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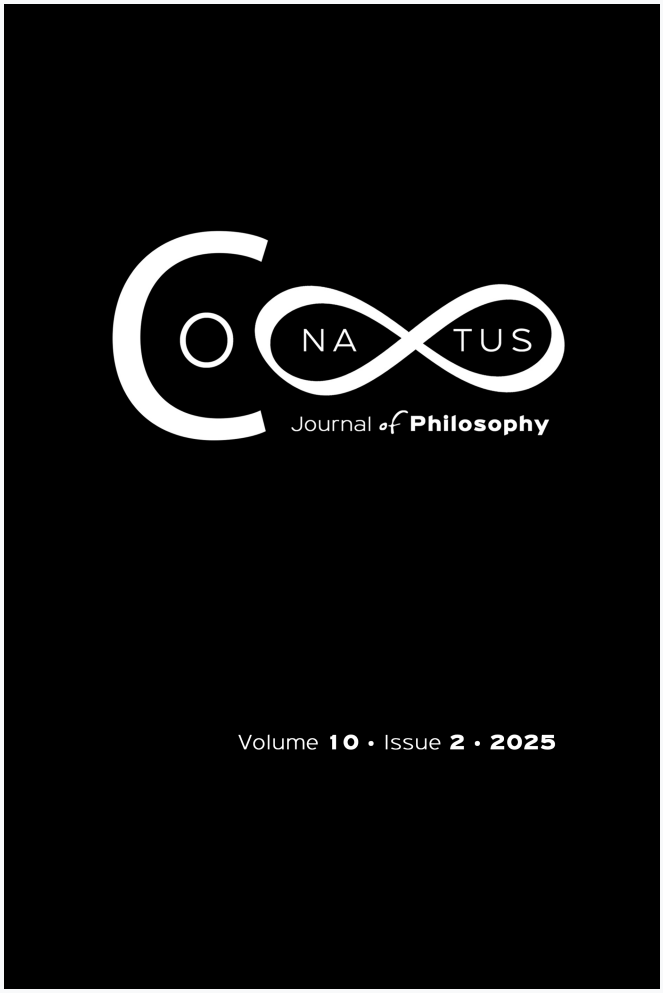

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An Aporetic Reading of the Apology

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Abstract

The thesis of this paper is that Plato's Apology has an internally structured dialogue which may be read aporetically and may be used to read its monologic external structure as a dialogue proper. The aporia of the Apology has to do with the notion of 'justice' (dikē). Drawing from Hesiod's observations as to the ambiguity of the term 'justice,' I argue that the same type of ambiguity is implicitly exploited by Socrates in the Apology. It is traditionally the case in Plato's aporetic dialogues that Socrates' interlocutor(s) are the ones reduced to a state of aporia. I argue that under this reading, the jury plays a dual function, acting both as Socrates' audience and interlocutor, and that they find themselves at an impasse (aporia) as to what justice is and whether they have acted justly.

Keywords: *Plato; Apology; aporia; dialogue; monologue*

I. Introduction

Despite the small number of *aporetic* dialogues within the entirety of the Platonic Corpus, the majority of the *early* Platonic dialogues lead to an *aporia*. Yet, the *Apology* stands as an oddity for, although considered one of the *early* dialogues, it is seen neither

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as *being* a dialogue nor as being *aporetic*.[1] That is because a dialogue is traditionally seen as needing to be in dialogue form, which the *Apology* admittedly lacks, and because Platonic *aporia* is thought of as requiring dialogue. That is to say, it requires Socrates' interlocutor to be verbally responsive – not only does the interlocutor need to agree [as his own person and in his own voice] to the premises set out by Socrates, but we also need to know that he agrees – and to be give *verbal* signs indicating his cognitive and ethical impasse.

According to the ancient accounts of Albino and Diogenes Laertius,[2] the definition of dialogue is: λόγος ἐξ ἐρωτήσεως καὶ ἀποκρίσεως συγκείμενος περί τινος τῶν φιλοσοφουμένων καὶ πολιτικῶν μετὰ τῆς πρεπούσης ἠθοποιίας τῶν παραλαμβανομένων προσώπων καὶ τῆς κατὰ τὴν λέξιν κατασκευῆς.[3] I propose an expanded notion of dialogue, specifically with regard to the ancient notion of "λόγος ἐξ ἐρωτήσεως καὶ ἀποκρίσεως" of the above definition, such that a 'dialogue' may be called a dialogue due to its external structural form, or by way of its goals and effects and the mechanisms employed to promote these; by way, that is, of its internal structure. The 'or' may, but need not be, inclusive. In this way, one may read an externally structured monologue as a dialogue. By doing so, I do not mean to deny the need for [the interlocutor's] signs of response but, rather, that the signs, as long as they may, in some way, be extrapolated from the text, need not be directly articulated by the interlocutor, nor directly indicated by the author, nor, for that matter, obviously attributed to a specific person. The *Apology*, I argue, *is* a dialogue – in the sense that its soliloquial external structure may be read as dialogue due to its philosophically dialogic internal structure – in that it shares this internal structure with other Platonic dialogues, for which both of the aspects of 'dialogue' may hold true.

Arguing from the position that Platonic *aporia* demands a dialogic exchange due to its ethical dimensions, I further propose that the internal form of dialogue of the *Apology* may also be read as *aporetic*.

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[1] For example, Catherine H. Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers: The Coherence of the Dialogues* (Chicago University Press, 2012).

[2] For modern sources on the ancient definitions of dialogue, see Rudolf Hirzel, *Der Dialog Vol. II* (S. Hirzel, 1895); Olaf Nüsser, *Albins Prolog und die Dialogtheorie des Platonismus* (De Gruyter, 1991), 87-100; Nikos Charalabopoulos, *Platonic Drama and Its Ancient Reception* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 24-103.

[3] Alb. Intr. 147.18–21. D. L. 3.48: "speech composed of question and answer on some political or philosophical topic, having the proper delineation of characters employed and the artistic treatment in terms of diction." I am using Charalabopoulos's translation of Albinos's *Prologos*, in Charalabopoulos, 25.

The *aporia* arises from the proposed Socratic thesis that insofar as both public sentiment or opinion and moral justice may be expressed *qua* law, law cannot be the highest means by which people are made to be virtuous. The ethical impasse experienced by Socrates' interlocutors in the *Apology* can be seen in the structure of its parts, which number five rather than the usual three, in its linguistic mannerisms and literary devices, implying natural conversational speech, and in the use of a Hesiodic style of ambiguity pertaining to 'justice.'

In this paper, I am focusing on an author-specific, informal definition of dialogue as opposed to a generic one. This, admittedly, narrows the scope of the application of the definition. However, this consequence is not necessarily problematic. A definition need not be applicable to both Xenophon and Plato, nor be generally informative about Socratic dialogue as a literary practice. Considering that this paper specifically examines structurally internal dialogue, which may not – and I take it does not – form an integral part of Xenophon's dialogues, and argues for the *aporia* – also a predominantly Platonic feature among the Socratic writers – of this internal dialogue, a generic definition of dialogue would not be appropriate for approaching the task at hand.

II. Dialogue

At a first glance, there seem to be two questions that first ought to be answered: firstly, what a Socratic dialogue [Σωκρατικοί λόγοι] *in* genere is, and, secondly, what the *sui generis* characteristics of the Platonic dialogues are. The reason for investigating these questions, even if briefly, is to understand the Socratic and Platonic aspects of the *Apology* – as opposed to how the proposed dialogic internal structure of the *Apology* may inform generic definitions.

i. Socratic dialogue

'Socratic dialogue'[4] is ambiguous in that it could mean either a dialogue carried out by Socrates, a dialogue having the figure of Socrates as one of its protagonists, or a dialogue that has a certain stylistic form associated with the Socratic dialogic style. In the first case, there is a subject carrying out an action, with Socrates as the subject and dialogue as the action. In the second case, dialogue is a framework

[4] There is scholarly disagreement as to whether works that aim at being Socratic yet exceed the periodic framework of the Classical period can legitimately be called Socratic. Whether King James I's *Daemonologie* can be considered a Socratic dialogue exceeds the scope of this paper and will not be addressed here.

in which Socrates is one of its major elements, and in the third case, the dialogue is not characterised by its existing subject but by a wholly specific argumentative style, a *modus operandi* associated with a specific person, in this case, Socrates. In other words, in the first case Socrates is doing something and in the second case, he is defined by being part of a certain kind of (literary) arrangement; that is, things are being done to *him*. In the third case, however, Socrates is associated with a certain kind of argumentative methodology that may, but need not, be performed by him, and is doing something to the literary framework so that the structure of the entire dialogue is arranged according to the structure of the method.

