

Naming the Wise:  
the *Sophos*, the *Philosophos* and the *Sophistēs*  
in Plato

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This thesis is submitted for the degree of PhD in Classics

## **DECLARATION**

I, Trinidad Silva, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

## ABSTRACT

In the first half of the fourth century BCE, when Plato is writing his dialogues, the titles ‘sophist’ and ‘philosopher’ have no widely-accepted application and, as a result, the use of them for some purposes rather than others is controversial and subject to dispute. In the tradition that follows Plato, ‘philosophy’ becomes a term of art and the *philosophos* is distinguished from the class of the *sophistai* and other alleged *sophoi* such as poets, orators and politicians. Considering Plato is among other competitors for the appropriation and legitimisation of these labels, the present dissertation examines the importance each of these notions have in the Platonic corpus, drawing attention to the way they are (re)defined and appropriated, whether they are novel or distinct. By observing examples in pre-Platonic and Platonic literature, section I of the thesis focuses on *sophos/sophia*, section II on *philosophos/philosophia* and section III on *sophistēs*. The investigation allows us to reassess two problems that have not been fully considered in Platonic scholarship: (i) Plato’s conception of *sophia* within the Greek tradition of wisdom, and (ii) the identity of and distinction between the philosopher and the sophist in Plato’s dialogues. I intend to consider both Plato’s inheritance from the tradition and Plato’s own contribution to creating an identity for the *sophistēs* and the *philosophos* from a deeper understanding of *sophos/sophia*. The legacy of the precedent tradition is reflected by the presence of the agonistic, authoritative, and moral strands. Plato’s contribution, on the other hand, is reflected by the presence of two elements, namely the principle whereby these titles are meaningful names, and a consistent conceptualisation of them in epistemic terms. I propose that Plato makes use of the meaning of these words by conceiving of them more as descriptors than as titles of authority or reputation. By using ‘real’ definitions, he is allowed to confront the ‘apparent’ with the ‘real *sophos*’ (*Apology*), to create a narrative of love for the philosopher (*Phaedo*, *Lysis*, *Symposium* and *Republic*), and to argue that the sophist ‘seems to know’—hence the name *sophistēs* (*Sophist*).



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*Here is the test of wisdom;  
Wisdom is not finally tested in schools;  
Wisdom cannot be pass'd from one having it to another not having it;  
Wisdom is of the Soul, is not susceptible of proof, is its own proof,  
Applies to all stages and objects and qualities, and is content,  
It is certainty of the reality and immortality of things, and the excellence of things;  
Something there is in the float of the sight of things that provokes it out of the Soul.*

Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, 82 *Song of the Open Road*.

# INTRODUCTION

## 1. The Problem

Because we take for granted that Plato is a philosopher and place him within the history of philosophy, we often forget the question of the way he positioned himself (as a philosopher) in the Greek tradition of wisdom. Not only do we take for granted that Plato is a philosopher; we assume that we know what a philosopher is for Plato. The question invites further analysis. In the fourth century BCE, Plato is fashioning the identity of the philosopher in contradistinction to other intellectuals and shaping his conception of *sophia* and *philosophia* by contrast to competing notions and models of education. In this regard, we also tend to assume that Plato draws a distinct antagonism between the philosopher and the sophist. *Sophistēs*, another label in use to designate a wide range of experts, teachers and intellectuals, seems to offer a perfect counterpoint to spotlight the virtue of the philosopher. Thus, by means of contrast, we also take for granted who and what a sophist is in Plato. It seems, in fact, that the dramatic tension that Plato achieved through the hostility between some individuals identified as sophists and the philosopher (i.e. Socrates) developed from his dialogues to find its own place in the history of philosophy, and became a commonplace. The problem, as with all commonplaces, is that the question is often overlooked. By placing Plato within a context where the appropriation and legitimation of these labels is contested, I offer a fresh outlook into the way he presents his philosophy (and his philosopher). Because *philosophos* and *sophistēs* are constructs rather than specialised terms, I look at the way they are conceptualised in Plato. A central claim of my thesis is that Plato understands both terms in relation to *sophia/sophos*. Plato embraces the cultural and authoritative weight that *sophia* traditionally has, and uses different attitudes towards the *sophoi* to create the identity of the philosopher and the sophist. To understand the extent of Plato's contribution, I examine the philosopher and the sophist on the foundations of a deeper understanding of the notion of *sophia/sophos* in pre-Platonic and Platonic literature. I consider the importance each of these notions have in the corpus, drawing attention to the way they are (re)defined and appropriated. This allows us to see the presence

of both the novel and traditional elements underlying Plato's rhetoric in naming 'the wise'.

The initial point of inquiry is triggered by a phenomenon observed in our language: the words 'philosopher' and 'sophist' are transliterations (not translations) from Greek *philosophos* and *sophistēs*. Thus we assume that these notions are transparent and, for the same reason, the question about their meaning does not even arise. When the question of meaning arises, we run into another difficulty. As a matter of fact, by the end of the fifth century BCE these categories were far from being as fixed and consolidated as they became later in the tradition. On the contrary, they were regarded as negotiable terms. The Greek orator Aelius Aristides (117-181 CE) invokes fifth and fourth century BCE authors to prove that the title of *philosophos* or *sophistēs* did not designate exclusive classes of intellectuals:

And these men [the Cynics], by using the good name of *philosophia* as a cover, think that through this way they will conceal what they are like on the inside. The fox has become a vixen instead of a lion. But they do not seem to me to know in fact what was the status of the word "*philosophia*" for the Greeks and what it meant, or anything at all about these matters. Did not Herodotus call Solon and again Pythagoras a *sophistēs*? Did not Androtion address The Seven as *sophistai*, meaning *sophoi*, and again did he not address our Socrates, the famous one, as a *sophistēs*? Again did not Isocrates call those concerned with disputations and dialecticians, as they would name themselves, *sophistai*, but himself and the orators, and those concerned with political matters, *philosophoi*? (*To Plato: in defence of the four* 310. 29-311.10).<sup>1</sup>

To make the case more striking, fourth century BCE orator Aeschines speaks of 'Socrates the sophist [Σωκράτην τὸν σοφιστήν]' in *Against Timarchus* (173).<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Diogenes Laertius reports in his *Proemium* (§12), in a rather cautionary note, that the *philosophos*, the *sophos*, and the *sophistēs* are all possible titles for ancient thinkers, including poets.

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<sup>1</sup> Trans. C.A. Behr (1973). Herodotus' references are found in 1. 29. 1 and 4. 95. 11; the case of the 'Seven sophists' is also attested in Isocrates 15. 235 and Aristotle fr. 5 Rose. The last reference is in Isocrates 13. 1 ff. This passage is part of a much larger discourse articulated by Aristides against the Cynics. Aristides takes this feature of negotiability to support his own claim for the title of *philosophos*.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout the thesis, I use square brackets for Greek textual citations and round brackets for transliterated Greek.

It goes without saying that some of these claims are deeply intertwined with the more or less explicit purpose of competition. Beyond the question of the particular agendas involved, the arbitrary assignation and appropriation of these labels seem to show that: (i) the two terms ‘sophist’ and ‘philosopher’ had no widely-accepted application and, as a result, (ii) the right to reserve it for some purposes rather than others is controversial and subject to dispute. In this attempt at appropriation, the philosophical tradition, since Plato, has been especially successful. ‘Philosophy’ stands as a discipline in its own right and the *philosophos* is distinguished from the class of the *sophistēs* and other allegedly *sophoi* such as poets, orators and politicians. This is especially significant in view of the fact that before the fifth century BCE ‘The words “philosophy” and “philosophise” were very rarely used [...] when they were, did not pick out a special and distinct group of thinkers. Rather, the words *sophos* and *sophistēs* were the coveted titles: the early thinkers wanted to be ranked among “the wise”’ (Nightingale 2000, p. 157). It was not until the fourth century BCE, especially under the influence of Plato and Aristotle, that *sophos*, *philosophos*, and *sophistēs* became specific categories.<sup>3</sup>

Although in the first half of the fourth century BCE, at the time Plato was writing his dialogues, *philosoph-* terminology becomes more widely used and more specialised, the meaning assigned to these labels is still contestable and the demarcation with other *soph-* terminology is rather blurred. Evidence of this is found in the writings of Plato’s contemporaries, Xenophon and Isocrates. Where one could have expected a clearer demarcation between the philosopher and the sophist in Xenophon, particularly in the *Apology* and *Memorabilia*, both concerned with Socrates’ presentation and defence from public perception, one finds a rather loose distinction.<sup>4</sup> And the title does not belong to Socrates in any special manner. As

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<sup>3</sup> This is something that should be considered when we talk about ‘pre-Socratic philosophers’. As Lloyd observes, ‘Besides their interest in cosmology, those whom we know as the first Greek philosophers all had one or more of the further roles of sage, religious teacher, statesman, moralist, and entertainer’ (1991, p. 134).

<sup>4</sup> He calls Prodicus a *sophos* in *Mem.* 2.1.21. Those who study the cosmos are called *sophistai* in *Mem.* 1.1.10. Callias addresses Socrates as a *sophist* in *Sym.* 4.4. In a more general sense, the sophist is simply a professor or an expert in *Cyrop.* 3.1.14. Euthydemus says to Socrates that he is a student of philosophy in *Mem.* 4.2.23. The philosophers are also those who are reputed to teach the arts of words in *Mem.* 1.2.31. A clearer demarcation between the philosopher and the sophist is drawn in *Hunt.* 13.6. 9. For a more detailed study on the subject, see Classen (1984). He argues that although the figure of Socrates appears to be unmistakably superior to other intellectuals, Xenophon does not

Nightingale asserts, ‘Nowhere in Xenophon’s Socratic writings [...] is Socrates (or anyone else) singled out as the proper claimant to the title of “philosopher”’ (1995, p. 17). Except for the last book of *On Hunting* (13), which presents us with a clear negative portrayal of sophists, and occasional expressions of contempt for the practice of charging money for teaching (cf. *Mem.* 1.6.13), one cannot assume a distinct demarcation between sophists, philosophers and other *sophoi* in Xenophon’s work.

Isocrates, on the other hand, in his attempt to appropriate the title of *philosophos*, stands in direct competition with Plato.<sup>5</sup> Unlike Xenophon, he draws a clearer demarcation between the sophist and the philosopher. On his account, both labels are tinged with negative connotations, and designate various intellectuals from different fields.<sup>6</sup> But he clearly presents himself as a philosopher and his programme of education as philosophy.<sup>7</sup> And even though many attempts have been made later in the tradition to make clear that he was not ‘really’ a philosopher, but a rhetorician, we should make an effort to understand that here the qualifier ‘really’ follows the standard of a philosopher as conceived by Plato and Aristotle.<sup>8</sup> ‘Given the uses and connotations of the term in his work, at first blush it may seem as if he is using *philosophia* but “really” means what we take to be rhetoric’ (Timmerman and Schiappa 2010, p. 64). In *Against the Sophists* and *Antidosis*, Isocrates defines his position against other competing educational systems. In the former he describes the sophists he condemns, mainly those who teach ethical eristic and empty rhetoric, and in the latter he makes a defence of his profession as a philosopher.<sup>9</sup> Let us see how

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regard sophistry as a uniform, influential or threatening phenomenon. See also Nightingale (1995, pp.16-7).

<sup>5</sup> For a study of the characteristic rhetoric of negotiation that both Plato and Isocrates use to position the philosopher, see Nightingale (1995).

<sup>6</sup> The Egyptians are called philosophers (11. 22, 30), also Athenians (12.209), and Pythagoras (11.28) The label ‘sophist’, on the other hand, can designate teachers in general (1.59), and also refers to some of those traditionally counted as sophists, as Protagoras (10.2). He includes among ‘the ancient sophists’ Empedocles, Alcmaeon, Parmenides, Melissus, Gorgias (15.268), Anaxagoras, Damon (15.235), and Solon (15.313). The prejudice affects both sophists and philosophers (13.1, 11; 11.49; 15.168, 170, 209, 215, 235, 243, 313; 12.9, 29).

<sup>7</sup> 1.3; 15.50, 186; 12.9.

<sup>8</sup> For a more detailed account of the different approaches in the interpretation of Isocrates’ *philosophia*, see Timmerman and Schiappa 2010, pp. 46-51.

<sup>9</sup> ‘With *Against the Sophists*, Isocrates begins to turn prospective students away from excessive promises, from litigious and greedy practices, from inflexible “political discourse,” which makes students inept in every part of political life, to what has defined traditional and conventional wisdom and success’ (Collins 2015, p. 195). See 13.1, 11, 21; 10.1, 6.

he defines *philosophia* in *Antidosis*:

It remains to tell you about *sophia* and *philosophia* [...] My view of this question is, as it happens, very simple. For since it is not in the nature of man to attain a science [ἐπιστήμην λαβεῖν] by the possession of which we can know positively what we should do or what we should say, in the next resort I hold that man to be *sophos* who is able by his powers of conjecture to arrive generally at the best course [τοὺς ταῖς δόξαις ἐπιτυγχάνειν ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ τοῦ βελτίστου δυναμένους], and I hold that man to be a philosopher [φιλοσόφους δὲ τοὺς] who occupies himself with the studies from which he will most quickly gain that kind of insight [τὴν τοιαύτην φρόνησιν] (15. 270-271).<sup>10</sup>

The counterpoints to Plato's conception of philosophy are clear and striking. Anyone whose notion of philosophy is grounded in book V of the *Republic* will be surprised to see that here *doxa* is the advised philosophical ideal over *epistēmē*. Indeed, he holds in contempt those who claim that one could attain true knowledge or that virtue can be taught, as these claims, he believes, are rooted in false promises.<sup>11</sup> Instead, philosophy proves its worth in practical affairs.<sup>12</sup> 'Isocratean *philosophia* should be understood as the cultivation of practical wisdom through the production of ethical civic discourse' (Timmerman and Schiappa 2010, p. 52). It is beyond the purpose of the present study to offer a detailed description of Isocrates' notion of *philosophia*, but it is important to start from here. Isocrates' account not only offers a direct counterpoint to Plato's own conception, but also helps us understand that philosophy is an 'artificial construct', as Nightingale says, undergoing a process of legitimation and specialisation in the fourth century BCE (1995, p. 14).<sup>13</sup> As Nehamas puts it:

The reason why it is important to remind ourselves of Isocrates' views, crude as they may appear, is that they make it clear that in the fourth century B.C. terms like "philosophy", "dialectic", and "sophistry" do not seem to have had a widely agreed-upon application. On the contrary, different authors seem to

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<sup>10</sup> Trans. G. Norlin (1929).

<sup>11</sup> 15. 1, 11, 21; 10. 1, 6

<sup>12</sup> 2.35, 51; 15. 266, 285.

<sup>13</sup> Nightingale aims to examine the history of the idea of philosophy from its historical and socio-political context. The starting point is that philosophy, as a discipline, was artificially created at some point in history: 'it was an artificial construct that had to be invented and legitimised as a new and unique cultural practice. This took place in Athens in the fourth century BCE, when Plato appropriated the term "philosophy" for a new and specialised discipline—a discipline that was constructed in opposition to the many varieties of *sophia* or "wisdom" recognised by Plato's predecessors and contemporaries' (1995, p. 14).

have fought with one another with the purpose of appropriating the term “philosophy”, each for his own practice and educational scheme (1990, p. 5).

The question of the conditions and the criteria whereby these categories are defined and distinguished in Plato invites further analysis. In previous scholarship, the distinction between the philosopher and the sophist in Plato has been mainly approached from Socrates’ rivalry with a particular group of thinkers traditionally identified as sophists such as Hippias, Prodicus, Protagoras, and Gorgias, among others.<sup>14</sup> Since Hegel, who attempted to restore the position of sophists in the Western philosophical tradition, different accounts have emerged to assess the contribution of sophists.<sup>15</sup> In these accounts, Plato is not always a reliable witness, for he is said to provide us with a partial or tendentious representation of sophists.<sup>16</sup> This is true, except that ‘partial’ only makes sense if we think that the term ‘sophist’ has a unitary definition or a clear referential use.<sup>17</sup> But this ignores one aspect that it is at the core of the problem, namely that there is no widely-accepted way of describing, identifying or characterising the sophists or the philosophers. A common approach to Plato’s treatment of sophists often assumes both that ‘sophist’ is a sharp and distinct category and that it has a clear derogatory sense.<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Wallace’s view: ‘A complex designation that he [Plato] made inescapably pejorative,

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<sup>14</sup> Recently, Corey (2015) has argued against this approach. Against the idea of using Plato’s dialogues as a witness for the reconstruction of historic truth, he proposes to examine Plato’s view of sophists within the dialogues. He declares: ‘I write on the assumption that Plato’s views were complex and his purposes not always transparent; and I write, moreover, under the conviction that to strive to understand what Plato thought about the sophists is an activity worthwhile per se’ (2015, p. 7).

<sup>15</sup> Roughly speaking, we can identify two predominant frameworks that have been used to approach the sophists. One started by Hegel, followed, among others by Jaeger (1946) and Guthrie (1971) regards the sophists as a school of thought. The other started by George Grote, followed by Sidgwick (1873) and, more recently, Kerferd (1981) regards the sophists mainly as individuals connected with their historical and socio-political context.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Wallace (2007) and Tell (2011).

<sup>17</sup> Unless we assume the title designates some historical figures, as it is often the case.

<sup>18</sup> From Hegel (1955 [1892]) onwards, most accounts deal with the issue of the meaning and connotation of this label. Most of them recognise that the meaning in pre-Platonic literature is broad and ambivalent. Among those who believe that it was Plato who conferred the negative connotation are Grote (1888, pp. 35, 37, 52) and Popper (1945, p. 225). Among those who believe that the negative connotation predates Plato are Guthrie (1971, p. 34) and Lloyd (1987, pp. 92-3). Havelock (1957, pp. 158-9) says that the term is maligned by the influence of Old Comedy. More recently, Wallace (2007, p. 218) and Tell (2011, p. 2) have claimed that Plato applied the label to a rival group of thinkers with the purpose of disparaging them. Against this view, Corey (2015, p. 3) claims that the label in Plato’s dialogues is distinct, but not necessarily negative or drawn in rivalry with philosophy.

his “sophist” is a pastiche, a dazzling fabrication elaborated from social practices and philosophical views that he found inimical’ (2007, p. 218).<sup>19</sup>

I would like to challenge the view that the meaning and connotation of these categories are fixed in Plato. To this end, I will address some basic questions. Are Plato’s conceptions of *sophistēs* and *philosophos* novel? Are they distinct? Do they have clear negative and positive connotations attached? Is there any explicit contradistinction between these categories? What needs to be assessed first is whether Plato created a contrast of meaning where none existed before him. I propose that Plato turns these conventional labels into meaningful names; rooted in the conviction that these are not just titles but descriptors, ‘they mean what they say’, he creates a narrative of love for the philosopher, and argues that the sophist ‘seems to know’—hence the name *sophistēs*. This investigation seeks to examine whether Plato created opposing notions and appropriated *philosophia* by redefining or adjusting the meaning of *sophos/sophia*. One central claim is that Plato’s conceptualisation of *philosophia/philosophos* shaped in contrast with the *sophistēs* borrows and transforms the elements already associated with *sophia/sophos*.

## 2. The State of the Question

The logical first step in the investigation is to examine the meaning of *sophia/sophos*. Here we find multiple possible translations, among them, ‘wisdom’, ‘good judgement’, ‘cleverness’, ‘knowledge’, ‘shrewdness’, ‘cunning’, ‘expertise’. In previous scholarship the wide semantic range of *soph-* in the period before Plato has been mainly approached through the lens of the Aristotelian developmental account that goes from particular skill to universal knowledge.<sup>20</sup> Kerferd, one of the most important critics regarding the development of the concept and the importance it has for the category *sophistēs*, challenges this approach because he believes it has modelled our interpretation in the wrong direction.<sup>21</sup> According to him, the account that has been imposed on the tradition—to the point that lexicons, such as the LSJ,

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<sup>19</sup> See also Popper (1945), Schiappa (1991), Cassin (1995), Poulakos (1995), and Tell (2010).

<sup>20</sup> These accounts include Snell (1924), Nestle (1942), Gauthier and Jolif (1959), Gladigow (1965) and Maier (1970).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Kerferd 1950; 1976; 1981.

reflect it—corresponding to a classification between general and particular knowledge is an artificial criterion designed by Aristotle for his own philosophical agenda, and shaped by our own expectations on the subject.<sup>22</sup> In Kerferd’s own words:

According to the received account, built both into our lexica and our histories of philosophy, these terms [*sophos* and *sophia*] went through a kind of evolution in their meaning from (1) skill in a particular craft, especially handicraft, through (2) prudence or wisdom in general matters, especially practical and political wisdom, to (3) scientific, theoretic or philosophic wisdom. I have tried to argue elsewhere that this sequence is artificial and unhistorical, being essentially based on Aristotle and his attempt to schematise the history of thought before his own time within a framework illustrating his own view about the nature of philosophy, above all that it proceeds from the particular to the universal (1981, p. 24).

This account adjusts to Aristotle’s taxonomy of knowledge as presented not only in *Metaphysics I*, but also in *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book VI, vii), and in *De Philosophia* (fr. 8 Ross). From this last source, which would correspond to the tenth book of Aristotle’s *Peri Philosophias*, it is established that *sophia* evolved as follows: (1) knowledge of basic necessities; (2) artistic knowledge; (3) political knowledge; (4) natural science; (5) knowledge of the divine [τὰ θεῖα], the ‘supracosmic’ [ὑπερκόσµια], and the unchangeable [ἀμετάβλητα]. The gradation is clearly advancing from particular and rudimentary knowledge to a more universal level of understanding, all of which fits with Aristotle’s programme whereby *sophia* constitutes the supreme contemplation of causes and principles. Kerferd claims that this programme has misleadingly predisposed us to search for the meaning of *sophos/sophia* in the period before Plato and Aristotle within a progressive context as if there were different stages. ‘No matter that in different contexts and for different writers the content of such wisdom may vary—of course it does. But these are not variations in the meaning of the term, nor do they justify us in attempting to trace “stages” in the development of its meaning. So far as meaning is concerned there is throughout a single concept of “wisdom”’ (Kerferd 1976, p. 27). The main purpose of Kerferd’s argument is to neutralise and unify the meaning of *sophos* by

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<sup>22</sup> The first entry of LSJ is ‘cleverness or skill in handicraft and art’, with examples of archaic poetry; the second ‘skill in matters of common life, sound judgement, intelligence, practical wisdom’ with the example of the Seven sages; the third ‘learning, wisdom’ with the example of Aristotle.

detaching it from the Aristotelian account and consequently his line of criticism moves in two directions: it aims at the ‘progressive’ aspect of the account received and at the double meaning (‘particular’ and ‘universal’) that *sophia* acquires as a result. My starting point admits both of Kerferd’s contentions in this regard. However, I would not go so far as to admit that the meaning of *sophia* remains consistent throughout the period before Plato. This is a very complex notion, and needs to be analysed within its context. As Tell warns: ‘Built into any definition of *sophia* must be an understanding of its polyvalence and the competing (and sometimes mutually exclusive) conceptions that existed at different times and in different groups in Greek culture’ (2011, p. 17). But the multiple and different layers of meaning should not be judged to be so only in relation to the variation of context, especially when it is possible to find in one single passage a case such as *to sophon d’ ou sophia* (Eur. *Ba.* 395). Here, there may be not a sharp contrast in literal meaning, but the dramatic context, i.e. Pentheus’ overcritical attitude towards the celebration of Dionysiac rites drawn in opposition to Tiresias’ acceptance of tradition, show us that there are two different notions of *sophia* at work (cf. 1.4).

In order to assess the extent to which Platonic *sophia* was influenced or shaped by previous accounts, I intend to examine all aspects of *sophia*: its different uses, its evaluative nuances and cultural weight. The assumption that there is a single concept of wisdom cannot help us understand the term, nor can an approach modelled on the Aristotelian account. This applies to pre-Platonic as well as to Platonic literature. It is a common mistake to assimilate Plato’s account to Aristotle’s. This is to be particularly important for a dialogue like the *Apology*. Kerferd reads Plato’s *Apology* along the lines of the Aristotelian account where all particular *technai* are dismissed to give way to real *sophia*. But as I hope to show, Socrates does not reject others’ *sophia* on the basis of being a particular *technē*; in fact, he praises the craftsmen, the only group possessing *technē*, as being *sophōteroi* (22d4; cf. 3.3.2). Ultimately, it is because they think they know the most important things, i.e. truth and virtue, without knowing them, that they do not qualify as real *sophoi*. Nevertheless, Kerferd sees it as an ironical move: ‘there is an element of deliberate paradox in that Socrates comes nearest to success with the craftsmen, a paradox which rests on Socrates’ reversal of an ascending order commencing with No.1 [which in Aristotle’s

taxonomy of *sophia* corresponds to the arts supplying the necessities of life]’ (1976, p. 20). Similarly, Detienne and Vernant affirm in reference to Plato: ‘*Sophia* becomes contemplative wisdom and ceases to refer to the knowledge of the skilful craftsman as it had ever since Homer’s writings where *Sophia* was used of any organised body of knowledge with its own rules and methods handed on from one generation to another within professional groups such as those of the blacksmiths and carpenters’ (1978, p. 315). But examination of the Platonic corpus proves the inaccuracy of this claim. Not only in the *Apology*, but also in the *Laches*, the *Protagoras*, the *Euthydemus*, the *Republic* and the *Theaetetus*, *sophia* is compared to other fields of expertise. As will be shown, *sophia* has an important component of expert knowledge, fundamental in establishing a non-relativistic criterion of truth (especially in the *Theaetetus*), which may be exemplified by carpenters, doctors, pilots and flute-players.<sup>23</sup> Of course, this does not mean that Plato does not transform or adapt these notions; it only means that he does not do this by ignoring earlier usage. On the contrary, Plato uses the traditional force of *sophia* and successfully appropriates it.

### 3. Approach

The present study begins by providing an account of pre-Platonic *sophia*. We shall see that *soph-* terminology is found from archaic literature, in rather isolated cases in Homer and Hesiod, but with notably frequency in Lyric poetry, particularly in Pindar and Theognis, in the *Histories* of Herodotus, in the three surviving tragic poets, particularly in Euripides, and in Aristophanes’ comedy. The textual evidence provides not only a number of different meanings and references, but also different evaluative nuances. *Sophia* describes the genius of the poet in Pindar and the versatility of the clever in Theognis. It is a complimentary description of the knowledge and experience of Solon in Herodotus, and an insulting reference to Medea’s cleverness in Euripides. In general, it is a title of authority and good reputation, but in Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, the *sophoi* represent the worst of the intellectual class by promoting a kind of knowledge that is useless, superficial and alien to Greek tradition. Beyond the meaning of each individual instance, we shall

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<sup>23</sup> Except in *Rep.* (429a2) where the *epistēmē* characteristic of *sophia* is reserved for the guardians.

see that there are some regular characteristics related to the use of this terminology in pre-Platonic literature: (i) a competitive strand, (ii) authoritative status, (iii) negotiable meaning, (iv) double-valence. As many scholars have observed, *sophos* and *sophia* were labels central to the *agōn*.<sup>24</sup> This essentially entails that the meaning of these labels is contestable and negotiable, just as *sophistēs* and *philosophos* are. Beyond the specific meaning and connotations that these labels carry in specific instances, this is a group of words that have a strong cultural bearing. To claim the title, the *sophos* needs to possess a set of qualities, ‘wits and personality’, according to Lloyd (1987, p. 103), but, more importantly, as Tell observes, authority, i.e. ‘the process of acquiring the cultural legitimacy necessary to claim the position of *sophos*’ (2011, p. 17). And this cultural legitimacy is mainly acquired by public recognition. This is important as it provides the context to understand *sophos* (along with *sophistēs* and *philosophos*) as a title of reputation—even if it is bad reputation.

What does all of this entail for the present investigation? And how is this important for our understanding of Plato? As already established, one central task is to unveil the elements and criteria whereby the Platonic conceptualisation of *sophia* and *philosophia* is shaped against earlier and rival conceptions of *sophia*. In order to do this, I will examine Plato’s conceptualisation of *philosophia*, *sophia*, and *sophistēs* through the corpus against the backdrop of pre-Platonic literature. To this end, I will consider the strands operating in the usage of *sophia*, namely (i) competitive strand, (ii) authoritative status, (iii) negotiable meaning, (iv) double-valence. That Plato was part of the process of legitimation and competition was shown above by the example of Isocrates. That these labels are endowed with authority seems to be supported by the prominence and status they have in the Platonic corpus, particularly in the case of *sophia* and *philosophia*. We shall discuss the other two aspects in more detail (chapter 1).

Attempts to redefine and re-evaluate these notions can be traced, more or less explicitly, throughout the corpus. Who are the real *sophoi* and what is real *sophia*? What is the *true* nature of the philosopher? Who is *really* the sophist? In tracing these attempts, it is particularly interesting to observe the rhetoric at work. To be

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<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Lloyd (1987), Martin (1993), Nightingale (1995; 2000), Griffith (1990), Graziosi (2001) and Tell (2011).

clear, this is not typically expressed by the form ‘what is x’, but mostly by using the qualifiers ‘real’ and ‘true’ as opposed to ‘apparent’. Definition via ‘real’ is conspicuous in the *Apology*. We shall see this in more detail (chapters 2 and 3), but it is worth observing the rhetorical component of the definition introduced here. As we know, after Socrates’ examination, none of the reputed *sophoi* qualifies as a real *sophos*, where ‘real’ *sophia* is (loosely) defined as ‘the knowledge of the most important things’. This seems to respond to what Stevenson (1944, p. 210) calls ‘persuasive definition’. According to Stevenson’s account, the redefinition of strong emotive words such as ‘culture’, ‘poet’, ‘art’, etc, has an effect on the audience’s attitude as it can redirect and modify their sentiments of approval or disapproval. In general, these words are difficult to define and describe, but they have a recognisable emotive value. ‘Our language abounds with words which, like “culture” have both a vague descriptive meaning and a rich emotive meaning. The descriptive meaning of them all is subject to constant redefinition. The words are prizes which each man seeks to bestow on the qualities of his own choice’ (Stevenson 1944, p. 213).<sup>25</sup> Even if the idea of a descriptive in contradistinction to an emotive meaning can be brought into question, what Stevenson’s theory underlines is the fact that the most commonly redefined concepts for the purpose of appropriation are those embedded in the context of a traditional and cultural value-system.<sup>26</sup> Because *sophia* and *sophos* have a well-established cultural significance in the fifth century BCE, especially in the context of poetic competition and traditional forms of wisdom, a novel definition would be less effective than the appropriation of a notion invoking the authority of the tradition. As Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca remark, ‘the purpose of the device may not be to transfer an accepted value over to a new meaning, but rather to enhance the value of a concept by conferring on it a prestige that it lacked in its former use’ (1969, p. 447).

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<sup>25</sup> ‘Descriptive’ and ‘emotional’ are defined by Stevenson as follows: ‘The “descriptive meaning” of a sign is its disposition to affect cognition, provided that the disposition is caused by an elaborate process of conditioning that has attended the sign’s use in communication, and provided that the disposition is rendered fixed, at least to a considerable degree, by linguistic rules’ (1944, p. 70). On the other hand, ‘Emotive meaning is a meaning in which the response (from the hearer’s point of view) or the stimulus (from the speaker’s point of view) is a range of emotions’ (1944, p. 59).

<sup>26</sup> Perelman & Olbrecht-Tyteca (1969, p. 140) bring into question Stevenson’s theory of a ‘descriptive’ as opposed to an ‘emotive’ meaning. Both the idea of a descriptive as an ‘static’ meaning and the idea of ‘emotive’ as an adventitious meaning are against their view of language as a dynamic and plastic system in argumentation.

#### 4. Platonic *Sophia*

Thus far I have established that Plato is one more participant in the competition for the claim of the title of *sophia*. Now the question arises whether there is a Platonic *sophia* at all. Can we say that he appropriates the title of *sophia* and *philosophia* in any distinct way? Indeed, Plato's notion of *sophia* is novel and distinct. This is because it is essentially an epistemic notion. This may not be surprising for most of Plato's readers. However, against the backdrop of a tradition where the term is used to designate knowledge, as in 'expertise', as well as traits of intelligence, as in 'cleverness', 'shrewdness' and 'cunning', to define *sophia* exclusively in terms of knowledge is a novelty. It is under this conception that Socrates in the *Apology*, being as clever as he is, disavows *sophia*, that the ideal philosopher of the *Republic*, being as quick and smart as he is required to be, only becomes a *philosophos* by apprehending the Forms, and that the sophist in the *Sophist*, being a master of deceit, is only an apparent *sophos*. This is also a relevant point of comparison with Isocrates. Mostly concerned with speech and action, Isocrates' programme requires candidates with certain innate abilities and character traits. As Nehamas says, 'Philosophy for Isocrates has nothing to do with the abstract study of reality with which Plato identifies it in the *Phaedo*, the *Republic* and thereafter. Isocrates thinks of philosophy as ἡ τῶν λόγων παιδεία/*hē tōn logōn paideia*, the ability to speak well which in turn reflects and is the product of the ability to think well and shrewdly about practical matters' (1990, p. 4). The comparison is not to claim that Plato's notion is detached from traits of intelligence; it intends to show that these are not defining elements of Plato's notions of *sophia*, *philosophia* and *sophistēs*. As will be shown, by defining *sophia* as knowledge, Plato is allowed to define 'real' *sophia*, *philosophia* and *sophistēs* according to the object known, and the value this object has.

In Platonic scholarship it is well-established that *sophia* has the cognitive force of *epistēmē*. In this regard, it is treated as integral part of the intellectual lexica. The pre-Platonic heritage, however, remains unnoticed. Some scholars have observed the competitive strand of *sophia* in connection with the significance of this terminology

in Plato but the implications have not been carefully considered.<sup>27</sup> See Benson, for example, who alerts his reader: ‘I will be following the virtual consensus of Socratic scholarship in treating Socrates’ vocabulary—primarily ἐπιστήμη (*epistēmē*), σοφία (*sophia*) τέχνη (*technē*)—and their cognates as essentially interchangeable’ (2000, p. 10). This is problematic. Not only because the term within Plato’s corpus is widely coloured and complex, but also because it ignores its cultural weight. Some scholars have raised the question: ‘Can it be true that the Greek reader in Plato’s time understood “science” in the sense of mathematical knowledge every time he used the term “wisdom”? Can we imagine that the term had just one meaning in Greek that made it synonymous with “knowledge”?’ (Ibáñez-Puig 2007, p. 166n16). This is a good question, and I believe that the answer is no.

As we shall see, it is true that Plato tends to trade *epistēmē* for *sophia*; it is also true that this happens, as Lyons observes, often when *epistēmē* is ‘graded upwards’.<sup>28</sup> But this is hardly enough evidence to assess the importance and value of this terminology in the Platonic corpus. In only a few instances is *sophia* linked to *gnōsis* or *gignōskein*, but those instances are remarkably significant for understanding the kind of knowledge ‘real’ *sophia* is (*Theaet.* 176c4) and the kind of knowledge Socrates has (*Apol.* 23b3). Certainly, ‘scientific knowledge’ in these two cases does not do justice to the text. In addition to the problems related within the intellectual lexica, in Plato *sophia* incorporates moral and epistemological elements. This, of course, has not gone unnoticed in Platonic scholarship; however, the fact that this assimilation is already present in pre-Platonic literature (while much more demarcated in Aristotle) has been overlooked. Griffith (1990) remarks that in the context of poetic competition all of these strands, namely knowledge and factual accuracy, moral and educational integrity, technical skill and aesthetic impact, converge. ‘Although these three categories, factual, moral, and aesthetic, might seem quite distinct, and best

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<sup>27</sup> See Lloyd (1987), Nehamas (1990), Nightingale (1995), Schiappa (1991), Timmerman and Schiappa (2010) and Tell (2011).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Lyons (1963, p. 228). As Lyons demonstrates, *epistēmē* is part of a structured system where its meaning can only be determined by considering the synonymy and contrast with other epistemic terminology, more particularly the nouns *gnōsis* and *technē* and the verbs *gignōskein*, *eidenai* and *epistasthai*. Drawing from Lyons (1963), see Burnyeat (2011) who affirms that *epistēmē* ‘is the most general word for knowledge in Platonic Greek’ (p.10), which challenges the idea that *epistēmē* and its cognate *epistasthai* express know-that rather than know-how or knowledge by acquaintance. See more of this discussion at 2.1. and 2.3.

kept that way, ancient critics, and even the poets themselves, often blur the distinctions and slide heedlessly—or opportunistically—from one to another, as if all poets should be held accountable at every moment in all three’ (1990, p. 189). This is precisely what happens in Plato. In some contexts, as in the *Theaetetus*, the notion is essentially epistemic at the beginning (145e6), but as the course of the argument progresses, its moral significance emerges (172b7). The opposite process is observed in the *Protagoras*. *Sophia* is introduced as a moral category (330a1), and then it becomes markedly epistemic (352d1) (cf. 2.3, 2.4).

A cautionary note is in order. Unlike Aristotle, Plato does not elaborate any sophisticated taxonomies regarding the distinction between intellectual and moral virtue. Instead, we have dialogues embedded in dramatic context, written in different periods with different purposes in view. The arguments run in dramatic settings and are intertwined with characterisation. I am not trying, nor do I believe it is possible, to find a systematic treatment of *sophia*. Sometimes *sophia* is closer to *phronēsis*, often to *epistēmē*, seldom to *deinotēs*. Sometimes it is listed as a virtue, but sometimes it is not. This is part of broader phenomenon: ‘Plato never in any dialogue imposes a boundary between ethics and epistemology’ [...] Whether ‘knowledge’ is interpreted as a moral virtue, an intellectual virtue, or both indifferently, in Plato’s eyes it undoubtedly is a virtue, and an essential factor in the goodness of a life’ (Sedley 2004, p. 18). This is rightly identified as a problem by Vlastos when offering a reading of the *Laches*: ‘how then is he going to cope with the problem which is as urgent in his own moral theory as in Aristotle’s—the distinction between moral and non-moral wisdom—between wise choice of moral ends and practical astuteness in devising means to the attainment of morally unweighted ends?’ (1994, pp. 112-3). He suggests—correctly in my view—that a distinction can be drawn by considering the value of the object known. ‘In both of the former dialogues [*Apology* and *Crito*] he uses the “great” goods/evils phrase to refer to moral goods/evils in pointed contrast to the non-moral goods/evils which he reckons “small.” So when he refers to “wisdom” in these dialogues he could only mean moral wisdom’ (1994, p. 113). That it means *only* moral wisdom is open to discussion, but the observation at least suggests a possible way of assessing the problem in some of Plato’s dialogues.

## 5. Linguistic Considerations

*Soph-* terminology involves the verb *sophizein*, adjective *sophos*, nouns *sophia*, *sophistēs*, and *sophisma*, adjective *sophistikos*, verb *philosophein*, and the nouns *philosophia* and *philosophos*. Because this project aims at providing the notion of *sophia* for the central distinction between the sophist and the philosopher, I am privileging the analysis of occurrences of *sophos* and *sophia* in the first, *philosophos* and *philosophia* in the second, and *sophistēs* in the third section. Considering the examination starts from *sophos/sophia*, two issues are worth addressing: (i) the correlation between *sophia* and *sophos* and (ii) the problem of translation and interpretation.

In general, I alternate between the noun *sophia* and the adjective *sophos* on the general basis that the *sophos* is the one possessing *sophia*. However, we need to consider some of the implications in play. These are cognates deriving from the same root *soph-*.<sup>29</sup> The difference is explained in terms of syntactic variation according to which *sophos* is an adjective and *sophia* an abstract noun.<sup>30</sup> The abstract noun *sophia* is formed from the adjective *sophos* by means of the suffix *-ia*.<sup>31</sup> It belongs to the class of ‘*nomina qualitatis*, generally derived from adjectives, which denote the properties and qualities of anything, e.g. σοφία-σοφός’ (Long 1968, p. 14). This is already relevant for the present analysis. The adjective *sophos* is the primitive form from which the noun *sophia* is created, and while *sophos* is always said in relation to something or someone, i.e. it qualifies a noun, *sophia* is itself the quality.

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<sup>29</sup> The etymology of the root *\*soph-* is unknown. ‘But the etymology of the root *\*soph-* remains quite unknown, and attempts to be precise about the history of words derived from it soon run into difficulties’ (Kerferd 1976, p. 17).

<sup>30</sup> Despite the obvious syntactic differences between noun and adjective, there is one case in the Greek language that provides good evidence to assume a semantic equivalence between adjective and abstract noun, namely the neuter adjective with article, *to sophon*. The general rule is: ‘An attributive adjective (or participle) generally with the article often dispenses with its substantive, and thus itself acquires the value of a substantive’ (Smyth 1920, p. 272 §1021). Significantly, most translations of the passage in question assume a distinction, such as G. Murray’s (1911) ‘The world’s wise is not wise’, G. S. Kirk’s (1970a) ‘cleverness is not wisdom’ and D.W. Lucas’ (1930) ‘that which is called wise is not wisdom’. Moreover, they all read *sophon* in a rather negative light as opposed to *sophia*. From here it could be argued that article + neuter adjective has the potential to point to elements not necessarily present in the noun *sophia*. Perhaps, the problem with the adjective *sophos* is that it always refers to human beings and their behaviour, thereby carrying an ambiguity that the abstract noun *sophia* need not.

<sup>31</sup> A complete survey on the formation of the nouns on *-ia* is provided by Chantraine 1933, pp. 78-96.

In this regard, it is important to observe how the correlation between noun and adjective works if we consider that *sophia*, in its broadest sense, designates intellectual capacity. The question arises what can be the significance of human intellectual ability in abstract, i.e. without qualifying specific traits of human behaviour. There is, as it seems, a potential danger in assimilating the adjective with the noun in this context. The case can be compared—in the absence of a more appropriate example—to the noun ‘intelligence’ and the adjective ‘intelligent’. The psychologist H. J. Butcher, in his book *Human Intelligence: Its Nature and Assessment*, warns against the tendency in psychology to talk about ‘intelligence’ as opposed to ‘intelligent’ behaviour:

The grammatical form itself can be misleading. “Intelligence” is a noun, and nouns often refer to things and objects. Even when we know perfectly well that intelligence is not a “thing”, but a sophisticated abstraction from behaviour, we may sometimes half-consciously endow it with a kind of shadowy existence distinct and separate from the intelligent organisms which alone give it meaning, or more insidiously, think it is a “thing” that these organisms “have”, rather than a description of the way they behave (1968, p. 22).

I believe it is important to bear this problem in mind. The noun *sophia*, although a recurrent form in the literary tradition of the fifth and fourth century BCE, particularly in Plato, is ultimately grounded, linguistically and conceptually, in the adjective *sophos*. However, as will be shown, the abstract noun plays an important role in Plato’s philosophy. This is mostly because it conceptualises knowledge, rather than an abstraction from behaviour. It is, indeed, something to have rather than a description of a way of being.<sup>32</sup> This proves to be important particularly in the second section of this investigation, where *sophia* is something to be acquired by the philosopher.

It is not possible, from a methodological point of view, to find a single term to translate Greek *sophia*. The terms ‘wisdom’ and ‘wise’ are often used to translate the Greek *sophia/sophos*, but it is clear that these terms do not do justice to the Greek originals. Let us illustrate the problem with an example.

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<sup>32</sup> Although becoming *sophos* is analogous to acquiring *sophia* (cf. 2.5, 4.3-4).

After Solon had seen everything and had thought about it, Croesus found the opportunity to say, “My Athenian guest, we have heard a lot about you because of your *sophiēs* and of your wanderings [πλάνης], how as one who loves learning [φιλοσοφείων] you have travelled [ἐπελήλυθα] much of the world for the sake of seeing it [θεωρήσας εἶνεκεν], so now I desire to ask you who is the most fortunate man you have seen” (*Hdt.* 1. 30. 7-13).<sup>33</sup>

What exactly does *sophia* tell us about Solon in this context? It is a quality connected with travelling and wandering (*planē/eperchomai*), to a disposition of love towards *sophia* (*philosopheōn*) and to the experience of seeing (*theoria*). In view of this, the question arises to whether the Greek *sophia* is better translated by ‘wisdom’ rather than by ‘knowledge’. Whereas ‘learning’, ‘understanding’, or ‘knowledge’, are all cognitive outcomes of the experiences of travelling and seeing, ‘wisdom’ also seems to imply something about Solon’s good judgement and character. On this, Pierre Hadot comments: ‘When trying to define *Sophia*, modern commentators always hesitate between the notion of knowledge and that of wisdom.<sup>34</sup> Was the person who was *sophos* one who knew and had seen many things, had travelled a great deal, and was broadly cultured, or was he rather the person who knew how to conduct himself in life and who lived in happiness?’ (2002, pp. 17-8). And then he goes on to conciliate both meanings: ‘these two notions are not at all mutually exclusive [...] real knowledge is know-how, and true know-how is knowing how to do good’ (2002, p. 18). This interpretation is certainly suggestive, but it assumes too quickly that there is a notion of ‘real’ knowledge in operation (as opposed to ‘false’ or ‘apparent’ knowledge?), that ‘real’ knowledge is know-how (and not know-that), and that ‘true’ know-how is knowing how to do good. But this interpretation seems dangerously close to the philosophical ideal of Plato and Aristotle.<sup>35</sup> As we shall see, none of these, i.e. the distinction between true and false, knowing-how and knowing-that, and the necessary moral component, are regular elements in pre-Platonic *sophia/sophos*. However, I agree with Hadot that our notion of ‘wisdom’ seems to imply all of these things, particularly the moral or prudential component. In a recent translation of the *Eudemian Ethics*, Anthony Kenny (2011, p. 169) admits that amongst the intellectual virtues *sophia* is the most difficult to translate. He believes the traditional ‘wisdom’ does not fit and translates *sophia* by ‘understanding’ and

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<sup>33</sup> Trans. A.D. Godley (1920). The text is also discussed at 4.1.

<sup>34</sup> The French original makes the distinction between *savoir* and *sagesse*.

<sup>35</sup> See Annas (2008) for a conception of the sage (*ho sophos*) in the philosophical tradition.

*phronēsis* by ‘wisdom’. He explains: ‘The Greek word “*phronēsis*” is often translated “practical wisdom”, but the adjective is superfluous: wisdom is always concerned with life rather than with theory.’<sup>36</sup> These are just some of the many examples showing the problem of ‘wisdom’ as the standard translation of *sophia*.

For the present study, it will suffice to recognise that ‘wisdom’ involves a prudential element, not necessarily included in the notion of knowledge. In order to avoid a potential confusion, in the first section I will not translate *sophia/sophos* from the Greek texts, although I will be discussing meaning in the analysis. In the discussion of the Platonic texts, I will use ‘knowledge’ and ‘wisdom’ as the standard translations, appealing to the receptivity of classical scholars, who, as Lyons observes, ‘are conscious of the inadequacy of translation as a method of stating the meaning of such terms as τέχνη, ἐπιστήμη, σοφία, ἀρετή, etc’ (1963, p. 98). In this I stand with Benson who recognises that the translation of these terms serve more as ‘markers of the Greek words than as attempts to exhibit the meaning of these terms’ (2000, p. 11).

## 6. Methodology

For the present study, I consider all the dialogues of which Plato’s authorship is not disputed.<sup>37</sup> Of course, this gives us a broad scope. This does not mean that I will be working through every instance of *sophia*, *sophos*, *philosophos* and *sophistēs*, but only those that provide us with some critical or explicit problem of conceptualisation. Since I am not treating any Platonic doctrine in particular, the chronology and the order of the dialogues will not be guiding criteria. Although I tend to follow the conventional division of the dialogues into early, middle and late, I do not endorse the developmental approach according to which we can trace different stages of Plato’s thought.<sup>38</sup> I hope that it is clear that this does not commit me to the unitarian approach either. As Sedley says in his introduction of the

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<sup>36</sup> As opposed to Ross (1954), who translates *sophia* by ‘philosophic wisdom’ and *phronēsis* by ‘practical wisdom’. Cf. *Nic. Eth.* 1098b.24.

<sup>37</sup> Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Cratylus, Theaetetus, Sophist, Statesman, Parmenides, Philebus, Symposium, Phaedrus, Charmides, Laches, Lysis, Euthydemus, Protagoras, Gorgias, Meno, Lesser Hippias, Ion, Republic, Timaeus, Critias and Laws.

<sup>38</sup> For further discussion on the problems raised by the developmental approach, see e.g. Annas (2002), Kahn (2002) and Taylor (2002).

*Theaetetus*: ‘If developmentalism simply means the thesis that Plato’s philosophy developed during his lifetime, only the most extreme of unitarians would be likely to resist’ (2004, p. 8). It would certainly be difficult to deny that that across the dialogues there is a variation in regard to perspectives and themes, style and language, the prominence of Socrates, and the balance of the dramatic and didactic elements. Whether these can be used as evidence to claim a profound change of view or different stages of thought remains open to discussion. Thus far, stylometrics and Aristotle’s testimony that distinguishes Socrates’ views from Plato’s have provided the most reliable evidence to establish the relative dating of the dialogues.<sup>39</sup> Both of them, however, can be reasonably brought into question.

An alternative that has gained adherents during the last decades is to approach the dialogues from their literary unity.<sup>40</sup> Against the analytical approach, this means that each dialogue should be read and interpreted as an independent, self-contained whole.<sup>41</sup> This would prevent us from engaging in cross-textual interpretation. But as much as I believe that each piece deserves to be read as a whole, with the proper observance of the dramatic setting, literary devices and characterisation, it seems impossible to avoid making thematic and philosophical connections across the dialogues. That Plato himself draws these connections can hardly be questioned.<sup>42</sup>

By reading Plato in the context of competition, where *sophia* and *philosophia* are being legitimised and contested, in the present study I am tracing the use of terminology. This means that the same term might be used to articulate a different view, but this is not the primary focus. Just to give an example, it is a commonly accepted view that the intellectualist doctrine of the Socratic dialogues treats virtue in analogy with other areas of expertise. However, examples of *sophia* as expert knowledge run throughout the corpus. We find them in the *Apology*, the *Laches*, the *Euthydemus*, the *Republic* and the *Theaetetus*. The treatment of this concept is not taken as evidence to prove either a shift of view or a single view, although we might

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<sup>39</sup> Irwin (2008, pp. 75-84) offers an account of the standard view regarding the composition and order of the dialogues and the possible objections.

<sup>40</sup> For a useful insight on this approach, see Press (1996) and Byrd (2007). See Blondell (2002) for an analysis of the dialogues taking into account the literary elements. See Corey (2015), who takes this approach to examine Plato’s view of the sophists.

<sup>41</sup> This is the position of Clay (2000).

<sup>42</sup> For further discussion on this, see Kahn (1996, pp. 36-65) and Michelini (2003, p. 4).

draw attention to the points of similarity and difference. By saying this, I am not suggesting that this is not a possible or interesting line of inquiry; it is simply not the primary focus of this study. Because *sophia* is at the centre of many important theses, I will be touching upon Socratic intellectualism, *eudaimonism*, unity of the virtues, theory of values, craft-analogy, theory of the Forms, but it should be established that I am not committed to a detailed examination of these doctrines. On the whole, my purpose is not to determine whether Plato was right or not, consistent or inconsistent, but to examine the underlying elements of his rhetoric in the attempt of redefining and appropriating *sophia* and *philosophia*.

The thesis is divided into three sections: the first devoted to *sophia*, the second to *philosophia* and the *philosophos*, and the third to the *sophistēs*. Each of these sections includes three parts: (i) an account of pre-Platonic literature, (ii) an overall account of Platonic literature and (iii) an analysis of one particular dialogue. The first part serves to trace the origin and early usage of the term. Because Plato understands *philosophos* and *sophistēs* by reference to *sophia/sophos*, the first section has a programmatic and foundational function. Most of the relevant criteria to assess these notions are laid down in this section. Apart from giving us the background to assess the Platonic notion, this account has the purpose of opening the way to work with a more unprejudiced conception of *sophia*, and particularly *philosophos* and *sophistēs*. The pre-Platonic account covers the literature from Homer to Aristophanes, spanning from eighth to fifth century BCE. It is not intended to be exhaustive, but it covers enough material to observe significant variation of meaning, regular patterns and some relevant aspects of characterisation. To this end, the argument relies on a more exhaustive analysis of word usage to establish their breadth and uniqueness. Having arrived at a comprehensive idea of the usage in pre-Platonic literature, I will work through the Platonic corpus, drawing particular attention to those passages in which the meaning or value of these terms is contested, especially in those contexts where competitive notions are at work or there is a clear attempt to (re)define them. I seek to identify the distinctive elements underlying these categories in Plato's works. The Platonic dialogue discussed at the end of each section has been selected in virtue of the material it provides concerning Plato's views in contrast with those of others (which are more or less explicitly representing

public opinion). The *Apology* (with a focus on the ‘old accusations’ and so-called ‘Narration’) offers relevant material to distinguish ‘real’ *sophia* from other traditional forms of *sophia*. Books V, VI and IX of the *Republic* are central to identifying the nature of the philosopher in contradistinction with other intellectuals and experts. Lastly, the *Sophist* is a dialogue whose main purpose is to define the essence of the sophist beyond the many forms in which he appears.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Except with the *Sophist*, a dialogue considered in its whole, I discuss the sections or passages in the text that are most relevant for the analysis. The analysis moves from what is conventionally regarded as an ‘early’ to a ‘middle’, ending with a ‘late’ dialogue. But other than the fact that these dialogues offer more complete accounts for the study of the notions of *soph-*, *philosoph-* and *sophist-* respectively, there are no chronological criteria involved in the structure and selection of texts. From a developmentalist point of view, this should be regarded as a ‘happy coincidence’.

## SECTION I: *SOPHIA/SOPHOS*



## CHAPTER 1: *SOPHIA/SOPHOS* IN PRE-PLATONIC LITERATURE

Let us start by posing the following question: ‘who are the *sophoi* in Ancient Greece?’ At first glance, it appears as if answering this question is as difficult as answering ‘who are the wise men in our era?’ With an extraordinary effort, we might attempt to answer it by listing some admirable people (pacifists, war heroes, people publicly lauded, politicians, artists?) or perhaps we could go on to count the most accomplished intellectuals in the fields of science or humanism. Soon enough, though, we would probably desist from such a task, disregarding it as worthless and impossible. Significantly, in the ancient tradition the question over the title of *sophia* was a meaningful and relevant one. Of course, the fact that the question makes sense does not imply that there is a correct or univocal answer. Indeed, answers to this question vary along with time and context. Claims for the title of *sophia*, as well as the characterisation of the *sophos*, run throughout from the Archaic period to the Second Sophistic and can be attested—among many others—in the elegies of Theognis and Xenophanes, in the prose of Heraclitus, the lyric of Pindar and Bacchylides, in the three tragedians (especially in Sophocles and Euripides), and in the comedy of Aristophanes.

Because one central claim of the thesis is that Plato embraces the cultural import of *sophia/sophos* in the Greek tradition, in this chapter I provide examples in pre-Platonic literature, from Homer to Aristophanes.<sup>44</sup> By doing this, I do not intend to collect a list of possible meanings, but rather to trace the use of the word in different contexts so as to provide a sense of chronology and shifting patterns. This will give us the necessary background to assess Plato’s own conception of *sophia/sophos*, a conception relevant to his description of the philosopher and the sophist. As we shall see, the characterisation of the *sophoi* include traits of the sophist and the philosopher, Socrates and other reputed experts. Here we will begin to understand why there is a negative connotation attached to *sophistēs* (further discussed in section III) and why Socrates’ reputation of *sophos* is used in the ‘old accusations’ in

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<sup>44</sup> The case of Heraclitus and Pythagoras will be discussed in the next section because their conceptions are relevant for Plato’s conceptualisation of *philosophia*.

the *Apology* (further discussed in the chapter 3); finally, it will also give us the background to understand why *philosophos/philosophia* adjusts to Plato's purposes (further discussed in section II).

For obvious reasons, the analysis will not exhaust every instance of the word family in pre-Platonic literature. Although the selection of examples may seem arbitrary, it follows a criterion that adjusts to the purpose of the present study. In order to ponder the distinctive elements shaping Plato's own conception of *sophia*, we need to become familiar with earlier accounts, so as to have an overview of its meaning, but also, and more importantly, to understand some of the key difficulties of interpreting its meaning. Most authors included here present us with a challenge of interpretation, each of them relevant to understanding the critical aspects involved in Plato's conceptualisation of *sophia* and the *sophos*.

I will start by showing that the notion of *soph-* does not allow a model of interpretation set in terms of particular craft/general knowledge, used by most accounts based on the Aristotelian approach (cf. Introd. 2). The fact that *sophia* is said of particular crafts, such as the art of carpentry, sailing or poetry, cannot be used as evidence to establish a relevant contrast between technical and theoretical knowledge, or know-how and know-that. Having a clearer idea of the range of meaning encompassed by these notions, I will show that *sophia* and *sophos* are salient categories in the context of competition, the *agōn*. This is relevant because it establishes the cultural significance of the term and the negotiability of its meaning. For the present investigation, it is also relevant that these notions encompass both knowledge and traits of intelligence, and that, among the latter, both 'good judgement' and 'bold cleverness' are possible translations. Particularly in Theognis and Herodotus, the *sophos* proves to be clever regardless of moral purpose. In the context of tragedy, we shall see that the notion is governed by ambivalence. Both the tragedy of Euripides and the comedy of Aristophanes reveal that the ambivalence is culturally embedded. Finally, I will discuss how different models of *sophia* give rise to different characterisations of the *sophoi*, most distinctively 'the clever cheat' and 'the idle intellectual'.

## 1.1. Every *Sophia*: Examples in Archaic and Lyric Poetry

Our first example in literature is rather extraordinary, as it is the only instance attesting the root in Homer. *Iliad* XV 410-13:<sup>45</sup> ‘But as the carpenter’s lines makes straight a ships’ timber in the hands of a skilled workman who knows well every *sophiēs* [πάσης εὖ εἰδῆ σοφίης] through the promptings of Athene, so evenly was strained their war and battle’.<sup>46</sup> The simile compares the string or line used by a skilled carpenter to cut the wood with the battle line between Trojans and Achaeans. As such, the image portrays the divided symmetry in war as being as exact as the line drawn by an accomplished carpenter informed by divine Athena. The *pasēs sofīēs* that the carpenter knows well has been interpreted by the scholiasts mainly as meaning *tektōnikēn technē* in opposition to *logikēn technē*.<sup>47</sup> It seems, indeed, that the virtue of the carpenter’s knowledge lies in his ability to create something well by the standards of his profession. On the other hand, Homer says he is well versed in every *sophia* and the totality of his knowledge is divinely inspired, which allows an interpretation like that offered by Kerferd. He comments on the kind of *sophiē* attributed to the *tektōn*: ‘The particular knowledge of the ship-wright is here linked with “all wisdom” and we are not justified in concluding that the reference in “all wisdom”, still the meaning of “wisdom”, is to be restricted to skill in the crafts, although this is certainly included in the reference’ (1976, p. 24). With this, Kerferd calls into question the validity of those criteria that discriminate between particular and universal (cf. Introd. 2).<sup>48</sup> To add to Kerferd’s case, it is perhaps worth remarking that *sophiēs* here stands as the object of the verb *oida*, which makes the reading that excludes *logikēn technē* even less compelling.<sup>49</sup>

The first example already shows the limitations of a model of interpretation based on the dichotomy between a particular *technē* and general knowledge. Our second

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<sup>45</sup> The other instance appears in *Margitēs*, a comic poem attributed to Homer by Aristotle (*Poet.* 1448b30). For an analysis of the poem, see Gladigow (1965). The words are more common in the Homeric *Hymns*. Cf. Mette and Snell 1955 sv.

<sup>46</sup> Trans. A.T. Murray (1999).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Erbse 1975, pp. 97-8.

<sup>48</sup> Hadot (2002, p. 18) reads *sophia* in Homer as an example of knowing-how (French original *savoir-faire*).

<sup>49</sup> The perfect *eide* + genitive is discussed extensively by Bartolotta (2005) under the thesis that case assignment is interpretable in semantic terms. The perfect aspect of *\*woid-* +gen., in contrast with *\*wid-*+acc., has an intentional meaning indicating an activity mediated by an intellectual process.

example in literature, found in Hesiod's *Works and Days* in the form of the verb *sophizein*, helps us to make the point clearer. Here Hesiod encourages Perses to welcome the work of sailing rather than trading: 'If ever you turn your misguided heart to trading and wish to escape from debt and joyless hunger, I will show you the measures of the loud-roaring sea, though I have no skill in sea-faring nor in ships [οὔτε τι ναυτιλῆς σεσοφισμένος οὔτε τι νηῶν]' (646-49).<sup>50</sup> Some scholars conceive the verb in terms of know-how rather than know-that, i.e. technical skill as opposed to knowledge, but this move is hard to justify.<sup>51</sup> In a literal version, the perfect participle *sesofismenos* seems to mean 'without having been trained in seafaring or ships', where the verb may either refer to knowledge (something learned), practical ability (capacity to act) or both. If we allow a metaphorical reading, skill and knowledge seem to overlap: having no skill in seafaring means having no knowledge of such affairs. Rosen argues: 'Hesiod claims on another level a poetic inability to sing of sailing, that is, he is not skilled in the type that deal with such affairs [in the way that Homeric poetry is]' (1990, p. 102).

Although early attested, *soph-* terminology emerges as a significant cultural category in the sixth century (as far as texts attest), becoming increasingly frequent in the course of the fifth century. The most numerous and evocative examples in the tradition of lyric poetry are found in Pindar.<sup>52</sup> Here, *soph-* terminology has a clear laudatory sense; it is paired along with beautiful (*kalos*) and illustrious (*aglaos*) (*O.* 14.7). It is often presented as a skill, sometimes having a strong intellectual component (*O.* 7.31). This skill or capacity is something that can be acquired and taught (*P.* 4.217), but it is also an innate quality (*O.* 2.86).<sup>53</sup> This is a relevant distinction especially considering the role that *sophia* has for the purpose of self-presentation. Ford reminds those who attribute to Pindar the view that poetry is an artifact that he 'never refers to his own poetic "wisdom" (*sophia*) as a *tekhnē*, and that he values god-sent wisdom over merely learnable skill' (2002, p.114).<sup>54</sup> This is also important for the present analysis as it establishes a contrast between the poet's

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<sup>50</sup> Trans. H.G. Evelyn-White (1914). This is an excerpt from a section of the poem known as *Nautilia* (618-94), a digression from the main topic of agriculture.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, the note by West on *sesofismenos*: 'σοφίη in early poetry is technical skill as possessed by the poet or musician' (1978, p. 9n319).

<sup>52</sup> The recurrence of the term in Pindar is noteworthy as compared to other Lyric poets.

<sup>53</sup> See also *adolos sophia* (*O.* 7.53) and *P.* 5.12.

<sup>54</sup> *O.* 2.86-87 and *N.* 1.25.

*technē* as a craft and the poet's *sophia* as knowledge of some kind (cf. Ford 2002, p. 123). This immediately opens the discussion for some critical aspects that will be discussed in Plato, particularly regarding the status of *sophia* as some sort of knowledge or expertise, and the question of whether it is teachable and learnable (cf. 2.3, 2.4).

To be sure, the poet is a *sophos* (*P.* 9.78, 10. 22; *I.* 7.18, 1.45, 8.47), but this does not mean that the *sophos* is a poet.<sup>55</sup> Rather, the poet is in possession of a particular art, often designated by *sophia*.<sup>56</sup> The notion is used with certain flexibility, in such a way that it allows Pindar to say that Aphrodite taught Jason to be *sophon* in prayers (*litas*) and songs (*epaoidas*) (*P.* 4.217). This means that *sophos* can be qualified by considering area of expertise. Likewise, in the encomium of Arcesilaus Pindar says 'he has shown to be a *sophos* charioteer [ἀρματηλάτας σοφός]' (*P.* 5.115), which in this context seems to mean 'good charioteer'.<sup>57</sup> In general, it encompasses both the ability to understand, which can be both naturally endowed or learned, and the ability to do certain things. It is important to notice that the capacity characteristic of *sophia* can be directed either to good or bad purposes. Pindar (*O.* 9.30-40), in support of the gnome that men become *agathoi* and *sophoi* only by divine assistance (v. 28), invokes the myth in which mortal Heracles overpowers three gods (Poseidon, Apollo, Hades). Immediately after, he recognises his move, i.e. the depiction by which mortal power defeats divine power, as a display of 'hateful *sophia* [ἐχθρὰ σοφία]': 'But cast that story away from me, my mouth! for reviling the gods [λοιδορῆσαι θεούς] is a hateful [ἐχθρὰ] *sophia*, and boasting inappropriately sounds a note of madness' (*O.* 35-9).<sup>58</sup> Importantly, what this passage shows is that men can be *sophoi* in accordance with gods (v. 28), or they can use their *sophia* against them.<sup>59</sup> As the case proves, *sophia* can be a good thing, but also

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<sup>55</sup> Perhaps *sophia* should be conceived as a broader category to which the art of poetry belongs; or, even more likely, the demarcation between poets and other intellectuals is not defined: 'In the sixth century, the role and status of the intellectual were not yet clearly defined; nor were intellectuals clearly marked off from singers, who had been claiming to be "wise" at least since Hesiod' (Ford 2002, p. 47).

<sup>56</sup> Solon (1, 52); Pindar (*I.* 7.18, 8.47; *O.* 1.9) and Sappho (Fr. 56.2) Bacchylides (fr. 2.1, Fr. 14. 3, Fr. 5. 1, fr. 1.3, *Ep.* 13.164 ).

<sup>57</sup> And so in Bacchylides *Ep.* 12.1, 'sophos pilot'.

<sup>58</sup> Trans. W. Race (1997).

<sup>59</sup> 'The gnome of v. 28 shows us men who are σοφοί in accordance with the gods, whereas the ἐχθρὰ σοφία of v. 38 provides the negative foil of men who turn their *sophia* against the gods' (Hubbard 1985, p. 120). For an analysis of the full passage see Gerber 2002, pp. 34-41.

a hateful thing if used for the wrong purpose. As we shall see, here and elsewhere, there is a sense of moral condemnation of the trick, the cleverness (cf. 1.4, 1.5).

## 1.2. The Context of Contest: Agonistic *Sophia*

However we intend to reconstruct the significance of *sophia*, we should start by considering that the notion is used in the context of competition. To assess the bearing this has on the present study, we only have to think about the way a ‘competition of wisdom’ would strike us today, as if wisdom were a quality that could be tested.<sup>60</sup> However, a contest of *sophia* is not only possible, but central in Greek culture from its earliest period: ‘Rivalry in claims to be wise starts almost as soon as we have any evidence to go on in Greece, and what counted as wisdom was an extraordinarily open-ended and negotiable question. Anyone could set himself up as a philosopher or as sophist, or, come to that, as a doctor’ (Lloyd 1987, p. 103).

Moreover, the very notion of *sophos* as the label designating the figure of the archaic sage appears to be essentially agonistic. Just as the performance of one athlete cannot be ranked except by reference to other athletes’ performance, ‘one sage was always sought to outdo the others, whether or not the others were present. In other words, *there had to be an idealised corporate body of sages for the very notion of archaic sage to make sense. One wise man does not work*’ (Martin 1993, p. 120).<sup>61</sup> Precisely because the title of *sophia* is an open and negotiable question, the conditions for the *agōn* are not restricted to specific genres or fields. Displays of rivalry in *sophia* are proved to be intrageneric as well as intergeneric. Examples of the latter and can be found in Xenophanes (DK B10-12), Heraclitus (DK fr. 42, 56 against Homer; DK fr. 57 against Hesiod), and Hippocrates against Empedocles and other thinkers (VM 20. 1-6).<sup>62</sup> In view of the fact that nowadays all fields of study are divided into specialised domains according to their own objects and methods, it

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<sup>60</sup> A potential tension between these two notions, i.e. *sophia* and competition, would be the result of a particular conception of *sophia*, one closer to our ideas of ‘wisdom’ and ‘temperance’. Graziosi proposes to understand competition in a broader sense and not necessarily linked to modern concepts of competition a ‘zero-sum game’ ‘in which one person can only win of another, or several others, lose’ (2001, p. 57).

<sup>61</sup> Richard Martin is here mostly concerned with the tradition of the Seven Sages and the stories about the tripod as a prize for *sophia*. The story is attested in Diod. 9. 3. 1-2, Diog. Laert. 1.27-32 and Plutarch. *Sol.* 4. 1. The different versions of the story are discussed by Wiersma (1933).

<sup>62</sup> Here addressed as *sophistai*.

seems most striking that a ‘contest of wisdom’ could include such a vast range of areas to the extent that, for example, a doctor and a poet could be striving for the same title. ‘Although these different kinds of wise men were clearly seen to be practising distinct activities, there was nonetheless a generalised competition among the different groups for the title of “wise man”’ (Nightingale 2000, p. 157). However, rival claims of *sophia* occur mostly in the context of poetic competition. ‘The catch-all Greek term for what is being tested in a poetic competition is *Sophia* (together with its cognates *sophos*, *sophizomai*, *sophistes*)’ (Griffith 1990, pp. 188-9). See, for example, Theognis (993-6): ‘If you should challenge me, Academus, to sing a pretty song, and a lad of fair beauty were to stand for our prize in a contest of your *sophiē* and mine, you would learn how much better mules be than asses’.<sup>63</sup>

Another illustrative (and more controversial) case of *sophia* as designating the art of the poet in the context of competition is found in one of Xenophanes’ elegies, where he compares his own *sophiē* with the kind of virtue displayed by the Olympic athlete: ‘For our *sophiē* is better than the strength of men and horses. But this practice makes no sense nor is it right to prefer strength to this good *sophiēs*’ (DK B2. 11-14).<sup>64</sup> Significantly, Xenophanes’ purpose does not seem to be disparaging the model introduced by the figure of the athlete, which occupies a prominent place in the tradition, but rather demonstrating that there is still a ‘better’ model, more suitable for the governance of the city (DK B2. 19). Most significantly, in this context, interpreting the meaning of *sophia* seems to be much more problematic. ‘In interpreting this passage generations of scholars have argued in effect that since σοφίη did not mean “wisdom” at this early date, but only “skill”, the poem must be interpreted as claiming that it is poetic skill (in the sense of “technique”) which is here ranked above athletic prowess’ (Kerferd 1976, p. 26). Let us see some of these interpretations. In one extreme position would be Jaeger, who offers the translation ‘intellectual virtue’ (1946, p. 174), and on the other side would be Guthrie, who translates ‘my art’ (1962, p. 364). Bowra (1953), Marcovich (1978), and more recently Leshner (1992) admit that either sense is possible, although they tend to privilege the broader sense of ‘wisdom’. But while Marcovich sees *sophia* as a means to teach citizens, Bowra favours the idea that *sophia* here simply entails ‘the

<sup>63</sup> Trans. J.M. Edmonds (1931) adapted.

