The analogy on this occasion is to an audience that will silently watch swimmers far out at sea but will cheer and even lend help to those who have made it close to shore. So too daimons involve themselves not with souls who are changing from one body to another but rather with those that are close to the goal of escaping bodies altogether. These daimons, Theanor says, help by cheering the souls on (ἐγκελεύόμενος, 594A5).⁶² If the soul pays attention to the daimon, it is saved; if not, the soul will not escape the cycle (593E–594A).

There is no philosophical argument here, merely a flowery speech with excessive use of analogy. Theanor does, however, present something new: human souls who have lived a life of exceptional virtue and escape the cycle of births become daimons. He has introduced Apuleius’s second class of daimons, those that had once inhabited a body but are now freed from them. For Theanor (unlike Apuleius), their only role is to help other human souls escape from the cycle of birth as well, so that they too may become daimons. The role that Theanor gives these daimons does not match any of the roles Apuleius assigns to them. Further, it does not square with the account of Hesiod, according to which these daimons help all humankind and keep an eye out for injustice.⁶³

As with Timarchus’s daimons, which were merely embodied rational souls, Theanor’s daimons do not jibe with Simmias’s account. They are merely disembodied human souls that have taken on a new duty. As such, they have no value for explaining Socrates’ daimonion. Once again Plutarch seems to be introducing another Middle Platonic classification of daimons but not endorsing it.⁶⁴

With Theanor’s speech the philosophical part of the *De Genio Socratis* comes to an end. Like Apuleius’s oration, it presents a demonology, but Plutarch is interested only in the highest part of that hierarchy of daimons: the Socratic daimonion. The other classes are mentioned but play no role in the main philosophical concern of the dialogue. Indeed, as we have seen, Plutarch most probably does not accept the statements of Timarchus and Theanor.

This brings us back to the structure of the two works. We have noted that the amount of space devoted to Socrates’ daimonion is small in both. Apuleius places his account of daimons and souls in the center of his work, giving the complete

hierarchy a place of importance. Plutarch's passages about the daimonion are distributed through the dialogue, but if we concentrate on Simmias's speech alone (588B–589F), we find that it is almost in the exact center of the work. Plutarch has given Simmias's conception of the daimonion center stage and thereby endorses the account that makes Socrates' daimonion an entity that never lived in a human body and that can offer Socrates' rational soul useful advice. Thus, our concerns about the authority of the accounts of Galaxidorus, Timarchus, and Theanor gain more validity.

Conclusion

Various interpretations of the daimonion of Socrates seem to have been available to philosophers of the Middle Platonic period. This fact allowed them to choose different positions to emphasize and endorse, depending on the philosophical point that they wished to make and their own personal viewpoint. Apuleius chose to emphasize not only the special position of Socrates' daimonion (as a purely separate daimon that gives suprarational advice) but also the possibilities that the hierarchy of daimons and souls offered for inclusion of various kinds of ghosts or disembodied souls. It also afforded him the opportunity to bring contemporary theories about the visibility of daimons and the philosopher's contact with them into his account.

Plutarch had the same array of options but chose to concentrate on Socrates and his daimon alone. He knew about the conception of the daimon-in-us and he considered it, but he left it for others to decide, most probably since the conception did not fit his overall theory of the daimonion. As was the case with Apuleius, personal opinion and religious belief helped determine which of the possibilities of the tradition he would accept and reject.

In the end, then, writing a treatise on the Socratic daimonion allows ample room for maneuvering. A philosopher could juggle the traditional elements and create a treatise of personal vision.

CHAPTER 3

The Daimonion of Socrates: Daimones and Divination in Neoplatonism

Crystal Addey

But, as I believe, I have been commanded to do this [i.e., philosophical elenchus] by the god through oracles and dreams (ἐκ μαντείων καὶ ἐξ ἐνυπνίων) and in every way in which any man was ever commanded by divine power to do anything whatsoever.

—Socrates in Plato, *Apology* 33c5–9

Introduction

Socrates stands as a figurehead in the history of Western philosophy and is often perceived as the champion of reason and rationality. Within the history of modern classical and philosophical scholarship, Socrates has been perceived as the paragon of rationality and reason, the founder of both rational enquiry and the Western philosophical tradition.¹ Within the parameters of such a perspective, the Socratic method of elenchus (question-and-answer cross-examination) is held to be one of the most relevant elements of the Socratic heritage and is often assessed as *the* major contribution of Socratic discourse to Western thought, rivaled only by his contributions to moral philosophy and virtue ethics.² Despite recent challenges,³ the view of Socrates as an arch-rationalist remains the predominant perspective today.⁴ Yet for later Neoplatonist philosophers, Socrates was this and yet also much, much more. These philosophers maintained that Socrates was not only the

philosopher par excellence but also a holy man or sage and an inspired mystic and prophet. One of the key elements of Plato's portrayal of Socrates which led these philosophers to hold such a view was the daimonion, the divine "voice" or "sign" of Socrates, which, through its prohibitions on his actions, frequently affected his action and discourse in Plato's dialogues.

Focusing on this characterization, this chapter explores Neoplatonist views of the daimonion of Socrates, while further examining their teachings on the personal daimon and the connections between daimones and divination. It focuses primarily on Proclus's *Commentary on the First Alcibiades* as a central case study, for several reasons.⁵ First, it includes an extensive examination of the whole range of daimones, including the nature and characteristics of personal (or guardian) daimones.⁶ Second, Proclus discusses the nature of the daimonion of Socrates in detail; this work comprises one of the few extant accounts of this subject in late Neoplatonism,⁷ although it is important to note that there was a long tradition of writing on the daimonion of Socrates within the Platonic tradition. The extant treatises of Plutarch, Apuleius, and Maximus of Tyre on "the daimon of Socrates" are key examples of this genre from the Middle Platonic period.⁸

I will argue that the late Neoplatonist view of Socrates as sage and mystic does not contradict or conflict in any way with the view of Socrates as a rationalist or as the philosopher par excellence. Both roles are attributed to Socrates by Neoplatonists and are seen as vital to the role of philosophy as a way of life leading toward self-knowledge and, consequently, toward knowledge of the cosmos. This mutual inclusivity derives from their metaphysical system and epistemology, whereby rationality is not in opposition to religious states of inspiration but operates on a continuum with suprarationality and divine inspiration. Thus, rationality and reason are themselves seen as *ultimately* gifts of the gods, which, when used in the appropriate manner, can lead to suprarational, mystic states of being, thought, and action. Within Neoplatonism, the dialectician must be a mystic, and the mystic must be a dialectician. In this sense, Socrates exemplifies the culmination of the philosophical life—the enlightened mystic who lives and acts in assimilation to the divine.

Socrates as the Founder of Western Philosophy: The Modern View

Within Plato's dialogues,⁹ Socrates often speaks of a daimonion, which he frequently calls a divine "voice" (φωνή)¹⁰ or "sign" (σημεῖον),¹¹ which has spoken to

him “since childhood” (*Apology* 31d3–4), advising him against a course of action. In the *Republic*, Socrates claims that “few or none” have experienced having a daimonion, although he immediately qualifies this by speaking of “those who have been of this little company” (τούτων τῶν ὀλίγων).¹² The warnings of the daimonion are often practical, relating to “matters great and small,” and it is understood to give him a sign that warns him not to pursue a course of action that he is in the process of initiating: “It always holds me back from something I am about to do” (ἀεὶ δέ με ἐπίσχει ὃ ἂν μέλλω πράττειν), as he states at *Phaedrus* 242c1–2. Sometimes the daimonion prevents Socrates from engaging in the elenchus and conversing with specific characters.¹³ On other occasions, the daimonion prevents Socrates from leaving a specific place: in the *Phaedrus* (242b9–243a6) Socrates attributes this intervention to the fact that he has made a bad speech dishonoring the gods that he must correct, while in the *Euthydemus* (272e1 ff.) the warning not to leave ensures that Socrates does not miss conversing with two characters who enter the Lyceum as he is about to leave. Meanwhile, in the *Republic* (496c3–e4) and in the *Apology* (31c5–d8) Socrates claims that the daimonion has prevented him from entering or becoming involved in politics. In the *Apology*, Socrates connects the daimonion within the divine origin of his philosophical mission to engage others in elenchus, which he claims was inspired by an oracle from Apollo at Delphi. He makes this connection by commenting several times on the silence of the daimonion during the course of his defense speech, which largely rests on the oracle and his consequent assertion of the divine nature of his philosophical mission.¹⁴ The connection drawn by Socrates between the silence of the daimonion and the divinely mandated nature of his philosophical mission is further supported by his claim at 33c5–9 to engage others in elenchus and pursue his philosophical mission because “I have been commanded to do this by the god through oracles and dreams and in every way in which any man was ever commanded by divine power to do anything whatsoever.” To these Platonic passages, we might add another from the *Hippias Major*, in which Socrates seems to allude to the daimonion, stating: “Hippias, my dear friend, you are a lucky man, because you know which activities a man should practice, and you have practiced them successfully as you say. But I am apparently held back by a certain daimonic destiny (ἐμὲ δὲ δαιμονία τις τύχη . . . κατέχει): I wander around and I am always getting stuck.”¹⁵

Socrates’ daimonion, his divine voice or sign, does not sit easily with the modern view of Socrates as an arch-rationalist. It has troubled modern scholars who would like to discount all traces of religiosity or, as they see it, all departures from rationality in his outlook.¹⁶ In fact, many scholars have attempted to “explain away” Socrates’ daimonion as the “voice” of human conscience, a purely human

phenomenon.¹⁷ This suggestion had earlier been refuted by Zeller, who recognized that Socrates does not talk of his “divine voice” in the same contexts as our notion of a “voice” of human conscience; rather, it is confined to future contingencies (as opposed to feelings of conscience after the act) and is not always concerned with moral judgments but concerned rather with the consequences of a course of action.¹⁸ Other scholars have attempted to explain away Socrates’ daimonion by interpreting his experience as nothing more than a “rational hunch” or “intuition” of the sort that often comes to those who think deeply.¹⁹ Recent scholarship has offered a far more comprehensive picture of Socrates’ religion, demonstrating the inadequacy and paucity of accounts that characterize Socrates as an arch-rationalist or as a mere humanist.²⁰ Nevertheless despite these recent and valuable reassessments, the relationship between Socrates’ religious experiences (his daimonion, his injunction to follow his philosophical mission as a result of the Delphic oracle’s pronouncement) and his commitment to reason remains a source of confusion for many modern scholars. For instance, Gregory Vlastos has insisted that Socrates would subject anything and everything, including religious phenomena, to the rigorous standards of rational justification:

So all he [i.e., Socrates] could claim to be getting from the daimonion at any given time is precisely what he calls the daimonion itself—a “divine sign,” which allows, indeed requires, *unlimited scope for the deployment of his critical reason* to extract whatever truth it can from those monitions . . . there can be no conflict between Socrates’ unconditional readiness to follow critical reason wherever it may lead and his equally unconditional commitment to obey commands issued to him by his supernatural god through supernatural signs. *These two commitments cannot conflict because only by the use of his own critical reason can Socrates determine the true meaning of any of these signs* [emphasis in original].²¹

For Vlastos, then, the voice of Socrates’ daimonion is inferior to, and dependent upon, his reasoning and rationality. To justify this interpretation, Vlastos cites Plato’s *Crito* 46b, where Socrates states, “I am not only now but always a man who follows nothing but the reasoning which on consideration seems to me best.”²² Yet Brickhouse and Smith have noted that Socrates does not make this claim to secure what Vlastos gets out of it, between reason and a sign from his daimonion (or between rationality and divination), but rather contrasts his commitment to reason with the unreflective and unfounded views of the many.²³ Furthermore, they suggest that the appearance of the daimonion is interpreted by

Socrates as a reason in itself for desisting from the action that he is about to embark upon.²⁴ They note, however, that the appearance of the daimonion sometimes seems to “trump” ratiocination; that in several instances Socrates unhesitatingly follows the daimonion even if it contradicts his course of reasoning, up to that point, for following an action.²⁵ Mark McPherran has made the excellent point that for Socrates reason plays a necessary role in the interpretation and confirmation of extrarational indicators (such as the daimonion); whenever possible, such signs must be rationally inspected, especially if they forbid what would otherwise be morally warranted.²⁶ Yet he concludes that “Socratic revelation will always appear in the docket of Socratic reason,” implying a view of reason as Socrates’ *ultimate* epistemological commitment, in agreement with Vlastos.²⁷ A certain anxiety regarding the relationship between rationality and divination (particularly the daimonion) in Plato’s portrayal of Socrates remains evident in modern scholarship.

The Daimonion of Socrates as Personal Daimon

For the later Neoplatonists, such as Proclus, Socrates’ divine voice was seen as his personal or guardian daimon—they had no hesitation in attributing the divine voice to a daimon, a semidivine being who, according to the seminal statement of Plato’s *Symposium*, was an intermediary between gods and humans, between the divine and human realms.²⁸ While modern scholars generally argue that the daimonion of Socrates is *not* portrayed as a daimon in Plato’s dialogues, let alone as a personal daimon, this notion had a long history in the Platonic tradition, and the Middle Platonist philosophers also interpreted the daimonion as the guardian daimon of Socrates.²⁹ Daimones in general played an important role in Neoplatonism: they were considered to transmit divine goods to human beings and to act as intermediaries between human and divine; for this reason, they were often attributed a significant role in divination, such as transmitting oracles to humans from the gods.³⁰ Proclus states that the function of daimones is service and assistance to the gods; he further claims that all daimones have a leader god whom they follow and whose characteristics they represent and transmit.³¹

From Plotinus onward, Neoplatonists subscribed to the doctrine of a “personal” or “guardian” daimon allotted to each individual human soul to guard and guide it. In doing so, they drew explicitly on a passage in Plato’s *Phaedo*, where Plato speaks of “the daimon of each person, to whom he has been allotted in life,”³² as well as the eschatological myth of Er in Plato’s *Republic*, where Socrates asserts: “No daimon shall be allotted to you, but you shall choose your own

daimon,” relating to the human soul’s choice of its next life and, consequently, its daimon.³³ Plotinus had written a treatise entitled *The Daimon Who Has Been Allotted to Us* (*Enn.* III.4), exploring the precise nature of the personal daimon. He claims that the personal daimon is the element attached to us superior to the active principle within us. As John Dillon has noted, it is the element “which is superior to the ‘centre of gravity’ of our consciousness or personality.”³⁴ Plotinus (*Enn.* III.4.3) expands on this notion: “If the working principle is that by which we have sense-perception, the spirit is the rational principle; but if we live by the rational principle, the spirit is what is above this.” Attempting to expand on Plotinus’s analysis of personal daimones, Proclus sets out their specific functions in his *Alcibiades I Commentary*:

For he [i.e., the personal daimon] who guides aright our whole life, fulfilling both the choices we have made before our birth, the gifts of fate and of the gods who guide it, and further bestowing in due measure the illuminations of providence, such is our guardian daimon. As souls we are dependent upon the intellect alone, but as souls using a body we are in need of the guardian daimon. . . . The guardian daimon alone moves, controls and orders all our affairs, since it perfects the reason, moderates the emotions, infuses nature, maintains the body, supplies accidentals, fulfills the decrees of fate and bestows the gifts of providence; and this one being is ruler of all that lies in us and concerns us, steering our whole life.³⁵

Proclus attributes a range of functions to the personal daimon: bringing fate and providence to the human soul, perfecting the reason, moderating the emotions, and maintaining the body. One claim of Proclus here, that it is the status of humans as souls using a body which necessitates the presence of the personal daimon, is also found in Iamblichus’s comments on the personal daimon in his treatise *De Mysterioris*.³⁶ There Iamblichus had been chiefly concerned with explaining how human beings can have contact with the personal daimon through theurgy in response to Porphyry’s questions concerning whether identification of and contact with the personal daimon can be gleaned through the practice of astrology.³⁷ Iamblichus, however, had set out some of the precise characteristics of the personal daimon in the course of his discussion, agreeing with Proclus in rejecting the identification of the personal daimon with any part of the soul, such as the rational soul or the individual intellect, the latter of which was a common theory among the later Stoics.³⁸ Given the prevalence of the notion of a personal daimon in Neoplatonism, it is unsurprising that Proclus identifies Socrates’ daimonion with his personal

daimon. Yet the question as to why Socrates *hears* his daimon remains, and it is to this issue that I now turn.

Socrates as Prophet of Apollo

Socrates' ability and capacity to actually *hear* his daimon and to subsequently follow its advice was taken as evidence by Proclus that Socrates was a seer, a *mantis*, who could hear the messages of the divine and communicate them to others.³⁹ Indeed, some modern scholars have also claimed that the daimonion represents a species of divination;⁴⁰ furthermore, this explanation accords with Socrates' description of it as his "customary divination" (ἡ εἰωθυῖά μοι μαντική ἢ τοῦ δαιμονίου) and himself as *mantis*.⁴¹ For Proclus, listening to the voice of the daimon was akin to experiencing a state of possession or inspiration, similar to that of the Pythia at Delphi, who was considered to convey the divine wisdom of Apollo through entering an alternative state of consciousness. Socrates' divine guidance was also seen as connecting him above all with Apollo, the god of oracles and divination par excellence: indeed, Proclus explicitly ranks the daimon of Socrates as being under the power of Apollo and elsewhere implicitly seems to call Socrates "the close pupil of Apollo" (τὸν τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος ὀαριστήν), along with Plato and anyone else who follows the Apollonian path.⁴² Again, many modern scholars have recognized that the daimonion seems to be linked by Socrates to Apollo and to the service he does for the god in his philosophical mission.⁴³

Yet Apollo was also considered to be the god of truth; for the later Neoplatonists, this meant he was especially connected with philosophy, rationality, and perhaps discursive reasoning.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, it is vital to remember that, for the Neoplatonists, the goal of philosophy was divinization, a term that expresses the notion of "assimilation to god as far as possible," which the Neoplatonists took from Plato's *Theaetetus* (176b) to define their philosophy.⁴⁵ They considered philosophy to be a process of divinization, a quest for assimilation with the divine. Dominic J. O'Meara has offered an extensive analysis of divinization in Neoplatonism, relating it (in late Neoplatonism) to the progressive hierarchy of virtues achieved through the progressive scale of the sciences (parts of philosophy) as exemplified by the teaching curriculum of the later Neoplatonists.⁴⁶ Thus he clarifies the mutually entailing intellectual and ethical dimensions of divinization; the inextricably linked nature of these dimensions of divinization is clearly based on the Platonic (or Socratic) theme that knowledge *is* virtue.⁴⁷ In later Neoplatonism,

theurgy was considered central to the process of divinization, seen as the culmination of philosophy,⁴⁸ and this introduced a ritual dimension to divinization. Hence assimilation to the divine, or “becoming like a god,” entails the attainment of a divine perspective, seeing all things unitarily, as the gods did.⁴⁹ The state reached was one of suprarationality, but for the later Neoplatonists, rationality and discursive reasoning operated on a continuum with suprarational states, because truth was seen as coexisting with the gods.⁵⁰ According to such a view, noetic reality is both the *causal* origin of rationality and reason⁵¹ and the *purpose* or culmination of rationality (the place to which rationality leads, in the appropriate conditions). Therefore, suprarational experience of noetic reality was seen *not only* as the culmination of philosophical investigation but often as the protreptic starting point of philosophical investigation as exemplified by the method of Socratic elenchus. The late Neoplatonic view of rationality is therefore much broader than modern views of rationality, for divine wisdom was considered to encompass (and thus cause) all rationality but in a unified and complete sense.⁵²

The implications of such a starkly different view of rationality for assessments of Socrates are momentous: in the Neoplatonic view, Socrates becomes the fullest culmination of the philosophical life; precisely because he is the philosopher par excellence, Socrates hears the voice of his daimon. The Middle Platonist philosophers Apuleius and Plutarch gave a similar explanation for Socrates’ ability to hear the voice of his daimon: they attributed this ability to his wisdom, the purified nature of his philosophical understanding, and way of life.⁵³ Proclus maintains that Socrates is a special μάντις, a genuine prophet rather than merely “prophetic” (μαντικὸς), since the former “possess[es] something superior to man’s knowledge.”⁵⁴ In accordance with the Neoplatonic view that suprarational, divinatory states can act as a protreptic toward philosophical investigation, Socrates is seen as embarking upon his philosophical mission because of his capacity to hear and listen to the divine. Proclus does not explicitly refer to Socrates’ attribution of his philosophical mission and practice of the elenchus to the Delphic oracle’s pronouncement that none is wiser than he, as described in Plato’s *Apology*; yet this episode implicitly forms the backdrop to his views of Socrates’ philosophical practices. Drawing explicitly on Socrates’ comments at *Phaedo* 84e1–85b8, Proclus speaks as follows:

Let this then be the start of philosophy, and of the teaching of Plato viz., the knowledge of ourselves. For I think it befits the familiar friend of Apollo (τὸν τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος ὁαριστήν) to begin the perfection of the imperfect from the same starting point as the god himself bids. Since Socrates

also, who asserts that he is the “fellow-slave of the swans” and has not less than they received the gift of prophecy from the god (παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν μαντικὴν), is said to have begun his impulse towards philosophy by coming upon the Pythian inscription and considering it to be the bidding, as it were, of Apollo himself.⁵⁵

Here the god Apollo is envisaged as the guardian of both philosophy and prophecy, and thus of *both* rationality and divination. Moreover, the injunction “Know thyself” recorded on the temple at Delphi is interpreted as the starting point of philosophy in general and of Socrates’ philosophical investigations in particular.⁵⁶ Plutarch also claims that it was this Delphic inscription that set Socrates off on his philosophical inquiries.⁵⁷ Proclus considers Socrates’ philosophical journey to have begun from Apollo’s injunction, from the divine itself; the implication is that divination is seen as a protreptic toward philosophy and elenctic inquiry.⁵⁸ While Proclus’s claims go much further, it is worth noting that any Greek would have thought it well advised to decipher the meaning of an oracle making personal reference to oneself in view of the Delphic oracle’s reputed past dealings with such figures as Croesus and Oedipus; furthermore, various scholars have noted the common ancient assumption that one should use one’s reason to interpret the meaning of oracular pronouncements and, in connection with this, the frequent debates that occurred in antiquity regarding the correct interpretation of oracles.⁵⁹

The view sketched above of the mutual inclusivity of rationality and suprarationality is well illustrated in Proclus’s *Commentary on the First Alcibiades*, when Proclus notes why Socrates waited so many years to converse with Alcibiades. This was not due to any lack of desire on the philosopher’s part; rather, Socrates explains that his silence arose from the opposition of his daimonion.⁶⁰ Proclus represents this as inspiring wonder in Alcibiades, which catapults him into his first philosophical pursuit:

Socrates astounds Alcibiades still further by making the cause of human pursuits depend on the daimonic, in order that he may appear wonderful to him not only as a man, but also as acting in accordance with a daimon and possessing something superior to human virtue, viz., spiritual inspiration (τὴν ἐκ τοῦ δαιμονίου ἐπίπνοιαν). . . . Already then, Socrates is revealed as someone inspired by a daimon (δείκνυται οὖν ἤδη καὶ δαιμονιώς τις ὁ Σωκράτης), arousing greater astonishment in Alcibiades and multiplying his wonder as regards philosophy.⁶¹

The sense of wonder that leads human beings to begin philosophical investigation had been discussed by both Plato and Aristotle.⁶² For Proclus, this sense of wonder and awe in itself becomes a state inspired by divinity.⁶³ Wonder is explicitly characterized as marking the beginning of the philosophical path and, thus, the path toward divinization; wonder inspires *and* puzzles the beholder, impelling him to deeper levels of investigation, while simultaneously delineating a level of suitability for both philosophical investigation and conscious participation in the divine (*in Alc.* 42.5–43.2). In fact, Proclus maintains, “The more we become consciously aware of the influence of the superior beings the more we stand in amazement at them” (ὅσῳ γὰρ πλέον συναισθανόμεθα τῆς τῶν κρείττονων δυνάμεως, τοσούτῳ μᾶλλον αὐτοὺς τεθήπαμεν, *in Alc.* 166.1–2) Proclus presents Socrates’ familiarity and assimilation with the divine, as evidenced by his ability to hear his daimon, as a cause of wonder to Alcibiades: “Both when silent, then, and when giving utterance, the good man is worthy of wonder in the eyes of those who have a kindred nature. . . . It seems, then, that the young man, astounded on both accounts, both at Socrates’ silence and his words, positively regards him as a guardian daimon. To follow about in silence is characteristic of a guardian daimon, since they are accustomed to call the good daimon our ‘fellow traveller’ and they say that he accompanies us from divine impulse.”⁶⁴ Alcibiades’ sense of wonder in this case points toward Socrates’ role as acting as a guardian daimon (by analogy) for Alcibiades, as will be discussed later.

The “Divine” Daimon of Socrates

In addition to characterizing the daimonion as Socrates’ personal daimon, Proclus identifies three key characteristics of it: first, his daimonion is the most “divine” type of personal daimon that a human being can have (*in Alc.* 78.10–79.6); second, for Proclus, Socrates was aware of a voice issuing from his daimon (*in Alc.* 79.15–17; 79.17–80.1); and third, the daimonion never exhorted Socrates but recalled or prohibited him from certain actions (*in Alc.* 80.19–20). Proclus claims that this latter characteristic is unusual and peculiar to Socrates (*in Alc.* 80.21–81.1). With regard to the first characteristic, Proclus states:

. . . concerning the guardian daimon of Socrates. Three main points are made about it: one, that it is not only a daimon, but also a god (ὥς οὐ μόνον δαίμων ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὥς θεός). Further on in this dialogue, he states clearly “My guardian is better than your uncle Pericles, O

Alcibiades: he is a god, who would not allow me to converse with you.” He calls the same being, then, daimon and god; for what was the subject of a previous remark “a daimonic opposition, whose force you will learn of later,” he now terms a god, since this it is which supplies the reason for his silence in the past. Furthermore he provides clearer indications of its rank in the *Apology*, and reveals that it has been allotted a godlike preeminence within the daimonic nature. This is just what we said before, that the (guardian) daimons of godlike souls who have chosen an intelligent and elevating life are of a certain godlike number superior to the whole class of daimons and participating primarily in the gods.⁶⁵

Proclus argues that the daimonion of Socrates is of the most divine and godlike kind because, among all the kinds of personal daimon, it participates most primarily in the gods.⁶⁶ Proclus sets out six orders or levels of daimon, ranging from divine daimones (as the highest rank), through the noetic, psychic, physical, and corporeal levels, down to material daimones, classified according to their roles and functions (Proclus, *in Alc.* 71.1–72.12). As John Dillon notes, he appears from the text (τῶν γὰρ δαιμόνων τούτων) to intend all of these to be classes of personal daimon; however, a persuasive emendation of Westerink of τούτων to πάντων would solve this problem, and make this an introductory statement of Proclus about the whole range of daimones.⁶⁷ Indeed, this emendation seems to be correct, given that Proclus then goes on to state that only the first two, the divine and the noetic, fill the role of personal daimones (*in Alc.* 72.18–73.4). Proclus sets out the characteristics of the divine level of personal or guardian daimon: “The divine spirits, then, are those which are guardians of souls according to their essential nature and unite them to their appropriate rulers; and every soul, even if it accompanies its own god, requires such a daimon.”⁶⁸ The highest class of personal or guardian daimones are said to act as the guardians of souls according to their “essential nature” and unite them to their leader gods. The implication of this statement is that it is those who have fully discovered their “essential nature,” those who have gained complete self-knowledge, who follow in the path of their leader god and have the highest type of daimon as their guardian.⁶⁹ The reasoning for this becomes clearer when Proclus contrasts it with the second grade of daimon:

But the second class of daimones watch over the ascents and descents of souls, and from among these are the choices made by the majority of souls; since the most perfect souls, who associate with birth without defilement, as they choose the manner of life appropriate to their own god,

so also they live according to the divine daimon (οὕτω καὶ κατὰ δαίμονα ζῶσι τὸν θεῖον), who also when they abode on high united them to the appropriate god (τῷ οικείῳ θεῷ); and for this reason the Egyptian marvelled at Plotinus as possessing a divine daimon (ὡς θεῖον ἔχοντα τὸν δαίμονα). The souls, then, that live after a manner that returns to their origin have the same daimon on high and in this world, but for the less perfect the daimon that corresponds to the way of life they have set before them differs from the daimon who accords with their essential nature.⁷⁰

Proclus maintains that “perfect souls,” those who “associate with birth without defilement,” have chosen a way of life appropriate to their own leader god and their divine daimon; therefore they have the same daimon throughout their various human lives and both when in and not in a body.⁷¹ Proclus contrasts these “divine” daimones with the daimones of the second rank who are concerned with the ascents and descent of souls, and who therefore act as the guardians of the majority of humans, who are in the process of descent and ascent. The implication of this contrast is that “perfect souls” have already ascended to the gods (which is possibly the implication of the phrase αἱ ἀποκαταστατικῶς ζῶσαι ψυχαί, “the souls that live after a manner that returns to their origin,” at 73.5–6), and this is why they have the same daimon throughout and between their human incarnations.⁷² Proclus clearly states that Socrates is such a “perfect soul” with a divine daimon, and he also includes Plotinus among this select group, referring to the famous story recounted by Porphyry regarding the Egyptian priest who conjured Plotinus’s daimon and was amazed to discover that it was a god (*Life of Plotinus* 10). In fact, Porphyry seems to understand this episode in a similar sense to Proclus: that Plotinus had a divine-like daimon: “So the companion of Plotinus was a daimon of the more god-like kind, and he continually kept the eye of his soul fixed on this companion” (Τῶν οὖν θειοτέρων δαιμόνων ἔχων τὸν συνόντα καὶ αὐτὸς διετέλει ἀνάγων αὐτοῦ τὸ θεῖον ὄμμα πρὸς ἐκεῖνον).⁷³ Rather intriguingly, Porphyry claims that this event inspired Plotinus to write his treatise entitled *The Daimon Who Has Been Allotted to Us*, an interesting case of a ritual inspiring philosophical work.⁷⁴

Listening to the Voice of the Daimon

Proclus maintains that the second important characteristic of the daimonion of Socrates is that Socrates was aware of a voice issuing from it.⁷⁵ Proclus explicates the operation of the daimon as follows: “. . . as regards the actual operation of the

daimon he received the light proceeding therefrom not merely in the discursive reason or the powers of conjecture, but also in the vehicle of the soul (τῷ πνεύματι), the spirit-like irradiation passing suddenly through all the levels of his life and even arousing sense-perception. For it is clear that although the activity of the spirit is the same, reason enjoys its gift in one way, imagination in another, sensation in yet another, and each of the elements within us reacts and is moved individually by the daimon.⁷⁶ Proclus explains that Socrates hears the voice of his daimon because it illuminates his soul-vehicle and therefore passes through his cognitive faculties: through his reason, imagination, and perception. The idea of the “vehicle of the soul” finds its first developed expression in the work of Porphyry and Iamblichus, although it was further developed by Proclus and other later Neoplatonists.⁷⁷ It was considered to have a central role as a bridge between the soul and body, and consequently had a mediating and median nature, since it was considered to be less material than the physical body but more material than the soul.

Since the illumination of the daimon irradiates the soul of Socrates and his cognitive faculties (reason, imagination, perception) through the vehicle of the soul, Proclus concludes that the inspiration from the daimon experienced by Socrates comes from *within* him⁷⁸ rather than arriving from outside as an external impression: “It was not from without, then, in the manner of an impression, that the voice impinged upon Socrates, but the inspiration from within, ranging through the whole of the soul and penetrating as far as the organs of sense-perception (ἐνδοθεν διὰ πάσης φοιτήσασα τῆς ψυχῆς ἢ ἐπίπνοια καὶ μέχρι τῶν αἰσθητικῶν ὀργάνων διαδραμοῦσα), finally becoming a voice, recognized by inner awareness rather than perception; for such are the illuminations of the good daimones and of the gods.”⁷⁹ This statement is very much in line with Neoplatonic views of inspiration and possession. I have argued elsewhere that Iamblichus’s views of divine possession and divination are based upon the notion that the gods work *through* the human soul; in relation to the human being’s experience of divination and divine possession, the gods are conceptualized as internal (working through the faculties of the human soul) *and* as external (in a *causal* sense that preserves the attribution of a divine transcendence but not in a spatial or temporal sense). Thus, the human soul is considered to have an active, instrumental agency that works *in conjunction* with the (more powerful) divine agency; the divine is therefore not conceptualized as a totally alien agency overcoming its human victim.⁸⁰ Divine possession is considered within later Neoplatonism as a phenomenon involving a transcendent and simultaneously immanent deity working *through* the soul of the possessed. Since the deity is conceived as already being linked to the human soul causally and ontologically,

the divine possession is conceived of not as annihilating the human consciousness but as replacing it with divine consciousness, representing an enhancement of the human being's power and perception.⁸¹ In fact, Proclus explicitly calls Socrates "an instrument of the divine" (ὄργανον τοῦ θείου) and an "instrumental" cause, while attributing to the divine the "primary efficient cause."⁸²

Socrates as an Agent of Divine Providence

Proclus sets out the third characteristic of Socrates' daimon: that it never gives positive injunctions but always gives prohibitions, deterring him from certain courses of action. Proclus claims that this characteristic is unusual and particularly relates to Socrates' character and "divine-like" nature:

This again is to be referred to the life led by Socrates; for it is not something common to our guardian daimones but peculiar to the care of Socrates. We declare, then, that the good character of Socrates' way of life, his courtesy, humanity and "unreserved" nature (τὸ ἀγαθοειδὲς τῆς τοῦ Σωκράτους ζωῆς καὶ τὸ κοινὸν καὶ τὸ φιλόανθρωπον καὶ τὸ ἐκκεχυμένον), as I think he himself says, had no need of encouragement from the guardian daimon as regards the communication of benefits, for he started out of his own accord and made himself readily available to all comers for the purpose of associating in the best way of life.⁸³

Proclus maintains that Socrates' divine-like nature ensures that the philosopher needs no kind of encouragement in order to pursue wisdom and to engage in elenchus with anyone who will converse with him; consequently, he needs no positive exhortations from the daimonion. It is worth noting that Apuleius (*De Deo Socratis* 19.1–9) makes exactly the same point about the daimonion. Proclus consistently portrays Socrates as "overflowing" (ὑπερπλήρης) with goodness in the sense of his eager nature to do the good due to his assimilation to the divine: Socrates manifests or imitates the One, the action of divine providence and of the gods themselves, who are considered to be "filled" with divine love, which they transmit throughout the cosmos and to lower entities.⁸⁴ Proclus identifies two key elements in "divine and daimonic providence toward the secondary beings" (τῆς τε θείας καὶ τῆς δαιμονίας εἰς τὰ δεύτερα προνοίας): (1) that it passes through everything, through every ontological level, and leaves nothing without a share of itself; (2) that it admits nothing that it controls into itself, nor is it infected by or confused with the

inferior beings or objects that it arranges.⁸⁵ He maintains that these two characteristics are present in Socrates' forethought: "This daimonic and divine providence (τὴν δαιμονίαν τε καὶ θεϊαν πρόνοιαν), then, Plato clearly attributes to the beneficent forethought of Socrates for the less perfect, both maintaining its vigilance and stability (as regards the beloved) and its full use of any opportunity for zeal, and at the same its detached, unadulterated and undefiled character."⁸⁶ The overflowing and abundant nature of divine providence is expressed in Socrates' beneficent forethought, which is demonstrated by his vigilance and stability and in his "full use of any opportunity for zeal."⁸⁷ Proclus repeatedly emphasizes Socrates' ability to imitate and manifest the action of divine providence.⁸⁸ He connects this ability with the philosopher's divine-like nature and, consequently, with his having the most divine type of personal daimon, for he states: "We assert that when souls abide with the gods they act intelligently and enjoy both the will of the gods, which is the form of the good, and their uncontaminated giving."⁸⁹ For Proclus, it is the status of Socrates as a divine-like soul and, consequently, his assimilation with the good, that explains the apotreptic rather than protreptic nature of the admonitions of the daimonion: ". . . it is clear that it is not necessarily required that the guardian daimon should stir us to action; but when our purpose accords with the good, even his not deterring nor preventing us is an indication that the action is appropriate for us. Therefore Socrates, when prevented, obeyed his guardian daimon, but when the latter ceased his opposition, considering that converse with his beloved was permitted him, he duly approached him with confidence."⁹⁰ Proclus thus attributes the apotreptic nature of the warnings of the daimonion to the fact that Socrates does not need positive encouragement because his purpose accords with the good, as demonstrated by his eager nature to engage all in elenchus and to pursue wisdom unstintingly; these qualities are themselves seen as expressions of divine providence. This theory provides a comprehensive explanation for Socrates' statement at the end of the *Apology* that the verdict is in accordance with the will of the gods due to the silence of the daimonion.

The *Kairos* and Receptivity

Yet the question remains as to exactly *why* the daimonion would give prohibitions or warnings; Proclus addresses this very issue:

But since many of those who approached him were unsuited (ἀνεπιτήδευτοι) to participation in the pursuits of virtue and the knowledge of universal

reality, the good guardian daimon restrained him from exercising his forethought in regard to such characters. . . . The unsuitability (ἀνεπιτηδειότητες) of those who approach for the most part escapes human reason and requires the discernment of the daimon, and the distinguishing of opportune moments (αἱ τῶν καιρῶν διαγνώσεις) can be suggested to us accurately by this means alone; men have devised certain methods and techniques for this purpose, but even so the resultant apprehension is obscure and falls very far short of the indications given by the good daimones.⁹¹

Proclus maintains that the prohibitions of the daimon relate to the “unsuitability” (ἀνεπιτήδαιοι) of those who approached him.⁹² This word derives from the term ἐπιτηδειότης, meaning “receptivity,” “fitness,” or “suitability.” Iamblichus’s notion of the “receptivity” (ἐπιτηδειότης) of the theurgist (the practitioner who engages in theurgic ritual) forms a cornerstone of theurgy.⁹³ Leonard George identifies four semantic domains of the term ἐπιτηδειότης, all of which seem to have influenced Iamblichus’s formation of ritual receptivity: potential, sympathy, receptivity, and aptitude.⁹⁴ Iamblichus maintains that the theurgists had to purify and prepare themselves through ritual, intellectual, and ethical means in order to be prepared to receive divine visions and messages through divination. He repeatedly emphasizes that divine illumination is constantly available and omnipresent in the mortal world, yet the ritual practitioners’ receptivity must have been properly cultivated so that they are ready to fully receive these divine illuminations.⁹⁵

Proclus’s claim that the daimonion prohibited Socrates from conversing with certain personages because of their “unsuitability” (ἀνεπιτήδαιοι) suggests a view of the necessity of the person engaging in philosophical elenchus to be “receptive” or “suitable” (ἐπιτηδειότης) in order to undergo the elenctic process. This view may seem strange to modern Westerners who see discursive rationality as wholly objective; Proclus’s view suggests, to the contrary, that the condition of the subject who engages in discursive reasoning is a vital prerequisite or, in other words, that receptivity (ἐπιτηδειότης) is necessary to engender the appropriate conditions in the would-be respondents so that they can fully receive the “purification” and truth that the elenctic method can bring.⁹⁶ While this notion may seem strange to us, it is worth remembering that educational research and psychology often notes the importance of the teacher beginning from and building upon the student’s current knowledge, experience, and skills.⁹⁷ In a sense, the notion of “receptivity” represents an extension of such pedagogical observations.⁹⁸ Significantly, the notion that one has to be “receptive” in order to engage in philosophical elenchus as effectively as possible provides a comprehensive justification of the Neoplatonic

teaching curriculum, with its specific ordering of (and thus progression through) Platonic dialogues for teaching purposes.

In fact, Proclus explicitly states that Socrates uses elenchus in a way suited to the specific characters according to their suitability and receptivity (ἐπιτηδειότης):

For everywhere Socrates pronounces the discourses in a manner suited to the characters in question; and as in the godhead all goods preexist in the form of the One, but different individuals enjoy different goods according to the natural capacity of each, *so also Socrates embraces all the forms of knowledge within himself, but uses now one now another, adjusting his own activity to the requirements of the recipients. . . . According, then, to the measure of suitability (ἐπιτηδειότης) that each person possesses, so he is perfected by Socrates and elevated to the divine (ἀνάγεται πρὸς τὸ θεῖον) according to his own rank* [my emphasis].⁹⁹

Proclus maintains that Socrates adjusts his elenctic activity according to the requirements of the recipients, according to the measure of “suitability” they possess. This view makes more sense if one remembers that for the later Neoplatonists discursive rationality and reason are considered to be part of a continuum, along with suprarational states of consciousness; this continuum entails the possibility that those who engage in elenchus when they are fully receptive can attain suprarational vision and insight (*noesis*). Within Neoplatonism, rationality and reasoning are themselves seen ultimately as gifts from the gods: thus, the process of elenchus is considered to be a step on the path toward assimilation with the divine and divinization.¹⁰⁰ As argued earlier, the notion of divinization involves intellectual and ethical preparation: consequently, engaging in elenchus with the utmost receptivity involves purification through the cultivation of the hierarchy of virtues:¹⁰¹ a concept clearly based on the Platonic dictum that knowledge is virtue.

Proclus’s claim that the “unsuitability” (ἀνεπιτήδευτοι) of those who approach Socrates mostly “escapes human reason and requires the discernment of the daimon” can seem strange, given that Proclus has spoken of Socrates as assimilated to the divine and having the most “divine” daimon a person can have. If, however, one remembers that the Neoplatonic sage was considered to have touched Nous and gained a knowledge of universals, Proclus’s claim becomes clearer. From this perspective, the “unsuitability” of human beings is connected to the interaction and relationship of universals and particulars, as are all human matters. In order to fully understand and contextualize the relationship between

universals and particulars, the Neoplatonists claim that the help of a divine being, a daimon, is needed. In his treatise *Ten Doubts Concerning Providence*, Proclus states that the gods and daimones have foreknowledge of the indefinite because the gods possess the forms and causes of all indefinite phenomena (and transmit this knowledge to daimones).¹⁰² Such definite knowledge of the indefinite and contingent is possible, according to Proclus, because grades of knowledge should be rated on the basis of the subject of knowing rather than on the basis of the object known, a view that accords with his constant emphasis on the importance of the “receptivity” or “suitability” (ἐπιτηδειότης) of the subject.¹⁰³ Thus gods and daimones were considered to have a universal knowledge of particulars—in other words, they were considered to know particulars from an eternal, complete, and unified perspective in relation to the whole of reality; they understood completely the complex interrelationships between universals and particulars.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, the complex multiplicity of material events and causes do not obscure their vision, as they were thought to do in the case of human understanding.

An important qualification is necessary here: it should not be thought that “receptivity” (ἐπιτηδειότης) was conceived of as a static or permanent state; rather, it is conceptualized as a dynamic and changing state related to human beings’ movement through time and their development of their capacities and abilities. The “receptivity” (ἐπιτηδειότης) of the individual is construed as a kind of *instrumental power or agency* for the human, since it is seen as the *active* cultivation of qualities or aptitudes that enable contact with the divine.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, human beings can enhance their level of “receptivity” so as to be more fully suitable to engage in certain activities. The Neoplatonic idea of receptivity has to be considered in relation to two central doctrines: (1) the theory of recollection, whereby all human souls are said to possess knowledge in their souls in some way that they “recollect”; and (2) the doctrine of rebirth, whereby all human souls are reincarnated in a succession of lives.¹⁰⁶ Ultimately, then, according to this view, *all* human souls will eventually become fully receptive, attain divinization, and ascend to the gods.¹⁰⁷ The key question, according to this schema, is *when* this will occur—and here the notion of the *kairos*, the “right” or “opportune” moment, becomes significant.

Viewing receptivity as a dynamic state resolves any possible contradiction between Proclus’ claim that Socrates recognized in Alcibiades tokens of his “suitability” (ἐπιτηδειότης) for virtue and Proclus’ assertion that the daimon had prevented Socrates from conversing with him for many years due to his apparent “unsuitability” (ἀνεπιτηδαιοί).¹⁰⁸ The notion of the *kairos*, the right or opportune moment, comes into play here, as Proclus explains:

The imparting of learning, if accomplished at the right moment (κατὰ καιρὸν), and purification of life, if its application is timely, afford to the recipients thereof a benefit many times greater. Just as the gods, by assigning to souls in a due order remedies for their faults and fruits in due season, benefit them, so also godlike men subordinately aim at the right moment (τοῦ καιροῦ) and beneficence towards the less perfect according thereto: the gods intelligently and divinely determining the measure of right time (νοερώς καὶ θείως ἀφορίζοντες τὰ μέτρα τῶν καιρῶν), men seeking to find it by scientific knowledge, and others again making their quest thereof by the inspiration of their guardian daimon (κατὰ τὴν δαιμονίαν ἐπίπνοιαν). Communion with good daimones is of great weight to souls involved in process toward the unmistakable discernment of the right moment (τῆς ἀναμαρτήτου τῶν καιρῶν διαγνώσεως); and therefore Socrates also, in this matter stirred by the guardian daimon and led by love itself, has discovered this as the best possible moment (τὸν ἄριστον καιρὸν) for beneficence to his beloved.¹⁰⁹

The idea of the kairos is based on the notion that “different portions of time are suited to different activities” (χρόνου μόρια ἄλλο ἄλλαις ἐφαρμόττει πράξεσι).¹¹⁰ Proclus maintains that “godlike men” aim at the right moment in order to benefit the less perfect as effectively as possible and that communication or contact with daimones assists such men in discerning the kairos. Proclus further elucidates the purpose and scope of the kairos: “. . . individual activities have different times suited to their accomplishment. Such time is the right moment (καιρός) for each activity as supplying the good and the ultimate purpose to the doers and to what is actually being done.”¹¹¹ Proclus claims that the kairos represents the right moment for the most effective action to take place, the moment where the purpose of the action is most likely to be fulfilled. Therefore, the idea of the kairos is clearly linked with the notion of receptivity, for the kairos is envisaged as the moment when the person is most fully receptive to receive what is about to be bestowed, whether this be through elenchus (discursive reasoning) or through ritual.¹¹² Proclus’s discussion of the kairos makes it clear that he envisages the daimonion of Socrates as assisting the philosopher in discerning the kairos—the “opportune” or “appropriate” moment or time for others to engage in the elenchus, the moment when the would-be respondents have become fully “receptive” or “suitable” to do so.

Socrates as a Daimon

Finally, Proclus maintains that Socrates himself acts as a daimon toward Alcibiades:

To purify the person in need of such aid through his own agency is the work of a daimon-like power, since the daimones do not operate upon us from without (ἐξωθεν) but as it were “guide us from within, from the stern” (οἶον ἐκ πρύμνης ἡμᾶς ἔνδοθεν κατευθύνουσιν); nor do they purify us as bodies that have a nature which is extrinsically moved, but heal us throughout as persons who are self-moved (αὐτοκινήτους). It is in this way that they confer upon us both participation in what is good (μεταδόσεις τῶν ἀγαθῶν) and purification of the emotions. Socrates, then, established in the position of a good daimon, shows the daimon as bringing the refutation upon the young man through his own agency, since to situate the cause of the refutations in the respondent proves that purifier and purified are one, but really the cause of such purification is of the daimonic-order.¹¹³

The “purification” of Alcibiades refers to his purification from false opinions through the elenchus; Proclus maintains that although Socrates initiates the elenchus as philosophical teacher and lover, such purification occurs *primarily* through Alcibiades’ own agency. This is because he holds that the process of elenchus allows one’s innate *logoi* to purify false *doxa*, a notion clearly based on the Platonic theory of recollection.¹¹⁴ Therefore “the primary agent . . . of the pupil’s progress in knowledge is himself.”¹¹⁵ Proclus then draws an analogy between the operation of the questioner in the elenctic process and the operation of the daimones: both purify the individual *through his or her own agency*. As Dominic O’Meara has noted, “To illustrate the particular kind of action whereby the teacher stimulates the pupil in such a way as not to override the *primary* agency for which the pupil himself is responsible, Proclus refers to the way that gods and demons work upon us from within, not from without and in communion with our own natures as self-movers.”¹¹⁶ Proclus’s view of the elenchus is that it involves a process of self-purification, whereby “the purifier and the purified are one” (ἓνα . . . τὸν καθαίροντα καὶ καθαιρόμενον).¹¹⁷ In relation to the Neoplatonist view of the elenchus as a stage on the route to divinization, O’Meara states: “. . . for Proclus, the primary agency for the salvation of fallen souls is to be found in their own selves. In this sense these souls can save themselves. At the same time, however, another agent is required to provoke the souls into self-discovery,

a teacher, a guide, a soul of superior insight, a Parmenides, a Socrates, a Plato, a Plotinus, a Syrianus.”¹¹⁸ These “divine-like” human teachers and guides, who can provoke souls into self-discovery, are considered to do so by assimilating themselves to the divine; consequently, they are able to express divine providence in the help they provide to other human souls.¹¹⁹ For it is the daimones (and thus the gods) who are seen as primarily provoking humans to self-discovery and purification through the human’s own agency; gods and daimones are viewed as operating on human beings from within, since the human soul is causally and ontologically connected with the divine.

Conclusion

Proclus provides a comprehensive analysis of the daimonion of Socrates, explaining the operation of the daimonion consistently, through the theory of the *kairos*, while preserving the unique particularity of the instances of the appearances of daimonion (since the *kairos* is always related to the interaction between “universals” and “particulars” at a particular, specific moment). Proclus identifies the daimonion as the personal daimon of Socrates, a notion that had a long history within the Platonic tradition. Of the three key characteristics of the daimonion identified by Proclus, two (first, that Socrates heard a voice from the daimonion, and second, that the daimonion only offered apotreptic warnings rather than protreptic advice) are generally accepted by modern scholars. The third characteristic, that the daimonion of Socrates is the most “divine” type of daimon a human being can have, correlates with Proclus’s claim of Socrates’ assimilation to the divine and his consequent “receptivity.” Proclus’s interpretation of the daimonion of Socrates accords with Neoplatonic views of inspiration, possession, and divination, which were viewed as *suprarational* rather than as *irrational* states. According to Proclus, the daimonion, through its apotreptic admonitions, shows Socrates the *kairos*, the opportune or right moment, to engage in philosophical elenchus. Thus, the daimonion is always linked with the elenchus, with discursive reasoning or rationality; it fulfills the function of a protreptic toward philosophical and rational inquiry at the most effective time, just as the Delphic oracle also acted (in a broader sense) as a protreptic for Socrates in embarking upon his philosophical mission. The explanation for this is that rationality is precontained, in a causal sense, in suprarational states of inspiration. The daimonion provides Socrates with the ability to discern the *kairos*, the right moment, in which to engage in elenchus with specific interlocutors; this *kairos* is based on the “receptivity” of the potential

interlocutors. Moreover, Proclus persuasively suggests that Socrates *hears* the voice of his daimon because of his own essential perfection (which includes perfect “receptivity”) gained through his commitment to self-knowledge and his corresponding orientation toward the divine. Therefore, just as the daimonion provides Socrates with the *kairos*, the right moment to engage in philosophical elenchus, so Socrates acts as a daimon (by analogy) in engaging Alcibiades in elenchus at the right moment and thus allows him to purify *himself* through his own agency at the most effective moment through the elenctic method. In late Neoplatonism, Socrates is seen as the *μάντις* par excellence, a prophet of Apollo, who exemplifies the prophetic, purificatory, and healing characteristics of the god through his ability to hear the daimonion and to consequently lead others towards potential divinization through engaging in philosophical elenchus at the most appropriate and effective time in relation to the individual’s receptivity. In this sense, Apollo is considered in this case to “work through” the soul of Socrates: Socrates is seen to “manifest” the prophetic, purificatory, and healing powers of Apollo through his service and assimilation to the god, exemplified through his consistent devotion to and engagement with *both* divination *and* philosophy.

Proclus’s account of the daimonion of Socrates displays an all-encompassing comprehensiveness and consistency, involving a complete and thorough integration of Plato’s portrayal of Socrates’ character, including *both* his rational *and* divinatory commitments. Unlike modern accounts that tend to exhibit a sense of anxiety about the relationship between rationality and religious states of inspiration in Plato’s characterization of Socrates, Proclus’s exposition shows a subtle yet ingenious linking of reason and suprarational, divinatory states within a continuum that enhances the scope and potential of both. Rather than presenting Socrates as an arch-rationalist *or* as an inspired mystic, Proclus’s exposition shows Socrates as *both* the dialectician *and* the inspired mystic par excellence. In this sense, Proclus’s account presents one of the most internally coherent and consistent solutions offered for the vexed question of the possible relationship and connection(s) between Socrates’ rational and religious commitments.

CHAPTER 4

Socrates in the Neoplatonic Psychology of Hermias

Christina-Panagiota Manolea

Introduction

In this chapter I focus on the portrait of Socrates found in selected passages of Hermias's *in Phaedrum* commentary. Despite the fact that the work in question appears to comprise a series of lectures given by Syrianus, the head of the Neoplatonic School of Athens from 432 to 437 CE, the manuscript tradition nevertheless attributes the *in Phaedrum* to Syrianus's student Hermias of Alexandria, who studied in Athens alongside Proclus.¹ As we shall see, Hermias (or, rather, his master Syrianus) considered Socrates to be a unique human being with an important pedagogical mission to accomplish. The following passages concerning Socrates will be integrated into discussion of several complex psychological and metaphysical issues within Neoplatonism itself, showing how the late Neoplatonic tradition was able to reengage with Socrates as an authentic part of the Platonic project.²

Socrates' Divine Mission

The *in Phaedrum* opens with the following words: "Socrates has been sent down to the world of generation, in order to benefit the human race and the young people's souls."³ These opening words bear a distinct Neoplatonic flavor, as the phrase "has been sent down to the world of generation" alludes to the complex metaphysical

structure of the Neoplatonic universe and the process of generation that ensues from it.⁴ Furthermore, these words also signal the divine/providential mission of Socrates: to benefit humankind and, more specifically, to save the souls of the youth.⁵ Hermias clarifies this idea by focusing on the fact that Socrates benefited the young in a different way from the older, wiser, and more experienced σοφισταί, as the character and habits of the latter differed dramatically from those of his youthful interlocutors.⁶ We should also note that according to Hermias Socrates did not confine his attention to these two groups but stretched his hands toward everybody and urged them all toward philosophy (πᾶσι χεῖρας ὀρέγων καὶ ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν προτρεπόμενος). Interestingly, the expression χεῖρ' ὀρέγων is Homeric—we encounter it at *Il.* 15.371, where Nestor prays to Zeus,⁷ and also at *Il.* 24.506, where the supplicant, Priam, raises his hands toward his son's killer, Achilles, as a petition for his son's corpse.⁸ Also relevant is the use of the expression at *Od.* 9.527 where the notorious Cyclops Polyphemus addresses a formal prayer to his father, Poseidon, asking him to punish Odysseus.⁹ Finally, I should also mention the use of the expression at *Od.* 17.366, where Odysseus, dressed in rags, imitates a beggar by stretching out his hands.¹⁰ All these instances occur when some kind of *pleading* occurs. One may safely assume that the author was aware of these Homeric uses—after all, his knowledge of Homer was outstanding, and his general use of the Homeric tradition considerable¹¹—and so the choice of this expression lends dramatic vigor and religious vitality to the image of Socrates, who stretches his hands toward everybody as a plea in order to urge everybody toward philosophy. Commenting ad loc., Rangos rightly remarks that we are dealing with a religiously inspired view about Socrates' role in history,¹² and so we may conclude that the successful use of this traditional poetic expression in the philosopher's description of Socrates is nicely fitted to his uniquely providential role within the Neoplatonic project.

