

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The nucleus of this book, an analysis of Socrates' references to Aesop and his use of fables in the introduction of the *Phaedo*, was conceived during my studies at the University of Exeter, yet back then it was one of those ideas that feature in a jubilant young classicist's list of projects to fulfil some day. Nevertheless, the decision to set forth for this study was taken many years later, at the beginning of 2010. Unbeknown to me, this was only a few months before Greece entered the arena of global markets. Abruptly, yet methodically in the years that followed, the hysteric dogmatism of dehumanized economics nullified for most of the Greeks the certitudes and evaluations of modernity, including the inhabitants of the academic world (let alone the master's repulsion for Humanities).

As a result, my research faced many unanticipated impediments, at times calling to mind the virgin daughter of the fable (386 in Perry, G131 in the *Life of Aesop*). I was in the ironic and awkward situation of studying the semantics of the symbolic status of the intellectual, as this emerges from Plato's portrait of Socrates, while Greek academics experienced destitution and the acceleration of their depreciation and debasement by the media. But what better pathway to truth and knowledge is there for a reader of Plato than irony?

The adventure of writing this book now over, I want to thank all those who made the journey pleasant despite history's troubled waters. First of all, my colleagues at the Department of Cultural Heritage Management and New Technologies of the University of Patras for our productive interaction during these years, hoping that Rick Blaine's line would describe my relation with most of them in the days to come. The same goes also both for my colleagues at the Greek Open University and for my former colleagues at the History, Archaeology and Social Anthropology Department (University of Thessaly), for the many inspiring conversations that we have had and for their feedback to my research. Parts of my study had been presented at the Department of Classical Studies, University of Brno and the Departments of Languages and Philosophy at Flinders University, Adelaide and I want to thank the good scholars there (especially Irena Radová and George Couvalis, respectively). I also owe many thanks to Niklas Holzberg for being the high priest of my baptism in Aesop studies, to my good colleagues Dimitris Paleothodoros and Giorgos Katsadoros for their friendship and for the conversations that we have had, but also to my precious friends outside the academia, especially my hospitable friends from the land of Agrios.

Contrary to the famous passage from the *Phaedrus*, I profited mostly from silent conversation with the authors that are cited in the bibliography, especially from those the work of whom I felt to be closer to my research topic and to the questions that it set. Hence, this book owes a lot to the work of Diskin Clay, Todd Compton, Ioannis Konstantakos, Leslie Kurke, Gregory Nagy, John-Theophanis Papademetriou and Christina Schefer. And for this silent conversation I must thank the good

people of the Blegen Library who keep it a most valuable safe haven for classical studies in Greece.

I am deeply honoured (and more than happy) to have my work included in the IPS series. So, I want to thank the members of the International Plato Society Board for offering to my study this route to specialist readership, but also those anonymous members who helped me with their constructive comments. I feel especially grateful to Lesley Brown and to Professor Franco Ferrari, let alone for the humane quality of our communication. I wish this book will contribute in scholar discussion on Plato and his Socrates and that it will reciprocate, at least partly, its generous reception by the IPS Board. I am also thankful to Jürgen Richarz and to everyone from the Academia Verlag who was involved in the publication process for their exemplary and cordial professionalism.

As regards the hermeneutical approach and the philological method that I tried to apply on this study, I am not *αὐτοφύης μηδενὶ τροφήν ὀφείλων* (cf. *R.* 520b3-4) and I hope that this book pays back part of my *τροφεῖα* to three great scholars that I was fortunate enough to have been their student. I am still (and I will always be) indebted to Professors Christopher Gill and Richard Seaford; the reader might sense their influence as regards the interpretative angles in the following pages. And with respect to the content of this book in particular, Christopher Gill has been, and shall always be for me, the image and the living example of the *philosophos aner* that I call to mind. But I am also most indebted to Professor Theodoros Stephanopoulos, not only for his support during these years, or for allowing me to feel a student again, but especially for the fact that he stood for me as a metronome of philological (and not only) virtue. Finally, and perhaps in a non-socratic manner given the opening and the closing scenes of the *Phaedo*, my last thankful note goes to the Ithaca of all my journeys during these years, a most generous place, despite my deficient contribution to it, namely my small *oikos* of Evi, Myrto and Adriana, to whom this book is dedicated.

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ABBREVIATIONS

References to ancient authors and to their works follow the list of the LSJ. References to periodicals follow the list of *L'Année Philologique*.

- CPG *Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum*, eds. E. L. Leutsch and F. G. Schneidewin, 2 vols., (Göttingen, 1893-1851)
- DK *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, eds. H. Diels and W. Kranz, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1952)
- FGrH *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, ed. F. Jacoby (Berlin and Leiden, 1923-58)
- FHG *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, ed. C. Müller, 5 vols. (Paris, 1841-70)
- G Perriana or Grottaferrata version of the *Life of Aesop*
- IG *Inscriptiones Graecae* (Berlin, 1873-)
- K-A *Poetae Comici Graeci*, eds. R. Kassel and C. Austin, 9 vols. in 11 (Berlin, 1983-)
- LIMC *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, 16 vols. (Zurich, 1981-97)
- LSJ *A Greek-English Lexicon*, eds. H. G. Liddell, R. Scott and H. S. Jones (Oxford, 1968⁹), with supplement
- P Fable in Perry (1952)
- Pfeiffer *Callimachos. Vol. I*, ed. R. Pfeiffer (Oxford, 1949)
- PMG *Poetae Melici Graeci*, ed. D. L. Page (Oxford, 1962)
- RE *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 1893-1978)
- SSR *Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquiae*, ed. G. Giannantoni, 4 vols. (Naples, 1991)
- T Testimonia on Aesop in Perry (1952)
- TMI *Motif-index of folk-literature*, ed. St. Thompson, 6 vols. (Bloomington, 1955-58)
- W Westermanniana version of the *Life of Aesop*
- West *Iambi et Elegi Graeci*, ed. M. L. West, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1989-92²)

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Throughout the centuries, the reception of Socrates' literary portrait, as it is preserved mainly in the works of Plato and Xenophon, has been that of a paternal figure for philosophy. Socrates has been characterized as a "patron saint" of philosophy and he has been considered as a kind of Weberian programmatic *Idealtypus* for the philosopher's, and by extension for the intellectual's, self-sufficiency against the demands and constraints that are set upon him/her by society and materiality. He personifies, although in a rather idiosyncratic way, the devotion of the intellectual's whole life to the search of truth and knowledge as well as to the service of his/her community. But he has also been conceived as the archetypically wronged *sophos*, one who challenged commonly held false beliefs and for this public activity of his he became the victim of a passion-driven and non-philosophical multitude. His monumental and founding, if not totemic, place in the history of philosophy is evident even by the very terming, albeit schematic and to some degree arbitrary, of Greek philosophy before him as 'pre-socratic'. In addition, whereas most of the renowned Greek philosophical schools that followed after his death, actually rooted their descent more or less directly to him, as their founders were either members of his group of disciples and followers, the Socratics or drew upon his teaching (from Plato and his Academy, Antisthenes and the Cynics, Euclides of Megara and the Megarian School, Phaedo of Elis and the Cyrenaicans, to Aristotle, the Stoics, the Epicureans, the Sceptics). Modern thought has contemplated a lot on the image and especially on the teaching of Socrates in search for its own coordinates of philosophical life and discourse. In fact, the bibliography of philosophers' references and indebtedness to Socrates, from Greece until nowadays, is too voluminous even to be summarized.¹

¹ A good starting-point is the edited volume by Sara Ahbel-Rappe and Rachana Kamtekaar's and Michael Trapp's two-volume reference publication on the subject, Ahbel-Rappe and Kamtekaar (2006) and Trapp (2007a) and (2007b) respectively. For a glimpse at particular aspects of Socrates' impact and reception see also K. Döring *Exemplum Socratis* (Wiesbaden, 1979) on Socrates from the Imperial times onwards; A. A. Long "Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy", *CQ* 38 (1988), 150-71; S. Kofman's *Socrate(s)* (Paris, 1989); P. Harrison *The Disenchantment of Reason: The Problem of Socrates in Modernity* (Albany, 1994); Nehamas (1998), 101-87; F. D. Caizzi "Minor Socratics", in Gill and Pellegrin (2006), 119-35; Frede (2006); J. Howland *Kierkegaard and Socrates. A Study in Philosophy and Faith* (Cambridge, 2006); Wilson (2007), 170-223.

Socrates' popularity is evidenced in modern culture too. To cite a few examples from a wide range of references, Socrates has featured in music, for example in the world famous 70s Greek band *Socrates drank the conium* and in Greece's 1979 Eurovision song contest entry, in film and television, from Ernesto Maria Pasquali's 1909 *La Morte di Socrate* to Roberto Rossellini's 1970 *Socrate* for RAI TV and more recently Cassian Harrison's *Empires – The Greeks: Crucible of Civilization* (2000). In literature, from Kostas Varnalis' groundbreaking and ideologically charged *The True Apology of Socrates* (1931) to Paul Levinson's science fiction novel *The Plot to Save Socrates* (2006), and even in football, from the famous 80s Brazilian football star

As regards the *Phaedo* in particular, the dialogue under scrutiny in this study, Plato's account on Socrates' end has not only set a cornerstone for the establishment of *philosophia*, but it has also proved to be inspirational in many respects, from Christian authors to humanists, like Erasmus, and from notable thinkers of the Enlightenment, such as Montaigne and Diderot, to eminent modern scholars like Michel Foucault. In addition, his death scene has been widely reproduced and immortalized in many great paintings, especially from the 18th century onwards, the most celebrated of which is *The Death of Socrates* by Jacques-Louis David in 1787, now housed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.² Even with respect to ancient biographical narratives of famous philosophers, Plato's account was so influential on them that scholars speak of a whole new genre of 'deathography' that the *Phaedo* inaugurated.³

Perforce, a study of Plato's portraiture of Socrates, like the one at hand, must address the specter that still haunts Platonic studies, the "Socratic problem". It springs from the discrepancies or contrasts between the various sources on Socrates, usually the result of comparative readings of Plato and Xenophon, especially as re-

Socrates, who was so named by his father in tribute to the Greek philosopher, to Socrates' winning goal in Monty Python's celebrated derby between Greek and German philosophers. To that rather diverse reception of him, we may add two recent austere attempts to honour his memory: the dramatization of his *Apology* by the Emmy Award winner Yannis Simonides (the poster for the Greek performances in 2012 numbered "250 performances in 14 countries") and, more interestingly, on the occasion of the 2,410 years since his trial and conviction, the year 2011 saw his acquittal by the Federal Court of New York (12/05/2011), and a year later (25/05/2012) Socrates was at last acquitted in Athens, not by the jury, the votes of which were tied, but by the voting crowd (two thirds in his favour) – freed at last from their ancestral sin, Athenians could experience the era of economics' *miasma*.