<sup>64</sup> Trans. J.H. Leshner (1992).

philosophical and critical poetry which he himself wrote' (1953, p. 18) in opposition to other *technai*, which in this case corresponds to athletic ability. The discussion in these terms is set on the grounds that Xenophanes later goes on to remark: 'For neither if there were a good boxer [πύκτης ἀγαθός] among the people [...] would for this reason a city be better governed [εὐνομίη πόλις εἶη]' (DK B2. 15-19). The value of *sophia* is here assessed in contrast with the model of the Olympic athlete for the political purpose of *eunomia*, civic order. The kind of *sophia* that Xenophanes champions seems to be qualified as 'wisdom' on two grounds: (i) being intellectual as opposed to physical, (ii) having a moral function of civic instruction. On this basis, Kerferd points out: 'It is not poetic technique that makes a city well-ordered, or which fills its treasures, it is what the poet has to say, his message, the policies he recommends, his 'wisdom' which does this' (Kerferd 1976, p. 26). Thus the division arises because apparently Xenophanes is not claiming his *sophia* is better in virtue of a particular craft or expertise, but in virtue of being a moral educator. 'Xenophanes claims that his wisdom [Sophia] is more valuable to the city than the skill of any athlete, and this poem is specially interesting because it is not as a cosmologist or as a natural scientist that Xenophanes makes this claim, but as a poet and moral leader' (Lloyd 1991, p. 133).

The passage is important as it opens up the question about the moral authority invested in *soph*-terminology. More particularly, the discussion shows the extent to which *sophia* as *technē* is understood as something qualitatively different to *sophia* as wisdom or knowledge. But maybe we should wonder about the legitimacy of this demarcation. 'The debate has tended unfortunately to fit the passage into a dubious Hegelian history in which Xenophanes stands midway in a presumed evolution from wisdom as a craftlike skill to a purely intellectual and spiritual quality' (Ford 2002, p. 51). Perhaps what is meant is something like an 'art of wisdom', what Maier calls in German *Weisheitskunst* (1970, p. 39), which encompasses both *Kunst* and *Weisheit*. It will be useful to keep this example in mind. We shall see that this ambiguity underlines many instances of Platonic *sophia* and it is central to the question of whether there is such a thing as moral expertise (cf. 2.3, 2.4, 2.5).

### 1.3. *Sophos*: The Man of Intelligence

The sixth-century poet Theognis provides some relevant examples for the present study. In general, *sophia* in Theognis means ‘expertise’, ‘skill’ and ‘knowledge’, but in more than one case *sophia* is specifically a trait of intelligence. The *sophos* is a man (even a bad man) who is able to decipher a riddle (1. 682) or distinguish real from fake gold (1.120).<sup>65</sup> Most importantly, Theognis presents *sophia* as resourcefulness, i.e. the power to adapt to different situations by using many resources. He exhorts Cynus to be like ‘an entwined [πολυπλόκορου] octopus [πουλύπου]’ in his ability to camouflage and blend in with the environment (1. 215-18) and concludes: ‘*Sophiē* is better than inflexibility [ἀτροπίης]’ (1.217). Gregory Nagy comments on this passage: ‘To be *atropos* “not versatile” is the opposite of *polutropos* “versatile in many ways”, epithet of Odysseus, a hero who is actually compared to an octopus when he is about to drown at sea (v 432-433)’ (1985, p. 76). The advised versatility as a virtue characteristic of *sophia* is again invoked in 1. 1074, only that here it is contrasted with *aretē*: ‘Turn to all men a changeful habit, Cynus, mingling your disposition to the like of each; now imitate this man, and now make your disposition of another sort; surely *sophiē* is a better thing even than great virtue [κρείσσόν τοι σοφίη καὶ μεγάλης ἀρετῆς]’ (1.1071-4).<sup>66</sup>

It is worth noting that in these passages *sophia* is close in meaning to the Greek term *mētis*. *Mētis*, in general, refers to practical intelligence in its capacity to successfully adapt to a situation. Accordingly, its semantic field incorporates words such as *dolos*, *kairos*, *polumētis* and *technē* (cf. Detienne and Vernant 1978, p. 23). This category designates a capacity, the ability to make, to act and to react. As *sophia*, it also describes the creative faculty of the poet: ‘From [Olympia] a famous hymn embraces [ἀμφιβάλλεται] the thoughts [μητίεσσι] of the poets [σοφῶν]’ (Pindar O. 8-9).<sup>67</sup> Significantly for the present case, *mētis* is particularly associated with the behaviour

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<sup>65</sup> The importance of riddle-reading as a mark of wisdom is highlighted by Lloyd ‘And riddles did not just remain a feature of oracular discourse, for the ability to resolve them continued to be, in popular legend, a mark of the wise man’ (1987, p. 85).

<sup>66</sup> Trans. J.M. Edmonds (1931) adapted. Gentili discusses the poem by assessing the role of the nobleman in his social context: ‘the nobleman’s ability—his *sophía*—lies precisely in his capacity to adjust himself to the situation at hand and not to lose his inbred, intuitive sense for what is opportune to say or not to say in the presence of a given audience’ (1988, p. 133).

<sup>67</sup> For the meaning of *amphiballō* see Nisetich 1975.

of animals such as the fox and the octopus, traditionally known for their intelligence and the multiplicity of their resources.<sup>68</sup> ‘The suggested ideal is the *polútropos* one, the man of thousand tricks, the *epístrophos anthrōpōn* who can turn a different face to each person’ (Detienne and Vernant 1978, p. 39). The human trait the octopus reflects is that of concealment; to be able to appear in different guises: the octopus clings to the rock and changes its camouflage in order to mislead and deceive its adversary. The attitude of the one using *mētis* is not engaged with truth; what operates is the rule of ‘anything goes’. ‘This kind of wisdom does not focus on abstract truths, but rather on the complexities of practical life with all its chancy and changing forces and exigencies. The person who possesses *mētis* has a keen eye for the main chance, for what the Greeks called *kairos*—the right thing at the right time’ (Nightingale 2000, p. 160). This depiction of the *sophos* will offer us a relevant point of comparison with Plato’s *Sophist*, where the sophist is described as a prey that conceals himself by means of appearances (cf. 7.2).<sup>69</sup>

In this portrayal of the *sophos*, Herodotus’ *Histories* are an invaluable source from the mid-fifth century BCE. By tracing the origins of the war between Greeks and Persians, it provides us with a most complete cultural and political context for the assessment of the *sophos*. In this context, the ideal of *sophia* is related to experience, knowledge and public reputation, but also to cleverness, shrewdness and cunning. As in earlier accounts, *sophia* is described as a quality of the mind, as opposed to physical strength (3.127.2). When used as an adverb, it qualifies a way to proceed reflexively or thoughtfully, as opposed to hastily and thoughtlessly (*tachutera e sophōtera*).<sup>70</sup> *Sophos* is often used as a title of reputation, as with Damasus of Siris (6.127. 1). Solon is also renowned for his *sophia* (1.30.2) because of his experience of traveling and seeing many things, in the same way as the Scythian Anacharsis (4. 76, 2.). But it is the Athenian general Themistocles who has the greatest reputation for *sophia*. This man is renowned for his political and tactical skills, celebrated as a

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<sup>68</sup> Detienne and Vernant (1978, pp. 27-48) dedicate a whole chapter to this theme particularly as treated by Oppian, the Second Century CE author (authors?) of the treatises *On Fishing* and *On Hunting*.

<sup>69</sup> According to Detienne, the man of political skill and practical intelligence describes the statesman and the politician, as they share the same domain: ‘Their domain is on the level of contingency, which belongs not to the order of *epistēmē* but *doxa*. This is the domain of ambiguity’ (1996, p. 117).

<sup>70</sup> Persian King Cambyses when confessing he sent to kill his brother Smerdis and realises it was mistake (3.65.3) and Dario when he realises that commander Sandoces should not be punished (7. 194. 2).

war hero, and credited with the victories of Marathon and Salamis. In Book VIII, Herodotus reports that his *sophia* is celebrated by Athenians (8.110. 1), Spartans (8. 124, 2), and throughout Greece: ‘throughout all of Hellas [he] was deemed the *sophōtatos* by far of the Greeks’ (8. 124, 1). It is worth noticing that the kind of *sophos* Themistocles embodies, according to this description, incorporates the characteristics of both the politician and the strategist, a man of clever ideas and a man of action. According to Kerferd, who goes through the various accounts of Themistocles (Thucydides’ 1.138.3 and Plutarch’s *Themistocles* Ch. 2. 3-4), this is the description of a ‘pre-sophistic’ *sophistēs*, embodied by the figure of the Sage. ‘There may well have been, as Plutarch suggests, a class of men whose wisdom consisted in δεινότης πολιτική σύνεσις δραστήριος—“political shrewdness” and “practical sagacity”’ (1950, p. 10). This, again, will provide a significant reference when we discuss the *Protagoras* (316d-317b), as Plato seems to concede that there is an early tradition of sophists, although he does not include the kind of military and political *sophos* embodied by Themistocles, but rather poets, prophets and athletes (cf. 6.5, 6.6).

The many attested instances of *soph-* terminology in Herodotus show the richness of the words’ usage. Although we cannot assert that there is a primary meaning, it is worth observing that there is a marked predominance of the terminology being used to denote intellectual craftiness or traits of intelligence. Often, *sophia/sophos* designate the capacity to calculate, to plan, to deceive, invent, contrive strategies, and to solve problems. There are those who are identified as *sophoi* because of their opportunistic cleverness, such as the council man Phanes, who escaped from the eunuch sent by the Egyptian king Amasis to capture him (3.4.2) or the Persian officer Oebares, called a *sophos anēr* when asked by Darius to come up with a plan to win a prize that would make him king (3.85.1). Similarly, Pisistratus’ plan to regain Athens for the third time (1.63.2) is said to be *sophōtatēn* and so is the thief of king Rhampsinit’s treasure (2.121E.2) by contriving a plan and successfully deceiving the guards to recover his brother’s body (cf. 2.121D.1 ff.). As in Theognis, *sophia/sophos* designates the sort of ingenuity that answers riddles (4.131.2). It also relates to inventiveness, the capacity to discover something, as when attributed to the Egyptians because they discovered 12 seasons from observing the stars (2. 4. 1). We

can say that the ingenuity of *sophia* may apply to theoretical inquiry as well as to practical sagacity as when the Phoenician are said to be *sophoi* by investing less work than necessary in the construction of a canal (7. 23. 3) and the Scythians in their power to contrive war strategies: ‘But the Scythian race has made the *sofōtata* discovery that we know in what is the most important of all human affairs that they have contrived that no one who attacks them can escape, and no one can catch them if they do not want to be found’ (4. 46. 2).

To the extent that a *sophos* can use his ability to any purpose, it can also become a threat. This is when the *sophos* becomes a *deinos sophos*. The Persian general Megabazus reproaches king Darius for giving rewards to Histiaeus the Milesian: ‘Sir, what is this that you have done? You have given a cunning and *sophos* Greek [Ἑλληνι δεινῷ τε καὶ σοφῷ] a city to build in Thrace’ (5. 23. 1).<sup>71</sup> This sort of intellectual craftiness, the capacity of the mind to reason, to plan, to solve problems and to discover things may deserve our admiration, but also our fear, and *deinos* captures both the admirable and the terrifying.<sup>72</sup>

Before returning to poetry, I would like to discuss one more example relevant to the portrayal of the *sophos* as a ‘man of intelligence’. This is offered by Gorgias and it constitutes one of the few attested instances in the fragments of the sophists and, except for Isocrates, in oratory in general. This is part of his *Defence of Palamedes* (DK B11. 25), an epideictic speech that argues against the charge of treason devised by Odysseus.

You accused me through spoken words of two directly opposed things, *sophia* and madness [μανίαν], which the same man cannot have. Where you say that I am artful [τεχνήεντα] and clever [δεινόν] and resourceful [πόριμον], you accuse me of *sophia*, and where you say that I was betraying Greece, you accuse me of madness [μανίαν]. [...] I would like to ask you whether you think *sophoi* men [σοφούς ἄνδρας] are witless or intelligent [ἀνοήτους ἢ φρονίμους]. If witless [ἀνοήτους], your speech is novel, but not true; if intelligent [φρονίμους], surely it is not right for intelligent men to make the

<sup>71</sup> Trans. A.D. Godley (1920).

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Plato’s *Prot.* 341a7ff. Guthrie makes the link between *sophos* and *deinos* in the following way: ‘Degenerating, as words do, in popular use, it became coupled with *sophos* to mean clever or skilful: the Egyptian are *deinoi* (terrible fellows) for devising stratagems, Prometheus is *deinos* at wriggling out of the difficulties, a good driver is *deinos* at his art. It also, and particularly, meant clever in speech and argument’ (1971, p. 32).

worst mistakes and to prefer evils to present goods. If therefore I am *sophos*, I have not erred [οὐχ ἥμαρτον]; if I have erred, I am not *sophos*. Thus in both cases you would be wrong.<sup>73</sup>

Palamedes proceeds to contest the plausibility of the charge by alleging lack of motivation. He is wealthy, honourable and *sophos*.<sup>74</sup> This particular passage aims to expose the contradiction resulting from holding a man accountable for treason while honouring him for his *sophia*. Because betraying the Greeks is conceived as an obvious error of judgement, as *mania*, he exhorts his audience to think about whether he is a *sophos* or a madman. Apart from the rhetorical appeal of the passage, what calls our attention is the way that *sophia* is first identified with ‘artful’ (*technēenta*), ‘clever’ (*deinon*) and ‘resourceful’ (*porimon*) and then presented in opposition to *mania*, thereby implying that the presence of these qualities guarantee good judgement. In this context, a *sophos* man always makes the right decision, which means that he always prefers goods over evils. This is a topic that will be further discussed in the context of tragedy (cf. below 1.4), but it is interesting to keep this example in mind, as a reference depicting the *deinos sophos* as a *sophos* who makes all the right choices. I will pick up the thread of this discussion again in the context of Platonic philosophy, particularly when examining the *Euthydemus* (280a8), where *sophia* is defined as the kind of knowledge that does not admit error (cf. 2.5).

#### 1.4. The Moral Strand: Examples in Tragedy

*Soph-* terminology is attested in the three main tragedians, showing an increasing number of instances from Aeschylus to Sophocles and from Sophocles to Euripides. We witness all the uses seen in earlier accounts. We find the figure of the *sophos* as an embodied authority, *ho sophos*, also identified as a group or a class, *hoi sophoi*. *Sophia* includes all of the early attested meanings, such as ‘knowledge’, ‘expertise’, ‘skill’ and ‘cleverness’. But the new element that tragedy offers for the interpretation of *sophia* is the moral context. Mostly, it raises the question of human agency, for which the assessment of the role of knowledge, skill and intelligence is essential. As we shall see, the notion is governed by ambivalence. On the one hand, *sophia*

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<sup>73</sup> Trans. G. Kennedy (1972).

<sup>74</sup> Palamedes is renowned and honoured for his *sophia* among the Greeks (cf. 16 in the text). See also Xen. *Mem.* 4.2.33.9-11 and *Hunt.* 1.11.

conveys a normative element: the *sophos* thing to do equates to the right thing to do, thereby becoming closer in meaning to ‘practical reason’ or ‘good judgement’. On the other hand, it designates traits of human intelligence regardless of moral purpose. As a consequence, in some contexts *sophia* is the advised ideal of prudence and good judgment, in some other contexts, daring cleverness. It will also become clear (particularly in Euripides and Aristophanes) that the conflict between different conceptions of *sophia* is culturally embedded. In some contexts *sophia* invokes the traditional model of learning, in others, the new model of learning; in certain contexts, *sophia* invokes both.

In Aeschylus we find only a few instances of *soph-* terminology.<sup>75</sup> It is mostly used as an adjective, meaning ‘instructed’, ‘skilled’ or ‘expert’, as in ‘expert helmsman’ (*kubernētē sopho*) (*Supp.* 770), but also meaning something like ‘wise’ as in *mantin sophon* (*Seven* 382). In *Prometheus Bound* we find a conception of *sophos* that is closer to our notions of ‘prudent’ and ‘wise’. Hermes comes to Prometheus bringing a message from Zeus: he either tells who is the one that will throw Zeus from power, or he will experience further punishment. The Chorus, noticing Prometheus’ stubbornness, advises him to follow Hermes instruction: ‘In our opinion, what Hermes says is not beside the point: he urges you to abandon self-will [αὐθαδίαν], and to pursue *sophēn* prudence [σοφῆν εὐβολίαν]. Follow his advice: it is shameful for the *sophos* [σοφῶ] to err’ (*PB* 1038).<sup>76</sup> Interestingly, this is a man who is twice called a *sophistēs* (62, 944), once by Hermes himself. But being a *sophistēs* does not make him a *sophos*. As Griffith points out: ‘P. is criticized for failure (ἐξαιμαρτάνειν) to make effective use of his σοφία’ (1983, p. 269). In this context, the lack of *sophia* (or lack of right use) denounces the loss of judgement, thereby conveying the normative aspect attached to *sophia*, closer to our idea of ‘good sense’. This view is confirmed later on when he then refers to him as *phrenoplēktos* (1054), someone mad or frenzied. Thus *sophia* can be opposed to madness as well as to ignorance and foolishness.

In Sophocles we can trace the meaning of expertise (*Phil.* 431), knowledge (*Ant.* 710) and good judgement (*El.* 473, 1016). Although it has a laudatory sense,

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<sup>75</sup> *P.B.* 936, 1038, 1039; *Eum.* 279; *Seven* 382, 595; *Supp.* 770.

<sup>76</sup> Trans. A.H. Sommerstein (2008).

Sophocles seems to be the first one explicitly to denounce the regrettable or dangerous aspect of human *sophia*. Indeed, one of the most paradigmatic passages warning against the dangers of human skill and ingenuity is found in Sophocles' *Antigone*. Creon has just been informed that, in defiance of his edict, someone has buried the body of Polyneices. From Antigone's daring action, the choral ode of the first stasimon goes on to describe the marvels and disgraces made possible by human audacity and inventiveness: 'Possessing resourceful skill, a thing *sophon* [σοφόν τι] beyond expectation he moves now to evil, now to good. When he honours the laws of the land and the justice of the gods to which he is bound by oath, his city prospers. But banned from his city is he who, thanks to his rashness, couples with disgrace' (365-371).<sup>77</sup> The ambivalence of men's talents is captured by the word *deinos* used twice in the first lines (332-3): 'Wonders are many, and none is more wonderful than man [πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κοῦδὲν ἀνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλει]'. Mark Griffith, commenting on this passage, claims that both the meanings 'wonderful' and 'terrible' are intended: 'So, while the "wonderful" benefits of architecture, medicine, language, and law are acknowledged, so is mankind's "terrible" urge to dominate and to push beyond accepted limits' (1999, p. 181).<sup>78</sup> Significantly, the Chorus is denouncing a kind of *sophon* that is beyond expectation. Roochnik, who assesses the passage for the analysis of *technē*, says: 'This would mean that human *technē* is surprising. It is that. But more to the point is that its effects are unpredictable and on this note the Chorus closes: *technē* can bring its possessor either to ill (*kakon*) or to good (*esthlon*). In other words, in and of itself it is neither. Only the application of *technē*, how it is used, determines its value' (1996, p. 60). The ambivalence lies then in the way that human talent and ability is put to use.<sup>79</sup>

No other poet reveals the ambivalence of *sophia* as Euripides does. Not only does he use these notions a lot more frequently, he does so in a way that allows something

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<sup>77</sup> Trans. R. Jebb (1902) adapted.

<sup>78</sup> The ambivalence of *deinotēs*, designating a sort of cleverness that can be excessive, explains why Aristotle defines it in opposition to *phronēsis* (*Eth. Nich.* 1144a28).<sup>78</sup> 'This natural counterpart to *phronēsis* is characterised by the fact that the *deinos* is "capable of anything"; he uses his skills to any purpose and is without inhibition. He is *aneu arêtes*. And it is more than accidental that such a person is given a name that also means "terrible". Nothing is so terrible, so uncanny, so appalling, as the exercise as brilliant talents for evil' (Gadamer 1989, pp. 323-4).

<sup>79</sup> Nussbaum summarizes the Chorus' assertion: 'the statement of human triumphs through reason turns out to be also a compressed document of reason's limitations, transgressions and conflicts' (2001, p. 75). The passage is also discussed by Woodruff (2006, p. 37) in connection with the double-valence of the word *sophistēs*.

like *to sophon d' ou sophia* (*Ba.* 395) to make sense. In general, *sophia* has the usual intellectual ingredient. Like in Herodotus, *sophia* is an asset that can manage without physical strength. So, for example, Menelaus says to Orestes that he will try to save him ‘by *sophia*, not by violence [μὴ βίᾳ]’ (*Orest.* 710).<sup>80</sup> It may be the kind of tactical knowledge witnessed in the context of Herodotus (*Andr.* 957; *Her.* 189, 202) or expertise in some specific area (*Hipp.* 987-88; *Med.* 579). As in Aeschylus, it can also mean ‘good judgement’ where the *sophos* incarnates the voice of prudence. See, for example, how Helen reacts to Menelaus’ suggestion of killing Theoclymenus: ‘You’ll find out. But a *sophos* [ἀνδρὸς σοφοῦ] does not undertake the impossible’ (*Hel.* 811).<sup>81</sup> But the calculation characteristic of good judgement can also be used for personal advantage, and so Menelaus calls *sophos* the revenge he takes part in against Andromache (*Andr.* 437).

As already mentioned, the most relevant passage rendering the complexity of the meaning of *sophia* is in *Bacchae to sophon d' ou sophia* (395). The full passage reads as follows:

Misfortune is the result of unbridled mouths and lawless folly; but the life of quiet and wisdom [βίσιτος καὶ τὸ φρονεῖν] remain unshaken and holds houses together. Though they dwell far off in the heavens the gods see the deeds of mortals. But *to sophon d' ou sophia*, nor is thinking on things unfit for mortals. Life is short, and on this account the one who pursues great things does not achieve that which is present. In my opinion, these are the ways of mad and ill-advised men (389-401).<sup>82</sup>

The Chorus is assessing Pentheus’ overcritical attitude towards the celebration of Dionysus’ rites, which reveals his *hubris* and lack of sense. Admittedly, Pentheus is not deprived of intelligence; he certainly demonstrates that he is a bold and competent speaker. In this sense, he is a *sophos* (266). Nonetheless, inasmuch as he does not acknowledge the limits of his mortal nature and acts against divine will, he is not *sophos*. Significantly enough, Pentheus is *sophos* and non-*sophos* at the same time, but not in the same respect. A possible reading of the passage can be made along the following lines: a *sophos* ‘with respect to something’ namely, the art of

<sup>80</sup> Trans. E.P. Coleridge (1938).

<sup>81</sup> Trans. D. Kovacs (2002). See also *I. T.* 907; *Hec.* 228.

<sup>82</sup> Trans. T.A. Buckley (1850).

speaking, does not make a *sophos* in its full sense, i.e. a ‘wise man’. The translation ‘wisdom is not wisdom’, even when it conveys the paradox of the Greek expression, does not really help to make the case clear.<sup>83</sup> Hence the alternative ‘cleverness is not wisdom’ (e.g. Seaford 1996), which reveals a distinction between two intellectual forms of behaviour, one associated with skill and the other connected with good sense (cf. Winnington-Ingram 1969, pp. 62-3). This reading of opposing conceptions of *sophia*, one that is aligned with traditional values and one that defies them, is confirmed by the text itself. Tiresias is insistently called a *sophos* by Cadmus (179, 183), and yet, in anticipation of Pentheus’ attitude, he declares: ‘We mortals have no cleverness [οὐδὲν σοφιζόμεσθα] in the eyes of the gods. Our ancestral traditions, and those which we have held throughout our lives, no argument will overturn, not even if some craftiness [τὸ σοφὸν] should be discovered by the depths of our wits’ (200-203). On this, Dodds asserts: ‘τὸ σοφόν has the same implication as in 203; it is the false wisdom of men like Pentheus, who φρονῶν οὐδὲν φρονεῖ (332, 266 ff, 311ff), in contrast with the true wisdom of devout acceptance (179, 186)’ (1944, p. 121). The passage illuminates two distinct cases of *sophia* in Plato, namely Socratic *sophia*, which designates the right appraisal of the limits of one’s knowledge and the recognition of the gap between human and divine, and the distinction between real and apparent *sophos/sophia* in terms of the value of the object known (cf. 2.6).

The risks and dangers involved in the possession of *sophia* find more concrete examples in Euripides’ *Medea* and *Hippolytus*. The former presents Medea’s characteristic intelligence and ingenuity as a burden and a threat. Creon describes her as being a ‘natural *sophe* [σοφή πέφυκας]’ and as ‘knowing many evils [καὶ κακῶν πολλῶν ἴδρις]’ (285). In Euripides’ *Hippolytus* (518), when Phaedra expresses her suspicion that the nurse might betray her, she says she is afraid she will prove to be ‘too *sophē* [λίαν σοφή]’ for her. The belief according to which someone might be considered excessively *sophos* seems to lie in a correlation between intelligence and the opportunity to act for one’s own advantage, closer to

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<sup>83</sup> Vlastos discusses this passage and claims that, in opposition to the English ‘wisdom’, the Greek *sophia* allows such a variation of sense. ‘He flings his sentence at the audience, sure that no one in it will fail to catch on instantly, understanding τὸ σοφόν to refer to the μὴ θνητὰ φρονεῖν displayed in that brash, sneering, jeering, smart-alecky rationalism of Pentheus, the extreme opposite of “wisdom” in that other sense of the word represented by Teiresias—reverent acceptance of the ancestral faith whose rejection by Pentheus will spell his doom’ (1985, p. 30).

the idea of cunning or cleverness. The excessive degree the adverb ‘too’ (Greek *lian*) indicates here reveals a transgression of some sort.<sup>84</sup> To be sure, one cannot be ‘too *sophos*’ unless being a *sophos* has some regrettable aspect involved.

More significantly, to the same extent that *kakos* and *sophos* become associated, the opposite phenomenon also occurs. In Euripides *Ion*, the old servant warns Creusa against Xuthus’ plans to make her believe that Ion was her own son. To this the Chorus responds: ‘I would rather have as a friend an ordinary man [φᾰύλον] who is good [χρηστόν] than a bad man [κακόν] who is more *sophos* [σοφώτερον]’ (834-5).<sup>85</sup> As Dodds asserts, when Euripides makes this contrast, the *sophoi* come in for criticism.<sup>86</sup> As a consequence, the value of *sophos* and *sophia* can be relativised. Certainly, *sophos* is a complimentary label in the assessment of intellectual achievement; if intellectual achievement is put in the service of the wrong purpose, however, *sophos* can be a term of abuse. In this case, it is preferable to be an *amathēs*. Thucydides addresses the phenomenon in the context of the Peloponnesian War. Circumstances cause a general perversion of values, including the meanings of terms.<sup>87</sup> ‘The words normally used to evaluate deeds where change to fit what was thought justified. [...] Most people would rather be called clever when evil [κακοῦργοι δεξιοί] than stupid when virtuous [ἀμαθείς ἀγαθοί], and think the second a ground for shame but the first a ground for delight’ (3. 82.4-7).<sup>88</sup> The passage shows the context in which words can alter, not so much their meaning, but their evaluative import. P. J. Rhodes comments on this: ‘the point is not that words

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<sup>84</sup> The same phrasing is found in a passage in Euripides’ *Electra* (295-6). Orestes, still in anonymity, wants to know what happened during his absence, although knowing it will bring suffering. He says to Electra: ‘Pity [οἶκτος] is found not in ill-bred ignorance [ἀμαθία] but only in the wise [σοφοῖσι]’, after which he adds, ‘when the wise are too wise [σοφοῖς λίαν σοφήν], there is a price to be paid [οὐδ’ ἄζημιον].’ (Trans. D. Kovacs (1998) adapted). Also see *Heracleidae* (575) for an example of ‘a right measure of *sophia*’.

<sup>85</sup> ‘Rather *sophos*’ is also a possible translation from *sophōteros*.

<sup>86</sup> See Dodds’ note on *Bacchae* 430-3: ‘The φᾰύλοι are the “simple” people both in the social and in the intellectual sense: Eur. frequently contrasts them with the σοφοί, and not always to their disadvantage’ (1944, p. 129).

<sup>87</sup> The only attested instance of *sophos* in Thucydides is found at 3.37.4 in the form of the comparative, *sophōteros*. In the *Mytilenian Debate* Creon defends the decision to condemn Mytilenes to death, advocating for a position which privileges firm action as opposed to reflective deliberation. In this context, it is preferable to have men that are ignorant and modest than clever and arrogant ‘The latter are always wanting to appear *sophōteroi* than the laws, and to overrule every proposition brought forward, thinking that they cannot show their wit in more important matters, and by such behavior too often ruin their country’ (3.37.4.) (Trans. P.J. Rhodes (1994)). In this same context appears the only instance of the word *sophistēs* (3.38.7) in Thucydides. Creon denounces the Athenians’ love for the speeches of the sophists rather than firm action (cf. 6.3).

<sup>88</sup> Trans. P.J. Rhodes (1994) adapted.

changed their meanings but that descriptions with favourable connotations and descriptions with unfavourable connotations were interchanged' (1994, p. 236). Importantly, in this scenario, emphasis is given to the fact that men prefer to be called clever, *dexioi*, although moral approval is given to the ignorant. As Marchant puts it, 'most men prefer to be called clever knaves rather than honest fools' (1952, p. 192). This is important to observe because, as we shall see, in the context of Platonic literature, *amathia* and *sophia* are often morally relevant. What the *sophos* knows and the *amathēs* ignores is the knowledge of good and evil. In this context, it is never preferable to be an *amathēs* than a *sophos* (cf. 2.3, 2.4, 2.5).

### 1.5. Characterisation of the *Sophos*: the Clever and the Intellectual

The figure of the cunning and clever individual has a significant place in the ancient literary tradition from Homer to Euripides. The characteristics of cunning *sophia* can be traced in Theognis, as well as in Herodotus and the tragedians. Among the epic heroes, *polutropos* Odysseus stands as a paradigmatic example.<sup>89</sup> While it is true that some post-Homeric accounts show Odysseus' intelligence in a rather negative light, in Homer this is a quality that deserves divine admiration. In *Odyssey* (13. 291ff) Athene praises Odysseus on the basis of being 'crafty in counsel [ποικιλομήτα]', 'insatiate in deceit [όλων άατος]', and describes him as someone who loves lying.<sup>90</sup> But when Pindar appeals to the general principle by which the achievement of men is reflected (as a mirror) by poetic hymns, he brings as a counter-example the case of Odysseus: 'I believe that Odysseus' story has become greater than his actual suffering because of Homer's sweet verse' (*N.* 7.20-2). The fame of Odysseus extends beyond his actions; there is not a proportional relation between deeds done and prizes sung, and so the mirror effect fails. Behind the principle lies a claim for poetic truth established by a relationship of conformity between sayings and facts. Odysseus' honor is fabricated: 'for upon his [Homer's or Odysseus'?] fictions and soaring craft rests great majesty, and his *sophia* deceives with misleading tales [κλέπτει παράγοισα μύθοις]' (*N.* 7.22-3). It remains ambiguous whether this charge is attributed to Homer, Odysseus, or to both of them. What matters for the

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<sup>89</sup> For a complete survey on the reception of the figure of Odysseus in the philosophical tradition see Montiglio (2011).

<sup>90</sup> Trans. A.T. Murray (1995).

present case, however, is that the explanation supplied contains ‘general applicability’ for the two instances shown in Pindar: ‘the capacity of σοφία to cheat by deceiving with fables’ (Most 1985, p. 152). In Sophocles’ *Philoctetes*, once Philoctetes realises that Neoptolemus has deceived him by following Odysseus’ instructions, he accuses the latter of training the former to be *sophos* in evil: ‘But your corrupt mind, always on the lookout from some position of ambush, trained him well—unsuited and unwilling though he was—to be *sophos* in evil [ἐν κακοῖς εἶναι σοφόν] (1013-5).’<sup>91</sup> As shown in the particular case of *Philoctetes*, Odysseus’ characteristic label of *sophos* is understood mainly in a negative way. ‘His cunning, eloquence, and inventiveness are no longer positive qualities, as in Homer, but dubious talents. [...] Specifically, Odysseus embodies the morally questionable type of σοφός. In tragedy the term has a range of meanings spanning from “clever” to “knowledgeable” to “wise”; but when it is applied to Odysseus, it never connotes moral wisdom except in *Ajax* (1374)’ (Montiglio 2011, p. 8).<sup>92</sup> Indeed, not only in this passage, but throughout *Ajax*, Odysseus is presented as a friend, a *philos*, rather than as a cunning or abusive *sophos*.<sup>93</sup> As compared to Neoptolemos, however, the character of Odysseus calls for moral disapproval. ‘There is hardly room for doubt that Sophocles in *Philoctetes* does not intend us to admire the character of Odysseus in those respects in which it is contrasted with that of Neoptolemos’ (Dover 1974, p. 16). Significantly, in Plato there is no place for a cunning *sophos*. Apart from the *Lesser Hippias*, which presents us with a rather ambiguous evaluation of Odysseus’ *polutropia*, the *sophos*, is almost never defined by virtue of his cleverness, i.e. this is not a distinctive trait of the *sophos*, but by virtue of his knowledge (cf. 2.1, 2.2). Plato’s defence of Socrates in the *Apology* (and of the philosopher in general in the *Republic*) tends to use the stereotype of the intellectual, particularly the type of the idle intellectual. This is the one who, unlike the man that knows his way in the courts of law, for example, seems to lack knowledge in practical affairs (cf. 1.6, 5.5).

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<sup>91</sup> Trans. F. Storr (1913). See also Euripides’ *Trojan Women* (1224). When Hecuba talks to Hector’s corpse refers to Odysseus as the *kakos sophos*.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Finglass (2011, pp. 502-3).

<sup>93</sup> The characterisation of Odysseus in these terms should not be surprising, since it follows the Homeric precedent in many ways. In addition to the rhetorical and intellectual skills often used by him to his own advantage, the hero is a model for rationality and endurance. Odysseus epithet is *polutlas*, ‘much-enduring’. Cf. Soph. *Aj.* 956; *Il.* 8.97; *Od.* 5. 171. In Plato’s *Symposium* Socrates is compared to Odysseus on precisely this quality. At 220c1 he is described by Alcibiades as a *karteros anēr*, in the same way Odysseus is characterised in *Odyssey* 4.242.

In the background of fifth-century BCE Athens, where the group of the *sophoi* includes poets, politicians, teachers of rhetoric, and philosophers, the question that needs to be defined is what particular group is to be labelled by the tag ‘intellectual’. Within this broad category there seem to be different types of *sophoi*: there is a *sophos* who promotes and embodies the customs and conventions of tradition; who puts his inventiveness and knowledge in the service of preserving the old traditional values and, conversely, there is a *sophos* who uses his inventiveness to undermine and subvert these values by introducing new ideas and standards. In this context, the intellectual is the one who, by means of critical and rational analysis, challenges the established system of beliefs. To understand this, it is useful to observe the cultural climate of fifth century Athens where a major shift takes place. Ford describes it ‘as a fundamental and broad shift from early responses to singing as a form of behavior regulated by social, political, and religious values to a conception of poetry as a verbal artifact, an arrangement of language subject to grammatical analysis, formal classification, and technical evaluation’ (2002, p. 8). This phenomenon, against the political backdrop of an egalitarian ideology, gives impulse to the democratisation of education and the creation of a new intellectual class.<sup>94</sup> Havelock describes the phenomenon as follows: ‘High culture had become alphabetised or more correctly, alphabetisation had become socialised’ (1982, p. 10). More significantly, ‘[i]n parallel, the intellectual man tends to be recognised as a type participating in the body politic, but not of it. His conceptualised written language no longer expects to command the direct sympathy of nonliterate listeners. He ceases to be a bard and becomes a “thinker”’ (1982, p. 11). Marked by an analytical approach to language, this new trend affects the literary tradition and the cultural value-system in many different ways. But even more interesting, considering the context of a traditional value-system and a religious culture, this kind of knowledge carries a negative evaluative component. ‘In Greek thought the acceptance of tradition is generally opposed to cleverness, to the critical intellect’ (Winnington-Ingram 1969, p. 43). For this kind of approach, the most evocative examples are found in the tragedy of Euripides and the comedy of Aristophanes (especially *Frogs* and *Clouds*), both

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<sup>94</sup> ‘From the end of the sixth century to the end of the fifth, the evidence suggests a general increase in schooling throughout the Athenian citizen class and a steadily wider dissemination of skill in reading and writing’ (Ford 2002, p. 195).

contemporaries of Socrates and the latter invoked in Plato's *Apology* (19c2). There is, so it seems, something tragic about *sophia*, but also something laughable about the *sophoi*. The underlying idea is that intellectual capacity and critical knowledge can be used to challenge the established value-system. As a consequence, the *sophos* becomes the object of social disapproval. See how Medea, in her attempt to persuade Creon, regrets the reputation of being *sophē*, where *sophia* is *kaina*, 'new' and 'strange'.

No right-thinking man should ever have his children taught to be over-*sophos* [ἐκδιδάσκεισθαι σοφοῦ]; for apart from the other problems they have, idleness [ἀργίας], they reap a hostile envy [φθόνον] from the citizens. For offering strange new *sopha* [καινὰ προσφέρων σοφά] to the foolish [σκαιοῖσι] you will seem to be inept [ἀχρεῖος] and not *sophos*; and again being thought more powerful than those who think they have some subtle knowledge you appear troublesome in the city. And I myself share this fortune; for being *sophē*, to some I am an object of envy [ἐπίφθόνος], and to others again I am in the way; but I am not all that *sophē*<sup>95</sup> (294-305).

As Judith Mossman (2011, p. 245) asserts, there are two drawbacks for the *sophoi*: (i) being thought foolish or idle by the ignorant and people unfamiliar with new concepts, (ii) being envied by others who consider themselves to be *sophoi*.<sup>96</sup>

In Euripides the question about the nature and value of *sophia* is a recurrent theme. 'Euripides wrote for an age preoccupied with the idea of *sophia*; for over a generation sophists had been claiming to teach it in every department of life, and we may believe that the word σοφός, "wise" or "clever", was constantly upon the lips of Athenian as it is on those of Euripidean characters' (Winnigton-Ingram 1969, p. 167). It seems likely that Euripides was negotiating the position of his own poetic *sophia* somewhere between tradition and the new sophistic trend. As already seen, the tension between two opposite conceptions of *sophia* is noticeable in *Bacchae*: the intellectual *sophos*, 'the thinker', embodied by Pentheus, is characterised in opposition to the *sophos* who accepts and respects the Dionysiac traditional rites, embodied by Tiresias.

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<sup>95</sup> Trans. J. Mossman (2011).

<sup>96</sup> Of course, the condemnation of Medea's *sophia* may also respond to the fact that she is a woman. Cf. Eur. *Hipp.* 640-3.

In Aristophanes, on the other hand, we find the contrast between traditional and innovative *sophia* in the agonistic setting of *Frogs*. To be sure, Aeschylus is no less a *sophos* than Euripides, yet there is a fundamental difference in the way they are perceived and portrayed. While Aeschylus embodies the poet of the old values of tradition, Euripides, with his innovative and critical approach, instead of preserving and promoting the traditional standards, challenges them until they lose their meaning. According to the chorus (*Frogs* 1486) Aeschylus' virtuosity blesses friends and fellow-citizens; Euripides, at best, spreads his madness by chatting with Socrates.<sup>97</sup> Significantly, Aeschylus' final prize is not assigned by virtue of cognitive ability or learning, but rather by virtue of his particular educative role in society (*nouthesia*; 1009).

### 1.6. The *sophos* in Aristophanes' *Clouds*

As we shall see (cf. 3.1), the *Clouds* is an important reference for Plato's presentation of Socrates as a *sophos* in the *Apology*. This, together with the fact that, from the old comedians, Aristophanes is the only one offering a regular use of *soph*-terminology, particularly in *Clouds*, calls for a more detailed analysis. Indeed, the adjective appears eighteen times, the noun *sophia* seven times (while *sophistēs* appears only three times).<sup>98</sup> The play narrates the 'educational journey' of Strepsiades, a simple countryman, who seeks to beat creditors by means of argumentation.<sup>99</sup> He becomes a student of Socrates' school, the *phrontistērion*, that offers instruction in a number of subjects, including astronomy, cosmology, biology, and, more importantly, rhetoric. More significantly for the present analysis, the class

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<sup>97</sup> For a study of the relationship between Euripides and Socrates, both as intellectual figures in late fifth-century Athens, see Wildberg (2006).

<sup>98</sup> At 331 the clouds sustain *sophistai* among many other experts; at 1111, the worse argument says to Strepsiades after the instruction on oratory: 'don't worry, you'll receive him back as skilled sophist' (*sophistēn dexion*); at 1309 is said of Pheidippides.

<sup>99</sup> The play was performed at the city of Dionysia in 423 BC and won the third place after Cratinus' *Wine-flask* and Ameipsias' *Konnos* (Hypothesis II). Although the play was not a success in terms of popularity, Aristophanes regarded it as his best (cf. *Wasps* 1047). In the absence of these two plays, one can only speculate about the reasons of its failure. Carey, after evaluating the fragmented plays, attempts to give an answer: 'On the basis of evidence currently available, Aristophanes was unusual in his detailed presentation of sophistic thought. Evidently his rivals felt that the audience had little interest in the ideas of contemporary rationalists and little desire to see those ideas explore in the theatre' (2000, pp. 430-1).

of the intellectuals is designated in *Clouds* by the label ‘*sophos*’ and ‘*sophistēs*’.<sup>100</sup> The terms *sophos* and *sophia* are indeed as distinctive here as in Plato’s *Apology*. It captures the whole range of intellectuals and specialists, enhancing assimilation without discriminating between types (cf. 3.1.1). Meanwhile, there is not an instance of the word *philosophos* or *philosophia*.<sup>101</sup> Nightingale makes the point:

Perhaps the most important indication of the valence of this term [*philosophia*] in late-fifth century Athens, however, is its absence from the texts of Old Comedy. Although the fragments of Old Comedy as well as the plays of Aristophanes contain a number of attacks on intellectuals, they have nothing to say about “philosophers”. Before the fourth century, then, there was no special subgroup of intellectuals that had appropriated the title of “*philosophoi*” (1995, p. 15).

Even when the wide semantic value of *sophia/sophos* does not allow a unique meaning, in *Clouds* the term tends to overlap with *dexiotēs*, an intellectual skill connected with cleverness and creativity.<sup>102</sup> And even though the *sophoi* can designate many ‘experts’ from different fields, the title most generally invokes the kind of new sophistic trend.<sup>103</sup> As Gauthier and Jolif (1959) and Kerferd (1976) have observed, the term, originally poetic, was probably popularised by the sophists in the late fifth-century. The textual evidence, particularly the fact that these forms are rarely found in Thucydides and the orators, seems to suggest that the word is not a regular one in Attic prose. ‘When we realise that there are 30 example of the word and its derivatives in Aristophanes’ *Clouds* it begins to be likely, even bearing in mind the subject matter of the play, that the term was a newish term in Athens in 423

<sup>100</sup> The lower frequency of this suggests that it is not in such wide use and so less obviously useful for Aristophanes.

<sup>101</sup> Havelock observes that the influence of Old Comedy is decisive for Plato’s reinvention of the intellectual via the *philosophos*: ‘For himself, and for his master Socrates, and for his future disciple Aristotle, there was needed a new professional title which should shake off the odium of *sophistēs*. This was found in *philosophos*, the “philosopher”. The “intellectual” was replaced by “the lover of intelligence”’ (1957, pp. 158-9).

<sup>102</sup> Dover asserts: ‘σοφία in Ar., and in the fifth century generally, most commonly denoted an active, creative skill or artistry, for which knowledge, practice and native wit are all required. Hence σοφός means “accomplished”, “discriminating”, “highly educated”, “brilliant”, “inventive”, “ingenious”; it is often applied to poets, e.g. *Pax* 700 (Kratinos) and above all, *Ra.* 1518 f. It seldom means “wise” implied by the English “you acted wisely”, but it comes close to that when used of men skilled in dealing with people and situations’ (1968, p. 106).

<sup>103</sup> The ‘*Clouds*’ are feeding material for σοφιστάς, θουριομάντεις, ιατροτέχνας, σφραγιδονυχαραγογομήτας, κυκλίων τε χορών ἄσματοκάμπας, ἄνδρας μετεωροφένακας: “experts”, diviners from Thurii, professor of the medical art, long-haired do-nothings with onyx signet-rings; and composers of convoluted songs for dithyrambic choruses’ (332-5) (Trans. A.H. Sommerstein (1982)). Lloyd (1979, p. 99) interprets the inclusion of such a variety of people as an element of exaggeration characteristic of Comedy.

B.C., and it might well have been made familiar there by the sophists' (1976, p. 22).<sup>104</sup> These two strands, the poetic and sophistic, are particularly relevant for assessing the value the term has in *Clouds* and elsewhere in Aristophanes.

Admittedly, *sophia* and *sophos* are at the centre of the poetic *agōn*. However, the conditions defining the value and meaning of *sophia* in this context are not fixed. Significantly, *Clouds* is a play about the *sophoi*, but in the context of the *agōn* Aristophanes himself claims the title of *sophos*. Not surprisingly, Aristophanes' own *sophia* in this particular play is associated with the sort of newish trend, characterised by the use of sophisticated language and an innovative style. The Chorus-leader addresses the audience as follows: 'Spectators, I shall be frank and tell you the truth, I swear it by Dionysus who nurtured me to manhood. So may I be victorious, so I may be thought a *sophos* [νομιζοίμην σοφός], I took you for an intelligent audience [θεατὰς δεξιούς] and this for the most *intellectual* of my comedies [καὶ ταύτην σοφώτατ' ἔχειν τῶν ἐμῶν κωμωδιῶν]' (518-22).<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, the poet presents himself, as opposed to other poets, as 'applying his skills' (*sophizomai*) to introducing new forms (*kaina ideas*) of comedy (547). The claim is further reaffirmed in *Wasps*, when he blames the failure of *Clouds* on his audience's lack of wit. The audience was not intelligent enough to appreciate the brand-new ideas (*kaionotatais dianoiais*; 1044) presented by him, 'but none the less with the *sophoi* the bard his accustomed praise will get' (1049).<sup>106</sup>

Socrates' school, the *phrontistērion*, is a place for the *sophoi* (94), where you can learn *anthropois sophia*: 'all human wisdom' (841). Strepsiades, after his son has been instructed, refers to 'us *sophoi*' (1203). Towards the end of the play, Strepsiades starts realising the damage this kind of instruction has produced in his son, particularly reflected in his ideas on poetry. Pheidippides disdains the poetry of Simonides and Aeschylus as old-fashioned, after which the father, unconvinced, invites him to recite some of the modern poets, 'that clever stuff' (*ta sophia tauta*; 1370). Not surprisingly, Pheidippides starts reciting Euripides, which, followed by

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<sup>104</sup> Kerferd follows Gauthier and Jolif: 'C'est un mot de la langue poétique. [...] Adopté dans la seconde moitié du V<sup>e</sup> siècle par la prose ionienne, par exemple par un Hérodote, il est introduit à la même époque par les Sophistes et Socrate dans la langue technique de la philosophie' (1959, p. 480).

<sup>105</sup> Trans. A.H. Sommerstein (1982).

<sup>106</sup> Trans. B.B. Rogers (1930).

Strepsiades' insults, ends up in a fight between the two. Euripides is qualified as *sophōtatos* (1377) by Pheidippides; the father, with sarcasm, affirms 'yes, *sophōtatos*' (1378). The poetic strand of *sophia/sophos* is especially visible in *Frogs*. The contest between Aeschylus and Euripides is *agōn sophias* (882), confronting *androin sophoin* (896) to determine who is *technēn sophōteros* (780).

It is difficult to assert the general meaning and overtones of the term in the context of Aristophanic comedy. What seems clear is that, when attributed to Socrates, the sophists or Euripides, the quality generally carries negative connotations. Dover sees this as an unjustified move: 'σοφός, like χρηστός, καλός or any other positive valuation can be used sarcastically. There is no passage of Old Comedy in which it is necessary or even plausible to see in σοφός the derogatory connotations of the English word 'clever' (1993, p. 9).<sup>107</sup> Surely, *sophos* and *sophia* are complimentary labels as they are used to praise the possession of intellectual competence or cognitive abilities; to the extent that these abilities can be used against other values, e.g. religion or tradition, it is entirely possible that a negative tone may be implied. Thus, at the same time that *sophia* can be positively assessed in terms of intellectual competence, it can be negatively assessed in moral terms. The word is marked by the characteristic ambivalence of other intellectual categories such as cleverness, shrewdness, cunning, resourcefulness, etc. (Greek *dexiotēs*, *deinotēs*, *mētis*, *polutropia*, etc). The point might be better illustrated by an example in Aristophanes' *Birds*. Hoopoe attempts to persuade the birds to accept Pisthetaerus' plan of founding a new city. The chorus asks whether Pisthetaerus is *sophos* (428) to which Hoopoe responds: 'The subtlest cunning fox [πυκνότατον κίναδος], all scheme, invention, craft; wit, wisdom, paradox [σόφισμα, κύρμα, τριμμα, παιπάλημ' ὄλον]' (429-30).<sup>108</sup> *Sophos* here, in obvious association with cunning, is a desirable quality because it is used for their own advantage; in the case these qualities are possessed by rivals, the tone and evaluation could turn negative. 'Foxy cunning in

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<sup>107</sup> 'On the other hand, neither comedy nor oratory treats the word in a derogatory sense, as 'clever' can so often be used in English; of course, they could use it sarcastically, but that is true of all other commendatory words, especially *khrestos*' (Dover 1974, pp. 120-1). To prove his claim, Dover (1993) provides the example of the label as assigned to Euripides in *Clouds* (1370, 1377). According to him, this is a case of sarcasm.

<sup>108</sup> Trans. B. Bickley Rogers (1930).

rivals may always be mentioned with disapproval or contempt, but is a desirable asset in oneself (*Clouds*) or a prospective ally like Peis' (Dunbar 1995, p. 298).

As a result, the word seems to admit, as other terms of value, a sarcastic or ironic use, and, like other intellectual categories, a positive and negative use. The sarcastic use seems clear when Aristophanes refers to his audience in *Clouds* (526, 535, 898). The positive or complimentary sense seems to be in use when he compliments himself as a *sophos*. By contrast, the more negative tone is usually invoked when the quality is attributed to others, such as the sophists, Socrates and Euripides, particularly when confronted with traditional forms of wisdom.

## 1.7. Conclusion

If we were looking to reproduce a list of possible meanings for *sophia* from the evidence provided above, we would have to go for 'cleverness', 'skill', 'knowledge', 'expertise', 'wisdom', 'good judgement', 'inventiveness', 'cunning', 'ingenuity', 'prudence', 'understanding', 'versatility', 'shrewdness', 'resourcefulness'. But rather than a multiplicity of meanings, what the examples discussed above reveal is that (i) it is a title of authority; (ii) its meaning is negotiable; (iii) it has a double-valence. All of these elements are important to understand the way Plato conceptualises *sophia* in defining the *philosophos* and the *sophistēs*. As will be shown, in Plato *sophia* is a cognitive category, mostly defined in terms of knowledge, but its importance and distinctiveness can only be assessed by considering the agonistic, authoritative, and moral strands operating in earlier accounts. This chapter has offered us insight into different attitudes towards the figure of the *sophos* and the relativisation of the value of *sophia*. This is important if we are to understand the way Plato embraces these categories and redefines them, endowing them with new value. It also explains how the *philosophos* and the *sophistēs* can be perceived as *sophoi*, and why there might be a prejudice attached to that perception. It offers us a first insight into understanding why Plato is interested in this category, as a title of (expert and moral) authority, but also why he might qualify *sophia/sophos* (e.g. as apparent or real). As will be shown in the next chapter, at the heart of Plato's *sophia* is the notion of expert knowledge present in previous accounts. The notion of

expertise becomes essential to defining the *sophos* as a title of authority. But it is not only the expert who has the right to claim or who deserves the title (it is also the cunning, the clever, the popular, the know-all, etc). Here is where Plato departs from the tradition. The title cannot be used as a mere title of reputation; it should say something about the cognitive and/or moral state of the person to whom is being assigned. The next chapter rescues a key issue for understanding Plato's position regarding the problem of public perception of the wise and wisdom in the tradition, a running theme in the *Apology* (chapter 3), the *Republic* (chapter 5) and the *Sophist* (chapter 7).

## CHAPTER 2: INTRODUCING PLATO'S *SOPHOS*: THE KNOWER

In light of earlier conceptions of *sophia* and the *sophos* in pre-Platonic literature, this chapter aims to examine the distinctive elements shaping Plato's conceptualisation of *sophia* and the characterisation of the *sophos* in a way that is relevant for the identification of the philosopher and the sophist. As with other important labels, Plato does not just assign new meaning by ignoring earlier or traditional usage. Instead, Plato engages with traditional usage to produce his own meaning. By providing a new context, i.e. his philosophy, the notion is endowed with a distinct mark and value. On this, it may be useful to offer Roochnik's view when referring to the Platonic and pre-Platonic meaning of Greek *technē*: 'Plato wrote largely in an ordinary language whose terms naturally tended to retain, at least on the surface, the standard meanings they had inherited over years of use' (1996, p. 17). But I believe that the qualification 'at least on the surface' is significant. On a deeper level, Plato's conceptualisation of *sophia* is distinct and novel.

I propose that Plato introduces a narrower conception of *sophia* than was traditional. I intend to show that the Platonic conception of *sophia* is essentially epistemic. Within the wide semantic range of *sophia/sophos* seen in pre-Platonic literature (chapter 1), where *sophia* qualifies traits of intelligence such as 'cleverness' or 'ingenuity' and also possession of knowledge such as 'expertise' or 'knowledge', Plato prioritises a conceptualisation of *sophia* in terms of knowledge. Apart from linguistic patterns such as its interchangeability with *epistēmē*, and its regular opposition to *amathia*, there are recurrent comparisons with other crafts and sciences, references to the expertise of the *sophoi*, and the acquisition of *sophia* in the learning process.<sup>109</sup> I propose that a conceptualisation in these terms provides Plato with a relevant criterion to redefine the *sophos* in the *Apology*, the philosopher in the *Republic* and the sophist in the *Sophist*, the three main dialogues of the present investigation. It allows him to present Socrates as a 'sort of *sophos*', and the reputed

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<sup>109</sup> John Lyons, in one conclusion of his examination of Plato's dialogues from structural linguistics, states: 'The most constant and closest relation to be registered in the analysis of the meaning of σοφός (σοφία) is its antonymy with ἀμαθής (ἀμαθία) These terms are explicitly gradable, and implicitly graded, antonyms' (1963, p. 228).

experts only as ‘apparent *sophoi*’, to describe the philosopher as a lover of wisdom, and identify the sophist as a counterfeit *sophos*.

Surely the assertion that *sophia* is defined in terms of knowledge in Plato seems extremely vague, especially considering that ‘knowledge’ can be expressed by *oida*, *epistamai* and *gignōskō* (and cognates), and that Plato’s theory of knowledge is formulated differently across the corpus. However, this does not affect the purpose of the present analysis. As will be shown, although *sophia* has a clear cognitive force, its meaning varies according to context to designate different areas of knowledge, a difference that is mostly made in reference to the object known. Therefore, apart from an epistemic criterion of truth, we should consider the following question: what does the *sophos* know? This, together with the aspects assessed in pre-Platonic literature, i.e. negotiable meaning, the authoritative force, and double-valence, will prove relevant to understand the fundamental and distinct uses in Plato, namely (i) expert knowledge, (ii) moral knowledge, (iii) Socratic knowledge, and (iv) real and apparent knowledge.

In what follows, I will first address some basic issues regarding the distinction between intelligence and knowledge in general, and the way this is approached in Plato. I will then focus on Plato’s conception of *sophia* in terms of expert and moral knowledge. For this, the *Theaetetus* will guide the analysis, as it sets out the problems of a conception of *sophia* in moral terms. From here, we will see how the merging of epistemological and moral is reflected in the discussion regarding the unity of virtue, particularly in the *Laches*, the *Protagoras* and the *Republic*. In connection with this, I will further discuss how a moral conception of *sophia* plays out in the context of Socrates’ exhortation to philosophise in the *Euthydemus*. Finally, I will examine how *soph-* terminology is used to designate a genus, i.e. class of experts in a loose sense, and how the distinction between ‘apparent’ and ‘real’ *sophia* becomes central to producing a contrast between Socratic wisdom and his interlocutors’ claims of knowledge. The selection of passages obeys two criteria. First, the dramatic context, for Plato’s conception of *sophia* tends to arise in the context of competition, i.e. where there are conflicting notions of *sophia*, for example, between Socrates and Protagoras (*Theaetetus* and *Protagoras*), or Socrates

and Euthydemus and Dionysodorus (*Euthydemus*). Secondly, the place the passages have within the scholarly tradition, for *sophia* significantly comes up in some of Plato's *loci classici*, which shows the many problems and perspectives around the subject.

## 2.1. Intelligence and Knowledge

Of course, the area of intelligence and the area of knowledge are not completely separable and the problem of demarcation is a controversial issue within philosophy of mind and theories of intelligence. But in the context of the present study, it would be sufficient to admit that possessing knowledge is different from being intelligent. This is a difference that allows us to assert that someone knows something, without necessarily implying that he is clever, quick or resourceful, in the same way that it allows us to say that someone is intelligent without entailing that that person possesses knowledge.<sup>110</sup> The distinction is categorical in the ground-breaking work by Gilbert Ryle *The Concept of Mind*. Ryle elaborates on the difference because he believes that the philosophical tradition has created an 'intellectualist legend' by reducing intelligent operations to rational operations of the mind. 'It is of first-rate importance to notice from the start that stupidity is not the same thing, or the same sort of thing, as ignorance. There is no incompatibility between being well-informed and being silly, and a person who has a good nose for arguments and jokes may have a bad head for facts' (Ryle 1949, p. 26). This means that having traits of intelligence does not entail a commitment to true knowledge or good ends. 'When a person is described by one or other of the intelligence-epithets such as "shrewd" or "silly", "prudent" or "imprudent", the description imputes to him not the knowledge, or ignorance, of this or that truth but the ability, or inability, to do certain sort of things' (Ryle 1949, p. 28). From here, some rather contentious distinctions and consequences derive, such as Ryle's interpretation of intelligence traits in terms of know-how. 'Clearly, knowing how to do something is not a character trait. I know how to start the computer I am working on, but not the computer you are working on. What sort of character does that make me? Ryle has yoked together two completely different things—know-how and character' (Snowdon 2011, p. 67). As

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<sup>110</sup> In the context of Plato, the difference could be traced in the *Rep.* V-VII. The guardian selected for education possesses the abilities but has not gained knowledge of the Forms.

Snowdon suggests, an intelligence-epithet is ‘one the application of which has implications about the intelligence of the subject’ (2011, p. 63).

It would be neither fair nor accurate to apply the distinction to Plato in the way Ryle describes it.<sup>111</sup> In fact, many of the dogmas of the legend that Ryle attempts to demystify can be attributed to Plato. I would simply like to rescue the significance of this distinction in philosophical thought, so as to demonstrate that Plato embraces it and privileges a conceptualisation of *sophia* in epistemic terms. This does not mean that the aspects of intelligence are completely detached.<sup>112</sup> Nor is this a way to assert that *sophia* can be reduced to propositional knowledge. The key issue is to understand that while knowledge has a correlate or a certain object, intelligence manifests itself in the ability or capacity to do certain things. Thus under ‘knowledge’ we may include expertise and skill, the knowledge or mastery of a particular field, both practical and theoretical. Under ‘intelligence’, on the other hand, we may include qualities of the mind related to the ability to reason, to learn, to plan, to solve problems, to calculate, to understand, to think and to use language.<sup>113</sup> While they may converge—certainly we use intelligence to obtain, assimilate and apply knowledge—it cannot be established, as Ryle indicates, that intelligence is necessarily directed to the knowledge of truth, or for the present case, choosing good ends. As Dover puts it:

Intelligence is indispensable for choosing the right means to an end, but the intelligent do not always choose good ends; a person of extraordinary ability in the drawing of inferences, with an extraordinary sharp eye for relevance, may be selfish, cowardly, mean, callous or unreliable, while a halfwit may be helpful and kind and do his utmost to be good, with success so long as the complexities of a situation do not disguise the issue (1974, pp. 116-7).

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<sup>111</sup> *Sophia* understood as knowledge includes aspects of knowing-how and knowing-that; in consequence Ryle’s distinction (cf. 1945; 1949) is not operative in Plato. Ryle’s theory today is much discussed, particularly the demarcation between knowing-how conceived as skill and knowing-that as propositional knowledge. For studies on this, see Stanley (2011), Snowdon (2011), Bengson and Moffett (2011) and Burnyeat (2011).

<sup>112</sup> Of course, ‘intelligence’ is an ‘umbrella term’ under which other categories such as *nous*, *noesis* or *phronēsis* may fall. All of them are forms of understanding and mental apprehension that have an important place in Plato’s philosophy. In the present study intelligence is mainly treated as a character trait, covering the aspects of cleverness, quickness and ingenuity already studied in the previous chapter.

<sup>113</sup> Ryle’s list of related concepts includes: ‘clever’, ‘sensible’, ‘careful’, ‘methodical’, ‘inventive’, ‘prudent’, ‘acute’, ‘logical’, ‘witty’, ‘observant’, ‘critical’, ‘experimental’, ‘quick-witted’, ‘cunning’, ‘wise’, ‘judicious’, and ‘scrupulous’ (1949, p. 26).

This is what matters for the present analysis. We witnessed that *sophia* in pre-Platonic literature can refer to the cunning of someone who successfully deceives someone else, the ingenuity of someone who deciphers a riddle, or the inventive genius of someone who contrives a vindictive plot (cf. 1.4). Thus, the possession of these qualities cannot guarantee in any way the object or purpose to which they apply. But knowledge is always knowledge of something; it is always relational. In the context of Plato's philosophy, the knowledge of certain objects, e.g. knowledge of good and evil, the Form of good or beauty, has epistemological and moral implications.

## **2.2. *Sophia* as Intelligence in Plato**

Some of the examples examined in pre-Platonic literature show that *sophia* can be associated with traits such as resourcefulness, ingenuity, cleverness and dexterity, generally captured by the Greek terms *polutropia*, *mētis*, *deinotēs* and *dexiotēs*. Plato, however, does not seem to include these qualities in any relevant account of *sophia*. Moreover, he does not seem to incorporate them at all in his philosophy. Some critics interpret the exclusion of these as an act of censure. Detienne and Vernant, in their study of *mētis* and cunning intelligence in Greek culture, claim: 'his condemnation of knowledge and skills based upon the stochastic intelligence is quite unequivocal [...] The various forms of practical intelligence are sweepingly condemned once and for all in the name of the one and only Truth proclaimed by philosophy' (1978, pp. 315-6). But it would be unfair to interpret the absence of these as an act of condemnation. Instead, one may want to suggest that the reason why traits of intelligence are missing a prominent place in Plato's philosophy is simply because they do not play any significant role. Being clever, being shrewd, and being quick, may all be desirable attributes, in the same way that being strong, interesting, or funny are. But we can be sure that Plato does not put *sophia* among these.

It is beyond the purpose of this chapter to offer an exhaustive account of the subject, but it may be worth recognising some of the most significant elements shaping the discussion. Even when not central to his philosophy, there seems to be evidence that

proves that Plato considered intelligence traits to be (i) good qualities, (ii) not integral to moral character, (iii) conflicting with other traits. That qualities of mind are assets is openly considered in the *Republic*, particularly in book VI when defining the traits of the ideal philosopher: quick of mind, of good memory, and ability to learn.<sup>114</sup> But this description goes along with the admission that this set of characteristics is often in tension with a gentle character.<sup>115</sup> It is clear that, in the context of the *Republic*, they are assessed positively in virtue of their potential to facilitate learning. But it is rather striking to find out that in book VII, after the image of the cave has been described and explained, and the importance of philosophical education has been asserted, Socrates regards *phronēsis* mainly as a *dunamis* that can be directed to either purpose, right or wrong. To prove the case, Socrates gives the example of those who are called *poneroi sophoi*.<sup>116</sup> The immediate implication is that intelligence, by itself, even considered as a fundamental instrument for learning, can be turned to achieve bad and good purposes.<sup>117</sup> The thought is dominant in literature. ‘The Greeks were also well aware that intelligence and skill can be positively exercised in the pursuit of bad ends. This was, after all, precisely what the sophists were accused of doing in the latter part of the fifth century’ (Dover 1974, p. 118). In terms of characterisation, this is well illustrated by the example of the *deinos sophos* in the preceding chapter with the figure of Odysseus (cf. 1.5). Drawing on a discussion of positive and negative attitudes to intelligence and cunning, Plato’s *Lesser Hippias* is surely the most important dialogue in this respect. But what strikes us is that Plato’s attitude is essentially ambivalent.<sup>118</sup> In a discussion about whether Odysseus or Achilles is better (where ‘better’ is largely defined in terms of competence), the dialogue asserts *polutropia* as an asset belonging to both the liar and the one who tells the truth. Many difficulties arise from this argument, all of them interesting in their own right.<sup>119</sup> But here it is

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<sup>114</sup> *Rep.* 485e3; 487a2. Intellectual categories are considered in relation to motion in the *Crat.* (411d4), *Theaet.* (153b9) and *Charm.* (160a1).

<sup>115</sup> *Rep.* 503c1. See also *Charm.* 160a1, *Theaet.* 144a5.

<sup>116</sup> Particularly suggestive is the way in which he moderates the assertion about the *poneroi sophoi*. Indeed, he does not concede that the *poneroi* are actual *sophoi*; he only affirms that this is how they are popularly called (*legomenon*). I assess the importance of it when discussing apparent *sophia* below (2.6.) and in the next chapter (3.3.).

<sup>117</sup> Most often *phronēsis* guarantees the achievement of good purposes. See *Meno* 88b1.

<sup>118</sup> ‘Whereas Antisthenes unhesitatingly defends Odysseus’ versatility and cunning, Plato is ambivalent toward them’ (Montiglio 2011, p. 58).

<sup>119</sup> For the philosophical content of the dialogue, see Weiss (1981), Irwin (1988), Blundell (1992), Hade (1997), Blondell (2002), and Adams (2010).

particularly relevant to observe that the argument reveals a conception of *sophia* in terms of capacity. In this context, *sophia* is not singled out from other intellectual categories, such as *epistēmē* and *phronēsis*, and it is even paired with *panourgia* (368e4).<sup>120</sup> The term's evaluative nuances are only hinted at by the beginning of the dialogue in the characterisation of Nestor as a *sophos* (364c6), Hippias' reputation as a monument for *sophia* (364b2), which is contrasted with Socrates' disavowal of *sophia* (369d1; 372b6).<sup>121</sup> So while we get an idea of the connotations of *sophia* at a dramatic level, the analysis of the central argument seems to assert *sophia*, together with *phronēsis* and *epistēmē*, essentially as *dunameis*, as capacities to do and learn things regardless of moral purpose.<sup>122</sup>

### **2.3. *Sophia* as Knowledge in Plato: The *Theaetetus***

In the face of a conception of *sophia* in terms of knowledge, any of Plato's readers would wonder whether this is tackled in the most significant dialogue addressing the question about the nature of knowledge, the *Theaetetus*. The answer is yes. The dialogue narrates a conversation between the mathematician Theodorus, his apprentice Theaetetus, and Socrates. The main question of the dialogue, i.e. 'what is knowledge (*epistēmē*)?' arises when Theaetetus (described as an exceptional apprentice) is asked about his learning process under the tutelage of Theodorus. Theaetetus offers three successive answers: knowledge is perception (151e-187a), knowledge is true belief (187b-201c), and knowledge is true opinion plus an account (*logos*) (201d-201a).<sup>123</sup> The three of them are assessed and rejected, but in the process we get some interesting and positive identification of *sophia* and the *sophoi*. For the present analysis, I shall consider the introduction and the assessment of the first thesis, particularly the argument against Protagoras' relativism, Socrates' midwifery and part of the digression, where there is a clear predominance of *sophi*-terminology. Here the dialogue does not only reveal a correspondence between

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<sup>120</sup> Cf. *Laws* 5.747c, where *panourgia* is contrasted with *sophia*.

<sup>121</sup> A discussion of the role of characterisation and Nestor's *sophia* is presented by Blondell (2002, p. 134) and also discussed by Sales-Coderch (2007, pp. 61 ff).

<sup>122</sup> As Adams points out (2010, p. 47), Socrates does not intend to evaluate the moral content (i.e. the value) of the object known by either the false or the true man, but the means by which they achieve their purposes.

<sup>123</sup> Strictly speaking, he offers four answers considering the one at 146c7, where he enumerates different subjects and crafts. Socrates dismisses it as 'an absurd answer' at 147b10.