In fact, there is room for even more distinctions. Insofar as Socrates is seen as doing something to others, the 'doing' can either be understood as implying a philosophical tactic (goal), or as significantly contributing to a recurring state of affairs (effect), regardless of whether the state of affairs is the result of a tactic. The state of *aporia,* as seen in Plato's dialogues, is the paragon. Similarly, Socrates' participation in a dialogue can be understood in two ways. Either he is part of the framework-dialogue, he is, that is, the object of a writer, and so the writer is doing something to him, or Socrates is open to the dialogue *at hand* by means of maintaining an internal dialogue with himself, that is, he is doing something to himself. The latter may also be applied to the third case, albeit it may not be Socrates but some other figure performing this function.[5] A further distinction applicable to the third case has to do with the argumentative style that Socrates is said to have created for himself and the various argumentative methodologies and styles associated with Socrates but not *created* by him, such as the art of rhetoric.

ii. Platonic dialogue

a. Inter-personal conversations

Plato's overtly conversational dialogues are casual in nature and are either narrated – the *dramatis personae* talk to each other within a narrated frame – or are dramatic, involving involve only direct dialogue without narration. In the *Apology*, apart from the brief direct dialogue

[5] Dialogues that include a Socratic-like figure but not Socrates as such include, for example, the Athenian Stranger in Plato's *Laws* and Simonides in Xenophon's *Hiero*. One could even include Timaeus, in *Timaeus*, as a figure that replaces Socrates, who, albeit actually present in the dialogue, does not act as an active interlocutor. Timaeus's rhetorical style is close to, if not the same as, Socrates' in *Phaedrus* and his thesis resembles Socrates's in *Phaedo* and *Republic* (*sans* the 'demiurge').

between Socrates and Meletus,[6] there does not seem to be any substantial conversational dialogue involved. In fact, it very much resembles a (dramatic) monologue. And for good reason, since, for the most part, there is only one speaking protagonist, Socrates. That is, the structural form of the *Apology* seems to prevent an actual dialogic exchange.[7]

By analogy, for example, one may imagine a girl standing on her father's feet, while he moves her with his own feet to teach her how to waltz. In this example, the question as to whether the girl is actually dancing, or even learning to dance, is a legitimate one, since she can be said to dance only insofar as her body is being moved by someone else's. Similarly, the question as to whether Socrates' audience is actually involved in a dialogue is also legitimate, since it can be said that Socrates is the one *moving* their thoughts. Although that is true for Socrates in the *Apology*, to the extent that he is primarily the only one delivering a speech, he does not simply monopolise the conversation in a way that reduces his interlocutor's responses to mere reflections of his own cognitive dance. In fact, there are many levels of conversation going on which are expressed through his defense speech.

On the one hand, Socrates gives his audience (and Plato's wider audience, namely *us*) an account of the practice of conducting conversations[8] that have already taken place, as well as, along with the subsequent consequences of these conversations, whether social, ethical and so on. He tells us of the conversations that his 'first' accusers have had with the men of Athens when the men were but only children.[9] He tells us that he has talked with young and, for the most part, wealthy men,[10] that he has talked with politicians,[11] poets,[12] and craftsmen.[13] He has indirectly talked to the Orphic oracle,[14] he has previously spo-

[6] *Apol.* 24b-28a.

[7] Mary Margaret McCabe, *Platonic Conversations* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 8.

[8] Although unwritten in the present context, the rest of the Platonic dialogues still serve as written examples.

[9] *Apol.* 18b-c.

[10] Ibid., 23c; cf. 33c.

[11] Ibid., 21c4-5; cf. 22a7; cf. 22c8.

[12] Ibid., 22a7.

[13] Ibid., 22d1.

[14] Ibid., 20e5-23b10. What I mean by saying that Socrates has talked to the Oracle indirectly is both that Chaerephon is the mediator between the Oracle and Socrates, as well as, and perhaps more importantly, that Socrates goes into modes of proving and disproving the Oracle not only by conversing with others, but also by construing an imagined conversation with the Oracle. See also McCabe, 16.

ken with (and must now again speak to) his current accusers,[15] and he has been talking to the *daimonion* all his life (which I take to be his own internal dialogue).[16] In other words, he exposes his current audience and interlocutors to the various kinds of conversations he has, and has had, throughout his life. In doing this, he brings both his own life and the lives of the men of Athens in all their individual complexities to the *podium*.[17]

What that means is that Socrates shifts these conversations from being simply narrated to being, in an important sense, active.[18] That is not to say that the lives of the men of Athens are being judged from a legal perspective; rather, they are examined in the present of the *Apology* just as they were in the past. I argue that much like any other dialogue[19] where this kind of personal examination is taking place, the interlocutor of the *Apology* is being examined in light of a question crucial to his life and, often, livelihood. It is exactly at the crucial moment that the jurors are called to be just that their capacity for thinking about justice is called into question.

On the other hand, apart from the seemingly simply narrated accounts of past conversations, more straightforwardly active conversations take place. In a sense, the absence of a vocal conversation at the time of Socrates' courtroom speech between Socrates and the *daimonion* is an open-ended conversation – a kind of ongoing negotiation – that is at all times given priority over his other conversations; Socrates has been waiting with his ears wide open, for if the *daimonion* were to warn him, or object to his at-the-time-of-the-court position, then Socrates would have to pause and reflect.[20] His professed conversation with the *daimonion* is both 'historical'[21] and active during his giving a

[15] Ibid., 24d3-27c3.

[16] Thought (διάνοια), as defined in *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* (264a), is the soul conversing with itself, with thought doing the asking and answering of questions.

[17] This is a Socratic technique where a certain concept is examined through the life of someone who thinks to have a legitimate claim over it.

[18] On Plato's dialogues using predominantly 'mixed' narrative, see David Halperin, "Plato and the Erotics of Narrativity," in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, eds. Julia Annas, James C. Klagge, and Nicholas D. Smith (Oxford Academic, 1992), 93-129.

[19] For example, Socrates asks Ion whether Homer is knowledgeable about the things he talks about, since Ion is a rhapsode.

[20] A case in which the *daimonion* is seen to actively warn Socrates while he is speaking is found in *Phaedrus*, where Socrates after entering his first speech on love with such 'dithyrambic frenzy' stops suddenly and professes that 'the spirit [the *daimonion*] that always holds him back from something he is about to do has come' (*Phdrs* 242).

[21] *Apol.* 31d2-3; 40a4-5.

defense speech.[22] Socrates' private dialogue with the *daimonion* is – in its demystified form – an aspect of his own active internal dialogue; it is the kind that reviews and weakens certainty at crucial points.

The kind of Socratic self-questioning is an internal dialogue which organises thought itself.[23] When Socrates says, "When I heard of this reply I asked myself: 'Whatever does the god mean?'" he is asking 'how should I go about thinking about some x thing.' The other internal dialogues occur within the *Apology* among the rest of the characters, the jury, his accusers, neutral parties or supporters. That is because, as Socrates informs us, his accusers had to "first persuade themselves before they go on to persuade others."[24] And he continues,

> Very well then, men of Athens. I must surely defend myself and attempt to uproot from your minds in so short a time the slander that has resided there so long.[25]

That is, there should be an internal state of uncertainty for the men of Athens to be reflective and open to what Socrates has to say. Socrates is consistently put in the position where he should first open shut doors before his voice is heard loudly within his interlocutor's 'estate.' It is because of the nature of the setting and, as I shall argue, the nature of Socrates' speech, that the internal dialogue of those present in the courtroom also constitutes an active, albeit implicit, dialogue between Socrates and the people present in the courtroom. And, additionally, there is of course the aforementioned brief and abrupt exposition of Socratic refutation in the direct conversation with Meletus, which stands as a tangible instance of what is *currently* happening on a grander scale.

Imaginary speech – questions and objections raised by hypothetical speakers – is one of Plato's recursive literary motifs. In the *Apology*, Socrates inserts hypothetical questions assuming the voice of the silent interlocutor, the men of Athens, and thus rendering them from passive to active: e.g., the imaginary conversation between an unskilled questioner[26] and Socrates in the *Hippias Major* introduced by

[22] Ibid., 40a5-b1.

[23] Ibid., 21b.

[24] Ibid., 18d.

[25] Ibid., 18e-19a.

[26] Ibid., 288d.