² Although David enlarged the space of Socrates' cell, which most probably was in fact rather small, to turn it into a very spacious basement, his reproduction generally opted for a realistic illustration of the dialogue's two edges, the opening scene and especially the closing one. In *The Death of Socrates* Socrates has his right foot stretched on his bed, while his left tramps upon a kind of pedestal. The position of his feet might suggest either that he tries to relieve the pain from the fetters, which lie on the floor, a reference to the introduction, or, more possibly, that he steps up on his bed in order to lie down on it after he will have drunk the conium, which is now handed to him. In the background we see the grieving Aspasia escorted out of the basement through the stairs, in a scene that is present both in the opening and in the final scene. By Socrates' right foot lies the lyre, a reference to his 'Apollonian' compositions at the introduction of the *Phaedo*. Actually, one of the two fetters seems to disappear under the lyre, perhaps in a reference to the philosopher's liberation from materiality thanks to philosophical and Apollonian *mousike*. Yet, in contrast to the *Phaedo*, Plato is present here, in the form of a solemn figure that stands at the foot of the bed in contemplative mourning, motionless and wrapped in his cloak, an immobility that sharply contrasts him to the tragic vividness of those present; perhaps it is suggested that his presence in the scene is spiritual. On the floor, beside Plato, lie a scroll, a stylus and some ink; the scroll could contain the *Phaedo*, because it lies by Plato's feet, or perhaps the paean and the fables that Socrates had versified. The lighting of the enclosed surroundings is such that it singles out Socrates from the other persons. The way that it falls on him elevates him to an excelled, almost divine status. For more detailed presentations of Socrates' death in thought, religion and art see Trapp (2007a); id. (2007b); Wilson (2007), 140-223, esp. 170-78.

³ Mpalla (2010) presents an overview of the bibliography. See also F. Wehrli "Gnome, Anekdoten und Biographie", *Museum Helveticum* 30 (1973), 193-208 and M. Erler's "Introduction", in his and S. Schorn's (eds.), *Die griechische Biographie in hellenistischer Zeit. Akten des internationalen Kongresses vom 26.-29. Juli 2006 in Würzburg* (Berlin – New York, 2007), 11-24.

gards the content of Socrates' teaching, his philosophical interests and doctrines. Some scholars have defended the historicity of Plato's Socrates, whereas others have doubted it, a disagreement that ensues from their different interpretative angles and criteria. These include the homogeneity and the continuity of Socrates' philosophical discourse. They also involve the extent of Plato's own interference to his material, both as a philosopher and as an author. These questions have given rise over the last two centuries to a stream of Platonic scholarship that is continuously strengthened and enriched with cross-readings from literary or philosophical studies.⁴ It seems, though, that certain aspects of the Socratic problem had been raised already in antiquity. For example, Plato's most renowned disciple and a connoisseur of the genre of *sokratikoi logoi*, Aristotle, had underlined their fictitious nature (*Po.* 1447a28-1447b13) and their consequent moralistic implications to their audience (*Rh.* 1417a16-21). In addition, an anecdote quoted by Diogenes Laertius (3.35) touches upon Plato's hidden authorship of Socrates' words in the dialogues: "they also say that when Socrates heard Plato reading the *Lysis* he exclaimed «By Heracles, how many lies this young man is telling about me»".⁵ Nevertheless, debate on the Socratic problem is relatively recent and, therefore, further developments and new approaches should be expected.

The starting point in related scholarship is generally considered to be Friedrich Schleiermacher's study in 1818, which called into question the competence of Xenophon to provide an accurate account of Socrates as a philosopher. His skepticism was strongly adopted by the ponderous German scholarship to be later expanded by Karl Joël to the whole genre of the *sokratikoi logoi*. He moved a step further from the Aristotelian observations to the ascertainment that the dialogues were in essence fictional narratives, an ascertainment that hindered the scholars' quest for the historical Socrates. Soon, however, a defense of the historicity of Plato's Socrates, against Xenophon's unreliable portrait, was undertaken mostly by English scholarship, under the authority of eminent scholars such as John Burnet and Alfred Taylor. They defended the possibility of modern scholars to recompose the personality and the teachings of the historical Socrates from the dialogues, despite the possible fictional aspects of their narrative. Thence forward, the historicity at least of Plato's Socrates

⁴ Bibliography on the Socratic problem is immense and a more detailed presentation of it, let alone a critical discussion, exceeds the research range of this book. The following selection of references provides an up-to-date introduction to the subject. Dorion (2011) offers a thorough historical survey and an appreciation of the current state of the matter (and of its future development) that is shared to a great degree by this book. The same applies for Prior (2006) and Mario Montuori's *The Socratic Problem: the history, the solutions, from the 18th century to the present time* (Amsterdam, 1992). Press (1998) presents an excellent outline of the relevant methodological issues and processes and so does, in a more condensed form, Christopher Gill (2006), 136-38. Debra Nails (1995), 8-31 and Daniel Graham's "Socrates and Plato", *Phronesis* 37 (1992), 141-65 are two more concise discussions of the subject. For the point of view that favours the fictionality of Plato's Socrates see Gigon (1947), ch. 1; Montuori (1967), 9 ff.; Nails (1995), 22-24; Kahn (1996). For the opposite view, on the historicity of Plato's Socrates, see A. E. Taylor *Socrates* (London 1932); Vlastos (1991), esp. 45-106; Tomin (2001), 150-72. See also Smith (1998) for a collection of the contributions to the problem by Anton-Hermann Chroust, Cornelia de Vogel, Gregory Vlastos and Charles Kahn, as well as Andreas Patzer's (ed.) *Der historische Sokrates* (Darmstadt, 1987), 1-40.

⁵ R. D. Hicks' Loeb translation slightly altered.

was seemingly reinstated, with the exception of Eugène Dupréel's labelling of the supposed lineal philosophical tradition from Socrates to Aristotle as 'mythology', which by then, in 1922, was quite a radical statement to make.⁶

The Socratic problem reemerged in post-war Europe. Since Olof Gigon's influential work, published in 1947, a constant reinstatement of the issue has been in circulation. It has taken the form of agnosticism as regards the restoration of the historical Socrates and of his discourse due to the discord of the various surviving sources (Gigon); or due to the uncovering of the poetic, fictitious nature of Plato's narrative, a kind of "philosophical myth" (Gigon, Anton-Hermann Chroust, Mario Montuori, Charles Kahn). A strain of critique ultimately saw Socrates as the product of Plato's literary talent and the mouthpiece for his own philosophical ideas, to the extent that the Socratic problem was actually deemed insoluble and the separation of the Platonic from the Socratic was considered impossible (Eduard Zeller, Werner Jaeger, Paul Shorey, Kahn).⁷ To this view one could add Mario Montuori's controversial work: a learned scholar, he argued that this whole creation by Plato, this "philosophical myth" can be deciphered in order to reveal its ideological nucleus and its intentions. Namely, by his fabricated image of Socrates Plato sought to answer and abolish the political and ideological reasons behind his teacher's condemnation to death. In fact, Socrates' was a political trial; he was a victim of the democratic Athenian *polis* because of his ideas, which were -rightly to a certain degree- considered as antidemocratic and against the common and dominant religious custom and ideology. The true reasons for his accusation and conviction also included his provocative way of life and the circle of his friends and disciples, many of whom were notorious for their enmity to democracy, both in words and in practice (Montuori builds much of his argument on the basis of the image of Socrates in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, which he endorses as historically accurate, and from the supposed content of Polycrates' libelous pamphlet against Socrates). Hence, it was very hard for Plato to purify Socrates in early fourth century Athens, when collective memory still strongly recalled his conviction by the city on political and ideological grounds, as well as the terror of the Thirty Tyrants' regime (with whom Socrates supposedly had affiliations). So, instead of the political and ideological aspect of the accusation, Plato chose to focus on refuting the charge of *asebeia* (impiety). As a result, he invented the story of the oracle given to Chaerephon at Delphi and consequently he turned Socrates into the most pious Athenian and Apollo's chosen one. By doing so he turned his master's conviction into an act that was both wrong and utterly impious and accordingly he presented his philosophical life that had disturbed the Athenians as a divinely ordered and guaranteed mission.⁸ Montuori's thesis has since received a lot of criticism, much of which is quite convincing.⁹ Yet, to my knowledge, the main question that he poses, i.e. the silence of the sources regarding the oracle to Chaerephon, has

⁶ A. E. Taylor *Varia Socratica* (Oxford, 1911); J. Burnet *Greek Philosophy: Thales to Plato* (London, 1914). Cf. Dupréel (1922). For this and the following synopsis see especially Dorion (2011), as well as Nails (1995), 22-24.

⁷ Rowe (2011), 2-3. Cf. Kahn (1996).

⁸ Montuori (1967), (1974) and (1990).

⁹ See especially Richard Kraut's review of Montuori's *Socrates: Physiology of an Anatomy* (Amsterdam, 1981) in *AncPhil* 4 (1984), 246-49.

yet to be effectively challenged by his critics. And, to some extent, the conclusions of this study regarding the cultural, religious and ritual context of Socrates' portrait in the *Phaedo* advocate a good part of Montuori's thesis, on Plato's intentions for his master's acquittal from the charge of impiety. In addition, in the last decades the fictitious and dramatic aspects of Socrates' Platonic portrait are widely accepted, including English scholarship, especially with respect to Plato's artistry and to the cross-literary exchanges of his dialogues with other genres.

As for the analysis and the historicity of the content of those dialogues in which Socrates is the protagonist, the two main trends of scholarship are 'unitarianism' and 'developmentalism'. Unitarians, beginning with Paul Shorey's *Unity of Plato's Thought* in 1904, see a single set of ideas that runs through the dialogues and many of them call accordingly for the reading and the interpretation of the dialogues as a deliberate, coherent whole, thus leaving scope for the study of Plato's intervention both as an author and as a philosopher. On the other hand, developmentalists point to the different philosophical positions that Socrates holds in the dialogues. They see them as a progression in Platonic thought that was owed to Plato's own ablactating and gradual detachment from Socrates' teaching. Consequently, they demarcate an early period, which mostly reflects the historical Socrates' discourse (for some developmentalists the representation of Socrates and his philosophy in the early dialogues is quite accurate); then a middle period during which Plato increasingly inserted his own views and started turning Socrates into his mouthpiece; and finally a late period, that of Plato's own philosophical maturity and independence, in which he put forward his own theory and teaching.¹⁰

Actually, the Socratic problem seems unsolvable. To borrow Anthony Long's words: "I should make it crystal clear that I am not taking a view on the authenticity of anything Plato attributes to Socrates as documentary evidence of what the historical Socrates said and thought".¹¹ Yet, at the same time, one must take into account that even scholars who challenge the historicity of Plato's Socrates tend to consider certain of his aspects as historically accurate. So they distinguish between Socrates the thinker or the philosopher and Socrates the man, who lived in fifth century Athens and is described in the dialogues. In what concerns that man, his physical appearance, his way of conversing with his fellow-citizens, the annoyances that he caused in many ways to the extent of him being considered a controversial figure that was followed by a similarly controversial popularity, as well as some of his political views that are documented in the dialogues, all these are often taken as genuine aspects of his life that are recorded in the dialogues.¹² Thus, overall, we could argue that Plato's Socrates is in fact a hybrid persona, a *Plocrates* as Christopher Rowe brilliantly called him, borrowing a term by Ruby Blondell in order to convey the insoluble mixture of Plato's authorship with the historical Socrates which shaped most effectively the protagonist of his dialogues. 'Plocrates' is the product of fabrication, of fiction, and, accordingly, research should examine the constituents of this mixture,

¹⁰ See however Charles Kahn's strong refutation of the developmentalists' tripartite division of Plato's work (especially of its founding points that had been argued by Gregory Vlastos) in Kahn (1996).