At this point, I should mention that Syrianus's disciple Proclus, undoubtedly influenced by his master, also identifies Socrates as a divine man of knowledge who has been sent to earth in order to benefit less perfect souls at *in Alc.* 32.1114.¹³ In this passage, Proclus stresses that Socrates' soul imitates divine providence and further notes that Alcibiades' soul was not only influenced by Socrates but improved by consorting with the philosopher.¹⁴

The Socratic Daimon

As the author of the *in Phaedrum* proceeds to the analysis of the dialogue, at 70.3–72.13 the famous daimon of Socrates is discussed.¹⁵ It was earlier stated in

the *in Phaedrum* that between gods and humans there exists a genus of daimons, which is responsible for all human acts, as every person has his own daimon.¹⁶ Hermias then brings in a number of clarifications regarding the things over which humans, due to the existence of daimons, do not have control. According to his analysis, humans are not in control of their nature, their dreams, or even their isolated individual actions. The terminology used for the daimon's power includes ἐπάρχειν (rule), κρατεῖν (dominate), κυβερνᾶν (govern), κατευθύνειν (direct), κηδεμονία (guardianship), ἔχειν (control), βουλή (will), ἐπιστασία (dominion), and προστασία (protection).

At 71.3–8 we read that some souls are sensitive to the daimon's domination (συναισθάνονται τῆς τοῦ δαίμονος ἐπιστασίας), while others bitterly accuse (καταμεμφόμενοι) the daimon.¹⁷ In the passage in question we notice the expression παίδων βρώσεις, alluding in the first instance to the myth of Er at the conclusion of the *Republic*, where the first soul to choose its destiny selected a life of tyranny—a life that it fails to examine properly, so that it misses παίδων αὐτοῦ βρώσεις. This soul blames “luck and daimones and anything rather than itself.” Hence, through Plato, the passage recalls the notorious Thyestean feast (Thyestes unknowingly ate his own children), and may also hint at the Titan Cronus, whose tyranny also involved the consumption of his own children. This reference, then, conjures up the world of mythology, and particularly Hesiod, recalling Plato's criticism of epic poetry, particularly at *Resp.* 378a.¹⁸ Here it seems the Neoplatonic philosopher only partially aligns himself with Plato's reservations regarding the poets who inadequately dealt with such theological matters.¹⁹

Returning to our passage, we read that the ones who bitterly accuse the daimon do not actually revert to him but are carried off by irrationality and are in every way oblivious of his protection in this world too. The fact that some revert to the daimon and others do not enables the former to feel the daimon and the latter to be deprived of the spirit's protection. Moreover, the ones who actually intuit the presence of the daimon are those who, following the advice in the myth of Er (*Rep.* 621a1–b1), have not drunk much of the water of oblivion and are consequently susceptible to the cosmic order. By contrast, those who do not feel the daimon cannot recognize this cosmic order and are thus incapable of awakening to the hand of providence. This is why the daimon resides in the human body as well as in the human spirit and soul. For Syrianus, it is by turning inward that the daimon guides individuals, and this reversion is accomplished with the aid of symbols and signs (διὰ τινων συμβόλων και σημείων).²⁰

In this context the portrait of Socrates receives a further dimension. Hermias brings in a number of examples of how the daimon, by using symbols and signs,

actually intervenes in the everyday life of those who live correctly. A ferret running, a garment caught, a stone falling, a voice heard, and even thunder are signs that prevent people from engaging in certain acts.²¹ We are undoubtedly dealing with a passage that alludes to theurgy as well as to everyday religious practices and beliefs of the fifth century CE. Correspondingly, in the course of the challenging analysis of the Socratic daimon, Hermias poses (and then answers) the following question: Why did the daimon in Socrates' soul clearly prevent him from certain acts but never actually encourage him to do anything? The answer is provided in an elaborate passage in which the myth of the Platonic charioteer plays a key role. According to Hermias,²² just as in everyday life some horses are in need of a whip because they are slow or require a bridle because they are not obedient, so some people are good at sharing (εὐμετάδοτοι) and, due to their eagerness, are willing to benefit others (ὕπὸ προθυμίας εὖ ποιεῖν βουλόμενοι). Accordingly, these people are keen to try anything and readily desire to engage with anybody; Socrates was one of these people, and this is why he was in need of his daimon, that is, to restrain him from acting on account of his eagerness. Hermias also stresses that there exist people who are bad at sharing (δυσμετάδοτοι) and who are in further need of being spurred into action. So, with this simile, strongly reminiscent of the Platonic charioteer myth, deriving from the field of psychology, the philosopher explains why the daimon of Socrates actually prevented him from doing certain acts. He was already naturally impelled to act and thus only needed to be deterred, like an impetuous, but good, horse that needs some restraint.²³

Hermias then asks why the daimon never in fact stimulated Socrates to do anything. His answer is that the daimon did not want to render Socrates irrational (ἄλογον) like one who is moved by external force (ἐτεροκίνητον) and does nothing on his own initiative. Had the daimon overdone it, Socrates' soul would not have been exercising self-motion. Of course, this would have been inconsistent with the fact that Socrates was sent down to earth in order to benefit young people's souls; for a soul incapable of acting for itself cannot benefit anyone.

The Socratic Contemplation of the Divine

Hermias records more on Socrates in a long passage dealing with various matters of Neoplatonic metaphysics and psychology.²⁴ In this passage Hermias directs the reader's attention to the idea that the gods are characterized by three elements: οὐσία (essence), δύναμις (power), and ἐνέργεια (activity). The ascent of the

human soul to the divine principles is not an easy task, and it is important not to dismiss any of the above elements. In practice, though, we notice that there are three cases. Hermias gives three parallel examples of men following a different route: the first type of person spends his time contemplating (τῇ θεωρίᾳ σχολάζων). The second type has the potential to contemplate the divine but distances himself from it and deals with politics (περὶ πολιτείαν διατρίβων). The third, who has made the same choice (i.e., dealing with politics), practices politics in a perverted and wicked way (διαστρόφως καὶ πανούργως). It goes without saying that politics includes rhetoric (in both ancient and modern times), and by this negative attitude toward politics Syrianus's lecture notes once more prove to be in tune with the Socrates of the *Gorgias* or the *Republic*.

Hermias does not hesitate to declare that both the second and third exemplars are mistaken, but the third is the most grievous. The man who represents the first type, that is, Socrates, does not face any difficulties in contemplating the divine. Nevertheless, this sort of perfection is only depicted in his contemplative moments, as opposed to those scenes in which Socrates practices politics. When Socrates deals with public affairs (politics), depicted as Hermias suggests in his speech on love, Socrates does indeed represent the person traveling the second path of ascent. Socrates' eminent case is also compared to that of Lysias, who was assuredly inferior to Socrates and represents the third category of men (the perverted and wicked ones), who face enormous difficulties in aligning their souls toward Neoplatonic ascent.

The "Contaminated" Socrates

In his analysis of contamination and purification Hermias maintains that such actions apply to the body, the irrational soul, the rational soul, and, finally, the intellect. Telestic madness cures the contamination of the spirit, while moral philosophy and divine intervention purify the irrational soul, which is full of irrational wishes and various forms of anger. Finally, philosophy in general (like divine intervention) purifies the rational soul and leads it to truth.²⁵ The curative power of telestic madness is not an idea original to the Neoplatonic philosopher but derives from *Phaedr.* 244b–245b, where madness is classified into three types, the second one explicitly dealing with the ability to relieve—through purification and rites—great maladies and sufferings that have been inflicted upon particular families due to various ancient causes of divine anger. Plato's phrasing is "ὅθεν δὴ καθαρυῶν καὶ τελετῶν τυχοῦσα," and such terminology unpacks the possible reason why the

Neoplatonic philosopher considers the second type of madness to be telestic madness, speaking of it as the cure for the contaminated spirit.²⁶

Hermias then considers a rather interesting analogy.²⁷ He compares Socrates to Homer and Stesichorus and concludes that the philosopher is superior to both poets, as his soul was contaminated by his own speech, but, unlike the two poets, he was immediately cured and so was turned not to material but rather to intelligible beauty. Homer is placed first in the rank of the polluted ones, as he was not only contaminated but suffered all kinds of damage as well, since his own daimonion was further contaminated by his soul. In this analysis of Homer, Hermias once again follows Plato's *Republic* (as well as other texts), where Plato seems to have similarly disparaged Homer. Stesichorus, in turn, is placed second in the rank of contaminated persons, as he was perverted but understood the damage and was consequently cured. Socrates, according to Hermias, polluted his soul during his first speech on love but suffered no damage, as he admitted his fault and offered a new speech oriented toward divine, intelligible beauty, and was, accordingly, purified.²⁸

Finally, Hermias holds that there exist doctors who cure diseases with medicines that are similar to the illness they want to heal, and as a consequence their remedies are not simple but dependent on the diseased part of the body.²⁹ This is a clear reference to homoeopathy. The argument goes as follows: as the doctor using homoeopathy cures the patient, so Socrates, who had committed a fault and had been contaminated by uttering the wrong words, was cured by using the same procedure, that is, by delivering a second speech on love, the famous *Palinode*.

The last question Hermias poses is how Socrates was able to be contaminated by uttering certain words, despite the fact that throughout the entire dialogue he always had in mind the benefit of the young Phaedrus and, thus, composed his speeches sensibly. For Syrianus and his pupil it is a fact that Lysias had been contaminated by his speech on the nonlover and his parallel lifestyle, but how did it come about that Socrates himself was contaminated by a speech? The answer Hermias gives is the following: Socrates was contaminated because he gave himself over to inferior activities in speaking against Love (even if against unrestrained or irrational love) but was nevertheless willing to be cured.³⁰

We notice that in this analysis Hermias is as Platonic as ever, but he is also willing to stress the importance of purification and rites not only in the philosopher's life but in everyday life as well. Purification was a common practice from early Greek religion.³¹ In the fifth century CE, when the Neoplatonic School of Athens flourished, rites of all kinds (including theurgical practices) were an everyday occurrence. So Hermias' attitude toward such a practice is consistent with his own theurgical practices as well as with his contemporary culture.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented selected psychological and metaphysical passages from the *in Phaedrum* where Socrates plays a key role. I have tried to show that in these passages Socrates' unique characteristics are presented within a Neoplatonic framework. It is obvious that Socrates, as a teacher and educator, was not a figure to be neglected. His presence on earth was in fact the consequence of a divine mission: he was sent down to the world of generation in order to benefit human souls. His relation to his students had a decisive and undoubtedly positive influence on their struggle to cultivate their souls as well as assisting them in their attempt to contemplate the divine cosmic soul. Furthermore, Socrates' own daimon rendered him unique and assisted his divine mission. This portrait that has come to us through a text that bears Hermias's name nonetheless decisively helps recover Syrianus's own attitude toward Socrates. A teacher who evidently cherished his students, and of whom Proclus speaks highly on numerous occasions, was himself inspired by Socrates as an educator with a divine mission. Syrianus's lectures on the *Phaedrus* not only express the Neoplatonist's intricate views on complicated metaphysical and theological issues but also reflect his pedagogical desire to guide his own students toward true philosophy through his portrait of Socrates.

CHAPTER 5

The Character of Socrates and the Good of Dialogue Form: Neoplatonic Hermeneutics

Danielle A. Layne

Introduction

The answer to the question “Who is Socrates for the Neoplatonists?” must begin with a detailed understanding of how the Neoplatonists interpreted the dialogues of Plato and the characters presented in them. Primarily, it requires us to revisit a question that haunts almost all secondary literature on Plato: Why dialogue form? Why the use of characters, for example Socrates and Timaeus, and not one’s own authoritative voice? Further, why the need for extensive preludes to the main subject of the dialogue, the elaborate references to settings like the public market and the gymnasium, or the seemingly subtle plots either within a dialogue or sometimes even running the gamut of several dialogues (e.g., Socrates’ relationship with Alcibiades)? In short, why did Plato use a literary medium to convey his philosophy? Was the choice of dialogue form and the use of characters like Socrates arbitrary and superfluous, mere window dressing to the arguments and intents of the author, a charming addition that can be passed over or ignored? If we concede that the dialogue form is superfluous for the Neoplatonists, then it may be easier to understand the alleged loss of the Socratic element in their understanding of Plato. A dismissal of the importance of such literary devices as character might help explain their supposed lack of concern for one specific personage like Socrates.

Yet, as many realize, this is a far cry from the Neoplatonic response to Plato’s

use of dialogue form. Rather, the later Platonic tradition often heralded the choice of dialogue form and, correspondingly, the Neoplatonists approached the preludes, characters, settings and plots *allegorically*, analyzing and unpacking these various elements for their philosophical meaning and intent. To be sure, in light of their hermeneutical strategies, which preserve, through an intricate and methodical form of allegorical interpretation, the integrity of the dramatic devices like character, the Neoplatonists often avoided conflating the personality of Socrates with Plato. Rather they always regarded Socrates as a distinct personality and thinker whose play with other characters, such as Timaeus and Alcibiades, contributes to the meaning of the text(s) as a whole.¹ For commentators like Syrianus, Hermias, Proclus, Olympiodorus, and Damascius as well as the anonymous author of the *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*, Plato's voice was not solely identifiable with Socrates (or Timaeus for that matter) but could only be gleaned by looking to the dialogue as a whole, as opposed to dissecting or extracting the arguments of any one character in the text. Of course, this approach is in tune with recent secondary literature that has moved away from analytical (and often developmental) trends in Platonic studies,² as the late Platonic commentators, like many contemporary commentators, regarded the literary form as part and parcel of observing what cannot simply be argued or put into a rational discourse. Furthermore, unlike contemporary trends that assume that Plato's thought develops and, in so doing, turns away from the Socratic,³ the proponents of the late commentary tradition believed that Plato's work should be read as a unit, which while teaming with different voices is not punctuated with different ends or goals. Ultimately the so-called early works as well as the late, regardless of their apparent differences, all fit together in a seamless tapestry of ideas, and thus at no time does Plato "mature" and, as such, disregard the value of Socrates and his way of life. Instead, Plato uses a variety of characters and an assortment of styles to ensure that all are challenged, from the novice to the veteran, to embrace the level of philosophical discourse appropriate to them.

In what follows I shall refer constantly to the hermeneutics of the late Neoplatonist Proclus while additionally utilizing the writings of other Platonic commentators when clarification on a point is needed. This will highlight how the use of character in Plato's dialogues complement and, in many ways, support the *aim* and overall meaning of the dialogue as a whole. Throughout this project the reader will be invited to consider the late antique rendering of Socrates, and how this tradition of Platonism heralded the vitality and importance of the *character* of Socrates.⁴ What becomes remarkable in this analysis is how, for thinkers like Proclus, the dialogue form, and the corresponding use of characters, is necessary for achieving

what is deemed “the Good” of the text. To put it otherwise, this tradition believed that the dialogues were intended to initiate a way of life, possessing in themselves a transformative or purgative power meant to restore health to the human soul. Nonetheless, for this “Good” of the text to emerge, Proclus will insist that the reader of the dialogue must engage with and correctly understand the structure of the dialogue, which is to say the characters and style of the dialogue as well as the overt arguments. Only through this way of approaching the text and, by extension, Socrates, can Plato’s dialogues have the potential to assist, as Proclus says, in the “salvation” of all individuals “who now live” and also “those to come hereafter.”⁵

The Text as a Cosmos and the Doctrine of Cyclical Creativity

To begin, we should start with recognizing the fact that for the late commentator tradition Plato’s dialogues are analogous to the living cosmos as a whole. Proclus lucidly clarifies the relationship between a well-formed dialogue and the cosmos while discussing his interpretation of the *Alcibiades I*: “Admittedly, as we have said elsewhere about the dialogues, each [part of the dialogue] must possess what the whole cosmos possesses; and an analogous part must be assigned therein to the Good (τῷ ἀγαθῷ), part to the Intellect (τῷ νοῷ), part to the Soul (τῇ ψυχῇ), part to the Form (τῷ εἶδει) and part to the underlying Nature itself (αὐτῇ τῇ ὑποκειμένη φύσει)” (Proclus, *in Alc.* 10.5–7, tr. O’Neill).⁶ In sum, part of every dialogue reflects the hierarchal structure of the cosmos: (1) Matter, (2) Form, (3) Soul, (4) Intellect, and (5) the Good. By possessing each one of these “parts” Proclus recognizes that every well-formed dialogue is more than simply text and is, as Coulter deemed it, a “literary microcosm” that is itself a living organic entity.⁷ Of course, the idea that both the cosmos at large and a Platonic dialogue are living entities may seem puzzling for contemporary readers who are more accustomed to viewing the cosmos as lifeless matter or the text as simply words on a page. Yet this characterization of both the cosmos and a dialogue with living entities can help to highlight the radical differences between contemporary hermeneutics and the Platonic commentators.

In contrast to contemporary hermeneutical procedures, the Neoplatonists began with the premise that one should read or approach a dialogue in the same way one “reads” or engages a living being.⁸ Correspondingly, since we never reduce knowledge of any living thing to one of its parts, so too must an interpretation of a dialogue require efforts surpassing the simple analysis of the propositions

advanced within the text. The propositions or “arguments” of a dialogue reflect only one of its parts, and thus an interpretation of a Platonic dialogue that exclusively focuses on analyzing the “logic” of Socrates’ refutations or the conclusions of Parmenides’ dialectic would fail to understand the dialogue as an integrated whole. For Proclus, to understand a Platonic dialogue one must examine and understand all its various parts, recognizing their relation and their contribution to the whole. Overall, one’s hermeneutics should echo one’s investigation into reality. When one studies the cosmos one should realize that even the lowest reality, Matter, assists the investigator in understanding the nature of the cosmos as a dynamic whole. Analogously, when we read a dialogue an understanding of the characters and its corresponding style, that is, its *material* and *formal* preconditions, assists readers in their approach to its overall meaning (the Intellect) and intent (the Good). In Proclus’s commentary on the *Alcibiades I*, the Neoplatonist discusses each of these parts of the dialogue, describing the various analogues to the cosmos. As Proclus writes,

Let it then be stated that in this work proportionate (ἀναλογεῖν) to the Good (τῷ ἀγαθῷ) is conformity to the divine through care of ourselves (τῆς ἐαυτῶν ἐπιμελείας), to the Intellect (τῷ νῷ) the knowledge of ourselves, to the Soul (τῇ ψυχῇ) the wealth of demonstration (τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἀποδείξεων) leading to this conclusion, and practically the whole syllogistic part of the dialogue (πᾶν ὡς εἰπεῖν τὸ συλλογιστικὸν τοῦ διαλόγου); for the Form (τῷ εἶδει) there remains the style of diction and the interweaving figures of speech, and of the literary forms, and what else belongs to stylistic ability (ὁ χαρακτήρ τῆς λέξεως καὶ τῶν σχημάτων καὶ τῶν ιδεῶν ἢ πλοκή καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τῆς λεκτικῆς ἐστὶ δυνάμεως); and for the matter (τῇ ὕλῃ) the persons and the time and what is called by some the plot (τὰ πρόσωπα καὶ ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἡ καλουμένη παρά τισιν ὑπόθεσις). (Proclus, *in Alc.* 10.6–15, tr. O’Neill)

Here, we should simply note that while discussing the Soul of the text, Proclus indeed refers to the arguments and the overt themes of Socrates’ conversation with Alcibiades, that is, “the wealth of demonstrations,” but the analogue to Form and Matter is assigned to the elements that make Plato’s work a piece of literature. Specifically, the Form is the *style* of the dialogue, while the Matter of the dialogue corresponds to Plato’s use of *preludes*, *characters*, and *settings*.

To better understand this approach to Plato’s dialogues it is useful to remember that while the Platonic dialogue is a cosmos or living being itself, it is also a

product of the cosmos, which, like all effects of creation, follows Proclus's system of causality and the doctrine of cyclical creativity first advanced by Plotinus in the *Enneads*.⁹ According to Proclus all products of creation remain (μονή) and proceed from (πρόοδος) their cause, but they should also, and most importantly for understanding Proclus's hermeneutics, return (ἐπιστροφή) or revert upon their cause.¹⁰ This process of reversion entails that the effect has gained determination in reuniting or reflecting upon its cause, and as a consequence the dialogue becomes a concrete, determinate being when it returns or reflects upon its proximate cause, that is, Plato's intent as author. As we shall soon see, this doctrine of cyclical creativity will have a dramatic impact on how we understand the interconnected relations between the Intellect of the dialogue and the various other parts of the dialogue, such as Matter and Form, but for now it seems prudent to note that all created things also have the potential to return to the causes of their causes. In the case of the dialogue this return may not simply be toward its proximate cause, Plato's intent as author, but ultimately may possess, as the whole of the cosmos possesses, the potential to "return" to its primary cause, the Good itself.¹¹ This return is ultimately the final cause or *telos* of the dialogue for the Neoplatonists. The anonymous author of the *Prolegomena* further clarifies how the parts of a dialogue also correspond to the various underlying causes of the universe, culminating with the value of the final cause.¹²

There is also another way to show the constituents of the universe analogous (ἀναλογουσι) to the elements of the dialogue since there are six kinds of causes acting on everything in creation: the material (ὕλικοῦ), the formal (εἰδικοῦ), the efficient (ποιητικοῦ), the final (τελικοῦ), the exemplary (παραδειγματικοῦ) and the instrumental (ὀργανικοῦ) cause, the analogues of the material cause are the characters and the time and the place (τὰ πρόσωπα καὶ ὁ χρόνος καὶ ὁ τόπος), of the formal cause the style (ὁ χαρακτήρ), of the efficient cause the soul (ἡ ψυχή), of the instrumental cause the arguments (αἱ ἀποδείξεις), of the exemplary cause the problems (τὰ προβλήματα), of the final cause the good (τὸ ἀγαθόν) of the dialogue. (Anon., *Proleg.* 17.33–39, tr. Westerink)

Table 1 summarizes the various analogues between the text and the cosmos.

Overall, for the Neoplatonists, it could be said that Plato chose dialogue form because it best resembles the creative work of the Demiurge which (in)forms Matter for the sake of some aim, and as a consequence it creates a living being that is complex but integrated in all its parts. Due to this, a well-formed dialogue does

Table 1. The analogues of the dialogue and the cosmos

| <i>Parts of the cosmos</i> | <i>Causes of the cosmos</i> | <i>The parts of the dialogue</i> |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Matter | Material cause | Characters, setting (time and place of action), preludes |
| Form/Nature ¹ | Formal cause | The style (rich or lean, expository or investigatory) |
| Soul | Efficient and instrumental cause ² | The overt arguments |
| Intellect | Exemplary cause | The overall problem/theme or aim/ <i>skopos</i> |
| The Good | Final cause | The realization of the problem or <i>skopos</i> in the reader ³ |

1. In Proclus's hermeneutics the Form of the dialogue is often conflated with the Nature of the dialogue. For the anonymous author the Nature of a dialogue is the combination of the Matter and Form of the cosmos/dialogue and is identified with the manner of discussion in the dialogues, i.e., it is expository or investigatory whereas the Form is the style of the dialogue, namely, rich or lean, physical or theological.

2. In his outline of the parts of the cosmos and the causes of the cosmos, the anonymous author does not clearly follow his schema. For example, when he describes the parts of the cosmos he associates Soul with the arguments of the text. This stands in contrast to his discussion of the causes of the dialogue where he separates the Soul from the arguments and assigns the former the role of efficient cause and the arguments the role of instrumental cause. Cf. Anon. *Proleg.* 16.7–17.25 and 17.32–38. Ultimately, in the various other passages, the arguments are the Soul of the text and so I have grouped these two causes together. Yet, to be sure, I am not conflating the implications of these two causes, as the arguments are what cause movement (efficient cause) in the text but are also “the means by which” (instrumental cause) the problem of the text(s) is made manifest.

3. This identification will be argued for in some detail near the end of this chapter.

not simply re-present the cosmos, merely copy the form of the cosmos, and as such simply reflect, as if in a mirror, a faded image of reality, but is itself a dynamic living organism that, through Intellect, tends toward the Good.¹³ Because of this, every part of the dialogue has a substantial part to play in determining the meaning and intent of the text and, as a result, the use of characters such as Socrates, one of the necessary material causes of the dialogue, can obviously at no time be ignored or neglected.

The Matter, Form, and Soul of the Dialogue: The Defense of Character

Beginning now with a defense of the material causes of Plato's dialogues, for example characters and setting, Proclus often expends considerable effort discussing how every character contributes to the meaning of a text as a whole, and so Proclus never presents any character as simply Plato's "mouthpiece." Rather, as Van den Berg notes in his work on Proclus's *Commentary on Plato's Cratylus*, "Such an approach would have been foreign to Proclus' conviction that all elements of the dialogue contribute to a single aim."¹⁴ Looking to the *Cratylus*, Van den Berg argues that for Proclus the position of both Hermogenes, who advances the idea that names are only by convention, and Cratylus, who contrastingly believes that names are natural, are not mutually exclusive. One need not, as we are often encouraged to do in contemporary commentaries, pick a side, so to speak. Rather, as Van den Berg writes, "the positions [of Hermogenes and Cratylus] complement each other," as their opposition may be resolved with the help of the third character in the dialogue, Socrates, who can come in and act as a "judge or umpire."¹⁵ Presenting Socrates as mediator ultimately advances a position that discovers the value of both Hermogenes' and Cratylus's positions, and for Proclus such an understanding of Socrates' role allows the text as a whole to manifest its unity, a uni-form uni-verse, rather than a competing swarm of difference and multiplicity. Markedly, then, for Proclus, without such an acknowledgment of the material causes, the explicit arguments on language, what is deemed the Soul (or efficient cause) of the *Cratylus* would lose any connection to its own cause, the Intellect or aim of the text. Notably, the importance of the connection between the materials of the dialogue and the Soul or arguments of the dialogue already explains why Socrates' views and arguments can change from one dialogue to another. This, for Proclus, is not a sign of his inconsistency but rather a sign of Plato's mindfulness of the unity and cohesiveness of characters and contexts in each dialogue. Who Socrates' interlocutors are and where they currently stand in their philosophical development dramatically alters the "materials" of the text and accordingly alters the dialogue and its intent as a whole. Moreover, these materials also modify the Form or style of the methods utilized by the characters in the dialogue itself.¹⁶ To offer a concrete example of the relationship between the arguments/Soul, style/Form, and characters/Matter of the dialogue, one need only think of whether a desk is made of wood or iron and how that difference in material not only determines the nature of the end product but also alters how the materials are to be joined. With wood you may use a hammer, with iron the

materials require soldering. Correspondingly, Proclus would support those contemporary interpretations of Socrates which argue that the son of Sophroniscus amends his speech both in style and in content to fit his audience. For example, before sophists Socrates will be more combative while with students or friends he gently questions. Furthermore, he may appear to be saying radically different things in each dialogue, but just as two different builders of a table, one with a hammer and one with a blowtorch, appear to be worlds apart, at the end of the day the apparently different arguments should lead to the same end, as a builder of tables, regardless of his different methods, always builds a table. As Proclus demands, Socrates is not inconsistent or contradictory, because:

Socrates embraces all the forms of knowledge within himself, but uses now one now another, adjusting his own activity to the requirements of the recipients; one he elevates through the science of love, another he stirs up through the art of elicitation to recollection of the eternal notions of the soul, and a third he brings round by the path of dialectic to the consideration of reality. He unites different individuals to different objects, some to essential beauty, others to the very first wisdom, and others to the Good. (Proclus, *in Alc.* 28.10–18, tr. O'Neill)

In short, Socrates' method and corresponding arguments have everything to do with his interlocutors, the material of the dialogue, and thus he can advance seemingly opposing views and use a wide variety of methods, arguments and styles, just so long as the Matter or characters of each dialogue are dissimilar or at different points of their education.

Alongside the characters of a dialogue, the "time" of the dialogue is also of the utmost importance for determining the Matter of the text, as the dramatic date often influences the interpretation of the overall meaning of the dialogue. To give a concrete example, for Proclus the fact that the *Parmenides* actually narrates four different conversations at four different times, beginning with Cephalus's narration to "no definitive person" and ending with the "dialogue proper" between Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, helps Proclus discuss how each setting and discussion, not just the main conversation, has a proper analogue to reality. Interestingly enough, Cephalus's narration to an undefined audience, a feature of many Platonic dialogues from early to late, shows the "procession of Forms into sense-objects," where, prior to the reception of Form, Matter is "indeterminate, unknown and formless" and thus "like" the indeterminate audience to which the narration is directed.¹⁷ The author of the *Prolegomena* expands upon this issue,

explaining how this form of narration imitates the degrees of reality in the cosmos.

We find, then, that Plato makes the conversation take place either by the mouth of the personages themselves, when, for example he introduces Socrates or somebody else talking directly; or through other people who are among the audience of the debaters, when he represents somebody else as reporting the things he heard Socrates say; or again through other people who have been told by those who heard Socrates himself; or finally, through others who heard it from those second-hand hearers; the succession of hearers goes as far as this, but no farther. In this respect, too, we can see Plato imitating the order of the universe, which goes no further than the third degree. (Anon., *Proleg.* 20.10–15, tr. Westerink)

Here, we see that even Plato's strange bent for "hearsay" narrations, sometimes three times removed from the original conversants, is justified for the later Platonic tradition, as such narrations merely reflect the various grades of reality from the indefinite sensible world to the height of intelligibility and immediacy in firsthand, original narration.¹⁸

Moving away from the Matter and turning toward the Form of the dialogue, we find that, in many senses, we already touched on its relevance when we were discussing the variety of Socrates' methods. In short, the Form of the dialogue has much to do with *how* the characters in the dialogue are speaking. The Form is the *style* of the dialogue, for example whether it is "instructive" (ὁφηγηματικός), normally advanced in longer narrative speeches like the *Timaeus*, "investigatory" (ζητητικός), advanced in a question-and-answer process like the Socratic elenchus, or the "mixed" approach that combines various styles. Moreover, this style also has much to do with the *character* of the dialogue; whether it is (1) inspirational or "rich" like the *Phaedrus*, (2) "lean"/unadorned like the *Parmenides*, or, once again, (3) "mixed" and as such Socratic, insofar as it is geared toward "discourse appropriate to median forms of life."¹⁹ The author of the *Prolegomena* discusses the issue of Plato's various styles and further expands upon Proclus's distinction, as this author additionally argues that Plato sometimes uses more than one style even within dialogues. After distinguishing between powerful (ἡ ἀδρὸς) styles used in more theological texts and plain (ἡ ἰσχνὸς) styles in other dialogues, the author comments on the *Gorgias* and argues that it is both an intermediate between the powerful and the plain style as well as mixed. In other words, it uses both powerful and plain styles in the same dialogue at different times. Our author

writes: "There is a juxtaposition [of styles] when a part of the dialogue shows the plain type and a part of it the powerful, as is the case in the *Gorgias*, where the part preceding the myth is in the plain and the myth itself in the powerful style" (Anon., *Proleg.* 17.7–11, tr. Westerink). For this commentator, Plato uses the powerful type of style in the more inspired/inspiring parts of the *Gorgias*, as these sections are intended to point to the divine, while Plato uses the plain style in more logical areas of the text. Overall the *Gorgias* is an example of both a mixed and an intermediate style, which while containing both kinds of styles (powerful and plain), also balances or tempers the two.²⁰ For this author, this intermediate and mixed medium is used most often in Plato's ethical dialogues, as "they treat of virtue," and since virtue is the mean, the intermediate form most properly reflects the end or aim of such dialogues.²¹

As should be clear by now, for the late Neoplatonic commentators one should avoid the type of radical analytic approach that divorces the arguments of the dialogues from their literary features, as these devices constitute the Form and Matter of a living being. Rather poignantly, Proclus notes in his commentary on the *Alcibiades I* that among his own predecessors and contemporaries there was and is a propensity to overlook the formal and material causes of Plato's dialogues in favor of the Soul of the dialogues, the overt arguments.²² Proclus scorns those who simply "bypass the various forms of expression," for example the style, setting, and characters.²³ For him, one should never simply "extract" the arguments from Plato's dialogues without bearing in mind who the speakers are, when they are speaking, and even how they are speaking.²⁴

Nevertheless, Proclus is not arguing for the dominance of literary readings over analytical readings, the valorizing of the Matter or Form of the dialogue over the actual arguments in the dialogue. This type of exegesis, he carefully recognizes, would lead to all sorts of haphazard interpretations, which clearly would not link up or relate to the subjects under discussion, allowing, therein, for interpretations of characters and settings that are disconnected or not like the arguments. Rather, Proclus demands that the Matter and Form of the dialogue, like Matter and Form in the cosmos, are somehow caused by the Soul of the dialogue (the topics of discussion/overt arguments) and as such are also like their cause insofar as the dialogues and their structure mirror Proclus's metaphysics. As the Soul is the cause of Form and Matter in the cosmos, so too are the arguments the cause of the style, characters, and actions in the dialogue. Remarkably, Proclus's metaphysics continues to help us understand his defense of dialogue form and allegorical interpretation insofar as Proclus demands that "every producing cause brings into existence things like to itself before the unlike,"²⁵ and thus by analogy we can see

how for Proclus the Form and Matter of the dialogue must also be most like their proximate and productive cause, the Soul or arguments overtly advanced in the dialogue. In other words, Proclus's theory of causation, when applied to his hermeneutics of Plato's dialogues, seems to support the idea that the literary style and use of characters is in fact complementary to the presentation of certain philosophical arguments and problems. For Proclus certain arguments produce or cause certain styles of speaking and accordingly influence the actions and behavior of the characters in Plato's dialogues, therein explaining why for Proclus some philosophical arguments lead to more "Socratic" or investigatory dialogues, some to more mythical or symbolic dialogues, and finally some to more expository dialogues like the *Timaeus* and the *Parmenides*.²⁶ Clearly, then, for this tradition of Platonism the literary elements of the dialogue could not "ironically" advance different positions from the arguments explicitly held in the text (as some Straussians would have us believe); instead, the literary elements complement or somehow resemble the explicit arguments of the dialogue. Put otherwise, the discussion of justice and the corresponding refutation of Alcibiades in the *Alcibiades I* befit the style/Form of the dialogue as well as the characters/Matter in the dialogue.

Before moving on to an explicit discussion of the Intellect of the dialogue and its influence over the Soul, Form, and Matter of the text we should once again stress the value of Plato's use of character for the late Platonic tradition. In agreement with Proclus, Olympiodorus and the author of the *Prolegomena* argue that Plato's use of character substantiates its resemblance to the cosmos as the noblest of living things. "As [Plato] says in the *Phaedrus*, 'A literary composition must resemble a living thing.' Consequently, the best constructed composition must resemble the noblest of living things. And the noblest living thing is the cosmos. Accordingly, just as the cosmos is a meadow full of all kinds of living things, so, too, a literary composition must be full of characters of every description" (Olympiodorus, in *Alc.* 56.14–18). Here we see that Olympiodorus emphasizes that the cosmos has a plurality of parts and, by extension, dialogues too must use various characters. Similarly, the author of the *Prolegomena* defends Plato's choice of dialogue form by claiming that this medium, unlike a treatise, portrays the life or vital nature of philosophy, and in this way can more easily compel a reader to the philosophical way of life. For this author, the living character of Plato's work arises from the fact that dialogue form fosters the appearance of a manifold variety of characters. "He chose it, we say, because the dialogue is a kind of cosmos. For in the same way as a dialogue has different personages each speaking in character so does the universe comprise existences of various natures expressing themselves in various ways; for the utterance of each is according to its

nature. It was in imitation, then, of God's creation, the cosmos, that he did this. Either this is the reason, or it is that the cosmos is a kind of dialogue" (Anon., *Proleg.* 15.1–5, tr. Westerink).²⁷ The author further heralds Plato's use of character as he argues that Plato recognized that in order to reach people he could not present philosophy and philosophical ideas divorced from their connection to real people and their lives; discussing justice in the abstract would not compel anyone to be just. In addition, the author argues that dialogue form and the use of character highlight the virtue and positive results of dialectical discussion and, concomitantly, the value of the living dialogue over the treatise.²⁸ In sum, for the late Platonic tradition the "literary devices" of Plato's dialogues are not mere window dressing; for without the material like the setting and time, but most especially the characters, "there can be no dialogue."²⁹

The Intellect and Good of the Dialogue

Recalling now that the Intellect of the dialogue corresponds to the dialogue's overall meaning, which is more than the overt arguments of the dialogue appearing on the surface, we shall see how Proclus's allegorical interpretation finds little room for vague abstractions. In direct contrast to such ambiguous readings of the dialogues (e.g., contemporary methods that twist the dialogues to mean anything they like), in Proclus's method one must understand that there is one concrete idea or a clear aim, what he often deems the σκοπός, of each dialogue.³⁰ To be sure, this aim of the dialogue is to be discovered in *both* the figurative/dramatic features and the literal/logical arguments. In short, the *skopos* is the Intellect of the dialogue that unifies all the various parts of the dialogue: for example, Soul, Form, and Matter. The author of the *Prolegomena* clarifies this by distinguishing the Soul, the arguments that can be divided into different sections and propositions, from the Intellect, which "is indivisible and thought of as the center of the circle," around which all the other parts of the text circulate.³¹

For example, for Proclus the *skopos* of the *Parmenides*, the "that toward which" all of the various parts, from the overt arguments to the various characters and settings, incline, is a complete and perfect understanding of the divine and Being. This is the Intellect of the text, which is more than the Soul, or explicit arguments of the text. The Intellect of the dialogue is more analogous to the unity of the text, a unity that is both the sum of its parts, the marriage of dramatic features and arguments, and also more than its parts. In other words, the overall meaning of the text is something that cannot be reduced or found in any one part

of the text but is only understood by contemplating the whole, attuning oneself to “that toward which” all the various parts of the text *aim*.³² Returning to Proclus’s understanding of the *Cratylus*, a dialogue now most often associated with Plato’s attempt at linguistic theory, Proclus, by contrast, regards the dialogue as a unity that has one clear intent far surpassing a mere discussion of Plato’s theory of language. Proclus believes that all the various parts of the text focus on demonstrating “the generative activity and assimilative power of souls at the lowest level of reality.” As Van den Berg explicates: “[Proclus] assumes that Plato’s *aim* [*skopos*] with the *Cratylus* is to make us discover something about ourselves, about certain powers and activities of our souls by studying the issue of the correctness of names. Our ability to coin correct names reveals the generative activity and assimilative power of the human soul.”³³ Van den Berg notes that Proclus’s holistic interpretation of this dialogue shows that this text and its arguments are not just about language; rather, the *Cratylus* is a psychagogic dialogue insofar as it informs the reader about what it means to be human, explicating and showcasing through its arguments and characters the powers or abilities the human being possesses. In the context of this dialogue, our ability to “coin correct names” evidences our connection to the divine, a connection that can be made actual through our intellectual and creative powers evidenced in Socrates’ speech. In short, for Proclus every part of the dialogue from the arguments to the literary features supports this overall aim (*skopos*).³⁴

For Proclus, even seemingly entertaining or “charming” aspects of the dialogues, like Plato’s famous preludes or prologues, contribute to the overall aim/Intellect of the dialogue.³⁵ For Proclus, the preludes should not at all be ignored or overlooked, and thus while explicitly discussing the importance of allegorically reading the preludes, Proclus argues that only when one first establishes the *skopos* of the dialogue can one see how “the details of the prologue prefigure them.”³⁶ In the *Parmenides* commentary Proclus starts with explication of the *skopos* of the dialogue and then analyzes how the opening conversations with their corresponding plot, style, and characters harmonize with this aim.³⁷ For Proclus, the characters, setting, and style of this dialogue all point to “the discovery of the divine,” while the prelude similarly expresses the connection of even the lowest levels of reality to the highest and as such cannot be dismissed as a simple artistic addition.³⁸ Correspondingly, in his *Alcibiades* commentary Proclus concludes that Plato’s preludes would not have been written “for the sake of dramatic charm,” as “this manner of composition is far beneath the exalted mind of the philosopher.”³⁹ Nor does Proclus think that they are merely historical narratives, as such accuracy would neither be possible nor even desirable.⁴⁰ Instead, “these circumstances

depend on the general purpose of the dialogues: on the one hand the *subject matter* in fact or word is adapted to the *immediate aim*, while on the other hand what is wanting to the completion of the topic under discussion is supplied; but all together, *as in an initiation* (τελετή), [the preludes] have reference to *the overall achievement* of the objects of enquiry” (Proclus, in *Alc.* 19.2–10, tr. O’Neill). Ultimately, Proclus contends in almost all his commentaries that every action, speech, and character, from the lowliest silent role to the great orations and myths, conform, as he insists in the above quote, to the subject matter for the sake of some aim. To be sure, this aim or Intellect of the text surpasses the mere arguments or topic(s) at hand; the aim is more than the Soul of the dialogue, and, as such, must also be understood in relation to the literary elements like the preludes of the dialogues. Particularly, in the above quote, we see that the literary elements, like the preludes, can be identified with necessary supplements to the logical elements, but supplements that, as the reference to an initiate indicates, lead to “the overall achievement of the objects of enquiry.”⁴¹ Put otherwise, the preludes in some way contribute to the consummation or actualization of the *skopos* or Intellect of the text.

Turning now to an overt discussion of the Good of the text, we should concentrate on how the dialogues “initiate” their readers to the philosophical life. To unravel this last statement, let us take a moment to look at Proclus’s commentary on the *Alcibiades I*. Discussing the aim of the text, Proclus emphasizes that the dialogue’s Matter, Form, and Soul contribute to understanding that the real object of the dialogue is to “declare our nature,” which will “reveal the meaning of the famous Delphic precept ‘Know Thyself.’”⁴² Here all of the features, including (1) the characters of Alcibiades and Socrates, (2) the setting as their first encounter, (3) the style as purgative, and (4) the overt arguments on justice leading to the refutation of Alcibiades’ pretenses, connect into one cohesive unity seen in the overall Intellect or *skopos* of the text: the knowledge of ourselves via the disclosure of our being. As Proclus writes:

For neither is it appropriate to refer the purpose of the dialogue to Alcibiades alone, as some have supposed . . . ; nor to put forward the tools of philosophical discussion as aims of the conversation e.g. exhortation, elicitation or refutation, but to observe to what end these tend; nor, standing aside from the considerations in hand, to transfer the enquiry to other forms of being, divine or spirit-like, in no way appropriate to us (for the object must be proper to the first beginnings of philosophical consideration, since Socrates says that this is the first time he has approached the

youth); nor to devise some altogether different and adventitious purpose for the dialogue, casting aside that to which Socrates himself *bears witness* (μαρτυρεῖ). If the knowledge of ourselves must precede all other considerations, how could there be any other end of this first conversation more to the point than the knowledge of ourselves? (Proclus, *in Alc.* 7.18–8.12, tr. O’Neill; my emphasis)

By looking to the Matter, Form, and Soul of the dialogue we see that everything in the text, from the demonstrative methods to the refutation of Alcibiades, points toward the value of self-knowledge and the process of turning toward the divine within. Proclus in fact forcefully notes that this dialogue over all others emphasizes the idea that without self-knowledge one remains “uninitiated and profane” and is “unfit to partake in the providence of Apollo.”⁴³ In other words, without self-knowledge one can never be a philosopher. Accordingly, for Proclus, the conversations, the characters, and their transformations, everything from Matter to Form to the Soul, reveals this Intellect of Plato’s dialogue.

Later in his commentary Proclus makes an important distinction between the Intellect and the Good of the text that allows us to see more clearly why the dialogue’s style or Form is purgative and, furthermore, why Proclus utilizes the language of initiation and witness in the preceding quote. As Proclus writes:

Even if one should say that the purpose of the dialogue is the care of ourselves and the knowledge thereof, although his assertion is correct, let him note that it is appropriate that this should accrue to us as an end and as the benefit that results from what is demonstrated, but the object of inquiry and the purpose of the syllogisms is a “problem,” viz. the knowledge of ourselves. For it is one thing to know the aim of the dialogue, and another *the Good* that derives from such a purpose (ἄλλο γὰρ ἢν τὸν σκοπὸν γνῶναι τοῦ διαλόγου καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἄλλο τὸ ἐκ τῆς τοιαύτης προθέσεως). (Proclus, *in Alc.* 9.15–10.5, tr. O’Neill)

Often quoted by scholars working on Neoplatonic exegesis, this passage is another great example of the importance of discerning the *skopos* of the text, here understood as the importance of self-knowledge. Yet, conspicuously, Proclus ends by making a distinction between the *skopos* of the text and the Good or *telos* of the text. The Neoplatonic scholar John Dillon in fact notes this distinction in his introduction to book 1 of Proclus’s *Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, but concludes that the purpose/*telos* of the text is simply another way of discussing its

skopos or aim. He dismisses the separation between the Good and the skopos of the text as “a distinction without a difference.”⁴⁴

Acknowledging that Proclus does seem to be inconsistent with his choice of language, often muddling the difference between the skopos and the telos, there is some evidence that the telos of the dialogue sharply contrasts with the skopos insofar as it is an *activity* that radically transforms the *reader* of the dialogue. Looking primarily to the *Alcibiades I* commentary, we can see that Proclus distinguishes between the overt arguments (the Soul), the aim or skopos (the Intellect), and also the dialogue’s telos (the Good). Now, above Proclus has made clear that to properly discern the Intellect of the *Alcibiades* the reader must observe the action of the dialogue, specifically the *transformation* of Alcibiades as a result of Socrates’ refutation. Interestingly, in Proclus’s understanding of character, Alcibiades is more than a static and immediately understood symbol; he is a dynamic individual, forcing readers to account for the change and difference of the young man from start to finish. Proclus argues that discovering the dialogue’s subject matter, namely, Alcibiades’ conceit, via both the literary and the logical elements, leads to ascertaining the dialogue’s Intellect only discovered in *witnessing* the transformation of Alcibiades in his own admittance of ignorance and corresponding desire for self-knowledge. This transformation is what Socrates *bears witness* to, and thus the skopos of the dialogue is easily seen by noting the unity of context and plot in the drama.

Moreover, in recognizing this skopos of the *Alcibiades I*, the *reader* should also be immediately compelled to identify with this subject matter, Alcibiades’ own purification from the conceit to knowledge and his corresponding initiation into the love of wisdom. Particularly for Proclus with regard to the *Alcibiades I*, each one of us, as reader, should recognize that we are all in the very same state of misfortune as the son of Kleinias; we too suffer from the conceit to knowledge.⁴⁵ In short, the end or telos of the text then is not, as Dillon asserted, the same thing as the aim or skopos of the text. Rather, the telos or Good of the *Alcibiades I* is the readers’ realization of their own ignorance, which transforms them, as readers, into philosophical initiates who possess the possibility of being cleansed or purged from the life tending toward externalities. Due to this realization, the skopos of the text would be actualized not only in the narrative event taking place within the dialogue but also in the psychic event simultaneously occurring within the reader.⁴⁶ Put simply, as it is in reality, the Good of a Platonic dialogue is something very different from the Intellect of the dialogue. In the case of the *Alcibiades I* the Intellect is a “discernment of being,” while the Good or purpose/telos is the *achievement* or consummation of this aim in the reader. Said differently, it is the initiation of the *reader* into the philosophical way of life.

In the end the Good of the text is the successful benefit bestowed upon the reader for achieving within oneself what is demonstrated within the text or, more radically understood, what was already demonstrated in the life and methods of Plato's famous protagonist, Socrates. In other words, Plato used this medium of dialogue because it mimicked the transformative and psychogogic methods of the philosopher who famously showed the vitality of concrete dialogue between real flesh-and-blood individuals. Socrates' insistence on dialogue and Plato's use of dialogue form highlight the Good, or true power, that arises in conversing with and engaging with people in determinate settings for a resolute end. In this way Socrates was always heedful of the needs of his interlocutors, and, as we saw in our discussion of character in Plato's dialogues, Proclus very clearly recognizes that Socrates tried to elevate all individuals he encountered to their appropriate ends, showing different interlocutors "where pleasure unmixed with pain, exists," or "where power and rule exist . . . free from all enslavement."⁴⁷ For Proclus, Socrates was always aware of the level of intellect and the needs of his conversational partners, and, consequently, the organization of the Platonic curriculum in late antiquity, like Socrates' careful discernment of his interlocutors, attempts to mirror this pedagogical method. Interestingly, the *Alcibiades I* is the first dialogue for students working through this curriculum because it helps beginners shed conceit and come to self-knowledge, while later in the curriculum readers are compelled to engage with the Good itself in the *Philebus*. For the Neoplatonists, who followed this curriculum, every dialogue has a different aim, but there is always only one corresponding telos, the ascent of the reader in thought and life toward the Good itself.⁴⁸ What we could glean from the construction of this canon is that Neoplatonists believed that Plato too was Socratic, that is, Plato too was mindful of the needs of his readers and constructed each dialogue to assist all comers in their intellectual and moral development. Here we should be reminded of the fact that if one were lucky enough to have a dialogue with Socrates there was more at stake than merely passing the time with pretty speeches and interesting metaphysical ideas; rather, these conversations explicitly aimed at some good, the transformation of a life. In just the same way, a Platonic dialogue for the late Platonists was more than just a beautiful or well-constructed text advancing a highly complex but ultimately ethereal and abstract metaphysics. Rather, the dialogue was like the cosmos, a living organism, an individual like Socrates, compelling us in all its parts to the Good.⁴⁹

CHAPTER 6

Hypostasizing Socrates

Michael Griffin

Introduction

In this chapter, I would like to explore a defining feature of later Neoplatonist treatments of the Platonic Socrates, namely, the representation of Socrates as a hypostasis within the rich ontological and epistemological hierarchy of later Neoplatonism. This allegory of Socrates appears to be a common inheritance of both Athenian and Alexandrian exegesis of Plato, and its roots can be traced back at least to Iamblichus. It is tightly intertwined, as I will suggest, both with Iamblichus's Platonic curriculum (see Table 2)¹ and with his broader exegetical practices and pedagogical ideas about how Plato ought to be taught.²

Specifically, I want to draw attention to two points of interest in several texts that exemplify the Neoplatonic “hypostasization” of Socrates. First, I will suggest that the commentators following Iamblichus had a single, consistent story to tell about where Socrates ought to sit, symbolically speaking, in the stratigraphy of hypostases. Socrates is made to stand for the *same* level of being and knowledge in each dialogue—that is, when the character of Socrates turns up, he always “means” the same thing regardless of whether we are freshmen beginning the Platonic curriculum from the gates of the *Alcibiades I*, or seniors concluding our cycle in the adyton of the *Parmenides*. This consistency in the symbolism of Socrates is matched by a pattern of development on the student's part: at each step of the curricular ladder, Socrates is presented to the reader from a different vantage point. The reader is treated as corresponding to a level of being “below” or “above” that which Socrates represents, consistent with the reader's progress on the curriculum, measured by the ladder of virtues (*aretai*) that the curriculum is intended to foster.

Second (and more briefly), I will suggest that this sort of allegory, although it might strike a modern reader as a peculiar and exotic feature of Plato's later antique garb, has a fairly intuitive pedagogical motivation that we still, by and large, tend to support today in any attempt to teach Plato "Socratically." This, I will suggest, should encourage us to challenge the sentiment that "the decisive characteristic" of Neoplatonic exegesis is "obliviousness to the genuinely Socratic element in Plato."³

Socrates in the Ten Basic Dialogues

A clear example of the practice I want to discuss occurs in Proclus's commentary on the *Alcibiades I*, which is indebted to an Iamblichean original. Iamblichus and Proclus described the *Alcibiades I* as a treatise about self-knowledge, understood as discovering which kind of being *we* are in the scale of hypostases. For instance, as Proclus explains in the opening pages of his proem, we might turn out to correspond to the eternal wholes that always are, or to the partitioned entities that are ever becoming, or to the rational soul that lies in between.

Proclus works out the answer to this question in the context of commenting on the *Alcibiades I*, and articulating the symbolism of the characters in it. Along the way, he explains that we should "establish [Socrates] as an analogy to the intellect (*nous*) of soul" (43.10), loftier than the character of Alcibiades, significant of the rational soul, and "intermediate somehow" (43.18) between Socrates and the many base lovers who in turn symbolize partition and multiplicity.⁴

Socrates, as being an inspired lover and elevated to intelligible beauty itself, has established himself as corresponding to the intellect of the soul (*tôi nôi tēs psukhês analogon*), for what else is it that is united to the intelligible than intellect and all that possesses intelligent life? But the diverse and vulgar class of lovers, carried along with sense and imagination and given over to the "manyheaded beast" [cf. *Rep.* 9, 588C] of the soul, bears the impress of the corresponding way of life, in accord with which it characterizes its own manner of living; for every soul is that portion by which it lives and it defines itself thereby. Somehow between these is Alcibiades, rent asunder from beneath by the passionate lovers and drawn down to the worse part, but from above aided by the one individual Socrates and preserved and provided for by him, lest he suffer anything at the hands of the lovers surrounding him. According to the analogy of the extremes we must

Table 2. The Iamblichean curriculum of dialogues

| | | | | |
|--------|--------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Aretai | Political | | | 1. Introduction: <i>Alcibiades</i> |
| | | | | 2. <i>Gorgias</i> (political) |
| | Cathartic | | | 3. <i>Phaedo</i> (purifying) |
| | | | | Theoretic |
| | On <i>noêmata</i> | | 5. <i>Theaetetus</i> (knowledge) | |
| | On <i>pragmata</i> | Physical | 6. <i>Sophist</i> (physical) | |
| | | | 7. <i>Statesman</i> (physical) | |
| | | Theological | 8. <i>Phaedrus</i> (theological) | |
| | | | 9. <i>Symposium</i> (theological) | |
| | Two “complete” dialogues | | | 10. Culmination: <i>Philebus</i> (Good) |
| | | | | 11. <i>Timaeus</i> (Physics) |
| | Two “complete” dialogues | | | 12. <i>Parmenides</i> (Theology) |

Source: Adapted from L. G. Westerink, *Prolegomena* (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Company, 1962), xl, xxxix.

relate Alcibiades to the rational soul, to which are still attached the emotions and the irrational powers, as it were plotting against the life of reason and like the Titans attempting to rend it, but the intellect, like Athene, is set above, keeping it from sinking in the scale and tending to implication in matter. (T1. Proclus, *in Alc.* 43.7–44.1, tr. O’Neill)

Remembering the premise of *Alcibiades I*, Socrates retains his affection for Alcibiades after his common lovers have departed; Proclus suggests that we should understand this state of affairs as symbolic of *nous* aiding *psukhê* as it turns from multiplicity. Another way of expressing this would be the following: the target of the analogy of the three characters is the metaphysical triad *nous*; *psukhê*; and *sôma* or *hulê*.⁵ We might sketch the analogy as follows:⁶

| |
|---|
| <p>Socrates : Alcibiades : Base Lovers = Nous of Psyche : Rational Psyche : Matter</p> |
|---|

The Alexandrian commentator Olympiodorus seems to have a similar picture and analogy in mind. In his lectures on the *Alcibiades I* a century later, he strives (as

he tells us) to keep close to the shoreline of Proclus's insights. Olympiodorus develops an account of Socrates as the *nous* of the *psukhê* when he paraphrases the famous "eye" passage of the *Alcibiades I* at 132D–133C.⁷ When Alcibiades looks at Socrates and "the Socratic soul," particularly its "highest part," he will see *nous* and *theos*:

Socrates, by also being such [a teacher] to Alcibiades, converses with him about political self-knowledge, and incorporates [a conversation] about purificatory and contemplative [self-knowledge]. For he says there, "Just as if the Demiurge commanded the eye, 'See thyself,' but on account of its not being self-moving, it was unable to do this, but could look away at another eye, and not at any random part of this [organ], but at the part that is entrusted [*empepisteumenon*] with optical activity (which is also called the 'pupil' [*korê*], because of the appearance of little images in it), thus also you, Alcibiades, since you have blinded the self-moving in you by giving yourself over to irrational activities, look away to me—to the Socratic soul—and not to any random part of this, but to the highest part, and you shall see in me intellect and God." (T2. Olymp., in *Alc.* 7.6–8.5; my translation)

I would like to come back to this portion of Olympiodorus shortly. First, there are several additional illustrations, to round out the picture of the basic curriculum.

