

Gabriele Cornelli (Ed.)
Plato's Styles and Characters

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Plato's Styles and Characters

Between Literature and Philosophy

Edited by
Gabriele Cornelli

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To Samuel Scolnicov[†] (1941–2014)

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Introduction

The significance of Plato's literary style to the content of his ideas is perhaps one of the central problems in the study of Plato and Ancient Philosophy as a whole. As Samuel Scolnicov pointed out in this collection, many other philosophers have employed literary techniques to express their ideas, just as many literary authors have exemplified philosophical ideas in their narratives, but for no other philosopher does the mode of expression play such a vital role in their thought as it does for Plato. And yet, even after two thousand years, there is still no consensus about the reason why Plato expresses his ideas in this distinctive style. Selected from the first Latin American Area meeting of the International Plato Society (www.platosociety.org) in Brazil (20 – 24th August, 2012), the following collection of essays presents some of the most recent scholarship from around the world on the wide range of issues related to Plato's dialogue form. The meeting was organized by Archai Unesco Chair on The Plural Origins of Western Thought of the University of Brasilia (www.archai.unb.br) and the Platonists Brazilian Society (www.platao.org), with a generous support of the International Plato Society, University of Brasilia and the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) of the Brazilian Ministry of Higher Education.

Scholars in Platonic studies gathered together at this conference and explored new paths of research in the field, despite the divergence of opinion among the participants, at the end. There is a lot to be learnt from a closer examination of Plato's literary art of writing philosophy in its cultural and historical context. Understanding how Plato turned the various styles and devices of his predecessors into elements of his own writing is a key step in assessing the real singularity of his writing and the conception of philosophy it conveys. Plato's use of characters is one of the exciting fields of research now on the table. As central feature of Plato's way of writing philosophy, it that needs to be understood in its singularity in comparison to others genres of writing also using characters before him – poetry, history, etc.

The contributions can be divided into three categories. The first addresses general questions concerning Plato's literary style. The second concerns the relation of his style to other genres and traditions in Ancient Greece. And the third examines Plato's characters and his purpose in using them.

Samuel Scolnicov, Raúl Gutiérrez, and Mary Louise Gill address the general question of the dialogue form for Plato's thought. María Angélica Fierro and Lucas Soares explain Plato's use of specific literary devices, such as myth, allegory, perspective, and prolepsis. And Graciela E. Marcos de Pinotti and José Trin-

dade Santos reflect upon Plato's use of language in the development of his arguments.

Michael Erler and Dino De Sanctis provide comparisons of the dialogues with other narrative styles of the time. Gilmário Guerreiro da Costa, Marcus Mota, Fernando Muniz, Mario Regali, Mauro Tulli, and Fernando Santoro address the relation of Plato's thought and writing to Ancient Greek poetry. Álvaro Vallejo Campos and Silvio Marino explore the use of medical terminology and ideas in the dialogues. Esteban Bieda and Beatriz Bossi discuss Plato's complex relation towards the use of rhetoric in philosophic teaching.

Gabriele Cornelli, Debra Nails, Francisco Bravo, and Michele Corradi address the question of the relation between Plato's characters and the historical individuals they represent, while Marcelo D. Boeri and Christian Keime examine the purpose of the characters in the dialogues.

Through these essays readers will have an understanding of the complexity of issues surrounding Plato's combination of literature and philosophy. They will also be able to access the most recent developments on these topics from various approaches – from the 'analytic' to the 'continental', from the established traditions in Europe and North America to the emerging Platonic scholarship in South America.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Archai team for help me to organize the venue in such an effective way, and especially to Nicholas Riegel, who worked very hard on the revision of the papers here published.

A last remark is very much needed. Samuel Scolnicov, one of the authors of this book, died in August 13, 2014, while this book was being prepared. Samuel was born on March 11, 1941 in Brazil and immigrated to Israel in 1958. His outstanding scholarly productivity is very well known: he wrote not only in English, but also in his native Portuguese and in Hebrew. He was between the small group of international Plato scholars who founded the International Plato Society in 1989, and served as its President from 1998 – 2001. Samuel truly embodied the ideals of the IPS, moving easily among numerous languages and cultures, and among the diversity of approaches to Platonic studies. Dedicating this book to him seemed the most natural thing to do. *Saudades*, Samuel.