Socrates as a means of self-questioning.[27] The fact that the speaker poses questions in the voice of his audience, in keeping with common oratory practice, does not take away from the function this style of questioning plays in Plato's dialogues *in genere*. We encounter this type of questioning in the *Apology*:[28] 1. "One of you might perhaps interrupt me and say: 'But Socrates, what is your occupation? From where have these slanders come?'"[29] 2. "Someone might say: 'Are you not ashamed, Socrates, to have followed the kind of occupation that has led to your being now in danger of death?'"[30] 3. "What do I deserve for being such a man?"[31] 4. "Thinking of this, he might feel resentful toward me and, angry about this, cast his vote in anger. If there is such a one among you – I do not deem there is, but if there is – I think it would be right to say in reply."[32]

The last example is particularly interesting for the implied question mark is expressed through an assumed physical action, that is, the casting of the vote.

The backbone of Plato's dialogues is, as Thesleff calls it, "cultivated everyday conversation."[33] Socratic dialectic mandates that there is only one immediate interlocutor whose views are being examined at each one time. That is even the case when there are multiple active characters present, as in *Phaedo* or the *Republic*. In the *Apology* the opinions and attitudes of the men of Athens may vary, but the end result of their actions, be that their interference with Socrates' speech or the outcome of their votes, comes out as a single voice. Moreover, Socrates himself treats them as though they are a unified entity. The awareness of the existence and power of the collective public perception, as seen both in *Protagoras* and the *Apology*, sets the scene and shapes the inter-personal dialogic exchange between the 'many' and Socrates.[34]

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[27] Kathryn Morgan, "Plato," in *Speech in Ancient Greek Literature. Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative, Volume 5*, eds. Mathieu de Bakker and Irene J. F. de Jong, 539-564 (Brill, 2022), 543.

[28] All the translations are taken from Cooper and Hutchinson's edited edition unless otherwise indicated. J. M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson, eds, *Plato: Complete Works* (Hackett, 1997), 17-36.

[29] *Apol.* 20c.

[30] Ibid., 28b.

[31] Ibid., 36d.

[32] Ibid., 34d. See also 19a-b, 20d, 28d, 32e-33a, 33c, 34d, 36b, 36d, 37b-c, 40b, 40e-41a.

[33] Morgan, 540; Holger Thesleff, *Platonic Patterns. A Collection of Studies* (Parmenides Publishing, 2009), 51-52.

[34] Morgan, 544.

b. Inter-textual conversations

Another type of 'dialogue' in Plato occurs between the texts representative of traditional discursive genres of his time, those with a certain claim to wisdom, namely poetry and rhetoric, which Plato time and again incorporates into and interrogates within his dialogues and his own texts.[35] Much like what happens to the figure of Socrates in the Socratic Dialogue section, "when one genre enters into the text of another genre, it both acts and is acted upon."[36] In the words of Bakhtin, "in one discourse, two semantic intentions appear, two voices."[37] The audience "is meant to hear both a version of the original utterance as the embodiment of its speaker's point of view (or 'semantic position') and the second speaker's evaluation of that utterance from a different point of view."[38]

In his interaction with other genres, Plato never alludes to simply one specific author or text. Instead, Plato's method often involves incorporating different genres which he has composed himself, such as the funeral oration in *Menexenus* or the encomiastic speeches in the *Symposium*.[39] Similarly, Socrates' speech follows many of the stylistic aspects of an *apologia*[40] – a court-room defense speech.[41] As Fowler

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[35] Andrea Wilson Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3.

[36] Ibid., 6.

[37] M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist (University of Texas Press, 1982), 305.

[38] Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford University Press, 1990), 65; Nightingale, 6.

[39] Nightingale, 8.

[40] For an analysis of ancient Greek apologetic speeches, see Angela Darkow, *The Spurious Speeches of the Lysianic Corpus* (Kessinger Publishing, 2010); Kenneth Seeskin, "Is the Apology of Socrates a Parody?" *Philosophy and Literature* 6, no. 1-2 (1982): 94-105; E. de Strycker, *Plato's Apology of Socrates. A Literary and Philosophical Study with a Running Commentary. Edited and Completed from the Papers of the Late E. de Strycker S.J.*, ed. S. R. Slings (Brill, 1994); Michael Gagarin, ed., *Antiphon: The Speeches* (Cambridge University Press, 1997); John R. Porter, "Adultery by the Book: Lysias 1 (On the Murder of Eratosthenes) and Comic Diegesis," in *The Attic Orators*, ed. Edwin Carawan, 60-88 (Oxford University Press, 2007); Michael C. Stokes, *Plato, Apology of Socrates* (Liverpool University Press, 1997).

[41] Demosthenes *Speeches* 18.306. See also Thomas Schirren, *Philosophos Bios: Die Antike Philosophenbiographie als Symbolische Form* (Universitatsverlag Winter, 2005), 81-3; M. F. Burnyeat, "The Impiety of Socrates," *Ancient Philosophy* 17, no. 1 (1997): 5; Charles H. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue. The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 88; Donald Morrison, "On the Alleged Historical Reliability of Plato's Apology," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 82, no. 3 (2000): 240. I do not take the intention of a certain text to be performed or delivered within a certain context as a prerequisite for that text to belong to a genre. In other words, Plato's *Apology* does not need to actually have been deliv-

points out, the basic structure of the speech, apart from the two responses following the conviction and condemnation, aligns with oratorical tradition; there is a brief introduction, followed by the narrative and the argument, and it ends with an appeal to the court and the god.[42] The speech, Tennant tells us, does not withhold the expected use of common rhetorical tropes of an *apologia*.[43] For example, we find a formal address to the jury ("men of the jury"), an appeal to their shared experience and emotion,[44] Socrates' (the litigant) promise to speak the truth[45] and expression disbelief as to the accuser's claim,[46] a showcasing of evidence of the litigant's good and trustworthy character,[47] and the invocation of an authority with regard to the litigant's decision to act a certain way.[48]

The *apologia*, however, fails to completely conform to the standards of its kind partly because of its inter-textual dialogic character. For the sake of brevity, I shall focus on only one example, the formal address of the jurors by Socrates. As Tennant succinctly observes, Socrates addresses the assembly men who acquit him as "men of the jury"[49] only once in the end of the *Apology*. For the rest of the *Apology*, as well as when he refers to the whole of the assembly, he refers to them with the less formal and respectful "men of Athens." Socrates' change of address, Tennant notes, is to be understood in relation to the passage[50] in which Socrates establishes the sole criterion by which a man of the assembly is to be judged in his capacity as a juror; his capacity to recognise what is just, despite of social appearances. The subtle difference in the customary address by the litigant, then, becomes a vehicle for Socrates' poignant commentary on whether a body of people is capable of pursuing justice in what Socrates views as its purest form. The practice of legal justice fails to be moral for, since it is being carried out by people, it is often conflated with a social code

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ered by Socrates in the court of justice to be considered as an example of the *apologetic* genre.

[42] Robert Fowler, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to Homer* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 65.

[43] John Roger Tennant, "Plato's Apology as Forensic Oratory," *Revista Archai* 14, no. 14 (2015): 39-50.

[44] *Apol.* 17a1-3, 21a1-4.

[45] Ibid., 17a4-b8, 17c1-4, 22a2.

[46] Ibid., 17a3, 18a6-b1.

[47] Ibid., 17d2-3, 20d5, 28e1-29a1.

[48] Ibid., 23b4-7.

[49] Ibid., 40a3.

[50] Ibid., 18a1-5.

of conduct. Insofar as practising the laws involves deviation from the truth, legality and ethics are divorced.

The change in address, however, does not necessarily reflect Socrates' or Plato's belief that solely those who voted to acquit him may truly be called 'jurors.' The punishment that Socrates chose for himself is put forward as a just punishment, but only ironically. Both options for punishment, the one proposed by the accusers (death) and the one by Socrates (championic treatment)[51] are not only unexpected by Athenian standards, but also ridiculous. Placing the jury in such a position as for them to make an impossible choice is deliberate; faced with the choice between Scylla and Charybdis one cannot escape death and one is not expected to. The choice, whichever it may be, shall be met with great regret. The brilliance of enforcing the impossible choice upon the assembly is exactly that it highlights the issue at hand: one should not and cannot help but be simultaneously 'a man of Athens' and 'a man of the jury.' Allen's observation as to the lack of a legal classification of the fact of the crime within the Athenian juridical system – especially with regard to the accusation of the corruption of the young – and its replacement with a dependence on a shared morality, namely that there is a judgement of the individual's character as opposed to a judgement of a certain action carried out by the individual reinforces this point.[52] That is not to suggest that the accusation of the corruption of youth does not have a legal basis as a crime under the Athenian legal system, but rather that the system leaves the definition of what constitutes 'corruption' to a group of people who more often than not are driven by a personal agenda. Plato's allusion to Anaxagoras' case also works as a reminder that the legal system allows for politically and socially driven juridical decisions and punishments. The impossible choice is foregrounded precisely to bring attention both to their impossible condition and the possibility of structurally unethical legality.