So far, we have explored the allegory of Socrates in the first dialogue of Iamblichus's curriculum, the *Alcibiades I*. Ascending Iamblichus's scale of virtues and his corresponding curriculum, we come next to the *Gorgias*. Fortunately, an analogous discussion from Olympiodorus's commentary on the *Gorgias* is preserved:

Next it is worth investigating the *number* and *symbolism (analogia)* of the characters. There are five characters: Socrates, Chaerephon, Gorgias, Polus, Callicles. Socrates corresponds to (*analogei*) the intelligent (*noêros*) and knowledgeable (*epistêmikos*), Chaerephon to the rightly-opining (*orthodoxastikos*), Gorgias to the misguided (*diestrammenos*). For [Gorgias] was not entirely dominated by injustice, he was wavering over whether to be persuaded or not. Polus corresponds to the unjust [character] bent solely on ambition, whereas Callicles corresponds to the swinish and pleasure-loving. . . . Socrates resembles (*mimeitai* [a key term]) the monad, looking towards the One. For God is simple, and underived. Hence the hymn is addressed to him which runs: "From you all things are

Notably, as in the Proclus passage cited earlier (T1), Olympiodorus sets up Socrates as a separate, intellect-like figure at the top of a triad that also has a middle or mediating term (in this case, Chaerephon; in the previous case, Alcibiades), and a lowest term (in this case, Gorgias and his worse associates; in the previous case, the base lovers).⁸ It also does not seem to be by accident that Olympiodorus here refers to Socrates as “noeric” or intellectual, as Proclus had done before, and as Olympiodorus had done in the *Alcibiades* commentary, and sets him at the top of the psychic triad. And later in this same commentary, Olympiodorus associates the noeric or “intellectual” function with the best aspect of the rational soul (4.3), which Socrates suggested that he himself contains. As in the case of the *Alcibiades*, we could sketch the triad roughly as follows:

More broadly, Olympiodorus's scholastic language in T3 (*axion loipon zêtēsai . . .*), which occurs in the proem of his commentary, suggests that the *analogia* of the characters in a Platonic dialogue had by this point become one of the prolegomena or general points to be addressed by a professor before dealing with the lemmata of a text.⁹

Pressing ahead to the summit of Iamblichus's basic tenfold curriculum—from *Alcibiades I* and *Gorgias* at the outset, to *Philebus* at the pinnacle, we encounter several other samples of this approach in Damascius's treatment of that dialogue (which is based on Proclus's lost commentary):¹⁰

What qualities do the characters represent? Socrates stands for knowing and reasoning (*hestêke kata to epistêmonikon te kai dianoêtikon*), Protagoras for opinion, Philebus for the animate functions. One may also say

that the specific quality of the last is attainment of the good on the appetitive level, of Protarchus on the cognitive level, whereas in Socrates the two are combined. (T4. Damascius, in *Phileb.* 8, tr. Westerink)

To compare the last texts, then, just as in Olympiodorus (to whom the Damascian *Philebus* commentary was originally attributed), Socrates represents the top of a triad, which again is at once an epistemological and ontological triad. Thus in *Philebus*

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|---|
| <p>Socrates : Protarchus : Philebus = Dianoetic/Epistemic : Doxastic : Animate</p> |
|---|

delivers a close analogy for the triad described in the commentaries on the *Gorgias*:

| |
|--|
| <p>Socrates : Chaerephon : Gorgias = Noeric/Epistemic : Doxastic : Mistaken Separate Monad : Enmattered Monad : Matter</p> |
|--|

and in those on the *Alcibiades I*:

| |
|---|
| <p>Socrates : Alcibiades : Base Lovers = Nous of Psyche : Rational Psyche : Matter</p> |
|---|

An essential point to draw from this, I think, is that Socrates is regarded as representing the best function of the soul, consistently throughout the basic tenfold Iamblichean curriculum. This is the soul's "helmsman," its noeric capacity to apprehend the truth. In the technical terminology of Neoplatonic metaphysics, Socrates signifies the highest term of the psychic triad—the peak of the three layers that compose the hypostasis of *psukhê*.

To frame this point more fully, we can try to make out the grand ontological picture behind the practice of hypostasizing Socrates. Within the ten dialogues of the basic Iamblichean curriculum, Socrates consistently stands for the noeric or intelligent, knowing function of psyche, its highest part, and the highest term of the triad that constitutes psyche. (The Platonic tripartite soul of *Republic* provided a natural basis for the triadic metaphysical structure that famously attracted Proclus and his successors).¹¹ Certainly Socrates is regularly represented as if he had certain properties ordinarily associated with *nous*. Socrates can be viewed from

two vantage points, just as the *nous* of *psyche* can be seen from two vantage points. Within *psyche*, he is the *logos*, the highest part of the rational soul, engaged in helping the rest of the soul to attain *aretê*—a point stressed both by Damascius (*in Phileb.*) and by Proclus (*in Alc.*, where Socrates as he engages with the wavering rational soul is identified with the *agathos daimôn*). Nevertheless Socrates also is a separable monad (so Olympiodorus, *in Gorg.*), and so in a sense he is *nous* itself. Proclus notes this same point in his *Alcibiades* commentary, where the separate Socrates is *nous*, and symbolized by Athene.

Thus the ten basic dialogues of Iamblichus are concerned with the ascent of the *psyche* on the ladder of virtues; the lower conditions of *psyche* are symbolized by an ascending ladder of characters in the dialogues, always aided by “Socrates,” the noeric, knowing function of the *psyche*. A way of putting this intuitively is that Socrates symbolizes the soul in its best condition, realizing its potential to grasp and understand the truth, much as Plotinus (*Enn.* 3.4) contends the soul can put into practice better or worse potentials; Socrates signifies the *psyche* when it has insight into the truth. Another way of reading this claim, I think, is to understand that Plato intends for Socrates to signify a character who is *right* about the subject of the dialogue—whether that means that he is expounding true doctrines or, as Vlastos put it in his influential and controversial article on the elenchus (1983), that he has a true set of moral beliefs, even if these are not explicitly stated.

Socrates in the “Complete” Dialogues

What lies *above* Socrates, as the highest term of this triad? The Neoplatonic exegesis of the two “complete” (teleiotic) dialogues that follow the basic cycle of ten—*Timaeus* and *Parmenides*—begins to answer this question. These two dialogues advance beyond the basic *scala virtutum* or ladder of virtues (cf. Table 2). Here is an example of the allegoresis of Socrates from Proclus’s *Timaeus* commentary:

Analogous to the demiurgic triad that take over the one universal creation of the father is the triad of those who receive the words. Of these Socrates is the uppermost, who through the kinship of his life [with the others’] fastens himself directly upon *Timaeus*, just as the first member of the paradigmatic triad is united with the one before the triad. (T5. Proclus, *in Tim.* 9.19, tr. Tarrant)

Here too we find an “analogy” of Socrates—marked by the same term, *analogia*, that Proclus and Olympiodorus share—standing for the uppermost member of a triad. For the first time, though, this “perfect” dialogue introduces the notion of a figure analogous to some entity or reality beyond the triad, here “the one before the triad,” symbolized on the stage of the dialogue *Timaeus* by the Pythagorean Timaeus himself.

The second hint can be found in the *Parmenides*, the next “perfect” dialogue dealing with theology. Anyone familiar with Athenian and later Neoplatonism might well expect that what lies above one triad (in our case, the noeric triad, with which the ten basic dialogues have been concerned) is another triad. Moreover, the highest term of a triad can be identified with the lowest term of the triad above it, as Proclus explains in the *Elements of Theology*. This seems to be what we get explicitly in Proclus’s *Parmenides* commentary (which also, incidentally, gently implies that the *analogia* of the characters is an important topic to cover in the prolegomena to a Platonic text):

If we should be required to give a likely *analogia* for the characters involved, it seems to me that Parmenides himself should be ranked as an analogue to the unparticipated and divine Intellect which is united to Real Being in respect of its intellection, or perhaps to Being itself, which was his special concern and which he declared to be one. Zeno is an analogue to the Intellect which is participated in by the divine Soul, filled with all the intellectual Forms which he has received into his essence from the immaterial and unparticipated Intellect; this is why he too strives to “snatch himself away” [*Chald. Or.* Fr. 3.1] from plurality towards the One Being, imitating the Intellect above him, to which he refers his own perfecting. Or, if you wish, we may liken him to Life, I mean Life that is immediately subsequent to Being, for he delights in assembling contradictions and arguing both for and against a thesis, just as the Life that comes after Being is the first to furnish an expression of contraries, of rest and motion together. And Socrates could be compared to the particular intellect, or absolutely to Intellect, whereas of the other two, the former (Parmenides) is ranked analogically with Being, the latter (Zeno) with Life. This is why he is associated so closely with Parmenides and Zeno, and together with them makes up the first conversation, which we said bears the likeness of genuine being, as Intellect is itself the fullness of indivisible being. Socrates is also portrayed as especially confident of the theory of ideas, and what other role is more fitting for the particular intellect than

to see the divine Forms and declare them to others? So these three person-ages seem to me to satisfy the analogy, the first to Being, the second to Life, the third to Intellect; or the first to complete and unparticipated intellect, the second to intellect that is participated, and the third to the individual and participated intellect. Indivisible nature stops with these grades of being; for intellect is either universal and unparticipated, or universal and participated, or particular and participated. For there is no intellect that is particular and unparticipated. (T6. Proclus, in *Parm.* 628, tr. Morrow and Dillon)

Clearly, then, Socrates is now viewed “from above” (as it were) as the *bottom* term of the lofty triad Being-Life-Intellect. As in the *Alcibiades* commentary, at the other end of the Iamblichean curriculum, it is suggested here that Socrates’ noeric symbolism could be read in two ways at once—either as engaged with helping the lower soul (thus “Socrates could be compared to the particular intellect,” or Socrates as the *agathos daimôn* aiding Alcibiades), or as separate (thus Socrates could be compared “absolutely to *Nous*,” or analogized to Athene).

What “level” of analogy are we addressing, then, when we read the *Parmenides* commentary? The suggestion is that we are now dealing with the triad of true being and *nous*, the triad of Being-Life-Intellect symbolized by Parmenides-Zeno-Socrates; we have ascended from the triadic hypostasis of the Psyche, and are now at the triadic hypostasis of *Nous* and *To On*. This would suggest that there are levels beyond the *Parmenides*, which would match the evidence we have that Iamblichus and the Athenian School also offered commentaries on higher texts such as the Chaldaean Oracles and Orphica. All of this evidence, I think, shows that the figure of Socrates played a vivid, pivotal and *definitely consistent* role in the Platonic curriculum laid out by Iamblichus and followed, broadly, by the Athenian and Alexandrian Neoplatonists.

Conclusion

Beyond this, I would like to make a few final remarks about the mechanism of the “analogy” of Socrates in Neoplatonic exegesis, closing with some proposals about the intended value of the allegory, and the pedagogical concerns that might partially have motivated this particular analogical approach to the exegesis of Socratic behavior in the dialogues. Essentially, I want to stress that Socrates was viewed by Iamblichus and his successors as a target for imitation, a paradigm for

mimêsis, both by the characters in the dialogue *and* by the reader of the dialogue—we are supposed to want to do as Socrates does—and although this means something a bit different for a Neoplatonist from what it means for many readers today, I think there is a sort of essential pedagogical intuition here that “Plato *wants us* to imitate” Socrates.

I think we can explore this intuition (and the underpinnings and motivation of the analogy) in a number of Neoplatonic sources. Starting with the *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*, first, we could recall the Neoplatonic doctrine, perhaps traceable to Numenius, that every Platonic dialogue is a cosmos. For example, compare Anon., *Proleg.* § 4 (which, as Westerink suggests, appears to be closely linked to Proclus):

We must now mention the reasons why Plato used this literary form. . . . In Plato, though we find good and bad characters, we see that the bad are changed by the good, and instructed and purified, and that they invariably disengage themselves from their materialistic way of life. . . . [Plato] chose it, we say, because the dialogue is a kind of cosmos. For in the same way as a dialogue has different characters each speaking in character, so does the cosmos comprise existences of various nature expressing themselves in various ways; for the utterance of each is according to its nature. It was in imitation, then, of god’s creation, the cosmos, that he did that.

Either this is the reason, or it is that the cosmos is a kind of dialogue. . . . For just as in the world there are superior or inferior existences, and the soul during her stay in the world sometimes conforms to the superior, sometimes to the inferior, so the dialogue also has its characters, the questioners and the questioned, and our soul, sitting in judgement, now sides with the questioners, now with the questioned. Another reason, given by Plato himself (*Phaedr.* 264C) is that a literary work is comparable with a living being, and therefore the most complete literary work will resemble the most beautiful of living beings; the most beautiful living being is the cosmos, and the dialogue can be compared with the cosmos.

. . . Since we are naturally fond of imitation (*hê hêmetera psukhê têi mimêsei khairêi*), and a dialogue is an imitation of various characters, he did it to enchant our soul.¹² (T7. Anon., *Proleg.* § 4, 15.1–19, Wk [208–209 Hermann], tr. Westerink)

This passage helps us to appreciate (1) again that the placement of Socrates symbolizes the organization of Neoplatonic ontology in general, but just as important,

(2) that *we*—as the soul reading or studying the dialogue—are meant to imitate the characters in being “turned” (as Alcibiades, the rational soul, is “turned” in the *Alcibiades I*), specifically turned *by Socrates*, from materiality. We approach the dialogue as if we ourselves represent a particular cognitive and hypostatic state on the ladder; we complete it having been “turned.” We follow in the footsteps of Socrates and his interlocutors by *mimêsis*. Proclus delivers a very similar idea in his *Alcibiades* commentary.¹³ In fact, this sort of methodological idea is dotted throughout the Neoplatonic commentaries. Like Alcibiades, “we ourselves stand in need” of Socratic attention (as Proclus suggests in the proem to his *Alcibiades* commentary); and “Socrates strives not only to lead his beloved upwards, but to do so along the very path through which he has himself been led upward” (Olymp., in *Alc.* 4 = T9). By studying the reasons for the behavior of the *character* Socrates, we come to desire the *knowledge* that he has (cf. Proclus in *Alc.* 21 = T10). For an Iamblichean Neoplatonist, such an essential desire for knowledge within the soul can be born from studying and imitating a symbol—and a symbol or analogy can “turn” the soul by means of recollection. This latter view is one that Iamblichus, in his *Timaeus* commentary, explained in detail as Pythagorean, and presumably endorsed (Fr. 5 Dillon). A text or a verbal philosophical teaching could operate in the same way: in a stretch of Simplicius’s *Categories* commentary (12.10–13.12), for instance, where there are many examples of Iamblichean *noêra theôria*,¹⁴ we hear that the words and behavior of a philosophy teacher can function as just such a symbol.

It could be argued that Socrates, consistently and uniformly throughout the Iamblichean curriculum, functions as such a pedagogical symbol, and the dialogues themselves operate in the same way. But there is an underlying principle, a fairly intuitive and not terrifically exotic one, that by studying the character Socrates’ behavior—even when he is merely questioning and testing—we are induced to emulate his thrusts and parries, and to follow his example and the example of his interlocutors as *their* minds are changed. As Michael Frede argues, “What is true of the questioner and the respondent” in the course of Platonic dialectic also becomes “true of the author and the reader.”¹⁵ The point is not so much that Plato has Socrates expound a certain set of views or normative or prescriptive principles—the disavowal of knowledge itself, or a definite doctrine, or a recon-dite set of true moral beliefs that cannot be cross-examined into inconsistency¹⁶—but rather that he offers a description of Socratic argument in action, and invites the reader to a kind of emulation or *mimêsis*. The basic notion that *Sôkratikoî logoi* belong to mimetic art is as old as Aristotle in the *Poetics* (1449b38); and Socrates himself in the *Apology* already describes his many “imitators” among the young.

The Neoplatonic allegory of Socrates, I think, could be treated as a way of talking about the Platonic dialogues' intertwined presentation of *dianoia* and *êthê* (to use Aristotle's words); and this is certainly a point that remains relevant in our own discussions of Socratic methods.¹⁷

The especially important point for the pedagogue is that knowledge becomes a highly personal affair; as François Renaud advanced: "The interplay between argument and action, between what one says and what one does or is, already suggests the Socratic notion that knowledge is inseparable from self-knowledge."¹⁸ I think this is the sort of intuition that Iamblichus strove to stress by locating the *Alcibiades I* at the outset of the Platonic curriculum, and inducing all his students to perceive themselves as rational soul and *nous*. Considering the centrality of Socrates in this procedure, we cannot easily allege with Hathaway (1969) that "the decisive characteristic" of Neoplatonic exegesis is "obliviousness to the genuinely Socratic element in Plato," when that genuinely Socratic element is, for the Neoplatonic exegete, the soul's ability to *alêtheuein*, to express the truth.

CHAPTER 7

Socratic Character: Proclus on the Function of Erotic Intellect

James M. Ambury

And I, through the love that I had for Alcibiades,
felt just as the Bacchants do. For whenever they are inspired
they draw honey and milk where others cannot even draw
water.

And I, though knowing no lesson through which I could
benefit a man by teaching, nevertheless believed that
by being together with this man I could make him better
through love.

—Socrates from Aeschines Sphettus's *Alcibiades*,
quoted in Aelius Aristides, *In Defense of Oratory* 74

Introduction

In this chapter I attend to the analysis of Socrates' character in Proclus's *Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*. While Proclus comments extensively on Socrates' arguments, he is also clear that Socrates' character is equally instructive for Alcibiades. Proclus's view is profoundly Neoplatonic in the sense that it understands Socrates as more than an intellectualist concerned with propositional truth. Instead, we find that Socrates strives for a nondiscursive pedagogy that aims at bringing his interlocutor to self-knowledge, understood broadly in the Neoplatonic tradition as knowledge of the self as soul.¹ As such, Proclus differs from

many modern commentators who focus more on the logical validity and consistency of Socrates' arguments than on his character and what he is meant to embody in the drama.² This picture of Socrates in contrast leans heavily on the erotic element of the philosopher's method and in so doing clearly grasps the importance of Socrates as paradigmatic of the good life. Accordingly, in the following we shall observe Proclus's view that Socrates embodies erotic intellect, seducing Alcibiades away from commonplace ways of living and knowing. We will then examine Proclus's distinction between the divine lover and the vulgar lover, showing how this distinction represents his view that intellect guides and educates the soul. For Proclus, Socrates is the embodiment of the erotic intellect that asserts the primacy of self-knowledge in the philosophical life.

Socrates as Erotic Intellect

Proclus understands Socrates first as the embodiment of Eros. Considering Eros, he claims, "One must establish him midway between the object of love and lovers: he must be posterior to the beautiful but precede all the rest."³ Beauty is ontologically prior to Eros because we cannot think of love without its object. At the same time, Eros is prior to individual lovers because there must be a force in which we participate that draws us toward Beauty. More specifically, Socrates represents what Proclus calls descending or providential Eros (Ἐρως προνοητικός) that inspires inferior beings with a love for the divine. Alcibiades, we shall see, is likened to ascending Eros (Ἐρως ἐπιστρεπτικός), the inspired inferior being striving toward divine Beauty.⁴ In the first line of the *Alcibiades*, Socrates tells Alcibiades that he was the first of his lovers as well as his last remaining lover (103a). Socrates is therefore the temporal embodiment of Eros, posterior to the beauty he sees in Alcibiades but prior to all his other suitors.

Socrates attempts to unite Alcibiades with the objects of philosophical cognition. Proclus claims: "Now the intelligibles on account of their unutterable union have no need of the mediation of love; but where there exists both unification and separation of beings, there too love appears as medium; it binds together what is divided, unites what precedes and is subsequent to it, makes the secondary revert to the primary and elevates and perfects the less perfect" (tr. O'Neill, throughout).⁵ Embodying Eros, Socrates serves not to refer Alcibiades to intelligible truth or point him toward a particular meaning but rather to call him back to his origins. As such, Socrates serves as a bridge between Alcibiades as he stands at the beginning of the dialogue and his recognition of his true nature at the end of the

dialogue.⁶ He stands “in between” Beauty, the object of divine love, and Alcibiades’ many suitors, mortals who are lost in Alcibiades’ physical appearance and who do not aspire to Beauty itself. Proclus follows the *Symposium* (202d–e) in claiming that Eros is between the divine and the mortal and argues that Eros is a “power of intermediacy . . . a medium between everything that reverts and the cause of reversion and the object of appetency to secondary beings.”⁷ Socrates attempts to make Alcibiades revert or turn back upon himself, to realize the divinity present within him.⁸ As Eros unites us with intelligible being, so Socrates “arouses the mind of the beloved toward attachment to true beauty, stirs up his inward admiration of the life of philosophy, and leads him round to the fulfillment of true love.”⁹

Socrates claims that Alcibiades seems to wonder (θαυμάζειν) at his love, a suspicion that Alcibiades confirms (104d). Calling attention to the *Theaetetus* (155d), Proclus reminds us that wonder is the beginning of philosophy and that Iris, the daughter of wonder, is the messenger between the gods and human beings.¹⁰ Alcibiades wonders at a love that is entirely different from his other lovers, “for they were dragging him down to irrationality and matter, but Socrates lifts him up, even through these first words alone, to reason and spirit.”¹¹ As the embodiment of Eros, Socrates differs from the other suitors not just in degree but in kind. Whereas they approached him, propositioned him with irrational ways of living and material wealth, and then departed, Socrates has remained ever present. In character alone, Socrates already makes Alcibiades philosophical, preparing to unite him with the divine.

Proclus next likens Socrates to intellect: “Socrates, as being an inspired lover and elevated to intelligible beauty itself, has established himself as corresponding to the intellect of the soul.”¹² The embodiment of Eros, Socrates at the same time embodies intellect. Intellect is an erotic state of the soul on account of which soul is said to be in contact with the objects of philosophical cognition. Intellect therefore guides the soul up toward the divine in the same way Socrates seduces Alcibiades. On account of this parallel, Proclus not only likens Socrates to intellect but also likens Alcibiades to the soul.

As Socrates stands between Beauty and Alcibiades, so Alcibiades himself stands between the extremes of Socrates as divine lover and his other suitors as vulgar lovers: “In conformity with the analogy of the extremes we must relate Alcibiades to the rational soul, to which are still attached the emotions and irrational powers . . . but the intellect, like Athene, is set above.”¹³ As soul is an intermediary between intellect and corporeal nature, Alcibiades will be drawn either to intellect, in the person of Socrates, or body, in the persons of the vulgar lovers.

The soul may be attracted in either direction because it resembles both intellect and matter: “The soul, in regard to knowledge, resembles intellect, by its activity comprehending the object of knowledge, as the intellect comprehends the intelligible; but in regard to twofold ignorance it resembles matter; the latter possesses all things in mere appearance, but in truth nothing.”¹⁴ Intellect’s task with the soul is to draw it away from corporeal nature and into communion with the divine. Socrates undertakes this task in his seduction of Alcibiades.¹⁵

Proclus argues that Alcibiades’ initial attraction to Socrates instead of his other lovers is evidence of his essential goodness. However, despite his philosophical nature, without having inquired into the true nature of justice, Alcibiades hesitates to admit that he is preparing to advise the Athenian Assembly (106c). When Socrates challenges him to account for the better (τὸ βέλτιον) with regard to war and peace (108d–e), Alcibiades, unfortunately, cannot answer. Reading this passage, Proclus interprets Socrates’ use of the phrase “come now” (ἴθι δῆ) to be the intellect reaching out to stabilize the soul: “the word ‘Come’ repeated by Socrates is most appropriate to our soul’s knowledge; since it is in movement and does not subsist all at once and without change, like the stable and enduring activity of the intellect.”¹⁶ As we later discover, Alcibiades characterizes justice as advantageous in one instance and not in the next (115a–116e). The erotic intellect is attempting to seduce the soul away from the flux of everyday accounts of justice in order to grasp justice as Form.¹⁷

Just as intellect draws the soul away from corporeal nature, so Socrates seduces Alcibiades away from contextual accounts of justice. Part of this project requires convincing Alcibiades that his guardian is not Pericles but the guardian spirit of all humanity.¹⁸ Alcibiades must revert to his true nature by caring for himself with Socrates. Proclus reminds us that Socrates tells Alcibiades that he has continuously turned his mind toward him (προσέχων γέ σοι τὸν νοῦν διατετέλεκα) (105a).¹⁹ Intellect here is thus conscious of itself in its erotic function, and when Socrates later tells Alcibiades to trust in his divination and follow the Delphic imperative (123b), we see intellect once more seducing the soul. Alcibiades must turn toward the divine by abandoning Pericles and following Socrates. He will thereby choose intellect over corporeality and the spiritual over the material: he will choose divine love instead of vulgar love.

The Divine Lover

We have seen thus far that Proclus views Socrates as the embodiment of the erotic intellect seducing the soul toward it and thereby toward self-knowledge. In this section I focus on Socrates as the divine or true lover. As erotic intellect Socrates is also the divine lover whose task it is to care for his beloved and properly educate him. Reading 105c–d, Proclus argues that Socrates discerns the aptitudes of individual interlocutors and cares for them accordingly. Each interlocutor is dealt with differently. With Alcibiades, Socrates appeals to his interest in attaining power in order to show him that true power requires knowledge.²⁰ Socrates therefore appeals to Alcibiades' particular interests not to gratify them as they stand but to redirect them philosophically.²¹

Socrates approaches Alcibiades as a philosophical beloved. While he observes that Alcibiades' physical beauty is clear for everyone to see (104a), Proclus claims that praising this sort of beauty as good is altogether contemptible: "For the true good is unknown to the many, is known only to the possessors of real knowledge, and is to be apprehended by intellection, but not by sense-perception."²² The many, who judge by sense perception, cannot truly see the beauty of which intellect is capable. They are lost in an image of beauty without knowing that it is merely an image. Socrates, on the other hand, "approaches evident beauty as an image of intelligible beauty. . . . He approaches Alcibiades, then, because he holds the position of image, for we are said to approach images."²³ As divine lover Socrates looks with philosophical vision on his beloved and takes him as an image of Beauty itself.²⁴ Alcibiades therefore learns something from Socrates' behavior before he advances any philosophical argument: he learns that he is truly an appearance or image of something more substantial, not accessible to sense perception.

Knowing oneself as a soul requires transcending sense perception through dialectical inquiry. Proclus claims that dialectic is an erotic activity, and he establishes a parallel between lovers seeing one another in their eyes and knowing themselves as souls: "[Dialectic] very clearly shows that in some way both the lover is in the beloved and the beloved in the lover; since as considered in Alcibiades Socrates directs his replies, and as Socrates Alcibiades gives correct answers."²⁵ Erotic intellect guides the soul back toward itself, away from externals and corporeal nature.²⁶

Through dialectic, intellect also helps the soul recollect notions already present within it. Whereas rhetoric induces knowledge from without, in dialectic we are led to see the truth already present within us.²⁷ At 112e, Alcibiades accuses

Socrates of saying that he is ignorant of justice, and Socrates replies by claiming that Alcibiades himself has made the claims about justice. Proclus argues that the dialectical method ensures that Alcibiades knows he is not a *tabula rasa* receiving notions from without: “Previously, [Alcibiades] was unaware of himself as realizing innate notions, but now he is aware of the fact, because he reverts toward himself, and learning his own activity and process of knowing he becomes one with the object of knowledge.”²⁸ For these reasons, Socrates is clear from the beginning that he will not give a long speech even though Alcibiades is accustomed to hearing them (106b). While the vulgar lovers court Alcibiades by flattering him rhetorically, Socrates does not flatter Alcibiades at all. Instead, he turns Alcibiades back upon himself to elicit the divinity already present with him.

Proclus develops the pedagogical function of erotic intellect by contrasting the divine lover and the vulgar lovers in five distinct ways. First, whereas the true lover arouses the amazement of the beloved, the vulgar lover is distraught over the beloved and pursues him without reserve. The inferior sort of lover “admits that he depends on his darling and says he has need of him, but the other is self-sufficient and full of power.”²⁹ Through his apparent self-sufficiency in the opening of the dialogue Socrates foreshadows his own characterization of the soul (130d) as the more authoritative (*κυριώτερόν γε*) aspect of human beings. Socrates has complete control of himself and depends on nothing other than himself, thereby reproducing in his person the ontological independence of soul from body and of intelligible from participant.³⁰ As Proclus reminds us, “law is regulation by the intellect.”³¹ Alcibiades is drawn to this self-sufficiency as soul is drawn to intellect. By embodying intellect the divine lover seduces the beloved away from a life of dependency on externals and corporeality toward a life of philosophy and true self-sufficiency. Thus, by the end of the dialogue, Socrates will tell Alcibiades that if he wants to rule the city, he does not need the power to do whatever he wants, but rather needs justice and moderation (134c–d).

Second, the divine lover watches over his beloved and does not approach him until the cessation of the bloom of youth. He is a lover of the soul, not the body. On the other hand, the vulgar lover fawns all over the beloved’s physical beauty but then departs when it has faded.³² Socrates shows that his love is divine by telling Alcibiades that he will not leave him so long as he is eager to be beautiful, not in body but in soul (131c–131d). Divine love, therefore, comes with the condition that the beloved make himself beautiful by following intellect: “This was the cause, that I was your only lover, but others loved things belonging to you (*μόνος ἐραστής ἦν σός, οἱ δ’ ἄλλοι τῶν σῶν*): while what belongs to you has left its prime, you are beginning to bloom. And now, lest you become corrupted by the Athenian

people and become shameful, I will not leave you” (131e–132a; my translation). Intellect loves soul, not what belongs to soul. Between intellect and corporeality, Alcibiades will be beautiful only through participation in the divine love of the erotic intellect.

Socrates then cautions Alcibiades to look at the Athenian people stripped, not in their immediate appearance (132a). Proclus claims that Socrates strips Alcibiades bare by showing that he is shameful (108e) and then chides Alcibiades for changing arguments as if they were fine garments when he does not like the consequences of his claims (113d–114a).³³ The divine lover strips his beloved to show him in his purity, naked, as a soul. Alcibiades needs neither fancy garments nor rhetorical flourishes but to follow intellect and practice dialectic. As Socrates has stripped Alcibiades, so Alcibiades, if he is to be a virtuous man, must strip others.³⁴

Third, Proclus claims the divine lover is stable and always the same, while the vulgar lover is swift to change, fickle, and easily inclined to forsake the beloved. Socrates again embodies the characteristics of the object of philosophical knowledge. This is contrasted with Alcibiades whose soul is unstable and indeterminate, and thus Socrates cannot claim to truly know him.³⁵ Socrates’ fear that Alcibiades will remain indeterminate is reflected in the following passage immediately preceding Alcibiades’ first admission of ignorance:

S: Therefore, while answering about things that are just and unjust, admirable and shameful, bad and good and advantageous, do you not say that you wander (φῆς πλανᾶσθαι)? Accordingly, is it not clear that, on account of not knowing about them, you wander on account of them?

A: It is to me.

S: Therefore, it’s like this: when someone does not know something, it is necessary that the soul wanders on this subject (ἀναγκαῖον περὶ τούτου πλανᾶσθαι τὴν ψυχὴν)? (117a–b; my translation throughout)

Socrates claims that Alcibiades is wandering, incapable of grasping philosophical truths that are always the same.³⁶ Through divine love, the erotic intellect is attempting to stabilize the soul, prevent its wandering, and thereby open up the possibility of its knowing the objects of philosophical cognition.

Fourth, while constantly present before the beloved, the divine lover approaches only when he can benefit the soul. The vulgar lover is always bothering him and attempting to unite with him sensually.³⁷ Proclus claims, as the “intellect is always active in our regard . . . so also the divine lover is both present to the

beloved before the many lovers . . . [and is] not like that of those many lovers, divided, deficient, implicated in matter and concerned with mere images.”³⁸ While Alcibiades is here the indeterminate beloved, by the time of the *Symposium* he is clearly a wandering vulgar lover, pursuing Socrates as the object of his desire.³⁹ Socrates’ reply that Alcibiades offers only apparent beauty in exchange for the real thing is the remark of a divine lover refusing the transient good of corporeal nature offered by a vulgar lover.⁴⁰

Proclus blames Alcibiades’ failure on his being reared under a bad form of government.⁴¹ At the end of the *Alcibiades*, when Alcibiades tells Socrates he will care for him in return for his divine love, Socrates expresses his doubt. He says, “I wish that you would persevere; but I am afraid, not distrusting your nature, but seeing the force of the city, lest it overpower both me and you” (135e). Alcibiades becomes a victim of the vulgar love of the many, not a beneficiary of the divine love of Socrates. While he praises the benefits of philosophy, he later claims that he caves in to his desire to please the crowd the moment he leaves Socrates’ side.⁴² Without intellect, soul continues to wander, indeterminate and without stability.

Finally, Proclus argues that the divine lover “is spoken of as being akin to the One and the Good and as reaching up to the simple and one-like exemplar of beautiful things, but the vulgar sort as ‘common’ and a ‘random heap.’”⁴³ He later characterizes the vulgar lovers as a “mob” or an indeterminate, confused, and disorderly multitude. That the vulgar lovers all mob Alcibiades is “evidence of a slovenly, confused way of life that drags down the beloved to the materialized, fragmentary, and manifold kind of variety of the emotions.”⁴⁴ Socrates is identified with unity, the vulgar lovers with plurality. Pedagogically, Proclus associates their plurality with sophistry: “Sophistry, then, is on a level with the multitude and the life of the multitude: it aims at deceit and appearances and recoils from the Truth and the One.”⁴⁵ Socrates faithfully plays the role of divine lover, attempting to educate Alcibiades by drawing him away from the life of the many. Intellect continues its seduction of soul; Socrates, in his character, behavior, and way of life, is already bringing Alcibiades toward self-knowledge.

Conclusion

In his presentation of the divine lover and vulgar lovers, Proclus reaffirms the presence of intellect as an erotic state that draws the soul away from corporeal nature and toward itself. Caught between intellect and corporeal nature, the soul that truly knows itself as divine reverts upon itself through the guidance of

intellect and thereby opens up the possibility of philosophical cognition. Accordingly, Proclus's *Commentary on the Alcibiades* is instructive not only because of its close attention to Socrates' arguments but equally because of Proclus's treatment of Socrates as the embodiment of erotic intellect.⁴⁶ Proclus's emphasis on Socrates' behavior reminds us that philosophy is primarily a way of living, and that knowledge of intelligible being is possible only for those that first know themselves. Like intellect beckoning the soul, Socrates, through his love of Alcibiades, shows us the meaning of divine love, and thus what it is to truly love wisdom.

CHAPTER 8

The Elenctic Strategies of Socrates: The *Alcibiades I* and the Commentary of Olympiodorus

François Renaud

In this chapter I examine the conditions and strategies for Socrates' elenctic practice in the first part of the *Alcibiades I* (106c–119a), the part of the dialogue that Olympiodorus specifically designates “elenctic.” This part is naturally divided into two primary segments: (i) the supposed origin of Alcibiades' knowledge (the multitude);¹ and (ii) the question of knowing whether what is just and what is advantageous are identical or different.² Socrates will succeed in obtaining the young man's admission of double ignorance, while the latter will blame himself for failing to heed his tutor, Pericles.³ What, then, are the conditions that apply to this elenctic exchange, and by what means does Socrates achieve his ends, particularly in Olympiodorus's eyes?

The Relation Between Socrates and Plato

Being the only ancient author from whom there survive two commentaries on “investigative dialogues” (ζητητικοὶ διάλογοι) or “Socratic dialogues” (*Alcibiades* and *Gorgias*), Olympiodorus is in some sense a specialist on Plato's Socratic heritage;⁴ yet his conception of how Socrates and Plato relate to one another is one of some complexity. Overall Olympiodorus presupposes a direct continuity between Socraticism and Platonism. The Socrates of the *Alcibiades*, especially as Olympiodorus interprets him, is an elenctic critic who produces aporetic doubt, but is

equally capable of defending precise theses about the nature of the soul. The figure of Socrates, in Olympiodorus's view, cannot always be reduced to "Plato." To begin with the hidden depths of Socratic teaching could not have been wholly accessible to the young Plato. Plato "only benefited from the instruction of Socrates in matters of ethics, and only then at a foundational level; he was still young at the time when Socrates died, and could not have grasped his more in-depth discussions (τῶν βαθυτέρων τοῦ Σωκράτους λόγων)."⁵ Furthermore, Plato and Socrates would not have followed the same communicative strategies. They differed sharply in their use of irony: "Plato rejected the irony associated with Socrates (τῆς Σωκρατικῆς εἰρωνείας ἀπήλλακτο), and he was not in the habit of passing his time in the agora and the workshops, and to engage in discussions in pursuit of young men."⁶ However, Socrates' avowal of ignorance according to Olympiodorus was only partially ironic; for example, with regard to the passage (109d) where Socrates asks Alcibiades who his teacher is so that he may himself enroll in his class, Olympiodorus believes that this remark is to some extent truthful. He offers the following principle: because every lover becomes similar to his beloved in everything, Socrates, "*qua* lover (ὥς μὲν οὖν ἐρωτικὸς) did not know justice, because the young man did not know it, but *qua* master he had that knowledge (ὥς δὲ διδάσκαλος ἠπίστατο)."⁷ In general, the pursuit of the youth and the habit of initiating discussions with them, which is associated particularly with Socrates, is characterized by strategies for "seduction," initially involving refutation. What are these strategies? Here, in the light of Olympiodorus's commentary in particular, is a preliminary answer.

A Tailored and Logically Valid Argument

The dialectical method of question and answer allows Socrates to make adjustments to his interlocutor in the same way that the orator adjusts to his audience.⁸ This method is "cathartic," because it expels false opinions from the soul much as the doctor expels diseases from the body.⁹ Further, Socrates does not immediately employ all his arguments right from the start of the discussion; he formulates them little by little, in accordance with the needs and abilities of Alcibiades. As Olympiodorus stresses, certain premises that Socrates solicits from Alcibiades are not universal but particular, or contingent, because they are drawn from the young man's personal experience (μερικαὶ εἰσι καὶ ἀπὸ ἱστορίας). Hence Alcibiades must offer a sincere reply, without which refutation would be pointless.¹⁰ According to Olympiodorus, Socrates' dialectic proceeds from like to like (διὰ τῶν ὁμοίων).

This is why he entreats the young man passionately to recognize the ultimate object of his desire.¹¹ Nevertheless his argument, in Olympiodorus's eyes, is invariably valid and able to be recast in a syllogistic form, which the commentator often takes pains to supply. As for any other logically valid argument, Socrates appeals to the common notions (κοινὰ ἔννοια). This is why the elenchus that Socrates practices, as interpreted by Olympiodorus, does not seem to be uniquely confined to Socrates. In effect, from a formal point of view, there is nothing to distinguish Socratic elenchus from philosophic argument in general. Yet it is distinct from the eristic use of argument, whose goal is victory rather than truth.¹²

The Act of Questioning

In contradistinction to today's dominant tendency that consists in envisaging Socratic dialectic as the expression of his modesty or skepticism, Olympiodorus for his part emphasizes the *wisdom* of Socrates, with special regard to his role as questioner: "It is true that it is not difficult to reply; quite the contrary, it is rather the asking of questions that is a difficult task (μᾶλλον τὸ ἐρωτᾶν χαλεπὸν), much as on a journey it is more difficult to guide than to follow."¹³ In the *Alcibiades* Socrates effectively reveals himself as a psychologist with penetrating intuition. He recognizes the secret (and unmeasured) desires of the youthful Alcibiades, which he has been silently observing "night and day" over a long period.¹⁴ If he finally makes his approach after so many years, it is because he *knows*—thanks to god, to be precise—that the youth now desires to hear him.¹⁵ As master of discussion and divinely inspired lover, Socrates is the ideal guide, because he combines "good intentions, precise knowledge, and expressive power."¹⁶ It is true that in the "Socratic dialogues" of Plato he is liable to offer his interlocutor an exchange of the roles of questioner and respondent.¹⁷ Most often, however, this is only a formality: as the only one to master the art of asking questions, he maintains this role for virtually the entire discussion. That emerges even more strongly in the *Alcibiades*, where Socrates remains the questioner throughout the entire dialogue.¹⁸ On a single occasion (if I am not mistaken) he invites Alcibiades to choose between asking questions and delivering a long speech on justice, but the youth declines this invitation as if it were a provocative suggestion.¹⁹ In a word, according to Olympiodorus, the role of questioner that Socrates occupies straightaway indicates his superiority over his opponent and his ability to lead the discussion along his chosen path.

The Act of Reply

Socrates repeatedly insists, and Olympiodorus with him, on the importance of the very act of reply. For it is the respondent who affirms everything that is affirmed within the dialogue, and defends all the theses that are advanced. Socrates resorts to various means of ascertaining that Alcibiades agrees at the beginning of the argument to answer his questions, and, above all, to persist with that role. In effect, Socrates must insist at several points (even at 113a1–2, that is to say after two-thirds of this elenctic first section) on the indispensable role that Alcibiades, as the respondent, is playing.²⁰ Socrates requires that Alcibiades give a truthful response, that he answer both sincerely and fairly, so that the discussion may not be in vain (καὶ τὰ ληθῇ ἀποκρίνου, ἵνα μὴ μάτην οἱ διάλογοι γίνωνται).²¹ Let us note that the phrase “in vain” (μάτην), used a little earlier by Socrates (110a3), again pointed to another indispensable condition for their discussion: the willingness of the god (θεός).²² To give an answer is to adopt that answer for oneself; hence it is also to accept responsibility for it. If Socrates states that the personal opinions of Alcibiades can (and should) express the truth, he probably implies thereby the relative simplicity of the questions that he puts,²³ as much as the sincerity that should characterize them. As Olympiodorus remarks, “Often the interlocutor agrees to propositions that are not the opinions of the person asking, and on the basis of which the syllogism is constructed.”²⁴ The great weakness of Alcibiades, in the first part of the dialogue, lies in his refusal to learn and then to respond. He will try at several points to avoid replying and will require Socrates to do so for him.²⁵ But he will end up recognizing how well founded his role as respondent was, making the following remark (which recalls what Socrates says to Polus in the *Gorgias*, 475d5–6): “I need to reply, and I do not believe that this will do me any harm.”²⁶ To this Socrates exclaims, “You are prophetic (Μαντικὸς γὰρ εἶ),” a term of praise that contrasts with his other exclamation a little earlier, according to which it is crazy (μανικὸν) to undertake to teach what one does not know;²⁷ thereby a rather obvious play on words is added to the compliment.

Besides the need to answer with sincerity and fairness as a condition for successful dialogue, Olympiodorus emphasizes the necessity to respond to the questions clearly, without ambiguity, and in terms that match those of the original question.²⁸ He points out for instance errors contained in one of Alcibiades’ answers. In “this answer, Alcibiades makes three mistakes. Firstly, though only asked for a single answer he has given three. Secondly, these answers were not straightforward, but ambiguous. . . . Thirdly, he errs when he presents ‘being a victim of deception, violence, or confiscation’ as three different things, whereas

one can speak of them all under the common heading of injustice. . . . So he should have mentioned the common term, and so not presented them as three.”²⁹ These mistakes are indicative of gaps but also of stages in the apprenticeship of the young man in the art of discussion and reasoning, the art that Socrates endeavors to impart to him in the course of his refutation.

Agreement and Truth

The elenctic method of Socrates aims above all to reveal the contradictions between two or more opinions of the interlocutor. That means teaching him the necessity for logical coherence in the same breath. In the same way as disagreement between two persons demonstrates that error resides in (at least) one of them, contradiction between the opinions of one and the same person guarantees falsity among them. The aim of Socratic discussion is agreement, and this agreement is, for Olympiodorus, the partial expression of a collection of true opinions, linked with the common notions that each person has within. Though agreement is not necessarily a guarantee of truth, it is still an indicator of probability. As Olympiodorus points out, “Disagreement is a sign of ignorance and of a lack of knowledge; not that those who are in mutual agreement are knowledgeable in every case (for Democriteans, in mutual agreement on the existence of void, nevertheless lack knowledge for that reason, because void does not exist), but the wise are in agreement with one another.”³⁰ An agreement reached in dialogue with Socrates is an even more probable sign of truth, because he at least always follows the internal voice of his conscience, and hence the common notions.³¹ Such is the sense that Olympiodorus attributes, in his commentary on the *Gorgias*, to *Alcibiades* 114e: “For as [Socrates] said in the *Alcibiades*, if you do not listen to your own voice, . . . do not put your trust in what anybody else says.”³² In other words, even if many people contradict me, it is *possible* that I am nevertheless correct; but on the other hand, if I contradict myself I am *necessarily* wrong.³³ Finally, let me draw attention here to a pedagogic progression (that Olympiodorus fails to pick up): Socrates is leading Alcibiades from the notion of agreement between several individuals³⁴ toward that of the agreement of a single individual with himself or herself.³⁵

It is, moreover, striking to observe the similarities between the conception of the elenchus adopted by Olympiodorus and that defended by Gregory Vlastos. According to both of them the false opinions of the respondent imply the presence within them of true opinions that form a coherent set of doctrines, which the refutation indirectly reveals.³⁶ Olympiodorus goes further than Vlastos in thinking of

Socratic knowledge as proceeding from the common notions, and therefore as sure and unerring. Further, while Vlastos finds no Socratic solution to the “problem of the elenchus” and sees in the Theory of Recollection, from the *Meno* on, a specifically Platonic solution, Olympiodorus for his part detects in the maieutic delivery of the common notions a continuity between Socraticism and Platonism.

Types of Questions

The *Alcibiades* is thus characterized, at every step of the discussion, by the cooperative spirit of Socrates as questioner and adviser. While Alcibiades encounters some difficulties, Socrates encourages him and aids him in various ways. Moreover, Socrates’ tact is evident in the fact that he is reluctant to humiliate Alcibiades in front of others: he specifies that it is because they are alone³⁷ that he allows himself to reveal to him the hard truth, that he is prey to the worst kind of ignorance. In the interests of helping him, Socrates often offers him, as a preliminary step, examples of questions and answers so that the youth may imitate him in his turn.³⁸ This strategic and well-intentioned approach is illustrated by the types of question that Socrates asks, particularly hypothetical questions. I note here their principal types, without endeavoring to provide an exhaustive list. To start with, of course, there is the Socratic question par excellence, “What is . . . ?” (τί ἐστιν), asked of Alcibiades with regard to three objects: the state of embarrassment into which refutation has plunged him,³⁹ the notion of self-care,⁴⁰ and finally (and less directly) the nature of a human being.⁴¹ Socrates also resorts to disjunctive questions (inviting answers of the yes/no or A/B type), which offer the respondent an object of inquiry as well as a choice between two or three possible answers. Finally, hypothetical questions are very frequent and include various subgroups (“If I were to ask you/myself/the two of us . . .”), and they often make reference to a questioner who is himself imaginary (τίς) (“if somebody were to ask me/you/us . . .”).⁴² In the *Alcibiades*, when for example Socrates wants to stress that it is shameful (αἰσχρόν) to be an adviser on matters of which one is ignorant, he resorts to an imaginary character so that Alcibiades may more readily comprehend and accept the implications of this scenario.⁴³ Olympiodorus stresses Socrates’ tact in the use of this indirect type of question, as well as its efficacy: “And because it is boorish to refute somebody in person (for it is thus that, in the Poet, Phoenix, wishing to make an impression on Achilles in refuting him, does not present his speech *in propria persona*, but introduces Peleus as an intermediary to refute Achilles), Socrates does not rest content with the use of another character, but he

even employs the one being refuted to make a greater impression.”⁴⁴ Hypothetical questions also aim at coming to the help of the respondent (in giving him encouragement to persevere or in explaining to him a detail that is causing him a problem), while remaining strategic to the extent that they facilitate the granting of premises needed by Socrates for the completion of his refutation. These questions allow him to bring about refutation without any immediate and obvious damage to the self-respect of his interlocutor.⁴⁵

Dubious Argument and Strategic Aim

Finally, let us briefly examine several dubious arguments that Socrates makes use of for the refutation of Alcibiades. I limit myself here to the section in which Socrates presents justice as identical with the advantageous (113d–116d). Against Alcibiades’ objections that the just and the advantageous are not identical (113d5–7), Socrates offers the following universal argument: everything just is honorable (115a); everything honorable is good (116c); everything good is beneficial (116c); hence everything just is beneficial (116d). Socrates’ approach is both gradual and strategic. At first he makes Alcibiades admit that certain just things are honorable, and that all just things are honorable. He offers an example well suited to Alcibiades, involving the honorable nature of courage, like that of Achilles wounded in saving his friend, cowardice being for Alcibiades the worst of evils (115d7–8). The distinction, in a way an ontological one, that Socrates establishes between courage (manifestation of honor) and death (possible fatal consequence) as if they were two distinct entities (Ἄρ’ οὖν οὐκ ἄλλο μὲν ἡ ἀνδρεία, ἄλλο δὲ ὁ θάνατος; 115c1) is only fair in a limited sense, because it involves two phenomena that are in reality inseparable; courage depends on an awareness of potentially fatal risks.

In addition, Socrates’ argument sometimes errs through oversimplification; for example, he proposes that people are happy owing to their acquisition of goods (Οὐκοῦν εὐδαίμονες δι’ ἀγαθῶν κτήσιν, 116b7–8), something that appears, to say the least, problematic to the extent that Socrates distinguishes elsewhere in Plato between good things and their use (e.g., *Euthydemus* 280d–281b). Socrates in fact plays upon the equivocation of the expression εὖ πράττειν, which translates literally as “to behave well” but commonly signifies “to be happy”; he thus surreptitiously effects the transition from “be happy” (τὸ εὖ πράττειν) to “good conduct” (ἡ εὐπραγία, 116b11–14).⁴⁶

Although he almost always defends the soundness of Socrates’ arguments, Olympiodorus still recognizes that Socrates “proves” that Alcibiades does not

know utility by building on an “antiparastasis,” because the demonstration (ἔνστασις) that justice and utility are identical would require several arguments; he will only have recourse to this afterward: “If justice and utility are identical, and if it has been shown that you do not know justice, it has also been shown that you do not know utility; if, however, they differ and it is shown by the same arguments that you do not know utility, then you will have been proved ignorant of two things instead of just one.”⁴⁷

Overall, Socrates’ argument in favor of the thesis that justice is identical with utility (113d–116d) has the primary function, at this point of the dialogue, of making Alcibiades aware of his ignorance, and therefore receptive to Socrates and to philosophy. In other words, the aim of these arguments is not the rigorous proof of a thesis but the revelation of Alcibiades’ confusion, of which he must himself become conscious before being able to make an advance toward the true knowledge of himself.⁴⁸ This is why, even if Olympiodorus almost always defends the arguments of Socrates, including those whose logical validity seems to us today to be seriously compromised, the exegetical approach of Olympiodorus has the merit of showing that all the arguments of Socrates, in the first part of the dialogue, have as their primary strategic function to instill into the young Alcibiades a consciousness of his ignorance, as is otherwise revealed by various dramatic aspects of the dialogue.

Conclusion

This short consideration of the formal aspects of the argumentation of the elenctic section of the dialogue (106c–119a) has also sought, indirectly, to stress the contribution that Olympiodorus’s commentary can make today, particularly regarding the Socraticism of Plato.

In his introduction to his commentary on the *Alcibiades*, Nicholas Denyer makes the perceptive remark that the act of writing philosophic dialogues, in this case a dialogue presenting an exemplary philosopher seeking to attract to philosophy somebody who was to become famous for his unscrupulous life, implies the adoption of a stance concerning the nature of philosophy, its techniques and its power, and its relation to other ways of life as well as obstacles to the philosophic life. These implicit positions (by comparison with the explicit affirmations of the author of a treatise) force the reader to pay attention to all aspects of literary form: “We will miss the dialogue’s answers to these philosophical questions about philosophy, if we bypass its literary form, in an attempt to go straight to its content.”⁴⁹

The merit of Olympiodorus's exegesis resides among other things precisely in the detailed and systematic attention that he affords to the dramatic action as an integral part of the doctrinal content. In general, his interpretation highlights the following aspects: (1) the moral conditions for philosophy, including the willingness to undergo moral improvement and the capacity for progress in the love of wisdom; (2) elenchus and midwifery as two complementary functions of Socratic dialectic (the mutual agreement of interlocutors and the coherence of the common notions as criteria of truth); (3) the close ties between pedagogy and rhetoric, which illuminate the enigmatic character of both the method and the person of Socrates; (4) the direct connections that join the daimonic and erotic activities of Socrates; and (5) finally, the exegesis of hidden implication, a second-level maieutic, involving the reader's going beyond the immediate results of the arguments in search of the deeper meaning of the text. These aspects of Socrates' wisdom in the *Alcibiades*, such as they are skillfully interpreted by Olympiodorus, deserve even today to be pondered by Plato's readers.

CHAPTER 9

Akrasia and *Enkrateia* in Simplicius's Commentary on Epictetus's *Encheiridion*

Marilynn Lawrence

... it is said that Socrates was always seen in the same
demeanor, and never moved by things that seem pleasurable
and painful, because he always lived out one and the same
life, his own.