¹¹ Long (1998), 119.

¹² Nails (1995), 13-14; Kahn (1996), 75; Trapp (2007c), xv-xxi.

but it should also set the question what was that Plato and the Academy, both his safe haven and his philosophical laboratory, had to gain from such a strange creature.¹³ That is, given Plato's mastery in composing his dialogues, e.g. their scenery and their narrative details, it is justifiable to suppose that when any such 'authentic' characteristics of Socrates' portrait and *βίος* are reproduced in the dialogues they should not be treated as simple touches of realism. Instead, an attempt should be made to see if they can be interpreted in the broader narrative and ideological framework of a given dialogue, and then in the even wider framework of the Platonic corpus. And finally, if possible, the researcher should try to see if they can be read in an even wider context, namely Plato's own philosophical *βίος* and particularly his conception of the philosophical life in the Academy. In the words of Anthony Long once more: "Where scholars have gone often wrong, in my opinion, is in supposing that the main question to ask about Plato's Socrates is the historicity or non-historicity of what that Socrates says. This, of course, is the key question if one is interested in the historical Socrates. But, so far as Plato is concerned, the principal issue is how he uses his own Socrates from start to finish; or, as I would prefer to put it, how the figure that Plato began to create in the *Apology* shapes Plato's philosophizing."¹⁴

This view is also endorsed by this study and it is from this perspective that the introductory part of the *Phaedo* is discussed here. To a great degree, the moulding and the presentation of Socrates' portrait in the dialogues is not a 'photographic', realistic reproduction, but largely a product of Plato's literary mastery. Correspondingly, the focus of this book is not on the philosophical doctrines themselves, that is, on the core of research interest in the dialogues for most scholars. It is instead a study of the 'dramatic' aspects of Plato's work, of the very image of the philosopher himself, of his characteristics as they are put forward by Plato's intervention in the narrative details and digressions of his dialogues. Instead of the philosophical content of the dialogues, this particular study looks at the form via which this content was articulated and diffused and especially at the biographic, ideological, ethical and aesthetic characteristics of its main bearer, Socrates. It looks at the very image of the ideal philosopher, his life, his characteristics and peculiarities, as well as at the motives and the intentions of Plato's choice to draw attention to specific characteristics of his Socrates and at the juxtaposition of this portrait and "philosophical mask" to the mainstream behaviour, ideology and aesthetics of the Athenian citizen. This approach will first be applied to the *Phaedo* in this book and then to the *Apology*, in the study that will hopefully complement this one. The following analysis shall observe and try to interpret these *microcosmic* aspects of the dialogues, which are usually treated as narrative details of seemingly peripheral importance, of minor importance to mainstream Platonic scholarship or even neglected by it. However, these details can prove to be quite important for Platonic studies when read in the total of a particular dialogue and some of them as running motifs in the corpus (additional references and comments shall be made, whenever deemed necessary, to Xenophon's works or to other sources on Socrates).¹⁵ From there, the next step is to look

¹³ Rowe (2011), 4.

¹⁴ Long (1998), 120.

¹⁵ Cf. Gill (2006), 137-38.

for hidden folds of Plato's thought and aims lying behind this *microcosmos*, for images, mentalities and ideas that participated in Plato's own shaping of the portrait of his ideal and intended *philosophos*, a life-consuming mission that Plato himself tried materialize in the Academy.

Despite the ponderous scholarship on Plato's dialogues and on Socrates, there may still be fresh ground for further research and discussion, especially so because, to an extent, every period has its own Socrates, the one that it chooses to discern in order to reflect and seek an answer to its peculiar, contemporary issues. The same might as well be argued for scholars' varying views of Socrates, let alone that every new reading of the dialogues, whether in solitary reading or contemplation or in the class, reveals new aspects for interpretation. As a result, the perception of Socrates somehow tends to be as personal as a fingerprint. Consequently, it seems that the Socratic problem shall remain an open question, exactly because it shall always be prone to further speculation that will spring from the future reader's affected reception of Socrates. At the same time, the particular multifarious and often contradictory portrait that Plato sketched perplexes interpretation: a friend or an enemy of democracy, beautiful or ugly, literal or ironic? And so on. Scholarship has hovered for centuries upon such questions, the answer to which perhaps lies in a unified co-existence of opposites in Plato's portraiture of the master.

Alongside his designed attempts to defend the memory of his teacher, Plato also built the portrait of his philosophical hero, and in so doing perhaps he also sought to protect future philosophers, Socrates' institutionally guaranteed "philosophical heirs" that would emerge from Plato's own philosophical school. In other words, Plato's description of Socrates' paradigmatic philosophical life and death perhaps aimed to function as a charter myth, a model for the future *philosophoi* of the Academy to emulate and a highly appreciated historical precedent on the basis of which the community of the *polis* could show in the future the very attitude towards philosophers that Plato would aspire to see. From now on Athenians should avoid (with much compunction) the repetition of the cardinal sin, the murder of the chosen one, Apollo's favourite philosopher and philosophy's archmartyr and first true master. So, where most scholars rightly look for the origins and the content of philosophical discourse, this book will try to trace the origins of academic life and of some of its constitutional preconditions. Of course, the criterion for the examination of a given dialogue from that point of view would be the date of its composition, in particular before or after the founding of the Academy. If, as it is generally assumed, the date of composition of the *Phaedo* is around the 380s, then it either falls within the fresh operational time framework of the Academy, which was founded in 387 BC, or it involves the period of its conception by Plato. In both scenarios, one is entitled to study Plato's programmatic thinking on his *philosophos*. Besides, the particularly high dramatic content of the *Phaedo*, its considerable richness in fictionality, imagery and myth-making and especially its many and extended narrative breaks from philosophical argumentation, which are filled with cultural, literary, religious and other connotations that not only complete the argumentation but often present us with new interpretative angles for the dialogue as a whole, all these special traits of this particular dialogue further justify its selection as a starting-point for an approach of the 'dramatic' aspects of Socrates' portraiture.

Scholars have noted Plato's narrative prowess, almost iconographic at times, and his impulse for plasticity in his representations of persons and sceneries. They have pointed out the theatricality of his dialogues, which is notably present in their introductions, the narrative and thematic function of which can be paralleled to that of the prologues in Greek drama. As a result, some have even labelled Plato a 'dramatist'.¹⁶ These dramatic qualities could perhaps be read alongside his celebrated comparison in the *Phaedrus* (264c) of discourse (λόγος) to a living creature (ζῷον), an analogy that has been considerably studied since Jacques Derrida's groundbreaking work.¹⁷ They may also be linked to Phaedrus' assertion later on in the same dialogue (276a), that for him who knows (τοῦ εἰδότος) the written form of the words is but a phantom, an unsubstantial image (εἶδωλον) of oral discourse, which in turn is alive and animate (λόγον ζῶντα καὶ ἔμψυχον). This parallelism seems to be grounded on a number of conceptual connotations of εἶδωλον in Greek culture, such as the Homeric description of the dead as εἶδωλα, forms in the likeness of men (e.g. Od. 11.476), or the phantoms that gods present to men (e.g. Il. 5.451), or even on the association of mirror reflections, εἶδωλα, with the underworld. The common underlying concept is that εἶδωλον denotes a deviation from truth and reality, something fake or less genuine. It was in this respect that Plato considered that the written words of a sage to be 'dead' and devoid of life compared to his original oral discourse, perhaps also like his recording of Socrates' discourses in the dialogues. Given this, Plato's rehearsals in theatricality may as well be interpreted either as an ironic comment to his own views on writing, or, more plausibly, as a deliberate attempt to breathe life into an otherwise short-lived, abortive form of *logos*.

As Christopher Gill has pointed, the Socratic dialogue "is, in some sense, a dramatic genre, though we do not know if these dialogues were written for performance, recitation, or private reading. The drama of the early Platonic dialogues centers especially on the recreation of Socrates' trial-speech and his response to imprisonment before execution (*Apology, Crito*)". And he adds that "the representation of the figure of Socrates and his interaction with others is elaborated in the middle dialogues, which dramatize his tough-minded response to the prospect of death (*Phaedo*), to sexual desire and alcohol (*Symposium*), or to the dialectical challenge of an immoralist (*Republic*, book I)".¹⁸ A combination of Gill's statements is shared by this study, as regards both the dramatic persona of Socrates in the dialogues in general and the 'staging' qualities of the *Phaedo* in particular. However, a couple of complementary points can be put forward. First, Gill's *in some sense* seems to call for special caution on drawing further analogies or even identifications with Greek drama in particular, especially with tragedy. One thinks forthwith of a few obvious and considerable differences between tragedy and the Platonic dialogue: the charac-

¹⁶ On the dramatic aspects of the dialogues and for an overview of scholarship on the subject, see Blondell (2002), esp. 14-38. Cf. Diogenes Laertius 3.48. On the *Phaedo* in particular see Sarah Jansen's (2013), esp. 335-39, 346-51, a valuable recent contribution on the subject that unfortunately came late to my attention and has not been discussed here at the length that it deserves. See also Morgan (2004), 364-68 and the recent contribution by N. Charalambopoulos *Platonic Drama and Its Ancient Reception* (Cambridge, 2012), 56-129.

¹⁷ Derrida (1981). Cf. Pl. *Sph.* 260a and *Anon. Proleg.* 21.21-24 Westerink. The abbreviated citations of ancient authors and their works throughout the book follow the system of LSJ.

¹⁸ Gill (2006), 140-41.

ters of the dialogues do not belong to some remote, mythological past, inscribed as heroic in collective memory; instead, they are common mortals from the recent past set in the realistic framework of the Athenian *polis* in the second half of the fifth century. And as regards the ‘mythopoeic’ process or heroization of Socrates that this study shall address, his character in the dialogues is not accompanied (yet) by his own preexisting mythological narratives with well set and valorized connotations, contrary to the epic heroes that tragedy made use of, but he rather seems to induce an ongoing formulation of the city’s collective memory of him.

