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THE AROUSAL OF EMOTION IN PLATO'S DIALOGUES

In Aeschines' dialogue *Alcibiades*, Socrates sees his brilliant young partner's haughty attitude towards the great Themistocles. Thereupon he gives an encomium of Themistocles, a man whose wisdom and arete, great as they were, could not save him from ostracism by his own people. This encomium has an extraordinary effect on Alcibiades: he cries and in his despair places his head upon Socrates' knee, realizing that he is nowhere near as good a man as Themistocles (Aesch., *Alc.* fr. 9 Dittm. = Ael. Aristid. 286.2). Aeschines later has Socrates say that he would have been foolish to think he could have helped Alcibiades by virtue of any art or knowledge, but nonetheless by some divine dispensation he has, in virtue of the eros he felt for the youth, been allowed to make him better (fr. 11a, c Dittm. = Ael. Aristid., *Rhet.* 17).

A similar picture of Socrates is presented in Plato's *Apology*: Socrates is a gadfly annoying the body politic of Athens (30e); his purpose is not to convey any knowledge or information (33ab), but simply to wake people up to the fact that they do not know what they think they know and that, in order to become better, they must care for their own souls more than for any other possessions (36c).

This Socrates is often[1] distinguished from that of the other Platonic dialogues, even those usually called 'Socratic'. There Socrates' stock in trade is complex arguments about the virtues and other moral questions. The agreement between the Platonic *Apology* and Aeschines is then taken to point to the historical Socrates, while the Socrates of philosophical argumentation is attributed more to a Platonic transmogrification, preparatory to Plato's later abandonment of Socratic theses for his own philosophy and to his ultimate abandonment of Socrates as a character.

I want to argue that there is no conflict between the gadfly Socrates, whose primary effect on his associates is emotional and protreptic, and the philosophical arguer of the Platonic dialogues. The intended effect of Plato's arguments is essentially, though by no means exclusively, emotional: his logic affects us while it teaches. This emotional manipulation is a chief aim of the Platonic dialogues, almost all the way through Plato's output (perhaps only *Tm.* and *Lgg.* are to be excluded).[2]

Of course, I am not claiming that arguments are unimportant to the Platonic dialogues. Arguments subtle and profound, crass and petty, good, bad, and indifferent obviously make up the bulk of the dialogues.[3] The question is rather what are the arguments good for; what do the participants and we get out of them?

[1] E.g., K. Döring, 'Der Sokrates des Aeschines von Spettos und die Frage nach dem historischen Sokrates', *Hermes* 112 (1984) 27–9.

[2] One of the few to note this sort of effect was K. Gaiser, *Platone come scrittore filosofico* (Istituto Italiano per gli studi filosofici. Lezioni della scuola di studi superiori in Napoli 2; Napoli 1984) 41: 'La componente poetica e artistica di questi dialoghi non deve manifestarsi solamente nella loro forma, ma anche e sopratutto nell'effetto che provoca sul lettore', and 43f.: '... Platone nei suoi dialoghi caratterizza in modo ben preciso l'effetto dei colloqui e dei discorsi filosofici. Secondo queste affermazioni di Platone l'effetto principale dei suoi dialoghi letterari non è cercarsi nella comunicazione di dottrine, ma nelle funzioni psicagogiche: essi intendono liberare il lettore da legami erronei, stimolarlo, incoraggiarlo e confermarlo nella sua aspirazione verso l'Areté e l'Eudaimonia'.

[3] For some considerations on the nature of Platonic arguments, see now M. Frede, 'Plato's Arguments and the Dialogue Form', *OSAP* Suppl. Vol. 'Methods of Interpreting Plato and his Dialogues', ed. J. C. Klagge and N. D. Smith (Oxford, 1992) 201–19.

Obviously, I would not ask this question if I thought it had a simple answer like: 'we learn that Virtue is knowledge, that all Virtue is one, that Forms are the ultimate cause of all things' existence, etc.' To take one of these answers, I have tried to show elsewhere that the Platonic Socrates (to say nothing of the real one) does not advocate a thesis of the unity of Virtue, nor do his arguments about this topic in the *Protagoras* amount to such an advocacy. Socrates picks up on Protagoras' own notion that the Virtues are somehow one thing because he knows he can show that it is the ill-formed thesis of a sophist ignorant not only about Virtue but even about how one must conduct a philosophical examination of Virtue. Socrates' argumentation about the whole of Virtue *vs.* its parts and about the relation of Virtue to knowledge is designed to illustrate some of the semantic and pragmatic methods which one must explore in any philosophical discussion of Virtue and the pitfalls awaiting the unwary explorer on these paths.

Now, the *Protagoras* ends in *aporia*, but even if it did not, a look at the types of dialectic available to Plato would show that we should not have expected the character Socrates to be committed to any conclusions reached dialectically – no more than we could expect the author Plato to be committed to the conclusions reached by his fictional characters. From Plato's dialogues and from Aristotle's *Topics*, a contemporary handbook of dialectic, we know quite a lot about the practice of dialectic discussion in Plato's time.

Aristotle divided dialectic discussion into four forms, called didascalic, dialectic, peirastic, and sophistic. Aristotle distinguishes them on the basis of their starting points: principles appropriate to the subject, reputable opinion, the beliefs of the respondent, and seemingly reputable opinion respectively.[4] Leaving aside sophistic, I will quickly review the first three forms.