—Simplicius, in *Epicteti Encheiridion*
(tr. Brennan and Brittain [2002: 89])

Introduction

Is it possible to knowingly err? In other words, can someone possessing knowledge of correct action willingly chose otherwise? Socrates did not think so, or at least that is how his position is characterized in the *Protagoras*. Making sense of this argument has been labeled by contemporary Socratic scholars as the problem of *akrasia*.¹ In this niche of Socratic philosophy, Socrates' denial of *akrasia* and Aristotle's response to it in the *Nicomachean Ethics* have been well discussed, producing numerous interpretations of the argument that no one willingly chooses to do what he or she knows to be an error or a worse action.² The primary problem centers upon the fact that Socrates denies the possibility of weakness of will, or even the idea that reason can be overtaken by pleasure. Strikingly, this view seems to be in direct contradiction to the commonsense notion not only that such weakness does exist but also that often human beings

act counter to what it is they know to be good. This sticky problem of akrasia is also related to another commonly discussed topic in Socratic studies, “Socratic intellectualism,” where virtue is identified with knowledge. As most can readily understand, Socratic intellectualism and its links to the philosopher’s infamous denial of akrasia threaten to make Socrates susceptible to the accusation that he ignores the role of emotions and richer psychological considerations in moral decision making.³

The problem of akrasia is further complicated by the fact that in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, book VII, Aristotle attributes different views to Socrates and Plato, by placing the denial of akrasia upon a historical Socrates, rather than Plato’s fictional character. By accepting a good portion of the *Magna Moralia* as authentically by Aristotle, Irwin amplifies Aristotle’s position with this direct contrast between Socrates’ intellectualist position and Plato.⁴ From the *Magna Moralia*, we have the following:

For [Socrates] used to make the virtues sciences, and this is impossible. For the sciences all involve reason, and reason is to be found in the intellectual part of the soul. So that all the virtues, according to him, are to be found in the rational part of the soul. The result is that in making the virtues into sciences he is doing away with the irrational part of the soul, and is thereby doing away also both with passion and moral character; so that he has not been successful in this respect in his treatment of the virtues. After this Plato divided the soul into the rational and irrational part—and in this he was right—assigning appropriate virtues to each. (Tr. George Stock)⁵

Attempts to make sense of this intellectualist position along with the tripartite soul in *Republic* IV have involved drawing upon the categories of early, middle, and late dialogues, in which the Socrates of the relatively early works such as *Protagoras* is more reflective of a historical Socrates.⁶ Another tactic is to suppose that Socrates did not really deny akrasia but drew the argument out to its conclusion so as to result in an aporia. A third approach, taken by Dorter, is to reconcile the *Republic* with early Socrates by emphasizing both the aporetic nature of the *Republic* and Socrates’ subtle critique of three divisions of the soul whereby manifestations of reason, spiritedness, and appetites are on a continuum rather than reflecting discrete parts of the soul, for the true soul is undivided.⁷ On this view, book IV presents a model of the soul that is for the majority, while for those (such as Socrates, perhaps) who have obtained vision of the true as illustrated in book

VII's cave metaphor, "weakness of will is no longer a danger because it is a vision that cannot be attained by a divided soul."⁸

While contemporary philosophers struggle to make sense of Socrates' denial of akrasia, the issue left its indelible mark on the philosophers following Socrates and Plato. Aristotle, the Stoics, and Neoplatonists such as Plotinus arrived at their own positions on akrasia and its opposite state of *enkrateia* or self-control. Nevertheless, it was the later philosopher Simplicius who attempted (successfully, I think) to harmonize seemingly disparate views, by saving the phenomenon (that one can knowingly err) while preserving Socrates' intellectualist position. He does so through his commentary on Epictetus's *Encheiridion*, which aims at the very practical enterprise of training young philosophers in the acquisition of virtue. For both Epictetus and Simplicius "the divine Socrates"⁹ serves as the paradigm of one who desires only that which is reasonable. Throughout his reading, however, Simplicius draws a distinction between sages like Socrates and the rest of us aspirants, who must first form proper habits in the soul before the reality of akrasia can be denied.

Aristotle on Akrasia

As mentioned above, Aristotle thought that Socrates' denial of akrasia contradicts the phenomenon. Unlike Socrates, Aristotle accepts that someone can be knowingly led by pleasure to do the worse thing. But, as for Socrates (and for Plato), for Aristotle some actions are done out of ignorance of the good. Having already made distinctions among types of ignorance in *EN* III, in *EN* VII¹⁰ he takes up the phenomenon unexplained by Plato's Socrates by making distinctions of types of knowledge, vices, and weaknesses of will. He also addresses moral responsibility, which is virtually omitted in the Socratic account of akrasia. Threatened by the notion that akrasia can happen on the basis of belief or opinion rather than knowledge, Aristotle makes the argument (also made in the *Eudemian Ethics*)¹¹ that akrasia involves knowledge rather than mere opinion. A definition of akrasia cannot be based on pure ignorance (never having learned)—that would count as a different cause for wrongdoing. Rather, one can *knowingly* do wrong by employing a distinction between two types of knowledge—general knowledge, and exercise of that knowledge in a given opportunity.¹² Gerson described it aptly as "a disconnect between belief in the universal proposition and belief that it applies to oneself or to oneself now."¹³

Akrasia involves a responsibility for one's actions, even if impairment

prevents one from remembering the general knowledge that was previously acquired, for the conditions that result in impairment were formed out of habits that might have been otherwise if knowledge had been exercised earlier in character formation. Actions arising from anger or appetite (*thumos* and *epithumia*, *EN* 1111b2) are not, according to Aristotle, involuntary,¹⁴ and *akrasia* arising out of these is similar to the forgetting of knowledge in sleep, madness, or drunkenness.¹⁵ Even in these states, Aristotle claims, possession of knowledge can be mimicked like actors reciting lines. Rather than being a temporary state like drunkenness, *akrasia* appears to have a more permanent nature. It is notable that throughout this discussion Aristotle refers to types of persons with a certain character or moral disposition, rather than to specific instances of self-control or lack of self-control within a given individual.

Continuing on this account, *akrasia* (notably translated as “Imperfect Self-Control” by D. P. Chase in the mid-nineteenth century)¹⁶ is the middle ground between those who are utterly depraved (either the criminally insane or those who practice evils as a custom)¹⁷ and a person of perfect self-mastery (ὁ σώφρων) who lacks strong or bad passions that need to be controlled. The *akratic* character is further distinguished from those who believe they are correct to pursue a pleasure (although it is an incorrect course of action) and those who are entirely lacking in self-control (ὁ ἀκόλαστος, 1146b20). The *akolastic* person is worse than the *akratic* and incurable.¹⁸ Aristotle also notes a difference between two main types of *akrasia*: the deliberative sort, and the impulsive nondeliberative or “precipitancy” *akrasia*.¹⁹ This difference is primarily one of temperament: the former is slower and allows deliberation but does not act on it due to weakness, whereas the latter, having a quicker and more melancholic²⁰ nature, does not allow time for reason to kick in and stop the impulse. Melancholic *akrasia* is more curable than the deliberative *akrasia*, though Aristotle does not say how this is so.²¹

Akrasia Following Plato and Aristotle

On the surface, the Stoic position on *akrasia* appears to be uncomplicated. For the early Stoa, at least for Chrysippus, Socrates’ denial of the existence of *akrasia* is defended, for the soul is unified and rational, and the passions are rational as well.²² The passions, by this theory, are judgments that involve assent to impressions, but they are false judgments because they deem something good or bad, whereas due to universal providence, nothing that happens is really good or bad, for only our impressions make it seem so.²³ Plutarch attributes to Chrysippus what

Joyce calls the “oscillation model,” in which competing judgments in one unified soul convert from one to the other so quickly that they seem to be competing parts or faculties of the soul, giving the appearance of reason being dragged along by the appetites.²⁴ In reaction to the criticism of this position (most likely from the Platonic school), the middle Stoics Posidonius and Panaetius modify this position and accept the possibility of akrasia. In Cicero’s account, Panaetius separates impulse from reason, thereby allowing for irrational decisions.²⁵

The influence of Socrates on the Stoics cannot be denied, and, as Gill (and Sedley) have pointed out, there is evidence that the early Stoics made a clear distinction between a Socratic and Platonic influence on the development of their psychology.²⁶ However, Gill sees in the *Republic* books VIII and IX an antecedent for the pervasiveness of rationalism in Stoic psychology. The clearest influential idea from Plato in this regard is “that psychological stability and cohesion are confined to those who are fully rational or ‘wise,’ whereas the non-wise are more or less conflicted and unstable.”²⁷ The boundary between Plato and Socrates on “intellectualism” becomes blurred when we consider that akrasia may only be possible for the non-wise, making the commonsense understanding of weakness of will for the majority (the non-wise) more prominent in Plato.

If the early Stoa denied the existence of akrasia, Epictetus appears to agree with them and asks, “Can someone, then, think that something is advantageous to him, and not choose it?”²⁸ He quotes the famous passage from Euripides’ *Medea* (1078–1080) that Galen says was also used by Chrysippus:²⁹

I know what evils I intend to do,
But *thumos* is the master of my purposes.³⁰

For Epictetus, Medea thought “gratification of her *thumos* in taking vengeance on her husband [to be] more profitable than saving her children.”³¹ In short, she gave consent to wrong impressions.³² While it appears that emotions have got hold of the rational faculty, it is really a matter of two conflicting beliefs or impressions, and not reason being dragged about by emotion. The belief held by Medea that it would be better to kill her children could be corrected if pointed out to her (and only if pointed out to her) that this would really be less advantageous.³³

While Epictetus may have endorsed Socratic intellectualism³⁴ and agreed with the early Stoics on the Socratic denial of akrasia, he differed from them in his ethical approach, for he is more concerned with educating the fallible human being than with extolling the virtues of the perfect sage.³⁵ His discourses were directed at his young students, and include advice (grounded on his Stoic and Socratic

philosophy) on numerous problems encountered in the day-to-day life of such students. Long argues that Epictetus gives his students techniques for preventing assent to deceptive or subjective impressions; he encourages us to delay acting upon them, or to engage in dialogue with them, thereby allowing an alternative representation to arise if necessary.³⁶ His pedagogical goals are less ambitious than attaining the status of sage but are far more manageable and relevant.

Moving on to the next century, Plotinus does not address the problem of *akrasia* in a direct manner. Nevertheless, Gerson finds an account of *akrasia* in which Plotinus borrows insights on the topic from Stoics and Peripatetic philosophers.³⁷ Very briefly stated, for Plotinus there are voluntary desires (directed toward the good) and involuntary desires that arise out of one's self-identification with the composite self that, through embodiment, contains a mixture of good and evil because of its turning toward matter. So weakness of will has its source in a person's ignorance or forgetting of one's true self that has only rational desires (for the Good). Gerson notes, "Whether the confusion [over one's identity resulting in *akrasia*] is chronic or sporadic or even remediable is a secondary question."³⁸ These questions are ones Aristotle addressed to a degree, but as we'll see, by synthesizing the Socratic, Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic accounts, Simplicius fills in the gap by more extensively addressing these issues in his work dedicated to the moral education of young minds.

Strikingly, though Plotinus does speak to the Socratic problem of the existence of *akrasia*, whether it is possible to knowingly choose the worse over the better, he does not speak of it in a direct manner. In fact we could draw out from his positions on the virtues and on freedom of the will two levels of *akrasia*, one in which *akrasia* is impossible and another where it is very possible. The issue depends on what knowledge means and who is doing the knowing. From the perspective of the intellectual principle, the soul possesses knowledge or *gnôsis* when in complete identification with it,³⁹ making the choice to do wrong impossible. There would be no pull between the right action and apparent goods since full knowledge would show the lesser good for what it is—not the Good. However, since emotions do arise and guide actions for the embodied, *akrasia* does exist from the perspective of the soul, which has attachment to both the higher *Nous* and the lower material cosmos. Plotinus's solution for extrication from situations of a faltering will is to achieve perfection of the soul through contemplation of the Good. Unlike the advice of Epictetus, this is not necessarily a practical solution for daily affairs and struggles of the will, and the state of *gnôsis* may be just as scarce as the Stoic sage (who is as rare as the Ethiopian phoenix even for the Stoics).⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Plotinus believes that a life of flourishing (*eudaimonia*) in the

truest sense, one lived in the realm of the intellect, is possible for a human being and not just the gods.⁴¹ He describes such a person in his treatise “On Virtues” (*Enn.* 1.2), someone comparable to Aristotle’s person of complete self-mastery (*sôphrôn*). The ethical and civic virtues (*politikai aretai*) are not sufficient for obtaining this state of being, whereas purgative virtues (*kathartikai aretai*) cleanse the soul of identification with the body and the passions that arise out of this association.⁴² When purified, akrasia is not possible because the soul draws itself away from the body and will not desire anything but the good:

It hinders spirited passion (*thumos*) as much as possible, entirely if possible, but if it cannot, at least then it does not join itself to the anger, relegating the involuntary as something other than itself, and it is minimized and weakened. . . . And what about desire (*epithumia*)? It clearly will desire nothing bad; it will not itself have desire of food and drink in respect of indulgence, and in no wise of sexual pleasures. If it does hold any desires, I think, it is of natural ones, and not those that are involuntary.⁴³

Turning to later antiquity, Proclus does not choose akrasia as a theme in his works, but we do find in his discussion of providence (*Dec. dub.*) a metaphysics accounting for weakness of will. On this account, an all-powerful providence is the cause of all good things due to its alignment/identification with the One. The gods (the coproducers to the demiurge in the *Timaeus*) exercise providential care over the things they produce, while leaving some of the administrative tasks to the daimons.⁴⁴ Proclus argues that it is absurd to think that the gods are capable but not willing to do what they are capable of doing. Likewise, persons who are good are both capable and willing to do good. They do not have a will to do what they are not capable of (in the case of akrasia, doing the worse action), nor do they have a capacity without a corresponding will to use it.⁴⁵ We do not get from this a sense of whether akrasia can arise, because Proclus is speaking of the good who are among us (*τῶν ἀγαθῶν τῶν παρ’ ἡμῶν*) and not how they realized their goodness.

We do, however, obtain a metaphysical explanation for akrasia in his discussion of why evil exists, and more specifically that which is outside reason and evil in souls (*Dec. dub.* 30). Here, Proclus notes that when the mortal part of us gains the upper hand of the immortal or divine in us, vice results. *Thumos* (spiritedness or anger) and *epithumia* (desire) are in themselves natural and are a natural part of beings given an irrational part. The rational part also naturally acts according to reason. The clash of both parts just doing what they do naturally results in evil, but an evil with a derivative existence (*παρυπόστασιν*) rather than existence of its

own. Being beyond or amiss with reason makes it evil, but being a result of natural tendencies makes it not evil. Everything is transformed by its superior when it becomes subservient to it, but if the irrational wishes to be self-moved (and not moved by reason), it loses its participation in the good. Furthermore, Proclus holds that this conflict between the rational and the irrational is a necessary part of the providential whole, and “the activity contrary to reason exists so that reason may act according to reason.”⁴⁶ In the location where Proclus directly mentions *akrasia* (in his commentary on the *Republic*) this point is reiterated—*akrasia* is the result of a contention between reason (*logos*) and emotion (*pathos*), and it is both bad and not bad for it makes reason what it is.⁴⁷

Simplicius’s Education for the Akratic-prone

Turning now to Simplicius, at first glance it may seem odd that this Aristotelianizing Platonist should choose a Stoic work, Epictetus’s *Encheiridion*, as the sounding board for his own moral philosophy. The reasons for this are discussed by others,⁴⁸ but besides the fact that the *Handbook* appears to fit well as an introduction to the Neoplatonic curriculum, it is likely that he targeted a similar audience to that to which he thought Epictetus directed his work.⁴⁹ The commentary is not for a philosopher who has obtained wisdom (for she would have no need for such a guide) and is not for the “ordinary person” (ιδιώτης)⁵⁰ who has not made necessary lifestyle changes to pursue philosophy, but is for those who are in an early to intermediate stage of commitment toward becoming philosophers (and have shown some progress). These individuals are, for Simplicius, those who have embarked on an education to care for the soul and who are holding “their essence in accordance with a rational soul and using the body as an instrument.”⁵¹ Socrates served as the exemplar for such students, not only as someone who lived as his true self and held this proper or “natural” relationship to the body but also as one who provided the arguments for this understanding of the human being per se (*Alcibiades I*, 129c ff.)—Simplicius outlines this argument in his commentary’s introduction.⁵²

Turning now to the commentary itself, Simplicius notes that Epictetus is correct to begin the *Handbook* with the issue of what is or is not up to us (ἐφ’ ἡμῖν) as the central question for ethical philosophy; for “according to this we partake of the good and its opposite.”⁵³ When we desire things that are not in our control, we become distressed and tend to blame others and “those who control the universe” (τοὺς τὰ ὅλα διοικοῦντας), while foregoing something that is up to us, namely, our

ability to correctly desire and avoid.⁵⁴ He agrees with the Stoic that we shouldn't care to obtain such things as honors and wealth that are generally outside our power, but he doesn't think we should remove desires altogether.⁵⁵ Some desires we should remove, while others, such as a desire for marriage or property, should be deferred until one's moral education is complete.⁵⁶ Some irrational desires can be useful for leading a virtuous life when under careful control of the rational soul. However, the care or attention paid to the body and other matters not up to us distract us from care of the soul. Someone who cares for money does not care for the genuine human being [ὁ ἀληθὺς ἄνθρωπος]⁵⁷ who uses the body as an instrument, but merely for an instrument of an instrument.⁵⁸ Postponing worldly matters, which have a place in a virtuous life, removes these distractions so that care of the soul can solidify and become habitual and the rational part can prevail throughout one's life.

The basic tenet of philosophy, to know thyself, in this context means to know the capacity of a human being. This is a fundamental step toward achieving the good life. Simplicius argues that the life of the earnest/good person (σπουδαίου) is more beneficial and pleasant than that of the licentiousness person. By way of demonstration, he uses the notion that the intemperate person (ἀκολασία) can change to be more temperate (σωφροσύνη), but the reverse doesn't happen such that the temperate become intemperate. Therefore, temperance appears to be a greater and more desirable good to the temperate person than licentiousness is to an intemperate person.⁵⁹ Intemperance is then curable through philosophical education—at least up to a point. Training of the soul early in life is character shaping. Early formation of good habits by practicing avoidance of harmful or unnecessary pleasures, or of false or lesser goods, provides exercise of reason over the lower passions.

What, then, was Simplicius's position on akrasia, on the existence of, definition of, and possible remedy for weakness of will? In the *Handbook* commentary, he refers to akrasia three times, in reference to weak-willed people (ἀκρατέσι), a "disposition called lack of self-control" (ἀκρατῆς ἡ διάθεσις λέγεται), and "considerable lack of self-control" (πολλῆς ἀκρατείας).⁶⁰ He mentions the opposing disposition of self-control (ἐγκράτεια) a total of nine times.⁶¹ In the scope of his commentary, self-control, weakness of will, and its treatment is a prominent theme throughout. In fact, Simplicius thrice quotes the famous lines from *Medea* (already mentioned above) used by both Chrysippus and Epictetus: "I know what evils I intend to do, / But *thumos* is the master of my purposes."⁶²

Simplicius first uses these lines when speaking of the necessity to possess wisdom in order to know what is beneficial or harmful to the good life. *Medea's*

struggle represents an error in judgment that can occur in two ways: through a lack of practical wisdom resulting in reason's not determining or defining (διορίζοντος) what should be done, and by reason knowing what is necessary to do "even when weakened" (or slackened) (εἰ καὶ ἀτόνωος), though the irrational appetites (ἀλόγων ὀρέξεων), not being educated (ἀπαιδευσίαν), successfully rebel against reason in its weakened state. The first case where reason does not grasp the right thing to do would not be *akrasia* proper, which requires knowledge, but the second explanation is *akrasia* since reason is overcome or enslaved by the irrational desires. *Akrasia* occurs when the soul is partially educated (reason is in operation but not fully in control), but has not graduated with a degree in *sôphrosunê*.

The second mention of the lines from *Medea* occurs when Simplicius is commenting on chapter 5 of the *Encheiridion*, in which Epictetus says: "It is the act of an uneducated person to throw the blame of his own bad state of affairs upon others; of one beginning to be educated to fault himself; and of one perfectly educated, neither upon another nor himself."⁶³ Here we have three levels of education corresponding to the possibility of *akrasia*. Simplicius asks why the person whose education is under way, a person who knows that the good and bad are in our control and who correspondingly blames himself, would err in the first place. He answers that the "irrational emotions do not always become measured and harmonious and subordinated to reason," especially when "through the laziness and lethargy of reason and the continuous motion of irrationality, the emotions have become muscular and tyrannical."⁶⁴ This situation he attributes to *Medea*. On this view, in order for a cognizant weakness of will to occur, two conditions are necessary: a weakening or laziness of reason to act according to its knowledge of good and bad; and a surging power of the irrational appetites or passions. The person of the first disposition, who blames others, however, does not even have a conception of rational and irrational, so she easily mistakes good from bad like the uneducated youth who despises his teacher for depriving him of some pleasure or another.⁶⁵ *Akrasia* and *enkrateia* don't enter the picture for the person of the third disposition, who never blames anyone, for that person's irrationality has been conquered by full rationality. Reason always acts in accordance with knowledge for this person, who always obtains what she desires and what is in her own control because she only desires the good. While Simplicius's acquaintanceship with Aristotle's ethical works is not overtly demonstrated in his exegesis of the *Handbook*, one can immediately see the parallel between his (and Epictetus's) understanding of these three levels and Aristotle's distinctions between *akolasia*, *akrasia*, and the self-mastery of the *sôphrôn*. Simplicius, however, doesn't distinguish between the deliberative and impulsive sorts of *akrasia*, for it appears that

the impulsive sort of akrasia happens in an earlier developmental stage prior to any moral education. Following Epictetus, Simplicius puts matters of self-mastery in terms of education, so that the akolastic (or the impulsive akratic) disposition, particularly in youth, can yet be changed by embarking on the path of philosophical instruction. Several times he refers to the emotional part of the soul as the “childish part in us” (παιδικὸν),⁶⁶ denoting a state of immaturity that is not permanent but correctible. Nevertheless, the window of opportunity for this education seems to narrow as one gets older and becomes more inclined to pursue matters external to one’s own control. A disposition toward certain desires and behaviors then solidifies into one’s character.

The third time that Simplicius quotes *Medea* is in his discussion of chapter 6, in which Epictetus instructs us to not exult in advantages that are not our own. Someone who takes pride in his beautiful horse is exulting not in his own excellence but in that of the horse. What we do have of our own is the use of impressions (χρησις φαντασιῶν). “So when you would have use of impressions according to nature, at that time you should be elated.”⁶⁷ Simplicius asks what he means by natural use of impressions and concludes that this use is “the desire and aversion for goods and bads, when they occur in accordance with nature,”⁶⁸ and furthermore, he might mean that “our deeds should be consonant with true beliefs and desires.”⁶⁹ In other words, merely having a correct belief is not sufficient; it must be reflected in our conduct. Otherwise, when these desires are “faint” and mixed with opposing desires, the irrational passions overcome reason as they did for *Medea*. Putting knowledge to practice is indispensable in the soul’s education, for practice makes perfect.

If those prone to akrasia have their education under way, the same holds for the counterdisposition of *enkrateia*. Simplicius notes Epictetus’s choice of this word over more perfect virtues such as *sôphrosunê*: “For things that seem pleasant, God gave the soul self-control. Epictetus did not say ‘temperance,’ but rather ‘self-control’ because this advice is directed to those who are still being educated. In their case, the emotions are still aroused and in dispute with reason, although they are worsted by it when the education is effectual.”⁷⁰ Likewise, for the fully educated there is the virtue of courage or manliness (ἀνδρεία), but for the partially educated there is endurance (καρτερία).⁷¹ Those possessing courage labor on without experiencing distress, while those with endurance fight through painful situations, and this “keeps the soul from falling down” (ποιοῦσα μὴ καταπίπτειν τὴν ψυχὴν).⁷² Simplicius defines temperance (σωφροσύνη) as “the preservation (σωτηρία) and superiority (ὑπεροχή) of that in us which thinks (φρονούντος). (For when the thinking part is subjected to the emotions, it is divided and torn apart by

them; but when it transcends the passions then it remains safe and whole [όλόκληρον].)”⁷³ This completeness of parts (όλόκληρον) echoes Plato’s concern with wholeness of the soul,⁷⁴ for Simplicius emphasizes throughout this work that the real soul *is* the rational, while the irrational emotions, tied to the body, are concerned for the instrument rather than the true self.⁷⁵

A Tense Soul and an Ethical Disposition

On a certain level, contra Socrates’ denial of *akrasia*, for Simplicius it is possible to know the right thing to do but to fail to do it as reason is overcome by baser appetites. He is not speaking of perfect or complete knowledge of the Good that translates into practical wisdom. As stated above, *akrasia* becomes impossible for individuals who possess such knowledge and can effortlessly put it into practice. To acquire such a permanent disposition,⁷⁶ however, requires more than knowledge of good or bad. It requires three interrelated activities: remembrance, the development of an “ethical disposition,”⁷⁷ and conditioning in order to produce a taut soul.

Simplicius points to Epictetus’s frequent use of the instruction “Remember” (Μέμνησο) and has the following to say about it: “He addresses it to the rational soul, which, though it has accounts of the real existents joined to its essence (since the truth about them is innate in it) is sometimes lacking in the intensity (ἀπονοῦσαν) required for pure vision owing to the pull of its power to engage with becoming. Hence it is degraded to forgetfulness—the cause of everything bad in it—and needs to hear continually the phrase ‘Remember.’”⁷⁸ In this classically Platonic interpretation, remembrance (or recollection) takes on the power of revealing to the soul its true nature, and the knowledge and vision of the Good that it already possesses, while forgetfulness is the source of all badness in a soul. Simplicius draws upon the *Phaedrus* in this matter,⁷⁹ for he describes this pull as the wheeling around (τῷ περισπασμῷ) that is like the circular motion Plato describes as carrying immortal souls around to the rim of the heavens, “as they stand while they gaze upon what is outside heaven.”⁸⁰ On the way around the cosmic Ferris wheel, the soul “has a view of Justice as it is; it has a view of Self-control; it has a view of Knowledge.”⁸¹ Due to forgetfulness, some souls cannot keep pace with the god they follow and do not see anything true before shedding their wings and falling to earth.⁸² Unfortunately, for the souls who never caught a glimpse of the Good, the philosophical education may never take hold because memory of knowledge “of what really is what it is” (τὴν ἐν τῷ ὃ ἐστὶν ὄν ὄντως ἐπιστήμην οὔσαν, *Phaedrus* 247e) is weak or nonexistent.

Added to this Platonic account of remembrance is the Stoic theory of tension and slackness in the soul. For Cleanthes, tension is a property of the fiery logos that maintains the cosmos, and it is related to the soul, and for Chrysippus good tension (*eutonia*) is a virtuous state, while lack of tension (*atonia*) is a vicious state.⁸³ Simplicius uses a concept of tension or intensity and its opposite of slackness or lack of intensity a number of times in the commentary,⁸⁴ two of which have been mentioned already: in the first, reason knows what to do but may be slackened, giving the irrational emotions the opportunity to take over the decision; and in the second case, lack of intensity (*ἀτονουσαν*) is a cause of the soul's falling into forgetfulness. In a passage commenting on envy, jealousy, and desire for honors, Simplicius points out that someone who is lacking tension in the soul would be prone to jealousy over another's power, reputation, or attainment. On the other hand, someone with intensity or tension is competitive and may experience envy or rivalry (*ζῆλος*), which unlike ill-willed jealousy (*φθόνος*) can be good: "Envy is good and akin to love of the good when its object is virtue, but bad and co-ordinate with jealousy when the object is an external thing."⁸⁵ Certain attitudes and behaviors can cause a weakening of tension, such as aiming to attain things that are not up to us⁸⁶ and trying to accomplish large matters rather than applying oneself to mastery of small things.⁸⁷ Simplicius also thinks that slackness can be corrected through (at first strenuous) exercise of the soul, and he believes that in sending human souls into the world of generation and decay, God granted human souls powers "through which they can make use of the snares and distractions in that realm without being harmed by them." And further, "God sets frequent contests for souls, and sets exercises for these powers so that they don't grow slack or lose intensity through idleness, and come to grief when the occasion calls for their use."⁸⁸ Or, as the modern adage goes, "God doesn't give you anything you can't handle."⁸⁹ Just as Theseus and Heracles were vaulted into greatness by extreme trials, Simplicius counts Socrates (along with Diogenes) as a soul who has been propelled (*προώθησε*) by God to the "extremes of simplicity and the natural life."⁹⁰ Quite interestingly, the simple life led by Socrates is characterized here as one requiring intensity of the soul rather than slackness or idleness.

Exercises of the soul in its akratic-prone stage of education are directed to the purpose of habituating oneself to reason's control over the irrational passions and appetites. This habituation preserves the "ethical disposition." *Enstasis* is used by Simplicius in a special sense, meaning to be inside oneself rather than turning to the externals or to irrational passions.⁹¹ The word he chose also has a sense of origin or beginning, so preservation of one's inward-directed disposition is akin to remembering one's celestial origins while operating amid the ordinary. The

educated individuals who have preserved enstasis are not disturbed by disorderly external things (as in Epictetus's example in chapter 12 of spilled oil or stolen wine) "because they remain within themselves, and render the external things orderly through the order that is in themselves."⁹² The development of this ethical disposition involves exercise of reason over the emotions until it becomes a habit, not a "second nature," so to speak, but one's true nature that is sometimes forgotten: "For it is mostly sudden and unexpected things that disturb students in the beginning and drive them out of themselves and make them forget their ethical disposition (ἐνστάσεως). Whereas considering things in advance makes us sober and remember, and prepares us through habituation (συνεθισμῶ) for difficulties in our impressions and expectations."⁹³ Simplicius also calls this ethical disposition the "philosophical disposition" (φιλόσοφον ἐνστασιν), which "aims to turn to oneself and the superior beings" in order to become a good person.⁹⁴ Certain passages in the *Encheiridion* are geared toward preparing the would-be philosopher for the difficulties of maintaining one's inward disposition in the face of bullies and "ordinary" people. Epictetus begins chapter 22 with the statement, "If you set your heart upon philosophy, then prepare yourself straight away to be derided and mocked by many people."⁹⁵ Simplicius adds that some students leave the ranks of those engaged in philosophical pursuit out of fear of being mocked, and so undo their ethical disposition and return to their former habits (συνήθη).⁹⁶ He notes here that when Epictetus is advising the philosopher-to-be, he is no longer speaking to those beginning a moral education but speaking to those who have made a commitment to philosophy, which is "the greatest of the gifts from God to men."⁹⁷ This commitment means living in such a way as to avoid activities of the ordinary person (ιδιώτης) whose life is guided by the irrational appetites and passions. "So the reasonable person should decline feasts for ordinary people (ιδιωτικᾶς) that are outside, i.e., of his own ethical disposition."⁹⁸

Simplicius is engaged with a work and a philosopher very much concerned with providing a solid theoretical approach to everyday problems. While all of these exercises of the soul may seem remote from Socrates' original formulation that akrasia is impossible, it is rather a continuous extension of the idea, but with eyes wide open to the realities of human fallibility. That no one errs willingly (or knowingly) remains true for the "true" self that is recollected through these exercises. The "false" that which is dragged about by irrational desires is not relevant to Socrates' definition of akrasia, for this self is not the knowing agent. This knowing self, however, is not always (or even usually) apparent while one behaves as an untrained "ordinary" person. Using the virtue ethics of Aristotle and Epictetus, Simplicius bridges the Socratic ideal and the realities on the ground.

A Concluding Note About Philosophical Education

Simplicius finds occasion in this commentary to lament about the antiphilosophical political culture of his time, particularly of unjust states and worthless governments that are “harmful to souls and especially suppress divine illumination.”⁹⁹ He offers a glimpse into the pedagogical situation in his day; and as is the case today, it seems that few people actually bond themselves to the study of philosophy in its truest sense, as a practice to better oneself and society through the pursuit of wisdom. Simplicius paints a picture of akratic and akolastic dispositions proliferating among the “ordinary people.”¹⁰⁰ Taking his cue from Epictetus’s own advice, he exhorts the philosophy student to avoid “ordinary people” in social situations in order to protect progress made toward self-control and some degree of wisdom. The pedagogical goal of Simplicius and Epictetus was to impress on the young students knowledge of truth, rather than opinion of truth, as well as values that sustain that truth. Due to the influence of Socrates, they both maintain a rationalism (that the true soul is rational), but they also acknowledge that few people can readily recognize the Good from apparent goods, and require training and instructions on day-to-day affairs. For Simplicius this training is like military boot camp, in which the mind rather than body is conditioned and habituated to maintain a “tension in the soul.” This would result in a state of preparedness when encountering situations that may lead one from the path of wisdom. In this regard, Simplicius is in agreement with Aristotle’s emphasis on habituation in the formative years to form an ethical character.

Nevertheless, we get from this picture that philosophical education in antiquity either was not abundantly available or was not valued by the majority. Philosophy has the appearance of being both an “elite” profession and a subject to ridicule.¹⁰¹ So the situation for philosophical training in self-control (enkrateia) if not in perfect wisdom and temperance (sôphrosunê) seems rather bleak.

However, Simplicius is optimistic that anyone of sane mind has the potential to recognize truth. Of the two things that are in our control, reason and the irrational emotions, reason is the “Hermes common to all”.¹⁰²

For even if the reason internal to each of us differs numerically from that in others, still it is one in form, inasmuch as everyone is drawn to the same goods, and avoids the same bads, and takes the same things to be true through reason, and conversely takes the same things to be false, with the result that the reason that is in each person is a criterion for judging the good and the bad and the true and the false. The reason in each of us

strives for forms that are incorporeal and undivided and always are in the same state and self-same manner—for instance temperance, justices, and practical wisdom. (Tr. Brennan and Brittain, slightly modified)¹⁰³

Not everyone will agree with the ultrarationalism of Socrates or the modified rationalism of Simplicius, or of any Platonist for that matter. This would hold particularly true today on the issue of the downgrading of the body and emotions. In spite of differences in culture and in the philosophical temperaments of late antiquity and today, the life of Socrates and the instruction manuals of Epictetus and Simplicius remain relevant for teaching philosophy, as long as philosophy is still considered to be a pursuit of wisdom rather than mere exercises in logic and critical thinking.

CHAPTER 10

The Many-Voiced Socrates: Neoplatonist Sensitivity to Socrates' Change of Register

Harold Tarrant

Introduction

It is not unnatural for the readers of some Neoplatonic texts to arrive at the conclusion that Neoplatonists had little idea of how one might set about distinguishing Socrates from Plato. Plenty of references to Socrates' position in the Neoplatonic commentaries leave one asking whether they meant anything different from Plato's position. One may also suspect that Socrates himself was seen as far inferior to Plato, not least because the two "perfect" dialogues, with which the commentators' Platonic curriculum finished, employed protagonists whose theological competence was clearly considered superior to that of Socrates. There is, however, another side to the Neoplatonists' work that needs to be appreciated, and that has more connection with the biographical tradition and with Socrates' mission as outlined in the *Apology* than with the formal Platonic curriculum. Though not a divinely inspired author (for he was not an author at all until the final days of his life), Socrates can still be treated as a divinely inspired questioner, committed first to self-examination, and secondly to the examination of others.

It is worth here repeating a passage, already used in Christina Manolea's chapter, from Hermias's *Commentary on Plato's Phaedrus* (1.5–9), that illustrates what the legend of the beneficent Socrates on his Apolline mission had come to mean for the school of Syrianus: "Socrates was sent down into generation for the benefit of the human race and of the souls of young persons. As there is much difference

between souls in their characters and practices, he benefits each differently, the young in one way, sophists in another, stretching his hands out to all and exhorting them to practice philosophy.” Considering that Neoplatonists now found themselves in an ultimately unsuccessful contest with Christianity, it is likely that such a description is intended to invite comparison between the divine mission of Socrates and that for which Christ himself had been immersed in human life. This is no minor philosopher with whom Hermias begins his commentary; it is the philosophic equivalent of a Messiah. Just as Jesus could not have achieved his fame by asking questions alone, so too this Socrates employs his questions for what is ultimately a hortatory purpose, involving protreptic and conversion, and it is more subtle than that of the Christian Messiah insofar as it takes full account of the differences between those he had to convert. The *Phaedrus* was a dialogue that made much of the different types of soul, itself suggesting that types of speech needed to be chosen to suit the souls that were addressed (271d, 277b–c), and using many types of speech even in this one conversation with Phaedrus, who might perhaps be regarded as a complex soul himself (cf. 277c2, 230a3–5).

As the brief Platonic *Clitophon* makes clear, a hortatory or “protreptic” role is not sufficient in itself, and Socrates’ role could be confined neither to questioning nor to exhortation. The recognition that Socrates’ role is one that employs examination did not (as it occasionally does today) lead to the assumption that he had little positive teaching to offer and no doctrines to which he was committed; rather, it led to the primacy of one particular kind of understanding, that of self-knowledge. External examination was intended to lead to internal examination, and the skillful examiner must know how to bring about the desired result. There is much that he does not have to know for this purpose, but that will not make him a skeptic. He must, as the *Phaedrus* suggests, make the recognition of souls his priority, beginning with the recognition of his own soul. Hermias responds almost with disbelief to Socrates’ apparent disavowal of self-knowledge at 229e5–6, thinking that the phrase “in accordance with the Delphic inscription” must be a qualifying phrase that requires a type of knowledge beyond human achievement. Socrates *must* know himself in the sense required of us, because knowing ourselves is fundamental to the whole Platonic curriculum, and is taught—taught by Socrates—in the very first work of that curriculum, the *Alcibiades*.

Olympiodorus, in whose *Commentary on the Alcibiades* the defining role of self-knowledge in this dialogue is fully discussed, also recognizes within three major sections of the work three separate roles for Socrates as protagonist. In the first major section, to 119a, he employs elenchus in order to demonstrate to Alcibiades his shortcomings; in the second, to 124b, he employs protreptic discourse;

and in the remainder he operates as the philosophic midwife, helping Alcibiades toward a correct understanding of the kind of creature that he really is in himself. Elenchus, protreptic, and midwifery all receive extensive discussion in the modern literature on Socrates, so that what Olympiodorus sees as the role of Socrates here may be regarded as genuinely Socratic. It might also be said that he too is recognizing a plurality of Socratic voices and not just one, even though there is once again only one rather complex interlocutor. The range of voices is different in the *Alcibiades* from that in the *Phaedrus*, where Hermias can discover in the palinode both poetic diction (174.5–17) and, at least in its final section after the conflicts within the human soul are introduced, myth (230.14–19). The *Phaedrus*, of course, not only recognizes the existence of inspired speech stemming from the crazed utterances of poets, prophets, purifiers, and lovers (244a–245a) but had actually begun to employ it already in Socrates' earlier speech (237b–241d), as may be seen in his remarks about the Nymphs possessing him (241e).

One can, at very least, claim that Plato's Socrates sometimes steps outside his familiar conversational mode and surprises one by embarking upon some nondialectical delivery. One can similarly claim, with some confidence, that Neoplatonist readers were conscious of Socrates' switches of register, and tended to take special note of the passages concerned. This chapter aims to demonstrate, first, that Neoplatonist commentators were much more sensitive to changes of register than we usually are today, and, second, that the computer is a useful tool for alerting us to the magnitude of these linguistic changes. To put it briefly, while Eudorus of Alexandria is often credited with the affirmation that "Plato is a man of many voices, not of many views,"¹ who will speak in different modes in different dialogues, the Neoplatonists recognized that this could also be said of a single character within Plato's works, his character Socrates.

The Background

A group of researchers based in Australia have recently been analyzing Plato's most basic vocabulary. Our analysis deals only with words likely to be among the three hundred commonest in most subsets of Plato's works, and aims to use the majority of words for which any of Plato's more conversational dialogues would be expected to find some use,² regardless of the nature of their subject matter or of their choice of narrative or dramatic presentation.³ Such words were designated "function words." In all, there were ninety-seven of these that regularly featured in our analyses. It is obvious that vocabulary is a familiar and important

component of style, and it has often been a focus of stylistic studies on Plato, as a glance at Brandwood (1990) will show. The major difference with our methods is that they study a large part of the recurrent vocabulary of a body of texts, using multivariate analysis rather than selected items or groups in which individual scholars may have developed a particular interest. It is possible to identify the exact words that are contributing to striking results, and reflection upon the reasons for an increased or decreased use of these words affords better hope of understanding results than would be the case when analyzing letter patterns or clausulae, for instance.⁴

We prepared noninflected texts, so that the definite article, demonstratives, declining pronouns, adjectives, nouns, and verbs had a single form only. Dialogues were routinely divided into two-thousand-word blocks, with any remainder added to the last block, giving it a maximum of 3,999 words. For each vocabulary item its percentage of total vocabulary within each block was calculated. Factor analysis and cluster analysis was then applied to all ninety-seven common words, to ninety-six words (without the article), to forty-seven words that Plato might have used more sparingly than comparable authors, and to twenty-five words for which Plato seems to have a liking.

It soon became obvious that the computer was inclined to group together works that did indeed have something (other than subject matter) in common, with different tests on different groups of works highlighting different common features. Some tests seemed to separate genuine works from the *spuria*, such as *Sisyphus* and *Axiochus*, quite well, others achieved a good separation between early Plato and Xenophon. The forty-seven-word test was able to point to similarities between the *Alcibiades* dialogues, *Hipparchus*, the first half of the *Theages*, and the *Minos*,⁵ and further refinement found nine words that were particularly favored by this group relative to unquestionably genuine dialogues. Some tests seemed to offer hints at the chronology of Plato's works, though without the radical separation of "late" from "early/middle" that hiatus rates and clausulae preference seemed to offer, since Plato's working vocabulary developed seamlessly, without the obvious shift that conscious stylistic decisions produce. Several tests that concentrated on early/middle dialogues were able to give reasonable separation between dialogues in dramatic and in narrative form, but with the striking exception that all blocks of the *Theaetetus* would be placed by twenty-five-word tests wholly within the narrative group.⁶ Finally, it seemed to make a huge difference whether or not what was written was intended as myth or other inspired diction.⁷

I begin with an illustration of the differences that could be recognized. If one tested a group of early Platonic dialogues, including the *Apology*, *Charmides*,

Crito, *Euthydemus*, *Euthyphro*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Meno*, and *Republic* I, using factor analysis based on ninety-six function words (leaving the article aside), a difference was regularly observed on the second factor between the blocks of dialogues in dramatic form, which appear on or above the zero line, and those of narrated dialogues, which appear on or below it. This was thought rather surprising given that certain words had been excluded from the tests precisely because of their being required much more in one group than the other. If one then adds the four dialogues of Tetralogy IV, the two blocks of *Alcibiades II* and the *Hipparchus* (both dramatic dialogues) are placed in territory otherwise occupied by narrative dialogues. Furthermore, while the *Alcibiades I* followed expectation as regards its place on factor 2, all its five blocks were placed far to the right (on factor 1), in an area that otherwise contained a single stray block of the *Meno* that overlapped with the mathematical language of the examination of the slave. One recognizes that an artist like Plato will have motives for varying his style in a particular part of a dialogue, but one does not expect him to write virtually the whole of a ten-thousand-word dialogue in a different style without good reason.

The aberrant features of the *Alcibiades I* did not prove its spuriousness, but pointed to differences that might need explaining by those who regard it as a genuine dialogue of the Socratic type. Much the same applied to the aberrant tendency of the *Hipparchus* and *Alcibiades II* to be placed by our analysis among the dialogues in narrative form. Interestingly, some later authors had their suspicions about the authenticity of these two,⁸ though none seem to have doubted the *Alcibiades I*. In fact, from the time of Albinus (*Prol.* 5), most appear to have afforded this dialogue a unique introductory role that might explain its distinct stylistic features. One may point to its special pedagogic concerns, which make this “Socrates” adopt a rather didactic approach and present all arguments in a rather simple fashion for a youth who appears to have taken little interest in philosophy previously. Reading these dialogues in their own language, and potentially with a wider knowledge of Socratic literature than we can derive from what survives today, late antique Platonists could sense that different dialogues of Tetralogy IV displayed different aberrant features, and could explain these features in different ways.

The Neoplatonist Response to Myth

The most striking difference to be found in many dialogues through our analyses was the difference between myth (and related revelatory diction) and ordinary

conversational language, whether dialogic or monologic. These differences must have had the effect of alerting the reader or listener to something special about the myth-like passages. The differences were easily captured in cluster analyses, especially when the amount of myth-like and nonmyth material was approximately equal. Cluster analysis, often represented by dendrograms that look rather like a family or evolutionary tree, produces family clusters of the analyzed materials. For us the materials were sets of percentages illustrating the relative frequencies of vocabulary items for various discrete blocks of text. Each of the families is linked at a notional level of similarity and is calculated according to a certain method. We have provided several examples of dendrograms capturing the differences of myth-like diction elsewhere,⁹ so it will suffice here to illustrate the kind of results obtained by tabulating the contents of clusters. Here is an example that employs McQuitty's method of analysis,¹⁰ nicely dividing myth and its allies (in clusters 3 and 5) from nonmyth (in cluster 1) with three seemingly anomalous blocks being allotted clusters of their own (Table 3).¹¹

The two "myth" families seem to be divided roughly into what might be seen as late¹² and early/middle material, though the *Statesman* myth is placed in the earlier group and the palinode of the *Phaedrus* is divided between the two. While it may surprise some that the Diotima episode and speech of Alcibiades are included in a myth group, both involve storytelling, and a certain revelatory element. These two "myth" families exhibit a greater degree of similarity with one another than with cluster 1, which contains most nonmyth material.¹³

If we were writing principally about Plato, then it would be normal to analyze the same data, and other data with a modified list of dialogues, in different ways. One such way is recorded in the appendix to this chapter. Many of the myths included in this analysis, however, have not even been narrated by Plato's "Socrates," who, together with Plato's later interpreters, is the principal focus of this volume. Socrates narrates the myths of the *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, and *Republic X*, and at least retails Diotima's narration of the myth of Poros and Penia at *Symposium* 203b1–204a7. Computational stylistics shows how all these myths stand out from surrounding material,¹⁴ even the myth of Poros and Penia.¹⁵ The presence of the myth of Er in cluster 5 of the above analysis, and of everything else from *Republic VII* and *X* in cluster 1, is not an isolated occurrence. Given that *any Platonic speaker* speaks differently when becoming the narrator of a myth, the important question is how far later Platonists were aware of Socrates switching voices as he moves from his dialectical register into that of the myth narrator. It will be my contention here that the Neoplatonists were very well aware that in many dialogues Plato, and Plato's "Socrates," tended to slip into a different voice

Table 3. Cluster analysis of selected mythical and nonmyth passages

| <i>Dialogue</i> | <i>Cluster 1</i> | <i>Cluster 2</i> | <i>Cluster 3</i> | <i>Cluster 4</i> | <i>Cluster 5</i> | <i>Cluster 6</i> |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <i>Cratylus</i> | All 8 blocks | | | | | |
| <i>Critias</i> | | A | B1, B2 | | | |
| [<i>Gorgias</i>] | | | | Water-Carr | Final Myth | |
| <i>Laws X</i> | Blocks A1–3 | | “Myth” & B | | | |
| [<i>Phaedo</i>] | | | | | Myth | |
| [<i>Phaedrus</i>] | | | Palinode 1 | | Palinode 2 | |
| <i>Protagoras</i> | 7/8 blocks | | | | 3, and myth | |
| <i>Rep. VII & X</i> | All but myth | | | | Myth of Er | |
| <i>Statesman</i> | All extracts | | | | Myth | |
| <i>Symposium</i> | Frame | | | | Ar., Di., Alc. | Agathon |
| <i>Timaeus</i> | | | B, C, D, Atl. | | | |

Note: Only myths are included from the *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, and *Phaedrus*, while materials from the *Statesman*, *Symposium*, and *Timaeus* were selected as follows: *Statesman* 291a–297c, 297d–303d, 303d–end; *Symposium* from 189c2, frame being material outside the major speeches; *Timaeus* Atl. = 22b6–25d6, B = 38b6–46c6, C = 58c4–65b7, D = 79a5–86a8. The “myth” in *Laws X* = 903b4–905d1, A1–3 are all that precedes it, and B is all that follows it.

or “register” in order to communicate a myth or similar nonstandard material, and that this register invited a different, and indeed a heightened, response from the reader. Hence no dialogue that contained a major myth narrated by the lead character is absent from the late Neoplatonist curriculum.¹⁶ The *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Statesman*, *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, *Republic*, and *Timaeus* are all included, and partial commentaries on all but the *Statesman* and *Symposium* are extant. We shall examine myth’s importance more fully later.

The Status of the Palinode

The statistical ambiguity of the early part of Socrates' long palinode speech in the *Phaedrus* (243e9–257a2), seen in the fact that its first two-thousand-word block was placed in cluster 3 while the remainder of it was placed in cluster 5, should raise questions in our minds about where the myth proper begins. The earlier pages contain much material that would normally be thought to prefigure the myth proper, and we have already observed that the later pages are, in a sense, “deeper” myth.¹⁷ Now Syrianus's pupil Hermias,¹⁸ our sole commentator on the *Phaedrus*, often (thirty-four times) uses the term “palinode” to describe the speech as a whole. So he thinks of it *primarily* as a kind of poetic construction with a debt to Stesichorus, and his awareness of the poetic nature of the wider passage becomes clear in his comments on 257a5 (206.18–26 Couvreur = 246.2–10), where he asks why Socrates had thought *poetic* language necessary, giving examples that show he sees that Plato is competing with the poets, a fact made obvious at 247c4. Only at 193.7–12 (= 230.14–19) does Hermias use “myth” in relation to this speech, and this is a direct response to Plato's use of that term at 253d. *Phaedrus* 253d in fact suggests that the start of the myth was 246a, not the beginning of the palinode at 243e, but Hermias for his part thinks it significant that the actual term is not used at all until this point, when the vicious nature of the bad horse is introduced in order to explain the behavior of the *human* soul.

With this in mind I divided the palinode at 246a and 253d, giving three sections named PalinA, PalinB, and PalinC. The “Lysias” speech was named PhdrS1, and Socrates nymph-inspired response PhdrS2. What preceded PhdrS1 was named Phdr.A; what came after that and before PhdrS2 became Phdr.B; the passage after that and before the palinode became Phdr.C; and what followed the palinode became Phdr.D1–3. The *Phaedrus* was analyzed alongside the *Republic* IV, VII, and X, *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, and *Statesman*. Blocks that used the language of myth (or similar) fairly consistently, including *Statesman* block 3 as well as Aristophanes' speech in the *Symposium* and the myth of Er (given separate files), tended to stand out in all analyses; and blocks that included some such language—for example *Phaedo* blocks 5, 10, and 11 (79b–84d, 106b–111e, 111e–118a)—often did so too.

However, one needed to know not just what was in the voice of myth but what was most extreme in this regard. Principal component analysis employing eighty-seven function words was therefore employed to try to place the blocks in an order. In relation to the first principal component, myth blocks achieved scores in the positive range, but they were not entirely alone, since blocks from the *Statesman* also did so. These, however, except for *Statesman* 3, a block that incorporates

the myth, received negative scores on the second principal component. So mythical language consistently seemed to be confined to those blocks that were placed in the positive range on *both* first *and* second principal components. The following blocks fell into that category, and have been listed according to the sum of the values of first and second principal component: PalinC (11.687), *Statesman* 3 (10.279), myth of Er (9.176), PalinB (9.117), PhdrS2 (5.551), PalinA (5.102), *Symp.*–Ar. (3.682), *Symp.*–Eryx. (2.947), *Phaedo* 11 (2.322), *Rep.* VII.4 (1.487), and *Symp.*–Diot. (1.225). Because of minor variations in Plato's styles over time, this is only a very general indication of the relativities *between* dialogues, but other results also confirmed that PalinC was more obviously myth-like in its language than PalinB, while doubt remained over whether PalinA was myth-like at all, since it was placed close to Socrates' earlier speech, advising that the lover should not be gratified. That had clearly not been telling a myth, even though participants agreed that the speech was inspired (238d1, 241e1–5). All these Socratic monologues differed greatly from the earlier speech of Lysias (principal component scores: –7.769 and 4.623), which resembled nothing more than the speech of Phaedrus in *Symposium* (–5.227 and 4.359).

According to my interpretation of the results, the palinode speech was intended to sound inspired throughout, beginning with the discussion of four kinds of inspired madness: prophetic, cathartic, muse-induced, and erotic (244a5–245c1; cf. 265b). After the brief discussion of the soul's immortality (245c2–246a2), we meet the unmarked beginning of the myth (according to Hermias), that is, the start of PalinB. If PalinA has employed a kind of cathartic-inspired speech, going to the heart of the *misconceptions* that had made it seem desirable to avoid gratifying the lover,¹⁹ PalinB makes it clear that Socrates is now in direct competition with the poets (247c3–4). Competing with the poets might perhaps be thought to involve myth, owing to the mythical subject matter of so much of traditional poetry, yet poetry does not have to be mythical. Though the palinode had been in competition with Stesichorus from the beginning, PalinA was nevertheless offering a classification of the better kind of madness, on the basis of which love is rehabilitated, followed by a proof of the immortality of the soul. This is philosophy dressed in a kind of poetic prose. But PalinB engages in a contest with the poets in a manner more akin to the *Timaeus*'s engagement with Hesiod.²⁰ In so doing it resorts to the use of complex imagery as well as to poetic language, and the repetition of resemblance terminology at 246a5–6 (*eoiken*, *eoiketō*) suggests that we have another attempt to create an *eikōs mythos* (as *Timaeus* 29d2 would have it). While I do not wish to make much of this much-discussed phrase, I do want to draw attention to my group's recent research that demonstrates how the

language associated with Plato's myths is not present, or at least not fully present, when Timaeus is discussing the enduring principles of the universe:²¹ that is, it is not present prior to the description of the creation of time (37c–38b), according to the general principle that precise explanation cannot be given in the case of generated images in the same way as when discussing eternal paradigms. Myth deals with what is in time rather than what is extratemporal.