Furthermore, in contrast to dramatic performances in classical Athens and to their widespread readership in modern times, in their own time Plato’s dialogues were did not aim at a wide community of spectators, at least more expanded than his close circle of disciples and friends, which ideally would coincide with a large portion of the population of the *polis* in which they were produce, as in the case of drama. And the conceptual abilities of their intended audience or readership, perhaps their social and ideological classification too, were not the same as those of the majority of the citizens-as-spectators in the theater of Dionysus, or in any other public performance of *logoi* in classical Athens, neither were the doctrines of the dialogues delivered and perceived in the same way. In addition, not only information on the performative scope of Plato’s dialogues is limited, but their ‘theatricality’ neither applies to all these works, nor throughout every single dialogue; it is usually the property mainly of the opening scenes and of some sporadic narrative tinges in the main narrative of a given dialogue. In most cases then, any talk on the ‘theatricality’ of the dialogues should be limited to the dramatic overtones that enhance their liveliness and accordingly amplify the cogency of the situations and of the exchanges that are represented in them. We must also take into account that the Platonic dialogue, if not the Socratic dialogue in general, was a new genre in its own right, a literary detail that further complicates the application to it of interpretative tools known from drama studies. Finally, one should keep in mind Andrea Nightingale’s warnings on the complex and authoritative aspect of Plato’s stance to other, competitive genres of discourse, including drama.¹⁹

Hence, references in this study to the ‘dramatic’ style or aspect of the dialogues are generally meant metaphorically. This said, the main part of the *Phaedo* can be described as a “staged dialogue” that is embedded in Phaedo’s recollection of it. It is staged in Socrates’ cell and apart from him as the focal point, it also involves a small group of interlocutors who occasionally interfere or react emotionally, resembling a diminished form of a chorus.²⁰ Nevertheless, although theatricality is an essential part of the *Phaedo*’s literary credits, it should not occupy the present study more than their philologically due share. In this line of thought, a passage from Proclus points to another direction for the reading of both the opening scene of Plato’s narration of Socrates’ last day in prison and in life: “the preludes of a Platonic dialogue fit in with their overall objectives and are not devised for dramatic impact ... nor do they just aim to tell a story ... but are linked with the overall project of the dialogues.”²¹ The

¹⁹ Nightingale (1995). See also Blondell (2002) 14-22, 29-33.

²⁰ See also the comments by Thesleff (2000), 55 and Morgan (2004), 357-59..

²¹ Τὰ προοίμια τῶν Πλατωνικῶν διαλόγων συνάδει πρὸς τοὺς ὅλους αὐτῶν σκοποὺς, καὶ οὔτε δραματικῆς ἔνεκα ψυχαγωγίας μεμηχάνηται τῷ Πλάτωνι (πόρρω γὰρ ἔστιν ὁ

erudite Neoplatonist sounds here as if he addresses the proponents of the aforementioned view of Plato as a dramatist and he categorically, if not rather polemically in style, rejects any such approaches.

The scope and the structure of this book

The book at hand does not contain a discussion of the philosophical doctrines or of the argumentation of the *Phaedo*. Having said that, I am conscious of the oddity of such a choice, given both the richness of the philosophical content of this dialogue, a gem in the corpus, and the presence of this book in the distinguished IPS series. However, these issues have been studied at depth by eminent Platonists and I do not claim such mastery. Instead, this book is more of an anthology of underlying concepts in the *Phaedo*, and secondarily in other dialogues, concepts that could point to the ideological, ritual, institutional and generic cross-references and connotations and their related discursive fields that Plato aimed to appropriate for his *philosophos* and his *philosophia*. It is a study, from a perspective that combines philological with literary contextualist readings, on the conceptual and cultural aspects of the beginnings of institutionalized and systematized Greek philosophy, as these particular aspects were laid out and put forward by Plato. It presents an alternative point of view on Plato's intentions in writing the *Phaedo* and it sheds some new interpretative light on particular parts of Plato's text. Its methodology is rather simple: every concept under consideration is located and studied first in the framework of a given dialogue (usually the *Phaedo*) and then in the rest of the Platonic corpus. This is complemented by the comparative study of that concept against the broader context of Greek literature and culture. The major issues that are thus studied in this book are the intended cultural signaling and cross-references that underlie Plato's parallelism of Socrates to Aesop in the introductory part of the *Phaedo*, the heroic attributes of Socrates and their inscription in the traditions of the epic heroes, as well as of the sages of old and of heroized poets, his relation to Apollo as well as to the *pharmakos*.

Actually, a very productive debate on the particular issue of Aesopic cross-references in Plato's dialogues has recently emerged, while research for this book was advancing. The starting point was Leslie Kurke's stimulating *Aesopic Conversations*, a work full of fresh and innovative thoughts, in which the author traces Aesop's cultural and literary influence in the Greek world.²² Kurke's arguments have opened a new ground for studies on the affiliations between Aesop and Plato. And since they share a similar literary and conceptual ground with this study, especially as regards the relation in the *Phaedo* of the Apollonian Socrates to Aesop, a summary of her thesis will be presented here. Kurke focuses on certain characteristics of Aesop as a literary and cultural figure. She sees Aesop and his fables as a two-fold political disguise, a means for political and ideological stance by the disembed-

τρόπος οὗτος τῆς συγγραφῆς τῆς τοῦ φιλοσόφου μεγαλοφροσύνης) οὔτε τῆς ιστορίας στοχάζεται μόνη, ὥσπερ τινὲς ὑπελήφασιν. Procl. *in Alc.* 18.13-17 Westerink, ap. Gill (2006), 136.

²² Kurke (2011). A first, condensed presentation of her argument appeared in Kurke (2006), whereas in Kurke (2003) she first presented her interpretation of Aesop's death at Delphi.

ded members of a community.²³ Hence Aesop was a vehicle of critique “from below”, from the lower social strata with little literary status, especially against the “inequitable and exclusionary institutional practices at Delphi”. This critique mouthed the “ongoing tension between the egalitarian ideology that prevailed within most Greek cities and the exceptional privileges and practices exercised by the Delphians who controlled Apollo’s Panhellenic oracle”.²⁴ At the same time, Kurke inscribes Aesop to what she terms “high wisdom tradition”, which was traditionally ascribed to the Greek *sophoi* and it combined “poetic skill, practical political wisdom and seercraft”. It was a rather popular kind of pre-philosophical *sophia* and was performed under Apollo’s *aegis*, in a competitive framework for public esteem that was characterized by mobility and extroversion. This book shares this view and it will suggest that in the *Phaedo* Plato presents his Socrates in strong resemblance to that old *sophos* and he parallels Socrates to Aesop in order to appropriate that old, pre-philosophical *sophia* for his new, much more effective, divine and true art of the *philosophos* who, however, as opposed to the old *sophos*, is now armed with the power of philosophical *logos* as the product of particular argumentative methodology.

Kurke argues that Aesop’s relation to that tradition of high wisdom is twofold. Sometimes he legitimizes and other times he strongly parodies and criticizes those acclaimed *sophoi*. This competitive relation of Aesop and of his ‘low’ status and fables against the traditional claimants of ‘high’ wisdom is most characteristically deployed in the *Life of Aesop*, where it is manifest against false *sophoi* and the Delphic clergy. The problem with Kurke’s pattern, which in some part she herself accepts,²⁵ is the scarcity of the relevant sources as well as the anachronistic use of much later material (for example she uses Plutarch’s account on Aesop and Croesus to argue for a tradition that predates Plato, although there are no explicit traces of such a tradition).²⁶ This seems like an unavoidable problem, given the nature of the Aesopic material, and it is one that this study also confronts (see below pp. 196-97). Moreover, Kurke reads the episode of Aesop’s visit at Delphi that is described in P.Oxy. 1800 as a parody of sacrifice rituals in Apollo’s sacred land, not with reference to the *pharmakos* to which it has already been paralleled by scholars like Anton Wiechers, Walter Burkert and Gregory Nagy (below, 173 ff.).²⁷ In fact, she does take into account the cultural and ritual parallels of the blame poet and the *pharmakos*, in the traditions of which Aesop has been inscribed, yet she proposes a re-evaluation of such theses. In her view, Aesop’s unjust death at Delphi, was only a parody, “from below”, of the official Delphic narrative on the *aition* for the local *pharmakos* ritual (the death of

²³ See also Zafiroopoulos (2001), esp. 36-43.

²⁴ Kurke (2011), 53-54.

²⁵ E.g. Kurke (2011), 134, 427.

²⁶ In addition, her suggestion that Herodotus based his account on Bias’ or Pittacus’ persuasion of Croesus not to invade Greece, although interesting, lacks the reference to influences from much older material, usually of oriental origin, on the dissuasive rhetoric of the sage in front of a king, an issue that is discussed at length by Konstantakos (2008), *passim*. In addition, one should address if the later material on which she bases her argument, was influenced by the high literature to which Kurke opposes Aesop (Plato, Aristotle and so on).

²⁷ Kurke (2011), 211-12.

Neoptolemus there) and of the sacrificial practices that were employed at Apollo's precinct.

Besides, instead of poetry, as Nagy did (Aesop as a blame poet), Kurke connects Aesop with prose. On the basis of Herodotus 2.134 and Plato's *Phaedo* 60c-61b, she traces the origins of Greek "mimetic or narrative prose" (such as Herodotus' prose history and Plato's prose philosophy) in the appropriation by these 'high' genres of discourse of the earlier, lowly prose narrative of the Aesopic fable. In her view, the passage from the *Phaedo* is a programmatic text on the generic affiliations between Platonic dialogue and fable and it indicates that the fable as well as "Aesop and the traditions around his figure were significant precursors [and models] for Platonic dialogue in general and the characterization of Socrates in particular".²⁸

Soon after the publication of Kurke's book, Gregory Nagy responded with an article of almost 90 pages.²⁹ With respect to the points of his disagreement that concern this book, Nagy challenges the restriction of Aesop to "low-minded" views. Instead, he also attributes "high-minded" views to him.³⁰ He persuasively defends his reading of the myth of Aesop's death on the basis of P.Oxy. 1800 as an aetiological myth, one that is cognate with that of Neoptolemus with reference to the heroic cult that both these figures received at Delphi and at the Delphic festival of Theoxenia.³¹ Furthermore, contrary to Kurke's reading of high- and low- discursive systems as being opposed in the case of Aesop and his fables, Nagy inscribes the *Life of Aesop* in "a larger system that includes high as well as low forms of discourse, and that this system integrates not only a lowly hero such as Aesop but also lofty heroes such as Neoptolemus or even Achilles".³² Accordingly, he sees a conceptual and terminological coexistence of *muthos* and *logos* with reference to Aesop's fables as representatives of the low- and of the high- artistic and social status of fables respectively. For example, argues Nagy, in Plato's *Phaedo* 61a-b, the high poetry of *mousike* is articulated by Socrates both with a hymn to Apollo, a kind of poetry that was identified with the great Homer, *and* with a versified fable, that was identified with the humble Aesop. The same can be argued with respect to the presence of fables in Greek poetry, from the lyric poetry, as in Stesichorus and Archilochus, to comedy, as in Aristophanes.³³ In Nagy's view, the reason for this undifferentiated use must be sought in the very form and function of the original mould for fable, the *ainos*, which was "a larger system of discourse" that involved speaking either positively or negatively. Since the *ainos* could be used both as praise and as blame, to decipher its message was like solving a riddle. Hence, the *ainos* addressed and functioned only within a close system of listeners who were capable of decoding such narratives, the 'skilled' ones who were generally known as the *sophoi*.³⁴ Aesop was such a *sophos* and, contrary to Kurke, Nagy interprets his discourse "as not only a parodistic alternative version of socially higher forms of comparable discourse but also as an actual cog-

²⁸ Ibid., 75-86, 247, 251.