In didascalic dialectic, the respondent shows by making a false statement that he is ignorant of some truth. The questioner asks questions which are designed to bring the respondent to see the truth of which he had been ignorant. In this situation, the questioner must already know the truth to which he will lead the respondent, and the respondent's answers can have no important effect on the course of the conversation. As Aristotle says (*SE* 165b2–3), the demonstration proceeds from the principles proper to the topic, not from the respondent's beliefs. Not many of the arguments found in the Platonic dialogues exhibit this form. One which does is the geometric demonstration conducted with the slave in the *Meno*.

Peirastic dialectic is very common in the Socratic dialogues of Plato, and it is here that Aristotle places Socratic questioning.[5] The respondent makes a statement, and

[4] *SE* 165a37–b8: *Ἔστι δὴ τῶν ἐν τῷ διαλέγεσθαι λόγων τέτταρα γένη, διδασκαλικοὶ καὶ διαλεκτικοὶ καὶ πειραστικοὶ καὶ ἐριστικοί, διδασκαλικοὶ μὲν οἱ ἐκ τῶν οἰκείων ἀρχῶν ἑκάστου μαθήματος καὶ οὐκ ἐκ τῶν τοῦ ἀποκρινομένου δοξῶν συλλογιζόμενοι (δεῖ γὰρ πιστεύειν τὸν μανθάνοντα), διαλεκτικοὶ δ' οἱ ἐκ τῶν ἐνδόξων συλλογιστικοὶ ἀντιφάσεως, πειραστικοὶ δ' οἱ ἐκ τῶν δοκούντων τῷ ἀποκρινομένῳ καὶ ἀναγκαίων εἰδέναι τῷ προσποιουμένῳ ἔχειν τὴν ἐπιστήμην (ὃν τρόπον δέ, διώρισται ἐν ἑτέροις), ἐριστικοὶ δ' οἱ ἐκ τῶν φαινομένων ἐνδόξων μὴ ὄντων δὲ συλλογιστικοὶ ἢ φαινόμενοι συλλογιστικοί.* See also Frede (op. cit. in n. 3) 208ff.

[5] *SE* 183b7; a37–b8: *Προειλόμεθα μὲν οὖν εὑρεῖν δύναμίν τινα συλλογιστικὴν περὶ τοῦ προβληθέντος ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων ὡς ἐνδοξοτάτων· τοῦτο γὰρ ἔργον ἐστὶ τῆς διαλεκτικῆς καθ' αὑτὴν καὶ τῆς πειραστικῆς. ἐπεὶ δὲ προσκατασκευάζεται πρὸς αὐτὴν διὰ τὴν τῆς σοφιστικῆς γειτνίασιν, ὡς οὐ μόνον πεῖραν δύναται λαβεῖν διαλεκτικῶς ἀλλὰ καὶ ὡς εἰδώς, διὰ τοῦτο οὐ μόνον τὸ λεχθὲν ἔργον ὑπεθέμεθα τῆς πραγματείας, τὸ λόγον δύνασθαι λαβεῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅπως λόγον ὑπέχοντες φυλάξομεν τὴν θέσιν ὡς δι' ἐνδοξοτάτων ὁμοτρόπως. τὴν δ' αἰτίαν εἰρήκαμεν τούτου, ἐπεὶ καὶ διὰ τοῦτο Σωκράτης ἠρώτα, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀπεκρίνετο· ὡμολόγει γὰρ οὐκ εἰδέναι.*

the questioner by asking questions implicating other beliefs held by the respondent leads him to see that his other beliefs commit him to the contradictory of his first claim. The respondent is reduced to *aporia*, not knowing whether his reasons for believing the first claim are better or worse than his reasons for believing its contradictory: he is confused as to which beliefs he should give up, and he is shown up as ignorant in the matter at hand. What the questioner does or does not know or believe is totally irrelevant to the process. The questioner asks the questions and steers the conversation where he wants it to go, but it is only the respondent's beliefs which are involved.[6]

In dialectical, or better gymnastic[7] or agonistic,[8] dialectic Aristotle indicates that neither party's actual beliefs are involved, just reputable opinions (*endoxa*).[9] The respondent chooses to attack or defend an *endoxon* thesis. So long as the thesis is *endoxon*, it does not matter whether he believes it or not. Probably he will choose the side he feels will be easier or more interesting to defend. The questioner will attempt to force the respondent to give answers committing him to the contradictory of the thesis he chose to defend. The difference from peirastic dialectic lies in the fact that in gymnastic the respondent need not choose a thesis he believes in and he also need not answer in accordance with his own beliefs, so long as his answers are not too outrageous, a transparent attempt to thwart the questioner's purpose.

It is clear that only in didascalic is the questioner committed to the truth of the proposition resulting from the dialectical inquiry and to the truth of the premisses on which the conclusion is based. In peirastic, the form of conversation we see in most of the Socratic dialogues, the questioner is quite uncommitted to the truth of the argument, although the respondent must answer according to his own beliefs, the aim of the process being to show that the respondent does not know what he should know if he were an expert in the field he claims. In gymnastic, neither the questioner nor the respondent is committed to the truth of the argument.