*sophia* and *epistēmē*, but also addresses all the distinctive uses I aim to discuss about Platonic *sophia*: expert knowledge, Socratic *sophia* (or lack of *sophia*), interlocutor's *sophia*, the *sophoi* as embodied authorities, and the distinction between real and apparent *sophia*.<sup>124</sup>

In the context of the dialogue, *sophia* is more often related to *epistēm-* terminology and *oida*, and less often with *manthanō* and *gignōskō*. While it is risky to assume synonymy between these categories, it seems even riskier to establish a relevant and regular contrast.<sup>125</sup> Let us see how the main question of the dialogue is laid out. Theaetetus, having been complimented by Theodorus, becomes Socrates' interlocutor. Being praised for his virtue and *sophia* (*aretēn kai sophian*; 145b1), the initial object of examination is Theaetetus' soul. Socrates starts by asking whether he is learning some subjects in the areas related to Theodorus' teaching, i.e. geometry, astronomy, music and arithmetic (145d7-e7):

ΣΩ. [...] ἄρ' οὐ τὸ μανθάνειν ἐστὶν τὸ σοφώτερον γίγνεσθαι περὶ ὃ μανθάνει τις;  
 ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς γὰρ οὔ;  
 ΣΩ. Σοφία δέ γ' οἶμαι σοφοὶ οἱ σοφοί.  
 ΘΕΑΙ. Ναί.  
 ΣΩ. Τοῦτο δὲ μὴ διαφέρει τι ἐπιστήμης;  
 ΘΕΑΙ. Τὸ ποῖον;  
 ΣΩ. Ἡ σοφία. ἢ οὐχ ἅπερ ἐπιστήμονες ταῦτα καὶ σοφοί;  
 ΘΕΑΙ. Τί μὴν;  
 ΣΩ. Ταῦτ' ἄρα ἐπιστήμη καὶ σοφία;  
 ΘΕΑΙ. Ναί.

S. [...]Now isn't it true that to learn is to become *sophōteron* about the thing

<sup>124</sup> The dialogue also proves important as it is dramatically connected with the *Apology* and the *Sophist*. Discussions about the location of the *Theaetetus* in the Platonic corpus are offered by Bostock (1991) and Sedley (2004).

<sup>125</sup> The problem is two-fold, as it involves the attempt of demarcating and also translating the relevant Greek lexica. Gould (1955), for example, contends the view that uses the distinction 'know-that' and 'know-how', according to which *epistēmē* is identified with the former. In this vein, Bostock argues, 'we are given no hint of any restriction on how "knowledge" is to be understood (1991, pp. 37-8) and knowledge here may include (a) knowing *that* (something-or-other is the case), (b) knowing *how* (to do something), and (c) knowing an *object* (e.g. a person, a place, and so on) (1991, p. 37). See also Runciman, who warns against making the assumption 'that Plato is clearly aware of a distinction between knowing that, knowing how and knowing by acquaintance' (1962, p. 13). Chappell (2004, p. 31) discusses Runciman's view by proposing that Plato may have been aware of the modern distinction, but finds conceptual connections between the two, a connection that the Greek allows. See also Guthrie who warns that knowledge-how is 'never entirely divorced from the other two kinds' (1978, p. 68). More recently, Burnyeat (2011) revindicates Lyons' (1963) structural reading of epistemic terminology to challenge a fixed interpretation of the lexica in terms of know-that, know-how and knowledge by acquaintance.

one is learning?  
 Th.: Yes, of course.  
 S.: And what makes men *sophoi*, I take it, is *sophia*?  
 Th.: Yes.  
 S.: And is this in any way different from knowledge?  
 Th.: What?  
 S.: *Sophia*. Isn't it the things which they know that men are *sophoi* about?  
 Th.: Well, yes.  
 S.: So knowledge and *sophia* will be the same thing?  
 Th.: Yes.<sup>126</sup>

In this short exchange, Socrates and Theaetetus quickly agree on the following: (i) to learn is to become more *sophos* in some particular area, (ii) what makes men *sophoi* is the fact that they possess *sophia*, and (iii) *sophia* is the same as *epistēmē*. The three assertions (and particularly i) will prove relevant for the subsequent analysis of the dialogue. Against the Protagorean thesis of the *homo mensura* according to which everyone's judgement is equally true, Socrates claims that someone can be *sophōteros* by having knowledge (*to edidenai*; 170b1). More importantly, the passage establishes a rather uncontroversial correspondence between *epistēmē* and *sophia*.<sup>127</sup> But before assuming interchangeability *salva veritate* between the terms, two aspects should be considered. First, we should consider that the dialogue focuses primarily on *epistēmē* (145e9), which suggests this is a more appropriate term to discuss the problem of knowledge in general.<sup>128</sup> Second, to assert the correspondence Socrates adduces the example of a *sophos*, which immediately suggests that the focus of the question is not so much the terminological or conceptual identity between *epistēmē* and *sophia* as it is the epistemic status of the *sophos*. The *sophoi* are *epistemoi* because they are 'wise' in respect of the same things as those in respect of which they are 'knowers' (145e3), i.e. they know the things they are wise about. The question of whether a *sophos* has knowledge, here presented as evident, is not trivial. As will be shown, many of those who are called *sophoi* prove to have no real

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<sup>126</sup> Throughout the thesis, translations of the Platonic dialogues are those of Cooper and Hutchinson (1997).

<sup>127</sup> There are different ways of interpreting the correspondence. Sedley sees the equation between *epistēmē* and *sophia* as 'a deliberate attempt to conjugate both realms moral and epistemological' (2004, p. 19). This is also the position of Ibáñez-Puig (2007, p. 16). Guthrie (1978, p. 68), on the other hand, ignores any potential distinction and translates *sophia* by 'knowledge'. Rowe (2015, p. 5) translates it by 'wisdom', but in the footnote he clarifies *sophōteros* means 'more expert'.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Burnyeat (2011, p.10).

knowledge. This is a main theme in two dialogues particularly relevant to this investigation, the *Apology* (chapter 3) and the *Sophist* (chapter 7).<sup>129</sup>

### 2.3.1. The Argument of the *Sophōteros* Man: Experts, Seeming Experts and Moral Experts

Theaetetus' first definition, 'knowledge is perception', receives extended criticism at various stages. The first stage revises the general account of 'knowledge is perception centred around the "Cold Wind" Argument and the Theory of Flux (152a-160e), which groups together Protagoras' relativism and Heraclitus' Flux doctrine. The second stage (161c-179d) specifically targets Protagoras' Measure doctrine, according to which all appearances are true.<sup>130</sup> It is in this context that Socrates introduces the objection of the *sophōteros* man. The objection states that if we all are the measure of truth, then no one is *sophōteros* than anyone else (161d-162a). This, indeed, seems to be perceived to be the strongest argument against Protagoras' relativism, as it is invoked in three different contexts through the argument and never successfully refuted.<sup>131</sup> It arises at 161d7, then after Protagoras' defence at 170a8 and at 171d6 and after the digression at 179b1.<sup>132</sup>

The argument is particularly appealing because it offers conflicting notions of *sophia*: one from Protagoras, one from public opinion, and one from Socrates. Of course, the rhetoric of appropriation of *sophia* is nothing extraordinary in the context of competition. Protagoras legitimises his argument by offering an *ad hoc*

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<sup>129</sup> In the *Apology* it is established that to possess knowledge about something is to be *sophos* about such matters (19c6), and it is by applying this principle that politicians, poets and craftsmen are ruled out as *sophoi*. Also in the *Sophist*, after the interlocutors have shown that sophists have no real knowledge, it is concluded that he cannot be called a *sophos*: 'We can't call him *sophos*, since we took him not to know anything [οὐκ εἰδότες]' (268b11).

<sup>130</sup> Most scholars agree that, at this point of the argument, 'appearance' involves perception and belief. This is what Fine (1996 p. 107) calls 'broader' Protagoreanism on the grounds that appearance is both perceptual and cognitive. Bostock, on the equation of perception with appearance, says: '[t]he relevant sense of 'perception', then, is one which entails a belief or judgment, at least in so far as I am not said to perceive a so-and-so unless I judge that it is a so-and-so and I am not said to perceive that P unless I believe that P' (1991, p. 43). See also Burnyeat (1990, p. 21) and Sedley (2004, p. 49).

<sup>131</sup> It is also presented as the only argument in the *Crat.* 385e4, although the favorite word there is *phronēsis* instead of *sophia*.

<sup>132</sup> According to the claim that every appearance is true, the appearance that not every appearance is true would be enough to contradict the theory. This is the *peritropē* argument that goes from 170c to 171c. A detailed analysis of the problem and its consequences is offered by Chappell (1995; 2006).

conception of *sophia* in terms of better and worse, benefit and harm. The consensual conception of *sophōteros*, i.e. the one from public opinion, is based on a criterion of expertise. Socrates' own notion of *sophia* is about the realisation of the limits of human knowledge and ability.

Let us start with Protagoras' *sophia*. It is noteworthy that the first formulation of the argument picks up on the authoritative status of *sophos* credited to both Protagoras and Theodorus. Socrates uses Protagoras' reputation of *sophia* to make the problem explicit. The problem is that while it is obvious that Protagoras is thought (and considers himself) *sophos*, according to his thesis, he would not be *sophōteros* than anyone else. So as long as there is no way to assert the superiority of his knowledge over others', there are no good reasons to call him *sophos* at all, as his *sophia* does not stand out from anyone else's. This should concern Theodorus, who surely considers himself an expert mathematician.

It is striking to see the way Socrates makes the case for Protagoras. 'I certainly do not deny the existence of both *sophia* and the *sophos* man [σοφίαν καὶ σοφὸν ἄνδρα]: far from it. But the man whom I call *sophos* is the man who can change the appearances—the man who in any case where bad things both appear and are for one of us, works a change and makes good things appear and be for him [μεταβάλλων ποιήσῃ ἀγαθὰ φαίνεσθαι τε καὶ εἶναι]' (166d4-8). Protagoras offers a conception of *sophia* that adjusts to his relativism and, at the same time, secures his status (and others') of *sophos*. According to his doctrine, a *sophos* is able to turn or transform others' perception from bad to good, where good is relativised into 'what appears or is believed to be good'.<sup>133</sup> By means of appearances, the *sophos* doctor makes a patient healthy, the *sophos* politician makes a city just, and a *sophos* teacher makes a pupil better. 'The "wisdom" of an educator like Protagoras lies in the fact that he can change for the better how things appear to other people' (Sedley 2004, p. 56).<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Bostock (1991, p. 93) claims the distinction is objective. Against this view, see Sedley (2004, p. 56).

<sup>134</sup> Protagoras' argument comprises two common trademarks of sophists found elsewhere in Plato, namely, the claim of making others better, which is regarded as super-human wisdom, and the use of appearances to achieve their purposes.

Socrates' assessment of Protagoras' argument targets two related statements: (i) 'every man is self-sufficient in wisdom [αὐτάρκη ἕκαστον εἰς φρόνησιν ἐποίει]' (169d5); and (ii) some men are superior to others in questions of better and worse [περὶ τε τοῦ ἀμείνονος καὶ χείρονος], these being 'the *sophoi*' [σοφούς] (169d6-8). It is interesting that, at this point, Socrates reformulates the argument by bringing *phronēsis* to the discussion, a word that has only a few (but significant) appearances in the dialogue.<sup>135</sup>

Resorting to popular consensus, Socrates holds that 'there is no one in the world who doesn't believe that in some matters [τὰ μὲν] he is *sophōteros* than other men; while in other matters [τὰ δὲ], they are *sophōteroi* than he' (170a7-9). For argumentative purposes, the main claim is that 'people believe that there are false beliefs'; this, according to Protagoras' relativism, should count as a standard of truth.<sup>136</sup> Socrates re-introduces a conception of *sophia* in terms of specialised knowledge, mostly because it provides a relevant criterion of comparison to declare that some men are *sophōteroi* than other men in a non-relativistic way.<sup>137</sup> Hence *sophōteros* is a term of comparison between an expert and a non-expert. Socrates picks up some of the examples offered by Protagoras, e.g. doctors and teachers.<sup>138</sup> These people are regarded as experts because they know (*eidenai*; 170b1) the matters specific to their expertise and thereby can assist others with their knowledge. Concerning matters of bodily health, the doctor judges more truly than a non-expert in the same matters, and as a result what appears to him is truer than what appears to a non-expert. To the extent that some men are more *sophoi* in some matters, it is fair to say that some other men are more ignorant in these matters: 'In all these cases [of expert knowledge], what else can we say but that men do believe in the existence of both *sophia* and ignorance [σοφίαν καὶ ἀμαθίαν] among themselves?' (170b5-6). It is important to understand that the opposition between *amathia* and *sophia* is not drawn in terms of possession and non-possession of knowledge whereby *sophia*

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<sup>135</sup> Cf. 161c8, 169d5, 176b2.

<sup>136</sup> The validity of Socrates' argument is not my angle. Many critics think that Socrates does not successfully refute Protagoras' relativism because he seems to dismiss the qualifier in the form 'true for *x*', taking whatever is true for the person as true *simpliciter*. Burnyeat (1990, p. 30) claims that he successfully refutes relativism, and so does Bostock (1991, p. 94). Fine (1996; 1998), on the other hand, claims that Protagoras is not being attacked as a relativist, but as an infallibilist.

<sup>137</sup> At this point animals and gods have been excluded.

<sup>138</sup> The example of the politician is left out, but it will be picked up later.

designates maximum and ignorance minimum degree, with the *sophōteros* being somewhere in between. As is made clear, the opposition is relevant in terms of true and false, i.e. the *sophos* judges what is true, and the *amathēs* what is false. Protagoras' position, according to which *sophia* (or lack of it) is not a matter of true or false judgment, is thus challenged. Socrates continues: 'and they believe that *sophia* is true thinking [σοφίαν ἀληθῆ διάνοιαν]? While ignorance is a matter of false judgment? [ἀμαθίαν ψευδῆ δόξαν;] (170b8-9). Although it is not made explicit yet, Socrates' position aims to reconcile those aspects that in Protagoras' conception of *sophia* are divorced, namely the production of benefit and a non-relativistic conception of truth. It should be noticed that thus far the argument of the *sophōteros* man allows Socrates to establish a comparative and not an absolute criterion of expertise, i.e. someone is more *sophos* in relation to some matters. This will play an important part in the analysis of the *Apology*, where although craftsmen are asserted as *sophōteroi* on account of their craft-knowledge, they prove to be no 'real' *sophoi* (cf. 3.3.2).

After laying out the *peritropē* objection, Socrates restates the argument of the *sophōteros* man: 'mustn't we maintain that any man would admit at least this, that some men are more *sophoi* than their fellows and others more ignorant [τὸ εἶναι σοφώτερον ἕτερον ἐτέρου, εἶναι δὲ καὶ ἀμαθέστερον]?' (171d5-7). This time Socrates explicitly tackles Protagoras' conception of *sophia* that divorces better and worse from true and false judgment. Socrates tests his theory for matters that involve the production of a benefit, and the theory stands. This is clear in the case of the doctor (171e4). When it comes to political matters, however, the theory finds less support. While most people would be ready to admit that some men are better prepared than others to guarantee what is in the best interest of the state, most of them would deny that this is also the case regarding virtues, particularly justice and piety. Most people, even those who are not completely convinced by Protagoras, will 'take such view of *sophia* [τὴν σοφίαν ἄγουσι]' (172b7), namely that 'in respect of these [justice and piety], they say, what seems to people collectively to be so is true, at the time when it seems that way and for just as long as it so seems [ὅταν δόξη καὶ ὅσον ἂν δοκῆ χρόνον]' (172b5-6). As a consequence, what seems just is just. The thread of the conversation is interrupted by the digression about the philosopher,

which leaves the issue open. Socrates resumes the argument at 177b8.

In the course of the digression (172c3-177b8), Socrates and Theodorus assert the superiority of the philosopher over the man accustomed to law courts.<sup>139</sup> Socrates seals the conversation by saying that the only way to escape from the evil of the world is to become god-like, ‘and a man becomes like god when he becomes just and pious, with understanding [μετὰ φρονήσεως]’ (176b2-3).<sup>140</sup> This time Socrates drops the mask of public consensus and reveals his own position: justice has an absolute and divine measure. Under this concept, Socrates rules out Protagoras’ relativism, but he also seems to suspend (at least for a moment) the commonsensical notion of *sophia* as expert knowledge thus far advocated. According to him, what counts as real *sophia* and good is ‘to recognise’ god as the absolute measure of justice: ‘for it is the realisation of this that is genuine *sophia* and goodness [ἡ μὲν γὰρ τούτου γνώσις σοφία καὶ ἀρετὴ ἀληθινή], while the failure to realise it is manifest folly and wickedness [ἡ δὲ ἄγνοια ἀμαθία καὶ κακία ἐναργής.]’ (176c4-5). In this context, *sophia* is the apprehension of some truth that starts by assuming the gap between human and divine. To be sure, in this context *sophia* rescues its prudential component, rendering something closer to ‘understanding’ or ‘wisdom’, a meaning which is reinforced by *phronēsis*, invoked a few lines above.<sup>141</sup>

Of course, this view would be hardly shared by a skeptic like Protagoras, who has already dismissed one of Socrates’ objections because it assumed the existence of gods (162d6). But Socrates still has the notion of expert knowledge up his sleeve. Legislation aims at making laws that are most useful and beneficial to a community. But what is most beneficial requires the ability to predict how things will be in the future, which is a characteristic of expert knowledge.<sup>142</sup> Thus Socrates advises Theodorus: ‘Then we shall be giving your master fair measure if we tell him that he has now got to admit that one man is *sophōteron* than another [σοφώτερόν τε ἄλλον ἄλλου εἶναι], and that it is such a man who is ‘the measure [τοιούτον

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<sup>139</sup> The digression offers an interesting parallel to compare Plato’s and Isocrates’ model of *philosophia*. See Nightingale (1995, p. 29).

<sup>140</sup> According to Sedley (2004, p. 75) the form ‘with *phronēsis*’ reflects the Socratic value system whereby wisdom (either *sophia* or *phronēsis*) is the only underderivatively good. We shall see this below with the *Euthydemus*.

<sup>141</sup> As we shall see, both the apprehension of some truth and the prudential element are at the heart of Socrates’ *anthropinē sophia* in the *Apology*.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. *Laches* 198d1: the knowledge of the expert is of the past, the present and the future.

μέτρον εἶναι]” (179b1-2). Although in a rather hesitant note, this is how the argument against Protagoras concludes.

The theory of the *sophōteros* man presented in the *Theaetetus* is significant because it projects the scope and limitations of a notion of *sophia* conceptualised in terms of expert knowledge. This is crystallised in the fact that most people would admit that some men are *sophōteroi* than other men on account of their knowledge in all areas of expertise, but not all of them would be ready to admit that this applies to questions of moral nature. In what follows, we will see how this ambiguity plays out in the context of the discussion of the unity of virtue.

#### **2.4. Virtue as a Kind of *Sophia* and *Sophia* as a Kind of Knowledge**

In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates says that not every man is ready to admit that there are *sophōteroi* men regarding virtue. He gets that right. The intellectualist thesis whereby virtue is knowledge baffles Socrates’ interlocutors in the same way that it has baffled generations of Plato’s critics from Aristotle onwards. This is so because the thesis is itself puzzling, but also because Plato does not offer a systematic or consistent view across the corpus. To attempt an answer or an explanation on this matter is beyond the scope of the present study. Instead, I would like to focus the analysis on the place that *sophia* takes in the discussion concerning the unity of virtue. In principle, the thesis maintains that all virtues are one because all of them ultimately amount to knowledge of good and evil. What is not clear is if the different virtues are inseparable but distinct parts of the whole; or if there is only one and the same thing with different names.<sup>143</sup> In this regard, the position of *sophia* is ambiguous. We are never completely sure if *sophia* stands as virtue on the side of courage, justice, piety or temperance (*Protagoras*, *Republic*), or if it contains all the other virtues on account of being equivalent to knowledge of good and evil (*Laches*). From the dialogues where *sophia* has a prominent position, that is, *Laches*,

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<sup>143</sup> There are two main positions with respect to the unity of virtue: the identity view defended by Penner (1973) Taylor (1976) and Irwin (1977) and the inseparability view defended mainly by Vlastos (1972). A moderate position is that of Kahn (1996), who argues that Plato leaves the unity thesis conceptually undetermined and Devereux (2006), who claims that, although knowledge makes the whole of virtue, each virtue has particular elements differentiating it from the whole and other virtues.

*Protagoras* and *Republic*, we get mixed signals.<sup>144</sup> As will be shown, with *sophia*, Plato brings about the concept of expert knowledge witnessed in the *Theaetetus*; however, we are left wondering whether it is equivalent to knowledge in general (*epistēmē*) or a certain kind of knowledge; whether this is about some objects rather than others, attainable or not. As we shall see, part of the ambiguity responds to the context of each dialogue. Socrates' tactic to persuade general *Laches* that *sophia* is central for courage takes more of an effort than to persuade Protagoras or Thrasymachus (who make claims of authority based on their wisdom) that *sophia* is at the centre of a virtuous and a good life. In the same way, we can see why Plato in book IV of the *Republic*, after asserting the prominence of the rational soul (over the spirited and the appetitive part), endows *sophia* with an exclusive status, a virtue only possessed by the class of the rulers. I propose that Plato does not explicitly demarcate (nor connect) the moral and epistemological significance of *sophia*, but rather invokes one or the other opportunistically to reinforce the argument in course.

### 2.4.1. The *Laches*

The *Laches*, traditionally considered among the definitional Socratic dialogues, will help us introduce the problem. Adding to the efforts of defining courage (*andreia*), Nicias joins the conversation between Socrates and the general Laches. Interestingly, his contribution is a principle borrowed from Socrates: 'I have often heard you say that every one of us is good with respect to that in which he is *sophos* [ταῦτα ἀγαθὸς ἕκαστος ἡμῶν ἅπερ σοφός] and bad in respect to that in which he is ignorant [ἀ δὲ ἀμαθής, ταῦτα δὲ κακός]' (194d1-2). Socrates spells out the thesis for Laches by saying that courage is 'a kind of wisdom' (*sophian tina*) (194d9), different from other types of expert knowledge, such as flute or lyre playing. It is interesting to observe that Laches is reluctant to accept that courage is *sophia* or *epistēmē* (195a4), even when he had admitted that courage was endurance accompanied by *phronēsis* (192c8).<sup>145</sup> As Stokes suggests, when the notion is introduced, it lacks the overtones of expert knowledge that it acquires later in the

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<sup>144</sup> *Sophia* and *phronēsis* tend to be the master virtues, except in the *Republic* where justice is. For an analysis of this, see Carr (1988).

<sup>145</sup> Although he is unable to say what *phronēsis* is about (192e-193d). A discussion of this definition and why it is rejected is discussed by Devereux (1977), Emlyn-Jones (1996, p. 101) and Vlastos (1994, p. 112).

conversation: ‘when Socrates first uses the words “wisdom” [standing for *phronēsis*] and its opposite “folly”, Laches will have heard no overtones of particular skill or technique, but only the denotation of general prudence and imprudence’ (1986, p. 81). On the other hand, Nicias and Socrates agree that courage is a sort of *sophia* (194d9), but they are not clear as to what specific kind. Socrates asks: ‘But what is this knowledge and of what [τίς δὴ αὕτη ἢ τίνος ἐπιστήμη]?’ (194e8). This means that the kind of *sophia* that courage is depends on the kind of knowledge that the courageous man has. ‘From the word “wisdom” he shifts to “knowledge”; this enables him to ask not only “What knowledge?” but (as an alternative) “knowledge of what?”’ (Stokes 1986, p. 93).<sup>146</sup> When they come up with ‘the knowledge of the fearful and the hopeful [τῶν δεινῶν καὶ θαρραλέων ἢ ἀνδρεία ἐπιστήμη ἐστίν]’ (199b9-10), they soon realise that this is the same as ‘knowledge of all goods and evils’ (199c7). Considering that courage is only a part (along with temperance and justice; 198a8), and not the whole of virtue, the definition is not satisfactory. By the end of the dialogue, it is still unclear whether *sophia* stands for knowledge in general, in which case virtue is a kind of *sophia*, or if *sophia* is equivalent to knowledge of good and evil, in which case *sophia* is a kind of knowledge. The position of *sophia* thus remains ambiguous; we cannot assert whether it stands as a virtue like others, or if it contains all the other virtues. The discussion is relevant to assess Plato’s conception of *sophia* as the knowledge of certain things rather than others, which is crucial to understand ‘real *sophia*’ in the *Apology* (chapter 3) and the philosopher’s love for *sophia* (where *sophia* stands for truth, the Forms, or virtue (further discussed in section II)).

### 2.4.2. The *Protagoras*

The question of the unity of virtue is explicitly addressed in the *Protagoras*, where Socrates argues against Protagoras’ claim of separability. Unlike in the *Laches*, *sophia* is counted among the virtues. Interestingly enough, it is Protagoras who adds *sophia* to the list. Initially Socrates introduces temperance, justice, and piety to which Protagoras adds courage and *sophia*, recognising the latter as the greatest

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<sup>146</sup> As Stokes notices, ‘the words here used for “wisdom” and “knowledge” overlap sufficiently in Greek usage for Laches to go on using “wisdom” without (apparently) noticing any difference’ (1986, p. 93).

(*megiston*) part (330a2). In an attempt to prove the unity of virtue, Socrates first identifies *sophia* with temperance (332a3).<sup>147</sup> But the question is not much discussed until they address the case of courage, for, according to Protagoras, courage is unlike all the other virtues (349d8).

The discussion of whether courage is a part of virtue like or unlike the other virtues attracts especial interest because it engages an analysis about the power and value of knowledge and *sophia*. The initial examination shows that Protagoras believes that some men are confident while ignorant, thereby challenging Socrates' conclusion that courage and *sophia* are the same (350c6). This reveals that Socrates and Protagoras stand in different positions regarding the identity between courage and *sophia*. However, they seem to stand in the same position regarding the importance of *sophia*. We must remember that it is Protagoras who adds *sophia* to the list of virtues, considering it 'the greatest part of all'. Thus *sophia* is championed by Protagoras as one of the greatest virtues; yet he is not ready to accept that virtue (or a part of it) is governed by *sophia*. This raises the question of whether their conceptions of *sophia* are actually aligned. Rival conceptions of *sophia* ultimately reveal their different stances on the ideal of a good life and education.<sup>148</sup> To test Protagoras' position, Socrates opens a discussion about the place of knowledge in a good and happy life, in which he contests the position attributed to most people (*hoi polloi*), according to which pleasure governs our actions over knowledge.<sup>149</sup> Socrates asks Protagoras: 'What do you think about knowledge [πῶς ἔχεις πρὸς ἐπιστήμην;]? Do you go along with the majority or not?' (352b1). They both agree that knowledge of good and bad is a principle ruling a person's life for the good, being action-guiding and sufficient for virtue (352c). Interestingly, Socrates, at this point, incorporates other cognitive terminology. Grouped together with *epistēmē* are *gignōskein* (352c4), and then *phronēsis* (352c7). Protagoras reaffirms his position by

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<sup>147</sup> The argument goes as follows: (i) *aphrosunē* opposes both *sophrosunē* and *sophia*; (ii) one thing has only one opposite, therefore (iii) *sophrosunē* and *sophia* must be the same. It is worth noticing how Socrates uses the term: *sophia* is here closer to 'prudence' as is drawn in opposition to *aprhōn* and not *amathia*. Taylor (1976, p. 122) sees this association as an unjustified move, and Stokes (1986, p. 292) contends his view by saying that *sophia* here assimilates the moral and the intellectual.

<sup>148</sup> As Kahn observes, 'Plato has chosen to explore here the connections between knowledge and the good in the context of a debate on moral education between Socrates and Protagoras that is, I suggest, to be read in the light of his own educational project' (1996, p. 252).

<sup>149</sup> Woolf (2002) offers a way to explain why Socrates uses an impersonal interlocutor to develop his argument of *akrasia*.

saying that ‘*sophia* and knowledge [σοφίαν καὶ ἐπιστήμην] are anything but the most powerful forces in human activity’ (352d1-3). Importantly, throughout the argument *sophia* and *epistēmē* are interchangeable.

The discussion Socrates holds with the many, traditionally read as an attempt to deny the possibility of *akrasia*, contests the claim that one can act contrary to what one believes is good, being ‘overcome’ by pleasure.<sup>150</sup> Socrates argues that it is not a case of someone’s good judgement being overcome by pleasure, but rather that someone is confused or deceived by appearances which results in an error of judgement, i.e. ignorance. It is by knowledge, Socrates declares, specifically the art of measurement (*metrētikē technē*; 356d3), that these appearances lose their power. From here, Socrates concludes that to lose control, which the many call ‘being overcome by pleasure’, is no other than ignorance (*amathia*), and ‘to control oneself’ is nothing other than *sophia*’ (358c2-3). The argument allows Socrates to reconnect knowledge with courage, and therefore with *sophia*. Men are courageous by knowledge, because they are able to judge as good what the coward judges as fearsome or bad. Interestingly enough, they reach the same definition that in the *Laches* is dismissed on the grounds of being too broad. ‘So the *sophia* about what is and is not to be feared is courage and is the opposite of this ignorance [ἀμαθία]?’ (360d4-5). Socrates restates his position by saying that all virtues are knowledge (*epistēmē*), and he names justice, temperance and courage (361b1), but not *sophia*. *Sophia* is initially listed among other virtues, but finally asserted as the ruling principle of the good and happy life, and inseparable from other virtues. What do we make of this shift? While it is clear that Socrates is defending the unity of virtue, we cannot be sure whether *sophia* here is conceptualised as a virtue among others or as the whole of virtue. While most scholars support the former, there is also room to interpret *sophia* simply as *epistēmē*, as for example, Guthrie does in his translation.<sup>151</sup> ‘The identity of courage with knowledge is also put by Socrates—though this does not emerge in Guthrie’s translation, unfortunately—as an identity of courage with wisdom’ (Penner 1997, p. 141).

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<sup>150</sup> Penner (1997) proposes that Socrates’ thesis defends the strength of knowledge, and not the strength of belief (even true belief), supported, among others, by Vlastos (1969) and Irwin (1977). This has also been discussed by Taylor (1976, p. 171).

<sup>151</sup> See Devereux (1992; 2006), Irwin (1977), Taylor (1976) and Penner (1973). Cf. Guthrie (1975, p. 229n1).

I believe that in the *Protagoras* it is clear that *sophia* has a different status from the other virtues, so we should think of it as either a capital virtue or the whole of virtue, although there seems to be more grounds to support the latter. As Devereux says, there are two reasons for Socrates' claim that *sophia* is the whole of virtue: '(a) like other wholes in relation to their parts, the possession of wisdom guarantees possession of the other virtues; (b) while the other virtues are manifested in some but not all virtuous actions, wisdom is manifested in all virtuous actions' (2006, p. 334). But I think that it is still significant that no answer is provided to the question about the kind of knowledge *sophia* is, especially considering that Socrates' initial position defends, against Protagoras, the unteachability of virtue (and therefore its unattainability).

For the purpose of the present study, I would like to draw attention to the rhetorical advantage Socrates gets from using *sophia* in this context. This advantage is reflected in the fact that at the beginning of the discussion it is undisputedly identified with virtue (by Protagoras) and at the end it is undisputedly identified with *epistēmē*. As Stokes claims, 'the interchangeability of 'knowledge' and 'wisdom' has become dialectically acceptable since early in the dialogue' (1986, p. 346).<sup>152</sup> Thus *sophia* allows Socrates to make the connection between virtue and *epistēmē*. This is important because it tells us something about the correspondence between *sophia* and knowledge, namely that it is not two-way. While *sophia* can take the place of *epistēmē*, *epistēmē* cannot take the place of *sophia* (surely *epistēmē* could not have been listed initially among the virtues). Hence *sophia* brings both an epistemological and a moral component, sometimes distinctly moral, and sometimes indistinctly epistemological.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Cf. 330a1, b4.

<sup>153</sup> I agree with Denyer, who says that there is evidence to argue that *sophia* and *epistēmē* are the same, but also to argue that *sophia* 'should be reserved for specially important or valuable sort' of *epistēmē*. 'Behind this looseness of language lurks a substantive issue: to what extent does the ideal condition of the intellect consist in being well-informed?' (2008, p. 124).

### 2.4.3. The *Republic*

The phenomenon of the ambiguity of *sophia* is also observed in *Republic* I when Socrates discusses with Thrasymachus, the professional rhetorician, whether justice or injustice should be paired with virtue and *sophia*. In line with the thesis that injustice is more profitable than justice (348b9), Thrasymachus includes *sophia* and virtue along with injustice (348e2). By applying a criterion of expertise, they agree on the following: (i) each, the just and the unjust, has the qualities of the one he resembles (349d6; 350c); (ii) the just wants to outdo the unjust, whereas the unjust wants to outdo both (349c7); (iii) a knowledgeable person (*epistēmōn*) wants to outdo the ignorant, whereas the ignorant wants to out do both (350a7); (iv) a knowledgeable (*epistēmōn*) person is *sophos* and a *sophos* is good (*agathos*) (350b3).<sup>154</sup> Socrates concludes ‘then, a just person has turned out to be good and *sophos* [ἀγαθός τε καὶ σοφός,], and an unjust one ignorant and bad [ἀμαθής τε καὶ κακός]’(350c10-11). Albeit reluctantly, Thrasymachus concurs, blushing at his defeat. Despite the obvious problems the argument raises, it is noteworthy how Socrates makes the case. Thrasymachus, claiming expertise on matters of justice, is ready to admit that an *epistēmōn* is *sophos* and good. By means of analogy, this is sufficient to make him admit that the just is *sophos* and good.<sup>155</sup>

It is only in book IV of the *Republic*, in the context of the theory of the tripartite structure of the just city and the just soul, that Socrates clearly locates *sophia* among other virtues. Here *sophia* is a virtue (along with courage, temperance and justice; 427e10) only possessed by the class of the guardians. Having sketched the ideal state, Glaucon presses Socrates to account for the justice of the city. They agree that a good city has all the virtues, *sophia*, courage, temperance and justice. The city they described is really wise (*sophē*) because it has good judgment (*eubolos*; 428b3), where good judgment is defined as ‘some kind of knowledge’ (*epistēmē tis estin*;

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<sup>154</sup> Socrates’ argument is fallacious: a competent or knowledgeable person tries to outdo both ignorant and experts alike. ‘Moreover, the fact that the Unjust man tries to “outdo” everyone in the sense of trying to get the better of them does not in the least show that Injustice is not a Craft—practitioners of competitive Crafts, such as Generalship or Boxing, do it all the time’ (Reeve 1988, p. 20).

<sup>155</sup> In order to assert that just men are better, Plato likens justice to a *technē*. Warren (1989), Sprague (1976) and Irwin (1977) agree that Plato believes that justice is a *technē*. I tend to subscribe to Roochnik’s (1996) non-technical conception of moral knowledge. According to Roochnik (1996, p. 146), in this concrete example, justice is knowledge and is exemplified by *technē*, but it does not follow that justice is a *technē*.

428b6) only to be possessed by the class of the guardians.<sup>156</sup> ‘And to this class, which seems to be by nature the smallest, belongs a share of the knowledge that alone among all the other kinds of knowledge is to be called wisdom [μόνην δεῖ τῶν ἄλλων ἐπιστημῶν σοφίαν καλεῖσθαι]’ (429a1-3). On the basis that justice is the harmonious relationship between the parts, each doing their own, justice is here the capital virtue: if there is justice in a city, then there is *sophia*, temperance and courage. But the status of *sophia* is still dominant, as it is possessed by the class of the rulers. In analogy with the city, the soul of the individual is only just if the rational part rules the spirited and the appetitive part. ‘Therefore, isn’t it appropriate for the rational part to rule, since it is really wise [σοφῶ ὄντι] and exercises foresight on behalf of the whole soul, and for the spirited part to obey it and be its ally?’ (441e4-6). Interestingly, *sophia* is regarded as ‘a sort of knowledge’, one that ensures the harmony of the soul by ruling the other parts; the one who acts with a harmonious and just soul, says Socrates, ‘regards as *sophia* the knowledge that oversees such actions [σοφίαν δὲ τὴν ἐπιστατοῦσαν ταύτη τῇ πράξει ἐπιστήμην]’ (443e6-7).<sup>157</sup>

## 2.5. Philosophical *Sophia* and the Good Life: The *Euthydemus*

Concerning the ethical significance of *sophia*, the *Euthydemus* cannot be overlooked. Socrates reports to Crito a conversation he had the day before with the young Clinias, Ctesippus and the brothers Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, two renowned sophists. It is certainly difficult to pin down what the dialogue is about, as it touches upon a number of themes through a discussion that aims to show the amazing skill of eristic refutation the two brothers boast about. But it is of special interest that the first eristic demonstration (2675d-277c), followed by Socrates’ protreptic argument (278d-282e), has the purpose of exhorting Clinias ‘to philosophy and the practice of virtue [εἰς φιλοσοφίαν καὶ ἀρετῆς ἐπιμέλειαν]’ (275a1-2), —a theme of special interest for Crito, who is looking for an education for his son. What interests us for the present analysis is that it reveals, again, conceptions of *sophia* in a context of competition.

<sup>156</sup> This is a question often asked of virtues, e.g. in the *Charmides* with the example of *sophrosune* (173d8-9) and the *Laches* (194e8) with the example of courage.

<sup>157</sup> See *Laws* III 689c where *sophia* is defined as psychological concord.

What Socrates expects to be an exhortation to philosophise, the brothers present as a dilemma. Put forward by Euthydemus, the question ‘who learns, the ignorant or the *sophoi* [οἱ μανθάνοντες, οἱ σοφοὶ ἢ οἱ ἀμαθεῖς;]?’ (275d4) confronts Clinias with an impossible scenario: the *sophoi* already know; the ignorant do not know where to start.<sup>158</sup> But Socrates explains to Clinias that learning (*manthanein*) applies to someone acquiring knowledge for the first time and also to someone who acquires further knowledge (277e5), thus allowing a middle ground between *amathia* and *sophia*.<sup>159</sup> This clarification on Socrates’ part gains particular significance when philosophy is defined at 288d8 as ‘the acquisition of knowledge’ [φιλοσοφία κτήσις ἐπιστήμης]. Importantly, defined as knowledge, *sophia* is something that can be acquired. One can become *sophos* and *sophōteros*.<sup>160</sup> The form *sophos gignesthai* is found often throughout the corpus.<sup>161</sup> As we have already seen in the *Theaetetus*, learning is defined in terms of becoming *sophōteros* (145d7). As will be discussed in the second section, the opposition *amathia-sophia* holds great significance for defining the epistemological position of the philosopher (*Symp.* 202a). The philosopher is different from both the ignorant, who is in a state of *doxa*, and the *sophos*, who is in possession of *epistēmē*. This is important in the context of the dialogue. While Socrates looks to establish the possibility of acquiring knowledge, Dionysodorus and Euthydemus seek to deny (second eristic demonstration) the possibility of false judgement, false speech and ignorance (286c6, 287a1) and,

<sup>158</sup> This already reveals Euthydemus’ conception of *sophia* as full knowledge and *amathia* as total ignorance.

<sup>159</sup> McCabe (forthcoming) offers a particularly suggestive analysis on this issue. She sees Socrates’ and the sophists’ different stance on philosophy (particularly on the possibility of becoming wise) from the metaphysics of change. Socrates gives an account of learning understood as a progressive process, whose end (virtue) is included in the process itself. On the sophists’ account change is replacement of one property by another, a succession where process and end are distinct and separable.

<sup>160</sup> Of course, the possibility of acquiring *sophia* raises the more problematic issue of whether *sophia* is teachable and therefore acquirable. This is also a critical theme in the *Euthydemus*. Having established that *sophia* is the only good from which all other goods derive, Clinias agrees that a man should try to obtain it in every way he could, to which Socrates answers: ‘But only if *sophia* can be taught [ἢ σοφία διδασκτόν], Clinias, I said, and does not come to men of its own accord. This point still remains for us to investigate and is not yet settled between you and me’ (*Euthyd.* 282c1). Clinias believes that it is the only good and that can be taught, which allows Socrates to exhort him to philosophy: ‘then it is necessary to philosophise [ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι φιλοσοφεῖν]’ (282d1). Of course, this is presented as problematic in the dialogues dealing explicitly with the possibility of teaching of virtue such as the *Meno* and the *Protagoras*. In principle, one can make another one *sophos*; indeed, the form *sophon poiein* is not unusual. See *Symp.* 184d5; *Euthyd.* 292b7; 292c4; *Prot.* 310d7; 324d5; *Meno* 93d5.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. *Phaedo* 90c2; *Theaet.* 145d8, 173b3; *Stat.* 290b2; *Phileb.* 17e1; *Symp.* 204a1; *Lysis* 210d1; *Euthyd.* 282b6, 282e5, 283b5, 283c6, 283d1; *Alc.* 118c4, 119a3; *Phaedrus* 243b3; *Crat.* 399a5; *Euthyph.* 9a2; *Gorg.* 487d1; *Meno* 93e3; *Rep.* 502d4; *Tim.* 21c1.

consequently, the possibility of learning and teaching (287a8). As we shall see in the last chapter, when looking at the *Sophist*, the counterargument that false judgement is not possible (also present in the *Protagoras*) is not ‘trivial counterpoint to Socratic philosophy’, as Roochnik points out:

If the process of learning cannot in fact be rationally articulated and its possibility should therefore be called into question, then the verbal combat of sophistry, the manipulation of words whose goal is only to achieve victory in any given debate, should be taken very seriously. Since the use of language could promise no higher goal, that is, knowledge, there would be no reason not to become a Sophist (1996, p. 161).

Socrates’ protreptic argument starts by posing a (rhetorical) question: ‘Do all men wish to do well [εὖ πράττειν]?’ (278e3). Clinias and Socrates initially agree in that all men wish to do well and that this is accomplished by the possession of goods, among which are power, honour, wealth, health, nobility of birth, being just (*dikaion*), prudent (*sōphrona*), courageous (*andreion*), possession of *sophia*, and good fortune (*eutuchia*). By the end of the argument, we see that *sophia* is the only good in itself; everything else derives its goodness from it.<sup>162</sup> Socrates’ conception of *sophia* as the only good is first asserted when he makes the strong claim that *sophia* alone guarantees *eutuchia* (279d6).<sup>163</sup> Of course, the argument does not prove that *eutuchia* and *sophia* are the same, but only that *sophia* brings *eutuchia* (280b2). The thesis says that by possessing *sophia* one does not need further *eutuchia*: ‘the one who has *sophia* needs no additional *eutuchia* (280b2–3), e.g. the *sophos* doctor cures her patient by her *sophia*, so once the patient is cured, additional *eutuchia* is redundant: *sophia* already provided “good fortune,” i.e. health’ (Adams 2014, p. 55). Rooted on the notion of *sophia* as specialised knowledge or expertise, Socrates

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<sup>162</sup> Socrates’ thesis that knowledge is the only good has been interpreted variously according to different theories of value. Vlastos (1991, pp. 200-32) defends an eudaimonistic theory based on the sufficiency thesis (virtue is sufficient for happiness) and not the identity thesis (virtue and happiness are one and the same). Brickhouse and Smith (1994, p. 107) argue that Socrates claim that wisdom is not the only good, but the only independent good, i.e. a thing that is good in itself. Penner and Rowe have suggested that the claim that *sophia* is the only good means that ‘wisdom is the only thing that is always a means to happiness’ (2005, p. 267). Reshotko (2001; 2006) claims that virtue (and hence knowledge) is an unconditional good but means to happiness, which is unconditional and self-generated (good in itself).

<sup>163</sup> Irwin (1995a) argues that the argument whereby *sophia* equates *eutuchia* is fallacious or invalid. Rider explains the extreme view by considering the purpose of the passage: ‘Socrates’ primary aim here is not to defend or explicate philosophical claims, but rather to inspire his young friend Clinias to practice philosophy, to pursue wisdom’ (2012, p. 208). The argument’s plausibility is defended by Adams (2014) and Jones (2013).

asserts that the *sophos* pilot, the *sophos* general and the *sophos* doctor need no further luck for the success of their activities, and this is so because the very notion of *sophia* is alien to error; *sophia* allows no misuse. ‘So *sophia* makes men fortunate in every case [Ἡ σοφία ἄρα πανταχοῦ εὐτυχεῖν ποιεῖ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους], since I don’t suppose she would ever make any sort of mistake but must necessarily do right and be lucky—otherwise she would no longer be *sophia*’ (280a6-8).<sup>164</sup> *Sophia* does not only guarantee *eutuchia*, but also a happy life. This is because Socrates considers that things are good inasmuch as we obtain a benefit from them. And we only benefit from the possession of these goods if we use them (280d3), but not only that, we ought to use them rightly, where ‘rightly’ essentially means ‘with knowledge’. Interestingly, in this part of the protreptic argument, *sophia* is coupled with *epistēmē* (281b2), *phronēsis* (281b6) and *nous* (281b7). Suddenly, the exclusive status of *sophia* is broadened to include *phronēsis* and *nous*. What do we make of this shift? Considering the main purpose of the argument is to exhort Clinias to philosophise, *sophia* has a unique place among other goods. But by coupling *sophia* to *phronēsis*, *epistēmē* and *nous*, Socrates reinforces a value-system that stands beyond the mere purpose of persuading Clinias to philosophise. This is an invitation to have a virtuous, happy, and good life, all of which can only happen with the guidance of knowledge. This is, as Sedley says, a ‘fundamentally Socratic value system’, also worked out in the *Meno*, *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, according to which ‘the only thing that is underderivatively good is wisdom itself, to whose guidance other things owe whatever goodness they may possess’ (Sedley 2004, p. 75).<sup>165</sup>

At the same time, the mixed terminology makes us wonder whether such knowledge actually exists. ‘This terminological flux helps to raise the next problem with Socrates’s argument: what exactly is this knowledge, assuming it exists, Clinias is being exhorted to seek?’ (Roochnik 1996, p. 165). While we can be sure that *sophia* is *epistēmē*, we are left wondering (once more) what this knowledge is about. When he has concluded that a good life is guided by *sophia* only, Socrates says to Clinias: ‘since knowledge was the source of rightness and good fortune [ὀρθότητα καὶ εὐτυχίαν ἐπιστήμη], it seems to be necessary that every man should prepare himself

<sup>164</sup> This recalls Gorgias’ conception of *sophia* in defence of Palamedes (cf. 1.3).

<sup>165</sup> Interestingly, in these contexts, the usual form is *phronēsis* and not *sophia*. *phronēsis*: *Theaet.* 176b2. *Meno* 88c2, 88d6, 89a5; *Phaedo* 69b3; *Rep.* 591b5, 621c5; *nous*: *Meno* 99e6.

by every means to become *sophōtatos*' (282a4-6). The protreptic argument proves successful, as it has persuaded Clinias to look after *sophia*, i.e. to philosophise. This is mainly because he has convinced himself that there is such knowledge and that it can be acquired (282c5). But then Socrates asks 'whether he ought to acquire every sort of knowledge [πάσαν ἐπιστήμην], or whether there is one sort that he ought to get in order to be a happy man and a good one, and what it is. As I said in the beginning, it is of great importance to us that this young man should become *sophos* and good [σοφόν τε καὶ ἀγαθὸν γενέσθαι]' (282e2-6). Socrates thus hints that a certain kind of knowledge is worth pursuing rather than another.<sup>166</sup>

## 2.6. The *Sophoi*: Apparent and Real

If we wanted to give a clear answer to the question 'who are the *sophoi* in Plato?' it would have to be 'those who know'. As will be shown, this answer, though largely unspecific, seems to capture most references in Plato. While specialised knowledge seems to be a requirement to identify a *sophos*, we find allusions to the *sophoi*, where the question about their specific expertise does not even arise. We should remember that *sophos* is largely a title of reputation. As Peterson observes, '[t]he unqualified term "wise" (*sophos*) is prominently a term of art for those traditional wise men. They were legendary for wisdom in various areas – technical expertise, political wisdom, and great verbal skill [...]' (2011, pp. 27-8).

See, for example, the *Theaetetus* when Socrates, encouraged by Theodorus, exhorts Theaetetus to take part in the examination by saying 'certainly a *sophos* man [ἀνδρὶ σοφῷ] shouldn't be disobeyed by his juniors in matters of this kind' (146c1-2). Similarly at 152b1 when introducing Protagoras' thesis of *homo mensura*, he says 'well, it is not likely that a *sophos* man [σοφὸν ἄνδρα] would talk nonsense.' By appealing to the *sophos* man, Socrates is invoking a prudential model of behaviour, similar to what was seen in tragedy. But more often, *sophos* or *sophōtatos*, unqualified, are said of someone who knows (or appears to know) a lot of things, or shows great ability. See for example, how Socrates, in assessing the way they should

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<sup>166</sup> In the second protreptic argument they postulate the kingly art (291b4), but it ends in *aporia*; they cannot pin down what the knowledge that makes others good is (292e5).

proceed with the investigation, compares the approach of a *deinos sophos* with the regular man (*idiotēs*). Being *deinoi* and *sophoi*, ‘who had already analysed all the contents of our minds’ (154d9), implying exhaustive and comprehensive knowledge, would allow them to play around with arguments in the fashion of sophistics (154e1). Someone who knows many things, a *polumathēs*, may qualify as *sophos* as Hippias does in the *Lesser Hippias* and Euthydemus and Dionysodorus do in the *Euthydemus*. The latter are not only introduced as having *sophia*, but as *passophoi* (271c6). But it is noteworthy that this kind of encyclopaedic knowledge is also identified as a particular sort of *sophia*. Socrates is responding to Crito’s question: ‘What is their *sophia*? [τίς ἡ σοφία]’. Ultimately, their area of expertise is restricted to one specific domain: *eristics* (272b10).<sup>167</sup> It is not unusual to see the label used as an epithet or a complimentary tag of renowned sophists, such as Hippias, Protagoras, Prodicus, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, and also poets, rhetoricians, sages and natural philosophers.<sup>168</sup> But *sophoi* also designates a group or a class, often unspecified, when there is an appeal to authority, ‘the experts’, ‘the intellectuals’ and ‘those who know’ in a general sense. See for example, in the *Theaetetus*, when discussing Protagoras’ secret doctrine of flux, he groups together Empedocles, Heraclitus, and poets Epicharmus and Homer announcing them as ‘all the *sophoi*’ [πάντες οἱ σοφοὶ]’ (152e2) and an invocation of the *sophoi* as endorsing the same doctrine arises at 157b4. It is noteworthy that this form can be invoked by Socrates to introduce a myth or a doctrine or simply support (or contend) a statement.<sup>169</sup>

### 2.6.1. Apparent *Sophia*

Significantly enough, the title of *sophos* is primarily a title of reputation; to a large extent, what makes someone deserving of the title of *sophos* is to be thought *sophos* (*dokein, oiesthai*) by others. Plato exploits the double aspect of *doxa* particularly with regard to others’ claims of *sophia*. ‘*Doxa* may mean reputation or glory in the eyes of the world, but also mere opinion as opposed to knowledge’ (Blundell 1992,

<sup>167</sup> This will become an important aspect in the third section. Plato expresses some kind of suspicion to those who claim to know everything, commonly the case with those practicing eristics

<sup>168</sup> Hippias (*Hipp. Min.* 364b1, *Prot.* 314c1, 337c6), Protagoras (*Theaet.* 152b1, 160d9, 161d9; *Prot.* 309d2, 341a9), Prodicus (*Theaet.* 151b5, *Phaedrus* 267b6, *Prot.* 314c1), Euthydemus and Dionysodorus (*Euthyd.* 271c6), poets (*Phaedrus* 235c4; *Rep.* 335e9), rhetoricians (*Phaedrus* 269b3), sages (*Tim.* 20d8) and natural philosophers (*Gorgias* 507e6; *Laws* 10.886d7; 10.888e8).

<sup>169</sup> See *Gorgias* 493a2; 507e6; *Lysis* 214b2; *Meno* 81a5; *Euthyd.* 287b7; *Rep.* 1.335e, 7.530d, 9.583b; *Theaet.* 151b, 167b; *Phileb.* 28c, 43a. *Phaedrus* 229c6, 260a6; *Crat.* 411b6; *Laws* 10.886d7.

p. 140).<sup>170</sup> The thought is that a great reputation for *sophia* does not entail possession of knowledge. See how the distinction operates in the context of the *Theaetetus*. Toward the close of the digression that compares the philosopher with the man of law, Socrates asserts that the most god-like thing is the man who becomes as just as his human nature allows him to be. To acknowledge this settles a difference between a man of ability and a man of no ability, ‘for it is the realisation of this that is genuine *sophia* and goodness [τούτου γνώσις σοφία καὶ ἀρετὴ ἀληθινή], while the failure to realise it is manifest folly and wickedness [ἡ δὲ ἄγνοια ἀμαθία καὶ κακία ἐναργής]’ (176c4-5). True (*alēthinē*) *sophia* is contrasted with *dokousa sophia*: ‘Everything else that passes for ability and wisdom [ἄλλαι δεινότητές τε δοκοῦσαι καὶ σοφίαι] has a sort of commonness—in those who wield political power a poor cheap show, in the manual workers a matter of mechanical routine’ (176c6-d1).

This makes us think that it is possible to become a reputed *sophos*, without actually having knowledge. In the *Cratylus*, Socrates says to Hermogenes that his brother Callias obtained his reputation for *sophia* (*sophos dokei*; 391c1) from learning with the sophists in exchange of money. This suggests that, by associating with the sophists, one may obtain a reputation for *sophia*, without necessarily being a *sophos*. Is there such a thing as a merely apparent *sophos*? A good way to attempt an answer is by recounting a story that Socrates uses in the *Phaedrus* when discussing the artfulness of writing. The story describes an encounter between the Egyptian king Thamus and Theuth, the god of calculation and writing. When asked to disseminate the discovery of writing among the Egyptians, Thamus responds to Theuth:

You have not discovered a potion for remembering, but for reminding; you provide your students with the appearance of *sophia*, not with its reality [σοφίας δὲ τοῖς μαθηταῖς δόξαν, οὐκ ἀλήθειαν πορίζεις]. Your invention will enable them to hear many things without being properly taught, and they will imagine that they have come to know much while for the most part they will know nothing [ἀγνώμονες]. And they will be difficult to get along with, since they will *merely appear* to be *sophoi* instead of really being so [δοξόσοφοι γεγονότες ἀντὶ σοφῶν] (275a5-b2).

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<sup>170</sup> We shall see this in more detail in chapter 3.

The evaluation of writing as the means to achieve the appearance of *sophia* is certainly suggestive in light of Socrates' comments on the genus of speechwriters by the end of the *Euthydemus*. In a middle territory between philosophy and statesmanship, they think themselves (*oionta*; 305c7) and are thought (*dokein*; c9) by others to be *sophōtatoi* of all. 'Therefore, they think that if they place these persons in the position of appearing to be worth nothing, then victory in the contest for the reputation of *sophia* [τὰ νικητήρια εἰς δόξαν οἴσεσθαι σοφίας πέρι] will be indisputably and immediately theirs, and in the eyes of all' (305d2-5).<sup>171</sup>

The reputed *sophoi*, considered as such in the eyes of the majority, can be qualified as 'merely reputed' as opposed to real *sophoi*. The distinction between real and apparent gains significance when considering that *sophia* is a flexible category and can be easily appropriated. This is the case with sophists in the *Republic* (493a6); they only teach what the majority wants to hear. 'Indeed, these are precisely what the sophists call *sophia* [σοφίαν ταύτην καλεῖν]' (493a9). As if someone were to learn how to please and pamper a beast: 'calling this knack a *sophia*, but nothing knowing in reality [μηδὲν εἰδὼς τῆ ἀληθείᾳ]' (493b6-8) about what is just, or unjust, good or bad, as if the purpose is just to keep the beast content.<sup>172</sup>

### 2.6.2. Interlocutors' and Socrates' *Sophia*

More significantly for the present analysis, the epithet *sophos* is commonly assigned to Socrates' interlocutors.<sup>173</sup> This is because Socrates' divine mission, explicitly addressed in the *Theaetetus* (150c7) and the *Apology* (23a5), compels him to examine the reputed *sophoi*, so as to learn something from them or, otherwise, to show them that they do not have the knowledge they claim to have. Most of the time, Socrates' method of examination reveals his interlocutor's conceit of *sophia*. 'Of the thirty-four interlocutors in the Socratic dialogues twenty-one have some claim of wisdom that Socrates goes on to examine. In no case is the interlocutor's wisdom

<sup>171</sup> This assessment is particularly significant considering that Socrates is reacting to the words of a famous speechwriter (most likely Isocrates, cf. 10.6), who approached Crito to say that the conversation Socrates held with the brothers was meaningless chattering and philosophy 'of no value whatsoever'. See Peterson (2011, p. 200) for a discussion of the competing notions of *philosophia* in the *Euthydemus*.

<sup>172</sup> See also *Rep.* 409c5; d3; *Laws* 3.691a, 3.701a, 5.732a; 9.863c; 12.952c; 12.962e.

<sup>173</sup> Apart from the already mentioned, Euthyphro at *Euthyph.* 9b3, 12a5; Callicles at *Gorg.* 489c8, 508a5; Thrasymachus at *Rep.* 337a8, 339e5; Agathon at *Symp.* 175e1; Diotima at *Symp.* 206b6.

uncovered and in only seven cases is the interlocutor persuaded of his ignorance’ (Benson 2011, pp. 182-3). As a result, those who appear or are reputed *sophoi*, prove to be not really *sophoi*.

The contrast between apparent and real *sophia* is dramatically accentuated by Socrates’ disavowal of knowledge. As compared to Socrates’ self-declared ignorance, the claims of *sophia* of someone like Protagoras, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, or Hippias arouse some suspicion, and put into question the merit of their reputation. In the *Theaetetus*, through a unique and eloquent analogy with midwifery, Socrates admits that he is ‘barren of *sophia* [ἄγονός εἰμι σοφίας]’ (150c4), that he ‘has no *sophia* [μηδὲν ἔχειν σοφόν]’ (150c6), but also that he is ‘not completely *sophos* [οὐ πάνυ τι σοφός]’ (150d1).<sup>174</sup> Socrates’ disavowal of knowledge here and elsewhere is moderate. As Sedley (2004, p. 31) suggests, Socrates possesses ‘rudiments of *sophia*’ which enable him to examine others. This view is confirmed later on when he reminds Theodorus: ‘I do not know much, only little, [ἐγὼ δὲ οὐδὲν ἐπίσταμαι πλέον πλὴν βραχέος], but enough to take an argument from someone else—someone who is *sophos* [ἐτέρου σοφοῦ]—and give it a fair reception’ (*Theaet.* 161b3-5).<sup>175</sup> Socrates surely knows how to elicit answers from his interlocutors, and he does it—genuinely or disingenuously—from the conviction that he himself lacks knowledge and a willingness to learn. In this context, it is worth noticing that the way Socrates addresses his interlocutor and presents himself is essentially anti-agonistic. Instead of appropriating the title, Socrates openly declares he is out of the competition. Instead of undermining others’ claims of *sophia*, he overstates their reputation.<sup>176</sup> The ironic effect can be easily detected in the dialogues, e.g. between Euthydemus and Dionysodorus and

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<sup>174</sup> The anonymous commentator (Sedley 1995, p. 227-562) of the *Theaetetus*, defends this translation of *ou panu ti sophos* (55.42-5). And he observes earlier (44.35-40) that the claim that Socrates does not possess *sophia* is intended in an absolute (non a relative) sense, meaning that he does not possess the *sophia* that is attributed to a god or to a sophist. See also Sedley (2004, p. 31n55).

<sup>175</sup> Trans. adapted.

<sup>176</sup> Although in a unique way, Socrates still belongs to the early tradition of *sophia*. As Martin puts it: ‘Against the background I have sketched, of sages who are performers in several spheres, we can certainly see continuities in Socrates’ life, in the form of his relationship with Delphi, his role in politics, even his versifying of Aesop’s fables. But, as he is depicted, all these are marginal activities in Socrates’ career. No archaic sage invented the *elenchus*; it was the speciality of a man who constantly broke the frame of the performance by confronting his audience in dialogue and refusing to rely on the power of emphatic, unidirectional self-presentation’ (1993, p. 124).

Socrates.<sup>177</sup> See, for example, the *Lesser Hippias*, when Socrates praises the reputed *sophia* of a rather confused and perplexed Hippias' (369d1), while he advances confident of his ignorance: 'I make mistakes as to the way things are, and don't know how they are—I find it sufficient evidence of this that when I am with one of you who are highly regarded for *sophia* [ὑμῶν τῶν εὐδοκιμούντων ἐπὶ σοφίᾳ], and to whose *sophia* all the Greeks bear witness, I show myself to know nothing [φαίνομαι οὐδὲν εἰδώς]' (372b4-7). The asymmetry between the interlocutors' reputation of *sophia* and Socrates' lack of knowledge is turned around to finally show an asymmetry between the interlocutors' conceit of *sophia*, i.e. ignorance, and Socrates' *sophia*. The result is that interlocutors are ignorant, and Socrates has some kind of knowledge.

To be sure, *sophos* is a complimentary label in Plato, but the contrast between Socratic ignorance and the interlocutor's claims of knowledge often results in a relative valuation of *sophia/sophos*. The title assigned to someone like Hippias who boasts knowledge of everything, or someone like Protagoras who assures that he can teach *aretē*, delivers an ironic or negative overtone, something similar to the one witnessed in Aristophanes' derisive portrayal of the intellectual (cf. 1.6), or in Euripides' presentation of Pentheus (cf.1.4), which denounces an hubristic attitude based upon an (exaggerated) optimism about the capacity of the human intellect. In this regard, 'apparent' as opposed to 'real' *sophia* is comparable to the passage of the *Bacchae* that asserts *to sophon d' ou sophia* (395) (cf. 1.4).<sup>178</sup>

Interestingly, Socratic *sophia* fits within a conceptualisation of *sophia* in terms of knowledge, if we allow that the apprehension of some truth counts as knowledge (even if not as *epistēmē*). Socrates knows something. I will come back to this in the next chapter, but it is worth noticing that *sophia* also conceptualises an apprehension of some truth, which involves a prudential component. *Sophia* is also *gnōsis*, the recognition or understanding, that god (and not man) is a measure of justice (*Theaet.* 176c4). Similarly, in the *Apology*, Socrates is the most *sophos* among men because he is the only one who understands (*egnōken*; 23b) that his *sophia*, as compared to

<sup>177</sup> Cf. *Euthyd.* 295a6.

<sup>178</sup> See, for example, Winnington-Ingram, who reads the passage as follows: 'What passes for wisdom is no true wisdom' (1969, p. 62).

god's, is worthless.<sup>179</sup> Significantly, in the *Apology*, Socrates says that he does not believe he knows, but he actually recognises he is *sophōteros* than the politician in that he does not think he has knowledge: 'I have no knowledge, nor do I think I have any [μὴ οἶδα οὐδὲ οἶομαι εἰδέναι]' (21d7).<sup>180</sup> What Socrates denies is not the possession of (some sort of) *sophia*, but the conceit of *sophia*.<sup>181</sup> As we shall see, Socrates is not a *sophos* in the way god or the reputed *sophoi* are, but he is certainly not ignorant, because his soul is free from false opinion (cf. 3.3.3). This already makes him a sort of *sophos*, the sort of *sophos* that in the *Symposium* describes the *philosophos* (cf. 4.4.2).

## 2.7. Conclusion

*Sophia* is understood as knowledge in a broad sense so as to include: (i) expert knowledge; (ii) moral knowledge; (iii) Socratic knowledge; (iv) reputation of knowledge. Importantly, expert knowledge is measured by the standards of true as opposed to false judgement. In principle, a conception in terms of expert knowledge makes *sophia* attainable (thereby making philosophy possible) by means of learning while it also establishes the possibility of false judgement and error. As moral knowledge, *sophia* stands together with *phronēsis* as a capital virtue (or the whole of virtue) and, if attainable, its possession secures a happy and virtuous life.<sup>182</sup> Socratic *sophia* consists in a realisation, an awareness or understanding of the limits of human knowledge, as well as an ability to conduct *elenchus*. By contrast, apparent

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<sup>179</sup> Furthermore, in the *Theaetetus* he declares he knows how to make questions, in the *Symposium* he knows *ta erotika* (177d7), in the *Apology* he is aware (*sunoida*) that he does not know (21b4) and he knows (*oida*) that to do injustice to be evil (29b6-7).

<sup>180</sup> Fine (2008) examines Socrates' claim in the form taken to be self-contradictory 'he knows that he knows nothing' and argues that this is only true if we eliminate the different cognitive terminology, e.g. *sunoida*, *gignōskein*, in contrast with *sophia* and *epistēmē*. She warns that 'in the relevant passages Socrates uses different cognitive words for different cognitive conditions' (2008, p. 85).

<sup>181</sup> In principle, I do not see the need of setting a distinction between different senses for knowledge terminology. Two senses of 'know' words, a weaker and a stronger, is defended by Vlastos (1985; 1994) in the form of certain knowledge and elenctic knowledge. Woodruff (1992) and Reeve (1989) and Roochnik (1996) defend a distinction between expert and non-expert knowledge. Brickhouse and Smith (1994) propose a distinction between knowing-how and knowing-that. According to Fine (2008), different cognitive conditions may be hinted by different terminology (*sunoida*, *gignōskō*, *eidenai*, *sophia*). This is useful, but also assumes that these differences are consistent. For the case of *sophia*, the criterion at work is the object known and the value of the object known. As we shall see in the *Apology*, this is sufficient to establish whether it is real or false *sophia*, human or divine *sophia*.

<sup>182</sup> It is noteworthy that neither the *Protagoras*, nor the *Theaetetus* nor the *Euthydemus* conclusively show what kind of knowledge *sophia* is.

*sophia* belongs to those who think themselves or are thought by other people to possess knowledge. Although it seems rather clear that Plato takes *sophia* to be knowledge in general, in some contexts *sophia* is distinctly moral, and it is at the centre of a good and a happy life. While *sophia*'s moral significance tends to overlap with *phronēsis*, it does not have the force that *epistēmē* has to establish a criterion of truth. On the other hand, neither *phronēsis* nor *epistēmē* has the cultural force that *sophia* has, which allows one to make a relevant distinction between real and apparent. Plato's conception of *sophia/sophos* against the background of traditional conceptions of *sophia/sophos* (discussed in chapter 1) becomes central in the *Apology*. As we shall see in the next chapter, the expertise of the reputed *sophoi* is examined to conclude that Socrates is the only human *sophos*, while the only real *sophos* is god. In the 'old accusations' against Socrates, Plato uses *sophos* as a title of reputation, a term of blame and an epithet to describe the intellectual. In his defence of Socrates, *sophos* is not as a title of reputation, but a quality designating possession of knowledge. In this context, the question about the object known becomes crucial to understanding the difference between the commonly reputed expert as a *sophos*, Socrates as a *sophos*, and divine *sophia*. This also makes us think about the way that Platonic *sophia* (which is essentially epistemic) positions itself in the tradition; the question 'what does the *sophos* know?' or 'what kind of knowledge is *sophia*?' emphasises the importance of the object known over the competence, skill or experience displayed by the subject. From the admission that one can be *sophos* about different things (about different crafts, moral virtue, own cognitive state, etc) in the *Apology*, we shall see how being *sophos* about some things matters more than being *sophos* about others.



### CHAPTER 3: THE *APOLOGY*

In 399 BCE Socrates was prosecuted by Anytus, Meletus and Lycon on the charges of impiety and corruption, condemned by the Athenian jury and executed. Plato's *Apology* narrates Socrates' trial.<sup>183</sup> It is an opportunity to rehabilitate the image of his master Socrates. This is also an opportunity to introduce a distinction between the sophist and the philosopher. However, we witness no such distinction. Plato's strategy is different. He picks up the stereotype of the *sophos* to assert Socrates as a 'sort of *sophos*'. He tests the knowledge of those with the highest reputation of *sophia* to show that they do not know the things that would make them 'real' *sophoi*. I will demonstrate that Plato in the *Apology* introduces a notion of *sophia* that aims to distinguish Socrates from all the traditionally reputed *sophoi*. He introduces Socrates as a new paradigm of *sophos*, against a tradition that conceives him as a typical *sophos*. He dissociates mere reputation of *sophia* from real *sophia*, against a tradition that uses these labels essentially as titles of authority and reputation. At the heart of this strategy is Plato's conceptualisation of *sophia* as knowledge. As we shall see, a *sophos*, to be rightly called so, must know something, but not just anything.

The analysis covers the *Apology* from 17a to 23c, which includes the 'old accusations' and the story of the oracle or 'Narration'.<sup>184</sup> The starting point is Socrates' old slanders which amount to his reputation of being a *sophos* (18b8). The label, in allusion to the stereotype of the intellectual (cf. 1.5, 1.6), is broad in meaning, reference and value, all of which makes it a perfect target for the purpose of redefinition and appropriation. We shall see that the criterion to define who a *sophos* is is both epistemological and moral. Someone relatively *sophos* (or *sophōteros*) has expert knowledge (as in the *Theaetetus*), a real *sophos* knows 'the most important things', and a human *sophos* does not think that he knows the things that he does not. In the *Apology*, Plato seems to find an opportunity to question the

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<sup>183</sup> Socrates indictment, trial and execution are also partly narrated in the *Theaetetus*, the *Euthyphro* and the *Crito*. For an assessment of Socrates' death in the four dialogues, see Nails (2006).

<sup>184</sup> Strycker and Slings (1994, p. 59), who analyse the formal structure of the *Apology* in rhetorical terms, identify this section as the 'Narration'. Significantly, the central function of the Narration (*diēgēsis*) according to Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is to depict moral character (cf. *Rh.* 1417a16ff.).

criteria whereby the *sophoi* are called *sophoi* (Socrates himself included), making Socrates' trial a case against the tradition of wisdom.