Now Hermias (193.9–14 = 230.16–21) seems to come close to such an explanation of why the account has explicitly become a *mythos* at 253c. Let us look more closely at what he says: "It is because from this point the soul is in the body as if in an image; for the whole body that appears about us and is wrapped around us and indeed the whole phenomenal world is like a myth. So it is with good reason that when he wants to speak about the relation of the soul to body he calls [his words] a myth, whereas in what preceded he did not use this word, since the soul was on high with the gods and in possession of different horses."²² It is not, for Hermias, a question of myth being unable to explain matters divine, but rather his recognition that Plato generally uses it to present us with a picture of what goes on unseen in this world of ours, especially in our souls while they are subject to conflicting forces. But Hermias may also have been conscious that the language, though poetic throughout, was getting increasingly like that of Platonic myth (as in the myth of Er, for instance). At any rate there is a recognition that the application of the chariot image from 253c7 onward to the individual soul's worldly experiences is more myth-like than when it had merely explained the disembodied ascent to the heavens of divine and human souls alike.²³

The status of the *Phaedrus*'s palinode is further brought into question by the fact that the Neoplatonists knew other myths about the travels of the disembodied soul as *nekuiai*, but not this passage.²⁴ The myths of the *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, and *Republic* X constitute the group of myths routinely known as *nekuiai* by Proclus (*in Remp.* 1.168.11–23), Damascius (*in Phd.* 1.471, 2.85), Olympiodorus (*in Grg.* 46.8–9, *in Meteor.* 144.13–145.5), and Elias (*in Isag.* 33.11–18). Though the palinode talks of the experiences of the disembodied soul, and though Hermias might be reluctantly conceding that this passage is already myth (though not marked as such), no part of the palinode is included among *nekuiai*, and the first block of the palinode is placed in the same cluster as the myths of judgment in neither Table 3 nor Table 8.²⁵ It could be claimed that the palinode's failure to include any equivalent to Hades sets it apart, but there is a chance that the later Platonists noticed more than just a connection of subject matter behind the myths of judgment. For *on the criteria employed* the three myths seem to share a style not consistently used in the palinode.

Inspired Texts, Curriculum, and Special Attention

I think we have here further evidence that the Platonist commentators were listening not only to what Plato's "Socrates" said but also to how he was saying it, picking up changes of register as he moved into poetic or mythic mode, or into some other kind of inspired speech. Inspired speech of course meant *important* speech for the Neoplatonists. That in turn meant speech that had to be taken into account in their teaching. Thus dialogues including inspired speech were the most likely to appear in their curriculum. Among Proclus's works the *Platonic Theology* demonstrates the importance of myths by using them *in particular* as a source for theology, while in his *Commentary on the Cratylus* Proclus recognizes the revelatory nature of etymological material concerning the gods of myth, affording it extensive discussion. Furthermore, he is unconcerned by the status of Timaeus's cosmology as an *eikôs mythos* (*in Tim.* 1.353), as this would, for him, make it *more* important than a dialectical treatment of physics.²⁶ He sees the *Timaeus* as a whole (*in Tim.* 1.7) as blending Socratic with Pythagorean character, with the additional Pythagorean element giving:

1. An intuitive and inspirational lift;
2. links with the intelligible;
3. mathematical content;
4. symbolic and mystical hinting;
5. a more didactic approach.

Hence it is clear that he appreciates that the *Timaeus* speaks rather differently from most Platonic works, and apparently not simply through Timaeus's words only, since much of this would apply to Critias's foreshadowing of the Atlantis story. Proclus's treatment of the Atlantis myth shows a commitment to the view that myth *by definition* has a deeper meaning,²⁷ though in Plato it is constructed to make even the surface meaning *plausible*.²⁸ The deeper (symbolic) meaning will necessitate much close interpretation.

Olympiodorus also recognizes myth as special. He has to deal with two myths in the *Gorgias*, the brief Water-Carriers myth and its interpretation, and the final myth of judgment. He regards the Water-Carriers material not only as myth but also as Pythagorean (*in Grg.* 29.3–4, 30.1, 3, 5), thus continuing to make this connection as Proclus had done. He allots to this myth, and to the multi-jar image that follows, considerable importance relative to the other proofs that he sees being employed against Calliclean hedonism.²⁹ He allots lectures 46 to 49, 8 percent of

his commentary, to the final myth, 523a–524d, which is just 2 percent of the *Gorgias*. He affords this myth the task of revealing the *paradigm* relevant to constitutional happiness (46.7). Somewhat unexpectedly, he is prepared to define myth as “a false statement *mirroring* the truth” (46.3), but there is certainly no intention of belittling its role. Rather the commitment is to requiring a deeper interpretation for any Platonic myth than may, at first sight, seem necessary, since Plato’s myths, even when taken literally, are not harmful like those of the poets (46.4–5). All myth requires such interpretation, and is constructed so as to conceal the message from inappropriate readers (46.5). But Plato still apparently includes some literal truth (49.1).

The anonymous *Prolegomena* confirm that Plato was thought to speak differently, both within the *Gorgias* in the myth and what follows it, and within “theological dialogues” more widely (which must of course include *Timaeus*). In a passage already employed by Danielle Layne in Chapter 5 (17.2–18), the author contrasts the use of styles that he labels “rich” and “plain” (ἄδρός, ἰσχνός), relating them to the solemnity or everyday nature of their subject matter. This literary terminology does not perfectly capture the phenomenon that we have noted, but it does come close.

The “Euthyphro” Voice in the *Cratylus*

Mention of the Water-Carriers myth may remind one that this and the following multi-jar image gave an ambiguous response to the tests designed to group myths and nonmyths together (Table 3 and the chapter appendix).³⁰ When tested without the article it seemed almost without parallel, but when the article was included, even though it occupied a separate cluster (6) it was fairly close to the central blocks of the *Cratylus* (B, C, D1, E),³¹ and more distantly related to the myths of clusters 5 and 7 as well as to *Cratylus* D2. There is indeed a link between the Water-Carriers and this part of the *Cratylus*, one that concerns notionally inspired hermeneutics rather than myth. Socrates is ironically pretending to be inspired by the religious expert Euthyphro from *Crat.* 396a to 427d, as a result of which Cratylus is able to observe at 428c that he has been intelligently (*kata noun*)³² oracle chanting (*chrêsmôidein*),³³ “whether you have become inspired from Euthyphro, or whether we have overlooked some other Muse within you.” This and other snippets³⁴ make it clear that Socrates is supposed to be adopting some kind of inspired tone of voice. Hence sections C, D1, and D2 of the work, with or without sections B and E, are liable to be placed in any of our analyses at a distance from sections

A, F1, and F2.³⁵ This has the effect of making these central blocks respond somewhat like a late dialogue to a variety of stylistic tests. Consider the results of a cluster analysis in which several dialogues (early, middle, and late) have been compared.³⁶ One of three major clusters groups together the blocks listed in Table 4.

These central *Cratylus* blocks, together with a single stray block of *Gorgias* (no doubt somewhat influenced by rhetorical style), have been grouped together most closely with the *Statesman* (from 264a3), and somewhat more remotely with *Statesman* block 1 (to 264a3) and the first three blocks of the *Sophist*. By contrast, the four outside blocks of the *Cratylus* (1, 2, 8, and 9, to 396c6, and from 428c1) have been grouped closely with six blocks of the *Gorgias*, four of the *Meno*,³⁷ three (out of eleven) of the *Phaedo*, three (out of four) of *Republic* I and one of X, with three early blocks of the *Theaetetus*. This material has a distinct early-to-middle feel about it, though some may be mildly surprised at the inclusion of three blocks from the *Theaetetus* and *Republic* X.³⁸ The remaining block (4, 403b1–409c6) appears in a different part of the analysis where *Republic* predominates. The main message to be derived from the analysis, however, is that the outer blocks of the *Cratylus* are very different in an important matter of style (its mix of recurrent vocabulary) from the central blocks, in which the voice of “Euthyphro” is heard. This might be partly explained in terms of chronology, since the dialogue has apparently been revised,³⁹ and the hiatus rate drops noticeably in blocks 3–7,⁴⁰ where one might have expected the technical nature of the material to lead to an increase. I suspect, however, that it has more to do with Socrates’ adoption here of the voice of “Euthyphro,” something that tends to make it *resemble* later material;⁴¹ for the tendency of the mythical register is also to make material *seem* later.⁴²

The issue for the Neoplatonists was to determine which passages they should give particular prominence to. The fact that Socrates keeps reminding us that he owes his eloquence to outside inspiration during this part of the *Cratylus* was already an indication for them that closer and deeper interpretation was required at

Table 4. Content of central cluster of multi-dialogue analysis

| <i>Dialogue</i> | <i>Blocks concerned</i> | <i>Parameters</i> |
|------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Gorgias</i> | Block 1 only | Up to 453b1 |
| <i>Cratylus</i> | Blocks 3, 5, 6, 7 | 396c6–403b1, 409c6–428c1 |
| <i>Sophist</i> | Blocks 1–3 | Up to 236e3 |
| <i>Statesman</i> | All blocks | Whole dialogue |

this point. Our sole extant commentary is that of Proclus, mediated by some note taker, and quite possibly abridged. For convenience we shall assume that these are Proclus's own views. Here is what is said on 396d: "Now seeing many men like Euthyphro who hold bestial thoughts about gods, Socrates himself descends from the scientific level of activity to an inferior one, but elevates those restricted by impressionistic thought to the middle state of conception about gods. He therefore blames Euthyphro (396d) for this, not because the latter is a leader of this [type of] understanding, but because he rouses Socrates to the pursuit of truth by his impressionistic absurdities" (*in Crat.* 116, tr. Duvick). It seems that Proclus does have some awareness of Socrates' switch to a different discourse at this point. That discourse is for him "doxastic" rather than "phantastic" or "epistemoniac," hence it is (a) unusual, and (b) operating at the level *usually associated with poetic or religious inspiration*—divine dispensation without understanding (*theiai moirai aneu nou*, *Meno* 99c–100b, *Ion* 542a). Socrates is seen as working toward theology through the doxastic world of the lawgiver of names, not in his normal epistemoniac fashion. None of this causes Proclus to deal any less earnestly with the etymologies of the gods that follow, but he does seem very conscious that Socrates does not speak in his normal way.

Up to this point we have seen that Socrates' speech changes in myths, and that Platonists respond to this by paying special attention and offering deeper interpretation. Hermias may in fact be rather more aware of the extent to which the palinode of the *Phaedrus* should be regarded as myth. Again, we have seen some attention paid by Proclus to a voice shift in the *Cratylus*, at a point where modern readers would be more inclined to think of Socrates' reference to Euthyphro as simply ironic.⁴³ Finally, I should like to ask whether there is any similar shift in the *Alcibiades I*, and what is noticed.

Protrepic in the *First Alcibiades*?

It is natural to think of the structure of the *Alcibiades* as pedimental (A1, B, A2).⁴⁴ Modern commentators might see Socrates' monologue (121a–124b) as the central section. Olympiodorus, however, labels his central section as *protrepic*, and he regards it as running from 119a to 124b. Stylometry suggests that this is right. There is certainly a rather different voice that is employed hereabouts, and I was not easily able to separate off 119a–121a stylistically. Terry Roberts and I have published a scattergram, based on factor analysis, that charts various parts of the *Alcibiades I* against a great deal of other material from early or middle Plato, the

dubia and *spuria*, and Xenophon.⁴⁵ In that diagram Alc1Extr is the monologue only, and Alc1Protr the entire protreptic passage as envisaged by Olympiodorus, and they are placed very close together. Since they contain overlapping material, this was always likely. Analysis after analysis indicates that a substantial central section of this work is in a different register from the surrounding passages in which Socrates engages Alcibiades in argument. This section is also closer to Xenophon than to other blocks of the *Alcibiades I*. The proximity to Xenophon is also clear in the cluster analysis given in Table 5, which compares doubtful works, *Memorabilia* I & IV, and *Philebus*.⁴⁶

Clusters 5 and 6 are close, as are clusters 3 and 4, which are more distantly related to cluster 2; cluster 1 is joined at some distance to clusters 2, 3, and 4, and only after this is all the Socratic material joined to the *Philebus* clusters.⁴⁷ This confirms the stylistic remoteness of the protreptic passage from the rest of the *Alcibiades I*, but what it cannot do is to confirm that it is written in a protreptic voice—except to the degree that Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* place great emphasis on Socrates’ ability to encourage young persons toward leading an honest and thoughtful life. Book II exhibits this tendency particularly well, and nowhere more so than in the myth of the Choice of Heracles and the preceding attempt to reform Aristippus. What seemed to be required was an analysis that included with selected Platonic texts *Memorabilia* book II, divided into the discussion preceding the Choice of Heracles, the Choice of Heracles itself, and everything following it (XMem2A, XMem2B, XMem2C).

Since many Platonic texts have been claimed to have a protreptic element or a protreptic purpose, turning the listener to some kind of philosophy or to virtuous behavior, it would be important to include the two texts that employed the adjective “protreptic,” *Clitophon* and *Euthydemus*, with the latter divided in a way that

Table 5. Cluster analysis of *Alcibiades I* with *dubia*, *Philebus*, and Xenophon

| Dialogue | Cluster 1 | Cluster 2 | Cluster 3 | Cluster 4 | Cluster 5 | Cluster 6 |
|--------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|---------------|------------|
| <i>Alc. I</i> | Protreptic | All else | | | | |
| <i>Alc. II</i> | | | Block 1 | Block 2 | | |
| <i>Erastae</i> | | | | Only block | | |
| <i>Hipparchus</i> | | | | Only block | | |
| <i>Memorabilia</i> | All seven | | | | | |
| <i>Minos</i> | | | | Only block | | |
| <i>Philebus</i> | | | | | Blocks 1–3, 9 | Blocks 4–8 |
| <i>Theages A</i> | | | | Only block | | |

isolated the two passages that seem to illustrate Socrates' idea of protreptic (EuthdP1, EuthdP2),⁴⁸ separating them from what precedes the first, what intervenes between the two, and what follows the second, with a separate file also for the final discussion with Crito, which would seem to be as much a protreptic to philosophy as anything else in the work (EuthdA, EuthdB, EuthCa, EuthdCb). Most speeches in the *Symposium* could be argued to be protreptic in nature, and those of Pausanias, Eryximachus, and Diotima-Socrates were selected. The *Menexenus* also seemed to offer an example of hortatory rhetoric close to protreptic, and the *Alcibiades II* seemed to offer another case of Socrates more obviously taking an advisory role concerning Alcibiades' future, with two speeches of perhaps an "apotreptic" role rather than a protreptic one (141c9–142e5, 148b9–150b3), so these were taken separately, and other matter included separately. There was no presumption that the *Alcibiades II* would behave like a genuine Platonic dialogue, and this applied still more to the *Axiochus*, which is "protreptic" to the extent that it encourages one to be philosophical in the face of death. To these were added the *Apology*, *Charmides*, *Ion*, and *Laches*, as regular examples of Plato giving Socrates his say.

Cluster analysis seemed to divide these materials quite sharply between plausibly protreptic passages and others, but with some surprises. In particular, those passages of the *Euthydemus* where Socrates demonstrates *his kind of protreptic* (278d, 282d) were not placed among what seemed to be protreptic passages, but the opening of the dialogue, and the closing discussion with Crito (appropriately) was. So too were the opening blocks of both the *Laches* and the *Charmides*, in both of which (one might argue) philosophic engagement is encouraged. When principal component analysis was used to separate the two major areas of difference, the first principal component confirmed that the "protreptic" passage in the *Alcibiades I* was indeed sharply distinguished from the other blocks, and that it largely kept the company of blocks that could plausibly be described as protreptic (Table 6).

It was tempting to see all results well into the positive register as potentially examples of protreptic, and it was noticeable that four of these blocks (XMem2B, SympDiot, and both *Menexenus* blocks) share with the protreptic of the *Alcibiades I* the use of female voices. Exactly what qualifies as protreptic is not a matter of agreement among scholars,⁴⁹ and is not likely to be settled easily by the kind of computer tests that we have been applying. As we struggle to determine whether or not Olympiodorus is right to choose the term "protreptic" to characterize the central section of the *Alcibiades*, we find only one paradigmatic text against which philosophic protreptic may be measured—Aristotle's highly influential *Protrepti-*

cus. For sure, this was the work of a different author, with a style sufficiently distinctive for scholars to have spotted most of the fragments within Iamblichus's own *Protrepticus* (VI–XII),⁵⁰ so that one does not expect it to look very close to Platonic protreptic; but it was nevertheless worth discovering where cluster analysis placed these Iamblichan chapters. The result is given in Table 7.

It is important to report that cluster 1 is first joined to cluster 3 at a similarity level of –4.45, then to cluster 4 at a similarity level of –58.80, and only then are all three of these clusters joined to the non-protreptic cluster 2 at a similarity level of –101.86. In other words, the material in Iamblichus's *Protrepticus* and from Aristotle's *Protrepticus* is considerably closer to the Platonic "protreptic" material than to material that does not have this function. Furthermore, Aristotle's *Protrepticus* is actually in the same cluster as a seemingly protreptic passage of the

Table 6. First principal component scores on "protreptic" test

| <i>Block</i> | <i>Score</i> | <i>Block</i> | <i>Score</i> |
|----------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| AlcIwoPrtr (3) | –7.71964 | Clitophon (1) | 1.16201 |
| AlcIwoPrtr (4) | –6.94036 | EuthdA (1) | 1.16877 |
| AlcIwoPrtr (1) | –5.40725 | Charmides (1) | 1.47259 |
| Charmides (2) | –4.47851 | XMem2C (2) | 1.78293 |
| Charmides (3) | –4.45888 | Laches (1) | 1.80691 |
| EuthdCa (1) | –4.35581 | SympDiot (1) | 1.93529 |
| AlcIwoPrtr (2) | –4.35257 | EuthdCb (1) | 2.01439 |
| Charmides (4) | –4.20891 | XMem2C (1) | 2.2866 |
| EuthdP2 (1) | –3.85576 | Alc1Protr (1) | 2.5063 |
| EuthdB (1) | –3.32773 | Alc2ExtrB (1) | 3.1537 |
| Laches (3) | –3.0588 | XMem2C (3) | 3.21979 |
| Alc2ABC (1) | –2.98282 | SympEryx (1) | 3.34114 |
| EuthdCa (2) | –2.5797 | SympPaus (1) | 3.54382 |
| Laches (2) | –1.97542 | XMem2A (1) | 3.57403 |
| Ion (1) | –1.79841 | Menexenus (1) | 4.20789 |
| EuthdP1 (1) | –1.11992 | Menexenus (2) | 4.80384 |
| Apology (2) | 0.54778 | Axiochus (1) | 4.96569 |
| Apology (4) | 0.85811 | Alc2ExtrA (1) | 6.14725 |
| Apology (1) | 0.95297 | XMem2B (1) | 7.2592 |
| Apology (3) | 1.00503 | | |

Table 7. Cluster analysis including Aristotle's *Protrepticus* (Ward's method, Euclidean distance, and standardized data)

| <i>Cluster 1</i> | <i>Cluster 3</i> | <i>Cluster 4</i> | <i>Cluster 2</i> |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Apology (4) | Alc2ExtrA (1) | Alc2ExtrB (1) | AlcIwoPrtr (3) |
| Apology (1) | | AristProtr (1) | AlcIwoPrtr (4) |
| Apology (3) | | AristProtr (2) | AlcIwoPrtr (1) |
| Clitophon (1) | | AristProtr (3) | Charmides (2) |
| EuthdA (1) | | AristProtr (4) | Charmides (3) |
| Charmides (1) | | AristProtr (5) | EuthdCa (1) |
| XMem2C (2) | | AristProtr (6) | AlcIwoPrtr (2) |
| Laches (1) | | AristProtr (7) | Charmides (4) |
| SympDiot (1) | | | EuthdP2 (1) |
| EuthdCb (1) | | | EuthdB (1) |
| XMem2C (1) | | | Laches (3) |
| Alc1Protr (1) | | | Alc2ABC (1) |
| XMem2C (3) | | | EuthdCa (2) |
| SympEryx (1) | | | Laches (2) |
| SympPaus (1) | | | Ion (1) |
| XMem2A (1) | | | EuthdP1 (1) |
| Menexenus (1) | | | Apology (2) |
| Menexenus (2) | | | |
| Axiochus (1) | | | |
| XMem2B (1) | | | |

Alcibiades II. While it is in any case evident that Olympiodorus has correctly picked a substantial shift from Socrates' normal voice, recognizing it as in some sense "other," it also seems that the label "protreptic" which he gives to this voice is not without justification.

Conclusion

It is true that the Neoplatonists did not necessarily appreciate what was *authentic* and what was not, and also that they were capable of reading some quite unexpected doctrine into the words of Socrates, as well as inclined to miss—perhaps

through excessive reverence—many of the instances of irony (of whatever kind) that we should postulate. They can, however, help us to appreciate the detail of Platonic texts regarding register changes within any given dialogue—even where Plato’s Socrates remains the main speaker. The computer helps to drive home to us today the way that Plato’s basic language changes along with changes of register, usually underscored by Socrates’ adoption of a myth-telling, poetic, priestly, or even female persona. One may presume that Neoplatonist familiarity with the nuances of Greek and their working within a culture of reading Plato did enable them to pick up, and respond to, changes of register in cases where the main speaker remains unchanged.

As far as Socrates is concerned, therefore, the Neoplatonists are not interested in distinguishing a true Socrates from a Platonic spokesman, nor even an elenctic Socrates from a dialectical one.⁵¹ What they are interested in taking note of is where Socrates steps out of his routine role as a questioner (with a keen sense of the answers that he requires) and adopts some other voice: a new persona (as a student of drama would put it), or a new register (as a linguist would put it). For them the nonstandard Socrates was the one to take special note of, and usually a sign of inspired speech—and hence a further step toward the divine revelation for which the Neoplatonists were seeking.

Appendix: Cluster Analysis of Myth and Other Files, F97 (Definite Article Included)

Because the definite article tends to constitute between 7 percent and 14 percent of the total number of words in a block of Platonic text, its power to skew results tends to be excessive. Hence Table 3 above is an analysis of ninety-six of the commonest permitted function words *excluding* the article. However, an increase in the rate of the article is normally an important feature of myths in Plato, so here I offer a table of results for an otherwise equivalent analysis that includes the article. Ten clusters were requested, but closely related clusters have been combined in Table 8.

In brief, clusters 5 and 7 have included only blocks that seem to contain myths, while the ambiguous position of the first part of the palinode of the *Phaedrus* is reflected in its removal to cluster 8. Clusters 2, 6, and 8 (containing the Water-Carriers myth and the central blocks of the *Cratylus*) are loosely connected with the myth clusters. On this test the alleged “myth” of *Laws X* does not respond as expected of a myth.

Table 8. Cluster analysis of selected mythical and nonmyth passages: myth, etc., files, F97 (McQuitty's method, Euclidean distance squared, raw data)

| <i>Dialogue</i> | <i>Clus 1&9</i> | <i>Clus 4</i> | <i>Clus 8 and 10</i> | <i>Clus 2 and 6</i> | <i>Clus 5 and 7</i> | <i>Clus 3</i> |
|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| <i>Cratylus</i> | A, F1, F2 | | | B, C, D1, E | | D2 |
| <i>Critias</i> | | A | | | B1, B2 | |
| [<i>Gorgias</i>] | | | | Water-Carr | Myth | |
| <i>Laws X</i> | A3, "Myth," B | | A1–2 | | | |
| [<i>Phaedo</i>] | | | | | Myth | |
| [<i>Phaedrus</i>] | | | Palinode 1 | | Palinode 2 | |
| <i>Protagoras</i> | 1, 3, 4 | | 2, 5–8 | | 3, and myth | |
| <i>Rep. VII & X</i> | VII 1–3 X 1–2 | | VII 4 X 3 | | Myth of Er | |
| <i>Statesman</i> | All extracts | | | | Myth | |
| <i>Symposium</i> | Diotima | | Frame, Alc, Ag. | | Aristophanes | |
| <i>Timaeus</i> | | | | | B, C, D, Atl. | |

CONCLUSION

Danielle A. Layne and Harold Tarrant

As we said in the Introduction, this volume is specifically aimed at tackling “the idea that the Neoplatonists neglected the Socratic element of Plato’s dialogues.” What it could not do, indeed could never hope to do in the light of the sheer quantity of evidence, is give a complete account of Socrates in later Platonism. Partly for this reason, the ensuing Appendix offers a much more comprehensive account of the evidence and directs the reader toward further lines of inquiry. Some of the chapters have been particularly concerned to show the importance of one or more Socratic themes or influences in a variety of authors, others have concentrated on particular authors who are of importance for our theme, generally with the result that the role of one or more particular Platonic dialogues has been emphasized.

Hermias’s *Commentary on Plato’s Phaedrus* and Proclus’s *Commentary on the Alcibiades* have received special attention, and this emphasis has enabled us to confirm first that Athenian Neoplatonism under Syrianus and Proclus found a considerable place for Socrates and Socratic themes. Indirectly, perhaps, it suggests that the principal influence on their school, Iamblichus, had also given Socrates a place. As we noted in the Introduction, this receives some confirmation in the eight fragments of Iamblichus’s *Commentary on the Alcibiades* included in Dillon’s 1973 collection (especially Frr. 3–7), but it may perhaps also be gleaned in the extensive reworking of passages from Plato in Iamblichus’s *Protrepticus*. However, most of Iamblichus’s extant oeuvre is not such that one could reasonably expect the prominence of Socratic themes. Nevertheless, the commentaries by Hermias and Proclus, which explicitly follow Iamblichus’s curriculum, have repeatedly evidenced the value and the extent to which Socrates remains an important figure to be understood and engaged throughout later antiquity. Obviously, one result of focusing on these two commentaries is the volume’s concentration on the image of Socrates in two dialogues, the *Alcibiades* and the *Phaedrus*.

Neither of these dialogues is regarded as a central “Socratic” text today; the former because scholars are uncertain whether it is genuine Plato, and the latter because its assumed chronology does not make it one of the “earlier” dialogues. Yet, as we have learned throughout this volume, the former work is perhaps the Socratic work par excellence for Platonists from Albinus through to Olympiodorus, while with regard to the *Phaedrus* nobody can deny the vividness of the Socratic image it paints or the prominence of several Socratic themes in it. From his expertise in matters erotic to the credence that Socrates attaches to his daimon, the *Phaedrus* certainly recalls to mind and recounts what many scholars today would regard as “genuinely” Socratic. Consequently, Socratic scholarship should not be deterred by the prominence of the *Alcibiades* or the *Phaedrus* in attempting to unpack the late antique reception of Socrates due either to matters of authenticity (for nobody denies the *Phaedrus* has an important place in the Socratic-Platonic tradition) or to issues of chronology. In fact, a special benefit in highlighting these two commentaries is that we have seen how closely linked the two dialogues were in the Neoplatonic mind: something that must be regarded as an *example* of how the Neoplatonists often read one dialogue in the light of another (with regard not only to Socrates but also to any other philosophical matter). As Tarrant (1997b) shows, we can see examples of this tendency in how closely Olympiodorus compares the *Republic* to the *Gorgias*. Furthermore, his comparison of these texts is not confined to matters that must be seen as merely Platonic rather than Socratic, which shows once again that while their methods may be different from our own, their cast of Socrates (which takes into consideration a plurality of texts and images) could very well be more robust.

After several chapters on Syrianus, Hermias, and Proclus, we have also included chapters on two other commentators, Olympiodorus and Simplicius. In his two wholly extant commentaries on Plato, Olympiodorus develops themes in which Socrates can, and often does, play a central role, most notably in his examination of Socratic method, a theme that no doubt can be explored more broadly throughout the Platonic tradition from Plotinus to Damascius. With regard to Simplicius, who chiefly wrote commentaries on Aristotle, we should bear in mind that his Platonist interests are quite clear, and much can be learned about how this commentator synthesized these interests by examining his attempt to unpack a Stoic text that is rather more “Socratic” in inspiration. Overall, our volume also touches on issues of Iamblichan questions and later Neoplatonic commentary on Socrates in the chapters by Addey, Layne, and Griffin, as well as to pre-Plotinian authors in those of Finamore and Roskam. Moreover, the Introduction analyzed some of the evidence that we have for the reception of Socrates in Plotinus and

Porphry, noting the valuable work of Smith (2004), Rangos (2004), and Beierwaltes (1995). What was determined is that while their extant work lacks the overwhelming Socratic presence of the authors and commentators of later antiquity like Proclus, what should not be doubted is that these earlier Platonists were manifestly concerned with Socratic themes, and in their works remained authentic heirs to this tradition. Nevertheless, the surviving material with regard to authors like Porphyry and Iamblichus is tricky to handle and to evaluate within the confines of our present focus; hence, in our view, it is best considered against the background of fuller studies of those authors.

The duty of drawing together themes across several authors has principally fallen on the chapters by Layne, Griffin, Tarrant, and perhaps Addey. The themes of these chapters, however, have led naturally to an uneven coverage, and there remains much work that can be done on the subject of what Socrates meant for Platonists in late antiquity. Besides the earlier figures of Plotinus and Porphyry, one would naturally wish for greater exploration of the commentaries of Damascius on the *Philebus* and the *Phaedo*, regardless of the fact that many scholars today would not see either of these as “Socratic.” One might usefully investigate the significance, especially for the figure of the Neoplatonic sage, of six passages in his *Life of Isidore* that refer to Socrates. Furthermore, there are several times where Socrates is mentioned both in the *De principiis* and in the *Commentary on the Parmenides*. Along with Proclus’s *Commentary on the Parmenides*, the latter might be used to clarify the Neoplatonic attitude to the very young Socrates who appears in conversation with Zeno and Parmenides. Certainly, one cannot expect that the later Platonists, who repeatedly insisted, as Manolea and Addey emphasized, that Socrates was on this earth to fulfill a divine mission, would be enthusiastic about drawing too sharp a distinction between this youthful portrait and the old man who willingly sipped his cup of hemlock in the *Phaedo*. Again, one should not be deterred by the fact that scholars today would shrink from using such dialogues as evidence for Socrates, as what matters for our purposes is the Socrates that appeared in this particular era versus the “authenticity” of the Neoplatonic portrait.

Another resource that remains largely untapped in the present volume is Proclus’s *Commentary on the Republic*, which treats the arguments of book I (often considered a “Socratic” introduction to the rest of the work), though much material has unfortunately been lost. Further, though most of Proclus’s miscellaneous collection of materials in this “commentary” involves passages that today’s scholars would not closely associate with Socrates, there are numerous references to Socrates (in the *Republic* and other dialogues) in the “commentary” that would

merit some detailed treatment. The reader may indeed feel that Proclus is neglecting Socrates as *we* know him, but that is not to say he is not offering an interesting alternative portrait of him.

A further subject of inquiry would be the portrait that emerges from the anonymous *Prolegomena to Plato's Philosophy*, both in the biography of Plato that it contains and in the handful of references to him elsewhere, and similarly one could study the writings of figures for whom Platonism was a sideline, such as Synesius and Julian. Nor should one neglect those who used their understanding of the figure of Socrates in the service of Christianity.

Hardest of all, however, is spotting the ways in which the heritage of Socrates influenced late antiquity's concept of the philosophic life or of the proper way to engage others in argument. So often the debt is not obvious in these cases, and yet this kind of inheritance is of supreme importance. Therefore we urge the reader to press on, like a good Socratic perhaps, recognizing that we are as yet only a short distance along the ascent. We have dealt with the more obvious manifestations of the Socrates in later antiquity, but, perhaps a bit like Heraclitean nature, the true Socrates loves to hide.

APPENDIX

The Reception of Socrates in Late Antiquity: Authors, Texts, and Notable References

The following is a list of primary texts and authors in later antiquity who are relevant for understanding the history of Socrates' reception. This list is meant to be a guide for those interested in research on the subject and does not seek to be exhaustive. For a more complete reference guide to the Neoplatonic Socrates please consult D. Layne, "Socrates Neoplatonicus," in *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, ed. Richard Goulet, Paris: C.N.R.S.-Éditions, forthcoming.

A note on the terms Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism: These terms have traditionally been used to cover Platonism in the Roman Empire before Plotinus (Middle Platonism) and Platonism after Plotinus, respectively (Neoplatonism). Both terms should be employed with caution, since it is by no means clear that Plotinus is making a new beginning, and did not suppose himself to be doing so. Moreover, Middle Platonism is not obviously "middle," has no founding figure aside from Plato, and did not constitute a single coherent movement. In what follows, brief consideration will be given to the Platonism of this first period, partly because attitudes to Socrates are better documented than in Plotinus and his early followers, before turning to detailed outlines of Socrates' reception in the later "Neoplatonists" like Proclus and Olympiodorus.

Plutarch (c. 46–120 CE)

Moralia. Loeb Classical Library, various editors. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Man of letters, biographer, Delphic priest, and philosopher, from Chaeronea. Among the many essays of the *Moralia*, the *De Genio Socratis* (vol. vii), which

includes an extensive discussion of Socrates' divine sign, is of special relevance. One might also single out the *Amatorius* (vol. ix), an extensive discussion of the merits and demerits of a proposed marriage in the light of broadly Socratic views on love; the first of the *Platonic Questions* (vol. xiii.1), on Socratic midwifery; *Against Colotes* (vol. xii.2), in which he defends various thinkers, including Socrates, against the charges of an Epicurean. The historical Socrates, though not himself the subject of a biography, features prominently in the *Life of Alcibiades*.

Apuleius (floruit c. 155 CE)

De Deo Socratis and *De Platone*. Apulée: *Opusculs philosophiques et fragments*, ed. T. Beaujeu. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1973.

North African man of letters, whether “sophist” or philosopher is a question that remains in debate. His own *Apologia de Magia* owes something to Plato's *Apology*, thereby placing Apuleius in the position of Socrates. A “Socrates” is rescued temporarily from the clutches of a witch in book I of his *Golden Ass* (or *Metamorphoses*), though one can only guess what the author intends thereby. Book II of that work also suggests a connection with Plutarch. The *De Deo Socrates* is another account of the divine sign, placed in the context of traditional Roman beliefs.

Numenius (floruit c. 155 CE)

Fragments. Numénius Fragments, ed. E. des Places. English translation with unchanged text by R. Petty, *Fragments of Numenius of Apamea*. Warminster: Prometheus Trust, 2012.

Owing his principal loyalty to Pythagoras, Numenius was nevertheless occupied with the exegesis of Platonic dialogues. In his work *On the Secession of the Academics from Plato* (Frr. 24–28) he depicts Socrates as a misunderstood follower of Pythagoras whose followers left the true path.

Lucian (c. 120–185 CE)

Luciani Opera, ed. M. D. McLeod. 5 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972–1987. Translation with Greek text in A. M. Harmon, K. Kilburn, and M. D. McLeod, *Lucian*, 8 vols., Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1913–1967.

Not a Platonist and difficult to classify, like many products of the “second sophistic,” Lucian is known for his satirical sketches in which he treats many things irreverently, especially philosophers. Socrates appears in the *Auction of Lives* and *Fisherman*, and though not immune from Lucian’s barbs, he is treated more gently than most intellectuals, since Lucian’s primary venom, he claims, is reserved for the sham philosophers of his own era.

Maximus of Tyre (c. 125–190 CE)

Dissertationes, ed. M. B. Trapp. Stuttgart: de Gruyter, 1994.

Philosophical Orations, tr. M. B. Trapp. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Maximus, though a philosopher with convictions with both Platonist and Cynic leanings, resembles the sophists of his age in communicating through short speeches on mostly traditional topics. A very positive but complex picture of Socrates emerges in his works, since besides Plato and Xenophon he employed the Socratic works of Aeschines of Sphettus. Many dissertations mention Socrates, with nos. 3, 8, and 18 being particularly rich.

Plotinus (c. 204/5–270 CE)

Enneads. Plotini opera, ed. P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer. 3 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1951–1973.

Often heralded as the father of the so-called Neoplatonic school, Plotinus mentions Socrates only a few times at *Enn.* III 2 [15] 59, VI 2 [1] 24, VI 3 [5] 13, VI 3 [5] 20–22, VI 3 [6] 18, VI 3 [9] 29. With the exception of III 2 [15] 59, where Plotinus alludes to Socrates’ playfulness, all of the above instances refer to Socrates as an example of a particular and unfortunately do not shed any light on Plotinus’s reception of the philosopher. Nevertheless, a few scholars have attempted to either tease out Socratic themes in Plotinus’s work or have argued that insofar as Plotinus is still committed to the importance of self-knowledge and the dialogical method of inquiry he remains true to the Socratic character of philosophy. See Beierwaltes (1995), Smith (2004), and Rangos (2004).

Porphyry (c. 234–305 CE)

Historia philosophiae (fragmenta) and *De abstinentia*, ed. A. Nauck, *Porphyrii philosophi Platonici opuscula selecta*. Leipzig: Teubner 1886, repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1963.

De abstinencia ab esu animalium, ed. J. Bouffartigue, M. Patillon, and A.-P. Segonds. 3 vols. Paris: Budé, 1979–1995. *On Abstinence from Killing Animals*, tr. G. Clark. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000.

Student and friend of Plotinus, Porphyry gives an interpretation of Socrates that offers readers a decisive ambiguity insofar as the paraphrased quotations from his now lost *Philosophical History* seem to portray Socrates in a negative light. In fact, Socrates Scholasticus relates that Porphyry's depiction of the philosopher is something one would expect from a hostile critic like Meletus or Anytus. In the fragments preserved by Theodoretus and Cyril of Alexandria, Porphyry seems to have maligned the inconsistencies of Socrates' life, to have discussed with disdain and an air of triviality Socrates' work as a stonemason, and may have referenced Socrates' possible infidelity and use of prostitutes (see *Hist. phil.*, Frr. IX, X, XII). Of course, this picture is neither positive nor in tune with later images of the philosopher in Neoplatonism, but we should be careful not to forget that Porphyry's work is being appropriated by these Christian authors for their own polemical purposes. It should be understood that if Porphyry had attacked Socrates one would expect his portrait to be criticized by later Platonists. Nonetheless, Porphyry's supposed comments do not seem to have provoked adverse Platonist reaction. In the end, regardless of whether this disparaging portrait of Socrates in this fragmentary text can be attributed to Porphyry, we doubtless learn that Porphyry clearly distinguished between the historical Socrates and the Socrates of Plato's dialogues. In opposition to the disparaging picture of the philosopher in the *Historia philosophiae*, in *De abstinencia* Porphyry mentions Socrates a few times and in a much more positive light. Here, he compliments Socrates' eating habits and his corresponding disdain for pleasure while also valorizing Socrates' unswerving commitment to the Olympian gods. In this text he also refers to *Phaedo* 85b, where Socrates likens himself to a "fellow-slave of the swans" (see *De abstinencia* 1.15, 3.1, 3.16, and 3.26).

Iamblichus (c. 250–325 CE)

De mysteriis, ed. É. des Places, *Jamblique Les mystères d'Égypte*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres 1966. *De Mysteriis*, ed. and tr. E. C. Clarke, J. M. Dillon, and J. P. Hershbell. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.

In Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta, ed. and tr. J. M. Dillon. Leiden: Brill, 1973.

Letters, tr. J. M. Dillon and W. Polleichtner. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009.

Like Plotinus, Iamblichus does not, in his extant work, explicitly discuss the character of Socrates, only mentioning him once and seemingly out of context at

De myst. I 8, 6. Nevertheless as the original author of the Neoplatonic curriculum one would be hard pressed to conclude that he never analyzed or wrote about the character of Socrates. Given that Iamblichus was said to have written extensive commentaries on various Platonic dialogues, we should moderate Iamblichus's silence with regard to Socrates with the unfortunate loss of these invaluable texts. Ultimately, Iamblichus's canonization of the Platonic dialogues into a set of twelve complete texts beginning with the *Alcibiades I* and ending with the *Parmenides* would revive the commentary tradition and stimulate later Neoplatonic authors to explicitly engage in extensive discussion of Socrates. See also the *Protrepticus* for various Socratic themes, e.g. moral intellectualism and the value of self-knowledge for the good life.

Julian (c. 331–363 CE)

The Works of the Emperor Julian, ed. and tr. W. C. Wright. 3 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1923. *Epistulae*, ed. F. Hertlein. Lipsiae, Teubner, 1875. *Orationes*, ed. G. Rochefort. 2 vols. Paris: 1963.

Greatly influenced by Iamblichus, the last pagan emperor, Julian, attempted to restore not only the religious practices of Hellenes but also their educational models and paradigms. Thus it should come as no surprise that throughout his works the emperor repeatedly extols Socrates' virtues. At *Epist. ad Themist.* 264b–d the emperor praises the philosopher's legacy, declares that he was more notable than Alexander the Great, and further claims that Socrates was the cause of, among others, Plato's wisdom and Xenophanes' military expertise. He concludes that all individuals who have been saved through philosophy ultimately owe their salvation to Socrates. See also *Orationes* II 78d–79b, VI 181a–b, VI 190a–c, VII 237b–c, VIII 249 b, *Epist. ad Themist.* 255c, and *Epist. ad Nilus* 50 444c–d.

Libanius (c. 314–c. 394 CE)

Declamationes, ed. R. Foerster, *Libanii opera*, vol. 5. Leipzig: Teubner, 1909.

In *Declamationes I, Apologia Socratis*, Libanius offers a detailed defense of Socrates' life and methods of practicing philosophy, and in *Declamationes II, de Socratis silentio*, he waxes eloquent on the heinousness of forcing Socrates to remain silent after his sentencing. *De Socratis silentio* is an expression of the persecution of pagans in the fourth century CE, while *Apologia Socratis* represents Libanius's defense of Socrates' virtue and way of life, explicitly arguing

against the view that Socrates led a hypocritical private life adverse to his public teachings.

Syrianus (died c. 437 CE)

In Aristotelis metaphysica, ed. G. Kroll, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, vol. 6. Berlin: Reimer, 1902. *Syrianus On Aristotle Metaphysics 13–14*, tr. J. Dillon and D. O'Meara. London: Duckworth, 2006. *Syrianus On Aristotle Metaphysics 3–4*, tr. D. O'Meara and J. Dillon. London: Duckworth, 2008.
The Teachings of Syrianus on Plato's Timaeus and Parmenides, ed. and tr. S. K. Wear. Leiden: Brill, 2011.

While only mentioning the philosopher once, the single fragment is loaded with highly controversial statements concerning Socrates and Socratic philosophy. At *in Metaph.* 104,15–105,22 (ad M 9.1086 a 37) Syrianus ascribes to the historical Socrates the argument that there is no scientific knowledge of things in flux but rather all knowledge is based off logical proof and dialectic. Most strikingly Syrianus further credits Socrates with a theory of immanent universals, and he records that some think Plato, in ignorance or deliberate misrepresentation, made these universals separate from the things themselves. Syrianus refutes this thesis and argues in tune with the *Phaedrus* and the *Phaedo* that Socrates did not confine universals to definitions but holds the proposition that there are reasoning principles in the soul. He concludes that Plato was the most upright and reliable writer on Socrates and, accordingly, would not make a mistake in depicting his way of life or philosophy.

Hermias (c. 410–c. 450 CE)

In Platonis Phaedrum, ed. P. Couvreur. Paris: Bibliothèque de l'École des hautes études, Sciences historiques et philologiques, 1901.
In Platonis Phaedrum Scholia (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana), ed. C. Lucarini and C. Moreschini. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012.

Hermias's commentary on the *Phaedrus* extensively discusses the character of Socrates and the nature of Socratic *eros*. His Socrates is exclusively Platonic as he focuses on his depiction of the philosopher from within this dialogue, but in his analysis of this text he defends against the charges that Socrates corrupted the youth and argues that he sincerely cultivated the care of the soul, saving individuals from a life tending toward external, vulgar love versus divine love. Furthermore, Hermias insists on the purgative nature of Socratic teaching, arguing that he

is an ideal pedagogue insofar as he has the ability to correct or save the young. Like many before him, Hermias additionally discusses Socrates' daimonion (65.25, 66.16–17, and 76.19–79.34) and argues that he did not face any difficulties in contemplating the divine. Hermias also broaches the subject of the importance of self-knowledge and the Delphi maxim for Socrates (26.15–25, 31.4–9), and, finally, at 147.11–14 he attempts the herculean task of dismantling a literal interpretation of Socratic disavowals to knowing or teaching.

Proclus (412–485 CE)

- In Platonis rem publicam commentarii*, ed. W. Kroll, *Procli Diadochi in Platonis rem publicam commentarii*. 2 vols. Leipzig: Teubner, 1899–1901.
- Theologia Platonica*, ed. H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink, *Proclus Théologie platonicienne*, vols. 1–6. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968–1997.
- In Platonis Alcibiadem I*, ed. L. G. Westerink, *Proclus Diadochus Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*. Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing, 1964. *Proclus Alcibiades I*, tr. W. O'Neill. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971. *Proclus Sur le premier Alcibiade de Platon*, ed. and tr. A.-P. Segonds. 2 vols. Collection des universités de France. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1985–1986.
- In Platonis Parmenidem*, ed. C. Steel and L. Van Camp, *Procli in Platonis Parmenidem Commentaria*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007–2009. *Proclus Commentaire sur le Parménide de Platon*, ed. and tr. C. Luna and A.-P. Segonds. 3 vols. Collection des Universités de France. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2007–2011. *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, ed. and tr. J. M. Dillon and G. Morrow. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- In Platonis Cratylum commentaria*, ed. G. Pasquali, *Procli Diadochi in Platonis Cratylum commentaria*. Leipzig: Teubner, 1904. *Proclus' Commentary on the Cratylus in Context Ancient Theories of Language and Naming*, ed. and tr. R. M. Van den Berg. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, ed. E. Diehl, *Procli Diadochi in Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, 3 vols. Leipzig: Teubner, 1903–1906. *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, vol. 1, bk. 1, *Proclus on the Socratic State*, ed. and tr. H. Tarrant. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, vol. 2, bk. 2, *Proclus on the Causes of the Cosmos and Its Creation*, ed. and tr. D. Runia and M. Share. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, vol. 3, bk. 3, pt. 1, *Proclus on the World Body*, ed. and tr. D. Baltzly. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- De providentia et fato et eo quod in nobis ad Theodorum mechanicum*, ed. and tr. D. Isaac, *Proclus Trois études sur la providence*, II. *Providence, fatalité, liberté*. Paris: Collection des universités de France, 1979. *Procli Diadochi tria opuscula*, ed. H. Boese. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1960. *Proclus On Providence*, tr. C. Steel, *Ancient Commentators on Aristotle*. London: Duckworth, 2007. *Proclus Ten Problems Concerning Providence*, tr. C. Steel, *Ancient Commentators on Aristotle*. London: Duckworth, 2012. *Proclus On the Existence of Evils*, tr. J. Opsomer and C. Steel, *Ancient Commentators on Aristotle*. London: Duckworth, 2003.

Proclus' Hymns: Essays, Translations, Commentary, ed. and tr. R. M. van den Berg, *Philosophia antiqua*, 90. Leiden: Brill, 2001.

The Elements of Theology, ed. and tr. E. R. Dodds. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933; 2nd ed. 1963.

Proclus deliberates widely on the character of Socrates both as a historical figure and as presented by Plato. While the character he depicts is predominantly Plato's Socrates, his analysis far surpasses simple exegesis of the character presented in the texts and leans more heavily toward an original construction of the philosopher. Proclus analyzes seminal themes from Socrates' disavowals to knowledge (*in Crat.* 27.1–5, *in Remp.* 54.3–56.19, *in Tim.* 1.62.21–25, *in Parm.* 883.10–20 and 1018.1–1019.21, and *in Alc.* 5.16–6.15) to more novel debates concerning the philosopher's status in the Neoplatonic system (*in Alc.* 19.18–20.1, 21.5–8, 22.27–23.10, 28.13–18, 79.10–14, 119.16–120.3, 123.17–20, 126.10–11, 130.1–2, 132.10, 145.10, 159.7–10, 161.5–8, 168.1, 231.1–3, 237.17–20; *in Tim.* 9.20–24, 29.10, 58.1–5, 62.10; *in Parm.* 628.20, 652.1–14, 676.24, 686.15–687.15, 690.24). For Proclus's comments on the historical accuracy of Plato's depiction of Socrates over other *sokratikoi logoi* see *in Tim.* 65.22–28, where Proclus clearly believes that Plato's Socrates has captured the real likeness of the philosopher (see also *in Tim.* 62.8–20 and *in Parm.* 1023.20–23). For Proclus's refutation of the skeptical portrait of Socrates and his defense of Socratic ignorance and wisdom see *De prov.* 48.1–50.12–51.1–30, *in Alc.* 23.1–4 and 24.5–10. For explicit attempts to clarify the nature of Socratic irony see *in Tim.* 1.62.21–25, *in Crat.* 24.1 and 27.1, *in Remp.* 60.27 and *in Alc.* 230.15–231.13. On Socratic method(s) see *in Parm.* 649.17–36, 652.1–14, and 654.15–655.11, where the commentator clearly associates Socrates with the art of refutation and the practice of arguing on both sides of a question (cf. *in Parm.* 989.15–18, *in Alc.* 100.27–103.21, 228.20–229.13, 241.10–18, 254.14, 289.1–290.12). Proclus also offers an in-depth analysis of the nature of Socrates' daimonion (*in Alc.* 78.10–83.16) and often argues that he had prophetic gifts (see *in Alc.* 5.16–17). Finally, Proclus also analyzes the nature of Socratic eros (*in Alc.* 34.11–67.17) and discusses at length the nature of divine, that is, Socratic, love, versus vulgar love (see *in Alc.* 62.10, 119.7–18, 123.27–30, 127.3–15, 133.1–19 as well as *in Alc.* 85.16–92.2 for an extensive defense of Socrates' affair with Alcibiades).

Olympiodorus (c. 495–570 CE)

In Platonis Alcibiadem commentarii, ed. L. G. Westerink, *Olympiodorus Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*. Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1956, repr. 1982.

In Platonis Gorgiam commentaria, ed. L. G. Westerink, *Olympiodori in Platonis Gorgiam commentaria*. Lipsiae: Olm, 1970.

In Platonis Phaedonem commentaria, ed. L. G. Westerink, *The Greek Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo*, vol. 1. Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing, 1976.

Overall Olympiodorus is extremely sensitive to the Socratic element in Plato, and so, like Proclus, he devotes considerable attention to the character of Socrates in his commentaries, discussing various topics from his wisdom (see *in Gorg.*, prologue 8.12–15, 3 4.6, 34 3.14–24, *in Phd.* 2 8.5–15, and *in Alc.* 8.1–5, 52.10–53.1, 55.20–23, and 217.4–22), argumentative and pedagogical methods (see *in Gorg.* 5 12.1–30) as well as his use of irony (*in Alc.* 52.10–53.1, 88.5–12, and *in Gorg.* 28 5.1–2). For his portraits of the historical Socrates see *in Gorg.* prologue 9.9–15, *in Gorg.* 1 6.11–20, 1 6.27–30, and 41 3.1–4.1. For Olympiodorus's understanding of the relationship between Plato and Socrates consider his remarks at *in Gorg.* 41 6.11–15, where he argues that Plato only learned ethical matters from Socrates because the former was too young to understand the deeper meaning of Socrates' arguments. Alongside this, Olympiodorus notes fundamental differences between Plato and Socrates, including both the latter's penchant for philosophizing in the agora and his use of irony, which Plato avoided (*in Alc.* 2.150–152). At *in Gorg.* 1 7.14 Olympiodorus claims that Socrates alone could heal the passions of the soul properly, and at *in Alc.* 88.5–6 and 215.13–21 he describes Socrates as an exemplar of a divinely inspired lover who benefits his beloveds by turning them toward the beautiful in their own souls. Finally, consider *in Alc.* 21.1–23.17 for Olympiodorus's interpretation of Socrates' daimonion.

Simplicius (c. 490–c. 560)

Commentarius in Epicteti enchiridion, ed. I. Hadot, *Simplicius Commentaire sur le Manuel d'Épictète Introduction et édition critique du text grec*, *Philosophia Antiqua* 66. Leiden: Brill, 1996; and ed. F. Dübner, *Theophrasti characteres*. Paris: Didot, 1842.

In his commentary on Epictetus's *Encheiridion* Simplicius makes ample appeal to Socrates but seems to conflate Plato's Socrates with the historical Socrates (see H196/D3,3). Nevertheless, throughout this work he often refers to Socrates as a moral exemplar as well as commenting on what he believed were standard Socratic themes. For reference to historical events in Socrates' life, including his

courage in battle and the Delphic oracle, see H314/D65,19 and H438/D131,7–20, H266/D40,44, H449/D136, 9–14, H395/D110,48 and H417/D121,50, H405/D115,47–49. For an explicit reference to Plato's *Apology* and Socrates' belief that Anytus and Meletus cannot harm him see H453/D138,8–9. For the most extensive account of Socratic virtue see H415–416/D120,48–121, where Simplicius valorizes his and Zeno's greatness of soul, authenticity, and humility (see also H397/D112,5, see H300/D58,12, H196/D3,5–6, H230/D21,24, H262/D38,15). On Socrates' attitude toward death see H243/D28,14 and H243–4/D28,34–37.

Damascius (c. 458–c. 538 CE)

In Philebum, ed. L. G. Westerink, *Damascius. Lectures on the Philebus* wrongly attributed to Olympiodorus. Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1959, repr. Hakkert, 1982

De principiis, ed. C. É. Ruelle, *Damascii successoris dubitationes et solutiones*, vols. 1 and 2. Paris: Klincksieck, 1889–1899, repr. 1964.

Vitae Isidori reliquiae, éd. C. Zintzen. Hildesheim: Olms, 1967.

Unlike the Socrates of Proclus or Olympiodorus, Damascius's Socrates is exclusively Platonic, as Damascius never discusses Socrates as distinct from the Platonic dialogues and the arguments contained in them. See *De principiis* 1 9.22, 1 64.4, 1 66.11, 1 136.14. For Socrates' place in the Neoplatonic system see in *Philebus* 8.1–5, where Socrates represents scientific method and discursive thought as well as one who attains the good on both the appetitive and the cognitive level. For an appeal to Socratic irony see in *Philebus* 23.3. On Socratic knowing and not-knowing in conjunction with ignorance and the *Theaetetus* see *De principiis* 1 9.22. See also *Vitae*, F76, F106, F109, E175, F329, and F361, for various fragments ranging from topics as diverse as Isidore's possible defense of Socrates to Socrates' enigmatic speaking ability as well as his rejection of politics, his disobedience toward the Thirty Tyrants, Xenophon's recollections of the benefits of virtue, and, finally, Socrates' belief that philosophy can only be harmed by internal evil.

Prolegomena philosophiae Platonicae

Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy, ed. and tr. L. G. Westerink. Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing, 1962.

As an introduction to reading Plato, this short text offers a considerable amount of anecdotal information regarding the Neoplatonic rendering of the

historical Socrates as distinct from Plato's Socrates. At *Proleg.* 1.40–45 the anonymous author discusses the birth date of Socrates (Thargelion sixth) in comparison to Plato (Thargelion seventh) and surmises that this indicates the priority of Socrates both in time and in insight. While discussing the question why Plato wrote dialogues, the author mentions that both Socrates and Pythagoras left only pupils as opposed to writings. He further clarifies at *Proleg.* 3.15–30 the nature of the teacher-student relationship between Plato and Socrates and, in the process, he rehearses the tales of Plato's first encounter with the philosopher at twenty, his decade-long study of ethics, and his final conclusion that Socrates was superior to all others, which lead the young Plato to throw all his earlier work into a fire (cf. DL III 5–6, Proclus, in *Remp.* I 205.4–13, Olymp., in *Alc.* 2.76–82). He also mentions the trial of Socrates and Plato's commitment to him at *Proleg.* 3.20–22. Cf. DL II 41 and Olymp., in *Gorg.* 41 6.15–18. The author also insists that the dialogues are not perfectly historical and uses Socrates' stage directions as an example of invention at *Proleg.* 16.30. For the author's conflation of Plato with Socrates see *Proleg.* 10.43–11.20. In this section the author discusses Plato's versus Socrates' denial of knowledge and teaching as well as Plato's profession to know only the art of dialectic, love, and midwifery.