Contrary to what we might first think, however, the lack of commitment on the part of the questioner to the truth of peirastic premisses and conclusions does not at all impugn the seriousness with which the questioner views the peirastic discussion. The Platonic Socrates concludes the defense which he puts into the mouth of Protagoras with a challenge to Socrates to conduct his argument by putting questions, as long as he observes the following rule:

> Do not conduct your questioning unfairly. It is very unreasonable that one who professes a concern for virtue should be constantly guilty of unfairness in argument. Unfairness here consists in not observing the distinction between a debate and a conversation. A debate need not be taken seriously and one may trip up an opponent to the best of one's power, but a conversation should be taken in earnest; one should help out the other party and bring home to him only those slips and fallacies that are due to himself or to his earlier instructors. If you follow this rule, your associates will lay the blame for their confusions and perplexities on themselves and not on you; they will like you and court your society, and disgusted with themselves, will turn to philosophy, hoping to escape from their former selves and become different men. But if, like so many, you take the opposite course, you will reach the opposite result; instead of turning your companions to philosophy, you will make them hate the whole business when they get older. (*Tht.* 167e–168b; trans. Cornford)

[6] Note Aristotle's insistence that the questioner need not know about the subject: *οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡ πειραστικὴ τοιαύτη ἐστὶν οἵα ἡ γεωμετρία, ἀλλ' ἣν ἂν ἔχοι καὶ μὴ εἰδώς τις. ἔξεστι γὰρ πεῖραν λαβεῖν καὶ τὸν μὴ εἰδότα τὸ πρᾶγμα τοῦ μὴ εἰδότος, εἴπερ καὶ δίδωσιν, οὐκ ἐξ ὧν οἶδεν οὐδ' ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων ἀλλ' ἐκ τῶν ἐπομένων... SE* 172a21ff.; cf. *SE* 169b24–29.

[7] *Top.* 101a27: *...πρὸς γυμνασίαν, πρὸς τὰς ἐντεύξεις, πρὸς τὰς κατὰ τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἐπιστήμας* (*sc.* *χρήσιμος ἡ διαλεκτική*).

[8] *SE* 165b11: *περὶ δὲ τῶν ἀγωνιστικῶν καὶ ἐριστικῶν νῦν λέγωμεν.*

[9] *Top.* 100a30: *διαλεκτικὸς δὲ συλλογισμὸς ὁ ἐξ ἐνδόξων συλλογιζόμενος.*

Although the rule is put by Socrates into Protagoras' mouth, this rule is meant to govern the argument which Socrates will give against Protagoras' position. As such, it should be taken as a statement applying to Socrates' dialectic. Note that the behavior of the one concerned for virtue, that is, whose argument is serious, does not involve correcting the questioner's own mistakes or ensuring the truth of his arguments or even saying only things he believes. It merely requires him to correct only the mistakes which his respondent makes due to his own ignorance or that of his former associates, that is, only the things he actually believed before the present conversation began.

But note too the beneficial effect which is said to result from adhering to the form of serious conversation: one's respondents will blame their resulting confusion on themselves; they will attach themselves to you and will flee the selves which they now hate, taking refuge in philosophy.[10] The respondents are not said to learn any thesis or doctrine, but only that they should blame their confusion on themselves and seek their salvation in philosophy. The words in which this result is expressed are also noteworthy: they will blame and hate themselves, while loving and pursuing you. If you merely try to trip up the respondents, they will also experience a strong emotional reaction, but a far less useful one: they will hate philosophy. This is the same reaction Socrates wants to guard against in the *Phaedo*, where he warns his companions against becoming 'misologous' upon seeing that the arguments which had previously persuaded them have now been rebuffed (*Phd.* 89e). A similar reaction affects the butts of inexperienced dialecticians such as the youths who mimic Socrates' elenctic: the victims become angry not with themselves, but with Socrates (*Ap.* 23c7). These reactions are in line with Socrates' statement in the *Republic* (440d) that when a man thinks he is wrong, the nobler he is the less angry he will become at one he thinks justly makes him suffer, but when a man thinks he is being wronged, he is angered and his spirit allies itself with the just cause. Ultimately, the inexperienced dialectician will alienate both his respondent and himself from philosophy (*Resp.* 539bc).

II

So, dialectical argument produces an emotional effect on the conversational respondent, and the effect is beneficial when the questioner is serious, for he arouses in the respondent self-hatred and pursuit of philosophy. I shall now examine the statements of some of Plato's characters about the effect of Socratic dialectic.

At *Symposium* 215d–216b Alcibiades says that anyone listening to Socrates or even to a poor recounting of Socrates' arguments is dumbstruck and becomes possessed. For his own part, Alcibiades' heart jumps and his tears flow at hearing Socrates' arguments. Even when listening to Pericles his soul was not so disturbed, nor did he feel so much like a mere slave, but when Socrates speaks Alcibiades often feels that his miserable life is insupportable. Socrates makes him admit that he neglects himself, while taking care of Athens' business, and Alcibiades must flee with his ears covered

[10] Some of the other passages which follow here were discussed by Richard Robinson in his *Plato's Earlier Dialectic* (Oxford, 1953²) 7–19. Robinson's concerns, however, seem quite different from those I shall pursue here. He assumes that Plato changes his attitude towards Socrates' elenchus in the later dialogues, giving up the 'ironic' elenchus, which tended to anger Socrates' respondents, in favour of a kinder, 'open' elenchus, such as those Socrates used on his friends, who after all could not continually be fooled by any claim that no elenchus was taking place. Strangely enough, Robinson omits discussion of *Tht.* 167eff. (although he stresses *Sph.* 229eff.). Had he considered it, his notions of an ironic and an open elenchus would have collapsed.

so as to avoid being fixed to the spot by Socrates' voice until his old age. And Socrates even makes Alcibiades feel ashamed: he cannot argue against Socrates' injunctions to care for himself first, but he always gives in to the adoring crowd and, upon meeting Socrates again, is ashamed at what he has agreed but not done.