There are many reasons why the most informative and revealing source for this kind of assessment is Plato's *Apology*. The most obvious reason lies in the effect and value that the portrayal of Socrates as a *sophos* has for the philosophical tradition:

*Apology* has very often been taken to be the fullest expression of Socratic character, and it has, thereby, exercised so enormous an influence on the reception of Socrates as a "sage" or wise man and exemplary thinker in Western thought, that clarifying aspects of it should contribute to greater self-reflection about the appropriation of Socrates as exemplar and of Plato as a radical thinker (Goldman 2009, p. 447).

For the present analysis, there is yet another significant reason. In a context where the title of *sophos* is open to be appropriated and defined, the *Apology* stands as a particularly valuable source. Nowhere else is the question of the possession of *sophia* and the discovering of the *sophoi* treated more systematically. It is worth remarking that the focus is on *sophia/sophos* specifically. The scholarly tradition on Socrates tends to consider *sophia* as an equivalent for other intellectual categories, such as *epistēmē* and *technē* and then the question seems to be dissolved in the problem of knowledge in general.<sup>185</sup> This assumption is not only problematic in that it is difficult to justify—at least in the case of the *Apology*, but more importantly, in that it conceals the unique value the label *sophia/sophos* has in the literary tradition of the fifth century BCE. On the tendency to equate *sophia* and *technē*, Leshner states: '*Sophia* however had a long-standing connotation of special skill, expertise, a high degree of competence in a field, and the fact that someone could be *sophos* in a particular episteme could hardly prove interchangeability *salva veritate*' (1987, p. 282). Let the evidence provided by the Greek text be sufficient to establish it as a salient category: the word *sophia* and *sophos* appear thirty-six times, whereas *technē* (20c1; 22d7) occurs twice, and none of these instances seem to prove that they are interchangeable.

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<sup>185</sup> Cf. particularly Benson (2000), but also Reeve (1989), Vlastos (1985) and Woodruff (1992).

### 3.1. Socrates *Sophos*: a Term of Blame

The *Apology*, from the beginning, confronts us with two images of Socrates: who he says he is; who others say he is. According to the official charges, Socrates is a ‘clever’ or ‘accomplished speaker’ (*deinos*; 17b1). This is the very first representation—a misrepresentation according to Socrates—which he rejects by describing the nature of his speech, namely a speech governed by truth and not by persuasive devices. In this passage we find the first interpretative problem of Socrates’ *Apology*.<sup>186</sup> He claims he is not a clever speaker (17b3), and yet he speaks cleverly; he claims the language of forensic oratory is alien to him (17d3), and yet he shows himself to be familiar with it. What is more, the very qualification of his speech as ‘true’ can be seen as a device of persuasion.<sup>187</sup> The emphasis is particularly on the way he is presented as a speaker, that is, as a *deinos* speaker (17b1; 17b3; 17b4). Most authors translate *deinos* as ‘clever’, which, although it seems most appropriate for the context, shows only one side of its double-valence. As already discussed, the adjective, when it refers to the achievements of men, means ‘wonderful’, but also ‘terrible’ (cf. 1.4). Thus it is not impossible to think that Socrates, when qualified a *deinos* speaker, rejects the negative overtone intended by *deinos* while assuming he can make a good and truthful speech: ‘unless indeed they call an accomplished speaker [δεινὸν καλοῦσιν οὔτοι λέγειν] the man who speaks the truth [τὸν τᾶληθῆ λέγοντα]’ (17b4-5).

A similar phenomenon occurs with the old charges. Once Socrates has declared the purpose of his defence and the nature of his speech, he establishes a distinction among his accusers. While also lumping them together as forces to be reckoned with, he distinguishes the official new accusers from the old ones. At 18a8 he invokes ‘his first accusers’ (*prōtous*). This makes an explicit reference to time, i.e. ‘former’, ‘earlier’, but, more implicitly, it hints at their order of importance. As Socrates will

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<sup>186</sup> Burnet (1982 [1924], p. 147) sees this move as ironic on the grounds that Socrates exordium follows all the conventions of forensic rhetoric: ‘The truth is rather that the exordium is, amongst other things, a parody’. On this, Riddle asserts: ‘the exordium may be completely paralleled, piece by piece, from the orators’ (1877, p. xxi). Other views, such as those of Brickhouse and Smith (1989; 2004), Strycker and Slings (1994) and Reeve (1989) support a more moderate interpretation: Socrates is sincere and the irony is rather subtle. Leibowitz (2010), on the other hand, sees it as straightforward case of irony.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Aristot. *Rh.* 1355a21.

later recognise, these accusations have affected for a long time both the opinion of the jury (18e3) and of his new accusers (19b1).<sup>188</sup> Socrates refers to them as the ones he fears most (*mallon phoboumai*; 18b3) as they are indeed ‘more fearful’, ‘more terrible’ (*deinoterōi*; 18b4), than the others. But why are these accusations so significant and these accusers more terrible? The accusations are false, they have been circulating for a long time, they include the charge of impiety and the accusers are anonymous. What they say is ‘that there is a man called Socrates, a *sophos* man [σοφὸς ἀνὴρ], a student [φροντιστής] of all things in the sky and below the earth, who makes the worse argument the stronger’ (18b6-c1).

It is quite remarkable that the key term in the old accusations against Socrates is the title of *sophos*. This aspect of the imputation appears when he first announces the accusations (‘Socrates *sophos anēr*’; 18b7), before the story of the oracle (‘What has caused my reputation is none other than a certain kind of *sophia* [διὰ σοφίαν τινὰ τοῦτο τὸ ὄνομα ἔσχηκα]’; 20d6-7) and after the story of the oracle (‘many slanders [πολλὰς διαβολὰς] came from these people and a reputation for wisdom [ὄνομα δὲ τοῦτο λέγεσθαι, σοφὸς εἶναι]’; 23a2-3).<sup>189</sup> What makes it more remarkable is the absence of terms of blame.<sup>190</sup> ‘It is striking that the so-called charges of the first accusers are not worded as charges: there is no mention of injustice, no blame, no call for punishment. Their statement, which after all refers to him as a wise man (σοφὸς ἀνὴρ), could even be read as praise’ (Leibowitz 2010, p. 40).<sup>191</sup>

Why is *sophos* at the centre of the old accusations?<sup>192</sup> We could certainly think of other characteristics making Socrates a target of popular odium and ridicule.<sup>193</sup> Among these, one can think that Socrates’ characteristic ugliness might have made

<sup>188</sup> Cf. 28a-b.

<sup>189</sup> On this, Peterson says: ‘It will emerge that the “and” in the phrase “the name and the slander” is appositional or explanatory. It amounts to “that is to say.” The name “wise” is precisely the slander’ (2011, p. 19).

<sup>190</sup> Although the language used of the accusers and the accusations is forensic.

<sup>191</sup> Part of Socrates’ reputation of being a *sophos* might have also come from his more intimate disciples out of admiration. The title, used in a positive light, could also have been rejected on the grounds Socrates rejects his bad reputation, i.e. on the grounds that he believes he does not know anything.

<sup>192</sup> This is a question worth asking especially if we look at Xenophon’s *Apology*, where these words are far from having any prominent place or particular emphasis (16.6 *sophos*; 34.2 *sophia*)

<sup>193</sup> For a full account of different perspectives around Socrates’ death from antiquity onwards, see Wilson (2000) and Trapp (2007).

him a more notorious and, of course, a more laughable target. His physical appearance, combined with the way he dressed, i.e. poorly and barefoot, might also have attracted public attention. It is also possible that Socrates was arousing suspicion among people because, being an Athenian, he was acting like a foreigner.<sup>194</sup> Mostly, however, Socrates associated with people that had become enemies of Athens.<sup>195</sup> He was the teacher of Critias, who later became a member of the Thirty Tyrants (404 BCE), a pro-Spartan oligarchy, and the mentor of Alcibiades, who led the failed Sicilian expedition, was charged with the mutilation of the statue of Hermes and allied in conspiracy with Sparta and Persia against Athens.<sup>196</sup> Surprisingly enough, none of these reasons is presented—at least, explicitly—as a motive against Socrates in Plato’s *Apology*. The official charges are formulated on grounds of impiety and corruption, and the old accusations are based, according to Plato, on nothing other than rumours, stereotypes and prejudices. The historical reasons might be useful in order to establish the mind set of the jury or understand the attitude of the audience, but as far as the *Apology* is concerned, one of the strongest sources of prejudice is the common opinion that Socrates is a typical *sophos*.<sup>197</sup> Of course, the prejudice may have been wider and more diverse in formulation, all of which suggests that Plato might have been deliberately selective. I propose that Plato focuses specifically on *sophia* because it offers a good way to defend and rescue Socrates’ activity.

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<sup>194</sup> This is Dover’s thesis: ‘It is even possible that an Athenian, such as Damon or Socrates, who gained a reputation as ‘teacher’ of wealthy and powerful men, incurred special odium inasmuch as he was felt to have alienated himself from the community by choosing a foreigner’s role’ (1988, p. 156).

<sup>195</sup> According to Diogenes Laertius, Socrates was the ‘the first philosopher who was tried and put to death’ (DL II. 20). Other cases of impiety might have already caught the attention of the Athenians. For a list of probable cases with an assessment on the credibility of the sources see Dover (1988) and Wallace (1994). On the view that Socrates was not an exceptional case, see Todd (1993) and Parker (2002). Parker summarizes the point as follows: ‘In a sense, Socrates was just one trouble-maker or bad citizen among many put to death by the Athenians’ (2002, p. 146).

<sup>196</sup> Cf. Xen. *Mem.* 1. 2. 12.

<sup>197</sup> The phenomenon of the hostility against intellectuals can be partly explained against the historical background of Athens in the late fifth century by the convergence of the war, the plague, the alienation of the intellectual elite from politics and the instability of democracy (oligarchs overthrew democracy twice, in 411 and 404 BCE). In this context, Socrates’ trial and defamation would be symptomatic of an anti-intellectual climate. Cf. Todd (1993), Wallace (1994) and Parker (2002). Indeed, according to some sources—most of them found in doxographic accounts or in comedy, Socrates was only one victim among others prosecuted on grounds of impiety (cf. Dover 1988; Wallace 1994).

### 3.1.1. The Intellectual *Sophos*

It is relatively safe to assume that when Socrates voices his old accusers, the label *sophos* refers to the intellectual type of the *Clouds*. These accusers, one cannot ‘know or mention their names unless one of them is a writer of comedies’ (18c9-d1).<sup>198</sup> He is a *sophos* man and a *phrontistēs* of things above and below the earth.<sup>199</sup> But what exactly is wrong with being a *sophos* or a *phrontistēs*? As seen in *Clouds*, the title, when associated with the new-fangled intellectual trend, carries the charge of transgression of the old traditional and moral values (cf. 1.6).<sup>200</sup> The comic stereotype of Socrates, although is meant to be humorous in the context of comedy, in the context of Plato’s *Apology* proves to have some serious implications regarding Socrates’ reputation of being a *sophos*.<sup>201</sup> Both the fact that the two charges appear almost cited word by word from Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, and its explicit reference (195c3) seem to suggest that for Plato’s presentation of Socrates these are indeed sources of serious prejudice.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> The allusion, later made in explicit reference to Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, could also be extended to other comedians who derided Socrates, such as Ameipsias (*Konnos*, 423BCE) and Eupolis (*Kolakes*, 421 BCE). To see a comparison between Eupolis’ *Kolakes*, Ameipsias’ *Konnos* and Aristophanes’ *Clouds* on the depiction of the intellectual see Carey (2000).

<sup>199</sup> The word is used in *Clouds* to designate Socrates’ school (*phrontistērion*) and the chorus in Ameipsias’ *Konnos* consists of *phrontistai*. It appears in Xenophon’s *Symposium* (6. 6) as a common nickname for Socrates and it is particularly related to the inquiry of celestial phenomena. As Burnet (1982 [1924], p. 156) explains, the use of the term to designate a ‘thinker’ is Ionic rather than Attic and, as it stands in *Apology*, *Clouds* and Xenophon’s *Symposium*, its first field of reference is astronomy rather than philosophy.

<sup>200</sup> Both accusations are more or less implicitly linked with the formal charges of impiety and corruption. Firstly, the investigation of celestial phenomena directly or indirectly leads to the defiance of religious conventions, among which is the acceptance of the gods of the city: ‘for their hearers believe that those who study these things do not even believe in the gods [οὐδὲ θεοὺς νομίζεῖν; 18c3]’. In this passage, as in Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, *ta meteora* refers to meteorology and astronomy, a common line of inquiry among the pre-Socratics—particularly Ionian philosophers, which in most cases seeks to explain physical phenomena by the action of elements, causes or laws different from the traditional Olympian gods. Secondly, ‘to make the weaker argument stronger’ makes reference to Protagoras’ *antilogia* whereby two opposite arguments can be claimed about every state of affairs. The assumption (at least in its vicious version) is that the power of rhetorical argumentation is such that can plead an unjust cause and win. This is, at least, one of the purposes that Strepsiades describes in *Clouds* (112-15). Cf. DK 80B 6a-6b.

<sup>201</sup> Certainly, the purpose of amusement in comedy is not incompatible with the purpose of public influence.

<sup>202</sup> Plato’s stance on the potential damage of comedy is exposed in the *Laws* XI 935e4-936a.

There seems to be general agreement among critics that Socrates in *Clouds* embodies a type.<sup>203</sup> This is not to say that Aristophanes could not see the difference between Socrates and other contemporary intellectuals, but rather to point out that the difference is not relevant for comic purposes.<sup>204</sup> *Clouds* derides Socrates in particular, it is true, but the particular Socrates it depicts includes the elements that characterise a whole class. Here I follow Halliwell who asserts that ‘Aristophanes’ fundamental procedure in most cases is not to focus on particular features or traits, but rather to turn the nominally real individual into an exaggerated and easily recognisable type’ (1984, p. 10). This generalising tendency is indeed fundamental to achieving the satirical effect as a way to capture popular attitudes towards a social type. By reducing individualisation and assimilating traits, stereotypes appeal to a broader audience. In this way, ‘[b]y attacking young smart allecks and busybodies, Aristophanes could appeal to the prejudices of his mostly older audience, to whom the New Rhetoric might seem an unwelcome invention’ (Hubbard 2007, p. 495). Significantly, the figure of Socrates is representing a school of intellectuals, i.e. a ‘reflectory for clever spirits’, and not so much a school of thought.<sup>205</sup> It is important to remark that Socrates’ characterisation is drawn in opposition to ordinary men, Strepsiades and Pheidippides. These two men, however, offer two different attitudes towards Socrates and intellectuals, which, I believe, captures the characteristic ambivalence of the label *sophos* whereby there are positive and negative elements at play. Thus while Strepsiades sees them as capable, Pheidippides sees them as charlatans. The *sophoi* of the *phrontisterion* are described by Strepsiades as ‘Reflective thinkers, fine upstanding people [μεριμνοφρονισταὶ καλοὶ τε κἀγαθοί]’ (101) and then re-described by Pheidippides as ‘the charlatans, the palefaces, the men with no shoes [ἀλαζόνας, ὠχριῶντας, ἀνουποδήτους]’

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<sup>203</sup> For example, Dover (1968), Whitman (1964), Sommerstein (1982) Halliwell (1984), Carey (2000), Lowe (2007) and Konstan (2011).

<sup>204</sup> As Carey explains, to acknowledge the difference between Socrates and other thinkers undermines the strategy of creating a type. ‘The difference between Sokrates and other sophists were as visible to Aristophanes as to his contemporary comedians; this is clear from the fact that in the surviving *Clouds* Aristophanes presents Sokrates himself as an ascetic while associating him indirectly with hedonism and self-assertion [...] To acknowledge the differences more pointedly would have undermined the strategy of using Sokrates in part as a type’ (Carey 2000, p. 429).

<sup>205</sup> Aristophanes thus targets a class rather than particular individuals. ‘The play’s emphasis on a school of intellectuals, which can be represented as well by the personified Unjust Argument as by Socrates himself, intimates Aristophanes’ greater concern with the popular view of philosophers as a class than with any particular individual’ (Halliwell 1984, p. 12).

(103).<sup>206</sup> Most significantly, by the end of the play Pheidippides' initial position against intellectuals is the one that proves right and, ultimately, the position from which the play acquires its full meaning. As Dover comments: 'in order to understand [*Clouds*] we must make an imaginative effort to adopt an entirely different position, the position of someone to whom all philosophical and scientific speculation, all disinterested intellectual curiosity, is boring and silly (1968, p. lii). In such a context, details and particulars are not important because what is under evaluation are social roles, and not specific ideas or doctrines. That is why traces of negative criticism towards the intellectual type contained in *Clouds* and then invoked here in the *Apology* should not be judged as sign of anti-intellectualism—inasmuch as this requires a discourse contrary to rational ideas or intellectualism, but rather as an anti-intellectual attitude—inasmuch as there exist an hostility against a group of people labelled as intellectuals.<sup>207</sup> To understand this point, let us now think of a different example, more familiar with Socrates' context in the *Apology*. Everyone would agree that nowadays the label 'academic' covers a vast a number of different disciplines and schools. When the category 'academic' is in use, particularly when attributed to a group of people, it tends to disregard in-group differences by assimilating characteristic traits. Thus, any aspects related to formal scholarly conventions, such as the use of technical vocabulary, or any regular practice such as reading, researching or teaching, or any customary place such as the library or the laboratory, will contribute to the creation of a stereotype. 'People who are not interested in science or philosophy tend to regard as trivial differences which to the scientist or philosopher are momentous [...]' (Dover 1972, p. 119). If there is a sentiment of dislike or a prejudice against academics in general, it surely will not discriminate on the grounds of the different objects and methodologies of each area of study. Thus the stereotyped judgement 'all academics are pedants' will apply to all of the above described by ignoring in-group distinctions and reinforcing out-group distinctions. Whether the academic refers to a philosopher, a sociologist or a historian, it is just not relevant as far as they behave or look similar in the eyes of

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<sup>206</sup> Trans. A.H. Sommerstein (1982).

<sup>207</sup> White (1962) makes the point clear: 'The anti-intellectual is usually an ordinary man, a non-intellectual, to whom an egg-head is an egg-head, whether scientist, historian or philosopher, rationalist or empiricist, hard-boiled or scrambled. For the anti-intellectual, the important contrast is that between the pursuits of the professor, artist, scholar and scientist, on the one hand, and those of the business man, plumber, secretary, barber, and politician, on the other' (White 1962, p. 1).

those who do not belong to academia. Likewise, the association between Socrates, the sophists and pre-Socratic philosophers disregards differences related to both subject matter and methodology; to be sure, to distinguish between dialectic and eristic already requires a sufficient level of acquaintance with these things, otherwise it looks too subtle, not to say superfluous. Of course, this does not mean that the judgment ignores subject matter altogether. Indeed, the judgement is grounded on the impression that this is a group who tend to mix in the same circles and discuss the same sorts of things, namely language, virtue and natural philosophy. Such a judgement, however, ignores differences inside the group while overstating differences outside the group in such a way that they are assessed negatively on the grounds that they do not act like most people. As a result the value-judgement prevails as it is rooted in the belief that there is a certain group who, unlike normal people, challenge conventional beliefs, threaten social stability and act strangely. The general principles and practices whereby this group is identified are perceived as objectionable.

### 3.2. A ‘Sort of *Sophos*’

Socrates restates the old accusations, giving voice to his unnamed accusers: ‘Socrates is guilty of wrongdoing [ἀδικεῖ] in that he busies himself [περιεργάζεται] studying things in the sky and below the earth; he makes the worse into the stronger argument, and he teaches these same things to others’ [19b4-c1]. The charges in their new formulation have acquired a negative force by the presence of the verbs *adikei* and *periergazetai*, i.e. to be unjust and to be a nuisance by taking unnecessary pains to do something. Since the accusations by themselves have no legal force, the presence of these words underlines the unconventional nature of these pursuits. ‘This is why, after the verb ἀδικεῖ, Socrates adds καὶ περιεργάζεται: the old accusers think that, by acting as he does, Socrates is guilty not of breaking the law but of going beyond the normal bounds within which a reasonable and well-behaved citizen would keep himself’ (Strycker and Slings 1994, pp. 50-1).<sup>208</sup> It is indeed the negative

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<sup>208</sup>The words καὶ περιεργάζεται are only added because, as a matter of fact, the old accusers had not said that Socrates is was legally ‘guilty’ of anything, but only that he meddled with what did not concern him’ (Burnet (1982 [1924]), p. 161).

tone attached to these activities that ultimately undermines Socrates' position as an intellectual, whose role and status in late fifth century Athens was highly discredited.

Socrates denies the charges because they do not contain an accurate description of what he does (19d1), not because he sees any of these practices as particularly wrong.<sup>209</sup> Indeed, he never assumes that the study and the teaching of these things are condemnable. On the contrary, he explicitly declares his admiration of this knowledge and its teaching. Regarding the study of natural causes, he confesses: '[...] I do not speak in contempt of such knowledge [τὴν τοιαύτην ἐπιστήμην], if someone is *sophos* in these things [εἴ τις περὶ τῶν τοιούτων σοφός]' (19c5-7). Similarly, about instructing other people he admits: 'Yet I think it a fine thing if someone were able to teach people [εἴ τις οἶός τ' εἴη παιδεύειν] as Gorgias of Leontini does, and Prodicus of Ceos, and Hippias of Elis' (19e2-4).<sup>210</sup> And in the same way, when he learns that Evenus of Paros claims to teach virtue, he says: 'I thought Evenus a happy man, if he really possesses this art [εἰ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἔχου ταύτην τὴν τέχνην], and teaches for so moderate a fee' (20b9-c1).

It is no coincidence that the three assertions are immediately qualified by the hypothetical clause 'if'.<sup>211</sup> As discussed in the first chapter, Socrates never endorses that the commonly reputed *sophoi* are actual *sophoi*, i.e. he never acknowledges that they know these matters, even when there is an explicit recognition of the importance and value of some of these matters. This is also the case here: people claiming knowledge, which Socrates does not possess and does not claim to possess. Significantly, negative assessment is not directed towards the object known, but to false claims of knowledge, i.e. pretence of knowledge.

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<sup>209</sup> Significantly, Socrates unambiguously denies the charge that accuses him of studying the causes of nature, and subsequently the charge of teaching others (19d9), but he does not seem to explicitly address the accusation of making the weaker argument the stronger. Burnet (1982 [1924]) and Strycker and Slings (1994) agree in that he addresses the second charge by 'such things' at 19d7 (τὰλλα περὶ ἐμοῦ ἃ οἱ πολλοὶ λέγουσιν). For a more controversial view see Sesonke '[... ] in not replying to the third charge he allows himself to remain united to these two groups of "wise men" in their common enterprise of reshaping the language and thought of Greece' (1968, p. 226).

<sup>210</sup> It is not clear whether Socrates here refers to the teaching of virtue or rhetoric. See Stokes (1997).

<sup>211</sup> The first is a case of plain conditional, which suggests the possibility is not unlikely. The second is a case of remote conditional (*ei* + optative), which suggests the odds are slim. 'About the value of cosmologists' science, Socrates will not speak disparagingly, if somebody has a real competence in such a field; but the negative form of his assertion and the proviso with which it is accompanied are clear hints that Socrates has his reasons to be skeptical' (Strycker and Slings 1994, pp. 53-54).

Even when Socrates challenges the accuracy of the accusations, he still needs to provide further evidence to modify the audience's attitudes towards him and what he does. Particularly, he needs to redirect his audience's opinion on a core element of his accusation, namely his reputation of being a *sophos*. This will prove most difficult. Indeed, it is the case that adjectives—mostly abstract, since they refer to more stable characteristics, are more difficult to disprove.<sup>212</sup> At the same time, less specific traits are easier to redefine. Certainly, it is easier for Socrates to qualify the assertion that he is a *sophos* (by saying that he is a 'sort' of *sophos*) than the assertion that he is a *sophistēs*. His defence is ultimately intended to remove the prejudice, *diabolē*, along with the negative assessment and the malicious intent it involves, but also to explain the origin of this reputation.<sup>213</sup> Socrates has already denied those aspects of the accusation that point to particular actions, that is, teaching argumentation and investigating nature. However, he is now ready to admit that there is something in the heart of these accusations that is indeed true.<sup>214</sup>

What is the 'grain of truth' that lies in the prejudice against Socrates? According to Socrates, someone may rightly object:

But Socrates, what is your occupation [τὸ σὸν τί ἐστὶ πρᾶγμα]? From where have these slanders come? [πόθεν αἱ διαβολαί σοι αὐταὶ γέγονασιν;] For surely if you did not busy yourself with something out of the ordinary, all these rumors and talk would not have arisen unless you did something other than most people [εἰ μὴ τι ἔπραττες ἄλλοῖον ἢ οἱ πολλοί]. Tell us what it is, that we may not speak inadvisedly about you (20c4-20d1).

Significantly, the hypothetical interlocutor makes two explicit references to the possibility that Socrates does not behave like most people, but he never points to the possibility that he behaves like sophists or natural philosophers. He pursues more unusual activities than other men (*tōn allōn perittoton*; 20c6) and acts in a way

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<sup>212</sup> German psychologists Schmid and Fiedler (1998) in their study about the use of language strategies in court (particularly in closing speeches) have argued that adjectives, unlike verbs, are the most abstract in defining features, which semantically implies high stability, low situation dependency and low verifiability. 'At the abstract end, ADJs suggest high subject informativeness (low consensus), low situation dependency (low distinctiveness), and high consistency (temporal stability), thus leading to a stable, global, and internal attributions' (1998, p. 1145).

<sup>213</sup> The presence of the word *diabolē* is recurrent thorough the *Apology* (12 instances in total), although mostly concentrated in the refutation. This seems to one of the aspects of contemporary practice of forensic oratory, recommended by Aristotle and Anaximenes, according to which the speaker should clean his image. Cf. Strycker and Slings 1994, p. 52.

<sup>214</sup> This is a foundational problem in Xenophon's *Mem.* 1.1.1.

differently from most men (*alloion he hoi polloi*; 20c8). In other words, the fault, as seen by Socrates, is not founded on the grounds that he belongs to a certain group whose defining traits are objectionable, but rather on the basis that he does not belong to the majority whose defining traits are conventionally accepted.<sup>215</sup> The question immediately suggests that the accusations have assumed a division between ‘most people’, *hoi polloi*, and a certain group broadly identified under the label of *sophoi*. While Socrates denies any direct association with that particular group, he admits he does not belong to the majority. The accusation is formulated on the grounds that he does not act like most people, but the fault is not just one of omission. The fault is in the fact that he actively engages with some activities that are seen as objectionable. This idea is conveyed by the presence of the cognates *pragma*, *pragmateuomai*, *prattō*. Socrates is pointing to something that he does, i.e. *elenchus*, later described in detail.<sup>216</sup> Interestingly, this assessment is intended to emphasise that Socrates acts in a certain way, and not particularly that he thinks certain things. If the accusations hold some truth, this is not in respect of Socrates’ positive beliefs or ideologies; it is in respect of a characteristic pattern of behaviour. More significantly, the *elenchus*, broadly described as an activity that involves ‘skilled questioning and clever use of examples’ (Hubbard 2010, p. 498), can be seen as a practice employed by both Socrates and the sophists.<sup>217</sup>

In accordance with the purpose of explaining the source of the slanders, Socrates proceeds to narrate the story of the oracle. In particular, he sets out to describe the conditions under which he acquired this name, *to onoma*. This name is associated with *sophia*, qualified by Socrates as the possession of ‘a sort of *sophia*’, *anthrōpinē sophia*.

What has caused my reputation is none other than a certain kind of *sophia* [διὰ σοφίαν τινὰ τοῦτο τὸ ὄνομα ἔσχηκα]. What kind of *sophia* [ποιάν δὴ σοφίαν ταύτην;]? Human *sophia*, perhaps [ἤπερ ἐστὶν ἴσως ἀνθρωπίνη

<sup>215</sup> This is also reaffirmed later in *Apol.* 35a.

<sup>216</sup> The ‘*pragm-*’ words are broad enough to suggest any kind of activity. In this context, it is useful to show that what is found objectionable is a particular kind of behavior and not so much a line of inquiry or an object of study, as suggested in the beginning. Socrates *does* something and the sophists do *something* – and the two look like they might be the same thing.

<sup>217</sup> At least at face value, Socratic *elenchus* pass for sophistry, even if it is, as described in the *Sophist*, ‘of noble lineage’. See also Taylor (2006). For a more detailed discussion of whether Socrates could be grouped together with sophists, see Woodruff (2006).

σοφία]. It may be that I really possess this [ταύτην εἶναι σοφός], while those whom I mentioned just now are *sophoi* with *sophia* more than human [μείζω τινὰ ἢ κατ' ἄνθρωπον σοφίαν σοφοὶ εἶεν]; else I cannot explain it, for I certainly do not possess it, and whoever says I do is lying and speaks to slander me (20d6-e3).

We shall see how Socrates' characteristic 'human *sophia*' comes up in the story of the oracle. For now, it is worth observing that Socrates compares his *sophia* with the *sophia* of those who claim to have knowledge (the natural philosophers and teachers of virtue mentioned above), describing them as having a *sophia* that is more than human. By the end of the story of the oracle the kind of *sophia* that is more than human, i.e. divine *sophia*, is only said of the god, while the kind to which others make claim is described as the conceit of *sophia*.

### 3.3. Socrates and the Reputed *Sophoi*

Socrates' reputation of *sophia* starts with Apollo's oracle to Chaerephon, Socrates' close friend, according to which there is no one more *sophos*. Socrates is perplexed by the words of the oracle: 'no one is *sophōteros* than Socrates' (21a7). The nature of the paradox that confuses Socrates involves two beliefs that are in conflict: (i) that he is not *sophos* with respect to anything, either big or small (21b 4-5), and (ii) that the god cannot be lying (21b6). He expresses with astonishment: 'Whatever does the god mean? What is his riddle? I am very conscious that I am not *sophos* in anything great or small [ἐγὼ γὰρ δὴ οὔτε μέγα οὔτε μικρὸν σύννοια ἐμαυτῷ σοφὸς ὄν·]; what then does he mean by saying that I am the *sophōtatos* [ἐμὲ σοφώτατον εἶναι]?' (21b3-b6).<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Trans. adapted. Traditionally, the Narration provides the grounds to discuss two major themes, the divine origin of the mission of *elenchus* and Socrates' disavowal of knowledge. The scholarly tradition has treated with particular attention the paradox resulting from Socrates' profession of ignorance. Socrates' declaration 'he knows he is not *sophos* with respect to anything, either big or small' (21b4) has triggered a search for 'senses' in which knowledge words, including *sophia/sophos*, are used throughout the *Apology*, namely a 'weak sense' and a 'strong sense'. See, for example, Vlastos (1985), Brickhouse and Smith (1994) and Benson (2000). Defending a 'semantic monism', are e.g. Leshner (1987) and Reeve (1989). As we shall see, *sophia* designates divine knowledge, Socratic knowledge and the craftsmen' knowledge. But from here, there is no need to conclude that *soph-* terminology is being used in more than one sense. I agree with Fine, who observes: 'This does not mean that he uses "wise" in different senses or ways. At most, he acknowledges that one can in principle be wise about different things (about crafts, about moral virtue); and that being wise about some things matters more than being wise about others' (2008, p. 82).

It is the belief that the god cannot be lying that ultimately motivates Socrates' following course of action. He sets out to investigate the meaning of the oracle by cross-examining those who are popularly considered *sophoi*. Interestingly, Socrates seems to concede the possibility that there are *sophoi* men. 'I went to one of those reputed *sophoi* [τῶν δοκούντων σοφῶν], thinking that there, if anywhere, I could refute the oracle and say to it: "This man is *sophōteros* than I, but you said I was"' (21b9-c2). In keeping with the belief that he is not a *sophos*, Socrates would think that there are other men more *sophoi*. This, of course, is not an uncontroversial claim. It immediately raises the question about the sincerity of Socrates' claims, the problem of Socratic irony. 'It [*ironia*] marks a man as free from conceit, and at the same time witty, when discussing wisdom [*sapientia*], to deny it to himself [*hanc sibi ipsum detrahere*] and to attribute it playfully to those who make pretensions to it [*qui eam sibi adrogant*]' (Cic. *Brut.* 292, 7-12).<sup>219</sup> This seems to be precisely the case here.<sup>220</sup>

Even if this passage is not interpreted under the veil of irony, there is no need to conclude that Socrates is conceding here that there are other men more *sophoi*. He decides to go to visit those who are reputed *sophoi*, thinking that 'if indeed' (*eiper*) there was a place to find out who was *sophōteros*, this should be that place. The conditional clause states a hypothetical scenario with no definite implications as to its realisation, and so the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of its consequence, i.e. that he will prove the oracle wrong, remains uncertain.<sup>221</sup> Furthermore, at 21b10, he identifies the politician, his first interlocutor, as 'one of those reputed wise' or 'who appear to be wise' (*tina tōn dokountōn sophōn einai*). The participle of *dokeō* 'renders equally ambiguous in Greek, meaning either "those thinking themselves to be wise" or "those appearing to/thought by others to be wise" or "those appearing

<sup>219</sup> Trans. G.L. Hendrickson (1939).

<sup>220</sup> Vlastos (1987) takes Cicero's definition of irony as the starting point to discuss at length the sense in which Socratic irony should be understood. However, it seems safer to take Socrates' claims as sincere: as already stated, *Apology* is an important source for the depiction of Socrates' character, the most significant of Plato's works for the purpose of Socrates' self-presentation. Socrates claims he is being sincere at 17b; 20d; 25a. 'Unless we are to understand Socrates in the *Apology* as engaging in a comprehensive pattern of deception about his own motives and activities -an interpretation that has no basis in Plato's text- we cannot avoid reading these professions of ignorance as sincere' (Bett 2011, p. 218).

<sup>221</sup> 'Greek has no especial forms to show that an action was or is fulfilled, however clearly this may be implied in the context. Any form of conditional sentence in which the apodosis does not express a rule of action may refer to an impossibility' (Smyth 1920, p. 515 §2292).

to/thought by me to be wise”; the last is perhaps ruled out here, though it is not impossible in general, by “thought to be wise by many people and by himself” (Stokes 1997, p. 117). The only thing he acknowledges is the reputation of *sophia* some have; by admitting it, however, he is not endorsing it (i.e. he never admits the politicians deserve such a reputation). Taking ‘apparent’ *sophia* to be the result of the opinion of the majority, i.e. a question of public recognition, allows us to understand the way in which Socrates applies these labels without necessarily raising the charge of insincerity. After the politician has been examined, Socrates is allowed to conclude:

I am *sophōteros* than this man; it is likely that neither of us knows anything worthwhile [οὐδὲν καλὸν ἀγαθὸν εἰδέναι], but he thinks he knows something when he does not [οὗτος μὲν οἶεταί τι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς], whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know [ὥσπερ οὖν οὐκ οἶδα, οὐδὲ οἶομαι]; so I am likely to be *sophōteros* than he to this small extent, that I do not think I know what I do not know [ὅτι ἂ μὴ οἶδα οὐδὲ οἶομαι εἰδέναι] (21d2-d6).

The evidence resulting from cross-examination is conclusive: neither he nor his interlocutor know anything ‘worth knowing’ (*kalon k’agathon*; 21d4).<sup>222</sup> This is the first time the object of *sophia* is qualified. At the beginning Socrates claimed not to be *sophos* with respect to anything; now he relativises his claim by saying he does not know ‘things worth knowing’.<sup>223</sup> Both the politician and Socrates are ignorant with regard to the same object, but whereas the former believes he knows it, the latter does not. The kind of ignorance the politician displays reveals to Socrates the sense in which he is more *sophos*: it is regarding the assessment of his own cognitive state, what he ‘esteems’ or ‘thinks’ (*oiomai*) himself to know.

### 3.3.1. The Politician and the Poet: Merely Apparent *Sophoi*

Socrates will prove to be a *sophos*, but not one of the kind that is usually

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<sup>222</sup> I think the translation ‘things worth knowing’ (Burnet [1924] 1982) for the pair *kalon k’agathon* is adequate in this context. Although a literal translation ‘fine and good’ (cf. Stokes 1997) fits the nature of the object of *sophia*, I believe here Socrates is not referring to anything specific; he is rather invoking the most conventional use of the form *kalokagathos*, meaning ‘admirable’, ‘noble and good’.

<sup>223</sup> What these ‘things worth knowing’ exactly are is a matter of discussion and it will be addressed later.

recognised.<sup>224</sup> In accordance with this purpose, he contrasts his *sophia* with the kind that is publicly recognised. Nowhere is this contrast more evident than in conversation with the politician. He describes his experience as follows: ‘I thought that he appeared *sophos* to many people and especially to himself, but he was not [ὁ ἀνὴρ δοκεῖν μὲν εἶναι σοφὸς ἄλλοις τε πολλοῖς ἀνθρώποις καὶ μάλιστα ἑαυτῷ, εἶναι δ’ οὐ]. I then tried to show him that he thought himself *sophos*, but that he was not [οἴοιτο μὲν εἶναι σοφός, εἶη δ’ οὐ]’ (21c5-c8). The politician ‘seems’ or ‘is thought’ to be *sophos*, i.e. appears to be *sophos* as he is judged to be so by other people and by himself. What Socrates demonstrates is that this estimation is an error of judgement, as it is rooted in a false belief, i.e. that they do know. As a result, what Socrates proves is that the politician fails to recognise his own cognitive state: he ignores his ignorance (second order—blameworthy—ignorance) and so he lacks ‘human’ *sophia*, which is the kind of *sophia* Socrates that has (20d8).

The case of the politician does not seem sufficient to prove the universal value of the oracle. The mission moves on and the target is announced once more: ‘all those who had any reputation for knowledge [ἅπαντας τοὺς τι δοκοῦντας εἰδέναι]’ (21e5-22a1). The next group who have a reputation for *sophia* are the poets. In this encounter, Socrates learns something new: not only are the reputed *sophoi* not real *sophoi*; moreover, ‘those who had the highest reputation were nearly the most deficient [οἱ μὲν μάλιστα εὐδοκιμοῦντες ἔδοξάν μοι ὀλίγου δεῖν τοῦ πλείστου], while those who were thought to be inferior were more knowledgeable [ἄλλοι δὲ δοκοῦντες φαυλότεροι ἐπεικέστεροι εἶναι ἄνδρες πρὸς τὸ φρονίμως ἔχειν]’ (22a3-6). The relation between ‘reputation of *sophia*’ and *sophia* (conceived as knowledge) is inversely proportional.<sup>225</sup> After the examination, Socrates concludes:

So I became aware also in the case of the poets too, quickly, that they did not compose their compositions by *sophia*, but by some sort of natural gift, and under divine possession just like the prophets and composers of oracles—since these too say many fine things [πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ], but know nothing of what they say [ἴσασι δὲ οὐδὲν ὧν λέγουσιν] (22b8-c3).

<sup>224</sup> For an account of Socrates’ reputation of *sophos*, see Burnet ([1924] 1982, pp. 154-5).

<sup>225</sup> This is the same as in *Rep.* II. 357a-367b, as I will show below.

They ignore their own subject matter, which make them non-*sophoi* with regard to their own expertise.<sup>226</sup> Mostly, they thought that ‘because of their poetry, they thought themselves the most *sophoi* in other respects, which they were not [διὰ τὴν ποίησιν οἰομένων καὶ τὰλλα σοφωτάτων εἶναι ἀνθρώπων ἃ οὐκ ἦσαν]’ (22c5-6). Thereafter, the poets ‘thought they were *sophoi*’ in matters of poetry, but they were not, and because they thought to know this, they also thought they were *sophoi* in other matters too, and they were not. Their conceit of *sophia* has then produced further consequences.

Thus far Socrates has keenly recognised the politician’s and the poet’s reputation of *sophia*. He has also recognised that this *sophia* is only apparent, but not real. The Greek words used to express ‘apparent’ in this respect are *dokeō* and *oiomai*, verbs usually translated by English ‘believe’, ‘think’, ‘suppose’, all weaker forms of judgement in that they lack the sufficient evidence or certainty characteristic of full understanding.<sup>227</sup> We may wonder how this becomes a question of *seeming* versus *being* or *appearance* versus *reality*. Strycker and Slings, in one of their notes on the *Apology*, argues with the tradition that interprets *dokein* as appearance: ‘it is well-known that δοκεῖν and δόξα refer to opinion or the conceit of knowledge as contrasted with knowledge or truth, not to appearance as contrasted to reality’ (1994, p. 62). Although Strycker raises an important issue of interpretation, he also seems to overlook the fact that the question of appearance and reality in Plato is rarely treated independently of the question of perception and knowledge.<sup>228</sup> In the context of the *Apology*, however, it is useful to keep in mind the notion of opinion, as it crystallises two important aspects at play: one epistemological, the other linked to public perception. The epistemic status of *doxa* in Plato is approached differently in different dialogues, but for the present case, what needs to be established is that

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<sup>226</sup> The topic on the knowledge of the poet as inspiration is further addressed on Plato’s *Ion*, *Phaedrus* and *Republic* (Books III and X). *Ion* and *Republic*, like here in *Apology*, treat poetic inspiration in opposition to real knowledge. In *Phaedrus*, however, divine inspiration is considered epistemologically valuable. On the revaluation of poetic inspiration in the *Phaedrus*, see Nussbaum (2001, pp. 200-28).

<sup>227</sup> In general, both verbs have a parenthetical function in the first person as a way to express personal opinion or moderate an assertion, e.g. *dokō moi*, ‘in my view’, ‘in my opinion’, ‘it seems to me’ (cf. LSJ, s.v.). The Greek verb *phainō* is only used once in this sense at 30a1.

<sup>228</sup> As noticed in the *Theaetetus* (chapter 2), the problem of appearance is both phenomenical and judgemental. The question of the nature of reality versus appearance rises on the grounds that perception can lead us to conclude something erroneous; hence, the nature of things perceived is judged to be illusory, whereas an underlying permanent reality guarantees consistent knowledge.

*doxa*, even if informed by truth, is unreliable.<sup>229</sup> On the other hand, *doxa* expresses public opinion (cf. 2.6.1).<sup>230</sup> In the *Apology*, the label ‘apparent’ when attached to *sophos/sophia* corresponds to the most traditional and popular account of what *sophia* is, which is essentially embodied by poets, sophists, statesmen, physicists, and craftsmen. In this regard, ‘apparent’ as opposed to ‘real’ opens the possibility of someone being *sophos* without being a reputed *sophos*, and, to the same extent, someone being reputed *sophos* without being a *sophos*. The opposition in this terms is explored with the example of justice in the *Republic* II, where Glaucon hypothesises the existence of the most unjust man who appears (*dokein*) just, and the most just, who appears (*dokein*) unjust (361a-b). Significantly, the whole purpose is to determine whether justice is something that is valuable and desirable by itself (and not by virtue of its effects). As discussed in the previous chapter, honour (within which is public recognition) is not among the ultimate goods as *sophia* is. At some level, Socrates is reminding his audience that *sophia* is something to be sought because it is at the centre of a happy and good life, and not because of the reputation the title traditionally carries. To be sure, Plato does not seem to be questioning the institutional and cultural weight of the long-standing tradition of *sophia*; rather, by understanding the high and valuable authority attached to these labels, he means to question whether they are being rightly assigned.

### 3.3.2. The *Sophia* of the Craftsmen

The case of the craftsman proves to be somehow different. As a matter of fact, he turns out to be *sophos* in that he not only appears to know something but in that he actually knows something, i.e. he possesses technical knowledge with respect to his craft, so in a relative sense he is a *sophos*. ‘[...] they knew things I did not know [ἠπίσταντο ἃ ἐγὼ οὐκ ἠπιστάμην] and in this respect [ταύτη] they were more

<sup>229</sup> In the *Meno* 97b5ff. Socrates declares that *orthē doxa* is as good as *epistēmē* for the purpose of acting rightly (97c4). But he later asserts: ‘For true opinions [δόξαι αἱ ἀληθεῖς], as long as they remain, are a fine thing and all they do is good, but they are not willing to remain long, and they escape from a man’s mind, so that they are not worth much until one ties them down by (giving) an account of the reason why (97e5-98a4). In the early dialogues there is not such a clear distinction between true belief and knowledge; there is rather a distinction between knowledge, the conceit of knowledge, and Socratic ignorance. On the significance of the distinction for the early dialogues, Beversluis asserts: ‘Socrates does not, of course, deny that some of his interlocutors have true moral beliefs, i.e. beliefs, which, if submitted for *elenctic testing*, could survive; but he attaches no epistemic importance to it. It is not enough to believe propositions which happen to be true’ (1987, p. 217).

<sup>230</sup> Cf. Blundell 1992, p. 140.

*sophoi* [σοφώτεροι] than me' (22d3-4). Socrates finds out that, as opposed to the poets who only 'say' many fine things, the artisans 'know [ἐπισταμένους] many fine things [πολλὰ καὶ καλά]' (22d2). 'There is a strong contrast between the craftsmen who actually know "many fine things" and the poets who say "many fine things" without knowing them. The poets receive only an implied recognition, the politicians none, of their professional skills' (Stokes 1997, p. 122). However, the craftsmen are not 'real *sophoi*' either.

But, men of Athens, the good craftsmen seemed to me to have the same fault as the poets: each of them, because of his success at his craft [διὰ τὸ τὴν τέχνην καλῶς ἐξεργάζεσθαι], thought himself to be the most *sophos* in other most important pursuits [τᾶλλα τὰ μέγιστα], and this error of theirs overshadowed the wisdom they had [αὕτη ἡ πλημμέλεια ἐκείνην τὴν σοφίαν ἀποκρύπτειν] (22d4-e1).

The positive form of the adjective, *sophos*, qualifies the subject with respect to their craft. As compared to men who ignore a particular art, i.e. politicians and poets, the craftsmen are comparatively more *sophoi*, *sophōteroi*. As compared to Socrates, who does not know their craft, they are also *sophōteroi*. Nevertheless, the superlative *sophōtatos*, as an expression of highest degree, does not properly qualify their knowledge. To be *sophōtatos* in an absolute sense or, in a comparative sense, i.e. more *sophos* than Socrates, they would have to satisfy either of these two conditions: to actually possess the knowledge of 'other and the most important things' or, provided they do not know those things, recognise they are ignorant of them. Inasmuch as they fail to acknowledge this kind of ignorance, they also lack human *sophia*, such as Socrates claims for himself. 'Socrates, that is, values highly the knowledge the craftsmen have and he lacks. Such knowledge would suffice to make someone wiser than Socrates, so long as that individual recognised his moral ignorance' (Benson 2000, p. 187). Importantly enough, what the artisans' case shows is that the success in passing the test of *sophia* is conditioned by the value of its object. The carpenter actually knows some things, but those things are not the 'most important things'. The object of 'real' *sophia* is now qualified.

This passage in which Socrates recognises the *sophia* of the craftsmen has traditionally been taken, among other things, as a reference to explain Plato's use of

Craft Analogy (CA) in the Socratic dialogues, a theory by which virtue-knowledge is understood in correlation to craft-knowledge.<sup>231</sup> Socrates is crediting the craftsmen with a degree of *sophia*, which is not just ‘thought to be’ so, but is actually so. Significantly, the kind of mastery the artisans possess is addressed as *technē*, one of the few instances where the term is invoked in the *Apology*.<sup>232</sup> See, for example, how Irwin interprets the passage: ‘Only craftsmen show knowledge of their craft—though not of other areas—by giving an account of what they do. The capacity to give an account distinguishes a real craftsman from someone who merely has a knack or technique which he cannot explain’ (1977, p. 71). Of course, approaches following this theory vary according to how craft-knowledge is defined and to what extent they make virtue comparable to *technē*. Indeed, inasmuch as the relation is established by analogy, the correspondent features might vary from one account to another.<sup>233</sup>

Significantly, what the CA shows in the context of the present analysis is that there are certain features characteristic of the artisans’ *technē* that qualify as *sophia*. But even more significant seems to be the fact that, in possession of their *technē*, the craftsmen fail to be *sophoi*. It is not the knowledge the artisan displays with respect to his craft what prevents him from being a *sophos*; rather, it is the wrong assessment of their own cognitive state, as they ‘believe’ or ‘think’ themselves to know other and the most important things. If they knew these things, then they would qualify as *sophōteroi* (than Socrates, the politicians and the poets), or even as *sophōtatoi*. However, they do not know them, so even when they do qualify as *sophōteroi* (than the politician and the poets), the result is that they are not *sophoi*. The paradox is solved by the introduction of two related elements: (i) the dissociation of real *sophia* from apparent *sophia*; (ii) the qualification of ‘real’ *sophia* as the knowledge of truth, virtue, etc. The first allows Socrates to describe the artisan as *sophōteros* in relative terms, to the extent that he knows a certain *technē*. On the other hand, by defining real *sophia* as the knowledge of some (important) things, among which the

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<sup>231</sup> It is also taken as a reference related to Socrates’ ignorance of the craft of stonemasonry: ‘this statement is evidence against Soc. having been a statuary or stonemason; and the evidence for it is weak’ (Stokes 1997, p. 122). Some of the most complete accounts on *technē* analogy are in Gould (1955), Irwin (1977), Reeve (1989), Warren, (1989), Roochnik (1986; 1996) and Annas (1995).

<sup>232</sup> The only other instance where *technē* occurs is at 20c1, when Socrates is told by Callias that Evenus can teach *aretē*.

<sup>233</sup> ‘There is no doubt, a real analogy between the fully developed moral consciousness and the capacity to make something—i.e. a *technē*—but they are certainly not the same’ (Gadamer 1989, p. 316).

mastering of a handcraft is not included, Socrates is allowed to say that the (apparently) *sophōteros* is not (really) *sophos*.

### 3.3.3. Socrates' Comparative *Sophia*

It seems relevant to evaluate Socrates' degree of *sophia* over others not least because two different descriptions are found in the *Apology*. At 21a6, it is said that Chaerephon asks the oracle whether there is anyone more *sophōteros* than Socrates, to which the Pythia answers 'there is no one *sophōteros*' (21a7). The oracle's response has two grammatical features worth noticing: (i) it is a negative statement; (ii) it uses the comparative form of the adjective *sophos*. This form describing Socrates' *sophia* implies that there could be someone at least (but not more) *sophos* than Socrates. Surprisingly enough, Socrates restates the answer of the oracle in the following terms: 'what then does he [the god] mean by saying that I am the *sophōtaton*?' (21b5-6). Socrates has turned the oracle into a positive statement using the superlative form of the adjective *sophos* (cf. Vigo 2001, pp. 114-7; Strycker and Slings 1994, p. 76). The description affirms that Socrates is more *sophos* than everyone else, which does not follow from the former sentence 'there is no one more *sophos* than Socrates'. Vigo (2001) proposes to interpret the superlative without the article as indicating a very high degree of the attribute, but not the highest.<sup>234</sup> Thus, Socrates might be asserting the high degree of his *sophia* as stated by the Pythia, without asserting that he is the *most sophos*. However, in the context of the present analysis, this interpretation is not entirely satisfactory. Essential to Socrates' mission is to prove his *sophia* in relation to others'. The oracle says that 'no one is more *sophos* than Socrates', and from this Socrates undertakes the task of testing others' *sophia*. Hence, the focus is not so much on the degree of Socrates' *sophia* by itself, but as compared to others'. In this regard, I privilege Fine's reading of the superlative. 'To say that he is wisest need not imply that he is wise. [...] someone might be the wisest person there is, without being wise; he might just come the closest to being wise' (2008, p. 81). This solution rescues two important elements: Socrates 'sort of *sophia*' and others' ignorance.

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<sup>234</sup> 'The superlative expresses either the highest degree of a quality (the relative superlative: ὁ σοφώτατος ἀνὴρ *the wisest man*) or a very high degree of a quality (the absolute superlative, which does not take the article: ἀνὴρ σοφώτατος *a very wise man*)' (Smyth 1920, p. 282).

It is worth remarking that Socrates declares that he is aware of having no knowledge, but he never declares that he is ignorant, an *amathēs*. We should remember that *sophia* in opposition with *amathia* in Plato is normally understood in terms of true as opposed to false judgement, not possession and lack of knowledge (cf. 2.3, 2.4, 2.5). We tend to talk about Socrates' profession of ignorance, but the truth is that in the *Apology* he is never described as an *amathēs*.<sup>235</sup> This is so because his soul is free from false beliefs and self-conceit, the worst form of ignorance.<sup>236</sup> It therefore would be more accurate to call him a non-expert, but not ignorant. In line with his 'profession of ignorance', he has also been described as a 'non-thinker', but this is not accurate either.<sup>237</sup> Socrates, indeed, *thinks* about his cognitive state, 'he does not think he knows'.

Socrates is in an intermediate cognitive state. When he finishes the cross-examination, he reflects: 'so that I asked myself, on behalf of the oracle, whether I should prefer to be as I am, with neither *sophos* with their *sophia* [μήτε τι σοφὸς ὄν τὴν ἐκείνων σοφίαν] nor ignorant with their ignorance [μήτε ἀμαθῆς τὴν ἀμαθίαν], or to have both. The answer I gave myself and the oracle was that it was to my advantage to be as I am' (22e1-5).<sup>238</sup> As we shall see, Socrates finds himself in a state that defines the nature of the *philosophos* in the *Symposium*: free from ignorance, not yet in possession of knowledge (cf. 4.4.2). Interestingly enough, the word *philosophos* and its derivatives do not appear in the oracle story. Socrates presents himself as possessing *anthropinē sophia*, not as a *philosophos*, although later in the *Apology* the verb *philosopheō* is used three times to describe Socrates' activity (28e5, 29c8, d5). According to Strycker and Slings, *philosophia* and *anthropinē sophia* are the same; the absence of the term *philosophos* in this section can be explained because 'in this part of the *Apology* Plato restricts himself to describing the refuting or elenctic side of Socrates' mission. Therefore he

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<sup>235</sup> Only at 22b2, he says he thinks the poets may prove to him that he is 'more ignorant' (*amathēsteron*), which is not the case.

<sup>236</sup> 'And surely it is the most blameworthy ignorance [ἀμαθία ἐστὶν αὐτῆ ἢ ἐπονείδιστος] to believe that one knows what one does not know [ἢ τοῦ οἶεσθαι εἰδέναι ἃ οὐκ οἶδεν]' (29b1-2). Socrates says this when he declares that he would never quit philosophising for fear of death, for no one knows what death is.

<sup>237</sup> Leshner (1987, p. 283) notices that the proclamation of such 'a modest thinker'—in his words, 'a non-thinker'—as the most *sophos* of all men, is taken to disparage human intelligence in general. The fact that Socrates, knowing nothing, is the most *sophos* ultimately means that he is the only human *sophos*.

<sup>238</sup> Trans. adapted.

characterises Socrates' state of mind tentatively as ἀνθρωπίνη σοφία' (1994, p. 64). I agree with Strycker that *anthropinē sophia* is what he later describes as *philosophia*. Both are intermediate states between perfect divine knowledge, i.e. real *sophia*, and conceit of knowledge, i.e. *amathia*.<sup>239</sup> However, I tend to believe that the introduction of Socrates as a sort of *sophos* rather than as a *philosophos* might respond to a different reason. As already seen, the term *philosophos*, was not sharply contrasted with other categories such as *sophos* or *sophistēs*; consequently, Socrates' self-presentation as a *philosophos* would not have struck the audience as something particularly positive and thus it would not have been very effective in redirecting people's attitude towards Socrates' *sophia*.<sup>240</sup> At 23d5, for example, Socrates groups together those intellectuals that are target of the slanders as 'those who philosophise'.<sup>241</sup> Plato, I believe, is characterising Socrates as a kind of *sophos* in order to produce a higher contrast with the class of other *sophoi*.

After his encounter with the *sophoi*, Socrates realises they show cognitive deficiency on two levels: they do not know (politicians, poets) or they do not know 'important things', and they do not know that they do not know. Consequently, Socrates is more *sophos* in this comparative sense, as he knows something the others ignore. Socrates is *sophos* as the oracle proclaims, but only in a limited sense: he does not possess *sophia* unqualified but a 'sort of *sophia*' (*poian sophian*; 20d7). This is not the particular kind of human *sophia* the artisan displays. According to Stokes, he is neither claiming the *sophia* equivalent to the whole of human *sophia* nor a particular kind of human *sophia*; instead 'he is claiming that particular kind of *sophia* which is specially human' (1997, p. 114). This is *anthropinē sophia* (20d8). If the Socratic 'sort' of *sophia* is human, then the pretension of *sophia* is super-human (*meizō tina ē kat' anthrōpon sophian*; 20e1) as it is projected beyond its limits.<sup>242</sup> But indeed,

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<sup>239</sup> Strycker and Slings (1994, p. 64) suggest that *philosophia* as *anthropinē sophia* points to an intermediate state in the scale of *sophia*, which is best described in terms of *erōs* in the *Symposium*. The compound *philo-sophia* is characterised for the love or desire for wisdom, but neither the ignorant nor the one who already is *sophos* strives for wisdom (*Symp.* 204a1-b2).

<sup>240</sup> Cf. *Introd.* 1.

<sup>241</sup> When those that are angry with Socrates are asked how he corrupts young men, 'they mention those accusations that are available against all philosophers [τὰ κατὰ πάντων τῶν φιλοσοφούντων], about "things in the sky and things below the earth," about "not believing in the gods" and "making the worse the stronger argument"' (23d4-7).

<sup>242</sup> 'Super-*sophia*' (*huper-sophoi*) is also mentioned in *Euthyd.* 289e.

neither ‘human’ nor ‘super-human’ *sophia* is ‘real’ *sophia*; ‘in truth’ (*tō onti*) ‘the god is *sophos*’.

What is probable, gentlemen, is that in fact the god is *sophos* [τῷ ὄντι ὁ θεὸς σοφὸς εἶναι] and that his oracular response meant that human wisdom [ἀνθρωπίνη σοφία] is worth little or nothing, and that when he says this man, Socrates, he is using my name as an example [ἐμὲ παράδειγμα ποιούμενος], as if he said: “This man among you, mortals, is most *sophos* [σοφώτατός ἐστιν] who, like Socrates, understands that his *sophia* is worthless [ἔγνωκεν ὅτι οὐδενὸς ἄξιός ἐστι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ πρὸς σοφίαν]” (23a5-b4).

Socrates is *sophos* because he ‘has understood’ (*egnōken*) that, as compared to the god, his *sophia* has no value. However, as compared to others’, his *sophia* proves to be more valuable. The result is that Socrates remains throughout divorced from the preceding tradition of reputed *sophia*: before the oracle he was the only non-*sophos* among the *sophoi*; after the oracle, he is the only ‘sort’ of *sophos* among the non-*sophoi*.

### 3.4. Things Worth Knowing: The Rhetoric of Real and Apparent

The criteria defining real *sophia* are established by the value of the object known, and the elements deemed more valuable are morally relevant. Even when Socrates never makes it explicit, the real motive of his examination was not to find someone ‘who knew something fine’, but someone who knew ‘all the other and the most important things’. The politician fails to know anything *kalon kagathon* (21d4), the poet talks about *polla kai kalla* (22c3) without knowing them, and the craftsman thinks he knows *talla ta megista* (22d7). This being the case, the fact that the ones failing the test of *sophia* are politicians, poets, or craftsmen, seems almost accidental.<sup>243</sup> As Goldman sees it:

They are criticised only for their socially agonistic self-presentation and public claims to knowledge before their fellows. Socrates rules out no literary doctrine or literary form as false or misleading or inappropriately seductive, but criticises and challenges only the social “power” exerted by individuals

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<sup>243</sup> Although Socrates does not intend to criticise directly the specific knowledge of each of these groups, he is—at least indirectly—undermining both their knowledge and their status as *sophoi* by relegating them all to the sphere of ‘appearance’.

through their pretension in face-to-face interactions outside their *technē* (2009, p. 457).

Whether they are expert on their own craft is a matter that seems to fade into the background of a far more significant problem: the fact that they do not know the most important things and yet claim to know them. Thus, the artisan fails to convey real knowledge not inasmuch as he is an artisan—in fact he knows his own craft—but as he is misled by false beliefs concerning other matters. Thereafter, Socrates' mission extends and applies to anyone he considers a *sophos* (cf. 23b5-6). The *sophos*, beyond his most immediate field of expertise, should display awareness towards his cognitive state if he is ignorant; otherwise, he should prove to know those valuable things. What are those 'valuable things' remains relatively open, until he reveals the nature of his philosophical vocation. Socrates puts forward the purpose of the *elenchus* by addressing a pretend interlocutor:

“Good sir, you are an Athenian, a citizen of the greatest city with the greatest reputation for both *sophia* and power [εις σοφίαν καὶ ἰσχύν]; are you not ashamed of your eagerness to possess as much wealth [πλείστα.], reputation [δόξης] and honors [τιμῆς] as possible, while you do not care for nor give thought to wisdom or truth [φρονήσεως δὲ καὶ ἀληθείας], or the best possible state of your soul?” Then if one of you disputes this and says he does care, I shall not let him go at once or leave him, but I shall question him, examine him and test him, and if I do not think he has attained the goodness that he says he has, I shall reproach him because he attaches little importance to the most important things [τὰ πλείστου ἄξια περὶ ἐλαχίστου ποιείται] and greater importance to inferior things [τὰ δὲ φαυλότερα περὶ πλείονος]. [...] Be sure that this is what the god orders me to do, and I think there is no greater blessing for the city than my service to the god (29d7-30a7).

Here Socrates contrasts two different sets of values: one related to money, reputation and honour; the other related to prudence, truth, and the state of the soul. The first set of goods is deemed less valuable than the second.<sup>244</sup> Indeed, knowledge and virtue, throughout Plato's dialogues, are necessary for a good and happy life, whereas wealth, honour and reputation are only good if guided by knowledge. This is what underlies the distinction between 'apparent' and 'real'. The real *sophos* knows the things that matter most for a good life, the apparent *sophos*, while valuing the title, ignores them.

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<sup>244</sup> On this view, cf. Reeve (1989), and Brickhouse and Smith (1994; 2004), Bett (2011) and Peterson (2011).

In the context of the *Apology*, the definition of *sophia* via real as opposed to apparent is especially significant in the interpretation of the truth of the oracle. Through this distinction, Socrates is allowed to divorce what he proves to be an erroneous and deceptive representation of *sophia* and the *sophoi* from a true and correct one. As a result, those who appear to be *sophoi* to the majority prove to be non-*sophoi* after Socrates' examination. The contradiction puts forward the unreliability of appearances. Above all, the pair real/apparent provides Socrates with a criterion to discriminate between the elements of *sophia* that are valuable from those that are not. According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca in their *The New Rhetoric*, the 'appearance-reality' pair—in their view, 'the prototype of all conceptual dissociation' (1969, p. 415)—is so persuasive because it presents the elements defined in terms of 'real' as more valuable than those defined in terms of 'apparent'.<sup>245</sup> As Schiappa observes, 'dissociation is a rhetorical strategy whereby an advocate attempts to break up a previously unified idea into two concepts: one which will be positively valued by the target audience and one which will be negatively valued' (1991, pp. 5-6). By dissociating *sophia/sophos* into real and apparent, Socrates is allowed to appropriate the title of *sophos* in its more valuable sense while disengaging from its less valuable aspect. To this extent, dissociation 'is not simply a datum, it is a construction [...] It enables those that do not correspond to the rule which reality provides to be termed illusory, erroneous, or apparent (in the deprecatory sense of this word). In relation to term I [defined in terms of apparent], term II [defined in terms of real] is both normative and explanatory' (Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca 1968, p. 416). 'Real definitions', in this context, would resolve the tension between the opposing aspects involved in competing claims concerning what is x (cf. Schiappa 2003, p. 37). For the present analysis, the dissociation of *sophia/sophos* in the context of the *Apology* allows Socrates to solve the paradox initially presented as a riddle by the Delphic oracle 'there is no one more *sophos* than Socrates'. The contradiction between Socrates' claim of ignorance and others' claims of *sophia* is overcome by the distinction between apparent and real and the qualification of the object known:

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<sup>245</sup> 'While the original status of what is presented as the starting point of the dissociation is unclear and undetermined, the dissociation into terms I [defined in terms of apparent] and II [defined in terms of real] will attach value to the aspects that correspond to term II and will lower the value of the aspects that are in opposition to it' (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, p. 417).

‘Real *sophos*’ is ‘the one who knows the most important things’,  
those who appear to be ‘*sophoi*’ do not know the most important things;  
thereafter apparent *sophoi* are not real *sophoi*

Plato is not reinventing the meaning of *sophia*, but rather redefining it within a context where the less valuable aspect is identified with ‘apparent’ and the more valuable aspect with ‘real’. Significantly, for Plato to dissociate ‘real’ from ‘apparent’ *sophia* and to persuade that it is only ‘real’ *sophia* that is to be accepted, it seems fundamental that *sophia* has a identifiable aspect that, because of its ‘apparent’ nature, is not to be accepted. As Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca remark: ‘the purpose of the device may not be to transfer an accepted value over to a new meaning, but rather to enhance the value of a concept by conferring on it a prestige that it lacked in its former use’ (1969, p. 447). In the particular case of Plato’s *Apology*, the attempt to redirect the audience’s attitude towards *sophia* is effective inasmuch as the definition motivates the audience to stop using the laudatory term to refer, for example, to values such as reputation or honour, all of which are deemed of little or no worth. Of course, Plato’s strategy is not used for the sheer purpose of persuasion.<sup>246</sup> According to Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca (1969, p. 447), it might be the case that the dissociation is employed either for persuasion or it ‘may be the result of an inner conviction which the speaker believes to conform the reality of things and is ready to justify.’ I tend to believe this is the case here.<sup>247</sup>

### 3.5. Conclusion

Against a tradition in which *sophia* is essentially a title of reputation (and sometimes bad reputation), Plato, while giving an account of Socrates’ trial, grounds a conception of *sophia* as the knowledge of valuable things. He also gives a first glimpse of his conception of *philosophia*, Socrates’ *anthropinē sophia*, as an

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<sup>246</sup> In this regard, Socrates in the *Apology* is shown to be, despite his own claims (17b3; cf. 3.1), a clever speaker. His rhetoric, however, is not empty. It is to persuade, but not only to persuade; it invokes a value-system, which he is ready to recommend because he believes it to be true: ‘unless indeed they call an accomplished speaker [δεινὸν καλοῦσιν οὗτοι λέγειν] the man who speaks the truth [τὸν ἀληθῆ λέγοντα]’ (17b4-5).

<sup>247</sup> It responds to what Robinson (1950, p. 165) classifies as ‘real definition as the adoption and recommendation of ideals’. Both the strong moral tone and the promotion of ideals and standards would be shaping these kinds of definitions.

intermediate state between *amathia* and *sophia* (to be discussed in section II). From an established prejudice against intellectuals in general, Plato picks up the title of *sophos* and redefines his meaning by detaching it from every expert in the city, while assigning it to Socrates and the god. The question which is at the centre of Socrates' inquiry is what do the *sophoi* know? By rescuing the importance of things known, where some of them matter more than others, Plato seems to introduce a criterion to identify the *sophoi* who actually possess expert and moral authority, and to distinguish them from those who pass for *sophoi* on account of their public reputation. By doing this, Plato rescues the widely-accepted notion of *sophia* as expertise, but also introduces Socratic *sophia* and divine *sophia*. Both of these conceptions are essential to understand the way Plato shapes the identity of the philosopher.

SECTION II:  
*PHILOSOPHIA/PHILOSOPHOS*



## CHAPTER 4: INTRODUCING PLATO'S *PHILOSOPHOS*: THE LOVER

The prominence of the role of the philosopher and philosophy in the Platonic corpus can hardly be questioned. With the label *philosophia* Plato promotes an intellectual ideal, a way of living and dying, an approach to knowledge, and a method of inquiry. Perhaps because our own expectations and ideas of what counts as philosophy may conceal its sense of novelty, the question of what *philosophia* is remains relatively obscure. Within Plato's cultural context, the appropriation of the term 'philosophy' holds great significance. Against the background of an agonistic context in which the title of *sophos* stands as a prize of reputation, and where there is no significant distinction between the labels *sophos*, *sophistēs* and *philosophos*, the definition and conceptualisation of the *philosophia/philosophos* becomes decisive in establishing Plato's position and educational programme among other competitors.<sup>248</sup>

In the *Apology* (chapter 3), Plato presents Socrates as a 'sort of *sophos*' rather than, as we might expect, a *philosophos*. The distinction invites us to think about the way *sophia* may be different from *philosophia*, and the *philosophos* from the *sophos* (including the *sophistai*). In this chapter, I examine Plato's underlying concerns in fashioning philosophy and the philosopher. Bearing in mind Plato's conceptualisation of *sophia* in terms of knowledge, especially drawn in opposition to *amathia*, I demonstrate that *philo-sophia* owes its particular significance to the *philo*-component, i.e. the element of love. This might seem to be an obvious inference; our standard translation 'love of wisdom' already makes the point. But as obvious as it may seem, the Platonic conception is both novel and unique. By the end of fifth century, *phil(o)*- compounds are fairly common, although the meaning of the element of 'love' ranges from 'taste' to 'addiction'. We know that in the fourth century BCE *philosophia* becomes a term of art, but before Plato it is rather rare and broad in meaning. Most importantly, for the purpose of appropriation, the term is sufficiently vague but also endowed with some prestige. I propose that the *phil(o)*-component allows Plato to create a narrative of love that distinguishes philosophers not only from the *sophoi* in general, but also from other lovers. This narrative gives

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<sup>248</sup> Mainly Isocrates (cf. Introd.).

the philosopher a unique status; it positions him in a place in between ignorance and wisdom. More importantly, the element of love allows Plato to tell us a story that includes a description of the subject (the lover or the desiring agent), the object (wisdom/knowledge), and the relationship between them (love). The philosopher is always in this intermediate state between ignorance and wisdom, but the love relationship that the subject establishes with the object varies. 'Love' is an ambiguous term that allows Plato to treat the philosopher's *intermediate* place as an *indeterminate* place. This is clear from the way he describes philosophy and the philosopher in different dialogues. So, for example, in the *Lysis* the relationship is one of friendship (reciprocal), in the *Symposium* one of (unidirectional) love (or desire), in the *Phaedo* the object is unattainable, and in the *Republic* the object is attainable. The love component gives philosophy and the philosopher a unique identity, while also allowing Plato the freedom to adjust the narrative in different contexts. Importantly, by creating a distinct identity for the philosopher, Plato seems to avoid a series of problems involved in the conceptualisation of *sophia* and the characterisation of the *sophoi*. Unlike *sophia*, which can be qualified by different areas of expertise (i.e. *sophia* of), *philosophia* is something (activity, programme of study, method, disposition, etc) in its own right. We saw in chapter 2 that Plato often seems to struggle with the relationship of *sophia* to other disciplines (such as music, mathematics, medicine, etc). There is no such thing as *philosophia* 'with respect to'. This is mainly because *philosophia* is not conceptualised as expertise. Instead, Plato emphasises the relational aspect of love (love is always 'love of something') to attach the philosopher to his object of love, i.e. *sophia*. On the other hand, we saw that *sophos* is broadly used as a title of reputation and carries negative connotations (cf. chapter 2). The *philosophos*, being a lover of wisdom, is free from the arrogance of those who claim to be *sophoi*. The philosopher does not suffer from the *hubris* of overestimating his knowledge or his capacity. Like Socrates, the philosopher is aware of his own ignorance and recognises the gap between human and divine.