Gabriele Cornelli
President of the International Plato Society

Michele Corradi

Doing business with Protagoras (*Prot.* 313e): Plato and the Construction of a Character

In the ever-cogent *Platon*, Paul Friedländer states: “As Goethe is in Tasso *and* Antonio, so Plato is not only in Socrates – or in the disciples Charmides, Theaitetos, Alkibiades – but also, to a certain degree and manner, in the opponents of Socrates”¹. The analogy with *Torquato Tasso*², Goethe’s ambiguous drama, which hinges on the contrast between the figure of the Italian poet and that of the consummate secretary at the court in Ferrara, Antonio Montecatino, and concludes with a surprising twist that moved Wagner³ to admit his inability to comprehend where right and wrong lay in the work, enables Friedländer to apprehend a crucial aspect of the personality and art of Plato. According to Friedländer, Socrates’ struggle against his adversaries is to a certain extent a struggle of Plato against himself, against his own nature, “endowed with overabundant powers”. For the German scholar, there is something in Plato of the ability and astuteness of the Eristics and Sophists, there is something of Calicles, “the ‘Strong Man’, something of his beloved Homer, and even something of Euthyphro’s ‘clerical piety’”.

Certainly, these pages by Friedländer, characterized by word choices that are perhaps excessively marked by Existentialism⁴, conceal concepts that have by now become established in the more modern exegetic tendencies regarding Plato, in particular in the so-called new “literary” approach⁵: Plato, heir to the Greek literary tradition, a discerning connoisseur of the mechanisms of tragedy and comedy, conceals himself behind his characters and allows his message to emerge through their interaction and dialogue, by means of the play of character – to use Ruby Blondell’s acute expression⁶ – which probably represents the best *mimesis* of the master’s real and lively *synousia* with his disciples.

1 Friedländer (1964³ [1973²], pp. 166–67).

2 Goethe (1790 [1988], pp. 731–834).

3 In a letter to Mathilde Wesendonck of April 15th, 1859 (Wagner 1999, pp. 37–39).

4 On the relationship between Friedländer and Existentialism, see Giovanni Reale’s preface to the last Italian translation of Friedländer’s *Platon* (Reale 2004, pp. XI–XVI). Cf. also Trabattoni (2004², p. 310).

5 On this new approach to Plato’s texts see Erler (2007, pp. 5–7).

6 Blondell (2002).

Opening up the gallery of characters, an incarnation of so many artistic projections of Plato's "I", Friedländer mentions, along with Agathon, the character of Protagoras, recalling him in particular for his love of "resounding speeches", which he shared with Plato.

Certainly, among Socrates' great adversaries, Protagoras is the one to whom Plato gives most space in his own output. In the *Protagoras*, Plato allows the Sophist about nine Stephanus pages (320c–328d = 80 C 1 DK). All the first part of *Theaetetus* (151d–187a) is dedicated to a discussion of the principle of the man-measure (80 B 1 DK) and in this same dialogue Socrates, like a ventriloquist, even lends his own voice to Protagoras who has returned from Hades to defend his position (166a–168c = 80 A 21a DK). Furthermore, there are references to Protagoras in many other works, explicit in *Cratylus* (385e–386a = 80 A 13 DK, 391b–c = 80 A 24 DK), *Euthydemus* (286b–c = 80 A 19 DK), *Hippias Major* (282d–e = 80 A 9 DK), *Meno* (91d–e = 80 A 8 DK), *Phaedrus* (267c = 80 A 26 DK), *Republic* (600c–e), *Sophist* (232d–233a = 80 B 8 DK), and implicit, as I have recently tried to demonstrate⁷, in *Philebos* (62a–b) and *Letter VII* (343a).

Plato offers a complex portrait of Protagoras, which certainly does justice to the character's great stature. Ancient tradition underlined his special role among the protagonists of the dialogues, even going so far as to suggest a dependence on the part of Plato on Protagoras' works in the *Republic* (80 B 5 DK) and perhaps in the *Parmenides* (80 B 2 DK). In effect, in two passages of Plato's life (III 37 e 57), Diogenes Laërtius reports an interesting remark that goes back, through Favorinus (23 Mensching = 60 Amato), to Aristoxenus (67 Wehrli²): almost the whole of the *Republic*, Πολιτεία ... πᾶσα σχεδόν, seems to have already been written in Protagoras' *Antilogies* (80 B 5 DK), ἐν τοῖς Πρωταγόρου γεγράφθαι Ἀντιλογικοῖς. This remark can easily be inserted into a tradition, often hostile, which attributes plagiarism to Plato of the works of previous thinkers. Certainly, more in general, this appears to be a clear example of a tendency on the part of ancient literary criticism, which was anxious to identify the κλοπαί of authors from the past. In this sense, as an actual manifesto of widespread interest in the issue of plagiarism, the dense fragment of the Φιλολόγος ἀκρόασις by Porphyry (*apud* Eus. *PE* 10, 3, 1–25 = 410 F Smith) may be recalled. Right at this point, at the conclusion of the fragment, Porphyry confronts another of Plato's debts to Protagoras: Plato appears to have drawn on, perhaps in *Parmenides*,

⁷ Corradi (2012, pp. 216–24).