²⁹ Nagy (2011).

³⁰ Ibid., §5.

³¹ Ibid., §65-84.

³² Ibid., §87.

³³ Ibid., §85-120.

³⁴ Ibid., §127-32, 136-37, 143-46.

nate of these higher forms". Thus the *ainos* could represent both lower and upper social strata, it could be uttered "in both high-minded and lowly ways" and accordingly Aesop too is represented in the *Life* as both a blame and praise poet.³⁵ In his conclusion, Nagy wishes that his debate with Kurke shall be fruitful and that their findings shall "be read in many creative ways". May the present book be a useful attachment to their stimulating work and dialogue.

In addition to Nagy's critique, a few more points can be raised here with respect to Kurke's intriguing and fresh look at the fable and to her exciting analysis of the class and status connotations that undercut the Greek genres of discourse. First, the history and the terminology of fable, in prose and in verse, is not as linear as Kurke supposes, neither are the semantics of its terminology. In addition, no criticism of Apollo "from below" seems to be at play in Plato. Furthermore, Kurke includes in her argument on the generic elevation of fables, their use by Protagoras (*Prt.* 320c-23a). Yet, if we apply Gert-Jan Van Dijk's criteria to define a story as 'fable', then Protagoras' *muthos* is too lengthy to be included in the genre.³⁶ The same can be argued as regards both Aristophanes' fictitious aetiological myth of the sexes (*Smp.* 189d-93a) and Diotima's description of the Eros and of those in love (*Smp.* 210c and 211d-12a). Compared not only to the surviving corpus of fables, but also to Socrates' very own fable in the *Phaedo* (60b-c), these stories from the *Symposium* can hardly be termed 'fables'.³⁷

A final introductory note on the approach of this study to the *Phaedo*: as Arnaldo Momigliano had pointed out, in their attempts to portray Socrates the Socratics covered a literary and conceptual gap between truth and fiction and thus they presented a new, decisive trend in ancient biography.³⁸ It is the content of that semi-fictional space in Plato's work that this book aims to search, in a kind of ontological research on the roots of the intellectual and the academic worlds. In other words, Plato's theoretical and discursive pursuits aside, themes that have been studied at great length and detail, this book shall ask what were the main ingredients for the formulation of Plato's *philosophos* as this is ideally represented by Socrates and if these might suggest a Platonic agenda for the institutionalization of his *philosophia* in fourth century Athens. In my view, Plato's portrait of Socrates is a multilayered amalgam of various qualities, like an artichoke or a statue that is composed by many metal sheets, at the heart of which lies Socrates the archetypal philosopher of our tradition, the dialectician, the contemplator, he who seeks definitions, that is, Socrates as the first to practice the basics of philosophy. But the layers above it are the ones that scholarship usually puts aside in order to reach the philosophical delicacies. Hence, themes in the *Phaedo* such as Socrates as an old sage, Socrates the ugly and the *pharmakos*, the Apollonian, the heroic, the pious, the *mousikos* and the competitor against other 'poetic' genres or authoritative discourses in the *polis*; or, more generally, narrative motifs that persist in the dialogues like Socrates the leisured one, the poor without a profession, the family man, the friend, the citizen and the politi-

³⁵ *Ibid.*, §132c.

³⁶ Van-Dijk (1997), 669-70.

³⁷ Kurke (2011), 316-20.

³⁸ Momigliano (1971), 46-47.

cal, the erotic, and so on, all these are traits of the Platonic portraiture that remain of slight or of no importance to scholarship.

This book aims to combine a running reading of the introductory part of the *Phaedo* alongside a detailed discussion of the major issues in the dialogue that are related to Plato's 'heroic' portrait of Socrates. It starts with an analytical reading of the two scenes that are embedded in its introduction (57a1-61c1), the conversation between the narrator, Phaedo, and Echecrates at Phlius and a detailed reading of the first passages of the former's narration of Socrates' last philosophical conversation in his prison cell, including Socrates' own prose fable on pleasure and pain. Emphasis is shed on the Apollonian connotations that shape the framework for the ensuing dialogue, the 'dramatic' constituents of the conversation (the time, the place, the participants) and, above all, Socrates' reported 'musical' compositions, his hymn to Apollo and his versification of Aesop's fables (chapter 2). Apollo's omnipresence in the dialogue and its semantics are further studied in the following chapter, with particular emphasis on the Apollonian supervision of Socrates' philosophical mission and the philosopher's inscription to the traditional list of the *sophoi*, including his privileged competence in deciphering puzzles. This last aspect is specifically studied as regards Socrates' attempts to answer the repeated utterance in his dreams to practice and compose *mousike* (chapter 3). The next chapters try to further interpret Aesop's surprising and repeated presence in the Introduction of the *Phaedo*. In particular, chapter 4 discusses the tradition and the sources on Aesop, as well as the presence of Aesopic material in Plato's dialogues. An analytical reading of the surviving G version of the *Life of Aesop* focuses on his death at Delphi, which combines the traditions and the concepts of the death of the blame poet with that of the *pharmakos*. The latter is studied in detail in the following chapter (chapter 5), together with the similarities and the differences between Plato's portrait of Socrates and that of Aesop in his *Life*, as well as the references of both portraits to the tradition of the *pharmakos*. The analysis concludes that the introductory presence of Aesop in the *Phaedo* is intended to mark Socrates' own parallelism to the ritual and cultural concepts of the *pharmakos* and of the blame poet, albeit from a perspective that denotes the illusionary character of such analogies and highlights the true philosopher's exaltation to the highest level of human excellence, which culminates in his most amicable and privileged relation with the divine both throughout his philosophical life, if properly and fully conducted, and in the afterlife of his soul. Chapter 6 discusses Plato's attempts to immortalize Socrates as a philosophical hero. Apart from Socrates' figurative, narrative heroization in the dialogues, the question of his actual heroization in Plato's Academy is also addressed, on the basis of a new look at an old thesis by the eminent German scholar Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, who had argued that Plato's Academy was actually organized as a *thiasos* that was dedicated to the cult of the Muses. The book then ends with a few concluding notes (chapter 7).

References and citations of the Greek text of the *Phaedo* follow John Burnet's Oxford edition. As regards the translation of Plato's text, I fully endorse the great von Wilamowitz's statement on his inability to present a translation of Plato's works that

would be truly faithful to the Greek text.³⁹ Hence, I resorted to well-known and acclaimed scholar translations, Harold North Fowler's Loeb translation, at some points complemented by David Gallop's Clarendon translation, occasionally with a few changes of mine, whenever these were deemed appropriate.

³⁹ Von Wilamowitz (1920²), 5 ("Ich selbst kann den Platon nicht so übersetzen, daß es mich voll befriedigt, dazu verstehe ich sein Griechisch zu gut").

CHAPTER 2

The opening scene

There is no general consensus among scholars about the actual date of composition for the *Phaedo*, which is actually the case more or less for most of Plato's dialogues. Various methods of dating have been proposed and applied by scholars, such as the stylometric analysis, the doctrinal or the reading order of the dialogues, their dramatic classification, but at the moment the shared verdict is that any statements on the chronology of the dialogues would be speculative or unsound, instead of valid. Nevertheless, most scholars include the *Phaedo* in Plato's so-called "middle dialogues" or in the "transitional dialogues" which are placed in-between his early and his middle dialogues.¹ As regards its dramatic date, though, here we are on more stable ground: on the basis of Socrates' prophetic dream in the *Crito* (44a-b), the *Phaedo* is set at the beginning of the summer of 399 BC, early in month Thargelion, two days after the discussion between Socrates and Crito.²

The *Phaedo* is a dialogue remarkably rich in themes. These include its Apollonian framework (namely the god's festivals, the ritual of the *pharmakos* and the references to Aesop, the paean to Apollo, the concept of purification, the perception of philosophy as music, Socrates' dream, his parallelism to the swan and his foresighted *logos* on the posthumous fate of his soul), the contrasting and alternating pairing of pleasure with pain; the issues of the incarceration of the soul in the body and the latter as the source of its affections, the immortality of the soul, the visionary myth on its transmigration, the theory of recollection. To these themes one may add the true philosopher's heroic temper in the face of death and his equally heroic overcoming of materiality; these attributes subjugate any fears of death and are complemented by Socrates' salutary discourse on that subject to his present philosophical audience (this includes the sub-theme of his interlocutors' salvation from the 'monster' of *misology*). All this highlightens the broader issue of the heroic status that Plato seems to appoint to his archetypal philosopher, especially so and most memorably in the *Phaedo*.³ In the next pages these themes shall be addressed especially with respect to the introductory part of the dialogue, and following the narrative flow of its text.

¹ See Debra Nails' detailed comparative tables with the major suggested chronologies for the dialogues, Nails (1995), 53-68. See also H. Thesleff *Studies in Platonic Chronology* (Helsinki, 1982) and id. "Platonic Chronology", *Phronesis* 34 (1989), 1-26; L. Brandwood *The chronology of Plato's dialogues* (Cambridge, 1990) and id. "Stylometry and chronology" in Kraut (1993), 90-120; Howland (1991), 189-211 (pp. 205-11 summarize the critique on stylometry); Kahn (1996), 47-48; Nails (2002), 320-23.

² Nails (2002), 322-23.

³ On the Apollonian context see 58a-c, 59e, 60c-61b, 62d-e, 67a, 84e-85b, 85e-86d, 89b, 91c (in particular on purification: 58b and e, 67a-c, 68b, 69b-c, 80e, 82d, 83d-e, 108c, 113d, 114c, 115a). Aesop and *pharmakos*: 60c-61b (*myths*: 61e, 110b). Pleasure and pain: 57a, 58d, 59a, 60b-c, 64c-5a, 68e-69b, 77d, 83b-d, 88c, 110b. The philosopher's conquest of fear: 67e, 68b, 68e-70b,

The place, the time and Socrates' condition

ΕΧΕΚΡΑΤΗΣ. Αὐτός, ὦ Φαίδων, παρεγένου Σωκράτει ἐκείνη τῆ ἡμέρα ἢ τὸ φάρμακον ἔπιεν ἐν τῷ δεσμοτηρίῳ, ἢ ἄλλου του ἦκουσας;

ΦΑΙΔΩΝ. Αὐτός, ὦ Ἐχέκρατες.