The changes in the traditional genre of oratory do not merely constitute Platonic perversions for the exaltation of philosophy. In Nightingale's words,

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[51] I take the proposal to pay a fine of 30 mina (38b9) not to be a serious counterpenalty offer. One reason has to do with the brevity of the particular suggestion in comparison to the overly extended championic treatment. The other is that if one is to read the *Apology* theatrically, it becomes obvious that the 30 mina has a rather comical effect which renders the proposal championic treatment even more painful as a counterpenalty offer.

[52] R. E. Allen, *Socrates and Legal Obligation* (University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 17, 27.

> if genres are not merely artistic forms but *forms of thought*,[53] each of which is adapted to representing and conceptualizing some aspects of experience better than others, then an encounter between two genres within a single text is itself a kind of dialogue.[54]

The tense relationship between oratory and philosophy may be paralleled to the cognitive dance between Socrates and his interlocutors; in light of a certain concept no one gets it completely right and everybody brings something to the table.

iii. Natural speech

Natural speech, as opposed to a set speech, is a prerequisite of dialogue. That is because spontaneous discourse is reactive; it requires the current speaker has listened to the previous speaker and that his own speech is a reaction and an answer to the opinions, objections, and questions of the first. Socrates' speech, he informs us, is a spontaneous speech delivered in a casual manner that stands as a response to the speeches of the accusers which proceeded his own. Then, Socrates conveys a warning issued by his accusers, that "the men of Athens should be careful not to be deceived by an accomplished speaker like Socrates."[55] Socrates' refutation of this warning is to say that he shall speak in a casual manner. From then on, we are given a brief exposition of what his accusers said and the manner in which they said it.[56] The response that follows is not only casual in style, but – as argued in the previous sub-section – also embedded with other natural conversations.

There are several trademarks of natural speech which Plato emulates in the dialogues. For one, it conveys more than simple formally presented arguments and often exceeds the confines of the philosophical subject at hand. For example, in *Protagoras*, the short conversation between Socrates and his friend touches on matters of gossip,[57] while the discussion about the virtues between Socrates and Protagoras[58] appeals to general principles and seeks an abstract conclusion. In the

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[53] Gian Biagio Conte, *The Hidden Author: An Interpretation of Petronius's Satyricon* (University of California Press, 1996), 132.

[54] Nightingale, 3.

[55] *Apol.* 17a-b.

[56] Ibid., 17a-c.

[57] *Prot.*, 309c-310a.

[58] Ibid., 332a-333b.

Apology we see this phenomenon in the form of Socrates' detailing of his own, and other people's, personal circumstances; it is evident in the gossipy manner in which he talks about those people he has deemed to have a false claim to wisdom, as well as in the emotional state of the interlocutors, conveyed through Socrates' speech.[59]

III. Other conversational mechanisms in the *Apology*

By 'conversational mechanism' or 'device' I refer to the means by which a reflective conversation is promoted and sustained within the scope of the Platonic Dialogues. There are at least four such conversational devices employed in the *Apology*, difference of opinion, silence, ambiguity, and paradox.[60] In this section I show how these conversational devices are being used in the *Apology* and engage in comparative work. The aim is to argue that the effect Socrates' speech has on his audience (-interlocutors) and Plato's wider audience does not substantially differ from that of Plato's other dialogues, both those traditionally seen as *aporetic* and those which are non-*aporetic* but structurally exist in dialogue form.

i. Difference of opinion

A dialectical exchange can only be sustained only if a certain subject remains unsettled and the interlocutors are not silenced[61] by each other nor reduced to echoing each other's ideas. Moreover, there must be evidence with regard to this activity in the dialogues, namely, the interlocutor, either by way of speaking or acting, will eventually answer.[62] The refinement of a state of disagreement in the *Apology* lies precisely in the fact that a proposition x is believed by Socrates, but not, or not yet, by the men of Athens.

The effect that difference of opinion has on the audience involved differs from that of a simple need for further development or clarification of a certain thesis. In his invocation to the gods, for example, Ti-

[59] Ibid., 21b-c and 21e. Verano lists a number of informality-related phenomena characteristic of natural language in defense of Socrates' claim to spontaneity which are present in the *Apology*. In Rodrigo Verano, "The Truth Alone Will Suffice: Traces of Spoken Language in Plato's Apology of Socrates," *Scripta Classica Israelica* 37 (2018): 25-43.

[60] While the list is not exhaustive, I have chosen four of the most important devices. As McCabe mentions, for example, fallacy as another such discursive devise, in McCabe 136.

[61] Unlike the silence encountered in the next section of this paper, silence here is not fruitful; it rather indicates a lack of cognitive fruits and self-reflectiveness.

[62] McCabe, 135; Jochen Mecke, "Dialogue in Narration (the Narrative Principle)," in *The Interpretation of Dialogue*, ed. Tulio Maranhao, 195-218 (Chicago University Press, 1990), 202.

maeus sets out the theme of the speech that is about to follow, namely the study of the universe.[63] Socrates' response is simply an expression of enthusiasm for further details; he asks no questions that would influence the course of Timaeus' examination.[64] Timaeus' speech has to do with cosmology, and as such Timaeus is attentive to the assumptions and questions of his inquiry, aiming at providing a fully satisfactory answer to all of them. He is not, however, concerned with his audience and the questions they may have, nor are we informed by Plato as to how they react. Timaeus guides his audience (including *us*) step by step; we can examine his thinking process in terms of consistency, validity and intuitiveness, but there are no personal stakes. And whatever wonder we may feel at the world he is constructing, we can set it aside and move on with ease once his speech is over.

That there is an active, but not direct, dialogue based on a difference of opinion, unlike the monologue of the *Timaeus*, is immediately indicated by the setting of the *Apology*. The accusers have brought Socrates to court because there is something about his life that is at odds with how they and the *polis* as a whole operate. The people of Athens are called (by the very laws of the *polis*) to reflect on Socrates' speech concerning his way of life and decide on his fate. That is, the setting prompts a dialogue in which the interlocutor (the men of Athens) reflects and responds through their actions, most notably by voting. The fact that it is a court issue means that Socrates' life may be at odds with the city not only at a social and informal level, but also with its very legal foundations. The proposition that is not yet believed by the jury is that Socrates is a just agent. That Socrates does not try to convince his interlocutors-audience that he is a legally just agent can be seen by the fact that he accepts the charges.[65] Rather, he argues that he is a morally just agent. The underlying question (and perhaps criticism) on his part is precisely that the law may simultaneously satisfy conditions both truthful and ethical, or deceitful and unethical, or at least that the connection between the two is something ought to be defended.

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[63] *Tim.* 27c1-29d2.

[64] Ibid., 29d3-5.

[65] This is not straightforward to discern from the text, but a careful, though admittedly controversial, reading shows that Socrates invents *daimonia* and does not believe in the gods of the city (in his 1983 lectures on the *Apology*, Allan Bloom talks about how the arguments that purport to show Socrates' *polis*-approved piety prove exactly the opposite), as well as that he does corrupt the youth (insofar as he teaches them values that the *polis* opposes, i.e. the renouncing of wealth). In Allan Bloom, "Allan Bloom's Lectures on Socrates (Boston College, 1983)," *Open Culture*, https://www.openculture.com/allan-blooms-lectures-on-socrates-boston-college-1983.

Unlike *Timaeus*, there is plenty of evidence that Socrates is concerned about the reaction of his audience; he time and again checks that the men of Athens are thinking about the things they hear.[66] Socrates directly requests that they neither be surprised (θαυμάζειν), nor disturb him by making noise (θορυβεῖν).[67] He, then, requests that they listen to his speech, focusing on whether what he says is true and just.[68] The two requests function as a way for Plato to inform us how the men of Athens are, and will be, responding to Socrates' speech. Given that later in the *Apology* the men of Athens do disturb the proceedings by making noise, we can infer that they are surprised by what they hear and that they fail to make justice and truth, as understood in their Socratic conception, the criteria by which to judge Socrates' case.

ii. Silence

Silence within the context of dialectics operates as a "self-corrective mechanism."[69] In Mittelstrass's words,

> When we say that something – an action, a context of actions, a state brought about through action – reveals the presence of reason, we mean that whatever we are referring to – an action, a situation, a state – is the effect of a reasoned judgment. The demand for clearness, proof, and justification with respect to actions and their effects requires in this sense that we stop and think.[70]

That is to say that silence carries, within the context of the internal state of the individual that participates in a dialogic exchange, a reflective function.