Protagoras' *Περὶ τοῦ ὄντος*, arguments against monist thinkers, πρὸς τοὺς ἔν τὸ ὄν εἰσάγοντας (80 B 2 DK)⁸.

Certainly Aristoxenus, author of a *Πλάτωνος βίος* (61–68 Wehrli²), is probably not the most neutral source in regard to Plato⁹. From the fragments conserved, a critical approach emerges towards the philosopher. His studies may however be inserted fully within the scholarly activities of the Peripatetic, above all in the biographical arena. An activity focused on the works of the great authors of the past, with the aim of seeking out data useful in order to understand their personalities and reconstruct aspects of their lives. This activity did not conform to the criteria of modern historico-philological research, but inclined to imaginative reconstructions, often based on the so-called Chameleon method¹⁰.

The analysis of what, with the apology in *Theaetetus* (166a–168c = 80 A 21a DK), the most important section is wherein Plato presents himself as Protagoras' spokesman, the great speech¹¹ in *Protagoras* (320c–328d = 80 C 1 DK), poses in any case a series of exegetic problems that confronts us with doubts that are not far removed from those that in all likelihood stimulated the curiosity of the ancient literary critics.

1. Memory of the μῦθος

The great speech of *Protagoras* (320c–328d) is structured in two sections, μῦθος and λόγος. In the first section Protagoras constructs a story on the origin of human society. This story starts from the original unhappy condition of mankind, up to the rise of the πόλις, and dwells on two subsequent interventions on the part of the divinity: that of Prometheus, who gives the gift of τέχνηαι to men, and that of Zeus who gives them a gift of αἰδώς and δίκη. In the λόγος section, Protagoras develops considerations on the educational commitment on the

⁸ Regarding the accusations of plagiarism towards Plato, see Dörrie, Baltes (1990, pp. 236–46). Cf. now also Corradi (2013, p. 82).

⁹ Dillon (2012) offers a recent contribution on the extant fragments of Aristoxenus' *Πλάτωνος βίος*. On Aristoxenus' biographical method, see Schorn (2012).

¹⁰ With regard to the so-called Chameleon method, cf. now Arrighetti (2008). A useful overview of the scholarly activity of the Peripatetics may be found in Montanari (2012). On the importance that biographical research assumes in that area, cf. Fortenbaugh (2007).

¹¹ The label “great speech” for the μῦθος and the λόγος that the Sophist pronounces in *Protagoras* has become canonical above all starting with the introduction by Gregory Vlastos to the translation of the dialogue by Benjamin Jowett, revised by Martin Ostwald (Vlastos 1956 [1976], pp. 273–76).

part of Athens towards its young, as well as reflecting on the role of the Sophists and the function of punishment. Significantly, many of the elements developed in the great speech, which still come across as consistent overall with what we can reconstruct about Protagoras from the other testimonies in our possession, present aspects that are quite obviously Platonic. Just how much then of the extraordinary portrait of the Sophist that emerges is due to Plato's literary genius? The problem, however, may be put in diametrically opposite terms: is it possible to think that there really was a reflective influence exerted by his character, that is, by Protagoras on Plato?

We shall try here to put forward an answer that is at least plausible in regard to these considerations, by means of an analysis, in light of the most recent results arising from literary criticism, of some of the crucial points of the great speech in *Protagoras*. We shall then try to relate these, on the one hand, and where possible, to the testimonies concerning Protagoras in our possession, and on the other, to *loci paralleli* in Plato.

As is known, from a stylistic point of view, the *μῦθος* in the *Protagoras* presents unusual characteristics compared to the more usual style in Plato's myths; these confirm Philostratus' intuition (*VS* I 10, 4 = 80 A 2 Diels-Kranz), who was the first to grasp Plato's wish to mirror Protagoras' style in Protagoras' speech. Consider, for instance, the sequences already highlighted by Ludwig Friedrich Heindorf¹² or the choice of the λέξις εἰρομένη¹³. From the point of view of the content too, more than a few elements may in all likelihood be traced back to Protagoras. In recent times Bernd Manuwald¹⁴ has carried out a series of in-depth studies on the *Protagoras*, and in particular on Prometheus' *μῦθος*: precisely in relation to the link between the *μῦθος* and the historical Protagoras, he has arrived at largely convincing results. It is plausible that Protagoras had in a lost work (which for Manuwald may well have been the *Περὶ πολιτείας* [80 B 8a DK] and not, as is generally supposed, the *Περὶ τῆς ἐν ἀρχῇ κατα-*

12 Heindorf (1810, p. 505) recalls ἄοπλον ... φύσιν, σμικρότητι ἤμπισχεν, πτηνὸν φυγῆν (320e). Cf. now Serrano Cantarín & Díaz de Cerio Díez (2005, pp. XLV–XLVI).