ΕΧ. Τί οὖν δὴ ἔστιν ἅττα εἶπεν ὁ ἀνὴρ πρὸ τοῦ θανάτου; καὶ πῶς ἐτελεύτα; ἠδέως γὰρ ἂν ἐγὼ ἀκούσαιμι. καὶ γὰρ οὔτε τῶν πολιτῶν Φλειασίων οὐδεὶς πάνυ τι ἐπιχωριάζει τὰ νῦν Αθήναζε, οὔτε τις ξένος ἀφίκεται χρόνου συχνοῦ ἐκείθεν ὅστις ἂν ἡμῖν σαφές τι ἀγγεῖλαι οἷός τ' ἦν περὶ τούτων, πλήν γε δὴ ὅτι φάρμακον πιὼν ἀποθάνοι· τῶν δὲ ἄλλων οὐδὲν εἶχεν φράζειν.

ΦΑΙΔ. Οὐδὲ τὰ περὶ τῆς δίκης ἄρα ἐπύθεσθε ὄν τρόπον ἐγένετο;

ΕΧ. Ναί, ταῦτα μὲν ἡμῖν ἠγγεῖλέ τις, καὶ ἐθαυμάζομέν γε ὅτι πάλαι γενομένης αὐτῆς πολλῶ ὕστερον φαίνεται ἀποθανῶν. τί οὖν ἦν τοῦτο, ὦ Φαίδων;

ECHECRATES. Were you there with Socrates yourself, Phaedo, on that day when he drank the poison in prison, or did you hear about it from someone else?

PHAEDO. I was there myself, Echecrates.

ECH. Then what did the man say before his death? And how did he die? I'd very much like to hear. For nowadays none of the Phliasians go to Athens at all, and no stranger has arrived from there for a long time, who could report to us anything definite about these events, except that he drank poison and died; as for the rest, there was nothing else that he could tell us.

PH. Did you not even hear about the trial and how it was conducted?

ECH. Yes, someone told us about that, and we wondered that although the trial took place a long time ago, he was put to death much later. Now why was that, Phaedo?

(*Phaedo* 57a1 – 58a5)⁴

This is the brief introductory scene, located at Phlious, a small *polis* in north-western Argolid near Nemea, which was also a center for Pythagorean philosophy. The two interlocutors are both Peloponnesian philosophers, Phaedo of Elis, who founded the Elean school on his return from Athens after Socrates' death and who was presumably present at the death scene, and a local Pythagorean, Echecrates. Plato's boxing of the main narrative (59c-118a) into an abridged conversation that supposedly took place at Phlious (the Phlious scene features at 57a-59c, again at 118a, and at the two interludes at 88c-89a and 102a3-9) serves his authorial aims with respect to the historicity and the authorship of the *Phaedo*. That is, to the average Athenian it would sound plausible that two Peloponnesian philosophers met and discussed somewhere at Peloponnesian. So he would consent to the credibility of Plato's account from its very start. Nonetheless, we may also sense a bleak and ironic tone here: by the very thought of Peloponnesian as a safe haven for philosophy, let alone the locals' fervent interest on Socrates, Plato aimed to suggest a shift in Athens' intellectual status at his days from one of supremacy among the Greek *poleis* into one

77d-78a, 80e-81a, 88b, 89a, 91c, 95d, 114d-e. His view of death as salvation: 61d-e, 62c-e, 63b-c, 64a, 64c-5a, 67b-68b, 69c-e, 80e-81a, 85d, 108c, 114b-e. The rescue of the disciples, which is effected by Socrates' argumentation on the immortality of the soul: 58b, 59b-c, 62b, 84a-b, 85d, 88c, 89a, 89c-91c, 102a, 114b-15a, 115b. Socrates' bravery and excellence in virtue: 58e, 63e, 64d-66e, 68b-69b, 80e, 83b, 84a-b, 84d, 86d, 89a, 114d, 115c, 115e, 116c, 117b, d. Immortality of the soul: 63e-69e (the principle of generation from the opposites), 69e-72e (the cyclical argument), 78b-84b, 99d-107b; the recollection argument: 72e-77a.

⁴ Fowler's Loeb translation with a few changes.

of devastation, due to the fleeing of its best (most prominently the Socratics) and their spread all over Greece, at a larger scale following Socrates' death. And correspondingly, perhaps he also sought to strike an alarming note to the average Athenian by signaling the intellectual amplification of the land that housed the greatest enemies of Athens in the aftermath of the defeat of the latter at the Peloponnesian War. Actually, Plato soon after reminds his readers of the extent of the "collateral philosophical damage" that followed Socrates' conviction and execution via the impressive detailed list of those who had been present at his last discourse (59b-c), most of whom were absent from Athens at the historical date of the dialogue. This list of Socrates' *hetairoi* constitutes an 'International' of post-Socratic Greek philosophy and thus its detailed report by Plato sought to recall the 'colonization' of Greece by Socratic, and by extension Athenian, thought as a consequence of his death, at the antipodes of which the metropolis laid empty and devastated of philosophers and their *logoi*, yet at its own accountability. Hence Plato depicts the grave impact of Socrates' execution and at the same time he points to the collective responsibility of the Athenians and to the guilt that befitted them. And consequently, perhaps he also suggests the need to rehabilitate the philosophical preeminence of Athens, thus encouraging the practical importance of his Academy.

Moreover, by locating the source of his main narrative far away, to a distant Peloponnesian *polis*, and at some unspecified time (yet, not that remote from the events, so that Echecrates' and the Phliasians' keen interest for news at 58a would be justified), Plato aimed to safeguard his account from questions over its objectivity and truthfulness. Actually, soon after he resorts again to narrative trickery when he effaces himself from the scenery (59b10 – below, 46) and thus he further legitimizes the third-person narrative that follows. So Plato tacitly beclouds things and blunts any doubts on the objectivity and truthfulness of the following account. His own absence from the event and the narrative stratagem of Phaedo's categorical certification of his eye-witness testimony on the content of the conversation (57a) fend off any questions over the reliability of the dialogue; if addressed, any such objections should not touch upon Plato directly, but they should rather be directed to his reproduction of what someone else recalled and disclosed to a third party. But such forced masking of Plato's authorship may as well backfire. That is, it may intensify suspicions on the scope of so many narrative voices being tangled over a single event, which in turn may result in the exposure of Plato's actual omnipresence and interference with the narrative.

The prologue at Phlius also summarizes the content of the dialogue and many of its issues. Phaedo's ensuing account shall answer Echecrates' request. He agrees to report what Socrates said before his death and to describe how he died (*ἅττα εἶπεν ὁ ἀνὴρ πρὸ τοῦ θανάτου... καὶ πῶς ἐτελεύτα*). The formulation of the first desideratum (*ἅττα εἶπεν... πρὸ τοῦ θανάτου*) allows the reader to expect both a detailed account of Socrates' last and therefore ponderous conversation with his disciples, but also an accurate reproduction of his *ultima verba*. And indeed, what follows shall meet both expectations *in extenso*, until its very last paragraph. As for the second commitment, the account does focus at great length on the drinking of the hemlock and its effects on Socrates' body, a theme that is stressed already in this introductory part by the deliberate and semantically weighty quoting of the term τὸ φάρμακον.

In fact, references to the hemlock are quite numerous in the *Phaedo*; they pervade the work and culminate in its dramatic conclusion.⁵ We just marked its presence in the very first words of the dialogue. Given that, and if we accept that Plato was a skilful author who handled his material carefully, that he laid emphasis on its structure and that resultantly the introductory parts of his dialogues are not simple narrative decorations, but instead they are rather meaningful signifiers of the themes to be addressed and of the arguments to be put forward, then the introductory presence of the hemlock cannot be hazardous. First of all, the formulation of Echeocrates' question is not if Phaedo was present "on the day that Socrates died" or "on the day of Socrates' death" and so on, but rather "on the day that he drank the poison *in prison*". This emphasis programmatically sets the grim tone that shall soon cover the whole work and it introduces a theme in the dialogue, the posthumous liberation of Socrates from his twofold confinement, of himself in his cell and of his soul in his body. It also forecasts and legitimizes the extended and detailed description of Socrates' death scene.

The mentioning of the hemlock also establishes a ring composition that places the poison at the two edges of the dialogue and thus 'locks' the content of the discourse in a somber atmosphere, under the hanging threat of imminent death. In fact, the hemlock appears twice in the opening paragraph, first at 57a1-3, just discussed. Then, in reply to Phaedo's one-word answer (αὐτός – "I was there myself"), Echeocrates sets him a round of brief questions that specify his interest into *what* Socrates said before dying and *how* he died (τί οὖν δὴ ἐστὶν ἅττα εἶπεν ὁ ἀνὴρ πρὸ τοῦ θανάτου; καὶ πῶς ἐτελεύτα, 57a5-6 – yet, the formulation of the question leaves room to speculate that its first part might refer more specifically to Socrates' mysterious last words). Echeocrates confesses his ignorance over these subjects and his thirst for information and he concludes by noting that the only news from visiting strangers that had reached Elis so far has been only that Socrates "drank poison and died" (πλήν γε δὴ ὅτι φάρμακον πιὼν ἀποθάνοι, 57b2). That is, the bare fact of his suicide and its means constitute the only knowledge about him outside Athens, an impressive gap that further legitimizes its covering by Phaedo's (Plato's) account.

Before its dramatic reemergence at the end of the dialogue, the hemlock-as-threat reappears at a very crucial point of the narrative. Following the 'Aesopic' passage that we shall discuss at length (below, 53 ff.), Socrates sends a seemingly oxymoron message to the poet Evenus, namely that it would be prudent of him to follow the philosopher's example and look forward to dying the soonest possible (61b7-8). This causes Cebes' reaction who calls for an explanation for that peculiar yearning for death. Socrates' reply is that this would be the best kind of discussion that they could have in the remaining time, until the sun goes down (the deadline for drinking the hemlock), that is, to examine (διασκοπεῖν) and to argue in the form of myth (μυθολογεῖν, 61e2) on the other world and on life there (61d-62a – τί γὰρ ἂν τις καὶ ποιῶι ἄλλο ἐν τῷ μέχρῳ ἡλίου δυσμῶν χρόνῳ, 61e3-4). Perhaps the μυθολογεῖν there recalls the Aesopic passage and Aesop's μῦθοι (below, 107 ff.). Overall, the passage summarizes the themes that are addressed in the bulk of the dialogue. As for its dramatic atmosphere, the whole situation sounds quite auspicious.