Thus, Alcibiades testifies to the self-hatred which Socrates' arguments can inspire. Further, he says that Socrates' effect on him is what a great orator's effect should be but never is; it is like the effect the god has on the corybant,[11] the effect the Siren has on the sailor; he does not say so specifically, but his language suggests that Socrates' effect is like the effect the inspired poet has on his audience (*Ion* 535b). Alcibiades then goes on to say that he and all those who have partaken of the madness and *bakcheia* of philosophy are like those bitten by a savage serpent (217e6).

When Meno has been led by Socrates into *aporia* for the first time, he says (79e7–80b7) that he has heard that Socrates is perplexed and reduces others to perplexity, and that this is just what Socrates has now done to him, using magic, drugs and incantations. In fact, Socrates seems to him to bear more than just a facial resemblance to the stingray, numbing all who touch it; for now Meno's soul and mouth are numb and he knows not what to reply to Socrates, though he has spoken well about virtue many times before many people in the past. If Socrates went abroad and did such things, he would surely be arrested as a sorcerer. Socrates, however, will not accept the comparison, for unlike the stingray, he himself is also numb (80c6). Not that Socrates has been numbed (i.e., perplexed) by the present argument, but he was perplexed before the argument began, and out of his own perplexity he has now perplexed the previously confident Meno.

The metaphor of numbness comes up again in the *Meno* with regard to, of all things, the example of didascalic dialectic. Although didascalic is the only form of dialectic which requires that the questioner know the answer beforehand and straightforwardly lead the respondent to the answer, the example in the Meno does not quite proceed straightforwardly. For, instead of simply bringing the slave to the truth, Socrates first reduces him to *aporia*. This *aporia*, like Meno's, is portrayed as a numbness resulting from shock. For didascalic, however, *aporia* causes a technical problem: how will the respondent find the answer once he's convinced he does not know it (given that the questioner cannot just tell him the answer)? The episode with the slave is designed to show that, once various misconceptions are cleared away, the answer can be recollected from a previous existence of the soul. Under these circumstances, Socrates can claim that the numbing of the respondent is itself good for him: now that he's perplexed he'll be glad to look for the answer (84b).

In the *Laches*, Nicias, who prides himself on his prior experience with Socrates' dialectic, describes the process:

> Whoever approaches Socrates in conversation, even if he first begins to discuss something else, will of necessity not cease to be led around by the argument until he falls into giving an account of himself, explaining how he currently lives and what sort of life he has previously led. And once he has fallen into this, Socrates will not let him go until he has tested all of these things well and finely. I am a familiar of his, and I know that one must suffer these things at his hands, and furthermore I am sure that I will suffer them myself too: for I am glad to approach him and I do not think there is any harm in being reminded that we have done or are doing something incorrectly; in fact, one must necessarily be more careful for the rest of his life if one does not flee these experiences but rather desires – as Solon says – and thinks it right to learn as long as

[11] Gaiser (op. cit. in n. 2) 44f. lays great stress on the magical, incantatory nature of philosophy's effect on Socrates' interlocutors. In this paper I am less interested in philosophy as ἐπῳδή (cf. *Chrm.* 175a–c, etc.) than in the emotional interactions of Socrates, his interlocutors and his audience.

he lives and does not believe that age brings wisdom. So I find nothing unaccustomed or unpleasant in being tested by Socrates, and I actually thought a long time ago that, with Socrates present, our discussion would not be about the young men, but about ourselves. (187e6–188c1)

Nicias makes a fairly straightforward claim that the apparent subject at the beginning of a Socratic conversation never turns out to be its real subject: the ultimate subject will always be the respondent himself, and the correctness of his present and former life. He also says that he enjoys suffering the fate of being tested by Socrates and feels that it will make him more careful in his future life. Of course, Nicias is showing off by displaying his 'intimate familiarity' with the Socrates who has been praised so highly by both himself and Laches. We shall see that in the event, when he stands refuted by Socrates (with a little help from his rival, Laches), he will not take it nearly so well as he predicts. Laches will accuse Nicias of trying twist and worm his way out of defeat in a most unbecoming manner (196ab), while he in turn will blame Laches for hounding him in a desire to see him meet defeat in the same way Laches had done (195ab, 200a).

Laches, on the other hand, appends to Nicias' speech about Socratic dialectic a speech of his own in which he declares himself unwilling to listen to anyone whose deeds have not first proved him worthy of the words he will utter, a condition which Socrates easily meets (188c4–e4). When Laches is shown not to be able to define courage, he responds to his *aporia* with *philonikia*, a desire to win out against the challenge of the argument, and with a resentment of the fact that he cannot put into words what he knows; for he thinks he knows what courage is, but cannot explain how this knowledge has just now escaped him, so that he cannot formulate it (194a6–b4). Laches is spurred on, but also upset at the failure of his *logos*, and apparently he is somewhat concerned lest that failure betoken a failure in his life and deeds too, for Nicias at one point assures him very lefthandedly that he still counts Laches as courageous (197c).