There are three significant occurrences of silence in the *Apology*; the silence of the *daimonion*, the silence of the men of Athens (the interlocutor), and the silent two parts to an otherwise tripartite structure. The silence, as it occurs in these cases, is significant because it is the internal dialogue, or the thought of the silent agent(s) that oc-

[66] *Apol.* 17d1; 19c7; 21a5-6; 31e1; 32a5; 32d1; 34c1; 34d1-2.

[67] Ibid., 17c-d.

[68] Ibid., 18a.

[69] Edward G. Ballard, *Socratic Ignorance: An Essay on Platonic Self-Knowledge* (Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), 50.

[70] Jürgen Mittelstrass, "On Socratic Dialogue," in *Platonic Writings/Platonic Readings*, ed. Charles L. Griswold Jr., 126-142 (Routledge, 1988), 130.

curs within the context of an externally structured monologue. The action that follows is found outside the *Apology*; namely, Socrates dies and the men of Athens later come to doubt the decision that led to his death. Plato writes the *Apology* after these two events have taken place and incorporates them into the structure of the *Apology*. If Diogenes Laertius is to be believed,[71] the dialogue was directed to an audience which had the time to reflect upon what happened and were aware of the ramifications of their choice. "By the time the *Apology* was written," Hunter tells us, "The guilt of the men of Athens was not only known and admitted, but also a source of great regret."[72]

> The sense of process, of movement through time, which is given by the *Apology*'s overt tripartite structure brings home with great force the unspoken fourth moment, Socrates' death, and indeed the fifth, Athenian regret and anger at what had happened on one side, and the continuing power of Socrates' example on the other. This manipulation of time and a sense of the past pave the way to the reasonable suspicion that Plato's *Apology* was *sui generis* in this, as in so much else.[73]

This structural silence indicates that whereas the *aporetic* effect of conversing with Socrates may not be directly visible, it, nonetheless, is there.

However, Socrates' interlocutors are traditionally not fully internally open to dialogue at the *present* time of the Platonic dialogues, especially when the subjects concern something to which they that are said to have dedicated their lives and livelihoods. In a similar manner, the men of Athens enter the courtroom with their own individual preconceptions of Socrates and of what constitutes justice. Most of them are not there to grant Socrates' request to be considered as a moral agent, nor to engage in an internal dialogue, a processing of what they hear. If Socrates has come in to voice the question, 'do you know the meaning of justice, men of Athens?,' the jury, at the time of his speech, is not prepared to say 'no.' The resistance to an internal openness may be seen in their lack of silence. An observation to this effect is present in *Alcibiades*, where Socrates voices his remark to Alcibiades with re-

[71] D. L. 2.43.

[72] Richard Hunter, *Plato and the Traditions of Ancient Literature: The Silent Stream* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 116.

[73] Ibid., 116.

gard to the relationship between loudness and a strong sense of one's own knowledge of justice.

> Socrates: When you were a boy [...] and sometimes when you were playing knucklebones [...] you'd say to one or another of your playmates, very loudly and confidently – not at all like somebody who was at a loss about justice and injustice – that he was a lousy cheater and wasn't playing fairly.[74]

In the *Apology*, Socrates repeatedly and throughout the text asks his interlocutors not to be loud and cause disturbance as they hear him talk about the way his life is aligned with that of a just one.[75] When Socrates asks for silence he requests that his audience reflects not only on what he is saying, but also on their own role in the situation. In both texts, Plato draws attention to the lack of silence and the lack of rational speech in response to a force aiming at destabilising our sense of an answer to a fundamental question. "So, it seems," says Socrates in *Alcibiades*, "that even as a child you thought you understood justice and injustice."

> Alcibiades: Yes, I did understand.
> Socrates: At what point did you find out? Surely it wasn't when you thought you knew.
> Alcibiades: Of course not.
> Socrates: Then when did you think you did not know? Think about it – you won't find any such time.[76]

There is no point in a person's life, Socrates tells us, when being just is not pertinent to our lives, for one cannot operate outside a system of justice, either external or internal. In *Republic I* we encounter a similar attitude when Socrates says:

> I mean that no man wants to be deceived in the most important part of him and about the most important things, that is when he is most terrified of falsehood.[77]

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[74] *Alc.* 110b-c.

[75] *Apol.* 17d1, 20c4, 21a5-6, 27b3, 27d5-6, 30c3. 18A3 may also be interpreted in this way though it is less straightforward that this may be the case.

[76] *Alc.* 110b1-c10.

[77] *Rep. II* 382a7-9. I am using Desmond Lee's translation of the passage (2003).

The position in which Socrates has been placed – and in which he has placed himself – is a terrifying one, not only for himself, but also for the men of Athens. The idea that a system of justice – for which Athens felt particular pride – is not infallible, not contained, that is, within its own domain, but heavily rests on the domain of ethics, is particularly frightening. Not only can it lead to a wrong decision and outcome, but – as in Socrates' case – it may not allow for the possibility of a *right* decision.

Aporia is intimately connected to silence. In Szaif's words, "the characteristic sign of this condition is that the person (the interlocutor) has been rendered *speechless*."[78] The speechlessness of the men of Athens comes forward not during Socrates' speech, but rather it is expressed through the structural silence of the last two parts. This follows the psychological progression of the interlocutors in other aporetic dialogues; from roisterous, confident and impatient to silent, insecure and shocked, and from an internalised pretence of knowledge to a suspicion of ignorance.

In the case of the *daimonion*, the action – that is, what Socrates says during his speech – is under constant *surveillance* with the possibility always being left open that the action is interrupted and made an object of reflection (which would then be Socrates' silence). The *daimonion*'s silence does not signal a lack of conversation but rather suggests that Socrates' speech is the effect of an internally produced reasoned judgment. In the *Apology*, Socrates has already thought about what he is saying and for this reason he does not need to stop and reflect, he does not need to be silent. As such, the *daimonion* acts as Cupid in Marsilio Ficino's letter to Domenico Gallettil; "*cupido magis persuadet uel tacendo, quam et orando Mercurius et Phebus ipse canendo*."[79] The *daimonion*'s silence is the most powerful means of persuasion, for it grants Socrates a kind of moral knowledge regarding his actions.

In *Timaeus*, the audience's silence does not indicate the same depth of thought as the audience's silence in the *Apology*. Timaeus' method more closely resembles, though is not the same as, that used by Socrates when conversing with the boy-slave in the *Meno*.[80] The slave's

[78] Jan Szaif, "Socrates and the Benefits of Puzzlement," in *The Aporetic Tradition in Ancient Philosophy*, eds. George Karamanolis and Vasilis Politis, 29-47 (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 31.

[79] "Cupid persuades more powerfully by being silent than both Mercury by speaking and Phoebus himself by singing," in Marcilio Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino Volume 2 (Book III)* (Shepheard-Walwyn Publishers, 1978), Letter 66.

[80] *Men.* 82b-85b.

short affirmative answers do not reveal a process of internal dialogue, but rather a quick assessment. To him, Socrates' propositions sound about right without the boy necessarily being able to give a detailed account of why they may be right. Similarly, Timaeus' audience listens to Timaeus' speech without immediately giving a detailed account as to whether Timaeus is wrong. Their silence is the lack of protestation, which implies that either they agree with Timaeus' proposed position, or have not detected anything evidently false in it.

iii. Systematic ambiguity

The *Apology* begins with ambiguity. As previous commentators have observed, the Greek title of the dialogue, *Ἀπολογία Σωκράτους*, is ambiguous; it can mean either "defense speech by Socrates," or "defense speech for Socrates."[81] The question commentators raise based on this ambiguity has to do with the degree to which the dialogue accurately represents the historical trial. However, I suggest that the question raised by ambiguity is of a different nature and pertains more closely to the issue at hand; namely, Socrates' defense speech. Is Socrates speaking in defense of himself (*for Socrates*), or in defense of something else, namely philosophy, the (moral) good (*by Socrates*), or justice?[82] Even though I take both to be the case, insofar as they may be isomorphic, the point of this remark is rather to emphasise that a certain atmosphere is established; ambiguity shall be of systematic use and the key to understand the *Apology*.