With the purpose of assessing Plato's contribution, I will start by examining instances of the *philosoph-* family of words in pre-Platonic literature. This will allow us to establish whether there is an original and distinctive Platonic sense for *philosophia* and *philosophos* and the degree to which the use of these terms is

informed by other accounts. As we shall see, the examination of earlier accounts immediately reveals the extent of Plato's influence on the subsequent tradition. As far as can be established, evidence which predates Plato's influence shows that this is rather a loose label, while much of the tradition informed by Plato's works tends to reveal a consistent and more specific sense that can be easily traced back to Plato. This is particularly the case with the doxography on Pythagoras. Below, I will offer an overview of the instances of *phil(o)-* compounds in Greek literature, which will be followed by an examination of the *philosoph-* word family in pre-Platonic literature. I will then work through some of the definitions of *philosoph-* terminology in Plato. As will be shown, when Plato defines *philosophia* or identifies the *philosophos*, he does it by appealing to each element of the compound, *philia* and *sophia*. *Sophia*, mainly understood as possession of knowledge, is the object the philosopher pursues. But we shall see that the love relationship the philosopher establishes with *sophia* (knowledge/wisdom) is described differently in different dialogues. In this chapter I include the *Lysis*, the *Symposium* and the *Phaedo* (the *Republic* will be discussed in the next chapter). These dialogues are relevant as they offer explicit descriptions of philosophy and the philosopher in a way that is unique to Plato. In all of them the philosopher is presented as a lover, which mainly defines his cognitive and moral disposition to seek the truth, but in some dialogues the emphasis is on the negative side of love (i.e. his lack of knowledge) and in others on the positive side of love (i.e. his proximity to knowledge).

#### **4.1. The *Phil(o)-* Compound and *Philosophia* in Pre-Platonic Literature**

The compound in *philo-* is an early and recurrent form in ancient Greek literature.<sup>249</sup> In Homer's *Iliad* the most recurrent forms are *philoptolemos*, 'fond of war' and *philommeidēs* 'laughter-loving', an epithet of Aphrodite. In the *Odyssey*, *philēretmos* 'fond of the oar' is the most recurrent, although the adjective *philoxenos*, 'loving-strangers', 'hospitable', features more prominently in the subsequent literary tradition. While many of these forms are *hapax legomena*, some of them have a well-established meaning and use in the literary tradition. The lyric poet Theognis

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<sup>249</sup> There are around 800 *philo-* compounds words in Greek (cf. Landfester 1966, p. 109).

introduces the form *philokerdēs*, ‘loving gain’, which is found in Plato’s *Republic*.<sup>250</sup> First attested in Pindar, the form *philopolis*, ‘loving the city’, is also found in Thucydides and Aristophanes.<sup>251</sup> In general, the evidence suggests an increasing use of *phil(o)*- compounds through the fifth century BCE. There are numerous examples of the form in the tragedians, especially in Aeschylus and Euripides. Such compounds are very common in Aristophanes.<sup>252</sup> *Wasps* (76-90) provides a good example to illustrate how the form was still used to coin new words in late fifth century BCE. Sosias and Xanthias discuss why Philocleon (Love-Cleon) has been put under house arrest by his son Bdelycleon (Loathe-Cleon). As Xanthias proceeds to explain, the father suffers from a sickness that begins with *phil(o)*-. The passage attests some older and more common forms, such as *philoxenos*. But the name of the father ‘*philocleon*’ and the adjective ascribed to him ‘*philēliastēs*’ are Aristophanes’ own inventions. As shown here and elsewhere, the morpheme *phil(o)*- attached to a second term serves to coin new words. It is certainly difficult to establish a general meaning applicable to all of these forms without reducing the unique significance of each instance in context. It is relatively safe to say that the form indicates a sense of familiarity, a good disposition towards something or someone, a sentiment of friendship, a passion, or, as seen in Aristophanes’ text, even an addiction.

Among the many *phil(o)*- compounds, the forms *philosophos* and *philosophia* are probably the most significant in the history of Greek culture.<sup>253</sup> Mainly through the influence of Plato and Aristotle, the term *philosophia* designates a discipline in its own right. Cognates of the term are attested only a few times before Plato. As Nightingale puts it: ‘First of all, φιλοσοφείν and its cognates were not often used before the fourth century, and they certainly did not have a technical sense that indicated a specific group of thinkers practicing a distinct discipline or profession.

<sup>250</sup> Theognis 1, 199. Plato, *Rep.* 581a7-586d5 (cf. 5.3).

<sup>251</sup> Pind. O. 4, 16; Thuc. 2.60.5, 6.92.2, 6.92.4; Aristoph. *Lys.* 546-7, *Pl.* 726, 900, 901.

<sup>252</sup> For a complete account of Greek *philos* from Homer to Aristophanes, see Landfester (1966). See Benveniste (1969) for a discussion on the semantic development of the adjective *philos* as ‘friend’ from its most primitive possessive sense. ‘En apparence, rien de plus simple que le rapport de *philos* “ami” à *philótēs*, *philia* “amitié”. Mais déjà nous arrête le fait bien connu que chez Homère *phílos* a deux sens: outre celui d’ “ami”, *philos* a la valeur d’ un possessif: φίλα γούνατα, φίλος υἱός n’ indiquent pas l’amitié, mais la possession: “ses genoux”, “son fils” (1969, p. 338).

<sup>253</sup> As Chantraine says: ‘Mais le mot le plus important est le terme de civilisation φιλόσοφος “qui aime τὸ σοφόν, philosophie” (Héraclite, att.), avec φιλοσοφέω (usuel depuis Hdt.), φιλοσοφία f. (usuel depuis Hp. VM 20 Isocr. et Pl.) etc.’ (1968, pp. 1205). He further claims: ‘Il n’y a rien de comparable à *phil-* (ou *phil(o)-*) dans les autres langues indo-européennes (1968, p. 1206).

When it did appear, the term was used to designate “intellectual cultivation” in a broad and unspecified sense’ (1995, pp. 14-5). Although it is difficult to pin down a general primitive meaning relevant for all the instances of the *philosoph-* word-group before Plato, the translation Nightingale suggests is not far-fetched. The word, mainly used as a verb in the context of prose writing, generally designates intellectual disposition and a taste for learning and culture. More specifically, it describes intellectual inquiry as opposed to other more practical affairs and activities.

In Herodotus (1.30.2), King Croesus sees in Solon someone who philosophises. Solon, who left Athens to travel around the world, is addressed by Croesus as follows: ‘Our Athenian guest, we have heard much of you, by reason of your *sophiē* and your wanderings [καὶ σοφίης εἵνεκεν τῆς σῆς καὶ πλάνης], how as someone who philosophises you have travelled far to see the world [ὡς φιλοσοφέων γῆν πολλὴν θεωρίης εἵνεκεν ἐπελήλυθας].’<sup>254</sup> There are two elements present in this description that deserve attention: to ‘philosophise’ is here an activity and it is associated with travelling for the sake of seeing. Rather than a title of reputation—as *sophia* is in the preceding line, *philosophein* here designates Solon’s keenness to learn and travel.<sup>255</sup>

The form is also attested in Thucydides (2.40.1) as part of Pericles’ funeral oration. Among the reasons why the city of Athens and Athenians are worthy of admiration is their characteristic love of wisdom: ‘We [Athenians] are lovers of beauty without extravagance [φιλοκαλοῦμεν τε γὰρ μετ’εὐτελείας] and of wisdom without softness [φιλοσοφοῦμεν ἄνευ μαλακίας].’<sup>256</sup> In this context, it is worth bearing in mind that, since *philokaleō* is first attested as a verb and *philosopheō* is not an old or common form, ‘each word may have its original significance’ (Gomme 1956, p. 121), i.e. it may have a meaning of its own in this particular context.<sup>257</sup> The passage has been interpreted by some critics as evidence that there is a relevant comparison between different types of life, according to which the kind of intellectual pursuits of

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<sup>254</sup> Trans. A.D. Godley (1920).

<sup>255</sup> The passage is also discussed at Introd. 5.

<sup>256</sup> Trans. P.J. Rhodes (1988).

<sup>257</sup> The form *philokalos* is found in Gorgias, DK fr. 6, 27.

the philosopher are assessed against those of the wealthy and the politicians.<sup>258</sup> Although the description holds some basic similarities with the kind of assessment we find later in Plato (*Rep.* IX, 581c ff.), the passage hardly reflects the purpose of the distinction in the context of Platonic or Aristotelian doctrine. Strictly speaking, Pericles is not describing the ‘theoretical’ or ‘contemplative’ pursuit of the philosopher as opposed to the practical kind of activity associated with the class of the wealthy and the political elite; rather, by asserting that the Athenians philosophise, he seems to emphasise intellectual cultivation in a general sense, as opposed to other practical activities.<sup>259</sup> In this regard, I think it is more important to highlight the qualification following *philosophoumen* whereby it is implied that intellectual cultivation can produce a kind of weakness or softness from which Athenians are free.<sup>260</sup> The suggested correlation between *philosophhein* and *malakia* indicates a possible drawback in the cultivation of purely intellectual pursuits, i.e. to become too soft.<sup>261</sup>

The only attested instance of the term in the extant comedy of Aristophanes—and Old Comedy in general—appears in *Assemblywomen*. The Chorus prompts Praxagora, the leader of the group of women, to introduce her proposal for a new government: ‘Now you must summon up a shrewd intelligence [πυκνὴν φρένα] and a philosophic mind that knows how to fight for your comrades [φιλόσοφον ἐγείρειν φροντίδ’ ἐπισταμένην ταῖσι φίλαισιν ἀμύνειν]’ (571-2).<sup>262</sup> Here *philosophos* is an adjective denoting intellectual capacity, along with *phrēn* and *phrontis*. As Ussher puts it, ‘the words merely mean a bright idea’ (1973, p. 155) with a possible reference to a contemporary philosopher.

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<sup>258</sup> J. S. Rusten (1985), by considering the following passage (2.40 1-2) argues that Thucydides refers here to three lives according to three different pursuits, intellectual, political and profit (*philosophia*, *politika* and *plouto*) in a way comparable to Plato (*Rep.* IX, 581c). In this line, Rusten believes the correct translation is not ‘broadly cultured’ as other critics suggest, but more specifically, ‘intellectual pursuit’. This seems entirely possible, although it does not necessarily reflect on the philosophical discussion that we see in Plato or Aristotle. This is mainly because, as Rusten himself recognises, the three lives are not really compared (in such a way that the superiority of one is asserted over the other), but simply described according to their different purposes (cf. 1985, p. 18).

<sup>259</sup> Presumably, as opposed to the Spartans.

<sup>260</sup> Unlike the Ionians. So it turns out that the Athenians are the ‘golden mean’ between the Spartans and the Ionians.

<sup>261</sup> Probably comparable to the members of the *phrontistērion* depicted by Aristophanes in *Clouds*.

<sup>262</sup> Trans. J. Henderson (2002).

For the purpose of the present investigation, one of the most revealing instances of *philosophos* in pre-Platonic literature features in Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen* (DK B11.13). Gorgias is describing the power of persuasion and, more particularly, the way speeches impress the soul of the audience regardless of truth. He discusses three cases (i) the speeches of the astronomers [τοὺς τῶν μετεωρολόγων λόγους] as they persuade most people of what is incredible and unclear; (ii) logically necessary debates [τοὺς ἀναγκαίους διὰ λόγων ἀγῶνας] written with great art but with no truth by the rhetoricians; (iii) 'verbal disputes of the philosophers [φιλοσόφων λόγων ἀμίλλας] in which the swiftness of thought [γνώμης τάχος] is also shown making the belief in an opinion subject to easy change.'<sup>263</sup> The philosophers are here depicted as practicing eristic argumentation based on contentious opinions, a characteristic that Plato often attributes to sophists (cf. 6.4.2).<sup>264</sup> Like astronomers and orators, philosophers produce speeches that are persuasively effective.

#### **4.1.1. Towards Philosophical *Philosophia*? *Philosophia* and *Sophia* in Heraclitus**

Significantly enough, the term has no obvious place among the pre-Socratic philosophers. The only attested instance is found in Heraclitus (DK Fr. 35. 2). The passage goes as follows: '[For, according to Heraclitus, men who are] lovers of wisdom ought very much to be inquirers into many things [χρηὴ γὰρ εὔ μάλα πολλῶν ἵστορας φιλοσόφους ἄνδρας εἶναι]'. But if this is Heraclitus' own (and not Clement's addition), it seems to designate intellectual pursuit, very much in the way the word *histōr*, 'one who knows', does.<sup>265</sup>

One point on which Heraclitus seems to anticipate the Platonic position is his treatment of *sophia* in association with divine knowledge. Although in Greek literature we find that gods can be called *sophoi*, and might be expected to be *sophoi*, *sophia* by itself does not designate an exclusively divine quality as opposed to a

<sup>263</sup> Trans. G. Kennedy (1972).

<sup>264</sup> This could be the philosophers as described by Isocrates at 13.1.

<sup>265</sup> Trans. T.M. Robinson (1987). According to Robinson (1987, p. 104): 'The extended phrase 'men who are lovers of wisdom' seems to be a coinage of Clement's own. If Heraclitus' own, this would be the first attested instance of the word in Greek literature'. For a different view, see Kahn (1979) who claims, on the basis of the significance of *to sophon*, that these are Heraclitus' own words.

(more defective) human cognitive state.<sup>266</sup> But the contrast is set out explicitly by Heraclitus. Indeed the connection seems so striking between the Platonic and the Heraclitean conception that Clement (fr. 32)—also influenced by Plato—points it out: ‘I know that Plato too bears witness to Heraclitus when he writes: One thing, the only truly *sophon* [τὸ σοφὸν μόνον], does not and does consent to be called by the name of Zeus’.<sup>267</sup> Not only here, where the divine status of *to sophon* seems clear, but also in other of the extant fragments, *to sophon* bears particular significance as it is singled out as a unique quality (fr. 41; 108). However, it is not evident that *to sophon* is exclusively a divine quality.<sup>268</sup> As in Plato, Heraclitus seems to introduce two conceptions of *to sophon*, one divine and absolute, the other relative and human. Kirk suggests that the implication is that ‘human wisdom is analogous to but less complete than divine wisdom’ (1970b, p. 395). Kahn follows the same line of interpretation:

[...] wisdom in the full sense is accessible only to the divine ruler of the universe, since it means mastering the plan by which the cosmos is governed. For human beings such wisdom can serve as an ideal target, a goal to be pursued by *homo-logein*, by agreement with the logos: putting one’s own thought, speech, and action in harmony with the universal course of things (1979, p. 268).

Although Heraclitus is never cited in Plato as the author of this distinction, the reference is relevant.<sup>269</sup> As shown above, the conception of *sophia* as a state of completed wisdom endows *philosophia* with a specific meaning in Plato’s writings. More specifically, by endowing *sophia* with divine status, *philosophia* becomes a god-like endeavour. This characteristic underlies descriptions of the philosopher as found in the *Theaetetus* (176b), the *Republic* (500c), the *Symposium* (204a), the *Phaedo* (64a-69e), and more significantly, the *Sophist* (254a-b) in opposition to the sophist. In general terms, our understanding of the nature of *sophia* shapes our

<sup>266</sup> At best, gods are wiser than humans: ‘For Gods *should* be wiser [σοφωτέρους] than mortals.’ (Eur. *Hipp.*120). But they can also be foolish (cf. Eur. *El.* 972; *Ion* 1313; *Ba.* 655).

<sup>267</sup> Kirk notes: ‘τὸ σοφὸν must, on any interpretation, imply absolute wisdom (as opposed to approximations, however close, to perfection in this respect), for otherwise any possessor of ‘true judgement, how all are steered through all’ (fr. 41) might also claim a share in the name of Zeus’ (1970b, p. 394).

<sup>268</sup> Gigon (1935, p. 127) makes the connection between Pythagoras’ conception of *sophia* (i.e. the one coming from Heraclides of Pontus) and Heraclitus’.

<sup>269</sup> Although a reference is found in the *Hipp. Maj.* 289b3. Socrates says to Hippias: ‘And didn’t Heraclitus (whom you bring in) say the same thing too, that “wisest of men [Ἀνθρώπων ὁ σοφώτατος] is seen to be a monkey compared to god in *sophia* and fineness and everything else?’’.

understanding of the *philo-* part of *philosophia*. If *sophia* is as an unachievable target for humans, *philo-sophia* is an ongoing activity; if only the god is *sophos*, there are no human *sophoi*; if *sophia* is perfect knowledge, *philosophia* is an unperfected state of cognition. As will be shown, all of these aspects are relevant in Plato's definition of *philosophia* and his characterisation of the *philosophos*.

#### 4.1.2. Pythagoras: the 'Platonic' Philosopher

According to two different accounts coming from Plato's disciple Heraclides of Pontus, literary sources point to Pythagoras as the first self-proclaimed *philosophos*. One of these reports is given by Diogenes Laertius. By word of Heraclides, Diogenes tells us that the first one to use the term by calling himself a *philosophos* was Pythagoras: 'for, said he, no man is *sophos*, but God alone' (D.L. I. 12).<sup>270</sup> On the basis of Pythagoras' distinction, 'the study was called *sophia* and its professor a *sophos*, to denote his attainment of mental perfection; while the student who took it up was a *philosophos* or a lover of wisdom [ὁ σοφίαν ἀσπαζόμενος].' The lover of wisdom or *philosophos* is thus someone who embraces (*aspazomai*) *sophia*, without yet attaining it. The anecdote is also recounted by Cicero in *Tusculan Disputations* as a way to explain the particular kind of inquiry of *philosophia* versus *sophia*. As Cicero describes, while the intellectual kind of inquiry characteristic of philosophy is of great antiquity (*sapientia* or *sophia* is the older name), the name *philosophia* is fairly new. Cicero reports the account that comes from Heraclides as follows: Pythagoras came to Phlius and in conversation with the king of the Phliasians, Leon, he was asked to name the art in which he was expert: 'but Pythagoras said that for his part he had no acquaintance with any art, but was a philosopher [*at illum artem quidem se scire nullam, sed esse philosophum*]' (V. III, 7-9). King Leon, surprised with the novelty of the word, asked Pythagoras to explain the distinctive nature of philosophers, to which Pythagoras responded with a metaphor. In Greek festivals, while some men sought to win prizes and others looked for profit, another group of people attended with the only purpose of watching the spectacles.<sup>271</sup> In the same manner:

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<sup>270</sup> The question of the legitimacy of this claim is discussed by Nightingale (1995, p. 14), Jaeger (1948, pp. 98, 432), Burkert (1960) and Guthrie (1962, pp. 164-66).

<sup>271</sup> The division into three types reflects Plato's own division in book IX (580d10) of the *Republic*.

[...] there were a special few who, counting all else as nothing closely scanned the nature of things; these men gave themselves the name of lovers of wisdom (for that is the meaning of the word philosopher [*hos se appellare sapientiae studiosos, id est enim philosophos*]); and just as at the games the men of truest breeding looked on without any self-seeking, so in life the contemplation and discovery of nature far surpassed all other pursuits (V. III, 9).<sup>272</sup>

Although the anecdote is suggestive, it seems likely that Heraclides, a Platonist and an assiduous Pythagorean, wrote the dialogue with a moral purpose consistent with his own philosophical agenda.<sup>273</sup> Indeed, in this account Pythagoras would appear as the founder of *philosophia* understood as the kind of contemplative and theoretical life in contrast with the pursuit of honour and wealth. Significantly, the definition sheds light on the meaning of the *phil(o)*- component within the Platonic tradition. In Cicero's report, Pythagoras—like Socrates in the *Apology*, is described as non-*sophos* in his lack of expert knowledge. Unlike the *sophoi* who claim to possess knowledge, the *philosophos* only claims to be a spectator of reality and a seeker of knowledge. Likewise, Diogenes' account of Pythagoras resembles the Socratic doctrine laid out in *Apology* whereby the only real *sophos* is the god (23a5). Thus the divine status of *sophia* relegates humans to a sphere where they can only desire it but not possess it.

Drawing from the above, we can establish that *phil(o)*- components are common in use and broad in meaning. Among these forms, *philosoph-* terminology, except in accounts informed by Plato, is neither recurrent nor distinctive. As seen in Thucydides, it is a valued characteristic of Athenians, but also, as seen in Gorgias, is a term to designate the kind of activity that makes philosophers and sophists a target of criticism. On account of the divine status of *sophia*, among the pre-Socratics, Heraclitus seems to be the only precedent for Plato's conceptualisation of *philosophia*.

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<sup>272</sup> Trans. J.E. King (1927).

<sup>273</sup> Guthrie argues that fourth-century sources for Pythagoras are not reliable. 'Heraclides wrote dialogues and no doubt the conversation between Pythagoras and Leon occurred in one of these compositions which, like those of his teacher Plato, would have a moral rather than an historical purpose and could contain free elements of invention' (1962, p. 165). Jaeger too believes that 'Heraclides is projecting Academic ideas on to Pythagoras' (1948, p. 165). He further comments: 'Attractive as this story sounds it is neither a unity nor original. Heraclides, the most assiduously Pythagorean of all the Platonists, has obviously been stimulated by [Aristotle's] the *Protrepticus*' (1948, p. 98).

## 4.2. Platonic *Philosoph-*

After examining the relevant references pointing to the meaning of the *phil(o)-* compounds in the literary tradition, particularly the cognate forms of *philosophia*, I would like to explore the value and meaning of the *phil(o)-* component in Plato to assess whether this serves to distinctly define *philosophos* and *philosophia*. Plato distinguishes the *philosophos* from other *sophoi*, but he does so also from other *philo*i. By reason of their passion or interest in learning something, they bear some likeness to philosophers and therefore they can be used to establish a relevant point of comparison. Of course, throughout Plato's dialogues one can see, more or less explicitly, the prevalence of the notions of *philosophia* and the *philosophos*.<sup>274</sup> Here I refer only to those dialogues in which is found a clear attempt to (re)define and appropriate these notions. As will be shown, these attempts reveal a particular conception of love, one that allows Plato to assert the philosopher in a middle-ground territory between *sophia* and *amathia*.

As already mentioned, *philosophia* in Plato is defined by reference to the meaning of its components: broken down into its elements *philo-sophos* is someone who loves *sophia*. Plato, like no other author, explores the etymology of the word to endow it with a special meaning and value. But here we encounter the very first difficulty, for it is not immediately clear in which sense 'love' is to be understood. Based on the general assumption that the *sophos* is someone who is in possession of *sophia*, are we to suppose that the *philosophos* is someone who is fond of *sophia*, someone who goes after *sophia*, or someone who lacks and therefore desires *sophia*? In what follows, I start by listing the references to the *philo*i in Plato. This will prove useful inasmuch as the references serve to create a relevant contrast (for the purpose of comparison or dissociation) with the *philosophos*. I will then proceed to consider *philosoph-* terminology in Plato, with particular emphasis on the component of love. In this regard, the *Lysis* and the *Symposium* will become central for the analysis. As will be shown, these two dialogues provide a good idea of how the love component defines the disposition of the philosopher in his quest for knowledge.

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<sup>274</sup> Some of the most significant references are in *Rep.* (books V to VII), *Symp.* (204a-b), *Theaet.* (174b), *Soph.* (216c-e), *Gorg.* (482a; 500c), *Prot.* (342a-b), *Euthyd.* (288d; 305b ff.) and the *Phaedo* (62c; 67d; 82e).

To be sure, *philosophos* holds a unique place in Plato. The only comparable term seems to be *philomathēs* ‘lover of learning’, which appears more prominently in *Phaedo* and *Republic*.<sup>275</sup> This bears particular significance for, as will be shown, it says something about the epistemic status of the philosopher. Mostly, the *philosophos* is distinguished from the *misosophos* ‘hater of wisdom’, *philodoxos* ‘lover of opinion’, *philosōmatos* ‘lover of the body’, *philochrematos*, ‘lover of money’, *philotimos*, ‘lover of honour’, *philarchos*, ‘lover of power’, *philonikos*, ‘lover of victory’, *philotheamon*, ‘lover of sights’, *philekoos*, ‘lover of sounds’ and *philokerdes*, ‘lover of gain’.<sup>276</sup> To the extent that they are ‘lovers’, the *philosophos* is compared with other *philoī* such as the *philortux*, ‘lover of quails’, *philokuon*, ‘lover of dogs’, *philoinos*, ‘lover of wine’, *philogumnastes*, ‘lover of exercise’ and *philositos*, ‘lover of food’.<sup>277</sup>

Most strikingly, although it is frequently implied, Socrates is never explicitly identified as a *philosophos* in Plato’s dialogues.<sup>278</sup> In *Apology* (28e5; 29c9; 29d5) he describes himself as ‘doing philosophy’ or ‘philosophising’, which in this context is explained as ‘examining myself and others [ἐξετάζοντα ἑμαυτὸν καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους]’ (28e6). This is part of Socrates’ digression in which he discusses the possibility of being acquitted on the condition of dropping his mission of cross-examination. As Stokes (1997, pp. 147-48) argues, Socrates seems to narrow the meaning of *philosopho* in connection with the activity of the *elenchus*. While the

<sup>275</sup> *Rep.* 376c2; 475c2; 485d3; 490a9; 535d4; 376b5; 376b8; 411d1; 435e7; 581b9; *Phaedrus* 230d3; *Phaedo* 67b4; 82d9; 83a1; 83e5; 82c1. In a similar way, *philosophia* is also compared to *philotechnias* (*Criti.* 109c).

<sup>276</sup> *misosophos* (*Rep.* 456a4), *philodoxos* (*Rep.* 480a6; a12), *philosōmatos* (*Phaed.* 68c1), *philochrēmatos*, (*Phaed.* 68c2; 82c6; *Rep.* 390d8; e8; 436a1; 469d6; 480e5; 485e3; 486b6; 551e4; 549b2; 551a8; 553c5; d9; 581a6), *philotimos* (*Rep.* 485b8; 551a7; 475a9; 553d9; 582c2; d8; 583a8; 549a4; 550b7; 581d5; 582e4; 347b2; 545a3; b5; 581b2; 347b9; *Laws* 744e3; 841c4; 870c5; *Phaedrus* 2565c1; *Phaedo* 68c2; 82c7; *Apol.* 23d9; *Prot.* 343c1; *Criti.* 107a3), *philarchos* (*Phaedo* 82C7; *Rep.* 549a3), *philonikos*, (*Rep.* 551a7; 550b6; 582e5; 545a2; 581b2; c4; 586d5; *Gorg.* 515b5; *Tim.* 70a3), *philotheamon*, (*Rep.* 475d2; e4; 476a10; b4; 479a3), *philekoos*, (*Rep.* 475d3; 476b4; 535d5; 548e5; *Euthyd.* *Lysis* 206c10; 274c3; 304c6;), *philokerdēs* (*Rep.* 582a9; b3; b7; d8; e1; 583a10).

<sup>277</sup> *philortux* (*Lysis* 212d6), *philokuon* (*Lysis* 212d7), *philoinos* (*Rep.* 475a5; *Lysis* 212d7), *philogumnastes* (*Rep.* 535d3; 549a6; *Lysis* 212d7), *philositos* (*Rep.* 475c4).

<sup>278</sup> Although Socrates presents himself as a *philomathēs* in *Phaedrus* 230d3, and in *Rep.* VI (496c3) he identifies himself among the group of philosophers that are retired from public life. Also in the *Phaedo* (66d7) he refers to ‘we’ (*hēmin*), by which is implied ‘we philosophers’. It is still striking to see that depictions of the philosopher as presented in *Rep.* V-VII and also in the digression of the *Theaetetus* do not seem to fit with Socrates’ philosophical activity. For a study of the relationship between Socrates the philosopher as described in the Socratic dialogues and the depiction of the philosopher in other dialogues see Peterson (2011).

particular value of *philosopheo* is here distinguished in connection with Socrates' active moral mission in Athenian society, it is difficult to establish whether Plato is playing with a narrower conception. The broader 'pre-Platonic' meaning also fits in this context. It is entirely possible to understand Socrates' activity as a learning or intellectual activity (as in Herodotus and Thucydides) or, more specifically, as an activity related to eristic debate (as in Gorgias). However, when considering the whole of the *Apology*, it is tempting to interpret Socrates' activity (*philosophein*) in connection with Socrates' knowledge (*anthropinē sophia*). Socrates, as already discussed, is described as a 'sort of *sophos*'. Although never explicitly connected, it is possible to see how *anthropinē sophia* equates to *philosophia*. Strycker defends this position and explains the absence of the word *philosophos* in the context of the Narration as responding to the two different stages characteristic of the *elenchus*, a negative and a positive moment (Strycker and Slings 1994, p. 64). As will be shown, knowledge of one's own ignorance, which in the *Apology* amounts to human Socratic *sophia*, in the *Lysis* and the *Symposium* is established as the condition for *philosophein*.<sup>279</sup>

While the dialogues traditionally known as 'Socratic' provide rich descriptions of Socrates' activity and 'sort of *sophia*', they present little evidence for descriptions of *philosophia*.<sup>280</sup> Furthermore, there is no positive identification of the *philosophos* as a characteristic kind of *sophos*. With the exception of the *Lysis*, those texts conventionally considered as the Socratic 'early' dialogues tend to use *philosophia* and cognates in a rather broad sense.<sup>281</sup> See, for example, the *Charmides*. Coming back from Potidaea, Socrates asks Chaerephon and Critias how things have been in his absence: 'about the present state of philosophy and about the young men, whether there were any who had become distinguished for wisdom or beauty or both' (153d3-5). Later on Socrates wonders whether Charmides is a good candidate

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<sup>279</sup> Two other alternatives can be considered: (i) for a rhetorical purpose, the label is not distinct enough to create a relevant contrast with *sophos* (as it was discussed in the third chapter) or, (ii) it is not part of Plato's agenda to call Socrates a *philosophos*. One possible way to explain this is by considering the position and status of the *philosophos* in Plato as representing an ideal. Socrates might be a case of *anthropinē sophia*, which is the knowledge of one's ignorance, not necessarily reflecting on Plato's ideas of the *philosophos* type.

<sup>280</sup> The only Socratic dialogue that explores a definition of *philosophia* is *Lovers*, a dialogue traditionally thought to be non-authentic. Although the dialogue reflects Plato's ideas on the nobility of philosophy as expressed, for example in the *Euthydemus* and *Republic* VI, and the object of philosophy, i.e. virtue, it does not shed much light on Plato's conceptualisation of *philosophia*.

<sup>281</sup> Among which are *Laches*, *Charmides*, *Lysis*, *Euthyphro*, *Lesser Hippias*, *Ion*, and *Crito*.

to participate in the discussion. Critias confirms it: ““Very much so,” said Critias, “since he is not only a philosopher but also, both in his own opinion and that of others, quite a poet”” (154e8-155a1). Another instance is found in the *Lesser Hippias* (363a5) when Eudicus invites Socrates to a ‘philosophical discussion’ (*hē en philosophiai diatribēs*) after Hippias’ speech. Of course, this broader sense is not exclusive to the Socratic dialogues; the general sense of philosophy as an activity, an inquiry or a general discipline is also present in other dialogues.<sup>282</sup> The point to emphasise here is that none of the more formal descriptions developed in the *Republic*, the *Phaedo* and the *Symposium* are elaborated in this group of dialogues. It is only in the *Lysis*, a dialogue that centres on the question of *to philon*, that we find a relevant description of *philosophia* hinting at the ideas elaborated in the *Symposium*. As will be shown, descriptions of philosophy and the philosopher are found mostly in what is conventionally thought to be the middle and late dialogues, particularly in the *Republic* books V-VI.<sup>283</sup>

### 4.3. The Love Characteristic of *Philosophia* in Plato

Of course, it is not the purpose of this section to offer a detailed analysis of Plato’s doctrine of love (if there is one); this will be covered inasmuch as it helps to clarify the position of the *philosophos* in relation to other *sophoi* and other *philo*i and the distinctive meaning of *philosophia*. For the purpose of the present investigation, it is particularly relevant to assess the evaluative dimension of the label. As will be seen, there is a double-valence to the *phil(o)*- component. On one hand, it qualifies deficiency, lack of something; on the other, it qualifies moral and epistemological progression.

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<sup>282</sup> *Theaet.*143d3; *Phileb.* 56e8; *Tim.* 20a4; *Charm.*153d3; *Gorg.* 485a4.

<sup>283</sup> Ueberweg claims that the use of *philosoph-* and *sophos* is not a distinction of the historic Socrates, but of his disciples: ‘With the disciples of Socrates φιλοσοφία appears already as a technical designation’ (1872, p. 3). However, this does not seem to be the case of Xenophon. Apart from Socrates’ calling himself a ‘labourer in philosophy’ (*Xen. Sym.* I.5), there are only a few significant instances of the word in Xenophon’s corpus. Nightingale points out: ‘Surprisingly, a mere sixteen instances of the word φιλοσοφείν and its cognates are found in Xenophon’s writings, and only ten of these are found in the “Socratic” treatises. Of these ten instances, moreover, eight are clearly used in the broad sense of “intellectual culture” outlined above. There are, then, only two passages in Xenophon’s Socratic treatises where one can find the suggestion that “philosophy” is a term that describes some intellectuals rather than others’ (1995, p. 16).

The first question that arises regarding the Platonic account of love is the apparent equation between *erōs* and *philia* in the *Lysis* and the *Symposium*. Although the terms overlap in one basic sense, i.e. to the extent that both designate love towards someone or something, there are also some relevant distinctions that are worth noticing. As Vlastos puts it: ‘*eran* overlaps with *philein* (they can both be translated by ‘love’), but differs from it in three respects: ‘i) it is more intense, more passionate; ii) it is more heavily weighted on the side of desire than of affection (*desire, longing*, are the primary connotations of ἔρωζ, *fondness* that of φιλία); iii) it is more closely tied to the sexual drive (though φιλεῖν may also refer to sexual love)’ (Vlastos 1981, p. 4n4).<sup>284</sup>

Besides the association between *erōs* and *philia* that the Greek language allows, in Plato there seems to be an intentional correlation between the terms. The equation is thus only apparent because Plato, rather than reducing or neutralising the differences, uses them as a way to integrate all the aspects of love that are relevant for his account. While *erōs* by itself cannot account for friendship or family ties, *philia* is not strong enough to convey the passion and desire characteristic of erotic love. The contrast is suggested several times in the *Phaedrus*. The correlation is there established in the following way: while lovers are always friends, friends are not always lovers. So there is place for *erastou philia* (256e4), but the relationship between lover and beloved is distinguished from the relationship between friends and among family (252a2; 255b5). On the other hand, *erōs*’s characteristic madness may fall short of the ideal of philosophical rational love.<sup>285</sup> Of course, one must be careful not to push the question of terminology too far. Plato might be using the

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<sup>284</sup> Cf. Xen. *Hiero* 11.11.3. Dover (1980, p. 1) makes a similar comparison: ‘This word [*erōs, eran*], which can denote any very strong desire (e.g. for victory) and is used also by Homer to denote appetite for food and drink, usually means ‘love’ in the sense which that word bears in our expressions ‘be in love (with...)’ and ‘fall in love (with...)’: that is, intense desire for a particular individual as a sexual partner. The word is not used, except rhetorically or humorously, of the relations between parents and children, brother and sisters, masters and servants or rulers and subjects’.

<sup>285</sup> In the *Phaedrus* the irrational component of love is particularly characteristic of *erōs* and the *erastēs* (244a5), which is consistent with traditional representations of *erōs*. To be sure, *erōs* is what takes over Paris’ mind in his desire towards Helen (*Il.* 3. 442) and seizes Zeus’ mind at the sight of Hera (*Il.* 14.294). *Erōs* also is what takes over Paris’ mind at the sight of Helen (*Il.* 3. 442) Zeus’ at the sight of Hera (*Il.* 14. 294).

whole range of meanings that the different words for ‘love’ allow without calling attention to specific points of difference.<sup>286</sup>

Nor should Platonic philosophical *erōs* be understood as something essentially different from common conceptions of *erōs* found elsewhere in literature. Even if his ideal of rationality is in tension with the impulsive nature of *erōs*, Plato seeks to capture the basic structure of desire in his conceptualisation of philosophical love. Indeed, *erōs*, central in Plato’s *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, is closely connected with desire (*epithumia*). As Socrates himself declares in the *Phaedrus*: ‘Now, as everyone plainly knows, love (*erōs*) is some kind of desire (*epithumia*)’ (237d3). Crucial to Plato’s account is the idea of insatiability associated with erotic desire. ‘When satisfied, as for example through sexual intercourse, *erōs* recurs, demanding to be satisfied again; we can therefore understand why it (as opposed to, say, *philia*) may be thought to carry an inevitable sense of lack and absence. An *erastēs*, even a successful one, always “wants something” (Hunter 2004, p. 81).<sup>287</sup> As will be shown, the sense of absence and need is at the basis of Plato’s conceptualisation of *philo-sophia*.<sup>288</sup> This means that philosophical *erōs* by itself, i.e. as desire, is not different from other desires; the difference lies in the object towards which the desire is directed. This is clear from the various examples Plato uses across the corpus to compare the case of the philosopher, as the lovers of wine and dogs in the *Lysis* (212d7), the lover of honour in the *Symposium* (208c3) and the lover of wine and adolescents in the *Republic* (474d4). In general ‘[a]ll intense desires, whether bodily and spiritual, would have to be referred to this basic structure of yearning’ (Ludwig 2002, p. 9), and Plato proves to be no exception.

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<sup>286</sup> For a discussion on this topic, see Hyland (1968) and Cummins (1981). Hyland’s reading is of a consistent difference between *epithumia*, *erōs* and *philia* on the basis of degree and presence of reason. Cummins contends this view and advocates for a more flexible reading: ‘In brief, I shall argue that Hyland presses too hard to find verbal consistency. Plato uses considerable variety in his terminology for human appetency, a variety which advises the interpreter to rely first of all upon context when considering the significance of the occurrence of this or that term’ (1981, p. 10).

<sup>287</sup> The sexual dimension of *erōs* is further developed in *Symposium* (207a7 ff).

<sup>288</sup> Of course, sexual desire is only one example of *erōs*. Ludwig (2002, p. 8) warns against ‘sexual reductionism’ on the interpretation of *erōs*. ‘In Greek texts, *erōs* can, but need not, connote sexual arousal’ (2002, p. 7).

#### 4.4. The *Lysis* and the *Symposium*: Friendship and Desire

The connection between *erōs* and *philia* in terms of desire is found in Plato's *Lysis* and *Symposium*, both relevant to establishing the distinct meaning of *philosophēin* and *philosophia*.<sup>289</sup> In general, it is worth noticing that in both accounts the idea of desire is drawn along with the idea of possession (*ktaomai*, *echō*). This is particularly important in the case of *sophia* when understood as knowledge, as *philo-sophia* is based on the possibility of acquiring *sophia*. In the *Lysis*, the question becomes immediately relevant, as Socrates introduces the inquiry by declaring: 'Ever since I was a boy there's a certain thing I've always wanted to possess [ἐπιθυμῶν κτήματός του]' (211d7-8).<sup>290</sup> Likewise, in the *Symposium*, the idea of desire as triggered by the absence or lack of the object is contrasted by the idea of possession. What this ultimately suggests is that between the total lack and the full possession of wisdom, there is an intermediate state described as 'love'. As already asserted, in the *Lysis*, this love is conceptualised as *philia*, whereas in the *Symposium* it is presented as *erōs*. Although it is possible to see the correspondence, my reading favours a complementary (rather than a hierarchical or equivalent) relationship between the two.<sup>291</sup> As we shall see, the love between friends is presented as primarily reciprocal, which in the case of the philosopher means that he obtains something in return. What at face value may seem absurd (and Plato embraces the absurdity) actually makes sense considering that the philosopher benefits from loving *sophia*. But *philia* lacks the impulsive and passionate force of *erōs* as described in the *Symposium*. Both accounts contribute to our understanding of the relationship that the philosopher, as a lover, establishes with his object of love. While the *Lysis* advocates for a love that is reciprocal and beneficial, the *Symposium* brings about the significance of lack and desire.

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<sup>289</sup> Particularly in the *Lysis*, the three terms are constantly entangled. The equation between *philia* and *epithumia* is made at 217e8-9 and. See also 221d2, 221d6, 221e2 and 221e3.

<sup>290</sup> 'Socrates calls a friend a "possession," but claims to be "erotically disposed to acquiring [or possessing] friends" (211e–212a). "Possessing" a friend is an ongoing activity' (Nichols 2006, p. 12).

<sup>291</sup> Unlike e.g. Khan, who proposes that Plato's 'theory of love' should only be read in terms of *erōs*: 'Not only in the case of the Forms, but in the desire for many other good and beautiful things, the notion of reciprocity would be entirely inappropriate. Hence Plato's "theory of love" is necessarily a theory of *erōs*, not of *philia*' (1996, p. 261).

#### 4.4.1. The *Lysis*: the Philosopher as a Friend

The *Lysis* is traditionally placed among the early Socratic dialogues, specifically among those that seek to define a moral concept, in this case that of friend and friendship, *philon* and *philia*. However, the dialogue turns out to play with a rather loose and broad conception of friendship. As Haden warns: ‘We must avoid the pitfall of presupposing that “the friend,” or “friendship,” has for Plato one and only one meaning. As his conversation with Menexenus shows early on, the practical problem is how to use the word “friend” meaningfully, in a variety of situations’ (1983, p. 354).<sup>292</sup>

Although the dialogue does not centre on the case of the *philosophos* exclusively or in much detail, it introduces two general aspects that will be relevant for the present assessment: (i) it introduces the question (and some of the problematic issues) concerning the philosopher as a *philos*; (ii) it establishes the love of the philosopher as an example of friendship between an intermediate type (‘neither good nor bad’) and the good. The first aspect assesses the kind of relationship that the philosopher establishes with his object of love (whether one-sided or reciprocal) and the second defines the philosopher as being midway between ignorance and wisdom.

Inspired by the relationship between Lysis and Menexenus, Socrates wonders in what way one person becomes friends with another (212a5). The discussion moves on to define the *philos*; given a relationship in which one man loves another, is the *philos* the one who loves (*philon*), the one who is loved (*philoumenos*) or, as Menexenus will agree, both of them (212b5)? The inquiry is partly allowed by the multiple senses that the Greek word *philos* admits.<sup>293</sup> As LSJ attests, in a passive sense, it might mean ‘dear’; in a purely active sense (less common) it could mean

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<sup>292</sup> See also Versenyi: ‘It is important to note at the outset that this theory is not just a theory about “friendship” in the strict sense of a reciprocal relationship of attraction between human beings. Neither is *Philia* the only subject under discussion in the dialogue, nor are terms like *Philein*, *eran*, *agapan*, *epithumein* and *peri bollou poieisthai* or *hegeisthai* technical terms here, clearly demarcated and precisely distinguishable from each other’ (1975, p. 4).

<sup>293</sup> Robinson (1986) and Price (1989) argue that Plato is playing with the different senses of the word *philos*. Penner and Rowe (2005) argue that ‘friend’ is a better translation throughout the text than ‘dear’, even when the context seems to demand a shift of sense: ‘the *Lysis* will treat anything loved (i.e. anything that is the object of *philein*) as a “friend”. What is loved, is a “friend”, regardless of whether it loves back or not’ (2005, p. 42 n11).

‘fond of’, or, in a more general sense, in the case of a reciprocal relationship, ‘friend’.<sup>294</sup> Indeed, it is the third of these senses, the one that Menexenus assumes to be true, that seems to predominate in literature.<sup>295</sup> Significantly, Menexenus suggests two different views of the conditions for reciprocal love: (i) if one loves, then both become mutual friends (212b); (ii) if both do not love mutually, neither is a friend (212c).

Socrates’ considers Menexenus’ first claim by bringing the example of the lover who is not loved (or even hated) in return. What needs to be established is whether the case of the non-reciprocal *philos* serves to disprove the condition of reciprocity or is in fact useless to indicate who the *philos* is (as Socrates will show later on). For Menexenus’ second claim, Socrates introduces various examples, among which is the case of the philosopher. Importantly, Socrates is no longer referring exclusively to interpersonal relationships, as the question was first introduced (212aff), but has moved on to include all kinds of relationships in which there is an identifiable case of *philos* (in an active, passive or reciprocal sense). To this end, Socrates introduces the neuter *philon* and draws the following conclusion from Menexenus’ claim: ‘So nothing is a friend of the lover unless it loves him in return [οὐκ ἄρα ἐστὶν φίλον τῷ φιλοῦντι οὐδὲν μὴ οὐκ ἀντιφιλοῦν]’ (212d4), after which he goes on to say: ‘So there are no horse-lovers unless the horses love them back, and no quail-lovers, dog-lovers, wine-lovers, or exercise-lovers. And no lovers of wisdom [φιλόσοφοι], unless wisdom loves them in return’ (212d5-8).<sup>296</sup> As it stands, the passage seems to imply reciprocity even in non-personal relationships. But the examples will prove ambiguous; indeed, it is not clear whether these cases are used to disprove or confirm Menexenus’ assumptions on reciprocity. Indeed, Socrates immediately evaluates these as possible cases of non-reciprocity: it may be the case that ‘people really love them even though these things are not their friends [φίλα]’ (212d8). Or, alternatively, they are friends with the lover, without them loving in return. In this

<sup>294</sup> See Robinson (1986) and Price (1989) for a discussion on the different senses of Greek *philos*.

<sup>295</sup> See, for example, Aristotle, who responds to Socrates’ initial question word by word (*Eud. Eth.* 7.1236a14-15). See also Xen. *Mem.* II. 4. 7.

<sup>296</sup> In consistency with the Greek usage of *philos*, Robinson points out the emotional value attached to the word: ‘People one likes, activities one pursues, qualities one approves of, special objects one values emotionally, are φίλα, but not ordinary objects one has a moderate liking for’ (1986, p. 67). Robinson’s thesis is that Socrates starts with the topic of friendship, but then he moves into the topic of ‘pursuit’ in general, among which he includes non-reciprocal love-relationships.

case, Solon would be right when saying that children, horses and hounds are *philo* (212e3), for ‘what is loved [τὸ φιλούμενον] is a friend [φίλον] to the person who loves it [φιλοῦντι], [...] whether it loves him or hates him’ (212e5-6). Critics usually see Socrates’ case of the philosopher, along with the other examples, as a way to illustrate non-reciprocal love, i.e. to show Menexenus that there are cases in which love is one-sided.<sup>297</sup> However, this interpretation is not immediately supported by the text. The assumption of reciprocity is on the surface, but the absurdity is not difficult to see. The example of the philosopher is introduced as a case of reciprocal love, i.e. there are no philosophers unless wisdom loves them back, although a paradox arises as a result. Other examples, similar to that of the philosopher, are presented as possible cases of reciprocal and non-reciprocal *philo*.<sup>298</sup>

Socrates is exploring the consequences of diagnosing *philia* as either reciprocal or non-reciprocal. It is worth bearing in mind that Socrates is not attempting to define *philia*, but to identify who the *philos* is. While reciprocal friendship seems too restrictive for the identification of the *philos*, since there is a sense in which the Greek *philos* can be said without referring to reciprocal relationships (the sense of ‘dear’ and ‘fond of’), non-reciprocal friendship admits the possibility of being a friend (*philos*) to one’s enemy, which is absurd.<sup>299</sup> But there is a way to understand the philosopher as a reciprocal *philos*. Reciprocity seems a necessary condition to define *philia* as a relationship between a friend and the object he loves, which is good and beneficial. The lack of reciprocity detaches the lover (or friend) from the object he loves. As discussed in the next passage, the philosopher loves wisdom because he benefits from it and so he finds reciprocation for his love.<sup>300</sup>

The dialogue moves on to a different line of inquiry, now taken by Socrates and Lysis. By invoking poetic wisdom, Socrates considers whether friendship is between

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<sup>297</sup> See, for example, Robinson (1986), Nichols (2006) and Wolfsdorf (2007).

<sup>298</sup> The case of the non-reciprocal *philos* is dismissed at the end of this section on the basis that it admits the possibility that one can be an enemy to their friends and a friend to their enemies (213c2 ff.).

<sup>299</sup> Most significantly, Socrates does not explicitly dismiss the alternative of loving someone or something that does not love back or loving someone or something that is not an enemy, i.e. that does not hate. For further discussion on this, see Bolotin (1979, p. 118).

<sup>300</sup> See *Euthyd.* 288e1.

equals (214b3) or opposites (215e4-5).<sup>301</sup> Both alternatives are ruled out: the bad cannot be friends with the bad on the grounds of mutual destruction (214c3), the good cannot be friends with the good on grounds of self-sufficiency (215a6), and the good cannot be friends with the bad, since the bad ‘never enters into true friendship with either good or bad’ (214d6).<sup>302</sup> Socrates then introduces an intermediate type between the good and the bad: ‘the neither-good-nor-bad [τὸ μήτε ἀγαθὸν μήτε κακὸν]’ (216c2).<sup>303</sup> Importantly, the neither good nor bad is only friends to the good (217a1); the possibility of friendship with the bad and the like has already been discarded. Moreover, it is quite clear from Socrates’ argument (and following examples) that as friendship is understood in terms of benefit, the intermediate loves on the basis of need (cf. 215b1ff). To illustrate the case, Socrates gives first the example of a bodily disorder (217aff). A body, neither good nor bad, in the presence of something bad, i.e. sickness, desires medicine (beneficial and good) provided by the doctor. ‘So what is neither good nor bad becomes a friend of the good because of the presence of something bad’ (217b4-6). Importantly, the presence of evil, before turning the nature of the intermediate type into bad, prompts in it the desire of the good (217e8). In analogy with the body, Socrates introduces the case of the philosopher, who in the presence of evil (ignorance) loves and desires wisdom (*sophia*):

From this we may infer that those who are already wise no longer love wisdom [φιλοσοφεῖν], whether they are gods or men. Nor do those love it who are so ignorant that they are bad, for no bad and stupid man loves wisdom [κακὸν γὰρ καὶ ἀμαθῆ οὐδένα φιλοσοφεῖν]. There remain only those who have this bad thing, ignorance [ἄγνοιαν], but have not yet been made ignorant and stupid by it [ἀγνώμονες μηδὲ ἀμαθεῖς]. They are conscious of not knowing what they don’t know [ἀλλ’ ἔτι ἠγούμενοι μὴ εἰδέναι ἃ μὴ ἴσασιν]. The upshot is that those who are as yet neither good nor bad love wisdom

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<sup>301</sup> ‘But if “likeness” and “unlikeness” are not understood as perfect identity and absolute difference—and the writer of the *Lysis* can hardly be presumed to be oblivious of the most ordinary meaning of these terms—the antinomy disappears and both propositions can be affirmed without contradiction.’ (Versenyi 1975, p. 191). See also Hoerber (1959, pp. 22-23).

<sup>302</sup> The theory of ‘utility-love’ is discussed by Vlastos (1981).

<sup>303</sup> The doctrine of the intermediate state between good and bad is developed in the *Gorgias* (467e-468d) and is also mentioned in the *Euthydemus* (281d-e). Particularly in the *Gorgias*, the doctrine refers to means (actions and objects) and ends (good). The bottom line is that means are neither good nor bad by themselves, but with regard to their use and purpose. Reshotko (2000) argues that the difference in the *Lysis* is that Socrates mixes two different scales of values, one defined from the perspective of the subject and the other from the object. This is visible in the case of the body. Thus while for the person the body is neither good nor bad, for the body health is good. The case of wisdom is different: from the perspective of the person, wisdom is always good.

[φιλοσοφοῦσιν οἱ οὔτε ἀγαθοὶ οὔτε κακοί], while all those who are bad do not, and neither do those who are good (218a2-b3).

What is most significant about the analogy between health and wisdom is the way the presence and manifestation of evil is described. With the presence of a physical disease, the body desires health as long as the disease has not completely taken over the body. Likewise, with the presence of ignorance, the philosopher desires wisdom as long as ignorance is not complete.<sup>304</sup> Evil is needed to trigger love and desire, but its presence must not be integral to either the physical state of the body or the cognitive state of the philosopher.<sup>305</sup> ‘In every case something is good for and loved by someone because of some evil or deficiency in him, provided that this evil or deficiency is not so complete as to make him insensible of his own deficiency or otherwise incapable of improvement’ (Versenyi 1975, p. 189). In this regard, the case of the philosopher is particularly relevant. The philosopher possesses this bad thing, which is ignorance, but he is not in a complete state of ignorance. He knows something, namely that he does not know, which gives impulse to his search for wisdom. Not surprisingly, the description captures both Socratic ignorance and the state of *aporia*. Conversely, when the presence of ignorance is extended and complete, the host is unable to see the need for wisdom. ‘An example of that ignorance which masks its own appearance is the case of someone who regards himself as knowing everything, though he knows very little’ (Bolotin 1979, p. 153). The intermediate state between ignorance and wisdom characteristic of the philosopher is what enables inquiry; conversely, complete ignorance and wisdom prevent the very possibility of inquiry.<sup>306</sup> In this context, the opposition between *sophia* and *amathia* should not be taken to mean knowledge as opposed to lack of knowledge, as if acquired cumulatively, but more precisely knowledge as opposed to false opinion (cf. 2.3.1).

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<sup>304</sup> The case of the philosopher differs in one significant respect from the body example. While the body moves from a state of sickness (lack of health) to a state of health, the philosopher, to be a philosopher, persists in an intermediate state between ignorance and wisdom. As Reshotko states: ‘The philosopher, unlike the body, can only persist in a NGB [neither-good-nor-bad] state’ (2000, p. 260).<sup>304</sup> While both serve to show the intermediate state between evil and good, this is a constitutive state only for the philosopher.

<sup>305</sup> See Bolotin (1979, pp. 155-156) for an account of wisdom and time.

<sup>306</sup> This is at the basis of Meno’s paradox according to which a man cannot inquire either about what he knows or about what he does not know: ‘He cannot search for what he knows—since he knows it, there is no need to search—nor for what he does not know, for he does not know what to look for’ (80e3-5).

#### 4.4.2. The *Symposium*: the Philosopher as a Lover

The *Symposium* presents us with six speeches on the theme of love (*erōs*) delivered on the occasion of Agathon's dinner party. Eryximachus, one of the guests, exhorts the other guests to give an encomium of love, *erōs* (177d1). The first speaker is Phaedrus, followed by Pausanias, Eryximachus, Aristophanes, Agathon and Socrates. In his turn, Socrates recognises that he ignores the method (*tropos*) the speakers have been using in their speeches, for all of them have eulogised divine *erōs*. Socrates lays down a difference between a good speech and a speech of praise; as he sees it, praise commends the highest qualities regardless of truth (198e3). Socrates decides he is not going to make an encomium, but he is going to speak the truth (1199b1).<sup>307</sup>

Agathon, who has delivered a much-applauded speech (203cff.), is cross-examined by Socrates. This section is important as it allows Socrates to establish two conditions that form the basis of the argument that follows: (i) love has an object, i.e. *erōs* loves something; (ii) to love an object is to desire the object. Socrates' first move, when cross-examining Agathon, is to establish the relational nature of *erōs*: *erōs* is *erōs* 'of something' (199e6). Like 'father', 'brother', and 'mother', 'love' is a relational term. This is central for the articulation of Socrates' argument, as it defines the way *erōs* is conceptualised. 'The fact that *erōs* is relational is crucial for what follows, but Socrates' explanatory examples of "father" and "brother" also allow him to slip into taking *erōs* in ways that we would more naturally associate with an *erastēs*, that is, a person who embodies *erōs*, as a father embodies "fatherhood"' (Hunter 2004, p. 79). As Diotima will reveal, *erōs* incarnates the lover (*erastēs*) rather than the beloved (204c1). Socrates' second move aims to establish the relationship of love and its object: love desires (*epithumei*) the thing that is its object (200a4).<sup>308</sup> The importance of this lies in the structure of desire: as Socrates is set to prove, desire indicates the absence of the desired object. The desiring subject must have a desire for something that he lacks (200a9). As a consequence, if *erōs* is love

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<sup>307</sup> This claim is comparable to the one made in the *Apology* (17d2 ff.), where Socrates declares he is not familiar with the language of law courts, but that he will speak with the truth.

<sup>308</sup> The parity between love and desire is clear in Agathon's speech (197a7). Bury notes on the passage: 'Observe that the entire argument here is based on the identification of ἔρωος with ἐπιθυμία' (1909, p. 91).

of the beautiful (as Agathon has admitted; 201a3), and *erōs* loves what he lacks and does not have (201b1), then *erōs* is not beautiful, ‘and if good things are beautiful, *erōs* is not good either (201c1)’. As Price puts it: ‘In relation to its object, lacking is part of loving’ (1989, p. 20).<sup>309</sup> But even more significant for the present study, the relational aspect of love emphasises the importance of the object. Unlike a *sophos*, the case of a *philos* or an *erastēs* immediately prompts the question about the object loved.

Socrates’ speech invokes his own conversation with the priestess Diotima, an expert (*sophē*; 201d5) on love-matters (*ta erotika*). The question to discuss is what kind of being *erōs* is (201e1).<sup>310</sup> To describe the nature of *erōs*, Diotima claims that there is a state in between opposites: not strictly a permanent or fixed state, but rather an intermediate state of progression (cf. Hunter 2004, p. 84). Diotima explains the nature of *erōs* in terms of an intermediate state between mortality and immortality. While gods are happy and beautiful (*eudaimonas kai kalous*; 202c6), and consequently are in possession of happy and beautiful things (*tagatha kai ta kala kektemenous*; 202c10), *erōs*, from the very absence of beautiful and good things, desires them (202d2). Since he is not in possession of these things (*amoiros*; 202d5), he is not a god. *Erōs* is of an intermediate nature, between mortality and immortality. In the same way he lacks beauty and happiness, he lacks wisdom, and so he desires it. To the extent that *erōs* stands midway between ignorance and wisdom, he philosophises:

He is in between wisdom and ignorance as well. In fact, you see, none of the gods loves wisdom or wants to become *sophos* [θεῶν οὐδεὶς φιλοσοφεῖ οὐδ’ ἐπιθυμεῖ σοφὸς γενέσθαι]—for they are wise—and no one else who is wise already loves wisdom [οὐδ’ εἴ τις ἄλλος σοφός, οὐ φιλοσοφεῖ]; on the other hand, no one who is ignorant will love wisdom either or want to become wise [οὐδ’ αὖ οἱ ἀμαθεῖς φιλοσοφοῦσιν οὐδ’ ἐπιθυμοῦσι σοφοὶ γενέσθαι]. For what’s especially difficult about being ignorant [ἀμαθία] is that you are content with yourself, even though you’re neither beautiful and good nor intelligent [καλὸν κάγαθὸν μηδὲ φρόνιμον]. If you don’t think you need anything, of course you won’t want what you don’t think you need (204a1-7).

<sup>309</sup> ‘The inseparability of Love and its “object” becomes even more clear if we bear in mind that Love is a lack, for a lack cannot be present, that is, cannot be recognized and acknowledged as such, unless the very thing it is lacking is also “perceived” as such’ (Geier 2002, p. 12).

<sup>310</sup> Socrates follows here Agathon’s own proposed methodology (195a1), i.e. first to discuss the nature and character of *erōs* and then his power and works (*erga*).

The passage aims to explain the intermediate nature of *erōs* through a polarisation between two extreme cognitive states, wisdom and ignorance, both—as in the *Lysis*—preventing the possibility of philosophy or inquiry. As Geier asserts, ““God” and “man” become simply placeholders for two forms of nonphilosophizing, namely a wisdom that need not seek wisdom and a lack of understanding that also lacks awareness of this lack’ (2002, p. 107). A significant aspect, also addressed in the *Lysis*, is that ignorance alone does not guarantee the search for wisdom. The starting point in the search for wisdom is not the defective state of ignorance, but the desire to overcome the defective state of ignorance. Philosophising is here explained in terms of ‘wanting to become wise’ (*epithumein sophos genesthai*). In this context, the whole significance of *philosophein* depends on the force of the *phil(o)*-component: ‘the sense requires the translation “is a lover of knowledge”, not “is a lover of knowledge”; it is impossible to make the point in English by using the stem “philosoph-”’ (Dover 1980, p. 143). Indeed, emphasis is deliberately put on the active state of the lover, not on the object of love. Diotima realises Socrates’ previous misconception lies in assuming that *erōs* is all-beautiful: he was thinking of the object of love, the beloved, and not the lover: ‘the lovable is the beautiful, tender, perfect, and heaven-blest; but the lover if of a different type (204c4)’.

The mixed nature of *erōs* between mortal and immortal is explained from the opposite nature of his parents, the father being *Poros* (resource) and the mother *Penia* (poverty). As the myth narrates, in the banquet to celebrate the birth of Aphrodite, *Poros*, the son of *Mētis*, ‘cunning’ (203b3), lying by the side of *Penia*, conceived *Erōs*.<sup>311</sup> As the son of *Penia*, ‘he is ever poor, and far from tender and or beautiful (203c7)’; rather ‘he is hard and parched, shoeless and homeless (203d1)’, ‘true to his mother’s nature, he ever dwells with want’ (203d4). As the son of *Poros*, ‘he is brave, impetuous and high-strung, a famous hunter, always weaving some stratagem; desirous and competent of wisdom [φιλοσοφῶν] throughout life ensuing the truth; a master of jugglery, witchcraft, and artful speech [δεινὸς γόης καὶ φαρμακεὺς καὶ σοφιστής]’ (203d6-9). It is striking to see here that the state of wisdom attributed to *poros* is described in terms of sophistry, witchcraft and cunning. Over any moral qualification, *Poros* embodies resource at all levels, which

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<sup>311</sup> The allegorisation of *Mētis* as ‘the most wise [πλείστα θεῶν εἰδυῖαν]’ among gods and men appears in Hes. *Theog.* 887.

translates into manipulation and control of speech and other means. ‘The resources inherited from *Poros* are to be identified not with the possession of wisdom *Erōs* lacks and desires, but rather with an ability to scheme and find the means to procure that knowledge. [...] In virtue of his father, *Erōs* can find the means to procure the knowledge he realises he lacks’ (Sheffield 2006, p. 62). More importantly, *Poros* embodies lack of desire; being in possession of such knowledge, he does not need anything, while *penia* dwells in want.

#### 4.4.3. Love and Knowledge

Diotima’s fundamental doctrine of the existence of an intermediate state finds a paradigmatic case in knowledge. Indeed, the first example Diotima uses to illustrate the principle of a state between two extremes is *orthē doxa*, a state ‘between *sophia* and *amathia* [μεταξὺ σοφίας καὶ ἀμαθίας]’ (202a1).<sup>312</sup> The philosopher as a case-study of an intermediate state, which is neither ignorance nor wisdom or, to the same extent, both ignorance and wisdom, reveals his peculiar disposition towards learning and knowledge.

The spatial and hierarchical metaphor of the in-between is superseded by the eidetic understanding of *Erōs* as neither-nor: *Erōs* is neither the overcoming of need, nor the lack of awareness of need. It is awareness of need. That is, it is neither the perfection of knowledge in self-sufficient wisdom, nor an ignorance that is ignorant of its own condition. It is knowledge of ignorance (Berg 2010, p. 109).

As previously discussed, the philosopher is not described for the sake of the knowledge he possesses, but rather on account of the knowledge he lacks and the awareness of that lack. This rather negative presentation (in epistemic terms) of the philosopher translates into a positive presentation in terms of disposition. The fact that he is characterised as cognitively deficient emphasises his condition as a lover: he is yet not wise, but he is on the path to becoming wise. By contrast with a *sophos* (or someone who claims to be *sophos*), the philosopher is on the way to become wiser and also god-like. In the effort of becoming wiser, he is closer to the divine. This characterisation is radically different to that of the apparent *sophos* (cf. 2.6), who claims to be an expert and, being unaware of his own ignorance, remains

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<sup>312</sup> For *orthē doxa* cf. *Meno* 97a-99a.

oblivious of the gap between human and divine. Thus Plato characterises human *sophia*, i.e. Socrates' and the philosopher's *sophia*, as god-like because it pursues that ideal; by contrast, he characterises the conceit of *sophia* as divine (or super-human) because it undermines the boundaries between human and god (3.2). This is a lesson we get by the end of the *Phaedrus*. Phaedrus asks Socrates what name would a speech-writer pursuing the truth deserve: 'To call him *sophos*, Phaedrus, seems to me too much, and proper only for a god. To call him wisdom's lover—a *philosophos*—or something similar would fit him better and be more seemly' (278d3-6).

The desire for knowledge is not purely a symptom of lack; it is the first step towards possessing knowledge.<sup>313</sup> From the awareness of ignorance, the philosopher's desire grows as a driving force in the search for wisdom. Thus the philosopher is not in a fixed state between ignorance and wisdom; rather, he is moving from ignorance to wisdom. This movement of progression must not be understood quantitatively, as accumulation of knowledge, but qualitatively, as an ascent towards a higher form of understanding (cf. *Symp.* 210e1 ff). In this progression the object of desire moves from the perception of beautiful bodies to the idea of beauty. It must be clear that this is a description of *erōs* in general, and not exclusively of philosophical *erōs*. Diotima is describing the progressive movement of *erōs*, where knowledge of the idea of beauty is presented as the highest target, but there are no clear hierarchical distinctions among desires. It seems clear that the contemplation of the idea of beauty is driven by the same *erōs* triggered at the sight of beautiful bodies. Thus the difference would be only one of degree: 'the energy that carries the soul in this highest flight is the same that is manifested at lower levels in the instinct that perpetuates the race and in every form of worldly ambition (Cornford 1978, p. 128).<sup>314</sup> Ultimately, the acquisition of knowledge contains all the important elements

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<sup>313</sup> The question about the acquisition of knowledge becomes relevant when discussing the fertile nature of *erōs*, particularly regarding the way the soul begets through knowledge by replacing old with new (208a1). It is also crucial to explain the process of cognitive progression driven by *erōs*, which in the case of beauty moves gradually from the acquaintance of particular beautiful things to the contemplation of the idea of beauty (cf. 210b1 ff.). Not less significant, particularly considering the *Phaedo* and the *Phaedrus*, is the idea that, through love, the mortal nature partakes of immortality (207d1).

<sup>314</sup> One important aspect is that the philosopher is not distinctly described over other lovers as desiring agents. The idea of a hierarchy of desires does not play a role in this context. Every desire is a desire

in Plato's account of love, as it conveys the notion of lack, i.e. not having knowledge, the notion of possession, i.e. having knowledge, the notion of desire, i.e. wanting to know, the notion of gradual progression, i.e. becoming wiser.

#### **4.5. Philosophy as a Practice for Dying: the *Phaedo***

Thus far philosophy has been depicted as an on-going activity of pursuit driven by the desire to know. As such, it involves a movement from lack to possession of knowledge, i.e. a movement of cognitive progression. Philosophy is thus an activity by which it is possible to acquire knowledge.<sup>315</sup> On the other hand, the fact that philosophy is an on-going activity seems to imply a restriction on the possibility of possessing knowledge. Indeed, the desire persists inasmuch as the object is not attained. This is relevant because it makes us wonder whether we should think of the philosopher essentially as a lover (rather than a 'knower'), inasmuch as he can only desire, but not possess his object of desire. It is still unsettled whether this is an unsatisfied or rather unsatisfiable desire for an unattained or unattainable object.

The question of the philosopher's acquisition of knowledge is discussed in some detail in the *Phaedo* (64a-69e). Soon to face his own death, Socrates intends to defend (against Cebes' opinion) his statement that philosophers are willing to die (61c8). First of all, Socrates makes sure they all agree that death is 'the separation of the soul from the body' (64c2).<sup>316</sup> Socrates is now set to demonstrate that the philosopher ignores the body by dismissing all kinds of physical pleasures (food, drink, sex, ornaments). This will prove relevant to asserting the philosopher's advantage over other souls. Having recognised that the philosopher is not guided by the needs of the body, Socrates goes on to describe the philosopher's primary task: the acquisition of knowledge (*tēs phronēseōs ktēsis*; 65a9). As he declares, while our senses (mainly sight and hearing) cannot apprehend their object accurately, the soul, by pure reasoning (*logizesthai*; 65c2), captures its object clearly. In the search of

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for the good (205a6; 205e7). As Khan claims, *erōs* in the *Symposium* is rational desire for the good and beautiful (1996, p. 262).

<sup>315</sup> Philosophy is defined as acquisition of knowledge (*ktēsis epistēmēs*) in the *Euthyd.* 288d8.

<sup>316</sup> The problems arising from Socrates' definition are discussed at length by Gallop (1975) and Bostock (1986). The question about the immortality of the soul is, of course, crucial in the dialogue. At this point of the argument, what needs to be established, as Hackforth states, is the admission 'that we can properly think and speak of soul "apart" from the body' (1955, p. 44n1).

wisdom the body then becomes a hindrance, an obstacle. By dissociating from the body, the philosopher becomes closer to that purer state of knowledge, his soul being ahead of the rest.