All well and good; it is obvious why Socrates has refused to allow Nicias' son to come study with him and has instead referred the young man to Damon of Oia, to whom Nicias also goes for advice – Nicias is even so misguided as to think that whatever confusions have arisen in his mind as a result of the conversation with Socrates can be cleared up after a chat with Damon; and Laches never claimed to be a philosopher in any case. We have seen quite a bit of accounting for one's life and we have also seen plenty of emotions roused by the Socratic conversation. Nicias' *aporia* and his anger, which he has failed to train upon himself, where it belongs, bring the dialogue to a close. But if this self-examination and its attendant stirring up of emotions, particularly those of shame, *philonikia* and anger, is the result of dialectic, why do we have to watch? The answer lies in the emotional effect this all has on the audience.

III

When speaking of the true and noble form of sophistic (230b4–9), the Eleatic Stranger of Plato's *Sophist* describes what can be none other than Socratic dialectic:

They cross-examine a man's words, when he thinks that he is saying something and is really saying nothing, and easily convict him of inconsistencies in his opinions; these they then collect by the dialectic process, and placing them side by side, show that they contradict one another about the same things, in relation to the same things, and in the same respect. He, seeing this, is angry with himself, and grows gentle towards others, and thus is entirely delivered from great prejudices and harsh notions, in a way which is most amusing to the hearer, and produces the most lasting good effect on the person who is the subject of the operation (*οἱ δ' ὁρῶντες ἑαυτοῖς μὲν χαλεπαίνουσι, πρὸς δὲ τοὺς ἄλλους ἡμεροῦνται, καὶ τούτῳ δὴ τῷ τρόπῳ τῶν περὶ αὐτοὺς μεγάλων καὶ*

σκληρῶν δοξῶν ἀπαλλάττονται πασῶν [τε] ἀπαλλαγῶν ἀκούειν τε ἡδίστην καὶ τῷ πάσχοντι βεβαιότατα γιγνομένην). For as the physician considers that the body will receive no benefit from taking food until the internal obstacles have been removed, so the purifier of the soul is conscious (οἱ καθαίροντες αὐτούς) that his patient will receive no benefit from the application of knowledge until he is refuted, and from refutation learns modesty; he must be purged of his prejudices first and made to think that he knows only what he knows, and no more.... For all those reasons, Theaetetus, we must admit that refutation is the greatest and chiefest of purifications, and he who has not been refuted, though he be the Great King himself, is in an awful state of impurity; he is uninstructed and deformed in those things in which he who would be truly blessed ought to be fairest and purest. (230b4–e3; trans. Cornford)

The effect of dialectic is characterized in the same way as in the description of proper questioning in the *Theaetetus*: the interlocutor's intellectual defeat brings on the emotions of anger at himself and gentleness towards others. But another element is added to the description, something which follows upon these emotions: the respondent in a refutation, when he is thrown into *aporia*, undergoes a purgation (*katharsis*) of his false notions and of his feeling that he is knowledgeable. This *katharsis* is good for the sufferer and it is also pleasant for the listener.[12]

How does the *katharsis* of the respondent's false opinions provide the listener with pleasure? Surely it is because the listener experiences emotions aroused by those of the respondent himself. The listener will not necessarily experience the very same emotions in the very same way as the respondent, since the listener and respondent are neither in the same position nor in the same precise state of knowledge, ignorance, prestige, commitedness, or vulnerability. Often, the listener will notice (or be told by the narrator) things unremarked by the respondent: this is a source of dramatic irony in the dialogues. At times, as with Nicias' attempted definition of courage, the listener may get carried away and believe the definition is a good one, so that when the respondent is thrown into *aporia*, the listener finds himself there too. At other times, the listener will see all along that the respondent is headed for a fall. Frequently, the listener will find the plight of the respondent simply amusing: Socrates and Protarchus agree that one's friends' delusions of wisdom and beauty are ridiculous and give us pleasure, mixed with the pain one feels for them (*Phlb.* 49d–50b).

Self-deception is considered by Plato's Socrates to be most painful, since one's deceiver never leaves one alone (*Crat.* 426d), but also one who leaves behind a false impression in someone else is like a bee leaving its stinger behind (*Phd.* 91c), and this false belief is bound to have a deleterious effect on the listener's soul, besides being jarring in its context (*Phd.* 115e). The self-deception of the respondent and the sympathy/amusement of the listener create a situation very like that pictured in Aristotle's description of tragedy's function: to accomplish by means of pity and terror the catharsis of such emotions (*Poetics* 1449b27), ultimately leading to pleasure (1453b12).[13] The audience's violent emotions are aroused and then purged by seeing the representation of the characters' misfortunes and emotions. The Eleatic Stranger's explicit presentation of the medical analogy in referring to catharsis suggests that Plato is himself transferring the word into the intellectual sphere. On the one hand, this analogy recalls the playful passage in the *Charmides* (156d1–157c6) where Socrates explains how Zalmoxis gave him a drug against headache, which he was only

[12] Cf. *Ap.* 23c2: ...οἱ νέοι μοι ἑπακολουθοῦντες—οἷς μάλιστα σχολή ἐστιν, οἱ τῶν πλουσιωτάτων—αὐτόματοι, χαίρουσιν ἀκούοντες ἐξεταζομένων τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ αὐτοὶ πολλάκις ἐμὲ μιμοῦνται, and 33c2: ἀκούοντες χαίρουσιν ἐξεταζομένοις τοῖς οἰομένοις μὲν εἶναι σοφοῖς, οὖσι δ' οὔ· ἔστι γὰρ οὐκ ἀηδές.