⁵ Rinella (2007), 145. On the legend of Phlius as Pythagoras' birthplace see Notomi (2013), 55-57.

cious for Socrates' audience, for he seems to be at leisure, in his usual mood for philosophical discourse, in sharp contrast to the threat of the hemlock. As a matter of fact, he has just put his feet down on the ground and sat there ready for discussion, a position that he shall hold for the rest of their interlocution (τὰ σκέλη ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν, καὶ καθεζόμενος οὕτως ἤδη τὰ λοιπὰ διελέγετο, 61d1-2). What might be at play here is a figurative escape from prison, a return to the customary ways of philosophical debate and of Plato's dialogues in which Socrates is presented to have nothing but leisure, σχολή, which he devotes wholeheartedly and ceaselessly to his interlocutors. This is symbolically stated by Socrates' late body posture. At the same time, though, the wording here bears an ironic cross-reference to the end of the dialogue. In particular, the reference to sunset as the time limit fills the audience (and us readers) with the welcome promise of plenty of remaining time for discourse (for at this point the dramatic time is still early in the morning). However, this reinserts the grim aspect of the introductory scene, for it reminds us of the threatening demise that awaits Socrates as soon as the sun will set. And then, when Socrates has drunk the hemlock, starting from these feet that now sit comfortably in a discussing posture, numbness and death shall move upwards until they reach his heart. Hence, on the basis of these introductory details as regards the state and the position of Socrates' feet we may argue that Plato deliberately and constantly opts for a suggestive phrasing that binds thematically the introductory scene with the conclusion of the dialogue. By so doing, he sets and builds up the tragic atmosphere of the scene and his audience's/readership pity and fear for his protagonist, whom however he elevates to an almost heroic stature, for anyone else would have paralysed mentally by the hanging threat of the hemlock. Instead, Plato presents Socrates as being ardent for discourse and thus he testifies to the philosopher's ἀνδρεία and to his moral excellence compared to the multitude of mortals.

Socrates then argues on the philosopher's welcoming attitude to death and Cebes mouths his first disagreement and his counterpoints (62a-e), to which Simmias adheres (63a). As a result, Socrates promises a second 'apology', this time not in the public and open air of the Athenian court, but in front of the 'court' of his interlocutors in prison, whom he will try to convince that death is rightly considered by the philosopher – and it will indeed turn out to be for him – the most welcome migration to another world, one that is populated by agents characterized by moral and intellectual excellence, the most wise and virtuous gods and humans, and therefore it is worth longing for (63b-d). It is at that very point, when the debate starts heating up and looks most promising, that Plato reemploys his suspension technique. And once more, the keyword is the hemlock.

Socrates says that he "shall try" to answer Cebes' and Simmias' pleas for an extensive argument (περιάσομαι, a key-verb in the dialogues that is usually followed by an infinitive that denotes articulation or argumentation and thus signals the forthcoming of discourse),⁶ but then he pauses and informs his interlocutors that before him doing so they must first hear what Crito has been trying to tell him for some time now. The demonstrative pronoun τόνδε indicates that Crito is standing by, possibly above and behind the sitting Socrates or facing him, and that perhaps he

⁶ E.g. *Ap.* 24b-c; *Cra.* 404e7; *Euthph.* 10a5; *Grg.* 463e5; *Phdr.* 243b4; *Prt.* 342a7; *R.* 523a5; *Tht.* 164d4. Cf. Phaedo's own attempt at an extended narrative, *Phd.* 58d4, 59c8.

was gesturing for quite some time to him on an apparently pressing issue that had to be handled (πρῶτον δὲ Κρίτωνά τόνδε σκεψώμεθα τί ἐστὶν ὃ βούλεσθαί μοι δοκεῖ πάλαι εἰπεῖν, 63d3-4). So Crito informs them that the man who will administer the poison (ὁ μέλλων σοι δώσειν τὸ φάρμακον – quite a euphemistic periphrasis for the public executioner) has been warning him to intervene in order to prevent Socrates from starting any further argumentation and to urge him talk as little as possible, or else he shall become heated from talking and later this overheating of his organism will most probably annul the effect of the hemlock (φησὶ γὰρ θερμοαίνεσθαι μᾶλλον διαλεγομένου). If so, Crito continues, Socrates might have to endure the painful repetition of the whole procedure, as it was often the case with the overheated victims who were forced to take a second or even a third dose before the poison started to act (63d5-e2). Moreover, the tone of Crito's reply to Socrates' question on the reasons for his interruption, τί δέ, ὦ Σώκρατες ... ἄλλο γε ἢ πάλαι ("what else, o Socrates, other than that for quite some time now") indicates his anguish from the aforementioned threat from Socrates' continuing talking and perhaps even his exasperation at Socrates' indifference to his long repeated gestures.

The hemlock again poses an explicit threat to philosophical discussion, and actually just when the most important and dramatic conversation in Socrates' life is about to begin. It also sets an obstacle to its continuation, but also to the answering of Echecrates' and the audience's yearning for information. Socrates once more challenges the warnings and thus manifests his indifference to corporeal issues. "Let him say", he comments, "just tell him to be prepared to do his part as if it he will have to give it twice or even three times" (ἔα, ἔφη, χαίρειν αὐτόν· ἀλλὰ μόνον τὸ ἑαυτοῦ παρασκευάζετω ὡς καὶ δις δώσω, ἐὰν δὲ δέη καὶ τρίς, 63e3-5). The ease by which he orders the administrator to have many doses prepared testifies his apathy over the possibility that he would have to take a second or even a third dose. And given Socrates' poverty, this might infer that the covering of the cost was undertaken by the rich Crito.

Crito states that he *expected* this to be Socrates' answer (63e6-7). This certainty presents another testimony (and a more reliable one, given the long-term relation and the close acquaintance between them two) to the latter's life-long courage. Socrates utters another, yet a now more brief "never mind him" (ἔα αὐτόν), a sign that too much time has been spent on such a trivial matter, and then he resumes his discourse that will cover the rest of their dialogue. The overall lesson from his reaction to the repeated mentions of the hemlock is that the true philosopher does not fear death and somatic pain; as a matter of fact, he is totally detached from them. In sum, the hemlock functions as a motif that attests to his moral and intellectual stamina.

His long discourse completed, it is now Socrates himself who mentions the hemlock. Having just argued on the immortality of the soul and on the blessed aftermath that awaits the philosopher's soul, he comments that such welcomed fate now awaits him. He notes that he does not want to give the women of his *oikos* the post-mortem painful endeavour of bathing his corpse and instead he shall go and bathe himself before taking the hemlock (δοκεῖ γὰρ δὴ βέλτιον εἶναι λουσάμενον πεῖν τὸ φάρμακον καὶ μὴ πράγματα ταῖς γυναιξὶ παρέχειν νεκρὸν λούειν, 115a7-8). Then he addresses his friends and reassures them that once he has drunk the hemlock, his soul shall no longer hover in the world of them poor mortals, but it shall

depart to the land and the joys of the blessed (ἐπειδὴν πῖω τὸ φάρμακον, οὐκέτι ὑμῖν παραμενῶ, ἀλλ' οἰχήσομαι ἀπιῶν εἰς μακάρων δὴ τινὰς εὐδαιμονίας, 115d3-4). So this time the hemlock, twice mentioned in this passage, is no more a threat to be faced, it is no more an obstacle but rather a gateway to the most desirable afterlife and with this comforting thought he leaves his cell. At this point the narrative sequence is interrupted and there is no information at all over what went on at the bath room.

The hemlock reappears with Socrates' return in his cell for the final and most dramatic part of the narrative. As in the introduction, here too the setting of the sun accompanies the reference to the hemlock. Socrates bids farewell to his family and relatives and sends them away, in a repetition – now at dawn – of the introductory scene that stresses the philosopher's dramatic and psychological detachment from social bonds. These references to the sunset and to the farewells form a ring composition. Then the administrator of the hemlock enters the cell. His words mark an attempt to appease the intense feelings that had just been created. They also present another confirmation of Socrates' uniqueness and moral standing, this time from a third party, from a disinterested and therefore objective source. Namely, the administrator thanks Socrates for being faultless in his behaviour towards him throughout his staying in the prison. He notes that Socrates' reactions to him differed sharply from those of all the other prisoners who had been condemned to drink the hemlock; they got angry when seeing him and cursed him when he told them to drink it. Socrates is once more set apart from the multitude by his excellence in character: he is the noblest, the most gentle and the best (ἄριστον) man that the administrator has ever encountered (116c1-8).⁷ The administrator then bids him farewell, bursts into tears and leaves the room (116d2), thus launching the final and most dramatic round of emotional outbursts from Socrates' friends, the tearful sirens against which the temperate philosopher shall stand calm and unaffected. In this passage, then, Plato once again uses the hemlock as an escalating threat and a test that testifies to the ideological *topos* of the philosopher's moral excellence. And immediately after his response to the administrator's kind words, Socrates asks for someone to bring the hemlock, if ready, otherwise he asks that they prepare it (καὶ ἐνεγκάτω τις τὸ φάρμακον, εἰ τέτριπται· εἰ δὲ μὴ, τριψάτω ὁ ἄνθρωπος, 116d8-9). This last utterance provides Plato with an excuse to prolong the narrative and its dramatic tension a little more; as it will turn out, the dose was not ready yet and it took some time to be prepared (117a).

Actually, Plato's narrative trick to augment suspense is twofold: the reference to the hemlock is followed by another reference to the sunset, with the same suggestion on Socrates' overcoming the fear of approaching death. Crito notes that the sun has not set yet and that in fact they could prolong the master's staying with them even a bit later than sunset. He has heard about some men who had supper, then drank and then chatted with their beloved ones before taking the hemlock. Therefore, Socrates

⁷ Ὁ Σώκρατες, ἔφη, οὐ καταγνώσομαί γε σοῦ ὅπερ ἄλλων καταγιγνώσκω, ὅτι μοι χαλεπαίνουσι καὶ καταρῶνται ἐπειδὴν αὐτοῖς παραγγείλω πίνειν τὸ φάρμακον ἀναγκαζόντων τῶν ἀρχόντων. σὲ δὲ ἐγὼ καὶ ἄλλως ἔγνωκα ἐν τούτῳ τῷ χρόνῳ γενναιότατον καὶ πραότατον καὶ ἄριστον ἄνδρα ὄντα τῶν πώποτε δεῦρο ἀφικομένων, καὶ δὴ καὶ νῦν εὖ οἶδ' ὅτι οὐκ ἐμοὶ χαλεπαίνεις, γιγνώσκεις γὰρ τοὺς αἰτίους, ἀλλὰ ἐκείνους.

should not hurry, for there might still be plenty of time (116e1-6).⁸ As expected, Socrates rejects the offer. As a result, to the portrait of Socrates in the *Apology* and especially in the *Crito*, who remains faithful to the orders of the *polis*, even to his own fatal disadvantage, is now added the heroic Socrates of the *Phaedo* who, having defeated the threat of misology (below, 75 ff.) and the fear of death, is unsurprisingly unaffected by the announcement of the imminent sunset and the ensuing drinking of the hemlock. Once more, the hemlock functions as a menacing narrative and ethical metronome that sets the pace in Plato's account, produces its dramatic overtones and counts Socrates' virtue.