Although closer to that pure state of knowledge, the embodied soul of the philosopher is still constrained by physical conditions and consequently is unable to contemplate the truth: ‘as long as we have a body and our soul is fused with such an evil we shall never adequately attain what we desire, which we affirm to be the truth’ (66b5-7). Only the disembodied soul is allowed to behold the truth.<sup>317</sup> In this context, the philosopher’s desire for knowledge is only satisfied after being separated from the body, i.e. dead. Socrates declares:

It really has been shown to us that, if we are ever to have pure knowledge [εἰ μέλλομέν ποτε καθαρῶς τι εἶσθαι], we must escape from the body and observe things in themselves with the soul by itself. It seems likely that we shall, only then, when we are dead, attain that which we desire and of which we claim to be lovers, namely, wisdom [οὐ ἐπιθυμοῦμέν τε καί φαμεν ἐρασταὶ εἶναι, φρονήσεως], as our argument shows, not while we live; for if it is impossible to attain any pure knowledge [καθαρῶς γινῶναι] with the body, then one of two things is true: either we can never attain knowledge or we can do so after death [ἢ οὐδαμοῦ ἔστιν κτήσασθαι τὸ εἰδέναι ἢ τελευτήσασιν] (66d7-e6).

It is worth drawing attention to the way Socrates presents the case of philosophers. As this and other passages show, Socrates refers to ‘we’ (*hēmin*), by which he implies ‘we philosophers’.<sup>318</sup> Socrates’ defence of the philosopher’s willingness to die ultimately proves that he is not afraid to die, the assumption being that he is a philosopher. The title *philosophos* is not being used lightly. Indeed, often in the text Socrates uses the qualification ‘serious’ and ‘real’.<sup>319</sup> At 67d7-8 Socrates asks: ‘It is only those who practice philosophy in the right way [μάλιστα καὶ μόνοι οἱ

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<sup>317</sup> Of course, the fact that only the disembodied soul can contemplate the truth does not imply that every disembodied soul can contemplate the truth. ‘Socrates says simply that he has spent his whole life practicing for death, but he does not mean that he has been practicing for what happens to all men when they die’ (Bostock 1986, p. 30). According to Bostock, there are two (compatible) views on the after-life of the soul in the *Phaedo*: one applies to the philosopher’s soul on the basis that pure reasoning is possible; another applies to ordinary souls on the basis that other activities persist into the disembodied state. The two views are, according to Bostock, reconciled by a religious doctrine taken from Orphics or Pythagoreans: ‘a doctrine of sin, purgatory, reincarnation, and eventual purification and release from ‘from the wheel of rebirth’ (1986, p. 29). Similarly, in the *Phaedrus*, the soul of the philosopher has a privileged status (248d3).

<sup>318</sup> See also 67b7.

<sup>319</sup> These considerations are for ‘serious philosophers’ (*gnēsios philosophois*; 66b2) or, what seems to be the same, ‘real lovers of learning’ (*orthos philomatheis*; 67b4).

φιλοσοφούντες ὀρθῶς], we say, who always most want to free the soul?’ Someone who philosophises in the right way is ready to die, for he knows that he will satisfy his lifelong desire to attain knowledge. Thus it would be odd for someone who desires pure knowledge to be afraid of death, when ‘they may hope to attain that for which they had yearned during their lifetime, that is, wisdom [ἤρῳν τυχεῖν—ἤρῳν δὲ φρονήσεως]’ (68a1-2). As those who happily depart from life in the belief that they will reencounter those whom they used to love, explains Socrates, ‘a true lover of wisdom [φρονήσεως δὲ ἄρα τις τῷ ὄντι ἐρῶν], who has a similar hope and knows that he will never find it to any extent except in Hades’ (68a7-b1) would be also ready to depart. It is important to notice that desire or love for wisdom is here described in terms of *eran* and *phronēsis*. More than an equation, the context seems to indicate a correlation between *phronēsis* and *sophia* justified by an explicative or descriptive purpose. As Burnet suggests: ‘The phrase φρονήσεως ἐραταί is an explication of the name φιλόσοφοι’ (1911, p. 66). This analysis of the name is explicative, but also normative. Someone who ‘really’ or ‘truly’ loves wisdom ought to behave in a certain way. The core of the argument is to explain why philosophers are willing to die.<sup>320</sup> Socrates’ justification of philosophers’ willingness lies in the fundamental characteristic by which a philosopher is identified as such: his love for knowledge. If philosophers love wisdom—as their name says they do—then they are willing to die since it is only after death, when the soul has separated from the body, that wisdom is attainable. The philosopher, by dissociating from the body, makes his life a dying process; by looking after the object akin to his soul, becomes closer to the knowledge of truth.

He concludes: ‘[o]ne must surely think so, my friend, if he is a true philosopher [ἐὰν τῷ ὄντι γε ἦ, ὃ ἐταίρε, φιλόσοφος], for he is firmly convinced that he will not find pure knowledge [φρονήσει] anywhere except there’ (68b2-4). The philosopher’s characteristic drive and desire for knowledge arises as a result of Socrates’ attempt to demonstrate that philosophers are not afraid of death. ‘Real’ philosophers, that is, those who really ‘love’ *sophia*, will not be afraid of death. By contrast, a man troubled by death proves to be a lover of the body (*philosōmatos*), which Socrates identifies with the lover of money (*philochrēmatos*) and the lover of honour

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<sup>320</sup> Fear of death is generally considered to be an unphilosophical trait. See e.g. *Rep.* VI 486b, and *Apol.* 29a.

(*philotimos*) (68b8).<sup>321</sup> Socrates' definition of the philosopher is thus shaped by epistemological and psychological elements. In the *Symposium*, Plato's philosophical *erōs* is comparable to any desire; in the *Phaedo* the philosopher's drive is asserted to be different and superior to the drives of the body. In this context, the philosopher is described over other lovers, e.g. the lover of the body, because the object he pursues, i.e. truth, is only to be attained by the intellectual means he cultivates. Of course, it must be considered that this is not a dialogue about the power of *erōs*, but about the immortality of the soul, which is demonstrated by asserting the essential difference between body and soul. Compared to bodily desires, for example, thirst and hunger, demanding immediate satisfaction, the philosopher makes his desire for knowledge a lifelong activity.

Significantly, the dialogue provides a relevant source to determine the nature of the *phil(o)*- component in consideration of the *sophia* component. For if *sophia* is an unattainable target, then the desire becomes an on-going activity of pursuit. *Sophia*'s divine quality explains the name and activity of the *philosophos*. *Sophia* becomes a guiding ideal; something we can only approximate to, closer to divine *sophia* in the *Apology* (cf. 3.3.3), a notion traceable back to Heraclitus (cf. 4.1.1). This notion will prove particularly relevant in the *Republic*, to be discussed in the next chapter. Like the *Phaedo*, the *Republic* characterises the philosopher by the object he pursues, i.e. true knowledge of the Form; unlike the *Phaedo*, the philosopher is presented as having access to this knowledge while he lives.

#### 4.6. Conclusion

The philosopher in Plato is characterised as a 'lover of wisdom'. But the narrative of love Plato creates is novel and distinct. As compared to earlier accounts, where the label adjusts to different purposes, *philosophia* in Plato is conceptualised by reference to the meaning of each of its components. The name becomes an explanation of the philosopher's characteristic activity and cognitive disposition. The name also becomes a normative standard, as it prescribes the philosopher's 'correct' disposition toward the object loved. Thus the *phil(o)*- component, conceptualised in terms of

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<sup>321</sup> As in *Rep.* IX 580d ff.

*philia* and *erōs*, establishes the philosopher's mental and moral disposition to acquire the object he loves. The characterisation of the philosopher as a lover allows Plato to distinguish philosophers from those in a state of ignorance, mostly those who think themselves wise, and from the wise, those who are in possession of knowledge. Midway between ignorance and wisdom, the *philosophos* moves from ignorance to wisdom by having the right cognitive disposition. In general, the element of love determines the philosopher's ascent or epistemological progress towards truth. This asserts philosophers over other lovers because the object they pursue is always good. As we shall see in the next chapter, the *Republic* also describes the philosopher as a lover, although the possibility of becoming a *sophos* is opened up. But what distinguishes the philosopher from other experts and intellectuals is his psychological, moral and cognitive disposition to pursue truth. Contrary to public perception, this is what ultimately defines the philosopher's political worth.

## CHAPTER 5: THE *REPUBLIC*

When it comes to defining the nature and role of the philosopher in Plato, the *Republic* offers the most exhaustive account. The discussion arises in book V as a way to assess the possibility of a just state. The ideal form of government Socrates describes is possible to realise only if there is a philosopher-king (473c11). Such an ambitious project requires a lengthy and detailed examination of the particular nature and nurture of the philosopher. This examination reveals the philosopher's exceptional nature. Interestingly, what is most exceptional and distinctive about him is that he is a lover, but of a particular kind, a lover of Forms. More than once in the *Republic* the philosopher's nature is defined and asserted in opposition to other lovers'; where one might as well have expected a rivalry with sophists or rhetoricians, the philosopher is compared with lovers of sights and sounds, lovers of money and lovers of honour.<sup>322</sup> This adds an interesting component to my investigation. The fact that the philosopher is distinctively characterised by the element of love connects the *Republic* to the dialogues discussed in the previous chapter. With the addition of the metaphysics as allowing the philosopher to be more accurately defined in terms of the specific object of his love and his particular mode of loving, there is a sense of continuity across these dialogues shaping the identity of the philosopher. The philosopher's desire to seek knowledge triggered by the awareness of his ignorance as described in the *Lysis* and the *Symposium* is not essentially different from the philosopher's love, triggered as it is by the recognition and discernment of true knowledge in the *Republic*. One might even claim that it is a matter of emphasis. In the *Republic*, Plato seems to favour a characterisation of the philosopher's knowledge in positive terms; as opposed to other lovers, the philosopher has the psychological make-up and the cognitive ability to assess the object he desires and to pursue it. However, the *Republic* stands apart from other accounts on one significant point. Particularly as compared with the *Phaedo*, the *Republic* opens up the possibility for the *philosophos* to become a *sophos*, i.e. to acquire true knowledge. This bears on the analysis, as it presents us with two different versions of the philosopher: in one he is in search of knowledge and in the other he is in possession of it. But as will be shown, the philosopher's nature is more

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<sup>322</sup> Of course, it is entirely possible that these are alternative names to designate rhetorician and sophists, among others.

accurately defined by the love he has towards knowledge than by the possession of it. Ultimately, what makes a philosopher is his disposition and active commitment to seeking truth.

Plato, in order to legitimate his own ideas of philosophy, is concerned with (re)defining *philosophia*, distinguishing philosophers from non-philosophers and rehabilitating the public image of philosophy and the philosopher. In what follows, I will introduce some relevant aspects shaping the definition of the philosopher as a lover in the *Republic*. This will lead us to discuss the different strands operating in the *Republic*, which explain why the dialogue deals with more than one version of the philosopher. Having established that someone who is by nature a philosopher is distinctively defined as a kind of lover, we will proceed to consider how he is different from and better than other lovers. To this end, I will address book IX, where the philosopher's desire for knowledge is explained from his psychological make-up and also book V, accounting for the philosopher's cognitive capacity to assess the object of his love. Lastly, I will take into account book VI, where the philosopher is defended from the voice of public opinion by asserting his intellectual and moral worth.

### **5.1. The Philosopher as a Lover (Books V, VI and IX)**

The depiction of the philosopher as a lover is relevant in Books V, VI and IX.<sup>323</sup> Indeed, almost every attempt at definition takes into consideration this basic trait, namely that the *philosophos* is a lover. In this context, Plato invokes all the relevant terminology associated with love and desire in the *Lysis* and the *Symposium*. In book V, the philosopher is said to love (*philein*) something (474c8) and, like other lovers, to desire (*epithumein*) the whole of the object of his pursuit, i.e. wisdom (475b8). Again, in book VI, he is said to be in love (*eran*) with the knowledge of the eternal

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<sup>323</sup> Weiss (2012) argues that the absence of intellectual *erōs* in *Republic* VII is explained by a change of paradigm: from the philosopher by nature to the philosopher by design. Whereas in book V and VI the philosopher is naturally inclined to pursue truth, in book VII the philosopher is forced to learn. 'Unlike the philosophers of book 6, those of book 7 are driven to philosophic heights, not by their own *erōs*, but involuntarily, by the coercive measures taken by the founders of Callipolis' (2012, p. 70).

(485b1) and to desire the whole of it (485b5). Further, the *philosophos* is said to desire (*epithumein*) the pleasures of the soul (485d10).

Essential to the purpose of defining the philosopher as a lover is to distinguish him from other lovers, particularly from lovers of sights and sounds (476a9), lovers of the body (485d10), lovers of honour and lovers of money (485e3; 580d10 ff.). The philosopher is a lover, like many other lovers, but the specific kind of love by which he is driven is defined by the object of his pursuit, knowledge, and a particular kind of knowledge, knowledge of the Forms. 'It is an implicit aim of all P.s' works to give a meaning to the idea of philosophy, but the final section of bk. 5 (with its sequel in bks. 6-7) faces the issue directly: it does so by equating the wisdom, *sophia*, that is the object of the philosopher's love, with a special kind of knowledge' (Halliwell 1993, p. 201).

As presented in the *Lysis* and the *Symposium*, the *philosophos*, as a *philos*, is in an intermediate state, between ignorance and wisdom; he desires wisdom because he does not possess it. As presented in the *Phaedo*, the philosopher makes his desire for wisdom a lifelong activity; because *sophia* is not humanly attainable, he persists in his desire to attain knowledge until he dies. This picture of the philosopher, as standing midway between ignorance and wisdom, is presented in a different light in the *Republic*. The definition of the philosopher as a lover emphasises his proximity to knowledge rather than to ignorance. Indeed, the philosopher is no longer defined as a 'lover of wisdom' inasmuch as he lacks wisdom; instead, he is positively defined as a 'lover of *wisdom*' inasmuch as he pursues a certain kind of knowledge: knowledge of the Forms, which is said to be true, eternal and universal. To be sure, this is what distinguishes him from other lovers in books V, VI and IX. In the *Republic* Plato seems to privilege a characterisation of the true philosopher in positive epistemological terms. As Keyt asserts:

The true philosophers of the *Republic* are in fact not philosophers at all, as Diotima explains the concept in the *Symposium*. Repeating a lesson he says he learned from Diotima, Socrates claims that one desires, or loves, not what one has, but what one lacks. From this premise Diotima in her speech infers that no

one who is wise, who is *sophos*, is a lover of wisdom, a *philosophos* (2006, p. 199).<sup>324</sup>

However, there is one significant aspect of Diotima's description that is also captured by Plato's idea of desire and love in the *Republic*: the philosopher's disposition to acquire knowledge. Particularly in *Republic* V, Plato explores the aspect of desire connected with passion and willingness in a way that reveals the philosopher's strong commitment to truth and knowledge. As will be shown, he *believes* there is such knowledge as the knowledge of the one and he is willing and able to pursue it.

To understand the particular approach to the meaning of philosophy and the philosopher in the *Republic* it is worth looking at a passage in book II. In discussing the basic traits defining the character of the guardian, namely gentleness, high-spiritedness and love of wisdom (*philosophia*)—a combination that in principle seems impossible (375c6)—Socrates introduces the example of a dog.<sup>325</sup> To prove that the combination of these traits is possible, he shows that dogs are generally gentle to their friends and harsh to their enemies and that, while the presence of an unknown person angers them, they embrace (*aspazētai*) the presence of an acquaintance (*gnōrimon*) (376a6). According to Socrates, the kindness it shows to its friends is a sign of love for knowledge, as it 'it judges [διακρίνει] anything it sees to be either a friend or an enemy [φίλην καὶ ἐχθρὸν], on no other basis than that it knows [καταμαθεῖν] the one and doesn't know [ἀγνοῆσαι] the other' (376b3-6). The love or sympathy that the dog manifests towards someone supposes the recognition and identification of that person as a friend. 'Then, may we confidently assume in the case of a human being, too, that if he is to be gentle toward his own and those he knows [πρὸς τοὺς οἰκείους καὶ γνωρίμους], he must be a lover of learning and wisdom [φιλόσοφον καὶ φιλομαθῆ]?' (376b11-c2).<sup>326</sup> At first sight, this would mean that the philosopher only pursues that which he knows, which seems absurd. As Peterson observes: 'Love of the familiar or known is different

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<sup>324</sup> Keyt concludes: 'There are thus two concepts of philosophy in Plato: the love of wisdom of the *Symposium*, which we might dub "daimonic" philosophy, and the wisdom of the *Republic* that comes with knowledge of the good, which we might call "godlike" philosophy' (2006, p. 199).

<sup>325</sup> The image of the philosopher-dog also arises in the *Sophist* (231a6) in contrast with the sophist-wolf (cf. 7.3).

<sup>326</sup> Socrates' example of the dog only shows that there is a natural love for things known and not for knowledge.

from love of learning. The latter requires receptivity to the currently unfamiliar’ (2011, p. 123). But the problem only arises if we understand familiar (*gnōrimon*) as ‘things already learned’, when it can also express acquaintance. As we shall see, the philosopher’s disposition to pursue Forms is given by a sense of familiarity with this object: he believes it is true, good and beneficial.

This rather broad definition of the philosophical nature is useful to understand the narrower and more precise sense in which true philosophers are described later on in book V. Just as the dog is able to show love to its friends from the experience of being acquainted with them, the philosopher embraces true knowledge by having recognised it and distinguished it from false opinion. In principle, this notion of philosophical love would be consistent with Diotima’s account in the *Symposium*: the philosopher’s impulse to pursue truth allows him to move from the perception of beautiful things to the contemplation of beauty in itself.<sup>327</sup> As noted above, love, *erōs* and *epithumia*, are driving forces in the search for wisdom. Along with the negative sense of lack that the notion of love carries, there is a positive sense of moral and epistemological progress whereby the lover becomes closer to divine *sophia*. In book VI, the philosopher is said to become god-like inasmuch as he studies the things that are: ‘the philosopher, by consorting with what is ordered and divine [κόσμιός τε καὶ θεῖος] and despite all the slanders around that say otherwise, himself becomes as divine and ordered as a human being can [εἰς τὸ δυνατὸν ἀνθρώπῳ γίγνεται]’ (500c9-d1).

## 5.2. Is the *Philosophos* a *Sophos*?

At the end of book V Socrates concludes that philosophers know (*gignōskein*) and do not merely opine (*doxazein*) (479e7). Similarly, in book VI, he identifies philosophers as ‘those who know [τοὺς ἐγνωκότας] each thing that is’ (484d5-6). So the question arises whether the philosopher is more accurately described as

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<sup>327</sup> Nussbaum claims that Diotima’s description of the lover’s ascent is faithfully represented in the *Republic*: ‘The lover’s final contemplative activity meets the *Republic*’s standards of true value in every way. [...] It is a stable activity, giving continuous expression to our truth-loving and creative nature; and one reason why it can be so stable is that it addresses itself to an unvarying and immortal object’ (2001, p. 182).

someone who is in the process of possessing knowledge or as someone already possessing knowledge.

The shift between the characterisation of the philosopher as a lover of *sophia* and as a *sophos* in the *Republic* can be partly explained by its political strand. The possibility of an ideal state ruled by a philosopher-king maximises the possibility of philosophical knowledge. Provided that the hypothetical situation can be realised, the philosopher should prove to be in possession of the knowledge that makes him an eligible candidate to run the state. As Halliwell observes, ‘in *Phaedo*, for example, knowledge of ‘forms’ is said to be attainable only after death, a theme which is integral to the work’s theme of immortality. In *Rep.* 5-7, that claim does not figure since it would be of no use in justifying the need for philosophers-rulers’ (1993, p. 202). Thus, in assessing the possibility of the philosopher’s political and educational leadership in society, his characteristic zeal or enthusiasm to pursue wisdom does not seem sufficient. ‘Suppose the city were run by a bunch of mere learners, of genuine truth-lovers who do not yet know very much. Such rulers will, out of ignorance, frequently make wrong decisions. Wrong decisions create injustice and instability. A city run by such people cannot be the best city; it cannot be Callipolis’ (Morrison 2007, p. 238).

But what is more important, given the political agenda of the *Republic*, is that Plato offers two versions of the philosopher: the philosopher and the philosopher-king. There is a philosophical nature that, because of the intellectual and moral qualities with which it is endowed, is most fitted to rule, but in order to rule, needs to be informed by a particular programme of education. In this regard it is useful to consider Hatzistavrou’s (2006) distinction within the notion of *phusis*. According to Hatzistavrou, when Plato refers to the *phusis* of the philosopher-king, he does it in two different senses: (i) a particular person’s natural ability (*nature*<sub>1</sub>); (ii) a particular person’s developed personality through education (*nature*<sub>2</sub>). The former marks the philosophical nature; the latter, the nature of the philosopher-king. In a more extreme interpretation, Roslyn Weiss (2012) has proposed that there are two irreconcilable paradigms of the philosopher in the *Republic*: the ‘philosopher by nature’ and the ‘philosopher by design’. The first paradigm fits the philosopher’s characterisation in

book VI (until 502c), the innate philosopher who rules by chance; the second belongs to the characterisation of book VII, the formed philosopher, constrained to learn and rule.

We have seen that for philosophers of the first paradigm, those who have a true philosophic nature, Socrates creates no scripted (or coercive) educational program; instead, it is hoped that (by chance-492a, 501d) they will be “perfected by age and education”. It is only for Callipolis’s philosopher-rulers that an educational curriculum must be planned to the last detail (2012, p. 43).<sup>328</sup>

Of course, this does not mean that the philosopher, born a philosopher, remains a philosopher in spite of his education. As will be shown, he might become a non-philosopher if corrupted by the wrong kind of instruction.<sup>329</sup> Importantly, favoured by the best possible conditions, the philosopher will be able to acquire knowledge of the Forms: ‘those who are able to grasp [δυνάμενοι ἐφάπτεσθαι] what is always the same in all respects are philosophers’ (484b3-5). The philosopher’s natural disposition and capacity to acquire *epistēmē* does not entail that he already possesses this knowledge; only that he is able and willing to pursue it. As Lane observes, ‘the natural virtues do not presuppose or require that the natural philosopher has already gained the knowledge that she or he seeks’ (Lane 2007, p. 45).

In general, it is safe to establish that the philosopher’s nature is defined by (i) love of true knowledge and (ii) intellectual and moral virtues, whereas the philosopher-king needs to possess (i) philosopher’s nature and (ii) specific training and knowledge. In what follows, I will address two significant aspects shaping the philosopher’s nature: the philosopher’s psychological make-up and his cognitive disposition to find the truth.

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<sup>328</sup> Weiss’ basic claim seems to be justified by the text, for it is clear that Plato alters the focus of his characterisation of the philosopher from book VI to book VII. But it is important to consider that the change of focus does not only respond to the distinction between nature and education. This would challenge the established principle whereby the philosopher-king is defined by both nature and education. It is also important to take into account the difference between a possible scenario, within which the ideal of Callipolis is drawn, and the probable or likely scenario, where the philosopher is considered in the context of existent polities. In book VI, when Plato describes the philosopher as the ideal ruler, he considers the possibility; when he describes the philosopher in his lack of political power, he is considering the existent conditions. When moving towards book VII, Plato sets out to provide the conditions to make the project of the philosopher-king possible, and so he creates a programme of education that guarantees the alliance between political power and philosophy.

<sup>329</sup> As a result, in the *Republic* we can make a distinction between the disposition of a developing philosopher and the epistemic state of a successful one.

### 5.3. The Psychological Make-up of the Philosopher

The philosopher's natural disposition to love knowledge distinguishes him from lovers of sights and sounds, lovers of the body, lovers of honour and lovers of money. The advantageous position of the philosopher as a desiring agent is explicitly discussed in two passages of the *Republic*, both of which consider his psychological pre-disposition to love and the rational grasp of the value of the object. The first of these passages appears at the beginning of book VI when Glaucon and Socrates reassess the philosopher's natural qualities in order to establish his suitability to run the state. In doing this, Socrates invokes a principle to understand the philosopher's tendency to love some objects rather than others. This principle, called by Lane (2007) 'the hydraulic model', establishes the following: 'when in a man the desires [ἐπιθυμῖαι] incline strongly to any one thing, they are weakened for other things. It is as if the stream had been diverted into another channel' (485d6-8). In the case of the philosopher this translates into a love of the pleasures of the soul over those of the body (485d10).<sup>330</sup> But while the hydraulic model describes the mechanics of desire applying to every desiring agent, it does not account for the philosopher's attachment to a particular object, namely the pleasures of the soul. The hydraulic effect satisfactorily explains why the philosopher's desire focuses on one thing at the expense of another, but not why it flows in that direction in particular. This is significant, especially considering that from here, Socrates is allowed to conclude that the philosopher, unlike others, is temperate (*sōphrōn*), since he does not take seriously the things for the sake of money (485e3); and that his soul 'is always reaching out [ἐπορεύεσθαι] to grasp everything both human and divine as a whole' (486a5-6); that he is not afraid of death, because he is 'a thinker high-minded [ὑπάρχει διανοίᾳ μεγαλοπρέπεια] enough to study all time and all being' (486a8-9), all of which suggests that he is not driven passively towards his object of desire, but that he is knowingly and deliberately pursuing it. 'The natural philosophers become aware of what it is they love, and reflect on why, and although they do not

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<sup>330</sup> The desire or love for learning concerns the soul exclusively. Consequently, the emergence of other desires, particularly those that concern the body and not the soul, would reduce the desire for learning. 'In one whose desires "set strongly" towards one all-absorbing object, the channels of the body must run dry' (Nettleship 1935, p. 24).

yet have knowledge, they endorse the value of the truth which is the object of their loving pursuit' (Lane 2007, p. 51).

The philosopher's pre-eminence as a lover is more clearly established in Book IX. Socrates picks up the thread of book II by restating one of his most controversial claims: the just man is happier than the unjust man. Having demonstrated that the tyrant is most wretched, he introduces another reason to defend his claim: the life of the just man finds more pleasure. As part of the argument, Socrates invokes the theory of the tripartite structure of the soul discussed in book IV (439d5), according to which there is a rational part (*logistikon*), an appetitive part (*alogistikon*, *epithumetikon*) and a high-spirited part (*thumos*).<sup>331</sup> To each of these three parts correspond three kinds of pleasure (*hēdonē*) and three appetites. The appetitive part loves money, the high-spirited part loves honour and the rational part loves knowledge. Depending on which part of the soul rules or dominates, we find three classes of men: the lover of money or gain, the lover of honour and the lover of wisdom (*philokerdēs* or *philochrēmatos*; *philonikos* or *philotimos*; *philomathēs* or *philosophos*). The soul of the *philosophos*, being governed by the rational part, loves the knowledge of truth. In this account the rational make-up of the philosopher accounts for his love for knowledge rather than honour and money, but it cannot satisfactorily assert the superiority of the philosophical life in terms of happiness and pleasure. As Socrates himself admits, each of these lovers regards his object as the best (581c8). The case of the *philochrēmatos* and *philotimos* are not cases of 'blind drives'; just as the philosopher does, they pursue their objects in the belief that they are good, which, of course, raises the question of whether and why the philosopher's object of love provides more pleasure.

Then since there's a dispute between the different forms of pleasure and between the lives themselves, not about which way of living is finer or more

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<sup>331</sup> Importantly, this provides a new context in which to assess the value of *erōs* and *epithumia* as they are more than once associated with the lowest appetites. 'The tripartite division relegates *erōs* to the lowest part of the soul, lumping *erōs* together with other irrational desires, such as hunger and thirst (439d). All these desires, including *erōs*, are said to be deaf to reason, unruly until policed by *thumos*, that is, the proud irascible "spirited" part (which can at least listen to reason). But in the erotic dialogues, and elsewhere in the *Republic* itself, reason and *erōs* have a synergistic relationship. Most mysterious of all is the fact that elsewhere in the Platonic corpus, Socrates the exemplary philosopher is characterised as *erōs* incarnate (*Thaet.* 169c). By contrast *erōs* is so corrupting in the *Republic*, Book IX, that the tyrannical man is characterised as *erōs* incarnate.' (Ludwig 2007, p. 203).

shameful [πρὸς τὸ κάλλιον καὶ αἴσχιον], or better or worse [τὸ χεῖρον καὶ ἄμεινον], but about which is more pleasant and less painful [τὸ ἥδιον καὶ ἀλυπότερον], how are we to know which of them is speaking most truly [ἀληθέστατα]?’ (581e6-582a2).

Socrates introduces three criteria to prove that the life of the *philosophos* is more pleasurable: experience, intelligence and discussion (*empeiria*, *phronēsis*, *logos*; 582a5). The pleasure of the philosopher comprehends and surpasses the other two.<sup>332</sup> On this passage Sheffield asserts: ‘The point, I take it, is that those who indulge the lower parts of the soul share some similar traits—from an epistemological point of view. They [lovers of money and honour] are both those who fail to develop their reason properly and are concern with appearances rather than reality’ (2006, p. 235). This means that each part of the soul has a grasp of its own good, but only the rational part, that is, the part that governs the soul of the philosopher, has a conception of what is truly good.

#### **5.4. The Philosopher’s Cognitive Capacity: Philosophers and Lovers of Sights and Sounds**

To have a more complete account of the advantage of the philosopher over other lovers, it is worth looking at Book V. With the purpose of defining who the philosophers are and distinguishing them from other lovers of learning, i.e. lovers of sights and sounds, the *philosophoi* are characterised by both a dispositional and an epistemic component. Unlike lovers of sights and sounds, the philosopher believes (*hēgeomai*, *nomizo*) that there is something beyond appearances. Only the philosopher sees the difference between the multiple and the one, which makes him both willing and able to find something that is universal and stable. Ultimately, the philosopher’s pre-disposition towards finding the truth, the way he chooses to see reality, is what gives impulse to acquire *epistēmē*.

In Book V, the question of who the philosopher is immediately related to the question of what the philosopher loves. ‘He focuses on the etymology of *philosophos*, a compound of *philia*, meaning love or friendship, and *sophia*, meaning

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<sup>332</sup> Objections to this argument are addressed and discussed by Reeve (1988, pp. 145-153).

wisdom. Hence, the philosopher is literally the “lover of wisdom” (Sheppard 2009, p. 88). And as a lover, a second—less obvious—assumption arises, namely that he loves ‘all of it’. In a general sense, this means that he desires (*epithumein*) the whole of the object he loves (*pantos tou eidous*) and not a part of it (475b5).<sup>333</sup> Just like the lover of adolescents, the lover of honour and the lover of wine find no excuse to restrain or limit their desire, the lover of wisdom desires all wisdom (475b7). As in the *Symposium* and the *Lysis*, the philosopher’s desire is comparable to other forms of desire that are deprived of an intellectual or a rational component.<sup>334</sup> To make the explanation clearer, Socrates illustrates the case by producing the first definition of *philosophos*: ‘the one who readily and willingly tries all kinds of learning [παντὸς μαθήματος], who turns gladly to learning and is insatiable for it [ἐπὶ τὸ μανθάνειν ἰόντα καὶ ἀπλήστως ἔχοντα]’ (475c6-7).

The lover of wisdom (*philosophos*) is firstly characterised as a lover of learning (*philomathēs*) (475c2) and, as such, he is said to pursue every branch of knowledge (*pantos mathēmatos*). Interestingly, this first attempt at definition depicts the philosopher as a *polumathēs*; being keen to learn, he desires to learn everything.<sup>335</sup> But this does not seem to satisfy the demand for a trait that belongs exclusively to philosophers. As Glaucon observes (475d2), unless Socrates is willing to include ‘lovers of sights’ (*philothēamones*) and ‘lovers of sounds’ (*philēkooi*) under the title of *philosophos*, this definition is too general.<sup>336</sup> Of course this does not mean that the

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<sup>333</sup> This needs an explanation, for one might think that someone who loves wine might love some wine rather than another. But as Halliwell (1993, p. 203) asserts, the text is not describing someone who loves, but the dispositional character of a ‘lover’, that is, someone who has a tendency to love this class of things. In a greater or lesser degree, the tendency can be described pathologically as an obsession or even an addiction (as it is the case of *phil-* in Aristophanes’ *Wasps* (76); cf. 4.1). The point to show is that in that desire (or compulsion), there is no qualification or discrimination. Thus we might well think that the lover of wisdom loves wisdom the way an alcoholic loves drinks: they love ‘all of it’.

<sup>334</sup> The apparent rationality of philosophers is in some sense comparable with an irrational appetite. ‘In some relevant respect the drive to learn resembles the drive for bodily pleasure, for money, or for fame. Otherwise it wouldn’t make sense to speak of “the same energy” moving from one to the other. So Socrates calls the philosopher’s fondness for learning erotic. Philosophers *erōsin* “are in love with” a kind of learning (485b) and their attachment to it is *epithumia* “desire”, the word that the *Republic* originally reserves for the soul’s least rational drives (485d; 475b; 499b)’ (Pappas 1995, p. 143).

<sup>335</sup> Annas asserts: ‘Glaucon misinterprets this to mean that the philosopher will be a sort of omnivore of learning, as though he were someone who wants to know all about physics and entomology and the history of the Holy Roman Empire’ (1981, p. 194).

<sup>336</sup> The question about the identity of ‘the lovers of sights and sounds’ remains open. Some critics suggest that these might be identified with the sophists, but there is no evidence to make such a claim. It seems more like a broad category, which would include poets, sophists, politicians and rhetoricians,

description is incorrect, only that it is incomplete. Indeed, the love of learning is a characteristic that philosophers and lovers of sights and sounds share. Although the latter will prove to love different objects of learning, Socrates explicitly admits that ‘they are like philosophers [ὁμοίους μὲν φιλοσόφοις]’ (475e2). Socrates does not state in which specific sense they are alike, but it seems safe to assume that it is because of their keenness or desire to learn (*chairontes katamanthanein*; 475d3). It is noteworthy that this notion of *philosophos* would be in line with some of the early pre-Platonic notions, i.e. ‘broadly cultured’ or ‘keen to learn’ identified in chapter 4 (cf. 4.1).

To avoid any potential confusion, Glaucon now qualifies the question: he asks who are the ‘true’ (*alēthinous*) philosophers (475e3). A second attempt at definition results: ‘those who love the sight of truth [Τοὺς τῆς ἀληθείας φιλοθεάμονας]’ (475e4). The element of love persists in the definition, but now the object is specifically qualified as truth. Interestingly, this more specific definition seems to be in line with the Pythagorean account given by Heraclides, where the philosopher is defined as a spectator of truth (cf. 4.1). This jump from one general to another more specific definition may bear witness to Plato’s attempt to redefine the notion by dissociating it from a more traditional usage.

Socrates’ argument (from 476a9 onwards) aims to describe how the distinction between the one in itself and the multiple is relevant to discriminate the lover of sights and sounds from the lover of wisdom. The lovers of sights and sound are said to embrace (*aspazontai*) the many manifestations of beauty, such as tones, colours, and other artistic expressions, while they are intellectually incapable of perceiving (*idein*) and embracing (*aspazesthai*) beauty in itself.<sup>337</sup>

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all of which—as Socrates intends to demonstrate—will qualify as ‘lovers of opinion’. ‘Characterised as “lovers of sights and sounds,” they are in effect cultured individuals who seek to fill their lives with all manner of beautiful things, yet lack any understanding of the unitary essence of beauty, an essence that Platonically informed readers will equate with the Form of beauty, or “the Beautiful itself”’ (Sedley 2007, p. 257).

<sup>337</sup> The reflexive pronoun *autos*, ‘in itself’ or ‘by itself’, has been used twice to establish a contrast with the multiple. Halliwell suggests a translation ‘universal’ as it captures the contrast with both ‘particular’ and ‘multiple’. Annas, on the other hand, argues against the conception of universality. ‘Theories of universals are theories about the application of every general term, whereas this argument produces Forms for only a restricted range. Analogously, objects of belief are not simply particulars; as we have seen Plato’s considerations about knowledge would allow particulars to be objects of knowledge in some respects’ (1981, p. 210).

Thus far, Socrates has not asserted that the cognitive state of the philosopher, here depicted as a ‘waking state’ as opposed to dreaming, entails the knowledge of the Form of beauty, but rather the recognition of the difference between beauty in itself and beautiful things.<sup>338</sup> He ‘believes’ (*hēgeomai*) in the reality of beauty and consequently he is able to pursue it. By contrast, the lovers of sights and sounds do not consider (*nomizō*) the difference between beauty and beautiful things and consequently live in a state of deception. Although none of the verbs (*hēgeomai*, *nomizō*) suggests knowledge in a strong sense—these are weaker forms of cognition, such as the English ‘consider’, ‘hold’, ‘think’, ‘believe’, the distinction is still relevant in cognitive terms. To know the difference between multiple manifestations of *f* and *f* in itself already implies a level of acquaintance with Forms, i.e. reality. However, the argument is articulated to finally prove that philosophers possess knowledge and non-philosophers do not. ‘The nonphilosophers do not know what they are missing, since they have never themselves distinguished Forms from their sensible instances. Nevertheless, the formal argument is meant to be sufficient to persuade them that they do not after all possess knowledge’ (Sedley 2007, p. 260). One underlying aspect for the characterisation of the philosopher is the possession of knowledge. ‘So we’d be right to call his thought knowledge, since he knows [τὴν διάνοιαν ὡς γιγνώσκοντος γνώμην], but we should call the other person’s thought opinion, since he opines [τοῦ δὲ δόξαν ὡς δοξάζοντος;]?’ (476d5-6).<sup>339</sup> Plato

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<sup>338</sup> See 476c9. The analogy between being asleep and awake has epistemological significance. ‘Those familiar features of dream-consciousness which Plato seems in various passages to be drawing upon in attempting to provide a model, a conceptual analogy, for some subject’s epistemological condition are: its insecurity, or instability; its elements of uncertainty or doubtfulness; its unclarity; its poverty with regard to theoretical, critical, or disciplined attention to matters of language, truth, and logic; its occasionally genuine but transmogrified grasp of truth; its characteristically being deceived, systematically, with regard to its own true state; its potential for becoming aware of its own true state; and its potential receptiveness to the intrusion of waking consciousness, either suddenly, or by degrees’ (Tigner 1970, p. 211).

<sup>339</sup> In the scholarly tradition, this section (from 476d5 to 480a) has raised two related controversies: one regarding the theory of the ‘two worlds’ and the other regarding the multiple senses the verb ‘to be’ allows in Greek. The advocates for a theory of ‘two worlds’ generally argue that the two faculties of the mind, opinion and knowledge, correspond to two worlds, the world of appearances (sensible) and the world of Forms (intelligible). ‘Corresponding to the two worlds, the mind has two faculties: knowledge of the real and belief in appearances’ (Cornford 1941, p. 175). A full list of supporters of this theory is provided by Fine (2003, p. 66). This position can be problematic, mostly because ‘if items of knowledge can never be objects of belief, and vice versa, then the philosopher will live in a different cognitive world from other people’ (Annas 1981, p. 193). Annas (1981) and, more recently, Fine (1999), have rejected this view in the light of a different interpretation of the verb ‘to be’, either in its existential, veridical or predicative use. Kahn (2009), in his analysis of the philosophical uses of the verb ‘to be’ in Plato advocates for a veridical use of *einai* in this passage: ‘The distinction

seems to be comparing the lover of sights and sounds with a successful and accomplished *sophos*. This is accurate as long as we understand that knowledge and opinion are described mainly as capacities.<sup>340</sup>

In the argument running from 476e to 478e two particular points arise that deserve our attention: (i) both *doxa* and *epistēmē* are described as capacities, and (ii) *doxa* is characterised as an intermediate state between ignorance and knowledge.<sup>341</sup> The difference between philosophers and lovers of sights and sounds is not a difference between opposites drawn in terms of ignorance (*amathia*) and knowledge (*epistēmē*), but between *doxa* and *epistēmē*, where *doxa* is defined as an intermediate state between ignorance and knowledge (478c8), a mid-region between what is and what is not (478c6; 479d).<sup>342</sup> Both *doxa* and *epistēmē* are described as cognitive capacities, a capacity being defined by its object and its effect (477d1): the former is that by which we are able to opine (477e2), the latter that by which we are able to know. Yet they are different capacities: (i) *doxa* is fallible (*mē anamartētos*), *epistēmē* is infallible (*anamartētos*, 477e6); (ii) they are set over different objects, the opinable (*doxaston*) and the knowable (*gnōston*) (478b3). The principle of differentiation of capacities should not be interpreted trivially.<sup>343</sup> ‘Plato is not aiming at the trivial

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between Forms and particulars, the one and the many, is then correlated with the opposition between Being and Seeming: each Form is really one, but *appears* as many’ (2009, p. 85).

<sup>340</sup> The premise is taken to be plain and uncontroversial. Many of the problems of interpretation raised by the text respond to Socrates’ assumptions about the subject. It is quickly admitted that knowledge is of what is, that ‘which is’ is fully knowable, and that *doxa* and *epistēmē* are different capacities set over different objects. In the absence of a more contentious and detailed analysis, the argument is open for conflicting or undifferentiated interpretations. ‘So we can say, if we like, that Plato has a distinction between the “two worlds” of knowledge and belief, with their distinct objects. But this does not imply that only Forms are objects of knowledge, or that particular things and actions cannot be known’ (Annas 1981, p. 211).

<sup>341</sup> It is noteworthy that in this context opinion is asserted as different from ignorance. ‘Now, we said that, if something could be shown, as it were, to be and not to be at the same time, it would be intermediate between what purely is and what in every way is not, and that neither knowledge nor ignorance would be set over it, but something intermediate between ignorance and knowledge [ἀλλὰ τὸ μεταξὺ αὐτῶν φανέν ἀγνοίας καὶ ἐπιστήμης;]?’ (478d5-9). In the *Theaetetus*, ignorance (*amathia*) is described as false opinion (170b9) (cf. 2.3).

<sup>342</sup> What the difference is between them is a matter of discussion and largely depends on how we understand the verb ‘to be’: the knowledge of the philosopher is set over what is; the knowledge of the lover of sights and sounds over what is and what is not. This can be interpreted in the existential, veridical or predicative use of the verb to be. For an interpretation in the predicative sense, see Annas (1981); for an interpretation based on the veridical sense, see Fine (1999; 2003) and Kahn (2009); for an undifferentiated interpretation (based on both the veridical and the predicative sense) see Taylor (2008).

<sup>343</sup> The principle of differentiation of capacities has been the target of much criticism. As it stands in the text, the general principle is either trivial or false; indeed, *doxa* and *epistēmē* could be different capacities set over the same object. White argues: ‘he has given us no reason to rule out the

connection between knowledge and the knowable but at the connection, necessary but not trivial, between knowledge and the character of what is known—namely, that knowledge is of what is true and/or real, whereas belief lacks those necessary connections with truth and reality’ (Taylor 2008, p. 178). By connecting each lover’s capacity with his object of pursuit, Plato is reserving the possibility of obtaining true knowledge for the philosopher only. So even if both lovers are in an intermediate state between ignorance and wisdom, the advantage of the philosopher is that he is able and willing to pursue *epistēmē*. It is precisely from this common ground—a midway territory—that the most distinct element of the philosophical nature emerges. While other lovers remain in a permanent state of *doxa*, with no prospect of ever contemplating true knowledge, the philosopher *can* move from *doxa* to obtain *epistēmē*.<sup>344</sup>

Like philosophers, lovers of sights and sounds love and pursue learning and have the capacity to apprehend their learning object, but the object of their love is restricted to the many. They may be said to pursue the same class of object, but only by ignoring the difference between the one and the many. Because, unable to see the difference between the one and the many, lovers of sights and sounds cannot be driven to pursue the one and therefore cannot possess *epistēmē*. The constraint to opine is ultimately explained by their inability to see, recognise and welcome the Forms. Towards the closing of the argument, Socrates addresses the lover of sights and sounds, describing him as someone who does not think (*hēgeitai*) there is an idea of beauty but believes (*nomizei*) in many beautiful things (479a1).<sup>345</sup> They love and contemplate ‘beautiful things’ without any regard to the idea of beauty and, as a consequence, the lover of sights’ account of reality is restricted to *doxa* (479e1).

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possibility that two capacities might be distinct in virtue of having different effects while nevertheless having to do with the same object’ (1979, p. 159). Similarly, Fine claims: ‘why should knowledge and belief not be different capacities with different work on the same thing? Husbandry and butchery, for example, do different work, even if both are set over domestic animals, and so have the same objects or spheres of operation; a difference in their work does not imply a difference in their objects’ (2003, p. 73). Also Taylor: ‘Heating is a distinct effect from cooling, but there is no nontrivial sense in which the object of the one effect, the heatable, is distinct from the object of the other, the coolable’ (2008, p. 178).

<sup>344</sup> Of course, lovers of sights and sounds could make progress in having more opinions (by accumulation), but they would still be stuck in a state of *doxa*. The notion of epistemological progress is not quantitative, but qualitative.

<sup>345</sup> Primary MSS attest both a present indicative *hēgeitai* and a perfect *hēgetai*. The difference, according to Slings (2005, p. 97), is that the perfect refers to a ‘firm, permanent conviction’, which fits in this context.

Unable to see the difference between the one and the many, lovers of sights and sounds cannot be driven to pursue the one and therefore cannot come to possess *epistēmē*. As a result, they belong to another class of lover, the *philodoxous* (480a6). ‘As for those who in each case embrace the thing itself [τὸ ὄν ἀπαζομένους], we must call them philosophers [φιλοσόφους], not lovers of opinion [φιλοδόξους]?’ (480a11-13). Socrates reminds his interlocutor that the title of *philosophos* must not be taken lightly. Precisely because, like Glaucon, people might confuse philosophers with non-philosophers, to provide a distinct use and meaning of the label is of utmost importance.

### **5.5. Plato’s Use of Public Opinion in his Characterisation of the Philosopher**

Thus far, we have a description of the philosophical nature and his advantage over other lovers. He has the psychological make-up, a rational soul, which allows him to conceive and assess true knowledge as the object of his pursuit. Provided that we accept the existence of Forms, the tripartite structure of the soul, and an essential difference between *epistēmē* and *doxa*, the philosopher would stand (over other lovers) as the most eligible candidate to lead society. But is society ready to accept the leadership of the philosopher? At least in the context of fifth century Athens, the answer seems to be no. An important part of Plato’s agenda when defining the philosopher and distinguishing him from other intellectuals is to rehabilitate his public image. This is clear in the *Apology*, where Socrates defends himself against the old accusations that depict him as a reputed *sophos*. Similarly, in book VI Plato articulates a defence of the philosopher against two major charges: being useless and being vicious. Voicing what seems to be a common view among Athenians, this representation of the philosopher is raised by Adeimantus’ as an objection to Socrates’ proposal of a philosopher-king. Surprisingly enough, instead of dismissing the allegations as false, Socrates admits ‘that what they say is true’ (*Rep.* 487d10) and incorporates these two strands of criticism into his argument. In what follows, I propose that the characterisation of the intellectual as being useless and vicious plays a significant role for Plato’s own characterisation of the philosopher. Plato is allowed to diagnose the philosopher’s alienation from public affairs and to define and

legitimate his own ideas on philosophy by means of comparison with other intellectuals and rehabilitate the role of philosophy as an educational model.

Adeimantus' objection should not come as a surprise. Towards the end of Book V Socrates' introduces the proposal of the philosopher-king as the 'worst' (*chalepōtaton*; 472c4) and 'greatest' (*megistoi*; 473c6) wave of paradox.<sup>346</sup> Apparently, the idea of a philosopher-ruler comes as more of a shock than the inclusion of women and the abolition of family ties among the class of the guardians. However, before Adeimantus speaks, Socrates' proposal is rather optimistic. The philosopher is described as someone who has the intellectual capacity and good character to serve as the best possible political leader. He is by nature akin to truth, of good memory, quick of mind, gracious, friendly, just, brave and sober. In agreement with Glaucon, the characterisation of the philosopher fits the profile of the best guardian of the city. Adeimantus' digression reminds Socrates that his proposal works only on a theoretical level. But the theory is easily contended by facts: indeed, those who study philosophy are far from being as beneficial and valuable for the city as Socrates has claimed them to be. In most cases, the philosopher proves to be 'useless' (*achrēstos*; 487d5), 'odd' (*allokotos*; 487d2) or 'thoroughly depraved' (*pamponeros*; 487d2). In the attempt to explain this phenomenon, Socrates describes a much more pessimistic scenario: the philosophical nature is rare and difficult to find (491a9); the philosophical nature is easily corruptible (491c2); there is no polity suitable for the philosophical temper (497b2). From Adeimantus' objection, Socrates also finds a way to diagnose the role of the philosopher in society, which allows him to restate the philosopher's exceptional nature, to distinguish philosophers from non-philosophers and, more importantly, to establish that philosophers are both beneficial and virtuous. It is worth noticing that the charges against philosophers target two different dimensions: while the charge of uselessness questions the philosopher's skill in running public affairs, the charge of baseness objects to his moral character. Socrates, then, will argue against both the philosopher's inability to operate effectively and his lack of moral integrity.

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<sup>346</sup> The first wave of paradox, women and guardians follow the same pursuits, is described at 457b-c. The second wave, the abolition of family ties, is discussed at 457d. For an examination on the nature of the analogy of the triple-wave, see Sedley (2005).

When Adeimantus' raises his objection, he does so by invoking a potential interlocutor: someone who might be unable to oppose Socrates in words (*logōi men*), yet by looking at reality (*ergōi de*) the scenario is described as the following:

[...] all those who take up philosophy—not those who merely dabble in it while still young in order to complete their upbringing and then drop it, but those who continue in it for a longer time—the greatest number become cranks [ἀλλοκότους], not to say completely vicious [παμπονήρους], while those who seem completely decent are rendered useless [ἀχρήστους] to the city because of the studies you recommend (487c4-d5).

The two principal criticisms of philosophers are made on the basis that the majority are base and the rest, useless. Adeimantus voices what seems to be a common view among Athenians. Indeed, in every case, he resorts to the use of impersonal grammatical forms to articulate his objection, thereby implying that this is a matter of public opinion.<sup>347</sup> He introduces the stereotype of the philosopher to challenge Socrates' prototype. This idea seems to be confirmed later on when Socrates refers to these beliefs as slanders (*diabolē*; 4891d; 490d4; cf. 3.1, 3.2) and explains them on the basis of the ignorance of the multitude (*hoi polloi*). Once the nature of the slanders and the causes of prejudice against philosophers are examined and explained, Socrates is allowed to contrast the 'false' or 'apparent' with the 'true' or 'real' philosopher. And he does this in the conviction that the prejudice and disparagement against philosophers will vanish when most people understand who the real philosopher is. This is made explicit by Socrates:

They'll come to a different opinion [ἀλλοίαν δόξαν], if you soothe them and try to remove their slanderous prejudice against the love of learning [τὴν τῆς φιλομαθείας], by pointing out what you mean by a philosopher and by defining the philosophic nature and way of life so that they'll realize that you don't mean the same people as they do [οὐς αὐτοὶ οἴονται] (499e1-500a2).

Here, as well as in the *Apology*, Socrates assumes that a clear conception of what he means by *philosophos* (or 'sort' of *sophos*) would allow him to redirect people's attitude towards philosophy (cf. 3.2).

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<sup>347</sup> Weiss claims that Adeimantus hides behind a 'someone' when criticising philosophers because he is 'worried about how he is perceived' (2012, p. 21n28).

### 5.5.1. The Relativisation of Usefulness

Socrates responds first to Adeimantus' point on the uselessness of the philosopher. In particular, Adeimantus' view holds that philosophy, if 'lingered too long', makes students either vicious or useless. The idea that philosophy should occupy students for a limited amount of time, as a sort of propaedeutic, is raised in the *Gorgias*, and discussed in Isocrates' *Antidosis*.<sup>348</sup> 'The term *philosophia*, which Socrates identifies as a very specific and selected form of knowledge, to most people stands for that general knowledge which is part of a well-bred youth's formative curriculum, as he is bound to acquire a generically intellectual basic education in order then to gain access to political life' (Gastaldi 2004, p. 135). Significantly, the problem of time has to do with a much more important issue of the instrumentalisation of philosophy. The question of whether philosophy is a life activity or part of a limited programme of instruction is really a question of whether philosophy is valuable by itself or as means to obtain something else. In this context, however, what matters is the extent to which philosophers (and not so much philosophy) are useful and beneficial as political leaders and guardians of the city. To be sure, Plato wants to prove that the philosopher is useful and beneficial for Athenian society. But Plato's conception of philosophy *as useful* is introduced in tension with common opinion.

Interestingly, Socrates uses people's opinion to challenge their views on what is useful and useless, while endorsing the popular depiction of the philosopher as someone isolated, alienated from the affairs of the state and concerned with theoretical questions. When Socrates offers a comparison between the art of navigation and statesmanship (488a7ff), he likens the 'useless stargazers [μετεωροσκόπων]' (488e4) to philosophers.<sup>349</sup> The point Socrates is trying to make

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<sup>348</sup> Callicles tells Socrates: 'Philosophy is no doubt a delightful thing, Socrates, as long as one is exposed to it in moderation at the appropriate time of life' (*Gorg.* 484c). Isocrates (15. 261) makes the same claim against astronomy, geometry and 'studies of that sort', what he calls 'gymnastics of the mind' (266). These studies are beneficial in the right measure and as means to pave the way towards the knowledge that is of real importance. Dodds believes that in these passages Isocrates is referring to the Academy: 'Isocrates doubtless had the Academy in mind; he speaks with the acidity of a rival educational expert' (1959, p. 272). See Jaeger (1944, pp. 46-155) for a more complete study on Isocrates' cultural ideal of rhetoric and its rivalry with Plato's philosophy.

<sup>349</sup> According to Keyt (2006, p. 196) the sailors represent orators. But the notion seems to apply to every potential politician eager for power. Weiss contends Keyt's view: 'They are would-be rulers who are prepared to kill any of their rivals who is more persuasive than they, but who will solicit the help of orators if they cannot prevail on their own' (2012, p. 23n36).

is that philosophers, although knowing the true science of governance, are not given the opportunity to govern because their knowledge is not deemed useful. Socrates asks Adeimantus: ‘Don’t you think that the true captain would be called a real stargazer [τῷ ὄντι μετεωροσκόπον], a babbler [ἀδολέσχην], and a good-for-nothing [ἄχρηστόν]’ (488e3-489a1). Significantly, the way in which the philosopher is depicted and derided invokes Aristophanes’ *Clouds* and Plato’s *Apology* (cf. 1.6, 3.1.1). In *Clouds* (1480) Strepsiades admits that under Socrates’ instruction he has gone mad by ‘prating’ or ‘babbling’ (*adoleschia*). In *Apology* (23d5) Socrates claims that his accusers reproach philosophers for teaching things in the sky (*ta metēora*) and under the earth (cf. also 18b7). As Sedley puts it:

This derisive description echoes a phraseology that Plato’s Socrates elsewhere uses with implicit approval (*Crat.* 401b7–9, *Phdr.* 270a1; cf. also its use at *Pol.* 299b), thus appropriating and turning to his own advantage the charges that were to be brought against him at his trial (cf. *Apol.* 18b). We are thereby invited to recognise in the expert navigator a thoroughly Socrates-like figure (Sedley 2007, p. 261).<sup>350</sup>

Socrates finally diagnoses the philosopher’s uselessness by reinterpreting the meaning of ‘useless’ (*achrēstos*). This allows him to turn Adeimantus’ version around without altering the facts: the fact is that philosophers are not of use to society. In this context, it is not surprising that philosophers are not honoured in cities, but they are not to blame. Socrates tells Adeimantus: ‘Next tell him that what he says is true, that the most decent among the philosophers are useless to the majority [ἄχρηστοι τοῖς πολλοῖς]. Tell him not to blame those decent people for this but the ones who don’t make use of them’ (489b3-5). The comparison thus offers an alternative scenario to that presented initially by Adeimantus, one that explains the uselessness of philosophers in terms of the ignorance of most people. At this point, it may be helpful to point out two senses in which the word ‘uselessness’ might be employed: (i) ‘useless’ may be said of something or someone that has no function, like a non-cutting knife; (ii) ‘useless’ may be said of someone or something without use or possibility to be used, like a functional knife that, for some reason is out of use. The distinction applies to the present case inasmuch as the philosopher is

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<sup>350</sup> This depiction of the philosopher in this passage of the *Republic* and elsewhere is turned to his advantage. See, for example, in the digression of the *Theaetetus*, where philosophers, as opposed to men of law, are characterised as having their minds in the universe, ‘astronomising’ (173e6).

considered useless by Socrates not because he has no function, he is ‘usable’, but because he is not being used.<sup>351</sup>

Of course, the philosopher’s call for retirement from public life is an unfortunate consequence of existent bad regimes.<sup>352</sup> In a well-ordered and just city, the philosopher is not retired from public life; on the contrary, through his expert knowledge of governance, he will be at the service of the community. As Socrates explains later on, by retiring, the philosopher is choosing the best possible alternative, for he is taking care of himself by avoiding contact with the corruption abounding in the public sphere.<sup>353</sup> Socrates’ purpose is, once again, to demonstrate that philosophers are useless or alien, not because they have no functional purpose in society, but because no polity of today is worthy of them (497b2).

### **5.5.2. Identifying the Real Philosopher: Nature and Education**

Having explained the apparent uselessness of the most decent sort, Socrates intends to explain another phenomenon that contributes to a greater extent to the disparagement of philosophers, namely ‘why it’s inevitable that the greatest number are vicious [Τῆς δὲ τῶν πολλῶν πονηρίας τὴν ἀνάγκην]’ (489d10). This is what Adeimantus earlier referred to by calling the philosopher *pamponēros* (487d2), ‘fully depraved’, a label endorsed later on by Socrates himself (489d3).<sup>354</sup> This phenomenon includes the true philosopher who becomes a non-philosopher due to his bad education, and the non-philosopher who pretends to be a philosopher. Both phenomena respond to the fact that the qualities that make and conserve the true philosophical nature are such that the philosopher may be led either to corruption or

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<sup>351</sup> The Greek word *achrēstos* can be employed to mean that something is without use or that something, being used, has no effect (Cf. LSJ sv).

<sup>352</sup> After considering the charge of corruption (489d-496a), Socrates goes back to re-examine the nature of the better sort of philosophers, himself among them (496c3), and their lack of political engagement. He identifies them as a ‘very small group [Πάνσμικρον] who consort with philosophy in a way that’s worthy of her [τῶν κατ’ ἀξίαν ὁμιλούντων φιλοσοφία]’ (496a11), none of whom have successfully participated in politics.

<sup>353</sup> That is why, in the eschatological myth at the closing of the *Gorgias* (523a1), the philosopher who has refused to take part in public life is judged to be just by Rhadamanthus and sent to the isle of the Blessed.

<sup>354</sup> The label is used in *Clouds* 1319 to designate the ‘villainous doctrines’ learned by Pheidippides from Socrates.

desertion. For Socrates' argument, this becomes an opportunity to restate the exceptional nature of the philosopher and the importance of philosophical education.

Apart from his characteristic desire for knowledge and truth, the philosopher displays a number of traits related to his intellectual ability and his moral character. He is temperate (*sōphrōn*) and not greedy for wealth (*philochrēmatos*; 485e3); he is marked by a liberal disposition (*eleutheria*; 486a4); he is not afraid of death (486b1); he is just and gentle (*dikaios*; *hēmeros*; 486b11); he is quick to learn (*eumathēs*; 486c3); of good memory (*memonikos*; 486d2); of a mind endowed with measure and grace (*emmetros*; *eucharis*; 486d9). It is noteworthy that there are always two identifiable sets of traits: moral and intellectual. Consistent with his claim that the well-born philosopher is difficult to find, Socrates declares that some of the intellectual capacities that belong to the philosophical nature, such as sagacity or good memory, tend to be in tension with other virtues defining good character, such as gentleness (cf. II, 375c6; cf. 2.2). According to this, candidates will be only few for, as seen by Socrates, these set of traits tend 'to grow in separation and are rarely found in the same person' (503b7; 503c2).

In addition to this, the few men that do meet these conditions are prone to be corrupted. Socrates explains why most of those who have the natural character and intelligence are so easily corrupted by appealing to a general principle formulated in the form of a paradox (495a1): the worst is the corruption of the best.<sup>355</sup> The better the nature of a man (i.e. the closest to the nature of the true philosopher), the easier it is to corrupt because 'all the things that are said to be good also corrupt it and drag it away' (491c1-2). But how does this principle apply to philosophers? Thus far, the philosophical nature stands as the most excellent regarding knowledge, experience and virtue. The philosopher has the knowledge, the skills and the character to govern and protect the city. But the philosopher's innate competence and virtue (*phusis*), although necessary, are not sufficient; he must be informed by education and

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<sup>355</sup> The principle by which the worst is the corruption of the best deserves an explanation, for it seems odd that the most courageous, temperate and clever men are the most liable to corruption. I believe, following Adams (1963) that Plato is referring here to the philosophers' uneducated nature, what Hatzistavrou (2006) calls nature<sub>1</sub> discussed above. This is clear with the case of natural intellectual abilities: the cleverest and quickest is more prone to corruption than the dull and slow.

instruction (*paideia*) (492a1).<sup>356</sup> By raising the importance of education at this point, Plato reasserts the importance of knowledge in general, and philosophy as an activity that requires an active commitment with truth. It is not only by the natural virtues that the philosopher is built; it is the active engagement with his object of love, i.e. true knowledge.

### 5.5.3. The Apparent Philosopher

There is yet another factor explaining the widespread disparagement of philosophers: ‘By far the greatest and most serious slander [δίαβολή] on philosophy, however, results from those who profess the philosophic way of life’ (489d1-2). The defining traits of the philosopher, e.g. quickness in learning (*eumatheia*), memory (*mnēmē*), courage (*andreia*), magnificence (*megaloprepeia* (494b1) makes him an object of public adulation. As Socrates describes it from 494c, flattered by honour and seduced by power, he would give way to pride and excessive ambition thus neglecting the commitment to knowledge and virtue. In this scenario, the prediction is pessimistic: the few men qualified to undertake philosophy will abandon it because of its difficulty and, being left alone, it will be taken over by impostors. The project of the philosopher-king is therefore bound to fail: if drawn by power, he ceases to be a philosopher; if drawn to philosophy while in power, he will be forced to give it up. The result is that true philosophers desert politics and the immediate consequence is that non-philosophers appropriate the title. In this appropriation of the title lies the source of the philosopher’s bad reputation; people associate *philosophia* and *philosophos* with these pretenders’ evil-doing and false knowledge. Yet, their move is smart, for the title of *philosophos*, even in the present state of decay, preserves its prestige: ‘seeing that this position, which is full of fine names and adornments, is vacated, leap gladly from those little crafts to philosophy [ἐκ τῶν τεχνῶν ἐκπηδῶσιν εἰς τὴν φιλοσοφίαν]’(495c9-d3). But what is it that these pretenders imitate? What do they want to validate under the name of *philosophia*? It

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<sup>356</sup> In diagnosing bad education, Socrates immediately addresses what seems to be the first misconception or false belief on the matter, namely that sophists are responsible for corruption. (492a5-b3). In opposition to the common view that sophists, as private teachers, can be blamed for the corruption of young men, Socrates proposes that the people, the multitude, the demos itself, coming together in the assemblies, theatres, and courtrooms are the real sophists and ultimate educators of the young and old, men and women (492b1). This will further discuss at 6.6.

seems clear that in order to give a false appearance of or to successfully imitate philosophers, these aspirants must act in a way that actually resembles their distinctive traits and activities. Unfortunately, Socrates does not expand on this. As it stands, it seems that they only usurp the name to validate their ‘evil-doings’. Of course, the phenomenon is far from being a mere question of title-appropriation. Socrates hints at the real problem later on: ‘Will they not produce what may in very deed be fairly called sophisms [σοφίσματα], and nothing that is genuine or that partakes of true intelligence [φρονήσεως ἀληθινῆς]?’ (496a7-9). It is suggestive that he uses the word *sophisma* to characterise their knowledge, as opposed to ‘true’ *phronēsis*. To be sure, they are able to produce what might resemble true knowledge, *sophismata*, without it being true knowledge.<sup>357</sup> I believe that an important part of Plato’s purpose here is to re-emphasise the importance of education, which is what ultimately separates a philosopher from a non-philosopher. Without it, a philosopher may become a sophist.

It is worth noticing that Socrates has already made a distinction between philosophers and non-philosophers in book V, namely philosophers and lovers of sights and sounds, who were mainly distinguished on cognitive grounds (*doxa* as opposed to *epistēmē*). But it seems that the present context, which is dealing with popular conceptions of the philosopher, demands a less subtle distinction. Plato is reacting to the moral typification of the intellectual, that is, to the belief that sophists, philosophers, and in general, all the reputed *sophoi* belong to one and the same class; a class reputed to be idle and vicious. In order to rehabilitate the image of the philosopher, Plato needs to redefine the notion *philosophia* by associating moral integrity and intellectual competence, two areas that are generally found separately. On one hand we find the idle but decent intellectual and on the other, the clever cheat, two characterisations of the *sophoi* (cf. 1.5). As Socrates mentions earlier, it is the charge of being vicious that contributes to a greater extent to the disparagement of philosophers. Thus Plato needs to show that although intellectual competence, i.e., quickness of mind, cleverness, good memory, are important qualities, these are not distinctive of the philosopher, for these can be used for the wrong purpose (cf. 2.2).

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<sup>357</sup> This will prove relevant in the analysis of the *Sophist*. If there is something common between the philosopher and the sophist is that they both appear to be *sophoi* (cf. 7).

‘Intellectual ability, however, is not the same as *love* of wisdom, and it is the latter alone that necessarily yields moral rectitude’ (Weiss 2012, p. 20).<sup>358</sup>

Initially presented as a criticism of philosophers, the argument turns into a revision of peoples’ beliefs, which works as a springboard to reshape the characterisation of the philosopher and as an opportunity to state the role of philosophical education. By responding to peoples’ opinions, Plato elaborates a statement of the philosopher’s social and moral worth, which as a consequence divorces the philosopher from both the decent but useless intellectual and the clever cheat.

## 5.6. Conclusion

The *Republic* is Plato’s most complete account of the philosopher, as it explores the psychological, epistemological and moral strands shaping his identity. I have argued that Plato here distinctively defines the philosopher via the element of love. Both his psychological make-up (Book IX) and cognitive disposition (book V) places the philosopher over other lovers. In this context, the philosopher is not described as a ‘knower’ in a strict sense, but as a ‘lover of wisdom’. His natural virtue also positions him as the best possible candidate to run the state, but we see that Plato still needs to assert his intellectual and moral worth against the popular view of the intellectual (Book VI). Against the paradigm of the man of practical skill, the philosopher appears as a ‘babblers’ or as a ‘stargazer’, which fits the image of the intellectual *sophos* discussed in chapter 1 (cf. 1.5, 1.6). The objection against the usefulness of philosophers allows Plato to emphasise the philosopher’s exceptional nature, with particular emphasis on the importance of his education and political worth. This is also an opportunity to make us reflect on how fine the line that separates a philosopher from a pseudo-philosopher is, the philosopher being easily corruptible, which explains the bad reputation of philosophers and the association of philosophers and non-philosophers (among which might be sophists). Thus the *Republic* allows us to see Plato’s views on the nature of philosophy and his

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<sup>358</sup> This is why, in book VII, when the allegory of the cave is concluded, Socrates identifies the importance of education by bringing forward the example of the clever and vicious, the *poneroi sophoi*.

programme of education in opposition to competing notions or models. As opposed to the man of practical skill, the philosopher is presented as someone who has the psychological and cognitive disposition to pursue knowledge. This description of the philosopher will resonate in the following chapters in contrast to the characterisation of the sophist as someone whose ability makes him successful at giving the appearance of knowledge, but whose self-assurance makes him unable to pursue the right object.

## SECTION III: *SOPHISTĒS*



## CHAPTER 6: INTRODUCING PLATO'S *SOPHISTĒS*: THE INDEFINABLE

The overall purpose of this section is to examine Plato's account of the sophist so as to establish whether, against the background of preceding accounts, this is a distinct or novel category. In the section above we saw that the philosopher is more consistently described as a lover. Is (are) there any distinct feature(s) shaping the identity of the sophist in Plato? Firstly, it should be clear that the line of analysis adopted here is not primarily historical. This is not an attempt to reconstruct historic truth, but to look at what Plato has to say about the *sophistēs*. The purpose is to get a deeper and clearer notion of the category *sophistēs* in Plato, without treating the question of whether his description is accurate or not. Even though part of the scholarly tradition has embraced Plato's negative stance on sophists without reservations, from the nineteenth century onwards historians as well as philosophers have opened up the discussion to challenge the veracity and factuality of Plato's charges against sophists (cf. Introd. 1). This has provided a platform in which to examine the matter by considering the cultural and historical conditions involved, such as the relation of sophists to money and travelling, the role of rhetoric, their outlook in relation to social conventions, etc. All of these features have been revised and confronted so as to determine how justifiable Plato's depiction of the sophist is. The proposal introduced here is not set to test the factuality of Plato's argument. Definitions of the *sophistēs* and the *philosophos* are loaded with Plato's own ideology and rhetoric, and so it is with his characterisation of them.<sup>359</sup>

I will start by tracing the meaning of *sophistēs* in pre-Platonic literature. This will allow us to see the extent to which Plato redefines the notion in the context of his philosophy. As will be shown, *sophistēs* is not clearly demarcated from other *soph*-terminology.<sup>360</sup> Although the examination is far from exhaustive, it provides us with enough evidence to establish that *sophistēs* has no widely-accepted application, whether this implies positive or negative connotations, and does not designate one

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<sup>359</sup> This is not to support the claim that Plato's account can be isolated from its historicity; rather, it does not focus on the question of whether Plato's notion of *sophistēs* adjust to historical account of who the sophists are.