[13] Not only tragedy, but also comedy will produce an Aristotelian *katharsis*, as argued by R. Janko, *Aristotle on Comedy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1984) 150ff. In *Philebus* 48a both tragedy and comedy are said to evoke a mixture of pleasure and pain or weeping.

to apply once the patient allowed his soul to be treated by Socrates with a chant (ἐπῳδή). The chant, on the other hand, looks forward to Aristotle's treatment of the educational use of cathartic or enthusiastic songs (*Pol.* 1341b34–1342a17).[14] Purgation of errors or incorrect moral ideas is found not only in the Stranger's remarks, but also in *PHerc.* 1581, a text which seems to summarize Aristotle's theory of catharsis.[15]

There are many ways in which Plato shows us how his characters' emotions (note that I use 'emotions' in a tolerably loose sense, including their physiological and expressive effects) are aroused by hearing what their companions say. Socrates, for example, is sometimes 'knocked senseless' by the force or indeed the forcefulness of a speech. After Thrasymachus pounces on Socrates and Polemarchus in the *Republic* (336de), Socrates cowers in fear. He is spellbound and collects himself only with difficulty after Protagoras' great speech (328d), just as he is also left dumb, dizzy and afraid that Protagoras might have a good point after the latter's exegesis of Simonides (339e; cf. *Eud.* 276d, 279de, 303a).

As for the reactions of the respondents themselves, I have already cited some of their own views of their *aporia.* They are described as having their pride hurt, becoming angry, growing reticent, sweaty and laconic, blushing (cf. Thrasymachus at *Resp.* 350d), etc.

Moving on to the listeners,[16] at times we see someone not currently in the discussion become so engrossed or agitated by its course that he is compelled to join in. Thus, Critias, from whom Socrates surmises that Charmides has drawn his definition of *sophrosyne*, is uneasy upon seeing the definition in trouble, and feeling his reputation at stake he grows angry and quarrelsome and can no longer restrain himself (*Chrm.* 162c). Hippothales hides behind Socrates, so that Lysis, the apple of his eye, cannot see him, but Socrates notes Hippothales' agitation at seeing his favourite humbled by Socrates (*Lys.* 210c); Lysis himself is less shy and bursts in on Menexenus' *aporia*, so engrossed is he at Socrates' refutation of the youth he admires (*Lys.* 213d). When Polus interrupts to complain about Socrates' use of Gorgias' sense of shame against him, Socrates tells him to restrain his exuberance (*Grg.* 461b), and Callicles' interruption to complain of Socrates' use of the same tactics against Polus is more violent still (482c–e). Thrasymachus has to be restrained from attacking Socrates before he finally enters the conversation (*Resp.* 336b), and Socrates has to take precautions when he sees the silent Thrasymachus begin to grow wild under the influence of the conversation (336d). Socrates is troubled at Dionysodorus' argument showing up the stupidity of Clinias (*Eud.* 283d), while Ctesippus flies into a rage at the same argument and becomes rude in defense of his pet (283e, 285a; cf. 288b). The testy initial conversation of Socrates and Thrasymachus is suddenly joined by

[14] Note also the medical metaphors there and in 1337b40ff. and 1339b15.

[15] A translation of this text appears in *Aristotle. Poetics I with the Tractatus Coislinianus, a hypothetical reconstruction of Poetics II, the fragments of the On Poets*, trans. R. Janko (Indianapolis, 1987) 61. Janko (187) thinks the text is either a summary of (perhaps in the context of a Philodemean polemic) or an actual fragment of Aristotle's *On Poets*; the first edition of the Greek text is found in M. L. Nardelli, 'La catarsi poetica nel PHerc. 1581', *CErc* 8 (1978) 96–103, and a new edition with full commentary in R. Janko, 'Philodemus' *On Poems* and Aristotle's *On Poets*', *CErc* 21 (1991) 5–64. S. G. Salkever, 'Tragedy and the Education of the *Demos*: Aristotle's response to Plato' in *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory*, ed. J. P. Euben (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1986) 274–303 equates Aristotelian tragic catharsis with the *katharsis* of false opinions in the *Sophist*, but this, I think, goes too far in intellectualizing the Aristotelian doctrine.

[16] Note the concentration of talk about 'bystanders' of dialectic in the *Apology* (21d1, e1, 23a3, c2, 33c2), where Socrates explains the origin of his ill repute.

Polemarchus on Socrates' side and Clitophon on Thrasymachus' side (*Resp.* 340a). When Socrates has been talking to Adimantus about the ascent to knowledge, Glaucon interrupts with a plea to Socrates not to stop now, so soon before the goal (*Resp.* 506d).