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NOTES

Introduction

1. ἢ πῶς δ' ἂν πρὸ τούτων ἄλλο τι τῶν ὄντων ζητήσαιμεν εἴτε τῶν ὄντων εἴτε τῶν γινομένων, αὐτοῦ Σωκράτους ἀκούσαντες λέγοντος· ‘γελοῖον δὴ μοι φαίνεται ἐμμαντὸν ἀγνοοῦντα τὰ τῶν ἄλλων σκοπεῖν’.

2. *Phaedrus* 229e–230a (tr. H. Fowler). Wherever possible, standard abbreviations have been employed in citing all ancient texts in this volume.

3. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 5.4, and Plutarch, *Lives* 23.1.

4. *De parasito* 43.

5. *Epist. ad Themist.* 264b–d.

6. See Foucault (2011: 73–177) for his surprising turn to examining the courage of Socrates in his late 1984 lecture series.

7. For a concise history of the Socratic problem see Patzer (1987: 1–40) and Dorion (2011: 1–23). See also Clay (1994: 23–47), Hackforth (1996: 1–16), Ross (1996: 26–37), Chroust (1996: 38–55), Smith and Brickhouse (2000: 11–52; 2003: 55–62), and Morrison (2006: 101–118); all offer readers a comprehensive discussion of the problems and sources for extracting the historical Socrates from the works of not only Plato but also Aristophanes and Xenophon. See especially Vlastos (1991: 45–106), who after analyzing the depictions of Aristotle, Xenophon, and Plato, argues that the early Platonic dialogues are closer to the historical Socrates than his middle and later work. Against this thesis see Morrison (1996: 119–135), Kahn (1996: 156–178), and Beversluis (1993: 293–312).

8. Vlastos (1991).

9. See Dorion (2000; 2011: 6–18), who in the former relies on Aristotle’s account of the *logoi sokratikoi* and consequently advances the theories of K. Joel, who at the turn of the nineteenth century already argued for the fictional nature of this genre. In the latter essay Dorion concludes that “Xenophon’s and Plato’s Socratic writings belong to a literary genre—that of the *logos sokraticos*, which Aristotle explicitly recognized and which authorizes by its very nature a certain degree of fiction and a great deal of freedom of invention as far as the setting and content are concerned, most notably with the ideas expressed by different characters” (2011: 7).

10. See Vander Waerdt (1994a), Lindsay and Vasilis (2006), Trapp (2007a and 2007b),

Rappe and Kamtekar (2009), and Morrison (2011). To be certain, while the question of the “Socratic problem” has fallen into disrepute, there has been in the past decade a resurgence of turning to Xenophon for understanding the importance of Socratic philosophy in later Hellenism. See especially Dorion (2006 and 2011). For a unique attempt to understand Socrates via the comedies of Aristophanes see Vander Waerdt (1994b: 48–86). See also Caizzi (2006: 119–135) and Trapp (2007c: 51–64) for information on the numerous and diverse “minor Socratics.”

11. “So-called” because no Neoplatonist ever saw himself as a follower of any philosopher other than Plato and Pythagoras, and it was the works of Plato that constituted the pinnacle of the philosophic curriculum; the debt to Plotinus in particular began to wane already after Porphyry.

12. See Table 2 in Michael Griffin’s Chapter 6 in this volume for a chart detailing the Platonic curriculum instigated by Iamblichus.

13. Bröcker (1966). In this lecture Bröcker makes no mention of Socrates or his inheritance (or lack thereof) in the Neoplatonic tradition but merely waxes eloquent on the metaphysical underpinnings of Plotinus’s system. Despite the incongruity of the title and his own silence with regard to Socrates, the intent of Bröcker’s title is clear; the Neoplatonic project stands counter to the Socratic tradition as argued above.

14. Hathaway (1969: 19–20).

15. See Beierwaltes (1995: 97–116).

16. Smith (2004: 460).

17. See Porph., *Vita Plotini* 3.37.

18. III 2, 15, 1–62. See also Rangos (2004: 465–467) for an in-depth account of Plotinus’s use of Socrates in this passage.

19. II 9, 14, 38. Furthermore, it could be argued that this aporetic impulse is retained throughout the history of Platonism in late antiquity. It is easily observed in Porphyry’s and Iamblichus’s caustic debate over theurgy, in Proclus’s own penchant for introspective questioning in his commentaries on Plato’s dialogues, and, finally, in the aporetic impulse championed most exceptionally by Damascius, the last Platonic Successor, in his embrace of the value of constant doubt even before the One. For more on the value of the aporetic method in Plotinus, Proclus, and Damascius see Rappe (2000).

20. Rangos (2004: 465).

21. *Vita Plotini* 21.10–64.

22. *Historia ecclesiastica* III 23.13 = *SSR* I B 41.

23. See *de Abstinencia* 1.15, 3.1, 3.8, 3.16, and 3.26.

24. *In Sophistam* Fr. 1 = Hermann, *Plat. Dial.* VI pp. 249–250.

25. *In Phaedr.* Fr.1 = Hermias, *in Phaedr.* 9.6ff. It might further be mentioned that Iamblichus made extensive use of Socratic dialogues like the *Apol.*, *Euthd.*, and *Hp.Ma.* as well as the *Alc. I* and *Menex.* in his *Protrepticus*. For confirmation see the index of des Places (1989).

26. Admittedly, few scholars of Socrates would see much that is Socratic behind the “Socrates” who dominates the discussion of the *Philebus*, while only the *Gorgias* would

have been accepted by Vlastos as employing the “Socrates” of Plato’s authentically Socratic period. For the development and order of the Neoplatonic canon instigated by Iamblichus see Jackson, Lycos, and Tarrant (1998: 14) and Tarrant (2000: 90–94 and 2007a: 48). Cf. Anon., *Proleg.* 26.12–16.

27. The dating of this dialogue is unknown, and its authorship has been much questioned in contemporary scholarship. In the Platonic tradition, however, it was often lauded as the best dialogue for beginners in philosophy. See Proclus, *in Alc.* 11–12. Several essays in Johnson and Tarrant (2012) discuss the issues of chronology and authenticity, but the volume does not arrive at any final position. For an overview of the possible chronology and a concise dismissal of those who question the authenticity of this dialogue see Denyer (2001: 11–25).

28. Cf. Marinus, *Vit. Procl.* 13, for Proclus’s progression through the Neoplatonic curriculum; see also Coulter (1976), Dillon (1976 and 1987: 1–18), Sheppard (1980), Lambertson (1986), Mansfeld (1994), Jackson, Lycos, and Tarrant (1998: 11–15), and O’Meara (2003: 63) for more information on the intentions and scope of Iamblichus’s Platonic curriculum.

29. Proclus, *in Alc.* 21.7–10.

30. Proclus, *in Alc.* 11.1–17.

31. εἴπερ οὖν ἄλλοθί που ξυνεκεράσατο τήν τε Πυθαγόρειον καὶ Σωκρατικὴν ιδιότητα, κὰν τῷδε τῷ διαλόγῳ τοῦτο φαίνεται ποιῶν· ἔστι γὰρ ἐν αὐτῷ παρὰ μὲν τῆς Πυθαγορικῆς συνηθείας τὸ ὑψηλόνουν, τὸ νοερόν, τὸ ἐνθεον, τὸ ἀπὸ τῶν νοητῶν πάντα ἐξάπτων. . . . παρὰ δὲ τῆς Σωκρατικῆς φιλανθρωπίας τὸ εὐσυνουσίαστον, τὸ ἡμερον, τὸ ἀποδεικτικόν, τὸ δι’ εἰκόνων τὰ ὄντα θεωροῦν, τὸ ἠθικόν, πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα.

32. κατὰ γὰρ τὰς ἐνδον διαθέσεις οἱ λόγοι φαίνονται διαφέροντες. οὕτω γὰρ καὶ τῶν ἀπολογίας Σωκράτους γεγραφῶτων ὡς οὐ διασωσασμένων τὸ ἥθος τὸ Σωκρατικόν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις καταγελῶμεν ἐξῶ Πλάτωνος τῶν πλείστων. καίτοι αὐτὸ γε τοῦτο ἰστοροῦντες, ὅτι κατηγορεῖται Σωκράτης καὶ ἀπολελογῆται καὶ ἔτυχε τοιαύσδε ψήφου, οὐκ ἂν εἶεν ἄξιοι γέλωτος, ἀλλ’ ἡ τῆς ἐν τοῖς λόγοις μιμήσεως ἀνομοιότης καταγέλαστους ἀποφαίνει τοὺς μιμητάς.

33. Syrianus, *in Metaph.* 105,1–5, and Anon., *Proleg.* 16.27–33. Cf. *Proleg.* 3.20–30. Remarkably, the anonymous author also reveals himself to be a true Socratic when he discusses the philosophical implications behind Plato’s and Socrates’ respective birthdays. According to Anonymous the fact that Socrates was born on the sixth of the month versus Plato on the seventh indicates “the priority of Socrates both as regards time and as regards insight.” *Proleg.* 1.43.

34. Cf. Anon., *Proleg.* 3.12, where Anonymous asserts that Plato went to mimes to learn to imitate others and to draw characters, as “writing dialogues means portraying characters.”

35. See Anon., *Proleg.* 10.43–11.20. In this section the author discusses Plato’s versus Socrates’ denial of knowledge and teaching as well as Plato’s profession to know only the art of dialectic, love, and midwifery.

36. Proclus, *in Tim.* 16.8–14. Cf. Anon. *Proleg.* 15.18–50.

37. Olymp., in *Gorg.* 8.1. See also Tarrant (2000:117).
38. See Layne (2009) for information on Proclus's understanding of the Socratic elenchus.
39. Taki (2012).
40. Hermias, in *Phaedr.* 1.5–6. Manolea argues for the identification of Hermias with his master Syrianus.
41. Proclus, in *Alc.* 114.1–10.
42. Cf. Bussanich (1999 and 2006).
43. McPherran (1996a and 1996b). McPherran writes in the latter essay, "In many longstanding and influential interpretations of his views, Socrates is portrayed as a figure of our own Enlightenment: a consummate intellectualist, whose 'paradoxical' view that 'virtue is knowledge' grounds a moral theory that takes discursive rationality as our only trustworthy guide in life" (1996a: 167).
44. Apuleius, *de Deo Socratis* 17.157; Plutarch, *On the Sign of Socrates* 588d12–588e3; 588e7; 589e1–589f3.
45. Layne (Forthcoming a, Forthcoming c, and 2009). For Proclus's refutation of the skeptical portrait of Socrates see *de Prov.* 48.1–50.12.
46. Anon., *Proleg.* 10.45–50.
47. See Syrianus, in *Metaph.* 104,15–105,22 where he ascribes to the *historical* Socrates the argument that there is no scientific knowledge of things in flux but rather all knowledge is based on logical proof and dialectic. In this passage Syrianus further credits Socrates with a theory of immanent universals and argues, in tune with the *Phaedrus* and the *Phaedo*, that Socrates did not confine universals to mere abstract definitions. Rather he contends that the philosopher proposed that there are reasoning-principles in the soul itself and thus Socrates' search for definitions was centered upon this discovery.
48. See in *Alc.* 23.1–4 and 24.5–10, where Proclus defends the philosopher's use of conjectural statements. See also *de Prov.* 48.1–50.12, in *Crat.* 27.1–5, in *Remp.* 54.3–56.19, in *Tim.* 1.62.21–25, and in *Parm.* 883.10–20 and 1018.1–1019.21 for other examples of Proclus's efforts to explain Socratic ignorance and/or his use of tentative or skeptical language. See in *Alc.* 5.16–6.15 for his specific commentary on Socrates' denial of self-knowledge and its connection to the Delphic oracle.
49. In *Alc.* 24.10–15.
50. See Proclus, in *Tim.* 1.62.21–25, in *Crat.* 24.1 and 27.1, in *Remp.* 60.27, as well as in *Alc.* 230.15–231.13
51. In *Gorg.* 28 5.1–2. See also in *Gorg.* 32.12. Cf. Proclus, in *Alc.* 230.15–231.13.
52. Aristotle, *NE* 3.1.
53. We are happy to note that as this project neared its completion various essays and texts devoted to Neoplatonism and Socrates began to appear. See Johnson and Tarrant (2012).

Chapter 1

1. Plato, *Smp.* 215a2–3.
2. Plato, *Smp.* 215a6–b6 and 216e5–217a1.
3. Plato, *R.* 1, 337a3–7.
4. Plato, *Apol.* 21a4–7, often repeated in later sources about Socrates.
5. Plato, *Smp.* 176c3–5 and 220a1–c1.
6. Plato, *Apol.* 31c4–32a3 and *Gorg.* 521d6–8.
7. This Epicurean view of Socrates has often been studied; see, e.g., Riley (1980), Kleve (1983), Vander Waerdt (1989, 253–259), and Clay 2003.
8. Cf. Döring (1979) and de Luise and Farinetti (1997).
9. By Cato the Elder; see Plutarch, *Ca. Ma.* 23.1.
10. See, e.g., Epictetus, 4.1.160 and 4.7.30–31; Dio of Prusa, *Orat.* 43.8; Seneca, *De tranq. an.* 5.1–3.
11. See, e.g., Schmitz (2002: 100–110), Machor and Goldstein (2001), Hardwick (2003), and Martindale (2003).
12. Neoplatonism has often been regarded as a philosophy that almost entirely forgot the Socratic questions; see, e.g., Zeller (1903: 496), Bröcker (1966), Hathaway (1969); contra see, e.g., Beierwaltes (1995).
13. Plato, *Smp.* 177d7–8; cf. also 212b6–7; *Lysis* 204b8–c2; *Theages* 128b1–4; Maximus of Tyre, *Orat.* 18.4; Themistius, *Orat.* 13, 161b–d.
14. Plato's *Apology* suggests that this is not the case, since Meletus there connects the charge with Socrates' supposed atheism (26b2–7); cf. Brickhouse and Smith (1989: 118–119). See also Maximus of Tyre, *Orat.* 18.6.
15. *Orat.* 18–21; short discussions can be found in Puigalli (1983: 386–399) and Szarmach (1985: 71–82).
16. Cf. Barigazzi (1966: 161–169).
17. I deal with the second one in Roskam (2012). See also Layne (Forthcoming b).
18. Lucian, *VH* 2.17.
19. Lucian, *VH* 2.19; tr. A. M. Harmon.
20. On Lucian's view of the philosophers, see, e.g., Jones (1986: 24–32), Clay (1992), and Nesselrath (2001).
21. Lucian, *Dial. Mort.* 4.1–2.
22. Plato, *Apol.* 33d9–34b5.
23. Cf. my introductory section above. For these debates, see also Tarrant (2012) on early philosophical discussions of the dynamics of Socratic love in the context of moral improvement.
24. Cf. also Lucian, *Vit. auct.* 15, and esp. Ps.-Lucian, *Amores* 54: “But may the airy talkers and those who raise their philosophic brows temple-high and even higher, beguile the ignorant with the speciousness of their solemn phrases. For Socrates was as devoted to love as anyone and Alcibiades, once he had lain down beneath the same mantle with him, did not rise unassailed” (tr. M. D. Macleod).

25. Hermias's commentary was very often regarded as a mere written report of Syrianus's teaching; see, e.g., Westerink, Trouillard, and Segonds (1990: x): "*Le Commentaire du Phèdre* que nous possédons sous son nom n'est qu'un ensemble de notes non révisées prises au cours de Syrianus sur ce dialogue"; Dillon (1994: 388): "Hermeias is really just transcribing the proceedings of his master Syrianus' seminar"; cf. Zeller (1903: 890). In such a perspective, Hermias's own role amounted to that of an uncritical *reportator*. Recently, however, this view has been questioned, and rightly so; see Bernard (1997: 4–19), Moreschini (2009: 516–522 and 574); cf. Bernard (1995: 220 n. 2). For the contrary view regarding the originality of Hermias see Chapter 4 of this volume, by Christina-Panagiota Manolea.

26. Hermias, in *Phdr.* 9.9–10 and 11.20.

27. Bernard (1997: 24–25).

28. Herm., in *Phdr.* 3.4–6. In the first speech, it is Phaedrus who, as it were, speaks through Socrates' mouth; in *Phdr.* 81.3–5.

29. Herm., in *Phdr.* 80.28–32.

30. Herm., in *Phdr.* 1.1–2: ὁ Σωκράτης ἐπὶ εὐεργεσία τοῦ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένους καὶ τῶν ψυχῶν τῶν νέων κατεπέμφθη εἰς γένεσιν.

31. Herm., in *Phdr.* 67.15; cf. Bernard (1997: 159 n. 233).

32. Herm., in *Phdr.* 208.11.

33. See, e.g., Herm., in *Phdr.* 22.31; cf. also 21.15 about the youth and 27.12–13 about Phaedrus.

34. See, e.g., Herm., in *Phdr.* 12.28 (Σωκράτης ὁ κηδεμῶν τῶν νέων); 13.16–17 (Σωκράτει ἐπιμελὲς ἦν τῶν νέων φροντίζειν); 14.17–18 (ὁ κηδεμῶν τοῦ νέου Σωκράτης); 19.5–6 (ἐπιμελὲς ἦν τῷ Σωκράτει τῶν ψυχῶν τῶν νέων ἐπιμελεῖσθαι).

35. Plato, *Apol.* 24c4–d9; 25c1–4; 26a9–b2.

36. Herm., in *Phdr.* 19.20; cf. Plato, *Apol.* 21a4–7.

37. Herm., in *Phdr.* 264.21–24.

38. Herm., in *Phdr.* 17.29; 31.22; 74.27; 80.20; cf. also 10.23.

39. Herm., in *Phdr.* 48.19–20.

40. Herm., in *Phdr.* 40.13–14: σφῆξει καὶ διορθοῦται τὸν νέον.

41. Aelius Aristides, *Orat.* 3.74 (= *SSR* VI A 53); cf. Döring (1984). See also Tarrant (2012), who most interestingly connects this view of Aeschines of Sphettus with the *Alcibiades I*, and also with the *Theages* and with Polemo's definition of love as "service to the gods for the care and salvation of the young" (Plutarch, *Ad princ. iner.* 780D).

42. Herm., in *Phdr.* 12.28; 33.1; 40.1–2.

43. Herm., in *Phdr.* 64.5–12 and 48.16–17; cf. also 40.20–21, where Hermias says that Phaedrus will turn to (ἐπιστρέφειν) Socrates, as a man turns to his δαίμων (66.16–17, 22–23, and 28–31); cf. Bernard (1997: 125 n. 153). See finally 93.13–14: λέγεται ἡ ψυχὴ κατίναι εἰς γένεσιν κατὰ πρόνοιαν κτλ.

44. Epicurus, *Epist. Men.* 135.

45. Herm., in *Phdr.* 147.14.

46. Herm., in *Phdr.* 50.8.

47. Herm., in *Phdr.* 54.32.
48. Herm., in *Phdr.* 48.15–16.
49. Herm., in *Phdr.* 50.16; cf. also 65.18–19 and 25–26.
50. Herm., in *Phdr.* 10.2–13.
51. Herm., in *Phdr.* 62.23–29; Hermias refers to Plato, *Ti.* 41c2–d3 but actually quotes *Plt.* 272e4–5; cf. Bernard (1997: 152 n. 216).
52. Herm., in *Phdr.* 40.6–14.
53. See Opsomer (1998: 128–130).
54. See Plato, *Smp.* 216e4–5 (where the opposition between παίζων and σπουδασαντος can already be found), and Xenophon, *Smp.* 4, 28; cf. also Hermogenes, Περὶ μεθόδου δεινότητος, p. 454.20–22 R.
55. See, e.g., Herm., in *Phdr.* 50.18–25; 51.8–19; 54.4–8; 60.25–26.
56. Herm., in *Phdr.* 1.2–5.
57. Herm., in *Phdr.* 1.5–6.
58. Herm., in *Phdr.* 46.17–22; the reference is to *Phdr.* 236c6.
59. Herm., in *Phdr.* 10.15–18 and 206.20–24.
60. Herm., in *Phdr.* 231.24–26.
61. Herm., in *Phdr.* 13.16–20, on *Phdr.* 227a1; cf. also 22.3–16.
62. Herm., in *Phdr.* 63.2–23.
63. Herm., in *Phdr.* 42.26–28; 196.25; 200.17; 207.18; 244.10–11.
64. Herm., in *Phdr.* 26.15–25; 31.4–9.
65. Herm., in *Phdr.* 207.17–23; see also Dillon (1994: 388).
66. This is obviously not the place to study all the striking similarities between Hermias's and Proclus's interpretations in detail, yet a few parallels out of many may be mentioned by way of illustration; Socrates' discussions as ἀναγωγή: Procl., in *Alc.* 19.20–22; 61.2–6; 95.15; 127.13; 152.13–15; his beneficent conduct: in *Alc.* 81.5–6; 90.24–91.3; 121.14; 241.19; his purification: in *Alc.* 95.13; 141.9; 174.2–175.18; 241.18; his providential care: in *Alc.* 53.19–56.4; 80.8; 81.12; 88.18; 95.25; 124.5; 140.23; etc.; his role as a kind of good δαίμων: in *Alc.* 40.17–42.4; 60.13–63.12; 198.14–199.23; 281.18–282.9 and passim; his decision to descend to a lower level for his interlocutor's sake: in *Alc.* 132.11–19; his differentiating approach: in *Alc.* 28.16–29.10; his making use of the right opportunity: in *Alc.* 42.5–7; 120.12–124.27; his concern to take into account the character of his young interlocutor: in *Alc.* 23.15–24.1; 47.9–15; 84.26–28; 210.19–211.5; his systematic approach: 209.3–210.2 and passim.
67. That later Platonists often connected these dialogues also appears from Olympiodorus's *Commentary on Alc. I.* See Tarrant (2007c esp. 10) on the link between Plato's *Alc. I* and *Smp.* cf. Dillon (1994).
68. Herm., in *Phdr.* 13.13–16 and 32.23–28, on *Phdr.* 230c7–d2; cf. also 25.24–27 and 73.6–10.
69. Procl., in *Alc.* 35.14–18.
70. Procl., in *Alc.* 36.5–9. The term προσομιλῶν is particularly well chosen here, since it does not only mean “associate” but can also denote sexual intercourse (cf. *LSJ*, s.v.). In

any case, it cannot simply mean “converse” in this passage, as appears from the following μήθ’ ὅλως διαλεγόμενος.

71. Procl., in *Alc.* 58.11–18.

72. This is especially interesting—as Harold Tarrant pointed out to me—in light of *Thg.* 130e2–3, where Aristides claims to have made most progress whenever he was sitting beside Socrates and held and touched him (ἐχόμενος . . . καὶ ἀπτόμενος); cf. also Tarrant’s own essay quoted above, Tarrant (2012: 154–155).

73. Plato, *Phdr.* 255a1–2.

74. Cf. Bernard (1997: 345 n. 79) on the ambivalence of the verb θεραπεύειν.

75. Herm., in *Phdr.* 199.25–27.

76. Anon., *Proleg.* 26.23–26.

77. Plato, *Phdr.* 255b3–8.

78. Herm., in *Phdr.* 201.3–5.

79. Herm., in *Phdr.* 201.7–8.

80. Herm., in *Phdr.* 201.13–14.

81. Cf. also n. 72 above.

82. Herm., in *Phdr.* 201.14–15, on Plato, *Smp.* 217b7–c3 and 217d3–219d2.

83. This is perfectly clear in the *Symposium* but less clear in the *Phaedrus*, where everything depends on the subject of the verbs χρονίζη and πλησιάζη (255b7): both ἐραστής and ἐρώμενος are possible. cf. De Vries (1969: 173). Hermias, however, explicitly opts for the latter interpretation, as appears from in *Phdr.* 201.11–13.

84. Plato, *Phdr.* 255e2–4; tr. H. N. Fowler.

85. Herm., in *Phdr.* 202.24–26.

86. Plato, *Phdr.* 256c3–5: τὴν ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν μακαριστὴν αἴρεσιν εἰλέσθην τε καὶ διεπραξάσθην.

87. Herm., in *Phdr.* 204.29–31; cf. also 203.14–17, again with reference to Socrates and Alcibiades in Plato’s *Symposium*.

88. Herm., in *Phdr.* 202.30–203.5.

89. Herm., in *Phdr.* 203.5–7, with reference to Plato, *Phdr.* 256d4–e2.

90. See therefore Layne (Forthcoming c, d and 2009).

91. Cf. Herm., in *Phdr.* 147.14 (ἐπιστήμονα).

92. E.g., in his comment on Plato, *Phdr.* 230a3–6.

93. See, e.g., in *Phdr.* 63.15 (οὐδενός . . . φησιν εἶναι διδάσκαλος).

94. Herm., in *Phdr.* 163.28–29 (Σωκράτει φέρε ἢ ἄλλω χρηστῷ διδασκάλῳ); cf. also 259.1.

95. Plato, *Apol.* 19d8–e1 and 33a5–b8; cf. also *Tht.* 150d6–7.

96. Cicero, *Tusc.* 5.10; cf. *Ac.* 1.15.

Chapter 2

1. Maximus of Tyre (second century CE) delivered two orations on the Socratic daimonion as well, *Dissertationes* 8 and 9. See Trapp (1997) for English translation. See also Harrison's introduction in Harrison, Hilton, and Hunink (2001: 186–189).

2. Plato refers to Socrates' daimon in *Apology* 31c7–d6, where Socrates says that it is “a kind of voice” (φωνή τις, d3) that keeps him from performing but does not prompt him to do an action (d3–4). Cf. *Phdr.* 242b8–c3, where Socrates claims the daimon “always holds me back from that which I intend to do” (ἀεὶ δέ με ἐπίσχει ὃ ἂν μέλλω πράττειν, c1) and again likens it to a voice (τινα φωνὴν ἔδοξα αὐτόθεν ἀκοῦσαι, c1–2). For other instances in the dialogues, see *Alc.* 103a4–b1, *Tht.* 151a3–5, and *Euthyd.* 272e3–4.

3. Smith and Woodruff (2000).

4. Smith and Woodruff (2000: 10).

5. On this point, see the introduction in Crystal Addey's Chapter 3 in this volume, and esp. her note 2.

6. Cf. *Statesman*, 271c–e, where daimons preside over different groups of humanity under the control of a single god.

7. On Xenocrates' demonology, see Dillon (1977: 31–32) and Finamore (Forthcoming).

8. For daimons in Philo, see my “Reason and Irrationality: The Intersection of Philosophy and Magic in Later Neoplatonism” (Finamore [Forthcoming]). He also does not discuss Socrates' daimonion.

9. I draw these six topics from the works of Apuleius, Plutarch, and Maximus. For the topic of the Socratic daimon in these authors and the evolution in thought from Plutarch to Apuleius, see Donini (2010). I am not suggesting that there is any direct influence of Plutarch upon Apuleius. I am in agreement with Hunink (2004), rather, that these ideas “were in the air” (256) and, more specifically, were part of the Platonic tradition.

10. For two other outlines, see Beaujeu (2002: 5) and Harrison, Hilton, and Hunink (2001: 192).

11. *Sunt enim inter nos ac deos ut loco regionis ita ingenio mentis intersiti, habentes communem cum superis immortalitatem, cum inferis passionem.*

12. Maximus of Tyre also argues for the intermediary nature of daimons by referring to their immortality and susceptibility to passions at *Or.* 9.2 and 5.

13. *Id potius praestiterit Latine dissertare, varias species daemonum philosophis perhiberi, quo liquidius et plenius de praesagio Socratis deque eius amico numine cognoscatis.*

14. See Pauly-Wissowa et al. (1996–2002: 4, 756–757), and *OLD* and *OCD* under “genius.” Spatially, at least, the *Genius* is particularly well suited to Plato's *Timaeus*, according to which the rational soul dwells in the human head.

15. *Qui est animus sui cuique, quamquam sit immortalis, tamen quodam modo cum homine gignitur.*

16. ἄτε δὲ αἰεὶ θεραπεύοντα τὸ θεῖον ἔχοντά τε αὐτὸν εὖ κεκοσμημένον τὸν δαίμονα σύννοικον ἑαυτοῦ, διαφερόντως εὐδαίμονα εἶναι.

17. For more on the daimonic soul in Plato, see Cornford (1935: 354) and Taylor (1928: 633–634).

18. “Ex hisce ergo Lemuribus qui posterorum suorum curam sortitus placato et quieto numine domum possidet, Lar dicitur familiaris; qui vero ob adversa vitae merita nullis [bonis] sedibus incerta vagatione ceu quodam exilio punitur, inane terriculamentum bonis hominibus, ceterum malis noxium, id genus plerique Larvas perhibent. Cum vero incertum est, quae cuique eorum sortitio evenierit, utrum Lar sit an Larva, nomine Manem deum nuncupant: scilicet et honoris gratia dei vocabulum additum est; quippe tantum eos deos appellant, qui ex eodem numero iuste ac prudenter curriculo vitae gubernato pro numine postea ab hominibus praediti fanis et caerimoniis vulgo advertuntur, ut in Boeotia Amphiraus, in Africa Mopsus, in Aegypto Osiris, alius alibi gentium, Aesculapius ubique.”

19. The Latin terminology for ghosts was not broad enough to accommodate the various classifications that Apuleius wished to make, and so Apuleius had to make accommodations. Apuleius places these three subclasses of daimons/souls under the rubric *Lemures*, a term that does not have kindly associations in Latin, where it refers to “the malevolent ghosts of the dead” (*OLD*). These are ghosts that sometimes appear frighteningly during the night, and at the feast of the Lemuria in May they return to enter their family household, where the Pater Familias performs a rite to eject them. See Pauly-Wissowa et al. (1996–2002: 7, 44). The *Lar Familiaris* was “the tutelary god of the hearth or home” (*OLD*). This group was imagined to include souls that were deified after death (1996–2002: 6, 1147–1148). The *Larva* was also a reborn ghost; *Larvae* cause madness and had the power to harm both the living and the dead (1996–2002: 6, 1155–1156). As such, it would be a major problem for good and bad people alike. A *Manes* was the shade of any dead person, not only of the particular subgroup of especially good former human beings (1996–2002: 7, 803–804). Clearly Apuleius did not object to manipulating the meaning of terms for the sake of his hierarchy.

20. See also Beaujeu (2002: 236).

21. Maximus of Tyre ends his second oration on the daimonion with this class of daimon (*Or.* 9.7). For Maximus, each daimon has its own sphere of operation based on its activities when it was embodied. Thus, Asclepius engages in healing, Heracles in action, and so on. Again the overlap with heroes is obvious. See Trapp (1997: 83 n. 21).

22. *Phd.* 81b1–e2. For Plato, however, these are all souls who have led a bad life. They haunt graveyards until they are reincarnated into the appropriate animal bodies (81e2–82b9). Plato goes on to say that only the souls of philosophers may join the gods (82b10–c2). Thus, the seeds of Apuleius’s division are here, even if Apuleius has freely reinterpreted Plato’s vision.

23. For the Platonic source of these daimons in the eschatological myths of the *Phaedo* and *Republic*, see Beaujeu (2002: 237–238).

24. *Apology* 20e–21a.

25. “Igitur mirum, si Socrates, vir adprime perfectus et Apollinis quoque testimonio sapiens, hunc deum suum cognovit et coluit, ac propterea eius custos prope dicam Lar contubernio familiaris cuncta et arcenda arcuit et praecavenda praecavit et praemonenda

praemonuit, sicubi tamen interfectis sapientiae officiis non consilio sed praesagio indigebat, ut ubi dubitatione clauderet, ibi divinatione consisteret?”

26. Mistakenly printed as *distibuta* in Moreschini (1991: 29).

27. *In huiuscemodi rebus vocem quampiam divinitus exortam dicebat audire ita enim apud Platonem, ne quisquam arbitretur omina eum vulgo loquentium captitasse.*

28. For cledonomanicy (oracular interpretation of overheard remarks), see Johnston (2008: 131) and Harrison, Hilton, and Hunink (2001: 211 n. 62).

29. *Eam quiddam insolitum et arcanum demonstrat habuisse, ita ut Socrates eam, quam sibi divinitus editam tempestive accidere dicebat.*

30. See Harrison (2000: 164–165). Maximus of Tyre, *Or.* 9.7, claims to have seen daemons himself, including the Dioscuri, Asclepius, and Heracles.

31. XX.166: *Credo plerosque vestrum hoc, quod commodum dixi, cunctantius credere et inpendio mirari formam daemonis Socrati visitatam.*

32. Beaujeu (2002: 242–244). Cf. Harrison (2000: 163–165) and in Harrison, Hilton, and Hunink (2001: 212 n. 67).

33. Harrison (2000: 165).

34. “That the Pythagoreans were accustomed to be utterly amazed if anyone should deny that he had ever seen a daemon, Aristotle (as I think) is a properly sufficient witness” (*At enim [secundum] Pythagoricos mirari oppido solitos, si quis se negaret umquam vidisse daemonem, satis, ut reor, idoneus auctor est Aristoteles*). On this lost Aristotelian fragment (193 in Rose), see Beaujeu (2002: 243–244).

35. XX.167: “Quod si cuius potest evenire facultas contemplandi divinam effigiem, cur non adprime potuerit Socrati optingere, quem cuius amplissimo numini sapientiae dignitas coaequarat? Nihil est enim deo similis et gratius quam vir animo perfecte bonus, qui hominibus ceteris antecellit, quam ipse a diis immortalibus distat.”

36. On Archedamus, see R. Parker’s note in Nesselrath (2010: 82 n. 1).

37. See most recently the summary of D. A. Russell in Nesselrath (2010: 3). Riley (1977) makes a reasoned argument that Epaminondas represents the ordinary, philosophical man who makes correct choices using philosophy and reason based on his own good up-bringing. Epaminondas is therefore contrasted with Socrates, who is that rare philosopher to whom daemons speak directly. Although I cannot agree with everything Riley says, his point about Epaminondas seems correct, and it does present a good means for connecting the two sides of the dialogue.

38. For discussions of the historical aspects, see D. A. Russell in Nesselrath (2010: 4–12), who gives a complete outline of the dialogue; Cawkwell (2010: 101–109), and Pelling (2010: 111–127). Cf. DeLacy and Einarson (1959: 362–364).

39. The manuscripts have ἀνάγκη. The substitution μαντικῆς is from Holwerda and adopted by DeLacy and Einarson (1959: 407 n. 9) and by Russell in Nesselrath (2010: 89 n. 101).

40. In the following paragraphs (581E–582C) Phidolaus asks Simmias to respond, and Galaxidorus welcomes the idea but first gives further arguments for his view. On Galaxidorus’s arguments here, see Schröder (2010: 159–160).

41. For a different point of view, see D. A. Russell's introduction in Nesselrath (2010: 7–8).

42. At 588C2–3 Caphisias says that he did not hear what Simmias replied to Galaxidorus (*ἃ μὲν οὖν πρὸς τὸν Γαλαξιδόρου λόγον ἀντεῖπεν ὁ Σιμμίας οὐκ ἤκούσαμεν*).

43. Maximus of Tyre does not consider cledonomanicy as an explanation for the daimonion, but he does allude to certain daimons that help human beings through κληδόνες (*Or.* 8.7). He emphasizes Socrates' special worthiness to have a daimonion in 8.1.

44. On the speech, see Schröder (2010: 161–164).

45. οὐκ ὄψις ἀλλὰ φωνῆς τινος αἰσθησις ἢ λόγου νόησις εἴη συνάπτοντος ἀτόπῳ τινι τρόπῳ πρὸς αὐτόν.

46. Cf. vonθέν, 588E8. See also Chalcidius's similar treatment at 254–255 Waszink, translated in Nesselrath (2010: 202).

47. Cf. Hermias, in *Phdr.* 65.26–69.31, translated in Nesselrath (2010: 204–207).

48. Simmias later offers the evidence of an oracle given to Socrates' father that he should allow Socrates to do as he pleased since, Simmias speculates, Socrates has a daimonic guide (589EF).

49. ἃ δὲ Τιμάρχου τοῦ Χαιρωνέως ἤκούσαμεν ὑπὲρ τούτων διεξιόντος, οὐκ οἶδα μὴ μῦθοις <ομοιότερ' ἢ > λόγοις ὄντα σιωπᾶν ἄμεινον (589F6–8).

50. οὗτος οὖν ποθὼν γινῶναι τὸ Σωκράτους δαιμόνιον ἦν ἔχει δύναμιν, ἅτε δὴ νέος οὐκ ἀγεννῆς ἄρτι γεγευμένος φιλοσοφίας (590A6–8).

51. On the fictitious character of Timarchus, see Russell's note in Nesselrath (2010: 94 n. 193). Cf. DeLacy and Einarson (1959: 365 and their note *a*). For a different perspective, see Schröder (2010: 166).

52. In keeping with the psychic locations in the *Timaeus*, the rational soul departs from Timarchus's head.

53. Plutarch gives no indication whose voice this may be. Russell (apud Nesselrath 2010: 95 n. 215) asserts that it is probably the voice of a lunar daimon, but this is not certain. The very uncertainty of the source of the voice adds to the reader's wonderment, and so too adds to the likelihood that the story is not to be believed at face value.

54. ἐκ δὲ τῶν εὐηνίων ἐκείνων <καὶ> κατηκόων εὐθὺς ἐξ ἀρχῆς καὶ γενέσεως τοῦ οἰκείου δαίμονος καὶ τὸ μαντικὸν ἐστὶ καὶ θεοκλυτούμενον γένος.

55. On Hermodorus, who is called Hermotimus elsewhere, see Russell's note in Nesselrath (2010: 96 n. 231). In the myth presented here, Hermodorus's own wife burns his body as he is soul-traveling.

56. οὐ γὰρ ἐξέβαιναν ἡ ψυχὴ τοῦ σώματος, ὑπέικουσα δ' αἰεὶ καὶ χαλῶσα τῷ δαίμονι τὸν σύνδεσμον ἐδίδου περιδρομὴν καὶ περιφοίτησιν, ὥστε πολλὰ συνωρῶντα καὶ κατακούοντα τῶν ἐκτὸς εἰσαγγέλλειν.

57. αἱ δὲ πῇ μὲν ἀνεκράθησαν, πῇ δ' ἔλιπον ἔξω τὸ καθαρῶτατον (591D10–591E1).

58. Hunink (2004: 255) raises the concern that “the lowest Apuleian class [of daemons] does not correspond to the one in Plutarch's dialogue, and there seems to be nothing negative about it.” It is true that Apuleius's class of *Genii* includes all human embodied minds, while Timarchus's account centers on the best of that class. Nonetheless, if one considers

the whole of his vision, all human souls are indeed included and all do possess a mind (albeit most minds are subjected to bodily influences). I therefore suspect a common Middle Platonic topos behind both philosophers. Note too that Apuleius introduces his discussion of the *Genii* with an allusion to Plato's *Timaeus*, as we saw above. Hunink's later statement that Apuleius's highest class of daimones does not correspond well to Plutarch's because "we do not find a reference to a specific connection with the divine philosophers such as Socrates" ignores the evidence of *De Deo Socratis* XVII.157–158, which I discussed above.

59. We are also told that the voice predicted Timarchus's death two months later, and Simmias adds that when he told Socrates the tale, Socrates was upset that he could not himself question Timarchus about his vision (592EF). This last may be an in-joke (Socrates would question anyone about anything), but it might rather be an indication that Socrates too was not satisfied with Timarchus's account. This would be another reason for doubting that Plutarch credited the tale.

60. There is a short delay when Theanor asks why Epaminondas does not contribute as well, and Polymnis explains his son's laconic character (592F–593A).

61. On Theanor's dubious philosophical character, see also Nesselrath (2010: 91 n. 141). For his historicity, see DeLacy and Einarson (1959: 365).

62. In an even odder twist, Theanor states that "god does not begrudge that the personal daimon help" (τὸν οἰκεῖον οὐ νεμεσᾷ δαίμονα βοηθεῖν ὁ θεός, 594A3–4), as if the gods felt emotion.

63. Maximus of Tyre, *Or.* 9.6, also includes such a group of daimons. They, now that they are free from the body, feel sympathy for those still in bodies and wish to help them. In Maximus's version, god has assigned them this role. Again, there is not the restriction imposed by Theanor; rather, the daimons help all human beings of all stations.

64. Riley (1977: 265–266) sees that Theanor's demonology is different from Simmias's but nonetheless thinks that the myth is appropriate since "Theanor takes Socrates as one of the souls who has almost reached the goal" (266). There is a certain tidiness to this theory: Socrates' daimonion is a former human soul who is directing Socrates as he reaches his goal. There is a problem, however. The gods, Theanor says, favor certain human beings and give them signs directly. His example, tellingly, is of Helenus the priest/prophet (and *not* of a philosopher). Would Socrates fall into this highest group? Certainly not. He is a philosopher, not a prophet, and he receives advice from a daimon, not from a god. Further, Theanor's conception is at odds with Plato's statement that gods do not interact directly with humankind. On Theanor's view, the gods interact directly with some very special mortals but leave a lower (but still special) class to the influence of daimons. We have an alternative conception about the daimonion: it is a former human soul who gives advice to Socrates, but Socrates is no longer the highest sort of human being. Given these problems, it should be clear that Plutarch is not endorsing the conception, only mentioning it as a possibility. Further, Theanor's muddled interpretation is inconsistent both with Simmias's view and with the vision of Timarchus. On this topic, see also Hershbell (1988: 367–377), who fails to see that, on Theanor's theory, Socrates is no longer in the first class of human beings and indeed includes Socrates, Epaminondas, and Theanor together as "divine persons" (377).

Chapter 3

1. This chapter does not attempt to identify the views or character of the historical Socrates; rather, it focuses on Plato's portrayal of Socrates and his daimonion in the Socratic dialogues and attempts to analyze the reception of this portrayal in the work of the late Neoplatonists. The so-called Socratic problem (i.e., "Can we identify the views, philosophy, character, and activities of the historical Socrates?") has often dominated modern scholarship on Socrates: a useful survey of previous scholarship and its inherent problems is provided by Dorion (2011: 1–23). For reflections on the Socratic problem in relation to the daimonion, cf. Joyal (2005: 97–112).

2. McPherran (2011: 111): "Socrates is acknowledged to have been a moral philosopher of the first order: the founder of virtue ethics and the chief exponent of the Socratic Method (the elenctic method of question-and-answer cross-examination)." Cf. Vlastos (1994: 1–37).

3. Cf. Bussanich (1999: 29–51; 2006: 200–213).

4. McPherran (1996a: 5; 1996b: 167): "In many longstanding and influential interpretations of his views, Socrates is portrayed as a figure of our own Enlightenment: a consummate intellectualist, whose 'paradoxical' view that 'virtue is knowledge' grounds a moral theory that takes discursive rationality as our only trustworthy guide in life." Guthrie (1971) devotes one chapter to the daimonion, entitled "The Divine Sign: Socrates and the Irrational."

5. Proclus, in *Alc.*, ed. L. G. Westerink.

6. Throughout this chapter, I use the terms "personal daimon" and "guardian daimon" interchangeably, to refer to the daimon "who has been allotted to us" (to use Plotinus's memorable phrase), the species of daimon thought to guide human souls, with one guardian daimon attributed to each human soul. Dillon (2001: 3) suggests that the concept of the "guardian angel" was the Christian adaptation of the personal daimon of later Platonism.

7. Apart from Hermias, in *Phdr.* 70.3–72.13, discussed by Christina-Panagiota Manolea in Chapter 4 of this volume, the only other extant Neoplatonic account of the daimonion of Socrates (to the best of my knowledge) is that of Olympiodorus in his commentary on this dialogue; however, his account seems to be based on Proclus's exposition. See especially 15.1–16.6; 17.7; 26.3–27.10; 38.1–40.17; 281.11–13.

8. On the works of Plutarch and Apuleius see Chapter 2 by John Finamore, who also compares Maximus in several notes.

9. While in Plato's dialogues the admonitions of the daimonion of Socrates are always negative, in Xenophon's works the daimonion also offers encouragement. Here I focus on Plato's portrayal rather than Xenophon's, since it is Plato's works that the Neoplatonists draw on in their discussions of the daimonion.

10. Plato, *Phaedrus* 242c2; *Apology* 31d4.

11. Cf. Plato, *Euthydemus* 272e5; *Republic* VI, 496c4; *Phaedrus* 242c1; *Apology* 40b1–2, 40c3, 41d7.

12. Plato, *Republic* VI, 496c3–10. It should be noted that most scholars adhere to the

traditional thesis of the uniqueness of the daimonion to Socrates and endorse the assumption that he is the only recipient of a daimonion, despite Socrates' immediate qualification noted above, which is generally interpreted as referring to the five groups of people who prefer philosophy to politics. Weiss (2005: 81–96) offers a notable challenge to this view, including a convincing, alternative reading of this passage (95). Destrée (2005: 63–79) also challenges it, arguing that the daimonion is a help provided by the god to the philosophical mission, a mission that should be common to all human beings.

13. Plato, *Alcibiades I*, 103a4–7, 105e8–106a1; *Theaetetus* 151a1–6, where Socrates states of those who have engaged in philosophical elenchus with him but left prematurely: “When such men come back and beg me, as they do, with wonderful eagerness to let them join me again, the spiritual monitor [daimonion] that comes to me forbids me to associate with some of them, but allows me to converse with others, and these again make progress.”

14. Plato, *Apology* 40a4–8; 40c1–4; 41d6–8. Cf. Smith and Brickhouse (2000a: 77), on the story of the oracle and Socrates' attempt to understand it as the means through which Socrates conceives of his elenctic activities as a religious mission and particularly 87 n. 10, for their refutation of scholars who have argued that Socrates betrays a kind of impious, skeptical disrespect for the god. As they note, Socrates begins his inquiry into the meaning of the oracle with the conviction that although the god can speak in riddles, it is not within the god's nature to lie (*Ap.* 21b6–7). For further support for this position cf. McPherran (1996a: 2, 7, 178, 208–229); Bussanich (2006: 203–204).

15. Plato, *Hippias Major* 304b7–c2. Cf. Destrée (2005: 70–71); Reeve (2000: 24–39). One may compare the appearance of Socrates' daimonion in the *Theages* 129e1–130a5, although many modern scholars consider this work spurious, partly because of the “occult” nature of the presentation of the daimonion, since here it offers positive advice as well as apotroptic admonitions, relating to potential interlocutors whom Socrates intends to engage in elenchus with: “Now I have told you all this, because this spiritual [daimonic] power that attends me also exerts itself to the full in my intercourse with those who spend their time with me. To many, indeed, it is adverse, and it is not possible for these to get any good by conversing with me, and I am therefore unable to spend my time in conversing with them. And there are many with whom it does not prohibit my intercourse, yet the intercourse does them no good. But those who are assisted in their intercourse by that spiritual power are the persons whom you have noticed; for they make rapid progress there and then. And of those, again, who make progress some find the benefit both solid and enduring; while there are many who, for as long a time as they are with me, make wonderful progress, but when they are parted from me relapse, and are no different from anybody else.” The notion that moral or spiritual benefit might derive from physical proximity is dismissed as occult and construed as evidence for the inauthenticity of the dialogue: e.g., Vlastos (1991: 280–281), and Bussanich (1999: 40–41): “The authenticity of neither dialogue [i.e., *Alcibiades I* and *Theages*] was ever doubted in antiquity but it is widely suspect now because of the ‘occult’ nature of the daimonion, especially in the latter dialogue.”

16. E.g., Vlastos (1991: 157–178), and Bussanich (1999: 29): “It has been something

of an embarrassment to received opinion to confront the fact that one of the founding figures of the western philosophical tradition openly acknowledged the existence of divinities and received regular communications from them.”

17. Cf. Beckman (1979: 76–77) for a concise summary of such views.
18. Zeller (1877: 92–93).
19. Nussbaum (1985: 234–235).
20. Bussanich (1999: 29): “Recent scholarship . . . has exposed earlier humanist and completely rationalist accounts of Socrates to be inadequate.”
21. Vlastos (1991: 170–171 and 1996: 144–145).
22. Plato, *Crito* 46b5–7. Vlastos (1991: 157). Cf. also McPherran (1996b: 168).
23. Smith and Brickhouse (2000a: 247, 251); Bussanich (1999: 36).
24. Smith and Brickhouse (2000a: 251–252 and 2000b, 84–85); Bussanich (1999: 36); McPherran (1996b: 169 and 185).
25. Smith and Brickhouse (2000: 82–84).
26. McPherran (1996a: 177–190 and 1996b: 176; 2005, 17).
27. See McPherran (1996a: 191 and 1996b: 177), where he notes his agreement with Vlastos on this issue.
28. The daimonion of Socrates as guardian daimon: Proclus, *in Alc.* 71.1–3, 72.18–20, 78.1–5. Proclus cites Diotima’s famous statement about the nature of daimones at *Symposium* 202d–e repeatedly in relevant discussion: e.g., *in Alc.* 69.14–70.3, 70.13–15, 72.12–14, 73.10–12; *in Crat.* 75.9–24.
29. Apuleius, *De Deo Socratis* 16–17; Plutarch, *On the Sign of Socrates* 588e3–5.
30. Cf. Porphyry, *De abstinence* 2.38.3, who states that good daimones bring oracles to men from the gods, drawing on Plato’s *Symposium* 202d–e; Proclus, *in Crat.* 36.20–37.22.
31. Proclus, *in Alc.* 68.9–69.3. Cf. Plutarch, *De def. Oraculorum* 421e2–6: “But, as that man said, if we call some of the demigods [daimones] by the current name of gods, that is no cause for wonder; for each of them is wont to be called after that god with whom he is allied and from whom he has derived his portion of power and honor.”
32. Plato, *Phaedo* 107d7–8, tr. Dillon (2001: 5): ὁ ἐκάστου δαίμων, ὅσπερ ζῶντα εἰλήχει.
33. Plato, *Rep.* X, 617e1–2: οὐκ ὑμᾶς δαίμων λήξεται ἀλλ’ ὑμεῖς δαίμονα αἰρήσεσθε, tr. Shorey (1935/1963), with slight emendations.
34. Plotinus, *Enn.* III.4.3; Dillon (2001: 6).
35. Proclus, *in Alc.* 77.4–9; 78.1–6, tr. O’Neill (1965) with slight emendations.
36. Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 9.6 (280.8–11): “When a soul has selected a daimon as its guide, then straightaway it stands over it as the fulfiller of the various levels of life of the soul, and as the soul descends into the body it binds it to the body, and it supervises the composite living being arising from it, and personally regulates the particulars of the life of the soul.”
37. Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 9.1–10.
38. Proclus, *in Alc.* 73.9–16; 75.16–76.16 (the daimon is not the rational soul or a part

of the soul); 76.17–77.4 (the daimon is not the individual intellect); Iamblichus, *De Mysterioris* 9.8 (282.6–9): “For if [the daemon] is merely a part of the soul, as for instance the intellectual part, and that person is ‘happy’ who has his intellect in a sound state, there will no longer be any need to postulate any other order, greater or daimonic, to preside over the human order as its superior.” For this theory among the later Stoics, cf. Dillon (2001: 8 n. 21), who also comments that Proclus refutes these identifications “with an eye on Plotinus’ treatise.”

39. Socrates as *mantis*: Proclus, *in Alc.* 119.8–9; 5.16–6.2, 4.19–5.12; 314.19–21; Socrates as *entheos*: Proclus, *in Alc.* 131.8.

40. Cf., e.g., Zeller (1877: 89): “The daimonion appeared therefore to him [i.e., Socrates] as an internal revelation from heaven respecting the result of his actions, in a word as an internal oracle. As such it is expressly included, both by Xenophon and Plato, under the general conception of divination, and placed on a par with divination by sacrifice and the flight of birds”; McPherran (1996a: 187 and 2005: 17): “It [i.e., the daimonion] is, in short, a species of the faculty of divination.” Bussanich (2006: 206–8).

41. Plato, *Apology* 40a4 (quoted); *Phaedo* 85b4–6; *Phaedrus* 242c5–7.

42. Proclus, *in Alc.* 82.25–83.6; 5.14–15. O’Neill (1965: 8) reads the latter phase (at 5.14–15) as referring specifically to Plato, yet given the ambiguities of the Greek and the apparent allusion to the use of the term ὁμοιστής (tr. by O’Neill as “familiar friend”) in the Platonic *Minos* (319b–e, referring to the relationship between Minos and Zeus established by Homer, *Odyssey* 19.179), where the author understands the term as meaning a close “pupil,” it seems to refer generally to anyone mentored by Apollo, including Plato but embracing all who follow the Apollonian path, one of whom is Socrates, as is then made explicit in the following sentence. I owe this interpretation to a suggestion of Harold Tarrant.

43. Reeve (2000: 24–39); Destrée (2005: 63–79); McPherran (2005: 26–27); Bussanich (2006: 200–213).

44. Proclus, *in Crat.* 78.24–25: “. . . the one who directs the truth from himself is called Apollo”; 98.1–4: “Apollo revolves in company with the sun, and the same intellect is displayed in both, since the sun too transmits light to the beings in heaven as it illuminates and provides all things with the power of unification”; *in Crat.* 101.9–10: “That Apollo is lord of simplicity in understanding and reveals the truth is demonstrated by his analogy to the Good”; cf. also *in Crat.* 99.11–100.2. On the prophetic properties of Apollo see *in Crat.* 90.17; 97.29; 100.11–13. Strictly speaking, Hermes is explicitly connected by Proclus with discursive reasoning and dialectic more than Apollo (*in Crat.* 10.12–13), yet Intellect (with which Apollo is linked by Proclus) is said to project and generate “dialectic as a whole from itself as a whole” (2.5–6).

45. Proclus, *in Alc.* 5.5–12, interprets the nature of Apollo and the Delphic injunction “Know Thyself” according to his views on philosophy as a quest for divinization: “. . . so also the inscription ‘Know Thyself’ on the front of the Delphic sanctuary indicated the manner, I presume, of ascent to the divine and the most effective path towards purification, practically stating clearly to those able to understand, that he who has attained the knowledge of himself, by beginning at the beginning, can be united with the god who is the

revealer of the whole truth and guide of the purgative life, but he who does not know who he is, being uninitiated and profane is unfit to partake of the providence of Apollo.”

46. See O’Meara (2003: 31–68) for an extensive examination of divinization in Greek philosophy. O’Meara examines notions of divinization in the works of Aristotle, Stoicism, and Epicureanism, as well as in Plato’s dialogues and Neoplatonism, and claims that divinization “describes the goal of the major philosophical schools of the Classical and Hellenistic periods” (34), although with the important qualification that “the divine is conceived in various ways in the different schools and the methods and degrees of assimilation to the divine vary correspondingly. The limits imposed by our human mortal nature on our sharing in divine life are also stressed to varying degrees” (34).