<sup>360</sup> See Tell, who argues against the artificial demarcation of *sophistēs* meaning something different from *sophos* (2011, p. 25).

group of experts or class of people. Rather, as with *sophos*, it is a broad and adaptable label. Through the available evidence, I hope to show that Plato does not assign a new meaning to the label, but rather uses conventional conceptions of the sophist to create his main argument.<sup>361</sup> Stemming from a conceptualisation of *sophia* in terms of knowledge (cf. 2.1, 2.2), the *sophistēs* is mainly described as someone who knows many things, or an expert in ‘all matters’—a description, we shall see, that precludes finding a single definition. Apart from the *Sophist*, where Plato reaches a definition of the sophist (cf. chapter 7), in other dialogues Plato shows that there is no clear conception of what and who the sophist is, that there is no clarity as to what their activity is, and therefore, that there are no grounds to condemn them.<sup>362</sup> Stemming from the same prejudice that condemns philosophers (the old prejudice against the *sophoi*), Plato redirects people’s opinion towards sophists. My point is that he does not construct the hostility against sophists, as some accounts claim, but rather represents this hostility against experts and intellectuals by appealing to popular attitudes against the *sophoi*. This does not mean that Plato is defending the sophist; rather, he defends the philosopher on those points where he looks like a sophist. It is only in the *Sophist*, I claim, that we see a clear attempt to differentiate the sophist from the philosopher, and this is achieved by creating a negative account of the sophist, one that can never be ascribed to the philosopher.

## 6.1. What and Who is a *Sophistēs*?

The first step into the investigation presents us with a difficulty. In general, to ascertain the meaning of the word *sophistēs*, when it is so heavily loaded with references and connotations, demands a complete and careful analysis. Post-Platonic definitions of the term as found in dictionaries and lexicons, both old and modern, offer a similar account. We find a general sense, usually linked to the sophists’ expertise and encyclopaedic knowledge, a more specific sense making reference to the subject of their teachings, i.e. virtue and rhetoric, and, finally and more importantly, a derogatory sense pointing to the sophist’s deceptiveness. The lexicons

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<sup>361</sup> Counting as evidence are those passages where Plato refers collectively to ‘the sophists’ or someone is introduced as a sophist. We will not assume someone is a sophist by relying on evidence outside Plato. For a discussion of this, see Irwin (1995b, p. 571).

<sup>362</sup> Although Plato implies that the fact that there is no clear conception of who they are or what they do is grounds for condemning them (cf. 7.2, 7.4).

of Hesychius, Photius and Suda use the same word to define the sophist in one of their entries: *apateon*, ‘cheat’, ‘rogue’, from verb *apataō*, ‘to deceive’.<sup>363</sup> At the core of this conception is Plato’s last definition of the *Sophist*, by which the sophist’s art is described as essentially deceptive (268c8).

Surprisingly enough, if we trace the usage of the word in the ancient textual tradition, we find there is nothing suggesting, at least in its origins, that this is a term of opprobrium—as implied by its later association with dishonesty, *apataō*. It is possible to make a noun from a verb (*sophizomai*) with the morpheme *-tā* (nom. sg. *-tēs*), which denotes agency. In the process of noun formation *sophistēs* is the masculine agent-noun coming from verb *sophizomai*.<sup>364</sup> Just as the agent-noun *poiētēs*, formed from verb *poieō*, ‘to make’, translates generally into ‘maker’, *sophistēs*, formed from verb *sophizomai* ‘being or becoming *sophos*’, would be fairly translated into ‘sage’ or ‘knower’. Not far from what the adjective *sophos* designates, ‘wise’, ‘expert’, ‘clever’, the noun *sophistēs* mainly designates the person who is *sophos*, i.e. a wise, expert, or clever person.

From the above, the question arises not so much as to what a *sophistēs* is, but rather as to who the *sophistēs* is. The label serves to designate a broad category of people—all of them deemed ‘experts’—which contains a number of subcategories, such as philosophers, poets, artists, statesmen, etc. A full list with references of early uses of *sophistēs* is provided by Kerferd (1950, p. 8). The list includes poets, musicians and rhapsodes, diviners and seers, the seven wise men and pre-Socratic philosophers. Significantly, unlike *philosophos*, the label has a much more widespread use and well-established meaning in the literary tradition of the fifth century BCE.

The first attested instance of the word is found in Pindar (*I.* 5.28) in reference to a poet. The victorious athletes Phylakidas and Pytheas should be among those many heroes that are praised and lauded because of their deeds in the city of Aegina. Their bravery has been celebrated for a long time and is recounted by the *sophistai*:

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<sup>363</sup> Hesychius, Σ 1372; Photius, Σ 528, 21; Suda Σ, 812.

<sup>364</sup> For a study on this see Fraenkel (1910).

‘thanks to Zeus, reverence for them [heroes] has provided a theme for *sophistais*’.<sup>365</sup> Since this is the only instance of the word in the Pindaric corpus, there is no way to establish a systematic usage of the word. However, it is safe to assume that the use in this context is comparable to that of *sophos* at *I.* 8.47 also said in reference to the poet. This first example shows us how the meaning of a rather broad category *sophistēs* can be specified by the context.<sup>366</sup> The same phenomenon can be observed in the context of Herodotus’ *Histories*, where the sense of ‘teacher’ or ‘sage’ is associated with a number of different ‘experts’, such as the poet and the statesman Solon (1. 29. 3), the soothsayer Melampus (2. 49. 6) and the philosopher Pythagoras (4. 95. 10). It seems quite clear that none of these examples includes any explicit or implicit negative tone. Just as the adjective *sophos*, often used by Pindar and Herodotus, in general qualifies intellectual achievement and skill in one’s craft, *sophistēs* designates someone who displays this kind of quality regarding a certain area of expertise (cf. 1.1, 1.3).

## 6.2. The *Deinos Sophistēs*

One of the most revealing passages for the interpretation of early uses of the word *sophistēs* is found in Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound*; here, the two instances refer to Prometheus. Hephaestus and Power, commanded by Zeus, are binding Prometheus in retaliation for his *philanthrophia* (11, 28). While doing this, Power says to Hephaestus: ‘Then pin down that other one safely too, so that he’ll learn, this *sophistēs*, that Zeus is cleverer than he is’ (61-2).<sup>367</sup> Later on, Hermes addresses Prometheus as follows: ‘You, *sophistēs*, too spiteful for your own good, you who committed a crime against the gods by giving privileges to beings who live for a day, you, the fire-thief—it’s you I’m talking to’ (944-6).<sup>368</sup> *Sophistēs* in both contexts seem to function as a term of blame; ‘the context shows that the term has already acquired a pejorative flavour’ (Podlecki 2005, p. 163). But to make a fair assessment of the meaning of the word and possible connotations, it is necessary to consider two

<sup>365</sup> Trans. W.H. Race (1997). For the translation ‘poet’ cf. Fennell (1899), Slater (1969), for the translation ‘sage’ or ‘mousikos’ cf. Bury (1892).

<sup>366</sup> Although traditionally the poet is the one who sings praises to heroes, from the context, we are allowed to assume that anyone who talks about these things may be a *sophistēs*.

<sup>367</sup> Trans. A.H. Sommerstein (2008), who translates *sophistēs* by ‘intellectual’. A more literal version of the passage renders: ‘that he is fooler (*nōthesteros*) than Zeus’.

<sup>368</sup> In this context, Sommerstein translates ‘clever fellow’.

elements present in the first of these passages. *Sophistēs* is drawn by direct contrast with the adjective *nōthēs*, ‘sluggish’, ‘dull’, and it is associated with the adjective *deinos* previously attributed to Prometheus (59). Power is worried that Prometheus, being *deinos*, may find the way to escape from his imprisonment. And though a *sophistēs*, as compared to Zeus, he is a fool. The label captures both Prometheus’ cleverness and his boldness in acting against Zeus’ will.<sup>369</sup> Accordingly, the complimentary sense associated with Prometheus’ intelligence in this context is interpreted as something negative because it is used to act against authority.<sup>370</sup> However, this does not necessarily entail that the term has acquired a pejorative flavour, as Podlecki asserts, but rather that, because of the word’s meaning, ‘clever’, ‘expert’, in this given context it is possible to interpret it as a negative quality: ‘in the present context the word may well carry something of the overtone of “the expert” [...] it could have the invidious note so often used of clever people when they are discomfited, without the sophistic overtone’ (Conacher 1980, p. 34). *Sophistēs* may evoke negative connotations by being associated with the ability to do wrong or the intelligence of cunning in the same way that cognates *sophos* or *sophia*, ‘clever’ and ‘cleverness’, may do in some contexts (cf. 1.4, 1.5). Thomson makes the point:

On the Lips of Might, as later of Hermes (976), the word is contemptuous; but there is no reason to suppose that it bears, in this play, the latter meaning of “quibbler”, “trickster” or “knave”. It is still the noun corresponding to σοφός, and means (1) a wise man, (2) a clever craftsman. [...] As used here, the word is a natural development, in Might’s train of thought, of the word δεινός in 59 (1932, p. 138).

A similar analysis can be drawn from Euripides’ *Rhesus*. Moved by the death of his son Rhesus, the Muse recalls the moment of his conception. She became pregnant by the river Strymon when she was coming to confront Thamyris, the bard who challenged the muses to a singing contest: ‘this was when we Muses came to Mount Pangaeon, rich in gold, equipped with our instruments to join in high contest of minstrelsy with the Thracian *sophistēs* [σοφιστῆ Θρηκί] Thamyris. Him we blinded in requital for his many insults against our artistry [ἔδέννασεν τέχνην]’ (921-5).<sup>371</sup> As in the *Iliad*, Thamyris’ defiant attitude towards the Muses ends in punishment:

<sup>369</sup> The double-value of *deinos* is explored at 1.4.

<sup>370</sup> For the role of Prometheus as the hero of cunning in the mythological tradition see Detienne and Vernant (1978, pp. 58-61).

<sup>371</sup> Trans. D. Kovacs (2002).

‘for he declared with boasting that he would win [στεῦτο γὰρ εὐχόμενος νικησέμεν] even if the Muses themselves were to sing against him [...]; but they in their wrath maimed him, and took from him his wondrous singing [ᾠοιδὴν θεσπεσίην] and made him forget his artful playing’ (2. 597-600).<sup>372</sup> To be sure, Thamyris is an expert of his own craft, singing and playing the lyre, but extreme self-assurance and pride in himself and his talents has driven him to excess. It is because of his *hubris* and the challenging attitude (*eris*; 917) against the Muses that he is ultimately punished. Similarly to the case of Prometheus, Thamyris is called a sophist by virtue of his ability, which in this context can also be negatively coloured by being associated with the singer’s arrogance. Consequently, it is possible to translate *sophistēs* more neutrally by considering Thamyris expertise, ‘that expert poet’ or ‘musician’, or tinge it negatively by considering Thamyris’ defiant attitude towards the Muses, e.g. ‘that clever sophist’.<sup>373</sup> Both translations are possible and are consistent with the sense of ‘expert’ or ‘sage’ that is invoked later in the text, when the Muse confronts Athena, whom she holds responsible for the death of Rhesus. In retribution she threatens to stop bringing sophists to Athens: ‘And here is your reward for this; in my arms I hold my child and mourn for him. I’ll bring to you no other *sophistēs* [σοφιστὴν δ’ ἄλλον]’ (948-9).<sup>374</sup>

One might have expected to find in Euripides a more distinct association of the label *sophistēs* with a certain class of intellectual, as, for example, teachers of rhetoric. This cannot be concluded from the available textual evidence. The few other instances found in the corpus show a rather flexible and broad use of the term. In *Heraclidae*, Eurystheus, when reporting to Alcmene, Heracles’ mother, the cause of the enmity between him and her son, describes himself as the ‘*sophistēs* of many pains [πολλῶν σοφιστῆς πημάτων]’ (993) in reference to the labours of Heracles. In Euripides’ *Suppliants* Adrastus, king of Argos, describes to Theseus, king of Athens, the courage of the seven warriors killed in the attack against the Thebes: ‘As for Tydeus, I shall give him high praise in brief compass. He was not brilliant in

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<sup>372</sup> Trans. A.T. Murray (1999).

<sup>373</sup> Liapis (2012) favours the sense of ‘poet’ ‘musician’: hence he translates ‘the renowned Thracian singer, Thamyris’ and so Kovacs (2002) ‘famous Thracian singer’ and Coleridge (1891) ‘that clever Thracian bard’.

<sup>374</sup> The presence of sophists is an asset to Athens: ‘The muse announces that she will retract the benefits she once bestowed on Athens’ (Liapis 2012, p. 322).

words but a great *sophistēs* with the shield [ἐν ἀσπίδι δεινὸς σοφιστής] and wise at inventing many things [πολλά τ' ἐξευρεῖν σοφά] (901-3).<sup>375</sup> He is called a sophist by virtue of his ability to fight, particularly with the shield (*aspis*), and his ability to discover many *sopha* things. Morwood (2007) provides a literal translation: 'a terribly good (*deinos*) sophist in the shield and (terribly good) at finding many wise things'. The notion of the *deinos sophistēs* gains significance in the context of Euripides' *Hippolytus*. In the belief that his son Hippolytus has defiled his bed with his now dead wife Phaedra, Theseus soliloquises about the limits of human intelligence: having devised so many fine things and arts (*technas*, 917), humans have not been able to teach sense (*phronein didaskein*) to the senseless (*oisin ouk enesti nous*, 920). Hippolytus, unaware of the facts, when hearing his father, responds sceptically: 'A formidable *sophistēs* this [δεινὸν σοφιστὴν εἶπας], who is able to force insensate fools to show sense' (921-2).<sup>376</sup> Here *deinos* has the sense of 'marvellous', 'extraordinary', which can also be attached to the sense of 'fearful', as has been shown before.<sup>377</sup> Theseus' view, stemming from his own predicament, projects the contrast between human ingenuity and progress in the areas of science and technology and the incapacity of understanding and teaching in the area of morality. 'Civilised man has gone far with his ingenuity, but he has never discovered or understood the one virtue that is at the basis of all others in society: right thinking' (Lawall and Lawall 1986, p. 126). While it is impossible to establish whether Euripides alludes to any specific class of intellectual by the name *sophistēs*, there seems to be a clear presence of the element of teaching.<sup>378</sup> Interestingly enough, Hippolytus' reaction to Theseus' hopes crystallises the controversy raised recurrently in Plato's dialogues (particularly *Meno* and *Protagoras*), i.e. on whether virtue can be taught.

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<sup>375</sup> Trans. D. Kovacs (1998).

<sup>376</sup> Trans. D. Kovacs (1995).

<sup>377</sup> The double sense conveyed by the adjective as applied to human inventiveness and intelligence is clear in the context of Sophocles' *Antigone* (332-3) (cf. 1. 4).

<sup>378</sup> Barret comments on the passage: 'σοφιστής (agent-noun from σοφίζομαι) is one who is adept or expert at any art or craft. In the latter part of the 5th cent. the word was applied to the sophists, the "experts" who professed to impart their knowledge (for a fee) to others; here, in a context of teaching, that application is evidently in mind' (1964, p. 340).

### 6.3. The Class of *Sophistai*

Because of its engagement with the political and social climate of Athens in the late fifth century, one might think that Old Comedy is the ultimate source to determine whether there is any specific denotation or connotation attached to the label *sophistēs*. Unfortunately, this is not the case either. Evidence is scanty and, where it exists, no regular features can be established. Surprisingly enough, there are only three instances of the word in the Aristophanic corpus. Perhaps not too surprisingly, all of them are found in *Clouds*. Possibly influenced by our own expectations, we would hope to see in this context that *sophistēs* designates exclusively the expert teacher of rhetoric. Once again, this is not the case. While it is true that within the value-system invoked by Aristophanes, where *new* opposes *old* and *tradition* opposes *innovation*, we see that *sophos* and *sophia* are more commonly associated with the new-trend of rhetoric (cf. 1.6), *sophistēs* itself carries no specific attributions. The *sophistai* are grouped together with a rather random and large group of people. Socrates introduces the divine Clouds to Strepsiades:

Because you aren't aware that these goddesses sustain and nourish a whole host of *sophistai*, diviners from Thuri, professors of the medical art, long-haired do-nothings with onyx signet-rings; and composers of convoluted songs for dithyrambic choruses, men of airy quackery, they maintain in idleness doing nothing, because they poeticise about the Clouds (332-5).<sup>379</sup>

The only common feature of this rather random group of idlers—among which are the sophists—is the fascination of theorising about the divine Clouds. Although there is an obvious element of comic exaggeration, *sophistai* includes those intellectuals who, like Socrates, are keen on speculative thinking (cf. 1.6). Later on, the Worse argument guarantees to Strepsiades that Pheidippides will become a ‘skilled sophist’ (*sophistēn dexion*; 1111) under his instruction, and then Strepsiades, after defeating the creditors, is called a *sophistēs* by the Chorus (1309). In both cases knowledge of rhetoric may be implied. This should not be too surprising considering that, at that time, rhetoricians are a salient group among the reputed experts, but this only proves that the category *sophistēs* is inclusive of rhetoricians rather than exclusive to rhetoricians. Following Dover, ‘σοφιστής in Ar.s’ time could still be used as a

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<sup>379</sup> Trans. A.H. Sommerstein (1982).

synonym of σεσοφισμένος, “skilled in an art”. The practitioner of an art is normally also a teacher of apprentices, and in E. *Hp.* 921 that implication of σοφιστής is necessary. Our passage may be the earliest example of the sense “teacher of the undesirable or superfluous accomplishments” (1968, p. 144). Thus the negative overtones that the title *sophistēs* carries in this context can be explained as part of a larger phenomenon, namely the comic purpose of deriding the class of intellectuals, among which are found philosophers such as Socrates, and poets such as Euripides (cf. 1.5, 1.6). This sort of permeability between the titles *sophos*, *sophistēs* and *philosophos* finds the clearest example in the Hippocratic corpus. The author of *On Ancient Medicine* (20. 1-4) describes natural philosophers as *sophistai*, and immediately after relates them to the kind of inquiry characteristic of *philosophia*. As Festugière (1948) observes, in this passage the term ‘sophist’ does not designate the exclusive group of intellectuals that were later classified as ‘sophists’, but it captures the original sense of ‘expert’ in reference to the *phusikoi*, those who apply philosophical theories to medicine.<sup>380</sup>

Perhaps the only case that shows a more distinct use of the label *sophistēs* in association with the art of rhetoric is in Thucydides (Book 3. 38. 7), the only attested instance of the word in the author. In the assembly to decide the fate of the people of Mytilene after their revolt against Athens, Cleon advocates for severe punishment. In doing this, Cleon attacks his opponents by claiming that only a skilled speaker can elaborate an argument in defence of Mytileneans. He attributes this argumentative ability to Athenians’ love for words and speeches on one hand, and their inability to decide and take action, on the other. ‘In short, you are overcome by the pleasure of listening, and you sit here looking more like spectators of the *sophistai* [σοφιστῶν θεαταῖς] than decision-makers for the city [περὶ πόλεως βουλευομένοις].’<sup>381</sup>

It is difficult to draw a general conclusion from the examples presented above. Concerning the question of who the *sophistēs* is, we can point specifically to titan Prometheus, the cunning thinker, or Thamyris, the daring poet, always bearing in mind that the label includes teachers and sages such as Solon and Pythagoras, and

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<sup>380</sup> ‘Le mot est employé au sens ancien d’ “homme habile, expert”. [...] il désigne ici des philosophes naturalistes, des φυσικοί, qui appliquent à la médecine des théories philosophiques étrangères à la pure expérience’ (1948, p. 55).

<sup>381</sup> Trans. P.J. Rhodes (1994).

even more generally, any one who shows expertise in some craft, such as the warrior Tydeus. We cannot establish that the *sophistai* designate a distinct class. At least as observed in Aristophanes, the *sophistai* are lumped together with all kinds of experts, including philosophers. The example in Thucydides suggests a more clear association between sophists and rhetoric, although there still exists a problem of demarcation between philosophers and sophists, as seen in Hippocrates. Importantly, the negative tinges associated with the name *sophistēs* may as well be attributed to *sophos* when describing the intellectual, the expert or the clever (cf. 1.3, 1.4, 1.5) and condemning their arrogance.

#### **6.4. The Platonic Sophist: The Indefinable**

When we get into the notion of sophist in Plato, we can hardly avoid preconceptions. These involve beliefs about the specific meaning of the label *sophistēs* and the negative connotations attached to it (e.g. ‘cheater’, ‘trickster’), the particular group of people to which it refers (e.g. Protagoras, Hippias, Gorgias and Prodicus) and the kind of activity that the label designates or is associated with (e.g. rhetoric). But the truth is that the evidence is not sufficient to establish what and who exactly the sophists are within the dialogues. By Plato’s own admission, this label is difficult to define, and it is not reserved for a class of people, but for many different individuals who compete with one another (cf. *Prot.* 318d). Surprisingly enough, there is also not sufficient evidence to argue for a systematic rivalry between the sophist and the philosopher across Plato’s dialogues. Of course, it is impossible to deny that dialogues such as the *Gorgias*, the *Euthydemus*, the *Lesser Hippias* and the *Protagoras* all provide a comparison between the sophist and the philosopher at a dramatic level. It is clear that Socrates, championing philosophy, competes with individuals who are reputed *sophistai*. But this is different from claiming that Plato defines philosophy and the philosopher as opposed to sophistry and sophists, or that he creates a systematic rivalry between them. Of course, the different views adopted depend on what counts as evidence; sometimes sources outside the dialogues are used to establish that someone is a sophist or behaves like a sophist, which ‘may rest on views about the nature of sophistic doctrine or the sophistic movement that ought not be accepted without question’ (Irwin 1995b, p. 571). Here I will limit the

evidence to what Plato says of the sophists. From the available evidence, we see that the philosopher is drawn in contradistinction to many other intellectuals, but direct and explicit comparisons between the sophist and the philosopher are only few. In at least two relevant dialogues in which Plato intends to define philosophy and the philosopher, the comparison is drawn in opposition to the lovers of the body (*Phaedo*; cf. 4.5), the lovers of sights and sounds (*Rep.* V; cf. 5.4) and the lovers of honour and money (*Rep.* IX; cf. 5.3). That sophists might have been considered within either of these groups can certainly be discussed, but cannot be safely established. Far from being sharply defined, *sophistēs* in Plato refers to different kinds of people and carries both positive and negative connotations.

Perhaps a regular feature of the notion of *sophistēs* in Plato is its resistance to definition. Plato himself poses the difficulties of defining a sophist. This is the starting point and the central thread of the dialogue *Sophist* (cf. 218b ff.), but the issue is also addressed in other dialogues. Although etymologically it may seem easy to assert what a *sophistēs* is (*Prot.* 312c5, *Soph.* 221d3), Plato contests the idea by proving that *sophistēs* is a loose category, potentially to be confused with the *philosophos* and the *politikos* (*Soph.* 216c8, 217a3 ff.). This phenomenon partly responds to the fact that sophists cannot be related to one specific area of expertise (*Prot.* 312d4 ff; *Soph.* 233c6), but more importantly to the way they operate, i.e. by imitation (*Soph.* 267e1, 268c1; *Stat.* 303c3).

In what follows, I would like to address the following aspects, all of which touch upon traditional representations of sophists in Plato: (i) the definition of ‘sophist’; (ii) the sophists’ area of expertise; (iii) the class of the sophists; (iv) the sophist’s reputation. By addressing these aspects, I intend to offer an analysis that elucidates, although not exhaustively or conclusively, some of the key issues involving the conceptualisation of the sophist in Plato. By the end of my discussion, I hope to show that Plato plays with popular conceptions of the *sophistēs* (which also capture attitudes against the *sophoi*) to demonstrate that there is essentially very little clarity around who the sophist is, what he does and whether he is good or bad. As we shall see, this lack of clarity is essential to defining the figure of the sophist in the

dialogue *The Sophist*, and it gives Plato the opportunity to distinguish what people think a sophist is (an apparent sophist) from a real sophist.

#### 6.4.1. The Problem of Definition

If, following Socrates in the *Meno*, we accept that a definition is obtained from identifying the distinct quality of a given thing, we might well accept that something that defies definition may have no identifiable distinct and universal quality.<sup>382</sup> This is what Plato seems to believe about the category *sophistēs*, a category that resists delineation because there seems to be no qualities and/or no group of qualities common to all and only sophists. It is the apparent indefinability of the category *sophistēs* that is at the heart of the visitor's quest in the dialogue *the Sophist*. 'But the tribe which we now intend to search for, the sophist, is not the easiest thing in the world to catch and define' (218d3-4).<sup>383</sup> However, this could be objected by arguing—as an average Greek citizen could—that the meaning of *sophistēs* actually appears to be quite clear; by definition, a *sophistēs* is 'someone who is in possession of *sophia*'. Plato is aware of this and so he raises the question about the definition of the sophist in the *Protagoras* (312c ff.) and the *Sophist*. This will prove problematic for Plato for, as shown in the *Sophist*, the sophist is said to have no (real) *sophia* although the name suggests he does. The visitor from Elea says to Theaetetus: 'Well, shall we suppose the sophist is a layman [ιδιώτην], or completely and truly an expert [παντάπασιν ὡς ἀληθῶς σοφιστήν]?' (221d1-2). The adverb *alethōs* aims to emphasise the literal meaning of *sophistēs* as 'a man of wisdom', and Theaetetus, picking up on this, responds: 'He's not a layman at all. I understand what you're saying: he has to be the kind of person that the name sophist indicates [ὡς παντὸς δεῖ τοιοῦτος εἶναι τό γε ὄνομα τοῦτο ἔχων.]' (221d3-4).<sup>384</sup> Of course, Plato does not seem to believe the issue at stake is only nominal (i.e. *sophistēs* is not just a name); the question is much more complex than that because there is actually a way to explain why those people that are called sophists are known as sophists in the sense of 'expert' or 'knowledgeable'. As Theaetetus asserts, although the sophist

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<sup>382</sup> Cf. *Meno* 72c1ff.

<sup>383</sup> It is worth noticing that although the *Sophist* works with collection and division rather than definition in the fashion of the Socratic dialogues, it is the apparent lack of an essential and unique quality that makes him indefinable.

<sup>384</sup> The passage will be further discussed at 7.1.

cannot be said to be an expert, he cannot be said to be a layman (*idiotēs*) either (*Soph.* 221d3).

Apart from the *Sophist*, there are other dialogues in which Plato raises more or less explicitly the problem of the identity of the sophist. As mentioned above, there is an attempt to define what a sophist is in the *Protagoras*. After admitting that from Protagoras' teaching he will become a sophist, Socrates asks Hippocrates to give a definition of the term *sophistēs*. Assuming that this is not an easy enterprise, Socrates says: 'As to what exactly a sophist is, I would be surprised if you really knew. [ὅτι δέ ποτε ὁ σοφιστής ἐστίν]' (312c1). Hippocrates, however, manages to give a general account based on what he seems to believe is the etymology of the word: 'as the name suggests [ὡσπερ τοῦνομα λέγει], he is someone who is knowledgeable in *sopha* things [τοῦτον εἶναι τὸν τῶν σοφῶν ἐπιστήμονα] (312c5-6).<sup>385</sup> Hippocrates comes up with a formula that seems to fit nicely with the meaning of a *sophistēs*, by associating the *soph-* component with *sophia* and the *-ist-* with *epistamai*.<sup>386</sup> But Hippocrates' definition is not only based on a false etymology; if we accept a certain correspondence between *sophia* and *epistēmē* (*Theaet.* 145e6; cf. 2.3), the definition is also circular. 'A sophist is a knower of wise things, or, in effect, a knower of knowledge' (Coby 1987, p. 29). Socrates seems to be bothered by neither of these things. Although the definition will prove insufficient, Socrates seems to have no grounds to reject the general characterisation of a sophist as a 'knower'. As Kerferd points out, 'when the young Hippocrates in Plato's *Protagoras* says that σοφιστής means "he who knows wise things" as if from σοφά and οἶδα (312c), he may have been a bad etymologist, but he understood the earlier meaning of the word' (1950, p. 9). Moreover, both the redundancy and the ambiguity of Hippocrates' definition seems to play in favour of Socrates' own characterisation of the sophist elsewhere as it points to the encyclopaedic knowledge claimed by some reputed *sophistai*.<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> Trans. adapted.

<sup>386</sup> Of course, the etymology is false. The *-ist-* of *sophistēs* is added to the stem to make an agent noun and the *-ist-* of the *epistamai* is not a component, but part of the stem. See Denyer (2008, p. 75).

<sup>387</sup> Cf. *Euthyd.* 271c5; *Soph.* 233c6, *Hipp. Min.* 368b2.

Socrates rejects Hippocrates' definition on the ground that it is 'too general'.<sup>388</sup> According to the Socratic criteria for definitions established elsewhere, we seem to be missing, *that by which* a sophist is a sophist: 'A proper definition of sophists would spell out a feature that all and only sophists have, and that makes them all sophists' (Denyer 2008, p. 75). But 'knowledgeable about wise things' can be said about painters and carpenters and, in sum, about any other expert. To narrow down the definition, Socrates presses Hippocrates into saying what the sophists' knowledge is *about*.

#### 6.4.2. The Sophists' Area of Expertise

For the purpose of making Hippocrates aware about the power and effect of Protagoras' teaching, Socrates is interested in determining what the sophist's area of expertise is. That is why the definition 'expert' unqualified is not useful. 'And if someone asked, 'What about sophists? What wise things do they understand [Ὅ δὲ σοφιστὴς τῶν τί σοφῶν ἐστίν;]?'—what would we answer? What are they expert at making [ποιᾶς ἐργασίας ἐπιστάτης;]?' (312d4-5).<sup>389</sup> The conversation resembles the exchange between Socrates and Gorgias in the *Gorgias* (449d ff.). There too Socrates is keen on determining the subject matter of rhetoric, i.e. about what (*peri ti*) the knowledge of rhetoric is.<sup>390</sup> And Hippocrates, like Gorgias, says that this knowledge is about speech (*Gorg.* 449e1): the sophist makes people clever speakers (*deinon legein*; 312d6). But speech is not a defining aspect, for there is a speech for every field of knowledge. Socrates then persists with the question 'about what' (*peri hotou*; 312d9, *peri tinos*; 312e3), until Hippocrates' is led into fallacy by including in his answer the premise that needs to be proven, producing something like 'the sophist knows about those things that he knows'. As he fails to establish what (*ti*) and about what (*peri hou*) is this knowledge that the sophist possesses and teaches, the question is left unanswered.

<sup>388</sup> Denyer (2008, pp. 74-5) goes through all the conditions of Socratic definitions as discussed in the *Euthyphro*, *Laches* and the *Meno*.

<sup>389</sup> By using the word *epistatēs*, Socrates seems to play along with Hippocrates' use of etymologies and he responds 'with a dodgy etymology of his own' (Denyer 2008, p. 76).

<sup>390</sup> As will be shown, sophistry and rhetoric are presented as almost the same practice in the *Gorgias*.

It is worth asking why the question related to subject-matter is relevant. Socrates in the *Apology* establishes that *sophia* unqualified, that is, absolute *sophia*, belongs only to the god (23a5-6). *Sophia*, unless divine, has to be qualified and a way to do this is determining its subject matter, i.e. to say what *sophia* is about. In general, we find three answers to this question in the dialogues; the *sophistēs'* *sophia* is (i) about all things (*Soph.* 233c6; *Euthyd.* 271c5) and specifically (ii) about virtue (*Apol.* 20b4; *Laches* 186c3; *Meno* 91b3, *Gorg.* 519c5; *Prot.* 319a4; *Soph.* 223a3) and (iii) speech (*Prot.* 312d6; *Crat.* 403e2; *Phaedrus* 257d6; *Tim.* 19e2; *Theaet.* 167a6).<sup>391</sup> In the *Euthydemus*, Socrates' refers to Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, previously introduced as a 'new addition to sophists' (271c1), and describes their expertise as follows: 'you ask what is their *sophia*—it will surprise you, Crito—they are simply [ἄτεχνῶς] *sophoi* about all [πάσσοφοι]' (271c5). The claim of encyclopaedic knowledge somehow contains the other two, but it does not affect them if proved wrong, for it can still be admitted that the sophist knows *some* things, namely speech and virtue. However, as observed above, since there is a speech or a discourse (*logos*) for every single kind of knowledge (see *Gorg.* 450b1), the answer is unsatisfactory for there is no specification of content.<sup>392</sup> The claim that the sophists' knowledge is about virtue, largely examined in the *Meno* and the *Protagoras*, connects to the question of whether virtue is knowable (and thus teachable), which neither of these dialogues can establish conclusively. Mostly, each of these claims seems to be too ambitious or simply impossible. It is not humanly possible to know everything and yet this is what sophists claim to do (*Soph.* 233a3ff).<sup>393</sup> The sophists' claim to knowledge is thus often characterised as super-human or divine.<sup>394</sup> In the *Apology*, Socrates' compare his *anthropinē sophia* with the claim of being wise in

<sup>391</sup> Corey (2015) proposes that 'teacher of *aretē*' is Plato's regular definition.

<sup>392</sup> This is explicit in *Dissoi logoi* DK 90 8(3): 'the man who knows the art of rhetoric will also know how to speak correctly in every subject' (Trans. R.K. Sprague (1972)).

<sup>393</sup> See *Rep.* 10. 596c-d and *Soph.* 233d9 for a characterisation of sophists as 'makers of everything'. Another example of a most accomplished craftsman and expert *polumathēs*, someone who has the ability to produce everything (even his shoes and tunic), is embodied by the sophist Hippias (*Hipp. Min.* 368b ff). Hippias' self-assertion and the listing of his numerous accomplishments contribute to characterise him as an over-achiever and the 'wisest of men in the greatest number of arts [πλείστας τέχνας πάντων σοφώτατος εἰ ἀνθρώπων]' (368b2).

<sup>394</sup> It is noteworthy that the philosopher is also considered divine (see *Soph.* 216c1). It is also noticeable that the philosopher's knowledge is not parceled but comprehensive, for it contains the principles of everything else. Although the knowledge the philosopher aspires is not restricted to a particular area, there is a fundamental difference with the kind of knowledge the sophists boast. As Rosen asserts: 'philosophy is concerned with the whole, and not simply with this or that art' (1999, p. 158).

superhuman wisdom which refers to Evenus' expertise in *aretē* (20b4). Such a remarkable undertaking deserves Socrates' admiration, and in this spirit he praises Protagoras more than once (*Prot.* 319a10; 320b5; 348e2). Here it may be worth recalling Hippolytus' words to his father when discussing the possibility of teaching *phronēsis*: 'A formidable *sophistēs* this [δεινὸν σοφιστὴν εἶπας], who is able to force insensate fools to show sense' (Eur. *Hipp.* 921). The production of a speech that covers every subject also seems like a super-human achievement. In the *Euthydemus*, when looking for that knowledge that combines both the making and the use of what is made, Socrates proposes the art of the speechmaker. 'For indeed the men who make the speeches, when I meet them, do seem to me to be super-*sophos* [*hupersophos*], Clinias, and their very art seems to be something divine and lofty [θεσπεσία τις καὶ ὑψηλή]' (*Euthyd.* 289e1).

From the examples above, we obtain two relevant characterisations of the sophists in Plato. First, to the extent that they claim to have access to knowledge that is beyond human (absolute or divine knowledge), we get the image of the sophist as a magician, an enchanter, a wizard, a prophet or a juggler (*Crat.* 397a1; *Symp.* 203d8; *Laws* 908d7; *Soph.* 235b5, 241b6). We might want to wonder whether the characterisation of sophists as magicians is necessarily unfavourable.<sup>395</sup> This becomes particularly relevant considering that Socrates is more than once presented in this light. Alcibiades in the *Symposium* compares Socrates with the Marsyas (215c) in his power to enchant and possess people with his words. Similarly, in the *Meno* (80b), Meno explains his own state of bewilderment and perplexity as the result of Socrates' 'spell'. This is why he introduces the torpedo-fish analogy, which goes hand with hand with the image of witchcraft. The tone of Meno's joke is not complimentary (see 80b4). In this regard, Socrates may not be too different from sophists: all of them seem to practice incantation through words. But this is only true when assessing the performance of the speaker from the point of view of the audience's response. Like the audience of a magician, most of Socrates' interlocutors turn out to be both amazed and baffled when witnessing his performance. But then again, one can be confused and baffled by reading conspiracy theories involving aliens or Darwin's theory of evolution. This means that a fair assessment should

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<sup>395</sup> To see a full account of the evaluation of magic from philosophy and medicine in the course of the fifth century, see Lloyd (1979).

include not only the response of the audience, but also the approach, the means, and the intention of the speaker. And considering these elements, Socrates appears more like a show spoiler than a magician. Romilly points out the difference: ‘Whereas the magic of the sophists aimed at producing illusion, Socrates’ magic rests on the obstinate destruction of all illusions. It is the magic of implacable truth’ (1975, pp. 36-7). The characterisation of sophists as enchanters or magicians in Plato relates to both the distorted conception sophists have of themselves (they think they know what they do not know), and the use of their abilities regardless of the truth. This second point becomes relevant later in the context of the analysis of the *Sophist*, but it is worth addressing it now. What makes the sophist comparable to a magician in Plato is his lack of commitment to the truth. This lack of commitment is ultimately what allows him to display the full potential of his capacity without any restriction, ‘for the sake of the show’. As a result, the sophist may use as many resources and as many facets as he deems convenient for the success of his performance. An example of this appears in the *Euthydemus* in relation to Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. Socrates addresses Ctesippus, annoyed by the brothers’ eristic tricks, as follows: ‘you fail to recognise how remarkable the strangers’ *sophia* is [τὴν σοφίαν ὅτι θαυμασία ἐστίν]. It’s just that the two of them are unwilling to give us a serious demonstration [ἐπιδείξασθαι σπουδάζοντε], but are putting on conjuring tricks [γοητεύοντε] in imitation of that Egyptian sophist, Proteus [τὸν Πρωτέα μμείσθον τὸν Αἰγύπτιον σοφιστὴν]’ (288b6-8).<sup>396</sup> Just as the cunning Proteus fights back by taking on all sorts of shapes, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus fight back by way of shifting from one verbal trick to the other, avoiding truth at all costs. ‘Proteus is the symbol of elusive transformation; for, instead of fighting in a direct and honest way, he used to change himself into a number of deceptive forms and shift from one to the other’ (Romilly 1975, p. 28). Through the dialogue we can see that this constant shifting makes the progress of the conversation impossible; the argument either turns in a circle or is reduced *ad absurdum*. But most important of all, by proving themselves skilled disputers, they show the wrong disposition to find the truth, which is crucial for philosophical activity. As Socrates declares: ‘they have become so skilled in fighting in arguments and in refuting whatever may be said, no matter whether it is true or false’ (272a8-b1). This characterisation reminds us the

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<sup>396</sup> In the *Euthydemus* sophistic is also comparable to religious mysteries (277d7).

importance of the distinction between knowledge and intelligence laid down in chapter 2. The sophist described as shifting and deceptive responds to the characteristic intelligence of *mētis* and *sophia* (1.3), but this is not enough to call him a *sophos*.

Second, to the extent that sophists claim to be experts in certain areas of knowledge, they can be compared to other craftsmen (*Apol.* 20a6; *Rep.* 596d1; *Prot.* 311e2; 312d4; *Soph.* 222a2). This is especially significant considering that philosophy is not commonly compared with other crafts. Except in the *Republic*, the status of philosophy as an activity prevents it from being conceptualised as a *technē* or as *sophia*. Of course, a thorough analysis of Plato's conceptualisation of philosophy might demonstrate that he ultimately considers it to be a craft (comparable to medicine)—dialectic being the highest craft, but in the context of the present analysis what comes to our attention is the contrast with sophistry. In this regard, there are two aspects that make the comparison between sophistry and other crafts relevant: the sophists' claim to knowledge and the sophists' claim to teaching.

## 6.5. The *Sophistai*

The doxographic tradition has provided us with a number of names listed as sophists. Within the tradition of 'old sophistic' we find Protagoras, Xenias, Gorgias, Lycophron, Prodicus, Thrasymachus, Hippias, Antiphon and Critias, most of them attested in Philostratus' account *The Lives of the Sophists* and the *Suidas Lexicon*.<sup>397</sup> Of these, Plato makes explicit references to the following as sophists: Prodicus (*Lach.* 197d3; *Sym.* 177b4; *Euthyd.* 277e4); Protagoras (*Crat.* 391c4, *Prot.* 311e3); Gorgias (*Hipp. Maj.* 282b4); and Hippias (*Hipp. Maj.* 282e8).<sup>398</sup> He also identifies Dionysodorus and Euthydemus (*Euthyd.* 271c1), Miccus (*Lysis* 204a5), who is introduced as a friend and supporter of Socrates, and Evenus (*Apol.* 20b8) as sophists.<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>397</sup> These are the sophists in Diels-Kranz (1951) and Untersteiner (1949).

<sup>398</sup> On Protagoras' evaluation, see also *Hipp. Maj.* 282c.

<sup>399</sup> Socrates himself is identified as a sophist by the servant in *Prot.* 314d3.

It is striking that Plato also compares Diotima to a sophist (*Symp.* 208c1), and identifies the god Hades (*Crat.* 403e2) and Poros (*Symp.* 203e1) as sophists. When reaffirming the doctrine according to which the mortal loves and strives for the immortal, Diotima is said to respond ‘like a perfect [τέλειος] *sophistēs*’.<sup>400</sup> In the same dialogue, Poros is a *sophistēs* for, as opposed to Penias, he is fully resourceful and knowledgeable (cf. 4.4.2). When explaining the etymology of ‘Hades’ (*aeidēs*) in the *Cratylus*, Socrates suggests that Hades bind us to come to the world of death by means of his words and charm. ‘And, according to this view, he is “the perfect sophist” [τέλειος σοφιστής]’ (403e4). His name ‘Hades’ is said to come from *eidēnai*, because of ‘his knowledge of all noble things [ἀπὸ τοῦ πάντα τὰ καλὰ εἰδέναι]’ (404b2-3). From these examples, I believe that we can safely assume that Plato is aware and makes use of the general sense of *sophistēs*, which captures the basic meaning of the adjective *sophos* as ‘knowledgeable’.<sup>401</sup>

When Plato refers to sophists as a group, he generally incorporates the aspect of teaching. Sophists are said to have pupils, (claim to) impart a skill, or (claim to) educate people (*Apol.* 19e1; *Lach.* 186c4; *Prot.* 319a5; *Gorg.* 519c5; *Meno* 91b7; *Rep.* 6. 492d5; *Theaet.* 167a6). As obvious as it might seem, it is worth remarking that teaching is described as requiring the possession of the knowledge of the subject taught. However, this condition does not apply to Socratic *elenchus*, by which he brings out the knowledge of the interlocutor. Thus in the *Apology* Socrates declares that he has never been a teacher (33a5) and in the *Laches* (186c2-5) he makes an explicit comparison between his lack of *technē* in *aretē* and the sophists’ expert knowledge.<sup>402</sup> It is important to consider this since it links the professional aspect of teaching with the quality of being knowledgeable, which seems to be a crucial element in the definition and characterisation of a *sophistēs*. In the *Cratylus*, Socrates says to Hermogenes: ‘The most correct way is together with people who already know [μετὰ τῶν ἐπισταμένων], but you must pay them well and show gratitude besides—these are the sophists [...]’ (391b9-11).

<sup>400</sup> The association between priests and sophists is made at *Crat.* 397a1, when Socrates says that the wisdom about names will be conjured away by either one of the priests (*hiereōn*) or one of the *sophistai*.

<sup>401</sup> Although it is not impossible that Plato labels these figures as sophists deliberately bringing forth some of the negative overtones associated with it.

<sup>402</sup> ‘*Laches* 186c discloses a basic point of divergence to which I return frequently: *unlike the Sophists, Socrates professes no technē*’ (Roochnik 1996, p. 96).

However, when *sophistēs* is used as a tag to designate a member of this group of teachers, the underlying meaning of *sophos* as ‘expert’, if not excluded, is at least diminished. If we recall the passage in the *Protagoras* where Hippocrates is trying to give a definition of *sophistēs*, we see that Socrates is not content with the idea of the sophist being this expert with no specific field of expertise. The question seems significant because Hippocrates expects to become a sophist from Protagoras’ teaching, which means that he believes that a sophist’s skills and knowledge are transferable. At this point of the discussion we already get an idea about the notion of *sophistēs* that Plato is looking for. This is not the general meaning of *sophistēs* as ‘knower’ or ‘expert’. If that were the case, Socrates would have been happy with this definition and Hippocrates, on the other hand, would have been able to include painters and builders among the *sophistai*. But as becomes clear later in the dialogue, ‘sophist’ has the more concrete sense of ‘professional teacher’, which makes reference to Protagoras, Hippias, and Prodicus (314e4 ff). This does not mean that any professional teacher is a sophist. It is essential to understand that this is a title of reputation; to a large extent, the *sophoi* and the *sophistai* are those renowned as *sophoi* and *sophistai*.

To illustrate the different uses of *sophistēs* in Plato, let us think of the example ‘conservative’, which as an adjective describes a person’s preference for tradition and old values. As a noun (used in the specific political sense) ‘Conservative’ designates a member of a political party aligned with a particular ideology and agenda. Although this ideology is linked to the original meaning of ‘conserving’ or ‘preserving’ old values, when we refer to Conservatives as a party the adjectival meaning seems to fade, and the term becomes more like a title or tag to label a class of people.<sup>403</sup> As a result, its sense and meaning is linked to the salient traits and activities associated with the people who belong to this group. Maybe we can think of the word *sophistēs* in a similar way. There is the adjectival sense associated with *sophos* that designates the quality of knowing, and there is a referential sense by which *sophistēs* designates a group of people distinguished by certain characteristics.

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<sup>403</sup> As shown by the fact that the label ‘Conservative’ is often treated as interchangeable with ‘Tory’ as a name for the party.

It is clear that in order to identify ‘sophists’ as a group or a class we would need to establish a set of identifiable traits. Although no one today would admit that there is such thing as a ‘school’ of sophists (or even a ‘movement’), some accounts still offer a list with some common salient features of sophists invoking Plato as a witness.<sup>404</sup> Most notably, Guthrie (1969, pp. 35 ff) says a sophist is distinguished by his (i) professionalism; (ii) inter-city status; (iii) epideictic and eristic methods; (iv) empiricist outlook. While it is true that most of these features are attributed to one or another individual sophist across the dialogues, there is little evidence in Plato to support the claim that this set of traits is either comprehensive or defining of sophists as a group. Other than the aspect of teaching, there seems to be no systematic set of defining features for the class of *sophistai*. It is actually quite difficult to distinguish sophists as a genus at all. The problem is identified at the outset of the *Sophist*, when Socrates wonders whether there is a difference between the categories *sophistēs*, *philosophos* and *politikos* (217a3). Part of the problem seems to be that, with the exception of Protagoras (*Prot.* 317b4), none of the so-called sophists call themselves sophists. This is quite significant. Unlike the case of ‘conservative’, ‘sophist’ is a title of reputation, which means that individuals can be identified as such as long as others regard them as such. In this sense, sophist is much closer to the label ‘intellectual’, a label rarely used for the purpose of self-presentation. Thus the labelling becomes a controversial issue because most of those who are called sophists might choose for themselves some other title endowed with more prestige such as ‘philosopher’ (*Rep.* 495d4).<sup>405</sup> In the *Euthydemus*, for example, we see that Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, previously labelled as sophists by Crito (271c1), proudly accept that they are the ‘best able to exhort a man to philosophy and the practice of virtue’ (275a1-2). Precisely because these titles are conventionally established, they are flexible and permeable.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> See e.g. Dillon and Gergel (2003).

<sup>405</sup> We know that this was the case with Isocrates’ *Antidosis*, and Plato seems to address him in the *Euthydemus* when Socrates says: ‘they are the persons, Crito, whom Prodicus described as the border-ground between philosopher and politician [μεθόρια φιλοσόφου τε ἀνδρός καὶ πολιτικοῦ], yet they fancy that they are the wisest of all mankind [σοφώτατοι ἀνθρώπων]’ (305c6-8).

<sup>406</sup> Thus it is entirely possible that he who presents himself as a philosopher may seem to be a sophist, as could be the case for Socrates, or a sophist as a philosopher, as could be the case of Isocrates. This problem is at the basis of the dialogues *Sophist* and *Statesman*.

## 6.6. The Sophists' Reputation

'Plato's hostility to the sophists is obvious and has always been recognised. But exactly what he says about them has not always been described with precision' (Kerferd 1981, p. 4). What makes Kerferd's statement interesting is the contrast between the categorical force of the first assertion, 'Plato's hostility is obvious', and the qualification that follows, 'but is not clear what exactly he says about them'. To assess the phenomenon, I would like to proceed in the opposite direction: to understand what Plato has to say about sophists and then establish whether his hostility is clear. Once we examine more closely Plato's own words, the argument for hostility becomes less obvious.

The truth is that as much as we find clear attempts to disparage the sophists, we can also trace some effort on the part of Socrates to clear their name against common prejudice. The phenomenon is partly addressed in the *Apology* (22e6), in the *Euthyphro* (3c6) and the *Protagoras* (316d2) and has to do with a generalised odium against the intellectual, whether teachers, philosophers or scientists (cf. 1.5, 1.6, 3.1.1). Indeed, when Hippocrates blushes at saying he will become a sophist, Socrates reacts: "What? You? Wouldn't you be ashamed to present yourself to the Greek world as a sophist?" [οὐκ ἂν αἰσχύνοιο εἰς τοὺς Ἕλληνας σαυτὸν σοφιστὴν παρέχων;]?' (312a4-6). The negative evaluation attached to the title of sophist comes from public perception.

An interesting example to show how Plato deals with prejudice against the intellectual is found in the *Meno*. Socrates, in conversation with Meno about whether there are teachers of virtue, calls Anytus for assistance on the assumption that he has the status and authority to respond to such a question. Anytus, one of Socrates' prosecutors in the *Apology*, is a most representative example of the anti-intellectual stripe. If Meno desires to have *sophia* and *aretē*, Socrates asks who should he go to. It would appear natural, says Socrates, to go to those who advertise themselves as teachers of virtue. The dialogue goes as follows:

ANYTUS: And who do you say these are, Socrates?

SOCRATES: You surely know yourself that they are those whom men call

sophists [οἱ ἄνθρωποι καλοῦσι σοφιστάς].

ANYTUS: By Heracles, hush, Socrates. May no one of my household or friends, whether citizen or stranger, be mad enough to go to these people and be harmed by them, for they clearly cause the ruin and corruption of their followers (91b6-c5).

Socrates challenges Anytus' opinions by invoking the example of Protagoras, who holds a great reputation among Athenians. 'Are we to deem those whom some people consider the wisest of men [σοφωτάτους ἀνθρώπων] to be so mad as that? (92a4-6). But Anytus does not give in and Socrates insists:

SOCRATES: Has some sophist wronged you, Anytus, or why are you so hard on them?

ANYTUS: No, by Zeus, I have never met one of them, nor would I allow any one of my people to do so.

SOCRATES: Are you then altogether without any experience [ἄπειρος] of these men?

ANYTUS: And may I remain so.

SOCRATES: How then, my good sir, can you know whether there is any good in their instruction or not [εἶτε τι ἀγαθὸν ἔχει ἐν ἑαυτῷ εἶτε φαρῶδες], if you are altogether without experience of it?

ANYTUS: Easily, for I know who they are [τούτους γοῦν οἶδα οἳ εἰσιν], whether I have experience of them or not.

SOCRATES: Perhaps you are a wizard, Anytus, for I wonder, from what you yourself say, how else you know about these things (92b5-c7).

Anytus' assumptions here, as in Socrates' *Apology*, reflect the anti-intellectual attitude based on prejudice. In Plato's version, it is precisely as a result of this distorted judgement that Socrates is regarded as a sophist. This can give us hints to explain why Plato does not endorse people's opinion in his assessment of the sophist. To destroy the sophist's reputation when is so tightly associated with the philosopher's, particularly with Socrates, can do more damage than good.

In the *Protagoras*, Plato creates a good opportunity to tarnish the sophists' reputation. Hippocrates cannot identify the sophist's expertise, and is at a loss to assert what a sophist is. Socrates, unlike Hippocrates, seems to have a clear idea of what sophists are: 'a sophist is a kind of merchant who peddles provisions upon which the soul is nourished' (313c4-6). Even though this depiction damages the sophist—he is presented as a seller rather than a knower or a teacher—when looking closely at the analogy we can see that the target of criticism is more the consumer

than the seller. Socrates warns Hippocrates of the dangers of being a misinformed consumer. Like the merchants of food, the sophists' main goal is to sell their products, i.e. teaching, without discriminating the beneficial from the harmful. 'So if you are a knowledgeable [ἐπιστήμων] consumer, you can buy teachings safely from Protagoras or anyone else. But if you're not, please don't risk what is most dear to you on a roll of the dice, for there is a far greater risk in buying teachings than in buying food' (313e2-5).<sup>407</sup>

It is striking to see later on that Protagoras' characterisation does not satisfy this generalised depiction of sophists as merchants or sellers indifferent to the effect of their teaching. When asked about the nature of his teaching, Protagoras claims to make people better (318b4), to make them good citizens (319a5), and to teach virtue (328b1). The question of whether this is possible or not does not change the fact that he is not presented as a seller whose only goal is to make money. And unlike other sophists who 'abuse young men, steering them back again, against their will, into subjects the likes of which they have escaped from at school, teaching them arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, music, and poetry' (318d9-e3), Protagoras claims to teach domestic and civic virtue: 'sound deliberation, both in domestic matters—how best to manage one's household, and in public affairs—how to realize one's maximum potential for success in political debate and action' (318e5-319a2). Protagoras stands out as a sophist whose activity concerns the citizens' well-being and he claims to undertake this activity in the name of sophistry. Across Plato's dialogues, no one else embraces the title of sophist with such pride: 'I admit that I

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<sup>407</sup> The aspect of money has resonated in the tradition, if not as one of the strongest, then as one of the most persistent motives for Plato's condemnation of sophists (cf. Tell 2011, pp. 39-59). Indeed, this is a recurrent theme across the dialogues (see *Apol.* 20b; *Lach.* 186c; *Theaet.* 167c-d; *Soph.* 225e; 226a; *Prot.* 313c; *Hipp. Maj.* 282b, 282e), although it is not exclusively treated by Plato. The negative aspect of money is also explored by Xenophon. See *Mem.* 1. 2. 5-6, 1. 6. 5. It is beyond the purpose of this analysis to carry a detailed examination of the aspect of money; it will suffice to say that this is not a specific aspect of Plato's criticism against sophists. The problem cannot be reduced to some distaste for money-making; it has a broader scope and is at the heart of Plato's value-system. According to some basic Platonic moral principles, the search for wealth and money (to which we might also add honour and pleasure) is misguided: it is the result of a misevaluation of goods. The particular problem with sophists, like Protagoras or Euthydemus, who offer to teach virtue for a fee, is that they challenge the Platonic moral balance between means and ends: virtue and knowledge become the means to acquire wealth, that is, the means become the ends and vice versa. Thus even though the love for money is driven by a low appetite, charging a fee is not reproachable in itself (see *Gorg.* 520d), but it is for giving advice on virtue (*Gorg.* 520e). Ultimately, charging a fee (or request any other favour) for teaching virtue implies that some sort of exchange is possible, i.e. that it is possible to simply buy virtue as opposed to have to work at the internal understanding necessary to have it.

am a sophist and that I educate men' (317b4); 'I have been in the profession many years now, and I'm old enough to be the father of any of you here' (317c1-3). Protagoras' pride at being a sophist is described as something remarkable and unprecedented. He himself explains that sophists are part of a tradition that goes as back as Homer: poets, prophets and even athletes are counted in the tradition of sophists, but because of people's odium and suspicion towards them, they have concealed their profession.

Now, I maintain that the sophist's art is an ancient one [ἐγὼ δὲ τὴν σοφιστικὴν τέχνην φημὶ μὲν εἶναι παλαιάν], but that the men who practised it in ancient times, fearing the odium attached to it, disguised it, masking it sometimes as poetry, as Homer and Hesiod and Simonides did, or as mystery religions and prophecy, witness Orpheus and Musaeus, and occasionally, I've noticed, even as athletics, as with Iccus of Tarentum and, in our own time, Herodicus of Selymbria (originally of Megara), as great a sophist as any. Your own Agathocles, a great sophist, used music as a front, as did Pythocles of Ceos, and many others. All of them, as I say, used these various arts as screens out of fear of ill will (316d3-e5).

The account offered by Protagoras seems to neutralise the earlier negative evaluation of sophists. As Kerferd says, as suspicious as it might seem, this account 'functions as an attempt to provide Protagoras with respectable antecedents for his own sophistic art' (1976, p. 27). He goes on to say: 'Plato here, through the person of Protagoras, gives expression to a more adequate "image" of the wise man in earlier periods, than that contrived, in part by himself and in part by Aristotle and others still later, which still dominates our handbooks and dictionaries' (Kerferd 1976, p. 28). But why would Plato do this? This account, of course, is offered by Plato as Protagoras' own interpretation of the tradition of sophists. But it is striking to see not only that it makes sense historically, but also that it presents the sophists' lineage in a rather positive light. I think there is a way to explain this within Plato's own agenda. Clearing the sophists' bad reputation would allow him to introduce his own assessment, a more serious one, free from the opinion of the majority and the anti-intellectual bias. By displacing popular conceptions, Plato validates his own. And this is ultimately because he considers that the reasons why sophists have a bad reputation are not the right reasons. As Protagoras' account says, sophists have historically claimed to educate men.<sup>408</sup> Traditionally, the odium against them is

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<sup>408</sup> See Isocrates 15. 285, 313.

rooted in the belief that their education defies the traditional value-system and corrupts people. But Plato's suspicion of sophists is rooted in disbelief: he does not believe that sophists can teach virtue and, to the same extent, he does not believe they can corrupt people. See for example in the *Meno*, where the problem of whether virtue is teachable becomes the problem of whether there are actual teachers of virtue. In this context, Meno asks Socrates: 'do you think that there are no teachers of virtue [ἀρετῆς διδάσκαλοι]?' to which he answers: 'I have often tried to find out whether there were any teachers of it, but in spite of all my efforts I cannot find any [οὐ δύναμαι εὑρεῖν]' (89e4-7). Unlike Anytus, Socrates does not think that sophists are a corrupting force; but he does not think they are teachers of virtue either. Both the downgrading and the overrating of sophists distort their image; they are neither educators in virtue nor corrupting rogues. This view is also laid down in the *Republic*. When Socrates diagnoses the causes of bad education, he asserts that sophists have no effect on the public. He asks Adeimantus: 'Or do you agree with the general opinion [ὡσπερ οἱ πολλοί] that certain people are actually corrupted by sophists [διαφθείροντας δέ τινας σοφιστὰς ιδιωτικούς] —that there are certain sophists with significant influence on the young who corrupt them through private teaching?' (492a5-8). It is not the case that sophists corrupt young men when trying to educate them; rather, their teaching has no moral effect, either negative or positive. They are relatively harmless.<sup>409</sup>

Because Gorgias has traditionally been counted among the sophists, it is assumed that the *Gorgias*, by articulating an attack against rhetoric, also includes an attack against sophistry and sophists. But the truth is that Gorgias is not regarded as a sophist' in this dialogue (cf. Dodds 1959, p. 7; Irwin 1995b, p. 575).<sup>410</sup> Rather, 'he describes himself as a rhetor (449a), and the professions of rhetor and sophist are carefully distinguished by Socrates, though he admits that people are apt to confound them (465c)' (Dodds 1959, p. 7). Indeed, sophistry can hardly be counted as a main topic of discussion; *sophistikē* appears only three times: twice in conversation with

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<sup>409</sup> As Irwin (1995b, p. 578) points out, Plato's view on sophists is less complimentary than the common view in that he holds them to be unoriginal, and more complimentary in that he does not accuse them of promoting new immoral doctrines.

<sup>410</sup> Neither does Callicles. 'If Plato intended us to regard him as a typical product of sophistic teaching, he missed his opportunity to signal his intention to us. Since it would have been easy for Plato to mention sophists and sophistic views if he had wanted to mention them in his description of Kallikles, the fact that he fails to mention them must be given some weight' (Irwin 1995b, p. 574).

Polus (463b6; 465c2) and once in conversation with Callicles (520b2), where *sophistēs* also appears only once (520a7). In the course of the dialogue Socrates engages in conversation with three different interlocutors: Gorgias, Polus and Callicles. The exchange with Polus reveals that sophistry is different from rhetoric and the exchange with Callicles that sophistry is better than rhetoric.

When Socrates gives his own account of rhetoric to Polus, he explains that there are four crafts, two aimed at the well-being of the soul, justice (*dikaioṣunē*) and legislation (*nomothetikē*) (politics), and two others aimed at the well-being of the body, medicine (*iatrikē*) and gymnastics (*gumnastikē*). For all four of them there is a knack that ‘makes the body and the soul seem [δοκεῖν] fit when in fact they aren’t any the more so’ (464a8). In the soul, oratory (*rhetorikē*) is to justice what sophistry (*sophistikē*) is to legislation, and in the body pastry-baking (*opsopoiikē*) is to medicine what cosmetics (*kommotikē*) are to gymnastics (465bff). Thus sophistry falls into the category of ‘flattery’ (*kolakeia*), which is defined as a ‘practice [ἐπιτήδευμα] that is not craftlike [τεχνικόν]’ (463a6), but rather a ‘knack [ἐμπειρία] for gratification and pleasure [χάριτος καὶ ἡδονῆς]’ (462d10). Oratory (*rhetorikē*) is ‘an image’ (*eidolon*) of politics (463d2), which is considered shameful (*aischron*) (463d4) ‘because it guesses at what’s pleasant with no consideration for what’s best’ (465a1-2). As the dialogue aims to define the nature of rhetoric, the description of sophistry is rather incidental. In the context of the *Gorgias*, the purpose is to associate rhetoric and sophistry by bringing forth the (negative) aspects they share. At 465c, Socrates establishes that sophists and orators tend to be confused as people that are working on the same matter. But rather than indicating what the matter is, he gives a general account of their predicament: ‘they don’t know what to do [οὐκ ἔχουσιν ὅτι χροῖσονται] with themselves, and other people don’t know what to do with them’ (465c5-7).<sup>411</sup> In this analysis, both sophists and orators have the same status; neither is better than the other because they are both concerned with gratification and flattery, and disregard what is most important.

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<sup>411</sup> It is noteworthy that the problem faced by sophists and orators is partly the same problem faced by philosophers in the *Republic* VI. Although for different reasons, all of them are misrepresented by people.

However, we may assume a distinction between sophist and orator by looking closely at the analogy that Socrates proposes: sophistry is to rhetoric what legislation is to justice. Socrates does not expand on the nature of legislation and its relation to justice, but we may fairly assume that legislation, roughly understood as ‘enacted law’, is an instrument for the observance of justice.<sup>412</sup> As such, legislation stands as a regulative instrument, as opposed to the administration of justice, which is corrective: in the same way that gymnastics is regulative and medicine is corrective. So although both rhetoric and sophistry are equally bad —they are merely imitations, sophistry can surpass rhetoric in this one aspect, i.e. ‘on the principle that prevention is better than cure’ (cf. Dodds 1959, p. 226). Socrates says to Callicles:

they are one and the same, the sophist and the orator, or nearly so and pretty similar, as I was telling Polus. But because you don’t see this, you suppose that one of them, oratory, is something wonderful, while you sneer at the other. In actuality, however, sophistry is more to be admired than oratory, insofar as legislation is more admirable than the administration of justice, and gymnastics more than medicine (520a3-8).

So, although both stand as imitations, they are different with respect to the thing each of them imitates: ‘if it is a finer thing to imitate the making of law than to imitate the administration of justice, it is because imitation has a share in the worth of his model. Sophistry consequently preserves a good deal of politics and even of politics’ finest part, the fashioning of the law’ (Narcy 2013, p. 58). One further point of difference, relevant for the present investigation, is brought forward by Rosen: ‘Perhaps the slight difference between them comes to this: the rhetor (as represented by Gorgias) emphasizes the persuasive power (δύναμις) of his art (see *Gorgias* 455d6ff), whereas the sophist emphasises his knowledge’ (1999, pp. 26-7).

What is most striking about this passage is that Callicles seems to despise sophists more than Socrates does. Unlike Protagoras, Gorgias does not seem to embrace the title of *sophistēs*, and Callicles, following him, supports orators while condemning

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<sup>412</sup> If we wanted to go deeper into the analysis, we could evoke the visitor’s words in the *Statesman*, when he establishes that the law is defective but necessary. Because every human being is different the ‘law could never accurately embrace what is best and most just for all at the same time, and so prescribe what is best’ (*Stat.* 294a10), but because it is impossible for the legislator to take into account the well-being of every individual, ‘he will set down the law for each and every one according to the principle of ‘for the majority of people, for the majority of cases’ (*Stat.* 295a4).

sophists.<sup>413</sup> Callicles' assessment of sophists is in line with Anytus' in the *Meno*. 'To Callicles the sophists are no doubt obnoxious both on social grounds and as "unpractical intellectuals"; ἀρετή for him is something that needs no teaching, whereas Gorgias teaches something useful' (Dodds 1959, p. 367).<sup>414</sup> On this, Corey states: 'Gorgias, in other words, appears to have eschewed the name sophist, because he recognised the basic fact that to be a sophist was to be teacher of *aretē* and he did not want to present himself as a teacher of *aretē*' (Corey 2015, p. 30). However, rather than showing that Gorgias is not a sophist, as some critics claim, one can also infer from this that 'sophist' is a flexible title, a label that can be used to designate philosophers, rhetoricians or politicians. This is also shown by Socrates being called a sophist or a *sophos* while claiming to philosophise in the *Apology*, and Euthydemus and Dionysodorus claiming to philosophise while being described as sophists in the *Euthydemus*.

Mostly, *sophistēs* is a conventional title of reputation, which allows flexibility. As will be shown in the next chapter, this is the problem that interests Plato. Rather than defining the sophist that bothers Anytus or teaches Hippocrates, Plato, in the *Sophist*, demonstrates that the sophist is essentially different from the philosopher in a way that is philosophically relevant.

## 6.7. Conclusion

Across the dialogues, Plato offers a critical account of the aspects commonly associated with sophists. Rather than defining what or who the sophist is, he offers snippets of the common characterisation of sophists. The result is that there is no clarity as to what or who the sophists are, what they do and why their activity would be condemnable. However, he is able to link the problem of definition to the

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<sup>413</sup> Gorgias is different from other traditionally classified sophists in that he does not claim to teach virtue. On whether sophists are teachers of virtue, Meno says to Socrates: 'I admire this most in Gorgias, Socrates, that you would never hear him promising this. Indeed, he ridicules the others when he hears them making this claim. He thinks one should make people clever speakers [λέγειν οἷεται δεῖν ποιεῖν δεινούς]' (95c1-4). On the possible reasons why he disavows from the teaching of *aretē*, see. *Gorg.* 475b-c. On this, Corey says: 'By teaching rhetoric alone, divorcing himself from the more challenging business of imparting *arete*, Gorgias seems to have hoped to avoid the problem of being blamed for his students' misdeeds' (Corey 2015, p. 31).

<sup>414</sup> Dodds (1959, p. 366) and Corey (2015, p. 16) claim this is the regular way Plato describes the sophist.

problem of sophists having no distinctive (or credible) realm of expertise, which is also important for his account in the *Sophist*. Importantly, Plato is critical of popular representations of sophists mainly because they are the result of people's misjudgement or ignorance, from which the prejudice against philosophers also stems. To understand adequately what the meaning of *sophistēs* is, including his expertise and liability, it is necessary to transcend those aspects attached to individual sophists. This is the main focus of the next chapter on the *Sophist*.

## CHAPTER 7: PLATO'S *SOPHIST*

The first difficulty we face when dealing with Plato's *Sophist* is to decide what the dialogue is about. At least two important subjects are discussed in detail: the definition of the sophist and the problem of non-being. Thus scholars have traditionally recognised the presence of a double structure in the *Sophist*; the outer part of the dialogue, including the first and final part (216a-236e; 264c-268d), mostly dedicated to the definition of the sophist, and the middle part (236e-264c), dedicated to the problem of falsity and non-being. This double-structure has determined the way in which the dialogue is approached. The question of what the sophist is can be considered from an historical and philosophical perspective; the problem of non-being or *what is not* can be approached from ontology and logic.<sup>415</sup> The many different layers allowing these various readings seem to defeat the purpose of deciding what the *Sophist* is about. However, in the course of the last few decades efforts have been made to see the dialogue as a whole, not only considered dramatically, but philosophically. Examined in its dramatic and philosophical unity the subject of the dialogue seems to be clear: the definition of the sophist. In the preamble of the dialogue, the visitor from Elea says: 'I think you need to begin the investigation from the sophist [νῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ σοφιστοῦ]—by searching for him and giving a clear account of what he is [τί ποτ' ἔστι]' (218b7-c1). By the end of the dialogue, the visitor concludes: 'Anyone who says the sophist is of this "blood and family" will be saying, it seems, the complete truth [τᾶληθέστατα]' (268d2-4). The visitor from Elea, with the help of Theaetetus, seems to have accomplished what he set out to, i.e. to give a clear account of *what* the sophist is. I emphasise *what* here because it points out that the dialogue is about what (*ti*) rather than who (*tis*) the sophist is. This is especially relevant to establish the philosophical (over the historical) priority of the dialogue. Plato is not seeking to identify the tribe of the sophists by listing the characteristics of individual sophists.<sup>416</sup> Here Plato aims to define the nature or essence of the sophist, which transcends those aspects conventionally associated with one or another individual sophist.

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<sup>415</sup> For an account of the *Sophist* and the interest the dialogue has raised in contemporary philosophy see White's introduction (1993).

<sup>416</sup> Reference to the reputed sophists mentioned in other dialogues happens only once when Protagoras is mentioned (232d).