The most important ambiguity in the *Apology* is of Hesiodic character and has to do with the interpretation of 'justice,' the definition of which is never explicitly specified. However, what we can draw from the *Apology* concerning justice is that there are two opposing forces, each with their own conception of what justice is. These opposing forces put forth both, yet in different ways, defend their case. According to Yamagata's table of Homeric and Hesiodic references in Plato,[83] the

[81] The "defense speech for Socrates" is commonly extended with the clarification "but written by Plato," which plays an important role in the way this ambiguity is usually understood. Cf. Leo Strauss, *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (University of Chicago Press, 1985); Thomas West, *Plato's Apology of Socrates: An Interpretation, with a New Translation* (Cornell University Press, 1979), 219-220; David M. Leibowitz, *The Ironic Defense of Socrates* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 5.

[82] A defense speech by Socrates does not have to be for the benefit of Socrates.

[83] Naoko Yamagata, "Hesiod in Plato: Second Fiddler to Homer?" in *Plato and Hesiod*, eds. G. R. Boys-Stones and J. Haubold, 68-88 (Oxford University Press, 2010), 70.

Apology contains eight references to Homer[84] and one to Hesiod.[85] As Yamagata suggests, the single reference to Hesiod occurs as an honorary mention among the praiseworthy poets, alongside Homer, Orpheus, and Musaeus. In comparison with the Homeric references,[86] the Hesiodic reference is *prima facie* not structurally significant. It primarily alludes to the fact that Plato is aware of the authority of Hesiod.[87] I propose that there are in fact two references to Hesiod in the *Apology*, one being the direct reference as it is found in Yamagata's table of references and another which is indirect, spread out throughout the text, and is of structural significance. This reference rests on the ambiguity of the term *δίκη* in Hesiod. In a recent conference on *Reflections on Language in Early Greece* Tor and Clay pointed out that with regard to the term *δίκη*, there are at least four different interpretations in Hesiod; the goddess Dikē, a principle of justice, a judgement or court verdict, and punishment or restitution (Σ Op. 279).[88] Vergados argues,

> At one juncture, Hesiod pointedly confronts us with the linguistic aspect of this sometimes confused multiplicity: "it is a bad thing for a man to be just, if the more unjust is going to have greater justice."[89]

The obvious way out of the paradox is the disentanglement of the notion of justice as an ethical principle from that of restitution, so that

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[84] *Apol.* 28b-d; 41a; 41a6-7; 41b-c.

[85] Ibid., 41a6-7. Another Hesiodic reference, according to Yamagata, has to do with the two accounts of death, namely that of falling asleep and that of having a chance to converse with the demi-gods. Yamagata argues that the accounts were fashioned after the death (WD116) and afterlife (WD170-2) of Hesiod's Golden Race.

[86] Just after this passage, Socrates goes on to mention Homeric heroes, such as Ajax, Agamemnon, and Odysseus, among the people whom he would look forward to questioning after death. Earlier on, Socrates has famously compared his situation to that of the Homeric Achilles, when he said that he is not afraid of death, just as Achilles did not fear death. Plato clearly casts Socrates in the image of Achilles, the quintessential Homeric hero. In *Apol.* 41bc, 28b-d, 41a.

[87] Cf. *Lg.* 658a4-659a1. For an analysis of the passage as a contest between Hesiod and Homer, see G. R. Boys-Stones and J. Haubold, eds., *Plato and Hesiod* (Oxford University Press, 2010). For the contest as such: Barbara Graziosi, *Inventing Homer: The Early Reception of Epic* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[88] E.g., (i) Op. 256, (ii) Op. 213, (iii) Op. 225-226 ('straight judgement'), 249-251 ('crooked'), (iv) Op. 239, 712. For analysis and further examples, see Athanassios Vergados, *Hesiod's Verbal Craft: Studies in Hesiod's Conception of Language and Its Ancient Reception* (Oxford University Press, 2020), 172-175. Vergados isolates further a use of *δίκη* for 'legal procedure' (e.g., Op. 254) and for a general normative state of affairs (Op. 248-249).

[89] Op. 271-272.

"the man whose conduct does not conform to the demands of the ethical principle of justice is the one to whom the legal system will grant restitution or satisfaction."[90]

Similarly, in the *Apology*, the *polis*, on the one hand, allows public opinion to be expressed through legal channels and defends its case through force. On the other hand, Socrates argues his case on the grounds of being right[91] and (morally) just in acting as he has. He pleads with the jury that there is "no reason to help [him] except the right and proper one, that they know that Meletus [one of the accusers] is lying and that [he is] telling the truth."[92]

There is, however, an ambiguity, which again Socrates exploits, this time concerning 'truth,' for truth reflects the complexities of justice. That is, just as the jurors' conception of justice becomes critical when they are called to be just, so Socrates' conception of truth becomes decisive when he is confronted with the critical moment of being called to speak the truth. It is at this moment that Socrates exploits the ambiguity between legal – which he views as circumstantial – and philosophical, absolute truth, asking the question, through this ambiguity, of the priority of 'truths.' If legal propositions are true only in virtue of something else, whether a moral truth, a convention, or a social circumstance,[93] then legal truths, unlike philosophical and moral truths, cannot be universal truths, since they do not rest solely on a purely rational structure.

Socrates' case is also evident from the fact that he questions the divine origin of the city's laws.[94] When Socrates asks Meletus who it is that morally improves the young men, Socrates does not accept the (city's) laws, nor those who supposedly know the (city's) laws as correct answers.[95] When Socrates asks if it is possible for a man to "believe children of the gods [heroes, demi-gods] to exist, but not gods,"[96] he draws a parallel with whether it is possible to believe "mules, to exist, but not to believe in the existence of horses and asses."[97] Bloom's as-

[90] Vergados.

[91] *Apol.* 28b5; 28c1; 31d5; 32a6.

[92] Ibid., 34b4-5.

[93] David Bakhurst, "Truth, Philosophy, and Legal Discourse," *The University of Toronto Law Journal* 47, no. 3 (1997): 395.

[94] *Apol.* 24e1. The scope of the laws is also ambiguous.

[95] Ibid., 24e2-6.

[96] Ibid., 27d8.

[97] Ibid., 27e1-3.

tute argument is that the mule, a product of two different species, as were the demi-gods, is infertile. If the offspring of different species cannot themselves reproduce, then the connection between Theseus – the hero from whom Athens' divine laws originated – and Athens is lost, as is the connection between divine law and the city's laws. If the city's laws are not divine, then the connection between legality and universality is ruptured. That is to say, the laws are not moral laws. In other words, the *polis* only has access to circumstantial, and not universal, truth. If the connection between law and morality is broken, then the question of whether Socrates is a just agent cannot be settled purely in terms of Athenian legality.

The aim of arguments that exploit vagueness and ambiguity, as Szaif succinctly points out, is to show that the interlocutor suffers from a muddled grasp of the relevant concepts.[98] There are plenty of cases of ambiguity being used by Socrates in this way. In the *Euthydemus*, for example, there is an ambiguity as to whether Socrates is wondering how we can bring it about that we do well. Or, if he is in fact asking a deeper question; what does it mean to do well?[99] Ambiguity in this way has a discursive function; it promotes and sustains discourse rather than ends it.

iv. Paradoxes

Paradox has a bifurcate effect on the reader; it both excites his curiosity and undermines his claim to knowledge. It has the paradoxical effect of being both, as Scruton puts it, a "destabilising force, and also a strange invitation to commitment."[100] It is a destabilising force in that it presents us with an impossible situation in which, at least *prima facie*, the affirmation and the negation of a proposition x seem intuitive, or not evidently false, and to have equal, or some, claim to truth. In order to solve the paradox and get out of the uncomfortable situation, one has to reason towards one of the two sides or rethink the proposition itself. That is, paradox works as a psychological itch that demands of us to commit to thinking in order for the pain of the paradoxical itch to be alleviated.[101]

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[98] Szaif, 36.

[99] *Euthyd.* 279c-282d.

[100] Roger Scruton, *Modern Philosophy: An Introduction and Survey* (Penguin Books, 1996), 398.