47. In a Neoplatonic context *Phaedo* 69b–c is of particular relevance.

48. Cf. O’Meara (2003: 48–49) for a discussion of Iamblichus’s addition of a level of “theurgic” virtues to the scale of virtues systematized by Porphyry and a brief discussion of theurgy as a term for assimilation to god (128–131).

49. Cf. Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 3.4 (110.12–111.2); 3.8 (116.1–3); 8.7 (270.6–14); 10.1 (286.5–10); 10.4 (289.3–5); 10.6 (292.4–14); Proclus, *in Alc.* 187.8–11 (“Now neither do the classes superior to our soul attain their own perfection through learning or discovery, since they are always united with their objects of knowledge and never withdraw therefrom, nor become deficient in the knowledge appropriate to them”); 199.5–7; 199.9–11 (“So everywhere the superior realities, by a certain transcendent preeminence, possess in advance all the knowledge that resides in inferior beings”); *Elements of Theology* § 121 (“For all other forms of knowledge came into existence in virtue of the divine knowledge which transcends the sum of things . . .”); § 124.

50. Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 10.2 (287.3–4): “Does truth not coexist in its essence with the gods, and not merely in harmony with them, based as it is in the intelligible realm?”; Proclus, *in Alc.* 187.14–20: “But the soul of man, which possesses innate in itself every notion, and has preconceived all knowledge, but is prevented by birth from the contemplation of what it possesses, requires both learning and discovery, in order that through learning it may stimulate its intellectual perceptions of itself, and through discovery may find itself and the fullness of the notions innate therein. *These are the gifts of the gods who benefit it in its fallen state and recall it to the life of the intellect, both coming from the order of Hermes*” (my emphasis); *in Alc.* 190.9–11: “. . . another reverts and having reverted finds within himself virtues and sciences like radiant images of the gods”; *in Crat.* 2.5–6: “The projector of the dialectical technique is Intellect, since it generates dialectic as a whole from itself as a whole”; 1.16–2.2: “For this technique [i.e., the dialectical technique] is the ‘copying stone of mathematical studies’ [*Rep.* 534E], elevates us to the one cause of all things, the Good, and is said by Plato ‘to have come with the most brilliant fire from the gods to men by way of Prometheus’ [*Phlb.* 16C].”

51. Proclus, *Elements of Theology* § 194: “Every soul possesses all the Forms which intelligence possesses primitively”; cf. also § 195.

52. Bussanich (1999: 31): “I shall argue that the role of the supernatural/divine in Socratic religion is underestimated by many scholars since it is excessively circumscribed by

rationality and by a modern understanding of what rationality consists in”; Voegelin (1974: 48, 232): “. . . revelation is not a piece of information, arbitrarily thrown out by some supernatural force, to be carried home as a possession, but the movement of response to an irruption of the divine in the psyche . . .” (232); “There is nothing ‘natural’ in the noetic illumination of consciousness of Plato and Aristotle; both thinkers were clear on the theophanic character of the event. That the insights of the classic philosophers have something to do with ‘natural reason’ as distinguished from ‘revelation’ is a conceit developed by the Christian Fathers when they accepted the Stoic symbols of Nature and Reason uncritically as ‘philosophy’” (48).

53. Apuleius, *De Deo Socratis* 17.157; Plutarch, *On the Sign of Socrates* 588d12–588e3; 588e7; 589e1–589f3.

54. Proclus, in *Alc.* 314.19–21: “Prophetic persons are conjectural but not knowledgeable types of people, whereas those who are not only prophetic but also genuine prophets, are already knowledgeable and also possess something superior to man’s knowledge.”

55. Proclus, in *Alc.* 5.13–6.3.

56. Proclus, in *Alc.* 4.21–5.14; 3.11–12; Riggs (2010: 114), states in relation to Proclus’s views of the Delphic injunction: “In fact, the necessity of knowing our mode of being in order to know its proper perfection is the content of the Delphi command to ‘Know Thyself’; the Delphic command is a command to *revert* upon our cause and, in the immediate sense, this cause is intellect.”

57. Plutarch, *Ad. Col.* 1118c. Cf. McPherran (1996a: 216–218).

58. Cf. Iamblichus, *Letter 5: To Dexippus, On Dialectic* 6–10: “And as the facts themselves demonstrate, the God in Delphi himself, in Heraclitus’s words, ‘not speaking out, nor yet concealing, but signifying’ his prophecies, rouses up those who hearken to his utterances to dialectical enquiry, on the basis of which they discerned ambiguity and homonymy, and the ferreting out of every double meaning kindled in them the light of knowledge.”

59. Cf. Plato, *Timaeus*, 72b; McPherran (1996a: 224 n. 21); Bowden (2005: 6) maintains that the crucial moment of receiving an oracle was not the actual consultation, since the exact meaning of the oracular response would always have been debated; Parker (2000: 76–108) has pointed out that Delphic oracles regularly triggered debates in the Athenian Assembly in the classical period; Graf (2005: 53) maintains that oracles also triggered debates in Rome, citing the following example: “. . . in 204 BCE Delphi ordered the Romans to bring Cybele to Rome and to have the best of the Romans receive her, this latter provision led to a debate about exactly whom the oracle meant.” Cf. Livy 29.11.6 (the oracles), 14.6–8 (the Senate’s decision).

60. Proclus, in *Alc.* 59.19–20, citing Plato, *Alcibiades I* 103a: “The cause of this has been nothing human, but a certain spiritual opposition, of whose power you shall be informed at some later time” (Τούτου δὲ τὸ αἴτιον γέγονεν οὐκ ἀνθρώπινον, ἀλλὰ τι δαιμόνιον ἐναντίωμα, οὗ σὺ τὴν δύναμιν καὶ ὕστερον πεύσῃ).

61. Proclus, in *Alc.* 60.10–15, 61.7–8.

62. Plato, *Theaetetus* 155c8–d6; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.2.9–10 (982b). Cf. also Proclus, in *Alc.* 42.7–43.1.

63. Proclus, *in Alc.* 164.1–15; 165.11–166.15; 166.16–18. Cf. especially *in Alc.* 166.6–15: “In this way the young man seems to me to say that Socrates is now more worthy of wonder; now he is consciously aware of him; previously he noticed him in mere silent attendance. Both when silent, then, the wise man is worthy of wonder, as most resembling the hidden and unknowable class of the gods, and when giving utterance he is even more worthy of wonder, as likening himself to the revelatory element of the divine. Indeed all the divine is such; in all its functions it appears worthy of wonder. . . .”

64. Proclus, *in Alc.* 165.12–19, tr. O’Neill (1965), with slight emendations. Cf. also *in Alc.* 60.3–11, where Proclus states that this sense of wonder arises from the nature of divine providence, which manifests through divine-like humans in their providential dealings with other humans and the cosmos. For a detailed and erudite examination of Proclus’s account of the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades, illustrating the way in which Proclus regards the affair between Socrates and Alcibiades as the perfect paradigm for appreciating the roles of providence and fate in all our lives, see Layne (2012).

65. Proclus, *in Alc.* 78.10–79.6, tr. O’Neill (1965), with slight emendations.

66. Cf. Proclus, *in Alc.* 158.4–20; 161.19–162.1; *Elements of Theology* § 112 (“The first members of any order have the form of their priors”); § 147 (“In any divine rank the highest term is assimilated to the last term of the supra-jacent rank”).

67. Dillon (2001: 8); Westerink (1962/2011: 97). As Dillon (2001: 8 n. 19) notes, “this is made more probable by a passage in Olympiodorus, in the corresponding section of his *Commentary on the Alcibiades* (pp. 17,10–19,10), where he presents more or less the same sequence of levels of daemons as a survey of the types of daemon in general.”

68. Proclus, *in Alc.* 72.18–20, tr. O’Neill (1965), with slight emendations.

69. Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 9.6 (280.13–281.4), makes a very similar point: “. . . it [i.e., the personal daimon] continues to direct men’s lives up to the point at which, through sacred theurgy, we establish a god as the overseer and leader of our soul; for then it either withdraws in deference to the superior principle, or surrenders its administrative role, or subordinates itself so as to contribute to the god’s direction of the soul, or in some other way comes to serve it as master.” While Proclus states that the soul who is united to its leader god still needs its daimon, Iamblichus here presents several alternatives, although the last two of these alternatives agree with Proclus’s statements. Riggs (2010: 114) clarifies the implications of knowing one’s self in Neoplatonism: “Knowledge of our essence requires knowledge of the kind of being which we have been given and how this being fits into the cosmos as a whole.”

70. Proclus, *in Alc.* 72.20–73.8, tr. O’Neill (1965), with slight emendations.

71. In relation to this Dillon (2001: 8) states: “We can gather from 73,7ff. that souls who remain in a pure state . . . have only the highest class of daemon as their guardian both here and on a higher plane . . . whereas the rest of us have second class of daemon as our guide in this life.”

72. Dillon (2001: 8 n. 20) interprets this as follows: “I take this to mean that the soul concerned is enjoying an *apokatastasis* to its original state, and thus either free of the body and the cycle of rebirth, or (like Plotinus, presumably) in their final incarnation before

attaining this.” This issue hinges on exactly what it means to “return to one’s origin” and to “be free of the body.” In a theurgic context, one can be free of the body and detached from generation while still in a body, since the generated cosmos is seen as a manifestation of the gods (and so “the way up is the same as the way down”). I suspect Proclus would adhere to the theurgic view of purification from the body and from generation. This would fit in with his comment here that these “perfect souls” “associate with birth without defilement.” Proclus’s comment at *in Alc.* 32.9–33.11 might also be suggestive of this.

73. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 10.28–31 (p. 34), tr. Armstrong (1966), with slight emendations.

74. Plotinus *Enn.* III.4; Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 10: “It was a reason of this kind that led him to write the treatise ‘On Our Allotted Guardian Spirit,’ in which he sets out to explain the differences between spirit-companions.” Cf. Dillon (2001: 7): “He [i.e., Plotinus] was willing, as we know from Porphyry, to attend a séance to identify his guardian daemon, and was so pleased to discover that his was actually a god that, as Porphyry tells us, he was stimulated to compose precisely the treatise that we have been examining. . . .”

75. Proclus, *in Alc.* 79.15–17: “So far our account has given evidence of one such singular characteristic in the case of Socrates’ guardian daimon: the second is that he was aware of a voice proceeding therefrom,” tr. O’Neill (1965) with slight emendations. Proclus here cites Plato’s *Theages* 128d and *Phaedrus* 242b–c in order to illustrate this point.

76. Proclus, *in Alc.* 80.7–14, tr. O’Neill (1965), with slight emendations.

77. On the origins of the doctrine of the vehicle of the soul and its development in the philosophy of Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Synesius, see: Kissling (1922: 318–330); Dodds (1933/1963: 313–321, esp. appendix II, “The Astral Body in Neoplatonism”); Finamore (1985); Smith (1974); Shaw (1995).

78. Plutarch, *On the Sign of Socrates* 588c10–d2, where the daimonion of Socrates is described by Simmias as “not a vision but some perception of a voice or else the mental apprehension of language that reached him in some strange way.” Simmias compares this to a dream in which one seems to hear speech but does not (588d3–5), giving an indication that Plutarch perceived the daimonion as a voice, but clearly not a normal voice. It is then described as a kind of thought or *noesis* (588d3). Cf. also van Riel (2005, 31–42), who argues for the “internal” nature of the daimonion as presented by Plato. He notes in conclusion: “The door that was half-open is closed again. It will not be re-opened until the time of Neoplatonism, where the internalization of the divine will emerge in all its power.”

79. Proclus, *in Alc.* 80.14–18.

80. Cf. Addey (2010, 171–185, esp. 180–182).

81. Addey (2013).

82. Proclus, *in Alc.* 168.17–169.8, referring to Aristotle’s theory of causation in *Metaphysics* 1013a24; *Physics* 194b23–26 and the “metaphysic of prepositions” used to describe theories of multiple yet simultaneous gradations of causation.

83. Proclus, *in Alc.* 80.21–81.7.

84. Proclus, *in Alc.* 5.12; 26.12–15; 32.9–33.11; 38.7–14; 40.18–41.8; 41.9–12; 46.9–11; 53.17–54.15; 55.15–56.3; 60.1–5; 90.19–91.7; 122.10–12; 125.2–126.3; 130.1–3;

130.15–131.7; 158.20–159.10; 160.17–161.1. Cf. also O’Meara (2003: 76–78); Layne (Forthcoming b).

85. Proclus, in *Alc.* 53.17–54.10. Cf. also in *Alc.* 55.6–10; 60.3–7; *De Decem* 10; Layne (Forthcoming b).

86. Proclus, in *Alc.* 54.10–15, tr. O’Neill (1965), with slight emendations.

87. Cf. also Proclus, in *Alc.* 49.14–15; 82.4–8; 88.14–15; 89.2–3.

88. Proclus, in *Alc.* 26.12–17; 27.8–10; 37.16–38.1; 62.16–63.8; 125.2–126.2; 130.1–3; 131.1–12; 132.10–15; 140.17–20; 158.20–159.10; 198.12–13. Cf. Layne (Forthcoming b: 278): “Proclus explicitly compares the agency of providence to the actions of both Socrates and his guardian spirit.”

89. Proclus, in *Alc.* 135.19–136.1. Cf. 32.13–17.

90. Proclus, in *Alc.* 163.5–11, tr. O’Neill (1965) with slight emendations. Cf. also in *Alc.* 161.17–19.

91. Proclus, in *Alc.* 81.7–82.1, 82.8–13, tr. O’Neill (1965), with slight emendations.

92. Proclus, in *Alc.* 90.19–91.7.

93. Cf. George (2005: 287–303); Addey (2013).

94. George (2005: 290–293). Cf. Dodds (1963: 344–345), who divides the semantic connotations of the term into three descriptive statements: “Inherent capacity for acting or being acted upon in a specific way”; “Inherent affinity of one substance for another”; and “Inherent or induced capacity for the reception of a divine influence.” It is of course the latter description that most closely matches Iamblichus’s notion of the term within ritual contexts.

95. Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 1.8 (29.1–3); 3.11 (125.4–6); 3.12 (129.9–11); 8.7 (270.6–14). With regard to Iamblichus’s view of divine illumination, George (2005: 293) notes: “Similar to the actualization of a potential, the gods pre-essentially dwell within the soul and manifest as soon as conditions are suitable.”

96. Cf. Proclus, in *Crat.* 1.12–16: “. . . but following the great Plato, because he knows that the dialectical technique is suited only to those who have been completely purified in thought, educated by mathematical studies, purified, through the virtues, of the immature aspect of their character, and, in short, after genuine philosophical study.”

97. “Constructivism” has a long history in cognitive psychology: this theory suggests that teaching is a matter not of transmitting information but of engaging students in active learning, building their knowledge in terms of what they already understand: cf. Piaget (1950); Biggs and Tang (1999/2007: 20–21); Grace and Gravestock (2009: 33–35).

98. Cf. Proclus, in *Alc.* 152.1–3: “It is the part of the educator accurately to discern the aptitudes (ἐπιτηδεiotῆτας) of those he educates and pursue his care for them in accordance therewith.”

99. Proclus, in *Alc.* 28.10–15; 29.5–7.

100. Plato, *Philebus* 16c6–8; 16e3–5: “The gods, then, as I said, handed down to us this mode of investigating, learning, and teaching one another.”

101. Purification through philosophy and dialectical inquiry (elenchus): Proclus, in *Alc.* 174.10–19; 175.19–176.6 (Westerink). Proclus states that the purification of the soul is

threefold: “one through the art of initiation concerning which the Socrates of the *Phaedrus* speaks, the other through philosophy, about which much is said in the *Phaedo* (therein prudence and each of the other virtues is termed ‘a sort of purification’); and the third through the science of philosophical discussion which induces contradiction, exposes the disagreement of opinions and delivers us from twofold ignorance” (174.8–14).

102. Proclus, *De Decem* 15.1–5; 15.10–15; 15.25–40; 16.1–10. Cf. *in Alc.* 87.10–88.7.

103. Proclus, *in Alc.* 87.12; *Prov.* 27–31; *De Decem* 7–8. Cf. Layne (Forthcoming b).

104. Proclus, *De Decem* 14; Layne (Forthcoming b: 274): “Ultimately the foreknowledge of Socrates and his daimon has its cause in a higher level of reality and as such participates in providence itself. Due to such participation, their foreknowledge has the power to bind the indefinite and infinite nature of contingent things, i.e. unify and as such know particulars.”

105. Proclus, *in Alc.* 92.3–8: “We observe that everywhere the more divine seem to approach the less perfect, not relinquishing their own abode but remaining in themselves and seeming to approach on account of the suitability of the participant: both in invocations and visions the divine somehow seems to approach us, although it is we who reach up towards it.”

106. O’Meara (1997: 154).

107. Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 8.8 (272.4–9): “And nothing in such a process is accomplished contrary to the ordinance laid down from the beginning, so that the gods should change their plans in virtue of some subsequently performed theurgic ceremony, but rather it is the case that from their first descent the god sent down the souls for this purpose, that they should return again to him. There is therefore no element of change of plan involved in such a process of ascent, nor is there any conflict between the descents of souls and their ascents.” Proclus, *in Alc.* 237.7–13: “Time is twofold, one sort that comes into being with the natural life and corporeal movement of the universe, the other that pervades incorporeal life. Now the latter both measures the cycles of the divine souls and perfects the separable activities of our own; but the former, the kind that is coextensive with the life according to Nature, measures our life with a body, but in no way the life of the soul in so far as it lives by itself.”

108. Socrates saw in Alcibiades many tokens of his suitability toward virtue: Proclus, *in Alc.* 94.4–5; the daimonion prevented Socrates from conversing with Alcibiades for many years due to his unsuitability: Proclus, *in Alc.* 81.7–82.1; 91.1–7; 162.4–14.

109. Proclus, *in Alc.* 120.16–121.11.

110. Proclus, *in Alc.* 121.13.

111. Proclus, *in Alc.* 121.15–18.

112. Proclus, *in Alc.* 121.20–122.3; 122.7–8; 122.14–15; 122.21–123.5; 123.19–20; Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 8.4 (267.6–10), considers the observation of the *kaïros* as an essential element of theurgy. Referring to the Egyptians, whom he claims were the first “theurgists,” Iamblichus states: “And this is not for them purely a matter of theorizing, but they recommend that we ascend through the practice of sacred theurgy to the regions that are

higher, more universal, and superior to fate, towards the god who is the creator, without calling in the aid of matter or bringing to bear anything other than the observation of the critical time (*kairos*) for action.”

113. Proclus, *in Alc.* 281.16–282.6. Cf. also *in Alc.* 40.15–42.4; 198.12–199.17.
114. Proclus, *in Alc.* 170.15–171.1; 171.3–8; 277.10–18; 279.23–281.14.
115. O’Meara (1989/1997: 154).
116. O’Meara (1989/1997: 154).
117. Proclus, *in Alc.* 282.4–5.
118. O’Meara (1989/1997: 154–155).
119. Proclus, *in Alc.* 32.9–33.11; 53.17–54.15; 56.6–16; 125.2–13; 126.1–3; 130.1–3; 135.19–136.1; 136.16–137.1; 140.17–20; 141.4–11.

Chapter 4

An earlier version of this chapter was read as a paper under the title “The Figure of Socrates and Its Psychological Dimensions in the *In Phaedrum*” at the panel entitled “The *Phaedrus* and Neoplatonic Psychology” at the Tenth Annual Conference of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies (ISNS), Cagliari, Sardinia, June 2012. I would like to thank the members of the organizing committee of the conference, which provided me with a generous grant. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Carl O’Brien and Dr. Sarah Wear for co-organizing the panel with me as well as the colleagues who attended it, for their useful comments and suggestions.

1. As internal evidence from the text itself reveals, Syrianus was teaching a class that included at least Hermias and Proclus, who took notes. So, the text we have actually consists of Hermias’s notes of his master’s lectures. The problem is whether Hermias has re-worked them, and if he has, to what extent he has done so. For those who argue the case of heavy dependence by Hermias on Syrianus see Praechter’s Pauly-Wissowa article on Hermias (1912); cf. also Manolea (2004: 47–58 and 2009: 500–501). For the opposite view see Bielmeier (1930: 4–96), Moreschini (1992: 451–460 and 2009: 516–522), and Bernard (1997: 12–13). See also Chapter 1 in this volume by Geert Roskam, which inclines toward the latter view.

2. The passages we are going to examine have not been adequately studied so far in works devoted to the Neoplatonic rendering of Socrates. For example, A. Smith has not included the *in Phaedrum* commentary in his article (Smith 2004: 455–460). Furthermore, Rangos (2004: 463–479) exploits passages from Syrianus’s *in Metaphysica* but mentions only one passage of the *in Phaedrum* commentary. Given that it is only quite recently that Socrates’ role in Neoplatonism has started to be acknowledged, e.g., by Beierwaltes (1995: 97–116), a discussion that this book hopes to stimulate further, the Socratic image in the *in Phaedrum* deserves new attention. See the Introduction to this volume for more information on Beierwaltes’ challenge and the older view of Bröcker (1966) and Hathaway (1969: 19–26).

3. *In Phaedr.* 1.5–6: Ὁ Σωκράτης ἐπὶ εὐεργεσίᾳ τοῦ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένους καὶ τῶν ψυχῶν τῶν νέων κατεπέμφθη εἰς γένεσιν.

4. For Neoplatonic metaphysics see O'Meara (2010: 306–324).

5. For the Stoic basis for this view see “The Logical Basis of Stoic Ethics” in Long (1996: 133–155, esp. 137–138, 140–142, 155). For Socrates in Stoic philosophy see Long (1988: 150–171; repr. in 1996, 1–33). Cf. also Long (2004: 449–450), Dragona-Monachou (2004: 429–447), Brown (2006: 275–284), and Brennan (2006: 285–297).

6. *In Phaedr.* 1.6–11: διαφορᾶς δὲ οὔσης πολλῆς κατὰ τε τὰ ἦθη καὶ τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα τῶν ψυχῶν, διαφόρως ἕκαστον εὐεργετεῖ, ἄλλως τοὺς νέους, ἄλλως τοὺς σοφιστάς, πᾶσι χεῖρας ὀρέγων καὶ ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν προτρεπόμενος. Καὶ νῦν οὖν τὸν Φαῖδρον ἐπὶ ῥητορικῇ ἐπιοημένον ἐπανάγει ἐπὶ τὴν ἀληθῆ ῥητορικὴν, τουτέστι φιλοσοφίαν.

7. For an analysis of this scene see Janko (1992: comm. ad loc.).

8. Cf. Richardson (1993: comm. ad loc.).

9. Cf. Heubeck's comm. ad loc. in Heubeck and Hoekstra (1989).

10. Cf. Russo comm. ad loc. in Russo, Fernandez-Galiano, and Heubeck (1992).

11. For the use of the Homeric tradition in the works of Syrianus see Manolea (2004); for the specific uses of the *in Phaedrum* commentary see chapter 3 (2004: 123–205).

12. See Rangos (2004: 476). For a more general yet illuminating view on the religious elements of Socrates see McPherran (1996a). Cf. also Bussanich (2006: 200–213) and McPherran (2010: 111–137).

13. *In Alc.* 32.10–13: καὶ δὴ καὶ ἀνθρώπων ψυχαὶ μεταλαγχάνουσι τῆς τοιαύτης ἐπιπνοίας καὶ διὰ τὴν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν οἰκειότητα κινοῦνται περὶ τὸ καλὸν καὶ κατίαιον εἰς τὸν τῆς γενέσεως τόπον ἐπ' εὐεργεσίᾳ μὲν τῶν ἀτελεστερῶν ψυχῶν, προνοίᾳ δὲ τῶν σωτηρίας δεομένων.

14. For the wider issue of the relation between Alcibiades and Socrates, and the extent to which the former exercised a negative influence on the latter, see Johnson and Tarrant (2012) and Layne (Forthcoming b).

15. For the Socratic daimonion see Destrée and Smith (2005). Among the essays in this useful collection one could mention Van Riel (2005: 31–42). Cf. also Long (2006: 63–74). For the role of daimon in later philosophy Plutarch's essay *De genio Socratis* is revealing. Iamblichus, whose influence on the School of Athens was considerable, quite naturally spoke of the daimon. For this issue see Dillon (2001: 3–9).

16. *In Phaedr.* 70.13–16: γένος δέ τι τῶν δαιμόνων ἐστὶν ὑπεριδρυμένον ἡμῶν προσεχῶς καὶ κατευθύνον ἕκαστον ἡμῶν· ἕκαστος γὰρ ἡμῶν πάντως ὑπὸ τινα τελεῖ δαίμονα, ὃς πάσης ἡμῶν τῆς ζωῆς ἐπάρχει.

17. *In Phaedr.* 71.3–8: Διὸ αἰτιοῦται ψυχαὶ καὶ ἐνταῦθα συναισθάνονται τῆς τοῦ δαίμονος ἐπιστασίας, αἱ δὲ ἄλλαι ψυχαὶ αἱ καταμεμφόμεναι τὸν δαίμονα, ὥς ὁ ἐλόμενος τυραννίδα καὶ παιδῶν βρώσεις, μὴ ἐπιστρεφόμεναι πρὸς τὸν δαίμονα, ἀλλ' ὥς ἄλογα ἀγόμεναι, αὗται ἀσύνητοί εἰσι πάντα καὶ ἐνταῦθα τῆς τοῦ δαιμονίου προστασίας.

18. For a quick overview of Plato's criticism towards poetry see Richardson (1993: 30–33); cf. Manolea (2004: 28–32).

19. As evidence from the *in Phaedrum* commentary suggests, Syrianus did not hesitate to quote verses from the “forbidden” Homeric scenes and, generally speaking, regarded Homer not merely as the best poet ever but also as a theologian. For more details see Manolea (2004: 202–205, 228–239).

20. Symbols and signs are an integral part of theurgic ritual theory that underlies the religious practices of Syrianus and Proclus. For the role of theurgy in Neoplatonism see Saffrey (1981: 153–169; repr. in 1990: 33–49). Cf. also Sheppard (1982: 212–224); Shaw (1995: passim and 1999: 573–599).

21. *In Phaedr.* 71.14–22: Ἐτι δὲ καὶ ἐκ τῆς τοιαύτης ζωῆς γίνεται ἡ συναισθήσις ἢ μὴ· οἱ γὰρ σπουδαῖοι ἄνδρες καὶ εὖ ζῶντες πάντα αὐτῶν τὸν βίον καὶ πᾶσαν ἑαυτῶν ἐνέργειαν καὶ θεωρίαν καὶ πρᾶξιν ἀναθέντες τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ ταῖς ἀφανέσιν αἰτίαις συναισθάνονται διὰ τινων συμβόλων καὶ σημείων πότερον αὐτοὺς ἀποτρέπει τῆς πράξεως ὁ δαίμων ἢ οὐ· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο, γαλῆς φέρε δραμοῦσης ἢ ἐνσχεθέντος τοῦ ἱματίου, ἢ καὶ λίθου πεσόντος, ἢ φωνῆς ῥηθείσης, ἢ σκηπτοῦ κατενεχθέντος, συναισθάνονται τῆς ἀποτροπῆς καὶ ἀπέχονται τῆς πράξεως.

22. *In Phaedr.* 71.25–33: Ἀλλὰ τί ἐκόλυε τὸν Σωκράτη, προέτρεπε δὲ οὐδέποτε; καὶ πρῶτον, διὰ τί ἐκόλυεν; ἢ ὥσπερ τῶν ἵππων οἱ μὲν κέντρον δέονται διὰ τὸ βραδεῖς εἶναι, οἱ δὲ χαλινῷ διὰ τὸ ὀξεῖς ὑπάρχειν, οὕτω καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων οἱ μὲν εὐμετάδοτοι καὶ ὑπὸ προθυμίας εὖ ποιεῖν βουλόμενοι καὶ πάσῃ πράξει ἐγχειροῦντες, οἷος ἦν Σωκράτης, κωλύεσθαι πολλάκις ὑπὸ τοῦ δαιμονίου δέονται, οἱ δὲ δυσμετάδοτοι καὶ διεγείρεσθαι. Εἰ δὲ καὶ πρὸς ἀναγωγὴν αὐτὸν παρασκευάζον τὸ δαιμόνιον εἴργει τῶν πολλῶν πράξεων, ἔχοι ἂν καὶ οὕτω λόγον.

23. *In Phaedr.* 71.34–72.1: Ἀλλὰ διὰ τί οὐχὶ καὶ προέτρεπε τὸ δαιμόνιον; ἵνα μὴ ὡς ἄλογον καὶ ἑτεροκίνητον ἢ ὁ Σωκράτης, μηδὲν ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ ποιῶν, μηδὲ ὡς ψυχὴ λογικὴ αὐτοκίνητος.

24. *In Phaedr.* 77.20–78.2: Τριῶν ὄντων τούτων, οὐσίας, δυνάμεως, ἐνεργείας, οἱ μὲν θεοὶ μένοντες ἐν ταῖς πρωτίταις ἑαυτῶν ἐνεργείαις καὶ οὐκ ἐξιστάμενοι αὐτῶν, παράγουσι δευτέρας καὶ τρίτας ἑαυτῶν ἐνεργείας. Εἰ δέ τις προβάλλων ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ δευτέραν ἢ τρίτην ἐνέργειαν ἀφίσταται τῆς πρώτης ἢ καὶ ἐπιλανθάνοιτο αὐτῆς, ἀμαρτάνει, ὥσπερ εἰς κοιλότερα διατρίβων, ἀφείς τὰς πρώτας καὶ κυρίας ἐνεργείας. Εἰ δὲ μὴ μόνον περὶ τὰ δευτέρα διατρίβει ἀποστὰς τῶν πρώτων, ἀλλὰ καὶ διαστρόφως περὶ αὐτὰ ἀναστρέφοιτο, τῷ ὄντι μέγα τὸ ἀμάρτημα. Οἷον τρεῖς εἰσιν οὗτοι ἄνδρες· ὁ μὲν τῇ θεωρίᾳ σχολάζων, ὁ δὲ δυνάμενος μὲν εἶναι καὶ θεωρητικός, ἀποστὰς δὲ ταύτης καὶ περὶ πολιτείαν διατρίβων, ὁ δὲ οὐδὲ ὀρθῶς περὶ πολιτείαν ἀναστρεφόμενος, ἀλλὰ διαστρόφως καὶ πανούργως· ἀμφοτέρω μὲν οὖν ἀμαρτάνουσι καὶ ὁ δεύτερος καὶ ὁ τρίτος, ὡς τῆς πρωτίστης καὶ καλλίστης ἐνεργείας ἀφιστάμενοι, ἀλλὰ πλέον ὁ τρίτος τοῦ δευτέρου ἀμαρτάνει.

25. *In Phaedr.* 78.26–79.8: Τὰ δὲ περὶ μολυσμῶν καὶ καθαρμῶν ὧδε λεκτέον· περὶ ὃ ὁ μολυσμός, περὶ τοῦτο καὶ ὁ καθαρμός. Ἔστι δὲ ἔννοια μολυσμοῦ ἄλλοτριου προσθήκη, ἔννοια δὲ ἔστι καθαρμοῦ ἄλλοτριου ἀφαίρεσις. Γίνεται δὲ ὁ μολυσμός καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς ἄκρας ἡμῶν ψυχῆς ἄχρι καὶ τῶν ἐξηρημένων ἐσχάτως ἡμῶν· καὶ πρόσφορος ἐκάστῳ καὶ ὁ καθαρμός. . . . Ἔστι καὶ τοῦ πνεύματος μολυσμός. . . . Ἔστι καὶ τῆς ἀλόγου ψυχῆς μολυσμός, ἐπιθυμίαι ἄλογοι καὶ θυμοί, ὧν πάλιν οἱ καθαρμοὶ καὶ διὰ ἠθικῆς φιλοσοφίας καὶ διὰ θεῶν βοήθειας γίνονται. Ἔστι δὲ καὶ τῆς λογικῆς ψυχῆς μολυσμός, ὅταν ἐκ ψευδῶν δοξασμάτων ψευδῇ παρ' ἑαυτῇ συναγάγῃ καὶ ὕθλους ἀποτίκτῃ καὶ ψευδοδοξίας, ὧν ὁ ἔλεγχος καθαρμός ἐστι καὶ ἡ φιλοσοφία μὲν ἀπελατικὴ αὐτῶν, μάλιστα δὲ ἡ παρὰ τῶν θεῶν βοήθεια τελειοῦσα τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ εἰς τὸ ἀληθὲς ἄγουσα.

26. Hermias' opinion that in this Platonic distinction the second type of madness is telestic is not shared by all modern scholars, though. For instance, Hackforth (1952: comm. ad loc.) has acknowledged the problem and tried to solve it, while Rowe (1986: comm. ad loc.) is very skeptical toward the possibility of this second type being identical with telestic madness. On the contrary, Yunis (2011: comm. ad loc.) considers this type identical to telestic madness.

27. *In Phaedr.* 79.8–17: Ἐπὶ ἐκάστου δὲ τούτων τῶν μολυσμῶν τρεῖς ἂν εὖροις ἄνδρας καὶ διαφοράς· ὁ μὲν γὰρ μολυνθεὶς καὶ βλαβεὶς οὐκ ἦσθετο, ὧν ἐν πρώτοις τάξει<ς> τὸν Ὅμηρον (πάντως γὰρ ἔπεται τῷ μολυσμῷ βλάβη διὰ τὸ οἰκεῖόν τι δαιμόνιον ἐπίστασθαι τὴν τοιάνδε τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ζωὴν καὶ ἐκεῖνον συντάττεσθαι), ὁ δὲ μολυνθεὶς καὶ βλαβεὶς ἦσθετο μετὰ τὴν βλάβην, ὧν ἐστὶν ὁ Σησίχορος, καὶ οὕτω μετὰ τὸ παθεῖν γνοῦς τὴν βλάβην ἰάσατο· τρίτος δὲ ἐστὶν ὁ μολυνθεὶς μὲν, πρὶν δὲ βλαβῆναι ἰώμενος, ὧν ἐστὶ Σωκράτης (οὐ γὰρ παραχρῆμα ἔπεται ἡ βλάβη, ἀλλὰ γίνεται τις μεταξὺ χρόνος).

28. Manolea (2004: 147–149).

29. *In Phaedr.* 79.17–23: Ὡσπερ οὖν φασιν οἱ ἰατροὶ ὅτι τὰ ἐναντία τῶν ἐναντίων ἰάματα, καὶ οὐχ ἁπλῶς, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ εἶδος τῆς ἐναντιώσεως καὶ κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ μέρος καὶ κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ μέτρα, οὕτω δὴ καὶ ἐνταῦθα ὁ Σωκράτης, ἐπειδὴ περὶ μυθολογίαν ἦν τὸ ἀμάρτημα καὶ ὁ μολυσμὸς (γίνεται γὰρ καὶ ἀπὸ ῥημάτων μολυσμὸς), κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ πάλιν εἶδος καὶ ἰάσασθαι βούλεται· διὰ γὰρ τῆς μυθολογίας τε καὶ παλινωδίας ἀποκαθήρασθαι καὶ ἰάσασθαι βούλεται τὸ ἀμάρτημα.

30. *In Phaedr.* 79.23–30: Ἀλλὰ πῶς ὁ Σωκράτης ἐμολύνθη διὰ τῶν λόγων, τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἔνεκα καὶ τῆς τοῦ νέου ὠφελείας μετὰ φρονήσεως τοὺς λόγους ποιούμενος; ὁ μὲν γὰρ Λυσίας μεμολύνθω καὶ διὰ τὴν προαίρεσιν, ὁ δὲ Σωκράτης πῶς; ἢ ἐπειδὴ περὶ κοιλοτέρας ἐνεργείας ἑαυτὸν ἐπιδέδωκε καὶ ὅλως . . . κάθαρσιν τῶν ἁλλοτρίων κακῶν καὶ τὴν οἴαν ποτὲ ἀπόβλεψιν εἰς αὐτά, καὶ ὅτι κατὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ ἔρωτος εἶπεν, εἰ καὶ τοῦ ἀκολάστου, διὰ τοῦτο καθήρασθαι βούλεται ὡς μολυνθεὶς.

31. See, for instance, Parker (1983).

Chapter 5

1. See Proclus, *in Tim.* 7.25–8.1, where Proclus makes a distinction between the Socratic character and the Pythagorean character of the *Timaeus*. Also see the Introduction in this volume, where this passage is quoted in full.

2. For examples of those who follow the literary trend in reading the Platonic dialogues see Gordon (1999) and Blondell (2002). This form of reading Plato has taken a decisive lead in contemporary commentaries on the dialogues. For more on this see Tarrant (2000: 7), who notes that the twentieth-century move away from analytic trends in Platonic commentary echoes the Neoplatonic rejection of Middle Platonic hermeneutics that tended to neglect the literary elements in favor of focusing on Plato's "arguments." Of course, the Middle Platonists were responding to a tradition of commentary that may have overemphasized the literary elements, e.g., the Aristophanes of Byzantium and the Trasyllan tetralogical approach.

3. The developmentalist trend was first championed in 1839 by K. F. Hermann, whose discovery of the “Socratic” dialogues led to the stylistic research confirming this period in Plato’s thought. See Kahn (1998: 38–39). The list of those who rely on the developmentalist approach are too numerous to account for here, but one should mention Vlastos (1991), whose entire thesis of separating the historical Socrates from Plato’s dialogues rested on the premise that Plato’s thought develops and, as a result, the philosopher comes to reject many of Socrates’ methods and conclusions in his middle and later years of writing.

4. This chapter focuses mostly on the methods of reading a dialogue and thus answers the question of *how* the Neoplatonists read the character of Socrates. Chapter 6, by Michael Griffin, offers a clear and concise exposition of Socrates and the hypostatic level he resides at in the Neoplatonic system and thus answers the distinct question of what the character of Socrates *means* or represents for the Neoplatonists.

5. Proclus, *in Parm.* 618.11 where he praises Plato and Syrianus’s salvific influence.

6. See also Anon., *Proleg.* 16–17. See Mansfeld (1994: 29), who relates this schema to the preliminary issues that must be addressed before reading a Platonic dialogue while also showing how this hermeneutic was similarly used in approaching the texts of Aristotle.

7. See Coulter (1976: 95–103) for the groundbreaking history of identifying literature with a living thing or with a microcosm that resembles the macrocosm created by the Demiurge.

8. This attitude toward a text was in fact very natural for classical thinkers. Consider Aristophanes, who in a fragment from a lost play declares that books, just like sophists, have the same power to corrupt the young. He also comments concerning a young boy that “either a book has corrupted him, or Prodicus, or one of the sophists” (Aristophanes, Fr. 490K = 506K–A). I would like to thank Harold Tarrant for pointing me to this fragment and for further noting that Aristophanes clearly thought of the text as an active agent or subject in very much the same way that Socrates imagined the dynamic character of the text in the *Phaedrus*.

9. Plotinus, *Enn.* V, 2.1, and VI, 5–7.

10. Proclus, *ET* § 30, § 31, § 35.

11. More will be said later on the importance of Proclus’s doctrine of cyclical creativity near the end of this chapter, as I argue that the proper commentary of a Platonic dialogue must enact this cosmic universal process of rest, procession, and return. Only by doing this will the text itself and its reader engage with, i.e., return to, the Good.

12. For more information on the Neoplatonic polemic against the Aristotelian four causes via advancing five or six see Gerson (2005: 101–130) and Tarrant (2007a: 94 n. 12).

13. Cf. Olymp. *in Alc.* 56.17–22. For the groundbreaking work on the Neoplatonic identification of the text with a cosmos and demiurgic activity see Coulter (1976: 95–126). Coulter traces the historic movement of this idea from the *Phaedrus* and also the *Timaeus* but outlines as well how this reading is grounded in the literary theories of Cicero, Seneca, and Philo before he turns to the Neoplatonic expansion of this theme.

14. Van den Berg (2008: 99).

15. Van den Berg (2008: 99).

16. This is discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

17. Proclus, in *Parm.* 626.1–10.

18. Another example of the importance of the setting and time in Proclus's exegesis of the dialogue comes when he observes the dramatic date of the conversation between Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates—"the Greater Panathenaea." In this context, Proclus connects this date to his understanding of the *Timaeus* that takes place during the Lesser Panathenaea. With regard to the latter, Proclus believes that this dialogue intentionally traces all things back to the cause of the physical cosmos, the Demiurge, while the *Parmenides* concerns itself with the cause of Being and the whole sphere of divine realities, thus explaining why the *Parmenides* takes place at the greater of the two festivals. See also Van den Berg (2001: 23–26), who contends that Proclus would have regarded both these dialogues as hymns written by Plato in honor of the "One and all the gods of the occasion of the Great Panathenaea." See also Olymp., in *Gorg.* 0.3 1–10 for a discussion of the relevance of the setting in the *Gorgias* as one which shows how people "acquire knowledge and engage in dialogue." For Olympiodorus, the fact that Socrates takes Chaerephon rather than attending alone shows that knowledge is acquired when "two go together."

19. See Anon., *Proleg.* 17.1–25, for more on the various styles and their connection not simply to the Form but also to the Nature of the dialogue, i.e., "methods of procedure." See also Dillon (1987: 4), who makes use of this distinction in his exegesis on Proclus's commentary on the *Parmenides* and its connection with the "plain" or unadorned style and investigatory or mixed Nature. As I noted earlier, I have passed over the distinction between form and nature, i.e., the style versus the methods, for the sake of clarity, as Proclus, in his commentary on the *Alcibiades I*, seems to conflate this distinction. See again Proclus, in *Alc.* 10.6–15.

20. Cf. Olymp., in *Gorg.* 0.6, for a different account of the structure and form of this text. See Jackson, Lycos, and Tarrant (1998) for a discussion of Olympiodorus's unique approach to the *Gorgias*.

21. See Anon., *Proleg.* 17.13–15. Cf. 27.1–65, where the author outlines fifteen different methods of instruction: (1) inspired prophecy, (2) demonstration, (3) definition, (4) division, (5) analysis, (6) indirect evidence, (7) metaphor, (8) example, (9) induction, (10) analogy, (11) arithmetic, (12) abstraction, (13) addition, (14) history, and (15) etymology.

22. Proclus, in *Alc.* 12.5–20.

23. Proclus, in *Alc.* 12.17.

24. Proclus, in *Alc.* 12.17.

25. Proclus, *ET* § 28.

26. Cf. Proclus, in *Parm.* 645.10–646.33 and in *Tim.* 7.18–8.13.

27. Consider also Proclus, *de Prov.* 2.1–10, where the Neoplatonist compares the world and its order to a great drama. In this analogy he waxes eloquently on the tragic *mise-en-scène* of human affairs and all the various "scenes" made by the great dramaturgy in order to summarize Theodore's fears concerning his fatalistic view of the world. Here we see that, like Anonymous, Proclus has no trouble comparing the cosmos to a dialogue or drama. For

a variety of discussions concerning the Neoplatonic identification/comparison of the dialogue with a cosmos see Coulter (1976), Dillon (1987: 3), Mansfeld (1994: 28–37), Tarrant (2000: 41).

28. A complete defense of dialogue form for Anonymous is as follows:

1. The dialogue best resembles the cosmos, and as the cosmos has various parts, e.g., matter, form, soul, while still being a unity, so too the dialogue possesses a diversity of natures and characters while still being a unity.
2. The cosmos is a kind of dialogue itself filled with superior and inferior elements that compete and blend together for the sake of the Good. This is comparable to a dialogue, as a dialogue has good and bad characters who are either questioned or questioned for the sake of some particular aim, i.e., for the sake of some good. Cf. Anon., *Proleg.* 14.8–22, where he emphasizes that Plato uses diverse characters in a wholly different way from tragedians. Unlike the authors of tragedy who use various characters, i.e., both heroes and villains, simply for the purpose of entertainment, Plato, like the maker of the cosmos, uses a diversity of characters (or elements) for the sake of the Good, and accordingly the villains, or the bad, are purified from their baseness, in much the same way as all parts of the cosmos from the highest to the lowest return to the Good. See also Olymp. in *Gorg.* 0.1 as well as Coulter (1976: 77–94) for the discussion of the concept of literary unity and its connection to the divine making of the Demiurge.
3. The literary work is comparable to a living being, and as such the best literary work will resemble the most beautiful living being (i.e., the World-Soul). Consequently, since the dialogue form is most like the world or cosmos, it is the best literary form.
4. Human beings naturally like stories and all other forms of imitation. Since the dialogue imitates the cosmos it is the best kind of imitation, i.e., it is the best story.
5. Plato recognized that to teach people he could not present philosophy and philosophical ideas divorced from their connection to real people and real life. Discussing justice in the abstract would not compel anyone to be just.
6. Dialogue form showcases the virtue and positive results of dialectical discussion and the discovery of latent knowledge in the depths of our souls.

29. Anon., *Proleg.* 16.15.

30. See Proclus, in *Parm.* 630.25. The nature of the *skopos* of a text in Neoplatonic hermeneutics has been much discussed. Consequently, there are too many works to reference exhaustively. The best introductions to the issues of *skopos* to my mind include Coulter (1976: 77–94), Mansfeld (1994: 28–36), Jackson, Lykos, and Tarrant (1998: 23–24), Tarrant (2000: 92–94), and Tarrant (2007a: 47).

31. Anon., *Proleg.* 17.25. Consider also 21.1–23.28, where Anonymous outlines the ten rules for establishing the *skopos* of the dialogue: (1) it must be one and not many; (2) it must be general and comprehensive over particular; (3) it must deal with the total versus only a part of the dialogue; (4) it must be an exact aim versus an approximate; (5) it should deal

with higher themes over lower ones; (6) the *skopos* must be in agreement with all the parts of the text; (7) it cannot be for the sake of merely criticizing or finding fault with revivals; (8) the theme should not be concerned with emotions or affections, as this may cause the reader to be dragged back down into matter, e.g., the *Philebus* is not about pleasure; (9) the dialogue is not about a method, i.e., merely showcasing instruments of philosophy versus the true objects of philosophy; and (10) the theme should not be concerned solely with the Matter or characters of the dialogue.

32. Cf. Hermias, in *Phdr.* 6–9.

33. Van den Berg (2001: 97–98).

34. See also Proclus, in *Tim.* 1.1.4–8 and in *Remp.* 1.2.8–13 for further examples of Proclus's analysis of the *skopos* of particular dialogues. See also Jackson, Lycos, and Tarrant (1998: 13–14), who offer a comprehensive list of the *skopos* of each dialogue in the Neoplatonic curriculum established by Iamblichus, as well as Mansfeld (1994: 32–36).

35. For more information on the importance of preludes in both Plato's dialogues as well as Neoplatonic commentary see Mansfeld (1994).

36. Proclus, in *Parm.* 659.15.

37. See Tarrant (2000: 39), where he points out that Proclus's interpretation of the prologues reflects a polemic against the Middle Platonists who reduced these moments to mere ethical lessons. See Proclus, in *Parm.* 659.1–15. See also Dillon (1987: 47).

38. See in *Parm.* 626.1–630.15, where Proclus insists on showing how all of the opening characters, even the indeterminate audience being narrated to by Cephalus, contribute to an understanding of the *skopos* of Being itself. This, of course, is more easily seen insofar as the indeterminate audience, which corresponds to matter in Proclus's eyes, desires to hear of the higher realities in their eagerness to hear of the conversation between Parmenides (Unparticipated/Divine Intellect or Being), Zeno (Participate Intellect or Life), and Socrates (Participating Intellect or Particular Intellect).

39. Proclus, in *Alc.* 18.13–16.

40. Cf. Proclus, in *Tim.* 65.22–28, and Anon., *Proleg.* 3.21–30, where the anonymous author argues that a *logoi sokratikoi* like Plato's may capture the spirit of Socrates without being historically accurate. Leaning on the certainly invented anecdote of Diogenes Laertius, Anonymous writes that when Socrates got hold of the *Lysis* he read it and said, "This young man takes me wherever he likes and as far as he likes and makes me talk to whoever [*sic*] he likes." Regardless of whether this is a true or an invented story does not matter for the purposes of this chapter, as it merely points to the author's belief that Plato was not aiming for historical accuracy, i.e., to record the actual conversations Socrates had, but was simply capturing the spirit of Socrates which is shown insofar as Socrates recognizes himself in the dialogue. See also 16.28–34, where the author clarifies how Plato was more concerned with his overall aim in each dialogue than with historical accuracy.

41. Once again I would like to be careful about inadvertently regarding the literary features as what is merely supplemental or as an extraneous addition imposed upon something already complete. The dialogue form and important dramatic devices like the prologues or settings are not window dressing for Proclus, a charming addition masking the

content, naively identified with the logical arguments. As Proclus contends, in identifying the text with a harmonious being, the form and matter portion of the dialogue is not extraneous, a spare part that can be removed from the whole. Quite to the contrary, this part, if removed, would change the whole, the *skopos* of the dialogue, as the *skopos* is identified not with the mere arguments/formal proofs but with the whole/unity of all the various parts of the dialogue. Accordingly, the dramatic aspects of Plato's dialogues may be likened to the body of a being without which the soul and intellect of the text could never be seen, could not emerge as what they are. Put otherwise, only in minding these features of the dialogue can the text be what it is, i.e., have a definite form or meaning and consequently reveal, indicate, or, in Proclus's language, return to its aim, the *skopos* of the dialogue.

42. Proclus, in *Alc.* 19.13.

43. Proclus, in *Alc.* 5.11–20.

44. Dillon (1987: 4).

45. Proclus, in *Alc.* 7.1–10. Cf. Anon., *Proleg.* 23.20–27.

46. Consider also Proclus, in *Tim.* 5.23–6.7, where he comments on the relationship that the *skopos* of the *Timaeus* should have with its reader: "In conformity with Pythagorean custom, [Timaeus] had to link his object of study with an account of the studying subject. . . . For the totality is always in a state of well-being, and our part too will be well-off when likened to the All. . . . Whenever the earthly human being is assimilated to the universe, he will also be imitating his own paradigm in the appropriate fashion, becoming orderly (*kosmios*) through his likeness to the cosmos, and well-off through his being modeled on a god who enjoys well-being" (tr. Tarrant: 2007a). See also 8.9–10 as well as Plato, *Timaeus* 29b.

47. Proclus, in *Alc.* 152.18–25.

48. See also in *Remp.* I.67.10–25 where Proclus asserts that the goal or *telos* of the poet is not to please one's audience but is nothing other than the good. See Tarrant (2008: 13–14) for a concise list of the different aims of each dialogue in the Iamblichean canon.

49. Further, it should be noted that for Proclus it does not matter if the metaphysical analogues that he advances concerning the dialogues actually correspond to Plato's actual intent as author. As he writes just after discussing the specific analogues of the *Parmenides*,

In general these analogies should not be taken as unimportant, especially if we believe Plato, who said that nothing else is so beneficial to the soul as what draws it from phenomena to being, freeing us from the former and making it easy for us to imagine immaterial nature with the help of these. Such an influence is the lover, the philosopher, and everyone who is moving upwards. So that even if Plato himself did not formulate these matters in this way, it would be beneficial for us to do so, for it is a good exercise for a well-endowed soul which is capable of moving from images to their archetypes and delights in observing these all-pervading analogies. (Proclus, in *Parm.* 675–676, tr. Morrow and Dillon)

In short, the practice of informed exegesis is a virtuous activity itself. Consider here the parallels between Pierre Hadot's observations that such exegesis is a "spiritual exercise,"

or in more Foucauldian language what matters in approaching a text is not propositional truth but truth as the “care of oneself.”

Chapter 6

1. See Westerink (1962: xxxix and xl), Dillon (1973), and Table 2.

2. In the limited scope of this chapter, I aim to illustrate a few examples of the “Socrates allegory” operating in later antique commentary, and to identify the target of the metaphor. I touch only briefly on wider questions about Neoplatonic semantic theory and allegoresis in general; thus this specific case study might be regarded as a companion piece to the broader treatment of Neoplatonic exegetical technique developed by Danielle Layne in Chapter 5 of this volume. In my use of English words like “analogy” and “allegory” I am already glossing and perhaps blurring some rather complex problems discussed in various contexts by Rappe, Praechter, Lloyd, Tarrant, and Dillon, among others; on the history of metaphor and analogy in antiquity more broadly, see Boys-Stones (2003).

3. A position articulated explicitly in Hathaway (1969).

4. See notes in Segonds (1986: 35).

5. The real target is a little more complicated, as we shall see, because Alcibiades is the *rational* part of soul, and Socrates can be regarded as both *nous simpliciter* and the *nous* of soul; but this will not prove to be a serious difficulty, as it will become clear that we are dealing here with the triad of the soul, Socrates functioning as its highest term and the lowest term of the triad above.

6. For convenience, I am using colons to represent ratios as in basic mathematical notation, so that the following chart would be read: Socrates is to Alcibiades and Alcibiades is to the base lovers as Nous of Psyche is to Rational Psyche and as Rational Psyche is to Matter.

7. On this passage specifically in Olympiodorus, see recently Tarrant (2007c).

8. On the psychic tripartition, cf. 1.13 and see notes ad loc. in Jackson et al., and, with Westerink, compare Proclus *in Remp.* 2.176.4–9 on Calicles and Thrasymachus.

9. See, e.g., Mansfeld (1994) and Hadot (1996).

10. Damascius (c. 435/445–517/526) succeeded Proclus, Marinus, and Isidore in the chair of the Athenian school; his commentaries often preserve lost extracts from Proclus, on whom he is dependent, but of whose ideas he is sometimes critical. He heard lectures by Ammonius, who taught Olympiodorus. I treat Damascius’s commentary as belonging (so far as the allegoresis of characters in Plato is concerned) to the same broad exegetical milieu as Proclus and the Alexandrian school; indeed, Damascius’s commentary on *Philebus* was for some time mistaken as a work of Olympiodorus.

11. See Dillon (1997).

12. Compare in T3, Olymp. *in Gorg.* 0.8, the language that Chaerephon *mimeitai* the monad. See also Layne in Chapter 5 and the Introduction to this volume for abbreviated uses of this quote.