By saying that the dialogue is about defining the sophist, I do not want to suggest that the other main subject, that is, the problem of *what is not*, is subordinate; only that, considering the dramatic structure of the dialogue, the introduction and treatment of this problem is instrumental to the broader purpose of chasing down the sophist. It is in the attempt to define the sophist that the dialogue turns to discuss the problem of non-being. Of course, since Plato dedicates more than 26 Stephanus pages to the problem of non-being and falsity, i.e. roughly half of the entire dialogue, it makes sense to wonder about the real scope of the dialogue. But it would be a mistake not to consider it a digression—in the same way that it would be a mistake not to consider books V to VII of the *Republic* a digression. As in the *Republic*, the question raises as an objection against the main argument. In the *Sophist*, the notion of appearance, pivotal to defining the art of the sophist, cannot be understood unless it is first proved that appearance is different from being. The possibility of appearing without being presupposes that it is true that ‘what is not is’. Once the visitor from Elea and Theaetetus have tackled this problem (264c), they are able to proceed with the investigation and get a clear account of what the sophist is.

In this chapter I will follow the main line of inquiry developed in the first and last parts of the dialogue, whereas the middle part will be considered only to the extent that it directly contributes to the task of defining the sophist. In principle, I believe that the *Sophist* offers a positive account of what a sophist is—although I do not necessarily claim that the definition is correct.<sup>417</sup> More particularly, I claim that Plato characteristically defines the sophist as an apparent *sophos*. The problem of the sophist’s appearance is raised across the dialogue, firstly when the philosopher is said to appear to people in the guise of a sophist (216d1), later when the sophist’s ability is described as seeming *sophos* about everything (233b1; 233c6), and by the end of the dialogue, when the visitor explains that he gets his name by imitating the *sophos* (268b11).<sup>418</sup>

The question arises to how this can be a defining attribute of the sophist when it also belongs to other *sophoi*, including the *philosophoi*. The underlying problem of the

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<sup>417</sup> There are those who believe the *Sophist* successfully defines the sophist (e.g. Cornford 1960 and Notomi 1999), and those who do not (e.g. Ryle 1966 and Brown 2010).

<sup>418</sup> Aristotle seems to rescue this aspect in his own description of the sophist in *Sophistical Refutations* (165a, 19-24).

*Sophist* recalls the discussion laid out at the beginning of the *Apology*, where the real philosopher (Socrates) appears to be a *sophos* (and particularly a sophist) (Cf. 3.1).<sup>419</sup> But in the *Sophist* Plato has the opportunity to demonstrate that the reason why the philosopher is confused with a sophist is different from why the sophist is believed to be a philosopher. While the philosopher seems to be a sophist because of people's mistaken opinion, the sophist seems to be a philosopher because he imitates the wise and deliberately deceives people into believing that he is wise (without being wise). The appearance of the sophist is not a conflict of public perception; it is a problem of deliberate deception. Deception is problematic. This means that to adequately understand the essence of the sophist (and to distinguish him from the philosopher's), one must already be a philosopher: it is only from within philosophy, from the connections that dialectic allows, that the sophist can be discovered. This allows Plato to treat the appearance of the philosopher as an historical problem, i.e. based on events and circumstances of fifth and fourth century Athens, such as Socrates' trial in the *Apology* (cf. chapter 1), or the political position of the philosopher as discussed in *Republic* VI (cf. 5.5), while the appearance of the sophist is treated as a philosophical problem.

## 7.1. The Sophist: One Name, One Kind

The dramatic setting of the dialogue is given by the triad *Theaetetus*, *Sophist* and *Statesman*.<sup>420</sup> Taken chronologically, the three dialogues narrate a meeting that takes place on two consecutive days between Socrates, the geometer Theodorus, and his pupils Theaetetus and the young Socrates, soon before Socrates' trial. Socrates carries the conversation in the *Theaetetus*, while the new leading character in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* is a visitor from Elea. The theme of these two dialogues is

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<sup>419</sup> The *Sophist* and the *Apology* are dramatically (and thematically) connected on this point. As Brown points out: 'In linking the *Sophist* dramatically with the *Theaetetus* (a dialogue full of intertextual references to the *Apology* and whose closing lines recall the impending trial of Socrates), Plato has reminded the reader of the fatal consequences of confusing philosopher with sophist' (2010, p. 155).

<sup>420</sup> For different perspectives about the composition of the trilogy, see Ryle (1966) and Bostock (1991). The thematic unity of the trilogy is examined by Rowe (2015).

established at the outset of the *Sophist*; they wish to distinguish and define three kinds: the philosopher, the sophist and the statesman.<sup>421</sup>

The first aspect to consider when analysing Plato's *Sophist* is the fact that the dialogue's main line of inquiry is treated as the initial step of a broader investigation, which is to distinguish philosopher, sophist and statesman from one another. 'The problem of the visibility of the philosopher is the context within which we attempt to capture the sophist' (Rosen 1999, p. 61). More particularly, the problem aims to distinguish philosophers from non-philosophers. Theodorus introduces his companion, an unnamed visitor from Elea, as a member of the circle of Parmenides and Zeno, and describes him as 'very much a philosopher [μάλα δὲ ἄνδρα φιλόσοφον]' (216a4). Socrates opens the question of whether he is a philosopher or more like a Homeric god who keeps watch of people's actions and has come to refute the arguments they are about to discuss. Although as a philosopher he is considered by Theodorus god-like or divine, he is said to be 'more moderate than the enthusiasts for debating [περὶ τὰς ἔριδας ἐσπουδακόντων]' (216b8). Socrates takes advantage of the comparison between Homeric gods and the philosopher to say that it is not easier to discover a philosopher than it is to discover a god.<sup>422</sup>

Certainly the genuine philosophers who "haunt our cities"—by contrast to the fake ones—take on all sorts of different appearances [παντοῖοι φανταζόμενοι] just because of other people's ignorance [διὰ τὴν τῶν ἄλλων ἄγνοιαν]. As philosophers look down from above at the lives of those below them, some people think they're worthless [τοῖς μὲν δοκοῦσιν εἶναι τοῦ μηδενὸς] and others think they're worth everything in the world [τοῖς δ' ἄξιοι τοῦ παντός]. Sometimes they take on the appearance of statesmen [πολιτικοὶ φαντάζονται], and sometimes of sophists [σοφισταί]. Sometimes, too, they might give the impression that they're completely insane [παντάπασιν ἔχοντες μανικῶς] (216c4-d2).

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<sup>421</sup> Given that the *Sophist* defines *sophistēs* and the *Statesman*, *politikos*, there is motive to suspect that Plato wrote (or intended to write) a third dialogue called *philosophos* to define the third kind. But the work does not appear on ancient lists, which suggests it was never written. Frede (1996, p. 150) argues that there is no need for a further dialogue; the triad *Theaetetus*, *Sophist* and *Statesman* provide a complete account of what the philosopher is. Gill proposes that Plato 'deliberately withholds the dialogue in order to stimulate his audience to combine the pieces into the full portrait he did not paint' (2012, p. 1).

<sup>422</sup> For a suggestive comparison between Homeric gods in the *Odyssey* and the treatment of the sophist in Plato, see Casadesús Bordoy (2013).

The introduction of the visitor from Elea as a philosopher bears on the dialogue in two different ways: (i) it introduces the question of the distinctiveness of the philosopher and the problem of the sophist as a ‘seeming philosopher’, which runs throughout the dialogue, and (ii) it displaces Socrates as the leading philosopher. It is worth looking at this last point in more detail, for we may want to ask why the visitor from Elea, an unnamed stranger, becomes the leading figure of this dialogue.<sup>423</sup> A plausible explanation, elaborated by Notomi (1999), is that Socrates, although a ‘real philosopher’ in Plato’s account is a ‘seeming sophist’ in other accounts. ‘If Socrates *is* a sophist, the whole explanation of philosophy will collapse, and we remember that it is Socrates who first occurs to Athenians when they think of sophists, as is depicted in Aristophanes’ *Clouds*’ (Notomi 1999, p. 62).<sup>424</sup> The anonymity of the visitor together with the weight of his philosophical background would provide both the impartiality and the authority that this kind of investigation requires.<sup>425</sup> But this does not necessarily mean, as Notomi believes, that Socrates has been replaced by the visitor as the model philosopher.<sup>426</sup> The central problem of appearance reveals that identifying a real philosopher is a difficult job, which brings into question the identity of the visitor from Elea. The enigma governs the whole dialogue: one never finds out whether the conclusions are reached by a seeming or a real philosopher. As a result, ‘the possibility of success remains in doubt, given Socrates’ disturbing observation that the hard-working hunter, the Stranger from

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<sup>423</sup> Similarly, Notomi: ‘The visitor from Elea, who is free from any historical image (except for his origin and his relationship with the Eleatic thinkers), leads the dialogue in a more constructive manner’ (1999, p. 63). The issue is also discussed by McCabe (2000, pp. 197-229) in connection with Socrates’ philosophical method (in the *Theaetetus* and the *Philebus*) and the method of collection and division (in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*). ‘When Socrates goes missing after the *Theaetetus*, so, one might say, does his method of philosophy. For after the *Theaetetus*’ defence of the methods of Socrates, the *Sophist* and the *Politicus* seem to restrict their positive interest in philosophical method to the method of collection and division’ (2000, p.192).

<sup>424</sup> See also Taylor (2006, pp. 158-59): ‘I suggest that Plato is here signaling that his own portrayal of Socrates and the sophists leaves the boundaries between the concepts of the philosopher and the sophist unclear, and that in that portrayal Socrates himself is presented as both a philosopher and in some respects a sophist. It is the role of the Stranger, not of Socrates, to provide that more rigorous characterisation of the sophist which will definitively discriminate the latter from the philosopher’.

<sup>425</sup> Cf. Rowe (1995, p. 11). Similarly, Blondell says that the fictionality of the visitor’s character serves a special purpose ‘in that it detaches a character from the audience’s background knowledge of personages already familiar from other audiences, including historical fact, legend, gossip, and other texts, fictional or otherwise, by Plato himself and other writers’ (Blondell 2002, p. 321). Then she adds: ‘Fictionality, then, aids Plato in the production of a generic philosophical figure lacking and extraneous features of the “real” world’ (2002, p. 322).

<sup>426</sup> McCoy believes that the visitor from Elea competes with the figure of Socrates, who is the real philosopher. ‘A careful reading of both the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist* alongside one another ought to produce a kind of dissonance in the mind of the reader. Socrates and the Stranger offer two entirely different approaches to inquiry (2008, p. 155).

Elea himself, could be yet another of the multiple and polymorphous manifestations of the Sophist' (Casadesús Bordoy 2013, p. 27).

It is also interesting to note that, from the outset, the many appearances that the philosopher takes on are explained by people's ignorance (*tōn allōn agnoian*; 216c5).<sup>427</sup> As in the *Republic*, the image of the philosopher is distorted by the opinion of the majority, who are not able to recognise the philosopher's worth. Here, the position of the philosopher, i.e. 'from above', creates two extreme representations; some believe that he means *nothing* and some that he means *everything*, which suggests again that no one values him for what he really is. More significantly, the philosopher can take the appearance of a sophist or a statesman and to some, according to Socrates, he may seem a complete madman.<sup>428</sup> But it is this case, in which the philosopher appears to others as a sophist or a statesman that interests Socrates. He wants to hear from the Eleatic visitor what these names, 'philosopher' (*philosophos*), 'sophist' (*sophistēs*) and 'statesman' (*politikos*) commonly refer to in Elea (216d2).<sup>429</sup> He expands on this: 'did they think that sophists, statesmen, and philosophers make up one kind of thing or two? Or did they divide them up into three kinds [γένη] corresponding to the three names [ὀνόματα] and attach one name to each of them [τρία καὶ τὰ γένη διαιρούμενοι καθ' ἐν ὄνομα [γένους] ἐκάστῳ προσήπτον;]?' (217a6-8). In connection with the problem of the appearance of the philosopher, by which he can pass as a sophist or a statesman, Socrates wants to know whether one name corresponds to one kind or whether there is more than one name for one kind. The suggested alternatives are as follows: three names for one kind, three names for two kinds, or three names for three kinds. It should be clear that the problem of appearances arises precisely because these are presented as three different kinds; the philosopher, a distinct kind,

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<sup>427</sup> This point will become particularly relevant when assessing the way in which the sophist appears to others.

<sup>428</sup> The image of the philosopher as mad is explored in the *Phaedrus* (249c4-250b1); the *Republic* (VI 487e1-496e1, VII 517d4-e2) and the *Theaetetus* (172c3-177b8) diagnose the philosopher's alienation from society.

<sup>429</sup> 'As several interpreters have observed, it is unclear, when Socrates wonders what people "in that region" think (*Soph.* 217a), whether he is referring to Elea or to "the place from which the true philosophers look down," an ambiguity that suggests an identification of Elea with the true philosopher's realm' (Blondell 2002, p. 321). By contrast, Nancy (2013) claims that the emphasis here is on the fact that the visitor will speak in representation of a group of people, and not himself: 'the only thing being asked of him is to speak for a group of people whose geographical location seems enough to identify them philosophically.'

is judged to be another kind, namely a politician or a sophist. One kind designated by multiple names would raise a different problem. The answer that Socrates gets from the visitor is straightforward: ‘they think there are three kinds [τρί’ ἡγοῦντο]. Distinguishing clearly what each of them is [τί ποτ’ ἔστιν], though, isn’t a small or easy job’ (217b2-3).<sup>430</sup>

According to the Eleatic visitor, it is not difficult to recognise that these are three distinct classes; the difficulty lies in defining each of them and distinguishing them clearly from one another. To illustrate the problem of the philosopher and the sophist we could think of the case of the artist and the artisan. That these names designate different classes is rather uncontroversial and yet, when it comes to distinguishing and defining each of them, we may find ourselves at a loss. Like the *philosophos* and the *sophistēs*, these are cognates, which means that we can trace a common original meaning.<sup>431</sup> But how are they different? Let us apply an arbitrary but acceptable criterion and say that the ability of the artisan is defined by the use of manual work, whereas the capacity of the artist is marked by creativity. Soon enough we find that these qualities are not distinctive. We come across the visual artist, whose main resource is the use of manual work, like a painter or a sculptor, in the same way that we find the artisan of fine jewellery who creates unique pieces. Neither manual work nor creativity can be established as exclusive defining traits. As a result, in a given context an artist may appear to some as an artisan and an artisan as an artist. But what is more important is that these titles are commonly endowed with more or less prestige. Conventionally, the artist’s status is better ranked than the artisan’s.<sup>432</sup> But to explain why this is so by distinguishing the features of each class would not only be endless, but extremely debatable. This is partly because these labels are conventionally established.

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<sup>430</sup> Here Plato does not deal with the ideal of the philosopher-king, whereby philosopher and politician would make one kind. This makes sense considering that this dialogue aims to describe how things are, rather than how they might be. Frede (1996, p. 149) makes the claim that Plato did not think of the philosopher, the sophist and the politician as three natural kinds, but rather as two: (i) real philosophers, often confused with counterfeit philosophers, i.e. sophists, and (ii) politicians, who can be real or false philosophers.

<sup>431</sup> Latin *ars, artis*, ‘skill’, ‘art’.

<sup>432</sup> Another example could be ‘musician’ and ‘sound artist’.

Having settled that each name corresponds to each kind, the visitor from Elea exhorts Theaetetus, his partner in conversation, to start the investigation from the sophist. He says: ‘I think you need to begin the investigation from the sophist—by searching for him and giving a clear account of what he is’ (218b7-c1). He makes clear that they need to agree on the nature of the thing itself and not only on the title; this is not a discussion of names, like the *Cratylus*, but of the nature of the things they refer to. It is worth asking why the investigation should start with the sophist. Considering the priority of the figure of the philosopher in Plato’s work, one may suppose that the account would start from there.<sup>433</sup> But why start with the sophist? A possible explanation is that a thorough assessment of the sophist, being the most complex and challenging kind, provides a practical advantage since it tackles the difficulties involved in the investigation, clearing the way for the politician and the philosopher.<sup>434</sup>

## 7.2. Multiple Definitions: The Sophist’s Appearance

Immediately after the visitor from Elea proposes to start the investigation from the sophist, he warns Theaetetus twice of the difficulty of the task they are committed to: ‘But it isn’t the easiest thing in the world to grasp the tribe we’re planning to search for’ (218c5-6); ‘since we think it’s hard to hunt down [δυσθήρευτον] and deal with the kind [τοῦ σοφιστοῦ γένος]’ (218d3-4). The analogy with hunting is especially significant; the sophist is comparable to prey, and to a particular sort of prey: the one that conceals itself by means of camouflage (cf. 1.3). ‘With his observation that the sophist is *δυσθήρευτον*, “difficult to hunt”, the Stranger situates the sophist in his place within the framework of hunting which he has previously determined. Indeed, as an object to be hunted he is an animal, *θηρίον*, and the difficulty in catching him lies in his multiplicity of forms, *ποικίλον*’ (Casadesús Bordoy 2013, p. 22). In reaction to the prey’s ability to escape and deceive, the hunter is forced to develop a more sophisticated method of hunting. By offering the example of the angler, the

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<sup>433</sup> We must remember that the original purpose is distinguishing the philosopher from the sophist and the politician, and therefore it is not necessary to define the three kinds. ‘Since the original issue was to separate the real philosopher from his appearances, that is, the sophist and the statesman, it may well be sufficient for his purpose to define these two’ (Notomi 1999, p. 25).

<sup>434</sup> ‘Given the sophist’s versatility, he is the most difficult of these to place within a genus or a class. Plato is thus justified in beginning his project with the sophist, in order to expose him’ (Casadesús Bordoy 2013, p. 21).

visitor introduces the philosophical method of division that operates throughout the dialogue. By identifying categories and sub-categories, genus and species, the visitor, with the help of Theaetetus, sets out to capture the essence of the sophist: ‘Anyway, neither he nor any other kind will ever be able to boast that he’s escaped from the method of people who are able to chase a thing through both the particular and the general’ (235c4-6). The definition of the angler’s art shows how the philosophical method of collection and division works: the aim is to decide the specific category the angler belongs to. As shown below, from each category two sub-categories result, one of which (in bold) applies to the angler.<sup>435</sup>

**Acquisitive:** Exchange

**Possession-taking:** Combat

**Hunting:** Lifeless prey

**Living prey:** Land -hunting

**Aquatic hunting:** Bird-hunting

**Fishing:** Enclosure

**Strike-hunting:** Torch-hunting

**Hooking:** Spearing

**Angling**

Modelled on the definition of the angler, the first definition of the sophist is obtained. Like the angler, the sophist masters the acquisitive art (*ktētikē technē*; 222a1), from which derives the following: possession-taking, hunting, animal-hunting, hunting on land, human hunting, hunting by persuasion, hunting privately, and money-earning. ‘It’s the hunting of rich, prominent young men’ (223b5). Although both interlocutors seem convinced by this definition, the visitor quickly proposes a second alternative. Unlike other dialogues, where the interlocutors explore different definitions in order to find one that captures the essence of the *definiens*, here they move from one definition to another, all of them apparently deemed equally valid. They are not defining and redefining the sophist; rather, they are presenting multiple definitions, each of them capturing some aspect of the nature of the sophist. The visitor observes: ‘Still, let’s look at it this way too, since what we’re looking for isn’t a trivial sort of expertise [φάυλης τέχνης] but quite a diverse one [ποικίλης]. And even in what we’ve just said earlier it actually presents the appearance [φάντασμα παρέχεται] of being not what we’re now saying, but a

<sup>435</sup> To see a comparison of the method of division as presented in the *Sophist* and the *Philebus*, see Dorter (2013).

different type [ἔτερον εἶναι τι γένος]' (223c1-4). Five different definitions seem to respond to five different types:<sup>436</sup>

- 1) **Acquisitive:** Exchange
  - Possession-taking:** Combat
  - Hunting:** Lifeless prey
  - Living prey:** Aquatic hunting:
    - Land-hunting:** Wild animals
    - Tame animals:** By force
    - By persuasion:** Public
    - Private:** Gives gifts
    - Takes wages**
- 2) **Acquisitive:** Hunting
  - Exchange:** Giving
  - Selling:** Own production
  - Others' production:** Retailing
  - Wholesaling:** Body
  - Soul:** The art of display
  - Trade in learning:** Expertise- knowledge
  - Virtue-knowledge**
- 3) **Acquisitive:** Hunting
  - Exchange:** Giving
  - Selling:** Other's production
- 4) **Acquisitive:** Hunting
  - Exchange:** Giving
  - Selling:** Own production
- 5) **Acquisitive:** Mutual exchange
  - Possession-taking:** Hunting
  - Combat:** Competition
  - Fighting:** Violence
  - Controversy:** Public (Forensic)
  - Private (Disputation):** Non-expert
  - Expert (Debating):** Wastes money
  - Makes money**

Even though these definitions are presented as distinct from one another, it makes sense to consider them as a group: (i) all of them stem from the same category, the art of acquisition; (ii) all of them involve the element of money or teaching for a fee. The very first characteristic they need to decide on is whether the sophist is an expert or a layman, that is, whether he is in possession of an expertise (*technē*). The visitor

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<sup>436</sup> The first account goes from 221c to 223b; the second account from 223b to 224d; the third and fourth account from 224d to 224e; the fifth account from 224e to 226a.

says: ‘Well, shall we suppose the sophist is a layman [ιδιώτην], or completely and truly an expert [παντάπασιν ὡς ἀληθῶς σοφιστήν]?’ (221d1-2) to which Theaetetus replies: ‘He’s not a layman at all. I understand what you’re saying: he has to be the kind of person that the name sophist indicates’ (221d3-4). The name *sophistēs* already denotes possession of knowledge or expertise. That the sophist seems like a sort of expert is thus grounded as the first piece of evidence in the investigation, and the following conversation reveals that this is the only thing that remains invariable.<sup>437</sup> His expertise allows him to hunt people by persuasion (1), trade virtue-knowledge (2), sell his own and other’s production (3 and 4) and earn money by disputing in private meetings (5).

The fact that these definitions are equally true proves that there is not a unified way to present the sophist’s expertise. Either the method is deficient, or the object of investigation is polymorphic. ‘The result that the sophist is called by *many* names, namely hunter, trader, and so on, implies that he has not been grasped as a man of one *single* art. In other words, the variety of descriptions of the sophist cannot be said to represent his essence, and therefore the six definitions are regarded as *appearances*, not the real being of the sophist’ (Notomi 1999, p. 80).

It is worth noting that these five definitions share something else: all of them incorporate elements associated with the public perception of the sophist. The different images of the sophist are not too far from the Aristophanic caricature picked up in the *Apology*, or Socrates’ impression of the sophist in the *Protagoras* 313c4-6 (seller of soul-nourishment; cf. 6.6) or the association in the *Gorgias* 465c (rhetorician; cf. 6.6), the characterisation of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus in the *Euthydemus* 272a8-b1 (disputant; cf. 6.4.2), or the *Republic* 492a5-8 (educator; cf. 6.6), according to which sophists are seen as a rather random group of professionals, some of them teaching virtue, some of them rhetoric, all of them charging fees. Plato explores the popularly accepted (and rather erratic) image of sophists with the purpose of showing that none of these really captures the essence of the sophist—at least in a way that is philosophically relevant. ‘Although the text does not explicitly say as much, it may be plausibly inferred that none of the six descriptions is a

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<sup>437</sup> Although, as Brown (2010) claims, the sophist’s art may not be considered by Plato a genuine expertise or *technē*.

genuine definition: rather, each one of them is an account of how sophists, or certain sophists, were viewed in public opinion or in humorous account thereof’ (Crivelli 2012, p. 22).<sup>438</sup>

At this point, the many appearances of the sophist can partly be explained by people’s ignorance. The sophists appear to be all these things, particularly an expert, a teacher, or a rhetorician, because most people believe they are experts, teachers and rhetoricians. As we shall see, the notion of appearance, expressed by the verb *dokein* and *phainesthai*, ‘seem’ and ‘appear’, is cognitively grounded. The appearance of the sophist is what the sophist is believed to be (by people or by the inquirers). Significantly, at this point no evaluative analysis of the sophist is made. The only time an evaluative assessment emerges is in the sixth definition.

### 7.3. Sixth Definition: Noble Sophistry or Philosophy?

The sixth definition stems from a different category, the art of discrimination (*diakritikē*; 226c8), the one that separates what is best from what is worse (cleansing) and it is concerned with the education of the soul. ‘And let’s say that within education, according to the way the discussion has turned now, the refutation of the empty belief in one’s own wisdom [περὶ τὴν μάταιον δοξοσοφίαν γιγνόμενος ἔλεγχος] is nothing other than our noble sophistry [γενναία σοφιστική]’ (231b5-8).

**Art of discrimination:** Like from like

**Best from worse (cleansing):** Body

**Soul:** Wickedness: Correction

**Ignorance: Teaching:** Not knowing: Admonition

**Not knowing own ignorance:** Refutation

For most commentators of the *Sophist* this definition represents a major turn from the preceding and following sections.<sup>439</sup> The image of the sophist as a professional

<sup>438</sup> Also see Wolff (1991, pp. 29-44).

<sup>439</sup> Cornford claims that this section could be taken out without affecting the overall argument of the dialogue: ‘It is hard to see why this analysis of Socrates’ Cathartic method should stand here as the last of these preliminary attempts to define the Sophist. [...] From the outset the Division has no link or point of contact with first five or with the seventh; it starts from an entirely new genus—a point by the final phrase ‘the Sophistry that is of noble lineage’ (1960, p. 181). By contrast, Kerferd claims

trader is now left aside, and suddenly the sophist they are so zealously trying to hunt is among those attending the conversation. That the definition describes Socrates' *elenchus* is hinted at by the visitor when he further explains:

They cross-examine [διερωτῶσιν] someone when he thinks he's saying something though he's saying nothing. Then, since his opinions will vary inconsistently, these people will easily scrutinize them. They collect his opinions together during the discussion, put them side by side, and show that they conflict with each other at the same time on the same subjects in relation to the same things and in the same respects. The people who are being examined see this, get angry at themselves, and become calmer toward others. [...] The people who cleanse the soul, my young friend, likewise think the soul, too, won't get any advantage from any learning that's offered to it until someone shames it by refuting it, removes the opinions that interfere with learning, and exhibits it cleansed, believing that it knows only those things that it does know [ταῦτα ἠγούμενον ἄπερ οἶδεν εἰδέναιμόνα], and nothing more (230b4-d4).

The description includes the most distinctive element of Socrates' *elenchus* as described in the *Apology* (21bff), namely the examination of people who think themselves wise but are not. Remarkably, Socrates' activity is introduced in the *Apology* as a way by which he can defend himself from the reputation of being a *sophos*, a reputation that he shares with sophists. Similarly, in the *Sophist* the elenctic activity belongs to a seeming sophist. 'In the sixth definition, the appearances of the sophist and the philosopher overlap in the figure of Socrates, and we seem to be in ultimate confusion. [ ] We have encountered the sophist who appears to be Socrates, and here the appearances of the sophist and the philosopher become the real issue in the *Sophist*' (Notomi 1999, p. 68). Again, the sophist's appearance results from people's ignorance, but in this case it creates more significant consequences: in the light of people's opinion, the real philosopher appears as a sophist.<sup>440</sup> The fundamental difference is that while the philosopher is judged to be a sophist because of the ignorance of most people, the sophist, as will be shown, has the ability to make himself appear as a *sophos*.

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that this can be considered 'one of the less undesirable results of sophistic activity' (1981, p. 5). Further interpretation allows connecting this account of the sophist with the one presented in the *Protagoras* by Protagoras (316d ff). 'It is true that the Stranger can only call the Socratic method sophistry provided one see it as an instance of "sophistry faithful to its lineage (ἢ γένει γενναία σοφιστικὴ)" (231b8). This is probably a way of reminding us that in "sophistry" there is *sophos*, and that the word "sophist" is not to be taken solely pejoratively' (Narcy 2013, p. 69).

<sup>440</sup> Socrates himself is confused with a sophist in the *Protagoras* 314d3.

Although the interlocutors have reached the sixth definition through the same dialectical process as the others, they are not content with it. For it seems that they are paying sophists ‘too high an honor [μείζον γέρας]’ (231a3), which basically means that the activity described is considered more honorable than the subjects to which it is commonly attributed. However, the similarity cannot be overlooked. As Theaetetus says: ‘But there’s a similarity [προσείκει] between a sophist and what we’ve been talking about’ (231a4-5). To illustrate the kind of similarity there is between them, the visitor gives the example of the dog and the wolf. The visitor warns: ‘And between a wolf and a dog, the wildest thing there is and the gentlest. If you’re going to be safe, you have to be especially careful about similarities [περὶ τὰς ὁμοιότητας], since the type we’re talking about is very slippery [ὀλισθηρότατον γὰρ τὸ γένος]’ (231a6-8). If there are grounds to believe that the comparison refers to the philosopher and the sophist, the example is quite eloquent. Both dog and wolf have the same genetic ancestor, but dogs are the domestic species. Perhaps we can think of the philosopher as a domesticated *sophos*, in the sense that he is tame, friendly and loving (see *Rep.* 376b3; cf. 5.1), whereas the sophist remains wild and untamed. Though it is possible for a dog (particularly a breed like the Tamaskan or the Malamute) to appear like a wolf, there is an essential difference regarding their nature and breeding.<sup>441</sup>

Nonetheless, the definition stands. One way to explain this is by approximation with the first five definitions. Thus the sophist would appear to be many things, among them, a philosopher. ‘The very reason for the division is based on the need to clarify concepts. This being so, Plato admits from the beginning that the sophist who is to be hunted is a “many-sided animal”. He is “many-coloured”, meaning that, like a many-coloured mural, he has many different qualities, one of which, the use of ἔλεγχος, is shared by the philosopher (Socrates-Plato) and the sophist’ (Solana 2013, p. 83).<sup>442</sup> The other way to explain it is by approximation with the seventh

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<sup>441</sup> In the *Rep.* book II Socrates uses the example of a dog to explain the philosopher’s love of wisdom (cf. 5.1). See Cornford (1960, p. 182) and Movia (1991, p. 173), who hold that the comparison is valid on the grounds that philosophy is defined in the *Rep.* with the standard formula ‘love of knowledge’. Rosen (1999, p. 130) argues that the comparison is ironical; according to him, it supports Polemarchus’ definition of justice.

<sup>442</sup> ‘The definitions in which they terminate are not definitions of ‘the Sophist’, but analytical descriptions of easily recognisable classes to whom the name had been attached’ (Cornford 1960, p. 187).

definition whereby sophistry imitates philosophy. ‘The full title, “the sophistry of noble family”, may be taken as indicating that this procedure, unlike other aspects or kinds of sophistry, is related (as an imitation) to the noble art of true philosophy’ (Bluck 1975, p. 46).

#### 7.4. The Sophist’s Amazing Capacity

From the six definitions already given, none of them stands over the others. While all of them have been independently assessed and accepted, once assessed together, the investigation proves unsuccessful.<sup>443</sup> Indeed, the whole inquiry lies on the assumption that the name *sophistēs* designates one kind and one kind only, and that this kind is different from the statesman and the philosopher. Thus far, the inquirers have found six kinds, one of which seems to designate the philosopher as well. Theaetetus expresses his disappointment: ‘But the sophist has appeared in lots of different ways [διὰ τὸ πολλὰ πεφάνθαι]. So I’m confused [ἀπορῶ] about what expression or assertion could convey the truth about what he really is [ὅντως εἶναι τὸν σοφιστήν]’ (231b9-c2). The visitor comforts him by saying that confusion (*aporia*) is the right state of mind. Analogously to hunting, the sophist is said ‘to be escaping from their account’ (231c4). This proves that they have not yet discovered the definition that captures the distinctive essence of the sophist. ‘Part of the purpose of the portrait of the sophist (as opposed to specious definitions) is to show how he escapes our attempt to hunt him down, even as we apply our heavy technical machinery to the task’ (Rosen 1999, p. 85).

This is a turning point in the investigation; the interlocutors are in a state of *aporia*. The second stage in the inquiry takes as the starting point the six definitions reached thus far: (1) ‘a hired hunter of rich young men’; (2) ‘a wholesaler of learning about the soul’; (3) ‘a retailer of the same things’; (4) ‘a seller of his own learning’; (5) an athlete in verbal combat; (6) a cleanser of the soul from ‘beliefs that interfere with learning’. It is from these conflicting definitions that the problem of appearance, essential for the whole argument, is introduced. The visitor reflects:

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<sup>443</sup> On the grounds that the definitions represent different kinds of sophists and not different aspects of sophists. On this, see Bluck (1975, p. 52).

Well then, suppose people apply the name of a single sort of expertise to someone, but he appears to have expert knowledge of lots of things [ἐπιστήμων τις πολλῶν φαίνεται]. In a case like that don't you notice that something's wrong with the way he appears [τὸ φάντασμα τοῦτο ὡς οὐκ ἔσθ' ὑγιές]? Isn't it obvious that if somebody takes him to be an expert at many things, then that observer can't be seeing clearly what it is in his expertise that all of those many pieces of learning focus on [οὐ δύναται κατιδεῖν ἐκεῖνο αὐτῆς εἰς ὃ πάντα τὰ μαθήματα ταῦτα βλέπει]— which is why he calls him by many names [διὸ καὶ πολλοῖς ὀνόμασιν] instead of one? (232a1-6).

When reading this passage we face a problem of interpretation. Thus far the six definitions have been taken to be six different kinds, which is a problem because it challenges the purpose of the investigation: to find the one kind under the name of *sophistēs*. But now the problem is presented in a rather different light: it seems that we are dealing with one expert in many things, not with many different types of expert. This in turn reveals that the real problem is the many ways in which the sophist appears to people (which includes the examiners). Thus the six definitions respond to the sophist's different appearances. Furthermore, the passage describes the different steps the investigation has gone through: (i) the sophist is identified as having a single or distinctive expertise under one name; (ii) the sophist appears to be an expert at many different things; (iii) the observers cannot recognise this one expertise; (iv) they call him by many names.

The way the visitor proposes to overcome the impasse is by picking up a specific trait of the sophist as set out in the fifth definition: 'the sophist engages in controversies [ἀντιλογικόν]' (232b6) and 'he teaches [διδάσκαλον] other people to do the same things' (232b8). But inasmuch as disputes can refer to every possible field, then one must admit that the sophist's expertise is all encompassing. They can engage in controversies about gods (232c1), about the earth and the sky (232c4), about being and coming-to-be (232c8), about the laws and political issues (232d1). About the expertise in controversy (*antilogikēs technēs*), the visitor concludes: 'Doesn't it seem like a capacity [τις δύναμις] that's sufficient for carrying on disputes about absolutely everything [περὶ πάντων πρὸς ἀμφισβήτησιν ἰκανή]?' (232e2-4). As already seen in chapter 6 (cf. 6.4.2), in reference to the *Gorgias* (450b1) and particularly the *Protagoras* (312d-e), the problem of having no specific

subject-matter defeats the purpose of definition.<sup>444</sup> However, here the consequences are radicalised.

The visitor raises an objection on the grounds of feasibility. He says to Theaetetus: ‘do you think that’s possible [δυνατὸν ἡγή τοῦτο;]?’ (232e6). The question is equivocal because it arises in reaction to the sophist’s capacity to dispute everything, while aiming to question the sophist’s capacity to *know* everything. This is how the visitor spells it out for Theaetetus: ‘Whether it’s possible for any human being to know everything [εἰ πάντα ἐπίστασθαι τινα ἀνθρώπων ἐστὶ δυνατόν]’ (233a3). The underlying assumption is that if someone did not know about something, he would not be able to make a sound objection, and therefore would not be an expert disputant. ‘But how could someone who didn’t know about a subject-matter [ἀνεπιστήμων ὄν] make a sound objection [τι λέγων ἀντειπεῖν] against someone who knew about it?’ (233a5-6). This leads him to wonder about ‘the sophist’s amazing capacity [τὸ τῆς σοφιστικῆς δυνάμεως θαῦμα]’ (233b8), which is crucial for understanding the digression and final definition.

The sophist’s ‘amazing capacity’ is that he *appears* to be wise. Supported by the fact that young people are willing to pay for the sophists’ tuition, the visitor wonders ‘how the sophists can ever make young people believe they’re wiser than everyone else about everything [δόξαν παρασκευάζειν ὡς εἰσὶ πάντα πάντων αὐτοὶ σοφώτατοι]’ (233b1-2), and the answer is clear: because they seem to know (*dokousi*: 233c1; *sophoi phainontai*: 233c6). Since ‘to know everything’ proves to be impossible, sophists only appear to be wise without really being wise (*ouk ontes ge*; 233c8). Here, as in the context of the oracle story in the *Apology*, the paradox about the reputed *sophoi* not being really *sophoi* is solved by the introduction of the pair real-apparent (cf. 3.4). ‘While Passage 7 [232e2-5] concludes that the sophist controverts about all things, Passage 8 [233a3-7] concludes that it is impossible to know all things. These conflicting conclusions are combined into a single conclusion which reveals the wonder of the sophist’s art: Therefore the sophists appear (*phainontai*) to their pupils to be wise about all things [...]’ (Notomi 1999, p. 85).

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<sup>444</sup> Brown (2010) discusses the role of subject-matter for a the delineation of a *technē* without reaching a definite answer on the matter.

Up to this point, the line of reasoning seems rather neat: (i) the sophist appears to have knowledge about all things, but (ii) it is not possible to have knowledge about all things, so (iii) the sophist *only* appears to have knowledge about all things.<sup>445</sup> But immediately after the conclusion, the visitor asserts: ‘So the sophist has now appeared as a having a *doxastikē epistēmē* about everything [Δοξαστικὴν ἄρα τινὰ περὶ πάντων ἐπιστήμην], but not truth [ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἀλήθειαν]’ (233c10-11). I intentionally leave *doxastikē epistēmē* untranslated because assessing its meaning is crucial for the present analysis. At first sight, the consequence that the sophist has *doxastikē epistēmē* does not seem to follow. The sophist appearing to be wise to his pupils can hardly say anything about the sophist’s state of mind. It only describes the cognitive state of those who believe that the sophist is wise. It is one thing ‘to appear knowledgeable’, and a totally different one ‘to have apparent knowledge’. But we should bear in mind that the problem of appearance is triggered by the possibility (or rather impossibility) of the sophist knowing everything, which re-elicits the question about the sophist’s capacity (*dunamis*), a transversal question throughout the inquiry.<sup>446</sup> From here onwards we are made aware that *appearance* is double-sided: it includes the sophist’s capacity to produce impressions and people’s beliefs about the sophist’s knowledge. As Notomi puts it: ““seeming knowledge” (*doxastikē epistēmē*) can mean both the knowledge which concerns appearance or opinion and apparent or seeming knowledge, which is not real knowledge’ (1999, p. 86). The ambivalence is rendered by different translations. Campbell keeps the ambiguity by translating ‘a knowledge which is in appearance only’, to which he adds ‘[t]here is, however, an allusion to the other (subjective) meaning of δόξα (=opinion) as opposed to ἐπιστήμη’ (1867, p. 69).<sup>447</sup> Cornford (1960), on the other hand, translates: ‘the Sophist possesses a sort of *reputed and apparent knowledge* on all subjects, but not the reality.’<sup>448</sup> By contrast, White (1993) goes for ‘belief-knowledge’, and similarly Rowe (2015) for ‘belief-based “knowledge”’, which refers to the kind of knowledge

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<sup>445</sup> Of course, this still leaves open the possibility that he knows about some things but not others, i.e. that it is the universality of his knowledge that is only apparent.

<sup>446</sup> ‘We must bear in mind that Plato keeps trying to define the sophist within the sphere of art (*technē*) from the beginning of the first division to the end of the dialogue’ (Notomi 1999, p. 86).

<sup>447</sup> And so does Taylor: ‘Thus the sophist stands revealed as the possessor of a sort of universal knowledge which is a mere appearance but no true reality’ (1961, p. 119).

<sup>448</sup> He reads this in the light of the following passage, where the sophist is described as producer of images: ‘Controversy in the wide sense, a technique of debate applied to any subject, implies the false conceit of wisdom in the Sophist himself and a false belief in that wisdom created in his pupils’ (Cornford 1960, p. 193).

the sophist possesses. All of these translations try to make sense of what in Plato looks like an oxymoron. At least in the context of the *Republic*, the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist* the possession of *doxa* rules out *epistēmē* and viceversa. The conclusion that the sophist has *doxastikē epistēmē* is paradoxical. For the present analysis, however, the paradox is certainly suggestive, for it assimilates the pair appearance/reality with the pair opinion/truth (*doxa/alētheia*) in such a way that the sophist's knowledge (or lack of it) is brought into question. Of course, assimilation between the pairs can be explained to the extent that the sophist's apparent knowledge relies on people's weak judgement (*doxa*), but not to the extent that the sophist's apparent knowledge is the same as a cognitive state of *doxa*. But Plato would not readily assume interchangeability.<sup>449</sup>

Interchangeability there is context-related and determined by the presence of two elements already mentioned: (i) the quest for the sophist's *dunamis* or *technē*; (ii) the sophist's (seemingly) all-encompassing knowledge. The first establishes that it is by way of the sophist's active ability that the belief is implanted in people. To illustrate this we might want to think of someone who appears to be Italian, i.e. he is believed to be Italian by some people, because of his accent, for example, as opposed to someone who appears to be Italian by impersonating typical Italian features, but most importantly, by saying that he is Italian. The sophist resembles the latter. The second element establishes that, since knowing everything is impossible, the possibility is open for the sophist to know some things, but as to the rest of the things, he would only have opinion. Thus his cognitive state would be rightly characterised as *doxa*. Of course, one may argue that the claim of absolute knowledge is imposed by Plato on sophists to produce this kind of paradox. This may be so, but it is not an *ad hoc* device. Plato plays with this characterisation of sophists elsewhere (cf. 6.4.2).

To make the point clear, the visitor presents the hypothetical parallel of someone who claims to do and make (*poiein and dran*) everything by one and the same ability (*technē*) (233d9) where 'everything' includes plants, animals, men, earth, sea, heavens and gods. The obvious impossibility of such an enterprise makes Theaetetus

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<sup>449</sup> This would mean that Socrates' apparent *sophia* in the *Apology* is equivalent to a cognitive state of *doxa*.

think that this is ‘game for schoolchildren’ (*paidian tina*; 234a6), to which the visitor says: ‘well, if someone says he knows everything and would teach it to someone else cheaply and quickly, shouldn’t we think it’s a game?’ (234a7-9). The category of *paidia* adds two significant aspects to the assessment of the sophist’s activity: it is targeted at children i.e. not a very informed or critical audience; it is done for the sake of amusement and fun, i.e. not a serious activity (see also *Rep.* 602b). Most importantly, it allows the visitor to make the link with imitation.<sup>450</sup> At 234b1-2: ‘Do you know of any game that involves more expertise [τεχνικώτερον] than imitation [τὸ μιμητικόν] does, and is more engaging [χαριέστερον]?’ Imitation crystallises the two relevant aspects discussed above, for it is described as a capacity to produce appearances.<sup>451</sup>

The assessment of imitation in this passage raises an interesting parallel with *Republic X*. In the *Republic*, the example of a craftsman who produces everything, ‘a most marvellous sophist’, according to Glaucon, is introduced into the discussion to lead to the same kind of paradox.<sup>452</sup> The production of all things is only possible by means of appearances, by a method of re-production. The craftsman resembles the poet in the same way that the man who draws resembles the sophist (*Soph.* 234b7). Both, the poet and the sophist produce ‘spoken copies of everything’ (*Soph.* 234c6). This would not be a problem if the people they address had the criteria to observe the difference between appearance and truth, but they are tricked into believing that appearance is the truth (*Rep. X* 595b; *Soph.* 234c).<sup>453</sup> ‘Then imitation is far removed from the truth, for it touches only a small part of each thing and a part that is itself only an image. And that, it seems, is why it can produce everything’ (*Rep.* 598b6-9). It is worth remembering that appearance in both contexts is cognitively grounded. Because Plato introduces the case of perceptual appearance (see *Rep.* 602c and *Soph.* 234d; 264a) one may think that there is a contrast between appearance (particularly

<sup>450</sup> At *Rep.* 602b8 imitation is also described as ‘a sort of game’.

<sup>451</sup> “‘More artful”, and therefore more worthy of the Sophist; “more amusing”, and therefore more deserving of the name παιδία’ (Cornford 1960, p. 71).

<sup>452</sup> In the *Rep.* (X, 596c-d) Plato hypothesises the existence of a producer of everything to show that, as much as he uses the Forms as models, he is still an imitator. Interestingly, when Socrates asks Glaucon what he would call this producer of everything, he answers ‘a wonderful sophist’ (506d1). Since there is no such a person, Socrates warns Glaucon that one should always be suspicious (cf. 598c7ff).

<sup>453</sup> Notice the implications in the *Rep.* in the context of the theory of Forms: imitation, as the reproduction of images, is in third position from the original. The painter presents reality as he sees it (as it appears to him), and so he produces the appearance of an appearance.

*phainesthai*) understood in a phenomenological sense and in a judgemental sense.<sup>454</sup> But appearance is always judgemental: ‘what constitutes an “appearance” is not some bare sensory stimulus but a judgment that something is the case-or at least an inclination so to judge, which can reasonably be interpreted in psycho-dynamic terms (as by Plato) as a preliminary judgment passed by some lower cognitive authority’ (Barney 1992, p. 288).<sup>455</sup> As will be shown, this is crucial to create a relevant contrast between appearance and reality. Against the Protagorean relativism by which all sensory impressions are true, appearance always has a doxastic content that can be juxtaposed to reality.

By the end of this section, the speakers confidently agree that the sophist is ‘a wizard and an imitator [γόητα μὲν δὴ καὶ μιμητὴν]’ (235a8). The art of copy-making (*eidolopoiiken technē*; 235b8) or imitation (*mimetikē*) can be divided into the art of likeness-making (*eikastikē*; 235d6), a reproduction faithful to reality; or appearance-making (*phantastikē*; 236c4), a reproduction unfaithful to reality.<sup>456</sup> However, when moving to define what kind of imitator he is, they encounter an important challenge. Until they provide a meaningful account of what an image (*eidolon*) is, without invoking *that which is not*, the inquiry is at the risk of being refuted by a sophist.

## 7.5. Between Darkness and Light: the Sophist and the Philosopher

As already established, the digression holds a very significant place in the dialogue, and it is instrumental to understanding the main problem, i.e. the definition of the sophist. Thus far, the definition of the sophist as an imitator includes the notions of appearance and falsity, which can only be understood by introducing the paradox of ‘that which is not is’. A copy, an image, or a likeness, all partake of being because they are like something else, and partake of non-being because they are not that thing (240a7ff). Similarly, false belief is ‘believing those which are not’ (240d9) and false

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<sup>454</sup> ‘Philosophers have spoken of a “phenomenological” and a “judgemental” use of the word “appear”: in the phenomenological sense, the verb expresses the ways things impress us, while in the judgemental sense, it expresses our beliefs’ (Annas and Barnes 1985, p. 24).

<sup>455</sup> The problem with imitation, images or appearance is that they gratify the irrational part in us (*Rep.* 603a). On this, Silverman says: ‘The import of this passage lies in what it tells us about how people who lack a developed calculative or rational capacity are led to believe what they believe’ (1991, p. 138).

<sup>456</sup> On the relationship between likeness and appearance, see Notomi (1999, pp. 147-155).

speech ‘saying those which are not’ (241a1). Thus they are forced, as the visitor says, to attach *that which is* to *that which is not* (241b1; 241d6). Ultimately, to tackle the problems of appearing (*phainesthai*, *dokein*) and falsehood (*pseudē legein e doxazein*), the interlocutors need to explain the being of non-being in a non-paradoxical way. Overcoming the paradox of non-being would allow them both to establish the conditions to make the definition possible and to create a meaningful speech ‘sophist-proofed’, by which they can establish the possibility of imitation and falsehood. If they are not able to talk about the sophists’ characteristic activities and traits without incurring contradiction, then they cannot give a meaningful account of their essence without being refuted by a sophist. ‘So if we say he has some expertise in appearance-making [φανταστικὴν τέχνην], it will be easy for him to grab hold of our use of words in return and twist words in the contrary direction’ (239c9-d2).

In order to talk about images, false belief and false speech they must prove that non-being can be conceptualised (236d9-259d7), and that it is possible to think and say *that which is not* (260a5-264b7). Here it is particularly interesting that the method to tackle the paradox of being and non-being is described as characteristically philosophical. Philosophy allows making the link between being and non-being, which is crucial to explain the notion of imitation and falsehood. Most importantly, creating a link allows a definition of both the philosopher’s and the sophist’s art. Twice in the course of the digression the philosopher appears representing an intermediate position between extremes (249c; 252e); further, he is shown to possess the intellectual disposition and capacity to make cognitive progress by establishing a relationship between kinds.<sup>457</sup> Like a weaver (259e5), the philosopher finds a way to blend and associate forms so as to move from ignorance to knowledge. Significantly, this dialectical activity can only be assigned ‘to someone who has a pure and just love of wisdom [καθαρῶς τε καὶ δικαίως φιλοσοφοῦντι]’ (253e5). ‘The unphilosophical and unmusical person [ἀμούσου τινὸς καὶ ἀφιλοσόφου]’, by contrast, tries ‘to separate everything from everything else’ (259e1-2).<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>457</sup> The philosopher rejects the doctrine of those who claim that everything is at rest, and of those who claim that everything changes. Instead, [h]e has to be like a child begging for “both”, and say that that which is—everything—comprises both *the unchanging* and *that which changes*’ (249c10-d1). Again, between the two extremes positions, ‘everything is willing to blend, or nothing is’, there is a third intermediate position: ‘some things are and some are not’ (252e1).

<sup>458</sup> Whether the art of the dialectician is the same or different from the art of collections and division is a matter of discussion. Gómez-Lobos (1977) claims, against Stenzel (1940), that dialectic as

When trying to hunt the sophist, the interlocutors stumble upon the philosopher. But he is not discovered as the object of definition; in this regard, he seems as difficult to catch as the sophist. While the sophist escapes into ‘the darkness of *that which is not*’, the philosopher remains unseen by the startling effect of light. ‘But the philosopher always uses reasoning to stay near the form, being. He isn’t at all easy to see because that area is so bright and the eyes of most people’s souls can’t bear to look at what’s divine [καρτερεῖν πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἀφορῶντα ἀδύνατα]’ (254a8-b1). It is worth stressing the value of the metaphor of light here, for it adds something to the way the philosopher’s and the sophist’s appearance is contrasted. While the philosopher cannot be seen because of people’s unaccustomed or untrained vision, the sophist cannot be seen because he remains concealed in the dark. So he is hard to see even for people with good vision. It is also worth noting how Plato rescues the distinctive divine nature of the philosopher, a theme introduced at the beginning of the dialogue (cf. 216b9-c1) and a regular feature of the characterisation of the philosopher elsewhere (cf. 4.1.1).

Even though they do not elaborate on a definition of the philosopher, they show that the philosopher is the one who makes the inquiry into these things possible. This is because philosophy makes the blending between kinds possible, which allows admitting the being of non-being in a non-paradoxical way. This, in turn, allows admitting the possibility of falsehood in thought and speech, which in the present context is crucial to define the art of the sophist as deceptive, but also, in general, to define the philosopher’s activity as moving from ignorance to knowledge. In this regard, it may be worth recalling some of those passages in the *Euthydemus*, where the sophists Euthydemus and Dionysodorus actually advocate for the position here assigned to a hypothetical sophist (cf. 2.5). Euthydemus says that nobody is able to speak things that are not, and therefore nobody tells lies; consequently, they can only speak things that are, i.e. the truth (284c6). The false can neither be said nor thought, and then ‘there is no such thing as false opinion’ and consequently there is no ignorance and no ignorant men (286d4). Most importantly, the conclusion is that there is no such thing as an intermediate state between ignorance and knowledge,

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described at 253d1-e2 is different from the method of collection and division. See also McCabe (2000), who proposes that dialectic amplifies the theory of collection and division.

which jeopardizes both the characterisations of the sophist as having only *doxa*, and the characterisation of the philosopher as moving from *doxa* to *epistēmē*.

## 7.6. Final Definition: from Imitation to Deception

The final definition picks-up the thread from 235d, where it was established that there were two types of imitation: the art of likeness-making (*eikastikē*) and the art of appearance-making (*phantastikē*) (264c). The method of division operates somehow differently here; the two-dimensional pattern is altered to give way to four sub-species.

**Expertise:** Acquisitive

**Productive:** Divine: Original

Likeness-making

**Human:** Original

**Appearance-making:** With tools

**Own person (imitation):** Informed mimicry

**Belief-mimicry:** Sincere

**Insincere (ironic):** Public speech

**Private conversation**

The sophist's art of appearance-making (*phantastikē*) stems from human reproduction and can be divided into tool-assisted and personified reproduction, i.e. imitation (*mimesis*; 267a). Imitation, in turn, can be performed by those who know the original (*eidotēs*; 267b7) or those who only have beliefs (*doxazontes*; 267c3), later identified as 'informed mimicry' (*epistēmēs mimesin*; 267c2) and 'belief-mimicry' (*doxēs mimesin*; 267c1). Belief-based mimicry is the kind that imitates the character of virtue without knowing virtue. 'Don't many people who are ignorant of it, but have some beliefs about it, try hard to cause what they believe it is to appear to be present in them [φάινεσθαι ποιεῖν]. And don't they imitate it in their words and actions as much as they can?' (267c3-6). And they prove to be successful at 'seeming to be just without being just [τοῦ δοκεῖν εἶναι δίκαιοι μηδαμῶς ὄντες]' (267c8).<sup>459</sup> Belief-mimicry has two sub-species related to two different states of mind: 'one sort of belief-mimic is foolish [εὐήθης] and thinks he knows the things he only has beliefs about [οἰόμενος εἰδέναι τὰ ἃ δοξάζει]' (267e10-268a1);

<sup>459</sup> A topic also explored in *Rep.* II (361a-b) (cf. 3.3.1).

the other, by contrast, is aware of the deception: ‘by temperament he’s suspicious and fearful that he doesn’t know the things that he pretends in front of others to know [ὡς ἀγνοεῖ τὰ ὑτὰ ἂ πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους ὡς εἰδὼς ἐσχημάτισται]’ (268a2-4). The first imitator is called sincere (*haplous*; 268a6), the second insincere or ironic (*ironikos*; 268a7). Finally, the practice of the insincere art of imitation can be performed in front of large crowds, this is the demagogue’s art (268b9), or can be performed in private speeches as a one to one disputative conversation, this is the sophist’s art. Sophistry is finally defined as ‘imitation of the contrary-speech-producing, insincere and unknowing sort, [ἐναντιοποιολογικῆς εἰρωνικοῦ μέρους τῆς δοξαστικῆς μιμητικόν] of the appearance-making kind of copy-making, the word-juggling part of production that’s marked off as human and not divine’ (268c8-d2).

Many of the characteristic traits of the sophist included in the last definition do not come as a surprise. After demonstrating that non-being partakes of being, the visitor is finally allowed to call the sophist an imitator and a copy-maker and, more importantly, to characterise his cognitive state as *doxa*. What is rather surprising is that the sophist’s ignorance is blameworthy. ‘It is one thing to assert that sophists claim knowledge but are ignorant, or, to put it in the Stranger’s terms, believe, simple-mindedly, that their ignorance is knowledge (268a *init.*), quite another to assert that they have a fair suspicion that what passes for their knowledge in the eyes of the world really is ignorance—and then do nothing to correct the mistake’ (Robinson 2013, pp. 11-12). The deficiency of the sophist is thus cognitive and moral.

But then we might want to ask why, from the beginning, the sophist’s activity is described as *technē* or *dunamis*. This is not because the sophist, as an imitator, has knowledge or right opinion about the things he imitates (cf. *Rep.* 602a), but rather because he knowingly and purposely produces appearances and deceives people.<sup>460</sup> But is this art of deception a *technē*? This is rightly problematised by Brown: ‘The nub of Plato’s complaint against those he labels sophists may be their uncanny ability to appear wise when they are not, but again, that does not mean there is a

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<sup>460</sup> Here it may be helpful to go back to the sixth definition where wickedness (*kakia*) is presented as different from ignorance (*agnoia*) (228e1).

*technē* whose aim is precisely this' (2010, p. 166). I agree with Brown that this is probably not genuine *technē*, in the same way that it is not real *sophia*, but I believe Plato suggests a way to understand this. For this, we might recall the way the visitor opens the question for Theaetetus: 'Well, shall we suppose the sophist is a layman [ιδιώτην], or completely and truly a sophist [παντάπασιν ὡς ἀληθῶς σοφιστήν]?' (221d1-2) To this Theaetetus replies: 'He's not a layman at all. I understand what you're saying: he has to be the kind of person that the name sophist indicates [ὡς παντὸς δεῖ τοιοῦτος εἶναι τό γε ὄνομα τοῦτο ἔχων]' (221d3-4). This is the first assumption, namely that because of his name (derived from *sophos*) he is in possession of some expertise. Now, let us see how they close the dialogue once they have reached the final definition. The visitor raises the question as to whether this imitator should be called *sophos* or *sophistēs*, to which Theaetetus says: 'we can't call him *sophos*, since we took him not to know anything [οὐκ εἰδῶτα αὐτὸν ἔθεμεν]. But since he imitates the *sophos* [μιμητῆς δ' ὄν τοῦ σοφοῦ] he'll obviously have a name derived from the wise man's name' (268b11-c2).<sup>461</sup> He is not real *sophos*, since he does not know, but an apparent *sophos*, where appearance includes both public opinion and error in judgement (cf. 2.6, 3.3.1). This allows us to think that a *technē* of appearance-making is no other than an apparent *technē*, in the same way that *doxastikē epistēmē* is to have apparent knowledge (as well as to appear to be knowledgeable). By defining him as an 'expert deceiver', Plato makes him liable (as an expert) and discreditable (as a deceiver).<sup>462</sup> At the possibility of being confused with a sincere imitator (i.e. someone who simply ignores the truth or inadvertently lies), the visitor remarks the sophist's ability and intention to lie.<sup>463</sup>

This settles the question about what kind of apparent *sophos* the sophist is. As seen in the *Apology*, there are many different apparent *sophoi*, among them, politicians, poets, and craftsmen. According to the last definition of the *Sophist*, it would make

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<sup>461</sup> Similarly in *Rep.* VI (493a6 ff), sophists are said to learn the pleasures of most people and call this knowledge wisdom (*sophia*) (cf. 2.6).

<sup>462</sup> As established in *Hipp. Min.* (365d6-366b6), the liar possesses the same art as the one who is telling the truth.

<sup>463</sup> From this, a significant question arises: who deserves more blame, the one who deceives knowingly or the one who does so unknowingly? In principle, those who knowingly deceive are the ones who deserve moral blame. However, there is also blame in not knowing the difference between reality and image. As Socrates asserts in the *Phaedrus*: 'For to be unaware of the difference between a dream-image and the reality of what is just and unjust, good and bad, must truly be grounds for reproach even if the crowd praises it with one voice' (277d10-e3).

sense that the sophist is not counted among those reputed *sophoi*: they appear to be *sophoi* because they are judged to be so by most people, while they prove to be ignorant. The case of the sophist is rather different. He is an apparent *sophos* because he knows the art of imitation, he makes himself appear as *sophos*. The active capacity to knowingly deceive also would distinguish sophists from lovers of sights and sounds, as described in book V of the *Republic*. Although both of them have the capacity only to opine, it seems that the sophist is able to see the difference between reality and appearance, and nevertheless stays in the realm of appearances.

## 7.7. Conclusion

The dialogue concludes successfully. The definition explains the sophist's name, art and fault in only one sentence: he makes himself appear to be a *sophos*. As discussed above, with appearance, there are two possibilities, appear and being something, and merely appearing (without being), where 'appearing' might be either the result of what people believe or the result of active deception. Sophists are among those who only appear *sophoi* (without being *sophoi*) by actively and knowingly deceiving people into thinking they are *sophoi*. As a result of the ignorance of most people, the sophist is believed to be many things, even a philosopher, and therefore he appears to have all kinds of expertise. But the truth is that he masters only one expertise, and that is the capacity of making himself appear to be wise without being wise. This defining feature bears on the present investigation because it settles a significant distinction between sophists and other apparent *sophoi*, among which are philosophers. While the sophist makes himself appear *sophos*, others might be believed to be *sophoi* by the opinion of most people.

As already noted, the definition obtained accounts for the sophist's name, art and fault. However, the dialogue does not offer any hint as to who may belong to the genus of *sophistai*. This is not irrelevant. One of the difficulties confronted when trying to define the sophist is that it cannot be circumscribed to one realm of expertise. As shown in the preceding chapter, this is also a problem in other dialogues; the sophists may be teachers, rhetoricians, politicians, and even philosophers. But this sort of multi-referential use of the term does not contribute to

Plato's primary purpose in the *Sophist*, namely to distinguish the sophist from the philosopher. This can only be achieved by clearing the account from the historical and circumstantial elements surrounding the conception of the sophist. Plato does this at the beginning when he removes Socrates from the conversation. It is only by distancing the account from any hint of historical reality that Plato succeeds in defining the sophist; when he succeeds, after a highly sophisticated practice of philosophical inquiry, the sophist seems to be devoid of any human reference. The interlocutors seem to have caught the philosophical sophist, while the historical sophist is still on the run. Whereas this may represent a failure in the task of defining the sophist, it represents a major success in drawing a philosophically relevant distinction between the sophist and the philosopher: while they both are apparent *sophoi* in the eyes of most people, only the sophist uses his ability to make himself appear a *sophos*.

## 8. CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have examined Plato's account of the philosopher and the sophist on a basis of closer attention to and deeper understanding of *sophos/sophia* within the Greek literary tradition. Considering Plato was competing for the appropriation and legitimisation of these labels, my approach from the outset has been to understand them as constructs and observe the rhetoric at work. In this context, I assessed the importance each of these notions have in the corpus, drawing attention to the way they are (re)defined and appropriated, whether they are novel or distinct. I considered Plato's conceptualisation in the light of earlier conceptions, to reveal the presence of the agonistic, authoritative and moral strands, and to assess Plato's own contribution, namely the treatment of these labels as meaningful names and a conceptualisation of them in epistemic terms. This approach has the merit of connecting Plato with previous accounts in a way that allows us to assess his position not only at the beginnings of *philosophia*, but also as a part of a long-standing tradition of *sophia*. It also sheds some light on a commonplace in the history of philosophy, namely that Plato is the author of the vilification of the sophist, which results in a rivalry between the sophist and the philosopher. Drawing from attitudes against the *sophoi*, I argued that the prejudice that affects sophists affects philosophers as well. Together with rehabilitating the image of Socrates as a *sophos*, Plato tends to redirect people's opinions about the *sophistai* (concerning what they are, what they do, and why are to blame). Moreover, I argued that while Plato is clearly concerned with rehabilitating the image of Socrates and endowing philosophy with a special status, the sophist (in particular) is not a relevant point of comparison, in contrast to (more generally) those who make false claims of *sophia*, and those who pursue the wrong kind of object. My project then subscribes to the efforts of a growing tendency in Platonic scholarship of reading Plato as an author embedded in his cultural context. By challenging the assumption that Plato is doing philosophy (as if this is a well-established discipline in the fourth century BCE), the thesis reassesses Plato's position and his project within the long-standing tradition of wisdom. By restating the importance of *sophia*, a concept whose significance has been largely neglected in Platonic scholarship, our understanding of Plato's project

is therefore enriched by considering the presence of competitive models, socio-political conditions and public opinion.

In section I of the thesis I examined *sophos/sophia* in Pre-Platonic and Platonic literature. Chapter 1 presented us with some examples in pre-Platonic literature, useful for discussing the problem of demarcation (between particular and general; moral and non-moral knowledge), against the background of an agonistic context in which the meaning of these notions is negotiated and the authoritative and moral strands adapt to different discourses. This led us to consider the use of these words in the description of character, where we saw that *sophia* designates traits of intelligence as well as expertise, and *sophos* can be used as a term of praise and blame, and as an epithet for the characterisation of the clever and the intellectual. From the examination of these examples we did not obtain a primary or a focal meaning, but rather the necessary background to assess Plato's own conceptualisation. I argued in chapter 2 that Plato conceptualises *sophia/sophos* more consistently in epistemic terms, i.e. as designating expertise or knowledge in relation to a field or area rather than an epithet for the description of character. I proposed that this allows him to raise the question about the object known and the question of value, crucial to making a distinction between real and apparent *sophia/sophos*. Drawing from popular attitudes towards *sophia* and the *sophoi* seen in chapter 1, and Plato's conception of *sophos/sophia* in chapter 2, chapter 3 on the *Apology*, allowed us to contrast traditional and popular conceptions of wisdom (embedded in a cultural value-system) with Plato's own, especially embodied by Socrates' 'sort of *sophia*'. In contrast to the way *sophos* is used as a term of reputation in the context of the 'old accusations' and the 'Narration', I claimed that Plato seeks to reassign these labels to those who show themselves to possess real knowledge, i.e. knowledge of the most important things, namely virtue and truth. We saw that Plato rescues the notion of *sophia* as expertise, but introduces Socratic *sophia* and divine *sophia*, which I have claimed are essential to understanding the way Plato's describes *philosophia/philosophos*.

In section II I examined pre-Platonic and Platonic conceptions of *philosophos/philosophia*. Bearing in mind that Plato promotes *philosophia* rather

than *sophia*, chapter 4 introduced the question of whether there is a specific sense in which the *philosophos* is distinguished from other *sophoi*. I proposed that Plato uses the *phil(o)*- component to create a narrative of love that defines the philosopher in a novel and distinct way. In contrast to previous accounts, Plato's distinctly describes the philosopher as a lover. This description positions the philosopher in an intermediate state between *amathia* and *sophia*. I argued that this has consequences in describing the philosopher's cognitive and moral disposition to pursue the object of his love. The *Lysis*, the *Symposium* and the *Phaedo* all provide descriptions of the philosopher and philosophy in terms of love, but the love relationship recounted in each of these dialogues is different. This, I claimed, allows Plato to rescue and emphasise different aspects related to his conceptualisation of philosophy, which involves the subject's cognitive and moral disposition, an active process of learning, and an object (the Forms, good, truth, virtue). Thus, while the *Lysis* suggests a relation of friendship, where the philosopher benefits from *sophia*, the *Symposium* illustrates this relationship as intense desire, thereby emphasising the philosopher's need for and lack of *sophia*. The *Phaedo*, on the other hand, depicts the love of the philosopher as a life-long desire, i.e. as an ongoing process driven by a desire that is only to be fulfilled after death. In chapter 5, I explored *philosophia/philosophos* in the *Republic* to show that, although in this context the possibility of acquiring knowledge is open to the philosopher (in contrast to the *Phaedo*), he is still described as a lover. Indeed, the passages that offer the richest descriptions of the philosopher compare him with lovers of sights and sounds (later described as lovers of opinion) (book V), and lovers of wealth and lovers of honour (book IX). As opposed to other lovers, the philosopher has the psychological make-up and the cognitive ability to assess the object he desires and pursue it. I argued that Plato's conception of the philosopher as a learner, devoted to understanding and to pursuing the Forms, clashes with the popular conception of the philosopher as useless. Against the paradigm of the man of practical skill, the philosopher appears to be a 'babbling' or as a 'stargazer', which fits the image of the intellectual *sophos*, discussed in chapter 1. Plato explains this as an error of perception, one that distorts the notion of usefulness. I argued that the objection against the usefulness of philosophers allows Plato to restate the philosopher's exceptional nature, with particular emphasis on the importance of his education and political worth, but it also reminds us how fine the

line that separates the philosopher from the non-philosopher is, which allows us to understand how and why a philosopher and a sophist may be taken to be the same.

In Section III of the thesis I sought to establish whether Plato offers a consistent or distinct description of the sophist. Chapter 6 examined examples in pre-Platonic literature, mainly to assess whether the label belongs to a certain class of people or carries a negative value. This is a title generally assigned to people that are deemed experts, among which there are poets, sages, teachers and even philosophers. I concluded that the derogatory sense attached to the term includes a negative evaluation of the trick, the cleverness and the arrogance involved, similarly to *sophos/sophia* in chapter 1. The Platonic conception captures the central aspect of expertise or knowledge, but to raise the following question: what does the sophist know? What is his expertise about? In the absence of an answer, we see how Plato uses different characterisations and popular conceptions of the sophist, some of them to describe him unfavourably, others to rescue him from unfair prejudice. I argued that since the reputation of the philosopher and the sophist stems from the same prejudice against the intellectual, with both of them deemed *sophoi* (as seen in the *Apology* (chapter 1) and the *Republic* (chapter2)), Plato assesses and moderates people's opinion about sophists. I proposed that the only account that offers a definition and a negative account of the sophist is the *Sophist*. The central thread of the analysis of chapter 7 is a running theme in the dialogue: the appearance of the sophist. The way the sophist appears makes him the target of multiple definitions, but only one captures his essence, i.e. the ability to appear as a *sophos*. I claimed that Plato is not concerned with the historical figure of the sophist, but rather with the philosophical problem of appearance so as to reveal the worth of philosophy. Plato is playing with the popular depiction of sophists, to finally assert that a sophist (if there is such a sophist) is someone whose ability is to deceive people into believing that he is a *sophos*. The amazing capacity of the sophist of appearing to be a *sophos* without being a *sophos* can only be captured by the philosopher's ability of linking kinds through dialectic.

In tracing the use of terminology, I have covered a vast extent of textual references, which has inevitably favoured a broad scope (over a more exhaustive in-depth

review) of the themes. Due to the limitation of length of the present dissertation, I could only signal some of the aspects that invite further investigation. A more comprehensive treatment of the subject will observe the dramatic elements at work, e.g. the dramatic links between the *Apology*, the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*, and the characterisation of the philosopher (Socrates) in contrast to the characterisation of those called sophists, such as Protagoras, and Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. A more extensive analysis of the negative assessment of the *sophoi* in connection with an anti-intellectual climate would include an account of the historical context of fifth and fourth century BCE Athens. Lastly, problems of a philosophical nature, both moral and epistemological, arising throughout the thesis, would merit a detailed analysis in connection with some of Plato's doctrines, particularly Socratic intellectualism and the theory of the Forms.



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