[101] As the Athenian explains in the *Lg.* 799c4-d7: "No young man, much less an old one, on seeing or hearing anything paradoxical or unfamiliar, is ever going to brush aside his doubts all in a hurry and reach a snap decision about it. More probably, like a traveller who has come at a crossroads, alone or with others, and is rather uncertain about the right road, he'll pause,

In the *Apology*, justice is a major philosophical paradox in that, as seen in the previous sub-section, it equivocates; justice seems to do two things at once, two things which contradict or cancel each another. If one maintains that all things politico-legal are just, but also that all things moral are just, then one has to face the problem that all things legal and all things moral are not two identical categories. Furthermore, one has to face the even more difficult problem that these two categories are at times in direct opposition to one another. Justice, under its Socratic construction, is a paradox also because it "defies a familiar orthodoxy,"[102] namely, the legitimacy of public opinion as an absolute moral standard expressed through the legal system. If thinking and paradox are so closely related, then the existence of the paradoxical concept as the very theme of the *Apology* indicates that there is also a form of active thinking in progress for the purpose of, at the very least, the alleviation of pain caused by the existence of the paradox.[103]

IV. Ἀπορία: Ex contradictione sequitur ignorantia[104]

In this section I focus on answering certain questions. Firstly, what *aporia* is, aiming at showing that *aporia* and dialogue are intimately connected. Secondly, whether *aporia* follows from an eristic, refutational dialogue, and, thirdly, how the *Apology* forms an *aporetic* dialogue.

i. What is aporia

For the purposes of this paper, I take *aporia* to be the point in a conversation when the agent (typically one of Socrates' interlocutors), whose moral beliefs, both explicit and implicit (that is, by way of life), are being tested, reaches an internal impasse. A state of *aporia*, then, is being at a complete loss as to one's moral standing, such that one can only to admit one's ignorance, if anything at all, and that one's very life is ruled by paradoxes. Yet, *aporia* transcends the device of paradox (and ambiguity); a human being whose life is constituted by a bundle of

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and put the problem to himself or his companions; and he won't continue his journey until he's pretty sure of his direction and bearings."

[102] Scruton, 397.

[103] Similarly, though in an explicit manner, Euthyphro's Dilemma is the exposure of the underlying paradox concerning holiness, which keeps the conversation going. And, in the *Hipparchus*, the paradox of the conclusion that everyone is greedy is the impetus to maintain the process of questioning.

[104] "From a contradiction [or paradox] follows ignorance."

paradoxes recognizes there is something that works. There is a sense of a moral being where one least expects to find it. That is, even a person in all his moral failures, misunderstandings, and hopelessness, is still a moral agent, still of moral worth, and, surprisingly, still of moral capacity.

I take it that, even though the idea of a moral being persisting *in [a] hell*[105] of its own making sounds hopeful and possibly elicits hope from the one who undergoes *aporia;* that in itself does not guarantee that the reaction of whoever undergoes *aporia* is going to be that of hope. It is a rather frightening realisation. In fact, we are shown that the reactions of the interlocutors who have been reduced to an *aporetic* state are usually negative. It makes sense, I take it, that faced with our own multiplicity of beliefs, we may react with a multiplicity of emotions, both hope and fear. An *aporetic* state is hopeful because, in seeing the truth of the *aporia*, one sees something of the truth of the inquiry. At the same time, it is scary, as if someone has suddenly pulled the carpet (often the one you thought was your flying carpet) out from under your feet, you have fallen, and you do not know whether you can get up again, nor, even if you do manage to get up again, whether you have landed on another carpet.

Now, *aporia* can result from an inability to define a certain concept[106] or from an inability to differentiate between concepts.[107] And it is exactly the latter case, I argue, that we find in the *Apology* in the form of a conceptual confusion of morality and legality in justice. The reason the claim that the *Apology* is an *aporetic* dialogue must be proven is that Platonic *aporia* and its state can only be produced in, and as the result of, dialogue.[108] Why then is dialogue the necessary breeding ground for Platonic *ethos*-pertaining-*aporia*?[109]

ii. Platonic aporia and dialogue

In Plato, as we have seen in the Platonic dialogue section, there can be different levels of dialogue. For example, there is the dialogue as

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[105] St Silouan the Athonite's phrase 'Keep your mind in hell and despair not.'

[106] As in the cases of *Theaetetus*, *Charmides* and *Protagoras*.

[107] Such is the case in *Euthyphro*.

[108] For the relation between *aporia* and dialogue, see George Karamanolis and Vasilis Politis, eds., *The Aporetic Tradition in Ancient Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[109] McCabe treats the same question as producing different answers in the same person when asking it repetitively, see: McCabe, 2. Though this may be true, the success of the claim depends on the agent's ability to recognise that each successive answer is unsatisfactory, and on a personal persistence to find an answer.

a conversation happening between the interlocutors, the internal dialogue of the active speakers, the dialogue of the audience witnessing the conversation, and the assumed internal dialogue of the audience reading the written dialogue. In a dialogue there is a multitude of interrogative questions that aim to aid the answering of the main question of the dialogue and to appeal to all the levels of 'dialogue.' The reader of the dialogue may or may not identify with the answers of the in-dialogue interlocutor(s). If she does, then she will be in a similar internal state as that of the interlocutor's as the dialogue progresses (and as such will also be at a loss).[110]

If she does not, she will start criticising the interlocutor's answers and trying to produce her own. In some real sense, the reader is also compelled to answer. The production of answers on the part of the reader occurs because the text deals with fundamental ethical concepts, the definitions of which people tend to inadvertently overly elasticise or restrict. The mistakes are similar to those of the interlocutors, and even if the reader does not identify her views with those of Socrates' interlocutor, the problems that the questions are meant to pose for the interlocutor's belief system, shall have an effect on the reader as well.

On the level of the in-dialogue interlocutors, if someone asks you to explain your reasons for your attitudes and actions, you have to create and convey a clear image of your belief system in such a way that, if you were to answer these questions to yourself, you would probably not have been as clear and would not have spotted potential inconsistencies. The other person then, provided that she has an eye for detecting and attacking vagueness and inconsistency, not unlike Socrates, is the one who both excites and maintains the interlocutor's 'internal dialogue.'[111]

Furthermore, it is in the nature of dialogue within the context of Ethics to produce both intellectual and psychological engagement. Ethics is the branch of philosophy that is most entangled with human life, aiming, after examining concepts that govern our lives, at answering the question of how we should live. For this reason, it is also the one that is most approachable and has the most psychological relevance. At the same time, it is also the most psychologically taxing if we fail to answer the major ethical questions well. For if we are convinced of a certain definition of a concept, or of the soundness of an argument, despite there being good reasons not to be, the consequences of such false beliefs will echo in how we live our lives.

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[110] A. K. Cotton, *Platonic Dialogue and Education of the Reader* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 44.

[111] McCabe 15.

Ethical *aporia* – which is most often seen in the Platonic corpus – depends on dialogue, since the agent, whether the interlocutor or the reader to varying extents, experiences a revelation by way of being persistently questioned; either there is a belief system to speak of, but the definitions of the concepts on which it is based fail to adequately describe these concepts, or, the belief system itself is inconsistent and the relations between the concepts are erroneous or misunderstood. When this is revealed to the agent, he realises that a quick and seemingly temporary repair will not satisfy his interlocutor (Socrates), and the agent can no longer provide any answers.

iii. Aporia in the apology

The next crucial question is: in what way is the *Apology* an *aporia*-inducing discourse? To answer this question first we need to look at patterns within the set of *aporetic* dialogues. The main difference, I shall argue, between the *Apology* and the rest of the *aporetic* dialogues is that what happens in most of them is explicit, whereas in the *Apology* it happens implicitly. In all their differences, the *aporetic* dialogues share a more or less similar pattern; Socrates, together with an interlocutor – whose way of life or alleged belief system is in some way relevant to the philosophical theme of the dialogue – begin with a question and then work together step by step toward an answer, only to have their answer repeatedly undermined and rejected. The question remains open throughout the dialogue, and the answer-production continues until the interlocutor can no longer come up with a new answer.

Aporia demands that someone is being reduced to its state. Who is it that undergoes the *aporetic* treatment by Socrates in the *Apology*? I have argued in earlier sections that the men of Athens, as represented by the jury and the court-audience, are, along with Socrates, the protagonist, being Socrates' interlocutor. The response of the *polis*, as the interlocutor, is to act as an authority on the pertinent subject (in this case, justice). This is unsettled by the difference in opinion and – instead of the traditional verbal force, which we also see in Socrates' request for silence – acts of force. Force works as the equivalent of the pride and confidence typically seen in the interlocutors and evident in the *polis* attempts to impose its conception of justice on Socrates. The men of Athens have entered the scene with a certain conception of right and wrong, and, by the *visible* end of the *Apology* they have not entirely changed their minds; instead, they exhibit signs of doubt via their reluctant fist voting.