In these passages we see how Plato and his Socrates use to fullest advantage all the personality quirks of the characters in the dialogues, as well as all the possibilities inherent in their interpersonal dynamics. Their desire to show off (*Resp.* 338a, *Eud.* 300c, *Prt.*, *Lys.*), their pride, their shame, their shyness, loves and lusts are all manipulated by Socratic dialectic to heighten the emotions of the interlocutors and listeners. These heightened emotions eventually lead them to the cathartic experience of *aporia*, to the pleasure which results from this *aporia*, and to the new-found willingness to learn which now takes the place of their prejudice and braggadocio. And *aporia* itself is contagious: in the *Charmides* (169c), Socrates notices the *aporia* spreading from himself to Critias, as the sight of a yawn induces yawning in the beholder.

IV

Now we are in a good position to appreciate the spread of *aporia* in the *Phaedo*, when Socrates' argumentation for the immortality of the soul is put into grave jeopardy by Simmias and Cebes with their analogies of a harmony, which does not survive the destruction of the lyre, and of a tailor, who though he may wear out many coats will also eventually die himself. Upon hearing these arguments, Phaedo says, the whole company became very depressed: they had been convinced by the earlier arguments of Socrates, but now Simmias and Cebes had upset their convictions and their confidence, not only in what had gone before, but also in whatever might come later; they even wondered whether they might be inadequate to judge the arguments or whether the facts themselves might not be reliable (88c). But Phaedo goes on to say that Socrates hugely impressed him with his kind and welcoming reception of the youths' objections, with his quick recognition of the depressed state into which his companions had been driven, and with his skill at healing the company's wounds, rallying their defeated ranks and exhorting them to pursue the argument (88e4–89a7).

The capacity of Socrates to perceive and heal his companions' wounded spirits, as well as his ability to size up and take advantage of their emotions and weaknesses is an essential characteristic of Socratic dialectic. It is the necessity to do this in person, while observing the interlocutors and bystanders which Plato means us to understand as a major reason why he shows Socrates in action. Socrates' symbouleutic and protreptic function could only be exercised in person, not through any treatise or handbook, and this basic fact is recognized in Greek letters and also in Plato's own critique of treatises in the *Phaedrus*. It seems, namely, to have been a topos in Greek letters which proposed to give advice that the letter-writer must apologize for not being able to give his advice in person: advice is always better given in person, since personal presentations are more readily believed and since the speaker is present to correct any mistaken impressions which may arise from his advice, while the absent writer can be of no help (Isocrates *ep.* 3.6, Demosthenes *ep.* 1.3.6). In Plato's *Phaedrus* where the whole purpose of *logos* is said to be *psychagogia* (271c10), a similar claim of superiority is made for speaking over writing, and a further claim is made too: the proper *logos* will know whom to address and how to address each different type of person, so as to ensure the best response in each (275de, 277e–278b).

The analogy with tragedy, which I made with respect to the *Sophist*'s treatment of dialectic as cathartic, demands one further step, however: the audience, in this case

we the readers, must also be emotionally affected and purged. Indeed, if both dialogue and tragedy are forms of *poiesis*, as they undoubtedly are, they cannot exist unless somebody suffers (*paschei*). A couple of the statements Plato gives to his characters suggest such an effect fairly straightforwardly. Thus, Alcibiades comes under Socrates' spell, not only when he hears Socrates, but also when he hears someone else – no matter how unskilled a speaker – repeat Socrates' arguments (*Smp.* 215d). Phaedo says that nothing gives him greater pleasure than recalling the memory of Socrates, either by talking himself or by listening to someone else (58d). These passages recall the story that Aristippus,

> upon meeting the Socratic Ischomachus at the Olympic games, asked him what it was that Socrates conversed about which so affected young men. Upon hearing some small seeds and bites of Socrates' logoi, Aristippus was seized with emotion, so that his body collapsed and became completely pale and thin, until he sailed to Athens and, thirsty and sunburnt, he drank from the source and researched the man, his arguments, and his philosophy, whose goal it was to recognize one's own ills and leave them behind (Plutarch, *de curiositate* 516c11)

– a classic case of one stricken with love at a distance. Further, theories of poetry and spectacle expounded in the Platonic dialogues hold that spectators are emotionally aroused and even possessed by poetry: they can be made to feel great fear even when surrounded by friends in the theatre, where no one will harm them (*Ion* 535b–e; *Resp.* 606d).

The best example of the effect that dialectic can have on the audience not present at the discussion is found in the *Phaedo*. At the point where Phaedo recounts how the entire company in Socrates' cell on his final day were stricken with doubt and despair at Simmias' and Cebes' arguments, we are suddenly surprised by an intrusion from the frame dialogue. Echecrates, to whom Phaedo is telling all this, bursts in:

> By the gods, Phaedo, I certainly sympathize with you! In fact, having heard you, I myself am moved to say something like this: 'Then, in what argument shall we trust? Very forceful as it was, the argument which Socrates gave has fallen into incredibility.' That's how extraordinarily this argument that the soul is an attunement has always taken hold of me, and when I heard it I was reminded that I myself had held this opinion. Now I very much need another argument which, starting from the beginning, as it were, will persuade me that the soul of the dead man does not die with him. So, by Zeus, say how Socrates went after the argument, and say whether he too, as you say that you all were, was obviously upset, or whether he was not upset, but easily came to the rescue of his argument. And did he aid it satisfactorily or only partially? Tell us everything as accurately as you can. (88c8–88e3)

Here Echecrates suffers the same emotions as he has been told were aroused in the companions of Socrates: Phaedo witnessed the impugning of Socrates' arguments and, along with the others present beside Socrates, became depressed, but his account also depresses his audience, Echecrates, and pushes him too toward 'misology'.