The final such trial-by-hemlock is announced in the next lines, when a boy first goes to call and then brings in the man who was to administer the poison, carrying the hemlock that has been grated in a cup and is ready for consumption (ἤκεν ἄγων τὸν μέλλοντα δώσειν τὸ φάρμακον, ἐν κύλικι φέροντα τετριμμένον, 117a5-7). The exchange that follows between the specialist and Socrates verifies the executioner's aforementioned appreciation of Socrates' character: he is kind to the specialist too ("my good man", ὦ βέλτιστε, 117a7-8), he listens carefully to his instructions (116a9-17b2), he takes the cup in his hand calmly and in full control of himself, without the slightest indication of hesitation or fear, no trembling, no change of colour or any facial expression (οὐδὲν τρέσας οὐδὲ διαφθείρας οὔτε τοῦ χρώματος οὔτε τοῦ προσώπου, 117b3-5) and then he even makes a joking suggestion. Namely, he takes his most threatening look that resembles that of a bull (ὥσπερ εἰώθει ταυρηδὸν ὑποβλέψας, b5, see below, 191-92) and he asks for permission to pour a bit of the poison to the ground, in an unprecedented libation that would certify his attitude to hemlock drinking as a welcomed and liberating path to the best possible fate (117a-b). In the end, he drinks it quite cheerfully and with easiness (καὶ μάλα εὐχερῶς καὶ εὐκόλως ἐξέπιεν, 117c4-5).

Plato's persistence with so many narrative details can be explained if these were inserted and intended as another proof of Socrates' moral superiority and courage in such stressful circumstances, which are juxtaposed to (and verified by) his friends' lack of control over their emotions and their burst into tears. As Socrates had been doing all over the dialogues and most paradigmatically in the *Phaedo*, instead of asking himself to be consoled, he calls its spectators to demonstrate self-control, silence and bravery at the sight of his upcoming death (117c-e). After its consumption, the narrative maps the effects of the hemlock on Socrates' body. As soon as he lays down on his back, enters the man who had administered it (ὁ δούς τὸ φάρμακον, 117e6) and with his fingers he checks the progress of the poison; this fatal effect of the hemlock marks the conclusion of both the narrative and Socrates' life. Throughout the *Phaedo*, then, the hemlock functions as a very significant motif. It is a hanging threat that Socrates repeatedly challenges and defeats and thus he sets an example on the philosopher's proper behaviour.

The unpleasant note that the repeated quoting of the φάρμακον and Socrates' death leave, is contrasted to Echecrates' eagerness to listen to all this "with pleas-

⁸ Ἀλλ' οἶμαι, ἔφη, ἔγωγε, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἔτι ἥλιον εἶναι ἐπὶ τοῖς ὄρεσιν καὶ οὐπω δευκέναι. καὶ ἅμα ἐγὼ οἶδα καὶ ἄλλους πάνυ ὀψὲ πίνοντας, ἐπειδὴν παραγγελθῆ αὐτοῖς, δειπνήσαντάς τε καὶ πίνοντας εὐ μάλα, καὶ συγγενομένους γ' ἐνίους ὧν ἂν τύχωσιν ἐπιθυμοῦντες. ἀλλὰ μηδὲν ἐπείγου· ἔτι γὰρ ἐγχωρεῖ.

ure", ῥῥδέως (57a6). His eagerness reflects the feelings of the varied audiences that are involved in this ἀκρόαμα; those present at the cell, Echecrates at Phlious and Plato's own audience. The ῥῥδέως also introduces already from the prologue an issue that will run throughout the dialogue and is essential for its semantics. This issue concerns the dialectical relation and the circle of interchanges between the opposite states of pleasure and pain, first as regards their corporeal setting (as in Socrates' bodily pain from the fetters and the pleasure from their removal) and then -and foremost- as regards their psychological and metaphysical settings (as in Socrates' and his interlocutors' reactions to the fear of death, to the soul's release from the body and to its afterlife). The hermeneutics of this pair of opposites moves from the somatic to the ethereal, in an advance that is parallel to the thematic progress of the conversation. The conclusion is in favour of pleasure, culminating in Socrates' redemptive vision of the posthumous eternity that awaits the souls of the truly virtuous and philosophical. To the *theoria* of the liberation of the soul in a blessed afterlife is juxtaposed, at the end of the dialogue, the somatic reality of the numbing pain from the hemlock that gradually spreads death in Socrates' body, yet in order to thus pave the way for the aforementioned eternal happiness of his soul. Therefore, the theme of corporeal pain followed by pleasure forms a ring composition between the two ends of the *Phaedo*.⁹

Back to the introductory passage at Phlious, it presents the content of the following main narrative, in answer to a specific demand by the local audience voiced by Echecrates. They have been wondering, he says, over a particular detail of the events around Socrates' end. But curiously enough, this wondering (ἐθαυμάζομεν, 58a3) of the cut off from the events Phliasians does not regard the details of Socrates' unjust trial and conviction or on the many philosophical exchanges he might have had with his disciples during the long period of his imprisonment. That is, it is neither the content of an *Apology* nor of dialogues like the *Crito* that interests them; both works seem to be assumed here as widespread knowledge. Quite surprisingly, the Phliasians have been wondering over the reasons for the *delay* of Socrates' execution, which is repeatedly specified as a *prolonged* one (πολλῶ ὕστερον, and τοῦτο δ' ἐνίστε ἐν πολλῶ χρόνῳ γίγνεται ... πολὺς χρόνος ἐγένετο, 58a4, b7-8, c4). *Phaedo*'s lengthy account and its rich ritual connotations indicate that behind this particular insistence about specific time details something more than a mere piece of information is at play:

ΦΑΙΔ. Τύχη τις αὐτῶ, ᾧ Ἐχέκρατες, συνέβη· ἔτυχεν γὰρ τῇ προτεραιᾷ τῆς δίκης ἡ πρύμνα ἐστεμμένη τοῦ πλοίου ὃ εἰς Δῆλον Ἀθηναῖοι πέμπουσιν.

ΕΧ. Τοῦτο δὲ δὴ τί ἐστίν;

ΦΑΙΔ. Τοῦτ' ἐστὶ τὸ πλοῖον, ᾧ φασιν Ἀθηναῖοι, ἐν ᾧ Θησεύς ποτε εἰς Κρήτην τοὺς 'δὶς ἑπτὰ' ἐκείνους ᾤχετο ἄγων καὶ ἔσωσέ τε καὶ αὐτὸς ἐσώθη. τῷ οὖν Ἀπόλλωνι ἠῤῥξαντο ὡς λέγεται τότε, εἰ σωθεῖεν, ἐκάστου ἔτους θεωρίαν ἀπάξειν εἰς Δῆλον· ἦν δὲ αἰεὶ καὶ νῦν ἐπι ἐξ ἐκείνου κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν τῷ θεῷ πέμπουσιν. ἐπειδὴν οὖν ἄρξωνται τῆς θεωρίας, νόμος ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς ἐν τῷ χρόνῳ τούτῳ καθαρεύειν τὴν πόλιν καὶ δημοσίᾳ μηδένα ἀποκτινύναι, πρὶν ἂν εἰς Δῆλον τε ἀφίκηται τὸ πλοῖον καὶ πάλιν δεῦρο· τοῦτο δ' ἐνίστε ἐν πολλῶ χρόνῳ γίγνεται, ὅταν τύχῳσιν ἄνεμοι ἀπολαβόντες αὐτούς. ἀρχὴ δ' ἐστὶ τῆς θεωρίας ἐπειδὴν ὁ

⁹ Cf. Chvatík (2001), 174-75; White (2000), 156.

ἰερεὺς τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος στέψη τὴν πρύμναν τοῦ πλοίου· τοῦτο δ' ἔτυχεν, ὥσπερ λέγω, τῇ προτεραίᾳ τῆς δίκης γεγονός. διὰ ταῦτα καὶ πολὺς χρόνος ἐγένετο τῷ Σωκράτει ἐν τῷ δεσμοτηρίῳ ὁ μεταξὺ τῆς δίκης τε καὶ τοῦ θανάτου.

PH. It was a matter of chance in his case, Echecrates. Namely, it happened that the stern of the ship which the Athenians send to Delos was crowned on the day before the trial.

ECH. What ship is this?

PH. This is the ship, as the Athenians say, in which Theseus once sailed to Crete taking with him the seven pairs and saved them and himself as well. As the story goes, the Athenians at that time made a vow to Apollo that if they were saved they would in return dispatch a mission every year to Delos. And from that time even to the present day they send it annually in honour of the god. Now it is their law that once they have started the mission, the city must be pure during that time and no one may be executed by the state until the ship has gone to Delos and returned; and sometimes, when contrary winds detain it, this takes a long time. The mission begins as soon as the priest of Apollo crowns the stern of the ship. And this took place, as I say, on the day before the trial. This is the reason why Socrates spent a long time in prison between his trial and his death.

(58a6 – c5)

The Phliasians' query is immediately answered by Phaedo. Chance is indicated repeatedly as an intervening force that affected Socrates' end by prolonging his execution (τύχη τις αὐτῷ... συνέβη, ἔτυχεν, ὅταν τύχωσιν, τοῦτο δ' ἔτυχεν). This repetition cannot be coincidental. It is a deliberate emphasis that aims to introduce non-human agency as an operative factor in this final part of Socrates' *bios*. For the Greeks the semantics of τύχη ranged from good fortune to providence and accordingly the impersonal causation for the delay of Socrates' execution might suggest divine intervention. That is, it is highly possible that Plato here points to some unspecified divine *aegis* that protects his hero at the dramatic culmination of his life. Such exogenous protection would be in accordance with the general image in other dialogues of Socrates being assisted by the divine during his philosophical life. This is most characteristically encapsulated in the preventive action of his *daimonion*. Yet we may also read here the presence of divine assistance at Socrates' end under the light of the Greek cultural *topos* of divine supervision and/or assistance over the suffering or dying hero, most memorably narrated in epic and tragic myths. In the *Phaedo* the actual source of this implied divine agency is left unspecified, but we are entitled to suppose that, as it is generally the case for Socrates' encounters with the divine in Plato's dialogues, here too we are located in an Apollonian domain of agency. This is evoked by the many manifestly Apollonian connotations that are accumulated in this particular passage and in the rest of the dialogue, such as the Delia and their *aition*, Socrates' dream and its inducement to him to make music, his hymn to Apollo and so on (below, 73 ff.).¹⁰

In particular it looks as if it was not the even nowadays notorious winds of the Aegean, but god Apollo himself who safeguarded his protégé and delayed his execution during a long period defined by his sacred festivals. There is a markedly re-

¹⁰ Bacon (1990), 149-50 also notes the Apollonian allusions as well as the highly hieratic tone and the musicality of this passage.