Here are the examples of the question-starting-point pattern: the question of the *Laches* is "What is courage?"[112] The *Meno* investigates the question "What is virtue?"[113] In the *Lysis* the question takes the form of "What is a friend?"[114] The *Euthyphro* strives to find an answer to "What is piety?"[115] In the *Charmides,* the question is "What is temperance?"[116] In the *Hippias Major* the question is "What is the fine?"[117] In the *Hippias Minor* the question is "Who are better, those who do wrong intentionally or those who do wrong unintentionally?"[118] Finally, in the *Protagoras,* the question is "Is virtue's unity more like the unity of a face or of a piece of gold?"[119] The *Apology* fits this pattern in that it begins (and ends) with whether justice is a politico-legal or a moral matter. However, since, as I claim, this question is not explicit in the *Apology* as it is in the other *aporetic* dialogues, its place in the text needs to be defended. To begin with, to ask this question is to suggest there is a conceptual confusion between morality and legality.

The signs of such a confusion are clear in the face of Meletus. He asserts that it is the laws that make the young men morally better along with anyone considered knowledgeable about the laws, from the jury to any citizen (apart from Socrates and presumably others who have been ostracised). The confusion is also evident in the case of the so-called experts.[120] If what it is to be wise is to know moral truths,[121] and the politicians who are law experts are deemed unwise, then it cannot possibly be the case that knowing the laws of the *polis* is equivalent to knowing the moral laws. The politicians, however, along with many other people who have heard them speak, think of themselves as being wise. This means, though, that there must be a naivety as to the relation between morality and legality. Furthermore, the question of whether justice is legal or moral can be detected in the way Socrates constantly asks his audience to consider whether he is being just,[122]

[112] *Lach.* 190d-e.

[113] *Meno* 87d-e.

[114] *Lysis* 212a; 223a.

[115] *Euthyp*. 5d.

[116] *Charm*. 159a.

[117] *Hip. Maj.* 286c-d.

[118] *Hip. Mi.* 371e-372a.

[119] *Prot.* 329d.

[120] *Apol.* 22b6-c8.

[121] Socrates calls himself wise and defends the moral understanding of justice.

[122] *Apol.* 18a2; 18a4-5; 32e3-5; 33b3-5.

while trying to prove, and as he himself believes, that he has been and is being just.[123] At the same time, he attacks the city's (mis)understanding of justice by undermining the reasons for maintaining the identity relation between the two concepts.[124]

The abandoned answers of some of the aforementioned questions of the *aporetic* dialogues are the following: The *Laches*, provides a potential definition of courage, namely "courage is knowledge of the hopeful and fearful,"[125] but then the explanation is found to be problematic and the definition is abandoned.[126] In the *Meno*, we are told that "virtue is knowledge,'[127] but then this definition appears also not free of problems and as such the answer is also abandoned.[128] In the *Lysis,* the definition drawn forth is "that which is neither good nor evil is friendly with the good because of the presence of evil,"[129] which is yet again rejected.[130] In the *Euthyphro*, both "the service of the gods" and "the science of giving and taking from the gods"[131] are rendered as inviable answers.[132] In the *Charmides*, one of the various definitions of temperance,[133] "temperance is the knowledge of good and evil," is also abandoned.[134]

Is there any sign of a first negotiated and then abandoned answer in the *Apology*? The answer is no. Neither Socrates, nor the jury try to come up with slightly different yet related answers in a straightforward manner in defense of their conception of justice. Something different happens instead. Socrates implicitly questions the relation between morality and legality in justice and showcases where the relation fails. It is hard to imagine that, at the level of internal dialogue, all 500 jurors remained either unaware of or apathetic to, Socrates' arguments and their meaning; yet, as evidenced in the text, 220 of them chose to acquit him.

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[123] Ibid., 17c4-5; 18a2; 29a1-3; 30d6; 32a2; 32c1-2; 32d5; 33a3; 36e2; 42a2.

[124] Ibid., 24e1-27e3 (against divine origin argument); 31e1-32a1; 34b4-5 (universal truth argument); 35c3-5; 35d1-2; 41b2.

[125] *Lach.* 195a; 195d-197b.

[126] Ibid., 198a; 199b.

[127] *Meno* 87d-e.

[128] Ibid., 89c-e.

[129] *Lysis* 218b-c.

[130] Ibid., 221d.

[131] *Euthyp.* 12d, 13c, 14d.

[132] Ibid., 14b; 15a.

[133] *Charm.* 161b; 163e; 165b.

[134] Ibid., 174d-175a.

Given Socrates' professed surprise[135] – which within an endorsed context of natural and reactive speech should be taken as an honest response – it is clear that at least some of the jurors voted to acquit him because of a change of mind, or due to doubt about whether their conception of, and commitment to a fully legal concept of justice is correct.

Furthermore, do the men of Athens come to the realisation that their conception of justice cannot be defended? That is, do they experience *aporia*? The jury is generally thought of as possessing expert knowledge of how to rule and impose a just verdict, keeping the citizens' best interests at heart. Not only is it assumed that such knowledge is possible, but also that politics should be led by it. Among the jurors who acquit him, Socrates points out at the end of the *Apology* that there are people who may feel that, even after the end of his speech, they still do not know what happened.[136] That is, there are people at a loss as to what has taken place, who may suffer from intellectual and psychological confusion. They are the people that Socrates invites to speak to him[137] after they leave the courtroom. They are the people that may be open to, and as such can benefit from, further Socratic examination. This follows a similar pattern, also seen at the end of the *Euthyphro*.[138]

The experience of *aporia*, however, is more prominent in the fifth and silent moment of the *Apology*; the moment of the realisation of the effects of the action against Socrates and the experience of regret. Regret, however, does not necessarily imply that having chosen between two possible options one wishes to have chosen otherwise. One may have experienced regret either way. The *aporetic* state is the state in which all moral choices appear as impossible. The fact that the men of Athens proceeded to make a choice does not eliminate the *aporetic* state. Rather, the knowledge of the psychological effect of the choice indicates that the choice has amplified the *aporia*.

V. Conclusion

The *Apology*, I have argued, is, to paraphrase Thesleff, an *aporetic* "monologue approximating to dialogue,"[139] because it retains the goals and effects of a Platonic dialogue; the manner of speech which

[135] *Apol.* 36a2-3.

[136] Ibid., 39e1.

[137] Ibid., 39e1-40a1.

[138] In *Euthyp.* 15d, we read: "So we must investigate again what piety is, as I shall not willingly give up before I learn this."

[139] Thesleff, 41-50.

reflects natural language, the inter-personal conversations and certain devices that promote these conversations, and the inter-textual conversations which negotiate the limits of rhetorical and philosophical language, the practice and thought.

For these reasons, the *Apology* shares a lot more overlapping aspects in terms of inter-personal dialogue with a conventional dialogue, such as the *Euthyphro*, than it does with a monologue such as the *Timaeus*.[140] As Cooper says, the *Timaeus* is a "rhetorical display, not a philosophical dialogue,"[141] not in the sense that it lacks philosophical content, but in that it lacks dialectical investigation. It is not my argument that the *Timaeus* and the *Apology* have no overlapping aspects; both of them are in monologue form, each hosting a *mock* dialogue, and in both there is an audience that exceeds the two main interlocutors, both in terms of characters – Socrates and Meletus in the *Apology*, Timaeus and Socrates in the *Timaeus* – and in terms of the audience of the dialogue. However, whereas the *Timaeus* is a rhetorically embellished treatise in Metaphysics, the *Apology* is a dialectical investigation in Ethics, and as such places different demands on its audiences. For this reason, the *Apology* can be shown to be an *aporetic* dialogue and the *Timaeus* cannot.

The *aporetic* mode of the apologetic dialogue is subtle, but nonetheless there. There is a clear subject under consideration, that of justice, and a clear oppositional disposition between two forces. Plato plays on the alleged expertise of a verbally silent yet intellectually active and forceful interlocutor and on Socrates' talent at diminishing the sense of confidence of the interlocutor on the subject. What is more, the main subject of justice is undermined by the implicit exploration of the concept of truth. In this way the goals and effects of a typically Platonic *aporetic* dialogue are maintained in an otherwise overtly soliloquial piece of writing.

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[140] That is not to say that the *Apology* does not have overlapping features with non-*aporetic* dialogues. The point is rather that the *Apology*'s monologue form does not get in the way of it being read as an aporetic dialogue.

[141] Cooper, 1224.

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