In the Socratic dialogue, then, the conversation and the respondent's reactions affect the bystanders, and the recounting of the scene for an audience affects the audience. The audience follows the arguments, being alternately persuaded and disappointed, just like the bystanders at the conversation. The audience's own sense of pride and anger are implicated, as are those of the bystanders. Furthermore, the audience's witnessing of Socrates' manipulation of the respondent and bystanders produces feelings of pity and superiority – for how else could irony function – which will only heighten the emotion with which they follow the action and the pleasure they will take in their own and the characters' catharsis. This catharsis and its resulting pleasure will cause the properly philosophical audience to want to follow more conversations, and even to participate in some themselves.

The limitation to the proper audience is important for Plato. Remember that, when Plato's *Laws* discuss poetry, whose effect is solely to bring pleasure, poetry is accepted on condition that the poems selected be those which bring pleasure to the best educated and morally soundest men (658e–659c). In *Republic* X, Plato divides the soul into a superior part ruled by reason and an inferior part which opposes reason and easily leads an audience to weep and to have false beliefs at the sight of suffering (603e–605b).[17] Each of these parts rules a different type of character, the wise and calm and the pied and complaining ἤθη. Socrates says (604e) that, while the complaining type is often and variously represented, the wise and calm character is difficult to represent and difficult to understand when represented, especially at a festival, when people of every stripe jam themselves into the theater. Thus, poets seeking to please represent the pied and complaining, not the wise and calm character (605a), which would be strange to the audience (604e8). Watching such spectacles in an audience composed of all sorts of people we let the inferior part of our soul run riot, with the ultimate result that we find it difficult to restrain this lower part of the soul by the better part when we have to face our own sufferings in life (606ab). Thus, the bad effect on one's psychic constitution caused by indulgence in watching or listening to mimetic poetry is habit-forming; from watching too much comedy you can become a comedian in private (606c).

Does the same hold true of Plato the imitative poet as of the tragic and comic poets against whom he rails? Unlike the dramatic poet's, Plato's audience will undoubtedly have consisted of 'reasonable' (ἐπιεικεῖς: 603e3, 605c7) people, those in whose souls there is conflict or *stasis* between the two characters. Watched by one another, the reasonable people will be better able to control their emotional reactions, tipping them toward the wise and calm (604a). Moreover, Plato's audience of reasonable spectators will not find it strange to see a representation of a wise and calm character. In fact, they see in each dialogue both character types, Socrates the wise and calm opposite his various and often complaining interlocutors. The superior part of the soul, which follows reason and is measured in its response to pain, is not simply rational, and its education occurs both by logos and ethos (606a8 with 604c9).[18]

The reference to habituation of the soul towards a measured emotional response brings us inevitably back to Aristotle and his own theory of catharsis. As Aristotle would have said, dialectic properly conducted will train or habituate its audience to display the proper emotions in the proper measure in response to dialectic;[19] they will, for example, become *philologoi*, not *misologoi* (*Phd.* 89), they will acquire the habit of steadfastness in the pursuit of the argument (*La.* 194ab). And that learning and the acquisition of knowledge requires the reinforcement of repetition and habit is clear from the end of the episode with the slave in the *Meno*: 'for the moment these opinions have just been aroused, like a dream; but if someone asks him these same questions frequently, you can be sure that he will end up knowing about these things as well as anyone'. Repeated hearing or reading Socrates' handling of dialectic and

[17] On this passage cf. E. Belfiore, 'Plato's Greatest Accusation against Poetry', in F. J. Pelletier and J. King-Farlow (edd.), *New Essays on Plato* (*Canadian Journal of Philosophy. Suppl. vol. IX*; Guelph, 1983) 39–62.

[18] *Resp.* 606a8: τὸ δὲ φύσει βέλτιστον ἡμῶν, ἅτε οὐχ ἱκανῶς πεπαιδευμένον λόγῳ οὐδὲ ἔθει, ἀνίησιν τὴν φυλακὴν τοῦ θρηνώδους τούτου ἅτε ἀλλότρια πάθη θεωροῦν καὶ ἑαυτῷ οὐδὲν αἰσχρὸν ὂν εἰ ἄλλος ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς φάσκων εἶναι ἀκαίρως πενθεῖ, τοῦτον ἐπαινεῖν καὶ ἐλεεῖν, ἀλλ' ἐκεῖνο κερδαίνειν ἡγεῖται, τὴν ἡδονήν... Cf. Belfiore (op. cit. in n. 18), 53.

[19] Cf., e.g., H. House, *Aristotle's Poetics: a course of eight lectures* (London, 1956), 105–12 and Janko *Aristotle, Poetics I*... (op. cit. in n. 15) xviiif., 200.

of his dialectical partners, opponents and companions fulfills this aim. Platonic *psychagogia* is not opposed to the dialectical argumentation of Plato's Socrates – it consists in large measure in Socrates' argumentation.[20]

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[20] Previous versions of this paper were delivered to audiences in Los Angeles, Berlin, Princeton, Melbourne, and Chicago. I am glad to have had these opportunities to try out my ideas and grateful for the comments of my audiences.