13. See Proclus, *in Alc.* 10, where, as Layne also partially quotes in her text, he writes:

Each [dialogue] must possess what the whole cosmos possesses: and an analogous part must be assigned therein to the good, part to the intellect, part to the soul, part to the form, and part to the underlying nature itself. Let it then be stated that in this work proportionate to the good is conformity to the divine through the care of ourselves, to the intellect the knowledge of ourselves, to the soul the wealth of demonstrations leading us to this conclusion, and practically the whole syllogistic part of the dialogue; for the form there remains the style of the diction and the interweaving of the figures of speech, and of the literary forms, and what else belongs to stylistic ability; and for the matter the persons and the time and what is called by some the plot. Now these exist in every dialogue, but as regards the question under discussion, the object of this work is the knowledge of our being, and we are lovers of this knowledge in order that we may attain our own perfection. As among the causative principles themselves the intellect depends on the good, so likewise in this matter, the object of enquiry in the dialogue is closely united with the purpose of the conversation; and the purpose is just such as we have said. (tr. O'Neill)

14. Cf. Dillon (1997).

15. Frede (1992: 217).

16. Cf. Frede (1992: 216), Vlastos (1983).

17. See Frede (1992), Press (2000), Rowe (2007).

18. Renaud (2004: 184).

Chapter 7

1. See Rappe (2000: 1–23) for an overview of this position as distinctly Neoplatonic. The Neoplatonic view that self-knowledge is knowledge of soul differs from many modern interpreters, who variously understand self-knowledge as knowledge of one's own ignorance (Ballard: 1965), as knowledge of knowledge (Mackenzie: 1988), and as moderation (Schmid: 1983).

2. Concerning just the elenchus alone, see Benson (2002), who argues that Socrates simply wishes to show his interlocutors' inconsistencies in their own beliefs, and Vlastos (1983), who argues that Socrates wants to replace his interlocutors' false beliefs with his own true beliefs. For a discussion of the elenchus in the *Alcibiades I* see Ambury (2011).

3. Proclus, in *Alc.* 51.5–6.

4. See Van den Berg (2001: 190–207) for an interpretation of Proclean Eros in light of Proclus's Hymn to Aphrodite (ΕΙΣ ΑΦΡΟΔΙΤΗΝ). There is considerable debate about the direction of Eros in Proclus. Van den Berg's note on the debate is instructive (2001, n. 11). Nygren (1953: 570) seems to think that in the Platonic tradition Eros only ascends, and therefore argues that any trace of a descending Eros in Proclus and Neoplatonist philosophy more generally should be traced back to some Christian influence. For the view that there is strong precedent for locating both sorts of Eros in Proclus and

Neoplatonism, see Rist (1964: 213–216 and 1966). For Plotinus specifically see Remes (2008: 157–160).

5. Proclus, *in Alc.* 53.3–8.

6. We therefore might also think of Socrates as a representation of Eros, provided we follow the Neoplatonic usage of such a term. See Rappe (2000: 11–17) for a discussion of the Neoplatonic understanding of symbols, images, and representations and the way such understanding differs from many modern theories of semiotics and textual hermeneutics.

7. Proclus, *in Alc.* 30.22–24. Proclus, *in Alc.* 28, also argues that Socrates appeals to his interlocutors in different ways, based on their natures and requirements. Socrates attempts to perfect Alcibiades through love, uniting him with divine Beauty.

8. See Siorvanes (1996: 189–199) for a discussion of Proclus's three paths to the One—Love (ἔρως), Truth (ἀληθεία), and Faith (πίστις).

9. Proclus, *in Alc.* 27.3–6.

10. Proclus, *in Alc.* 42.8–43.2.

11. Proclus, *in Alc.* 40.1–3. Cf. Van den Berg's analysis of the Hymn to Aphrodite (2001: 199), in which bad love makes souls fall in love with the material cosmos.

12. Proclus, *in Alc.* 43.7–9. Proclus, *in Alc.* 65.21–66.5, also claims that the love that subsists in souls is analogous to intellect. The first two kinds of love are love among the gods (analogous to unparticipated Intellect) and love among the spirits (analogous to participated Intellect).

13. Proclus, *in Alc.* 43.20–24.

14. Proclus, *in Alc.* 190.17–21.

15. Cf. *Phaedrus* 247c, 265c on the intellect as helmsman of the soul. That soul is in between intellect and matter suggests that the ultimate success of the seduction depends on soul itself. See Manos (1995: 58–59).

16. Proclus, *in Alc.* 208.1–4.

17. Cf. *Theaetetus* 175b–d. The philosopher attempts to draw someone to a higher level by asking questions about justice and injustice in themselves (αὐτῆς δικαιοσύνης τε καὶ ἀδικίας) instead of asking about “my injustice toward you or you toward me” (τί ἐγὼ σέ ἀδικῶ ἢ σὺ ἐμέ).

18. Proclus claims that this guardian spirit is not to be identified with individual intellect. See Proclus, *in Alc.* 73–84. Proclus, *in Alc.* 114.10–14, also remarks that neither Pericles nor any other human being is our proper guardian. Cf. 124a, where Socrates claims that his guardian, the god, is a better guardian than Pericles. For Socrates' daimon cf. *Apology* 31d, *Phaedrus* 242b–c, and *Theages* 128d.

19. Proclus, *in Alc.* 140.18–19. Cf. Socrates' claims in the *Republic* 514a and 518b–d, that the prisoners in the cave cannot turn around (περιάγειν) and that philosophical education assumes the soul can see but that it is not turned the right way or looking where it ought to look (οὐκ ὀρθῶς δὲ τετραμμένῳ οὐδὲ βλέποντι οἷ ἔδει).

20. Proclus, *in Alc.* 154.4–8.

21. Pace DeMarzio (2007: 115), who argues that Socrates appeals to Alcibiades' political interests without any intention of redirecting them.

22. Proclus, *in Alc.* 107.23–25.
23. Proclus, *in Alc.* 92.8–15.
24. Cf. *Phaedrus* 249d.
25. Proclus, *in Alc.* 172.8–10. In the *Alcibiades* (132d–133c) it is not specifically lovers who do this (as in *Phaedrus* 255c–d), but given the context—in which Socrates has just claimed he is Alcibiades’ only true lover—Proclus seems to characterize dialectic appropriately. Additionally, though Proclus distinguishes between erotic science, maieutic, and dialectic, it is evident that he recognizes their interrelation. See Kaproulias (2005).
26. Socrates’ erotic comportment therefore does not disappear once his formal arguments begin. Thus Schomakers (2008: 596) claims that Proclus’s understanding of “negative theology” is that it creates a desire that impels us to move toward the One. Proclus, *in Alc.* 170.5–12, also claims that dialectic makes the listener more attentive to the speaker than he would be during a speech, and that dialectic purifies the listener from twofold ignorance. Cf. Proclus, *in Alc.* 314.1–8. For more on Proclus and double ignorance see Layne (2009, Forthcoming c and d).
27. Proclus, *in Alc.* 171.1–3. See Marler (1993) for an analysis of the role causal reasoning plays in Alcibiades’ reversion upon intellect.
28. Proclus, *in Alc.* 277.20–23. Cf. Layne (2009).
29. Proclus, *in Alc.* 35.10–13.
30. Cf. *Republic* 382a, where Socrates claims no one would willingly tell falsehoods to the most authoritative aspect of himself (τῷ κυριωτάτῳ ἐαυτῶν) about the most authoritative things (περὶ τὰ κυριώτατα), which he equates with beings (τὰ ὄντα).
31. Proclus, *in Alc.* 220.16–17. Cf. also *Republic* 431e, in which moderation is characterized as power over oneself (κρείττω δὴ αὐτοῦ).
32. Proclus, *in Alc.* 35.13–22.
33. Proclus, *in Alc.* 209.5, 300.13–301.7.
34. Cf. *Charmides* 154d–e, where Socrates claims that they must strip Charmides to see whether he is beautiful in soul even though he is clearly beautiful in body.
35. Proclus, *in Alc.* 95.7–26. On Plato’s soul as indeterminate activity, see Demos (1978).
36. Cf. Socrates in *Gorgias* 482a–b comparing his two loves: philosophy, which always says the same things, and the son of Kleinias, who differs from one moment to the next.
37. Proclus, *in Alc.* 36.5–11.
38. Proclus, *in Alc.* 44.9–45.6.
39. *Symposium* 217c.
40. *Symposium* 218e. This does not mean that Socrates is solely interested in abstract objects of love, as Vlastos (1973) argues. Rather, Socrates loves Alcibiades as the beautiful soul that allows him to glimpse Beauty itself (*Symposium* 209c, 210c) in such a way that he is never simply a stepping-stone on the way to abstract truth. See Lawrence (2003).
41. Proclus, *in Alc.* 90.1–3. Cf. Socrates’ remark in the *Republic* (492e–493a) that if anyone escapes the education of the many, he has been saved by divine dispensation (θεοῦ μοῖραν αὐτὸ σῶσαι).
42. *Symposium* 218a–b and 216a–c.

43. Proclus, in *Alc.* 36.11–15. Cf. Plato, *Letter VII*, 344a: “Neither quickness of learning nor a good memory can make a man see when his nature is not akin to the object, for this knowledge never takes root in an alien nature.” Cf. also *Phaedo* 79d in which the soul is said to be akin to the Forms.

44. Proclus, in *Alc.* 57.6–8.

45. Proclus, in *Alc.* 253.13–15. Cf. Proclus, in *Alc.* 39.10–16: “As in the intelligent considerations of philosophy obstacles are raised by the sophist’s way of life and the association with it that drags away the less perfect from the consideration of reality to the appearance that corresponds to the coming-to-be and passing-away, so also in the elevation to divine love the multitude of common lovers becomes an obstacle by assuming the character of the true lover and dragging down the soul of the youth.”

46. One of the disappointing aspects of the few modern interpretations of the *Alcibiades* is that they simply ignore the erotic aspect of Socrates’ character. For instance, Schleiermacher (1836) attacks the authenticity of the *Alcibiades* on the grounds that all reference to Socrates’ love for Alcibiades is omitted insofar as he has not approached Alcibiades until his looks are fading. Aside from the fact that Socrates begins the dialogue talking about his love for Alcibiades (103c), for Proclus we should expect that he has stayed away, not because he does not love Alcibiades, but because Socrates is the only person capable of truly loving him. Those modern commentators who do account for Socratic ἔρως include Denyer (2001) and especially Gordon (2003).

Chapter 8

This brief chapter belongs to a series of investigations into Olympiodorus as a Platonic commentator, involving the *Alcibiades I* and its reception in antiquity; see for example Renaud (2006, 2007, 2008, and 2012). I would like warmly to thank Harold Tarrant for kindly taking it upon himself to translate the French text, and so elegantly.

1. *Alcibiades I* (= *Alc.*) 110e2–3: Παρὰ τῶν πολλῶν. (References are to the text of J. Burnet, 1900.)

2. *Alc.* 114b1–2: πότερον δὲ ταῦτά ἐστι δίκαιά τε καὶ συμφέροντ’ ἢ ἕτερα.

3. *Alc.* 118e8: Ἐγὼ οἶμαι αἴτιος οὐ προσέχων τὸν νοῦν. Cf. Plutarch, *Alc.* 8.1–3.

4. Cf. Tarrant (1998: 4).

5. In *Gorgiam commentaria* (= in *Gorg.*) 41.6: παρὰ γὰρ Σωκράτους τὰ ἠθικά ὠφέλιτο μόνον, ἃ διὰ θεμελίους εἰλήφει· νέος γὰρ ἦν ἔτι Σωκράτους ἀποθανόντος καὶ οὐδέπω ἦν ἀψάμενος τῶν βαθυτέρων τοῦ Σωκράτους λόγων.

6. In *Alcibiadem commentaria* (= in *Alc.*) 2.149–152: καὶ γὰρ καὶ τῆς Σωκρατικῆς εἰρωνείας ἀπήλλακτο καὶ τοῦ ἐν ἀγορᾷ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἐργαστηρίων διατρίβειν καὶ τοὺς νέους θηράντα ποιεῖσθαι τοὺς λόγους.

7. In *Alc.* 88.5–6: ὥς μὲν οὖν ἐρωτικὸς ὁ Σωκράτης ἡγνόμενός τὸ δίκαιον ἀγνοοῦντος τοῦ νέου, ὥς δὲ διδάσκαλος ἡπίστατο. As for 124a–c, where Socrates declares himself in search of self-knowledge, the single type of self-knowledge that Socrates does not possess, according to Olympiodorus, is the highest of the seven degrees of knowledge.

8. *In Alc.* 56.9–57.4: τὸ διαλογικὸν σχῆμα καὶ ἡ κατὰ βραχὺ τῶν λόγων διαπλοκὴ κατὰ πεῦσιν γινομένη καὶ ἀπόκρισιν. ἥ, ὥς φησιν ἐν τῷ Φαίδρω, ‘δεῖ τὸν λόγον εὐοικεῖναι ζῶφ’. . . . ὥσπερ οὖν οὗτος λειμὼν ἐστὶ ποικίλων ζῶφον, οὕτω δεῖ καὶ τὸν λόγον εἶναι πλήρη παντοδαπῶν προσώπων. . . . ὅτι τὸ κατ’ ἐρώτησιν καὶ ἀπόκρισιν σχῆμα διεγερτικὸν ἐστὶν καὶ ἐπιστρεπτικόν. τοιγαροῦν καὶ οἱ ῥήτορες, ὅτε βούλονται διεγείρειν τὸν ἀκροατὴν ἢ ἐπιστρέψαι <πρὸς> τὸν λόγον, αὐτῷ κέχρηται, οἷον ‘ἀλλὰ μοι ἀπόκριναι, πρὸς θεῶν’.

9. Cf. *Sophist* 230b–e.

10. *In Alc.* 89.13–17: Καὶ τάληθῇ ἀποκρίνου, ἵνα μὴ μάτην οἱ διάλογοι γίνωνται: . . . ἐπειδὴ μερικά ἐῖσι καὶ ἀπὸ ἱστορίας εἰλημμένα, αἰτεῖ αὐτὸν ἀληθεῦσαι.

11. *In Alc.* 7.4–8: ὁ οὖν Σωκράτης οὐχ οὕτως ἐπανορθοῦται τὰς ψυχάς, ὥσπερ οἱ προειρημένοι, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῶν ὁμοίων μᾶλλον· εἰ μὲν τίς ἐστὶν ἐρωτικός, λέγων ‘μάθε τίς ὁ τῶν καλῶν ἔρως’· εἰ δέ τις φιλοχρήματος, φάμεν ‘μάθε τί τὸ αὐταρκες’· εἰ δὲ φιλήδονος, ‘τίς ἡ ἀληθὺς ῥαστώνη, ἣν καὶ θεοὶς ὁ ποιητὴς ἀνατίθησι, λέγων “θεοὶ ῥεῖα ζῶντες.”’ On dialectic as purification in Plato, cf. *Rep.* 533d2–4, 527e1–3.

12. Cf. Tarrant (2000, 116–118).

13. *In Alc.* 62.4–8: δυσχερὲς ἦν καὶ χαλεπὸν τὸ ἀποκρίνεσθαι· ἐπειδὴ δὲ Σωκράτης ἐστὶν ὁ μαιευτικὸς καὶ πρὸς ὠφέλειαν καὶ διόρθωσιν τῶν νέων σκοπῶν, εἰκότως οὐ χαλεπόν, τούναντίον δὲ μᾶλλον τὸ ἐρωτᾶν χαλεπόν, καθάπερ καὶ ἐν ὁδῷ τὸ ἡγεῖσθαι τοῦ ἔπεσθαι.

14. *Alc.* 110b1–2: Πολλάκις σοῦ ἐν διδασκάλων ἤκουον παιδὸς ὄντος καὶ ἄλλοθι; *Alc.* 106e4–9: ταῦτ’ ἐστὶν ἃ σὺ ἐπίστασαι, εἰ μὴ πού τι μανθάνων ἐμὲ λέληθας· οἶμαι δὲ γε, οὔτε νύκτωρ οὔτε μεθ’ ἡμέραν ἐξῶν ἐνδοθεν.

15. *Alc.* 104c3: ὅθεν δὴ εὖ οἶδα ὅτι θαυμάζεις; Alcibiades confirms it (104d4): τῷ ὄντι γὰρ θαυμάζω.

16. *In Alc.* 62.22–23: Τριῶν ὄντων τούτων στοιχείων ἀγαθοῦ συμβούλου, προαιρέσεως ἀγαθῆς, γνώσεως ἀκριβοῦς, δυνάμεως ἀπαγγελτικῆς; *in Alc.* 41.10–12: στοιχεῖα δὲ καὶ τεκμήρια ἐνθέου ἐραστοῦ λέγει δύο ταῦτα, ὅτι δεῖ τὸν ἐνθεον ἐραστὴν καὶ κρίσιν ἔχειν καὶ συμπάθειαν. Cf. *in Gorg.* 145.23–146.10.

17. E.g., *Gorgias* 448c1–3, 462a3–5; cf. *Prt.* 338c7–d3.

18. *Alc.* 113b1–2: Οὐκοῦν ἄρτι διὰ παντὸς ἐγὼ μὲν ἦ ὁ ἐρωτῶν.

19. *Alc.* 114b2–5: τί οὐκ ἀπέδειξας; εἰ μὲν βούλει, ἐρωτῶν με ὥσπερ ἐγὼ σέ, εἰ δέ, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπὶ σεαυτοῦ λόγῳ διέξελθε. Cf. 114d4–7: Ἴθι νῦν, ἐπειδὴ τοῦ αὐτοῦ φαίνεται πολλοὺς τε καὶ ἓνα πείθειν, ἐν ἐμοὶ ἐμμελέτησον καὶ ἐπιχείρησον ἐπιδείξαι ὥς τὸ δίκαιον ἐνίστε οὐ συμφέρει.—Υβριστὴς εἶ, ὃ Σώκρατες. Cf. 106c1–4.

20. *Alc.* 113a1–2: Περὶ δὴ τούτων μὲν ἐγὼ φαίνομαι λέγων ὁ ἐρωτῶν, ἢ σὺ ὁ ἀποκρινόμενος.

21. *Alc.* 110a2–3.

22. *Alc.* 105e6–7: οὐκ εἶα ὁ θεὸς διαλέγεσθαι, ἵνα μὴ μάτην. Cf. 113c4.

23. Cf. *Gorgias* 495a; *Republic* 350e.

24. *In Alc.* 99.13–15: καὶ ὅτι πολλάκις δίδωσιν ὁ προσδιαλεγόμενος προτάσεις τοιαύτας μὴ δοκούσας τῷ ἐρωτῶντι, ἐξ ὧν σύγκειται ὁ συλλογισμός.

25. E.g., *Alc.* 114d11–e2: Ἐκ μὲν ὧν σὺ λέγεις οὐκ εἰκός.—Ὁρᾷς αὖ τοῦθ’ ὥς οὐ καλῶς εἶπες, ὃ Ἀλκιβιάδης; 112d10–e1: Ἀποκρίνου μόνον τὰ ἐρωτώμενα.—Μή, ἀλλὰ σὺ αὐτὸς λέγε.—Τί δ’; οὐχ ὅτι μάλιστα βούλει πεισθῆναι.

26. *Alc.* 114e10–115a1: Οὔτοι, ἀλλ’ ἀποκριτέον· καὶ γὰρ οὐδὲν οἶομαι βλαβήσεσθαι.— Μαντικὸς γὰρ εἶ. Cf. *Gorgias* 475d5–6, where Socrates says to Polos: μὴ ὄκνει ἀποκρίνασθαι, ὦ Πῶλε· οὐδὲν γὰρ βλαβήσῃ.

27. *Alc.* 113c5–7: μανικὸν γὰρ ἐν νῷ ἔχεις ἐπιχείρημα ἐπιχειρεῖν, ὃ βέλτιστε, διδάσκειν ἃ οὐκ οἶσθα, ἀμελήσας μανθάνειν. Cf. in *Alc.* 63.9–10, 67.22.

28. Cf. *Gorgias* 448d–e, 451d–e, 489e.

29. In *Alc.* 80.12–81.10: τριχῶς δὲ ἐν τούτοις ἀμαρτάνει. πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι ἐν ἐρωτηθεῖς τρία ἀπεκρίνατο. δευτέρον ὅτι οὐχ ἀπλᾶ ταῦτα, ἀλλ’ ἐπαμφοτερίζοντα . . . τρίτον ἀμαρτάνει ὅτι αὐτὸς μὲν ὡς τρία προήγαγε τὸ ἀπατᾶσθαι ἢ βιάζεσθαι ἢ ἀποστερεῖσθαι, κοινὸν δὲ ἐστὶν εἰπεῖν ἐπ’ αὐτῶν τὴν ἀδικίαν· . . . ἔδει οὖν αὐτὸν τὸ κοινὸν εἰπόντα μὴ οὕτως ὡς τρία ταῦτα προαγαγεῖν.

30. In *Alc.* 92.4–9: σημεῖον δὲ ἀγνοίας καὶ ἀνεπιστημοσύνης ἢ ἀσυμφωνία· οὐχ ὅτι οἱ συμφωνοῦντες ἀλλήλοις πάντως ἐπιστήμονές εἰσιν (διὰ τοὺς Δημοκριτεῖους, συμφωνοῦντας μὲν περὶ τοῦ κενοῦ ὅτι ἐστὶν, ἀνεπιστήμονας δὲ διὰ τοῦτο ὄντας, οὐκ ἐστι γάρ), ἀλλ’ οἱ μὲν ἐπιστήμονες συμφωνοῦσιν ἀλλήλοις, κατὰ τὴν σὺν ἀντιθέσει ἀντιστροφὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐπομένου γινομένην οἱ μὴ συμφωνοῦντες ἀνεπιστήμονές εἰσιν.

31. Tarrant (1997a: 188).

32. In *Gorg.* 19.1; cf. 41.9; cf. *Alc.* 114e, *Phd.* 91c.

33. *Gorgias* 472b–c, 482c–d. Cf. Denyer (2001: 142).

34. *Alc.* 111b3–5: Οὐκοῦν τοὺς εἰδότας ὁμολογεῖν τε ἀλλήλοις καὶ μὴ διαφέρεισθαι.

35. *Alc.* 117a5–6: Περὶ ὧν ἄρα ἄκων τάναντία ἀποκρίνη, δῆλον ὅτι περὶ τούτων οὐκ οἶσθα; cf. 117b2–3. There is, however, just a glimpse of the idea of agreement with oneself at 111d11–e2: Ἰκανὸν δὲ σοι τεκμήριον ὅτι οὐκ ἐπίστανται οὐδὲ κρήνυσι διδάσκαλοί εἰσιν τούτων, ἐπειδὴ οὐδὲν ὁμολογοῦσιν ἑαυτοῖς περὶ αὐτῶν.

36. Vlastos (1994: 25–29); cf. Tarrant (1998: 10).

37. *Alc.* 118b5–6: ἐπειδὴ μόνω ἐσμέν, ῥητέον.

38. E.g., *Alc.* 108b4–5: Ἀλλὰ πειρῶ ἐμὲ μιμεῖσθαι.

39. *Alc.* 116e5: ἀγνοεῖς τὸ πάθημα τί ἐστίν.

40. *Alc.* 127e9: τί ἐστὶν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι.

41. *Alc.* 130c2–3: ἢ εἴπερ τί ἐστὶ, μὴδὲν ἄλλο τὸν ἄνθρωπον συμβαίνειν ἢ νυχήν. This is one of the examples that Aristotle gives of this type of question, the fourth of his classification, *Analytica posteriora* B 1, 89b23–35.

42. *Alc.* 105a3–5: ἴσως ἂν οὖν εἴποις, ἅτε εἰδὼς ὅτι ἀληθὴ λέγω, “Τί δὴ οὖν, ὦ Σώκρατες, τοῦτ’ ἐστὶ σοι πρὸς λόγον”; *Alc.* 105c7–d1: δοκεῖς γάρ μοι, εἴ τίς σοι εἴποι θεῶν· “Ὡ Ἀλκιβιάδη, πότερον βούλει ζῆν ἔχων ἢ νῦν ἔχεις, ἢ αὐτίκα τεθνάναι εἰ μὴ σοι ἐξέσται μείζω κτήσασθαι.”

43. *Alc.* 108e5–109a3: Ἀλλὰ μέντοι αἰσχρὸν γε εἰ μὲν τις σε λέγοντα καὶ συμβουλευόντα περὶ σιτίων ὅτι βέλτιον τὸδε τοῦδε καὶ νῦν καὶ τοσοῦτον, ἔπειτα ἐρωτήσῃεν “Τί τὸ ἄμεινον λέγεις, ὦ Ἀλκιβιάδη”; περὶ μὲν τούτων ἔχειν εἰπεῖν ὅτι τὸ ὑγιεινότερον, καίτοι οὐ προσποιῇ γε ἰατρὸς εἶναι· περὶ δὲ οὗ προσποιῇ ἐπιστήμων εἶναι καὶ συμβουλευσεις ἀνιστάμενος ὡς εἰδὼς, τούτου δ’, ὡς ἔοικας, πέρι ἐρωτηθεῖς ἐὰν μὴ ἔχῃς εἰπεῖν, οὐκ αἰσχρὴν; ἢ οὐκ αἰσχρὸν φανεῖται.

44. *In Alc.* 102.27–103.9: [Οὐκοῦν ἐλέχθη ὅτι περὶ δικαίων ὁ Ἀλκιβιάδης]: καὶ ἐπειδὴ φορτικόν ἐστι τὸ ἐξ οἰκείου προσώπου προσφέρειν τοὺς ἐλέγχους—οὕτω γὰρ καὶ παρὰ τῷ ποιητῇ ὁ Φοῖνιξ βουλόμενος καταδρομῇ χρήσασθαι ἐλέγχων κατὰ τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως οὐκ ἐκ προσώπου οἰκείου εἰσάγει τοὺς λόγους, ἀλλ’ εἰσαγαγὼν τὸν Πηλέα οὕτως ἐλέγχει· . . . ὁ δὲ Σωκράτης οὐκ ἀρκεῖται τῷ ἄλλῳ προσώπῳ χρήσασθαι, ἀλλὰ χρῆται καὶ τῷ ἐλεγχομένῳ πρὸς μείζονα καταδρομῇ, λέγων ὅτι ‘ἐλέχθη ὑπὸ Ἀλκιβιάδου ὅτι μὴ εἰδὼς τὸ δίκαιον μέλλει συμβουλευεῖν περὶ ὧν οὐκ οἶδεν’.

45. On these hypothetical questions, see the detailed study of Longo (2000: 93–220).

46. Cf. Denyer (2001: 150).

47. *In Alc.* 106.9–14: Τί οὖν; εἰ ὅτι μάλιστα ἕτερα μὲν τὰ δίκαια: ἄρχεται τοῦ ἐλέγχου καὶ δείκνυσιν αὐτὸν μὴ εἰδὸτα τὰ συμφέροντα ἐκ τῆς ἀντιπαραστάσεως, διότι πολλῶν λόγων δεῖται ἢ ἔνστασις εἰς τὸ δεῖξαι ὅτι ταῦτόν δίκαιον καὶ συμφέρον, ὃ ἐφεξῆς ποιήσει· νῦν δὲ φησιν ὅτι ‘εἰ μὲν ταῦτόν ἐστι τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ συμφέρον, ἐδείχθη δὲ μὴ εἰδὼς τὸ δίκαιον, οὐκοῦν καὶ τὸ συμφέρον· εἰ δὲ ἕτερον, δειχθεῖς δὲ μὴ εἰδὼς τὸ συμφέρον διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν λόγων, δύο ἀνθ’ ἑνὸς δειχθήσῃ ἀγνοῶν’; see also the French translation of Segonds (Proclus 1985–1986: 445).

48. Cf. Denyer (2001: 10).

49. Denyer (2001: 11).

Chapter 9

1. It has been translated variously as weakness of will, incontinence, lack of self-control, and unrestraint, among other things.

2. Works on this topic are too numerous to list here. Some of the works I have drawn upon include Segvic (2008), Bobonich and Destree (2007), Hoffmann (2008), Reshotko (2006), and Vlastos (1995).

3. This point has been countered by Segvic (2008).

4. Irwin (2008).

5. Aristotle, *Magna Moralia* 1.1, 1182a14–26. If this section of *MM* is not in fact by Aristotle, it at least shows that such a division between Plato and Socrates was not out of place in the Peripatetic school.

6. See Vlastos (1991). See Kahn (1996) for a response to this position on two Socrates. Kahn shifts the conventional division of dialogues and deemphasizes the role of any historical Socrates. Rowe (2002), however, argues against Kahn’s downplaying of the philosophical positions of a historical Socrates, including the denial of *akrasia*.

7. Dorter (2008). Also see Shields (2007: 61–86).

8. Dorter (2008: 14); cf. *Rep.* 518c–d.

9. Simplicius, in *Epicteti encheiridion*, H262/D38,15. Brittain and Brennan (2002: 82).

10. *Akrasia* and *enkrateia* are also discussed in the context of temperance and intemperance (*sôphrosunê* and *akolasia*) in *Eudemian Ethics* III.6. Some have argued that Aristotle is inconsistent on *akrasia* in *EN* and other works, such as *De anima*. For more on this, see Destree (2007: 139–166).

11. Aristotle, *EE* 1226a ff.
12. *EN* 1146b35–1147b5.
13. Gerson (2007: 271).
14. *EN* 1111a22–b3. Of these two sources, akratic behavior arising from thumos is less unjust than that from epithumia (*EN* VII.6).
15. *EN* 1147a10–18.
16. Chase (1847).
17. Aristotle gives examples of such practices among “the barbarians.” *EN* 1148b20ff.
18. *EN* 1150a21–31, 1150b29ff. In contemporary terms, someone with antisocial personality disorder, also called psychopathy, might fit Aristotle’s typology of the *akolast*: a person who indulges without self-control or reason (as moral reason), and who is incurable because she does not empathize or see what she has done as wrong.
19. *EN* 1150b19ff. “Precipitancy” = *Propeteia*. See Salles (2007: 249–264).
20. Aristotle’s use of *μελαγχολικός* does not have the simple later meaning of “sad” or “depressed” but is closer to excitable or prone to inconstant emotions.
21. *EN* 1152a27–29. If custom is easier to cure than nature (1152a29–30) in *EN* 1154b10–15, and the melancholics (tr. by Lombardo and Bell as “excitable”) are tormented by their bodies’ special composition (predominance of black bile), why should we think that one’s bodily constitution (more akin to nature than nurture) is more readily curable than cognitive weakness? Perhaps Aristotle has in mind the treatability of such things that affect the temperament through medical cures, as was considered later in the Aristotelian tradition. Melancholy is discussed in the Pseudo-Aristotelian or Pseudo-Alexandrian *Problemata*, book 30, 953a ff.
22. This view was codified by Inwood (1985: 137). In light of the presence of akratic emotions in Chrysippus and *enkrateia* as a virtue in Cleanthes, Gourinat (2007: 217–248) reevaluates the role of *akrasia* in early Stoic moral theory. Gerson (2007: 272–274) also challenges this interpretation of the early Stoa.
23. For a reconstruction of Chrysippus’s position on *akrasia*, see Joyce (1995: 315–335). Brennan (2003: 274) takes issue with Joyce’s interpretation of the Stoic position on weakness of will.
24. Plutarch, *De virtute morali* 446F–447A.
25. *De officiis* 1.29.101; 36.132. See Gerson (1994: 169 n.76).
26. Gill (2006: 304–305).
27. Gill (2006: 306).
28. Epictetus, *Discourses*, book I (tr. R. F. Dobbin).
29. *De placitiis Hippocratis et Platonis* 3.3.13–16; 4.6.19–24. For discussion of this passage, see Dobbin (2008: 218–224). Also see Gill (1983: 136–149).
30. καὶ μανθάνω μὲν οἷα δρᾶν μέλλω κακά, / θυμὸς δὲ κρείττων τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων. *Diss.* 1.28.7 (tr. R. Dobbin).
31. Epictetus, *Diss.* 28.8.
32. This passage is discussed by Long (1996: 277–279 [reprint 2001]). Cf. Salles (2007: 249–264).

33. Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.28.8.
34. Long (2002: 75–77). Long argues in this work that Epictetus “appropriates Socrates more deeply than any other philosopher after Plato” (8).
35. Long (2002: 33). Long also notes that Epictetus uses the word *arête* infrequently, perhaps because the early Stoa linked it to the ideal sage.
36. Long (2001: 279).
37. Gerson (2007: 265–282). Also see Gerson (2008: 42–57).
38. Gerson (2007: 281).
39. Plotinus, *Enn.* 1.2.4 and 6.8.7.
40. Alex. Aphr., *De fato* 199.14–22.
41. *Enn.* 1.4.3–4.
42. *Enn.* 1.2.3. Cf. *Phaedo* 69b–c.
43. *Enn.* 1.2.5.11–14, 17–20. τὸν δὲ θυμὸν ὅσον οἷόν τε ἀφαιροῦσαν καί, εἰ δυνατόν, πάντη, εἰ δὲ μὴ, μὴ γοῦν αὐτὴν συνοργιζομένην, ἀλλ’ ἄλλου εἶναι τὸ ἀπροαίρετον, τὸ δὲ ἀπροαίρετον ὀλίγον εἶναι καὶ ἀσθενές· . . . Ἐπιθυμίαν δέ; Ὅτι μὲν μηδενὸς φαύλου, δῆλον· σίτων δὲ καὶ ποτῶν πρὸς ἄνεσιν οὐκ αὐτὴ ἐξεῖ· οὐδὲ τῶν ἀφροδισίων δέ· εἰ δ’ ἄρα, φυσικῶν, οἶμαι, καὶ οὐδὲ τὸ ἀπροαίρετον ἔχουσιν.
44. This tripartite nature of providence goes back to the middle Platonists such as Ps-Plutarch (*De fato*) and Calcidius (*Tract. de fato*).
45. *Dec. dub.* 18.18–22.
46. *Dec. dub.* 31.38–39 (tr. C. Steel).
47. *In Remp.* 1.24.12–18.
48. See Brittain and Brennan (2002: 4–8). Throughout I have drawn upon Brittain and Brennan and use their translations (unless stated otherwise), while referencing I. Hadot’s (1996) and Dübner’s (1842) editions. Using Brittain and Brennan’s convention, in references I list the Hadot page number followed by the Dübner number.
49. Simplicius, in *Epicteti encheiridion* H441–443/D132,24–133,45. See Sellars (2003: 132–133), who also speculates on Simplicius’s audience and believes the work was intended for more advanced students.
50. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H443/D133,28–41. There doesn’t seem to be much hope for the “ordinary person” on this account. Dictionary meanings of *ιδιότης* (private individual) can be neutral, including “common man,” “average person,” “layman,” but it usually maintains a sense of inferiority to an opposing term (“unpracticed,” “unskilled,” “ignoramus”). It was used by Aristotle in contrast to the philosopher (*EN* 1116b13), and that sense is most likely the one which is used by Epictetus and Simplicius.
51. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H193/D1,36–37. Παιδεύει δὲ τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ὥς κατὰ ψυχὴν λογικὴν οὐσιωμένον, τῷ σώματι χρώμενον ὥς ὄργανον.
52. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H195–197/D3,3–48. Simplicius generally treats the Socrates of Plato’s dialogues as the historical Socrates, though loosely distinguishes him from Plato. “But that someone who has his essence in accordance with a rational soul is the real and true human being was demonstrated by Plato—or rather the Platonic Socrates—in his dialogue with Alcibiades the fair, the son of Kleinias” (H195–196/D3,3–6). Ἀλλ’ ὅτι μὲν

οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς ἄνθρωπος, ὁ κατὰ τὴν λογικὴν ψυχὴν οὐσιωμένος, προηγουμένως μὲν ὁ Πλάτων ἢ ὁ τοῦ Πλάτωνος Σωκράτης ἔδειξεν, Ἀλκιβιάδῃ τῷ καλῷ, τῷ Κλεινίου, διαλεγόμενος. Cf. H243/D28,34.

53. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H204/D7,50–52.

54. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H222/D17,15–19.

55. Simplicius questions why Epictetus says we should do away with all desire, including toward things up to us, then he gives counterpoints. He writes, “How can one continue to be a human being without desire?” (H231–2/D22,27–28). He then speculates that perhaps Epictetus is speaking to youth who are just starting an education, “for whom it is altogether unsafe to desire before knowing what they ought to desire” (H232/D 22,35–36). He speculates that perhaps he didn’t mean do away with all desires but only with vehement desires (τὸ σφοδρὸν).

56. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H224/D18,20ff.

57. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H196/D3,18–19

58. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H197/D3,48–54. In Simplicius’s Platonism, the human being is not a composite of soul and body but *is* the soul, period (cf. H195/D2,30–49). Drawing upon *Alcibiades* I, 129c, he stresses the soul’s use of the body as an instrument many times throughout the commentary (e.g., H196/D3,26–33; H212–213/D12,18–22; H260/D38,D10–18; H444/D134,6–8). He notes that Epictetus’s speeches are directed toward those who do not think that the human being is a composite of body and mind but are eager for the rational soul to rule and transcend the body. He ascribes to this type of person the ethical and political virtues, whereas (as noted above) for Plotinus these virtues are less important than cathartic virtues. H195/D2,33–36: Οὔτε οὖν πρὸς τὸν καθαρτικῶς δυνηθέντα ζῆν· ἐκεῖνος γάρ, ὅση δύναμις, φεύγειν ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος βούλεται καὶ τῶν σωματικῶν παθῶν, καὶ εἰς ἑαυτὸν συννεύειν·

59. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H223/D17,44 D18,7.

60. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H352/D33,13; H246/D46,11; H407/D117,42.

61. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H233/D23,19; H276/D46,5,9; H362/D92,29; H407/D117,14,18; H420/D123,14; H440/D132,4.

62. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H225/D18,50–51; H247/D30,39–40; H252/D33,22–23.

Καὶ μανθάνω μὲν, οἷα δρᾶν μέλλω κακά· / θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσων τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων.

63. *Ench.* 5.1.6–8: ἀπαιδεύτου ἔργον τὸ ἄλλοις ἐγκαλεῖν, ἐφ’ οἷς αὐτὸς πράσσει κακῶς· ἡργμένου παιδεύεσθαι τὸ ἐαυτῷ· πεπαιδευμένου τὸ μῆτε ἄλλω μῆτε ἑαυτῷ.

64. Simplicius, in *Epicteti encheiridion*, H247/D30,32–38. Brittain and Brennan (2002a: 73).

65. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H248/D31,13–17.

66. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H276/D46,14. Cf. *Phaedo* 77e.

67. *Ench.* 6. 5–7. ὥσθ’, ὅταν ἐν χρήσει φαντασιῶν κατὰ φύσιν σχῆς, τηνικαῦτα ἐπαρθῇ· τότε γὰρ ἐπὶ σῶ τινι ἀγαθῷ ἐπαρθήσῃ.

68. Simplicius, in *Epicteti encheiridion*, H252/D32,53–54. Brittain and Brennan (2002: 76).

69. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H252/D33,5–7.

70. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H476/D46,4–9: πρὸς μὲν τὰ ἡδέα δοκοῦντα, ἐγκράτειαν. Καὶ οὐκ εἴτε σωφροσύνην, ἀλλ’ ἐγκράτειαν· ἐπειδὴ πρὸς τοὺς ἐτι παιδευομένους ἐστὶν ἡ παραίνεσις· ἐφ’ ὧν κινεῖται μὲν τὰ πάθη καὶ ἀμφισβητεῖ πρὸς τὸν λόγον, ἡττᾶται δὲ, ὅταν ἡ παιδεία ἀνύσμιος ᾖ. Brennan and Brittain (2002: 92).

71. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H276–277/D46,20–27.

72. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H277/D46,27.

73. Brennan and Brittain (2002: 92). In *Epicteti encheiridion* H276/D46,16–19: Καὶ ἔστι τοῦτο σωφροσύνη, σωτηρία καὶ ὑπεροχὴ τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν φρονούντος. Μερίζεται γὰρ τοῦτο, τοῖς πάθεσιν ὑποκλινόμενον, καὶ διασπώμενον ὑπ’ αὐτῶν· σῶον δὲ μένει καὶ ὁλόκληρον, ὑπερανέχον τῶν παθῶν.

74. In “Weakness and Will in Plato’s *Republic*” Dorter (2008) argues for a reconciliation between the divisions of the soul in the *Republic* that seem to support the existence of *akrasia* and Socrates’ denial of *akrasia* in other dialogues. On this account, manifestations of reason, spiritedness, and appetites are on a continuum rather than reflecting discrete parts of the soul, for the true soul is undivided. Book IV presents a model of the soul that is for the majority, while for those (such as Socrates) who have obtained vision of the true as illustrated in the cave metaphor, “weakness of will is no longer a danger because it is a vision that cannot be attained by a divided soul” (14). I find that this understanding of *akrasia* fits well with that of Simplicius.

75. Simplicius usually refers to emotions as irrational (e.g., H193/D1,41, H204/D7,30, H247/D30,21, H252/D33,18). See my note 58 on the body as an instrument.

76. As noted above, for Simplicius the *akolastic* person can transform into the *sôphrôn*, but the perfectly temperate person doesn’t revert back to being intemperate (H223/D17,50–18,5). So it seems that once acquired, the disposition of practical wisdom remains stable.

77. “Ethical disposition” is Brittain and Brennan’s translation of *enstasis*.

78. Brittain and Brennan (2002: 58–59). H226/D19,39–46: πρὸς τὴν λογικὴν ψυχὴν διαλεγόμενος, τὴν συνουσιωμένους [μὲν] ἔχουσιν αἰετὸς τῶν ὄντων λόγους, καὶ σύμφυτον αὐτῇ τὴν τῶν ὄντων ἀλήθειαν· ἀτονοῦσαν δὲ ποτε πρὸς τὴν εἰλικρινὴ θέαν, τῷ περισπασμῷ τῆς ἐν αὐτῇ γενεσιουργοῦ δυνάμεως, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο εἰς λήθην ὑποφερομένην, τὴν πάντων αὐτῇ τῶν κακῶν αἰτίαν, καὶ δεομένην τοῦ συνεχῶς ἀκούειν τοῦ Μέννησο.

79. Cf. H336/D77,49–54.

80. *Phaedrus* 246b–c. Tr. Nehamas and Woodruff (1997: 525).

81. *Phaedrus* 246d.

82. *Phaedrus* 248d.

83. See Long (2001: 52–53; 212–213).

84. See in *Epicteti encheiridion* H224/D18,46; H226/D19,42; H234/D24,6; H236/D25,5; H265/D40,12; H297/D56,45; H336/D77,50; H448/D135,53.

85. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H298/D57,3. Brittain and Brennan (2002: 107).

86. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H235/D24,5.

87. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H236/D25,5.

88. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H266/D40,34–42. Brennan and Brittain (2002: 92).

89. This is perhaps an interpretation of 1 Corinthians 10:13. We could also wax Nietzschean here with “What doesn’t destroy me makes me stronger.”

90. Simplicius, in *Epicteti encheiridion* H266/D40,42–50. Brittain and Brennan (2002: 85).

91. He sees the irrational as akin to things external to oneself. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H281/D48,35–39; H298/D57,25.

92. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H281/D48,30–32. Tr. Brittain and Brennan (2002: 96).

93. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H283/D49,45–50.

94. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H304/D60,25–27.

95. *Ench.* 22.1–3. Εἰ φιλοσοφίας ἐπιθυμεῖς, παρασκευάζου αὐτόθεν ὡς καταγελασθησόμενος, ὡς καταμωκησομένων σου πολλῶν.

96. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H301/D58,50–54.

97. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H303/D59,35–36.

98. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H402/D114,46–47. Brennan and Brittain (2002b: 92).

99. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H315–316/D66,25–26. Brittain and Brennan (2002a) 120.

100. See my note 50 on ιδιότης.

101. *Ench.* 22.1–3 and in *Epicteti encheiridion* H301/D58 (discussed above).

102. Simplicius states this popular maxim in H441/D132,41. It is not unlikely that he draws upon Proclus’s understanding of the god Hermes as common to all, and as the leading god of rationality and philosophy (*Theol. Plat.* 6.98.14–17; in *Crat.* 66.2; in *Remp.* 2.62.16). The understanding of Hermes as “common” was not exclusive to philosophy. In Hellenistic/late antique astrology, the planetary god Hermes/Mercury is called *koinos*, being neither beneficent nor malevolent, masculine nor feminine, and not holding a sectarian preference (*hairesis*) of day or night. Cf. Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 1.5–7.

103. In *Epicteti encheiridion* H441/D132,41–50. Κἂν γὰρ ἀριθμῶ διαφέρωσιν οἱ ἐν ἡμῖν λόγοι, ἀλλὰ τὸ εἶδος ἔν· οὕτως, ὡς πρὸς τὰ αὐτὰ ἀγαθὰ ἀνατείνεσθαι, καὶ τὰ αὐτὰ κακὰ ἐκκλίνειν, καὶ ἀληθῆ τὰ αὐτὰ ἡγεῖσθαι πάντας κατὰ τὸν λόγον, καὶ πάλιν ψευδῆ τὰ αὐτά· ὥστε τὸν ἐν ἐκάστῳ λόγον κανόνα εἶναι διακριτικὸν τοῦ τε ἀγαθοῦ καὶ τοῦ κακοῦ, καὶ τοῦ ἀληθοῦς καὶ τοῦ ψεύδους. Εἰδῶν δὲ ἀσωμάτων, καὶ ἀμερίστων, καὶ ἀεὶ κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ ὡσαύτως ἐχόντων, ἐφίενται οἱ λόγοι· οἷον σωφροσύνης, καὶ δικαιοσύνης, καὶ φρονήσεως·

Chapter 10

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1. See Stobaeus, *Eclogues* 2.49.25–50.5; 2.55.5–21; what matters for our purposes is

not the disputed attribution of the wider context to Eudorus, but rather the strong probability that we are dealing with a source two centuries or more before Plotinus.

2. Words chosen in fact occurred in a list of the commonest two hundred words in dialogues that were assumed to be early. The emphasis on earlier dialogues stemmed from the initial expectation that the analysis might assist with questions of authenticity among seemingly “Socratic” works.

3. It was hoped that narrative and dramatic dialogues would be comparable if one omitted verbs of saying, personal pronouns such as would refer to a narrator or his hearer, and the particle that introduces vocatives; however, some tests still managed to distinguish them.

4. The letter patterns employed by Ledger (1989) and the clausulae employed by several authors reported in Brandwood (1990) may suggest that Plato’s preferences changed, but they offer one little hope of understanding those preferences.

5. See here Tarrant and Roberts (2012).

6. For the implication of this see Tarrant (2010).

7. For further explanation see Tarrant, Benitez, and Roberts (2011).

8. See Aelian *VH* 8.2 and Athenaeus *Deipn.* 11.506c.

9. Tarrant, Benitez, and Roberts (2011).

10. With Euclidean distance squared and without standardization of data.

11. Critias A (cluster 2, closest to cluster 3) is the introductory part of the dialogue before the Atlantis story is resumed (to 108d8); Water-Carr (cluster 4, closest to cluster 1) is a short snippet of the *Gorgias* from 493a1 to 494a5, and as it is about one-sixth of the size of a normal two-thousand-word block a reliable result would not be expected for it; and the speech of Agathon (cluster 6, closest to cluster 5) is clearly intended by Plato (*Symp.* 198b–c) to be sui generis.

12. As suggested by the presence of a passage of *Laws* X, treated as myth by Stalley (2009); the passage has something of a myth-like atmosphere about it, but it is not usually treated by others as myth; the material following this myth is also included.

13. Since several factors, not just the one relating to myth, have contributed to the results of cluster analysis, principal component analysis (PCA) may be used to help to isolate the myth element. Asked to separate two components using the same data, PCA placed the myth files in the positive register of the first principal component, in the following ascending order:

SympAr +1.69, GrgMyth +2.33, PrtMyth +3.66, Laws10Myth +3.70, PhdMyth +4.02, PhdrMyth (1) +4.57, PhdrMyth (2) +5.08, MythER +5.34, TimB (1) +6.70, TimC (1) +6.81, CritiB (1) +7.02, TimAtlB +7.48, CritiB (2) +7.98, PolMythB +8.09, TimD (1) +8.55. No files of a consistently myth-like character were placed at above +1.41. While one might suspect a date-related element in this order, the second principal component is more obviously date related, with blocks from the *Laws* and *Statesman* at the negative extreme of the spectrum and from the *Symposium* and *Protagoras* at the positive extreme (myths being the likeliest passages to be misplaced on this hypothesis).

14. Tarrant, Benitez, and Roberts (2011).

15. Johnson and Tarrant (forthcoming) show the extent to which the passage exhibits the characteristics of both myth and female speech.

16. Although the *Republic*'s position was ambiguous (owing to its status as a plurality of *logoi*) the myth of Er received considerable attention from Plutarch and Theon of Smyrna through to Proclus and Olympiodorus.

17. The difference between block 1 and block 2 was evident in Tarrant, Benitez, and Roberts (2011, 108–112), where block 1 received a notional “myth score” of +5 and block 2 a score of +10.

18. For convenience I shall speak here of Hermias's interpretation, without necessarily implying any originality on Hermias's part.

19. For cathartic responses to misconceptions see *Soph.* 230b–e, *Crat.* 396e7–397a1.

20. On which see Pender (2009) and Sedley (2009) in particular.

21. Tarrant, Benitez, and Roberts (2011).

22. My translation. We may derive a little of Hermias's expectations of myth from his remarks concerning the myth of Boreas and Eilethua (229b: 28.13–30.27). He begins by offering two nonliteral interpretations of the myth, which he does not see as mutually exclusive. One is supposedly more ethical, telling us about the good character of both god and victim, and the other more about the way the universe works. He attacks any reading of 229c that would have Socrates criticizing nonliteral interpretation in general, thinking it to be interpretation in terms of material causes (rather than in terms of gods, minds, and souls) that Socrates is rejecting.

23. This all raises a question of where Plato thought myth should be used. While the eternal causes of love discussed before 253c might seem to us today to offer better material for myth than the temporal and uncertain battles between the obedient and disobedient forces within living human souls, this is evidently not how Plato saw the role of myth. Myth may employ the framework of divine forces in order to illuminate our human experiences to the extent that we are the creatures of a changeable world, and the description of those eternal forces may be poeticized. But without application to the unseen elements of our human world it cannot be complete. Hence, as Protagoras's remarks at 324d make quite clear, the myth that he employs is only just completed. The story of the creation of human beings by Epimetheus, their practical support from Prometheus, and their rescue from their own barbaric practices by Zeus (320d–322c) had to be followed by showing how this background is relevant to Athenian expectations concerning the political judgment of any of its citizens.

24. It seems that the term is not employed in Hermias's commentary, and Olympiodorus counts only those three myths that conclude the *Gorgias*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Republic* (Olymp., in *Grg.* 46.8–9), as do other Neoplatonists (see Jackson, Lycos, and Tarrant [1998, 295 n. 900]).

25. Note that to some extent even Aristophanes' speech is one that includes an account of a judgment and punishment of human beings in a different world.

26. See Martijn (2006).

27. It is worth noting that in response to *Tim.* 21a3 Proclus (in *Tim.* I.8513–26) stresses

how far the Atlantis story functions like a hymn, albeit a hymn of a type that does not directly address the nature of the gods but rather lauds their works.

28. Tarrant (2007a, 70–84); also Tarrant (2007b).

29. See Lycos (1994).

30. In the corresponding PCA analysis (see my note 14 above) it registered a weak negative score (1.61) on the first principal component, where myths all gave a positive one.

31. The *Cratylus* was divided into natural sections, as follows: A, to 391c7; B, 391c8–395e5; C, 395e5–408d5; D, 408d5–421c2 (D2 from 415a5); E, 421c3–427d2; F, 427d3–end (F2 from 433c5).

32. In the *Meno* (cf. *Apol.* 22c, *Ion* 534c–d) the oracle chanter (99c3) was among those, like prophets, poets, and politicians, who are believed to operate without *nous* (99c8, e6); if Socrates is treated as oracle chanting with *nous* then he is analogous to the clear-thinking Teiresias in the world of the shades (100a).

33. Both Hermodorus and Cratylus use the rather rare verb (396d2 and 428c6–7), a verb that occurs just twice in the *Cratylus* and once each in the *Ion* (534b), *Republic* (IX 586b), and *Laws* (IV 412a). In the *Ion* it is connected with poetry, in the *Laws* with myth, so that it clearly fits inspired diction. Hence neither Hermodorus nor Cratylus means any disrespect by using this word.

34. Socrates himself also uses the vocabulary of inspiration (*epipnoia* 399a1, cf. 428c7; *mousa* 409d2).

35. For further details see Tarrant (2013).

36. *Crat.*, *Gorg.*, *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Republic* I, II, III, V, VII, and X, *Parmenides* (part I), *Theaetetus*, *Sophist* (first four blocks only), and *Statesman* (= *Plt.*). The dendrogram employs Ward's method, with Euclidean distance and without standardization of data, and is based on a cluster analysis of ninety-six function words (with article excluded).

37. *MenoB* is the examination of the slave boy, and it has been omitted from most analyses, as its geometrical language is exceptional; all remaining blocks are found here.

38. On the *Theaetetus* see now Tarrant (2010); on *Republic* X see Tarrant (1994), and now Tarrant (2011).

39. See Sedley (2003, 6–16).

40. My figures give an average rate of about 21.1 cases of hiatus per one hundred word-breaks in *Crat.* 3–7, as opposed to about 24.0 in the outer blocks. This seemingly slight decrease brings it into line with the *Theaetetus* (21.2) rather than with the *Euthydemus* (23.7) or the *Charmides* and the *Apology* (23.3 percent). See Tarrant (2013). Earlier work, reported by Brandwood (1990, 157), had detected just two brief passages where the rate falls strikingly, 400c7–401b7 and 404e7–405c5.

41. After all, it is even here grouped closest to the first block of the *Gorgias*; an important way in which it resembles both the late dialogues and more especially the myths is an increase in the rate of the definite article, which can rise to some of its highest levels in Plato in the central blocks of *Cratylus*.

42. Tarrant, Benitez, and Roberts (2011).

43. Cf. Sedley (2003), 40; on the Neoplatonists' interpretation of irony see Tarrant (2000, 108–11).

44. On pedimental structure see Thesleff (2009, 28 etc.).

45. Tarrant and Roberts (2012, 235).

46. The contents include *Alcibiades I* (protreptic and four other blocks); *Alcibiades II* (two blocks), *Hipparchus*, *Erastae*, and *Minos* (one block each); *Theages A* (to 126c2); *Philebus* (nine blocks), and *Memorabilia* (book I = three books, book IV = four blocks). The analysis is by Ward's method with Euclidean distance and standardized data.

47. Clusters 5 and 6 are joined at a similarity level of +5.68, clusters 3 and 4 at +13.27, and these two are joined to cluster 2 at +1.76; the protreptic passage has been joined to all Xenophon at +18.10, but cluster 1 as a whole is only joined to clusters 2, 3, and 4 at a similarity level of –64.37, and clusters 1–4 to clusters 5 and 6 at –103.12.

48. On these passages see Gill (2000).

49. Protreptic elements have been detected or suspected in a wide range of Platonic works, including the *Apology*, *Euthydemus*, earlier dialogues more generally, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Laws*; for a discussion of what counts as protreptic see Jordan (1986).

50. Needless to say the Aristotelian content can also be recognized using the computer, and my own cluster analyses consistently placed all blocks together with Arist. *EN* and *Pol.* rather than with Iambl. *Myst.* It does not matter if a little original Iamblichan material is present, for that too is indisputably philosophic protreptic.

51. See Taki (2012).

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