13 Norden (1923², pp. 367–74). Bertagna (2012) highlights some specifics regarding the narrative structure of the *μῦθος*, which may have been conscious mirrorings of story-telling techniques proper to the archaic *epos*. While Morgan (2000, pp. 132–54) attempts to trace all the characters of Sophist epideictics in the *μῦθος* of *Protagoras*; Most (2012) shows how it already presents nearly all the typical features of myths present in Plato's mature work. However, insisting on a distinction between Sophistic and Platonic aspects may not be necessary. Cf. Manuwald (2003), who underlines the paradigmatic role that the *μῦθος* section of the *Protagoras* assumes for Plato.

14 In particular Manuwald (1996), Manuwald (1999, pp. 168–236), Manuwald (2003) and Manuwald (2013).

στάσεως [80 B 8b DK]) already developed a mythological story on the origins of human civilization in order to illustrate the central role of πολιτική τέχνη in its evolution, the superiority of this τέχνη compared to others and the space that the central role of πολιτική τέχνη offers the Sophists' pedagogical activity. Indeed, some inconsistencies in the narration, in relation to subsequent developments in the dialogue, may be explained as the fruit of a rather complex process of adapting pre-existing material within the context of the dialogue. Manuwald insists for instance on the case of ὁσιότης: in the μῦθος this virtue, however non-explicit, clearly has origins prior to the gift of αἰδώς and δίκη by Zeus (322a); but subsequently it is considered on the same level as σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη – terms that at the end of the μῦθος substitute the archaic and poetic αἰδώς and δίκη – which are necessary for the support of human communities (325a)¹⁵. Therefore, central to Protagoras' speech is the observation that all men possess to some extent σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη, or at least that the possession of these virtues by all the members of a human community is the necessary condition for the existence of the community itself (322c–d, 323a–c, 324d–e, 325a–c, 326e–327a). This thesis, according to Manuwald, must have been the basis of Protagoras' politico-anthropological manifesto, just like the thesis of the man-measure (80 B 1 DK) represented his “erkenntnistheoretische *Credo*”¹⁶. It is precisely this link between the reflection on αἰδώς and δίκη and the principle of man-measure (80 B 1 DK) that appears to be decisive for the attribution of the theses advanced in the μῦθος to Protagoras, at least in the interpretation that Plato himself offers of it in the celebrated apology in *Theaetetus* (166a–168c = 80 A 21a DK): all men have real opinions and sensations, but just as the doctor substitutes πονηραῖ sensations with χρησταῖ sensations in the patient by means of medication, so does the Sophist, by means of his παιδεία, manage to direct opinions in the most useful direction. In a manner not dissimilar to the great speech in *Protagoras*, the Sophist acts on men who are in themselves endowed with αἰδώς and δίκη and therefore to some extent, at least potentially, participants in πολιτική τέχνη, in order to perfect their natural talents and point them towards virtue¹⁷.

15 Without falling into anachronism, Schlick (2012, pp. 40–43) perceives in the difficulty of conciliating the reflection on the religious phenomenon developed in the great speech with Protagoras' agnosticism (80 B 4 DK) one of the principal arguments against attributing the doctrines contained in it to the Sophist. In any case, as Brancacci (2013, pp. 66–67 n. 16) points out, in the great speech religion is confined to a pre-political phase in the evolution of mankind.

16 Manuwald (1996, pp. 124–25).

17 Cf. Corradi (2013a, p. 78 n. 25).

Important reflections on the link between the μῦθος in the *Protagoras* and the historical Protagoras have also been made recently by Mauro Bonazzi who, in Prometheus' μῦθος, perceives the desire to tackle literary tradition on the origins of humanity in decidedly innovative terms. This is particularly true for Hesiod, since this wish fits into the wide range of testimonies relative to Protagoras' critical commitment to poetry (80 A 25–30 DK)¹⁸. To return to a skilful intuition on the part of José Solana Dueso, it may be possible to perceive in the μῦθος in the *Protagoras* an exercise in ὀρθοέπεια on the part of the Sophist¹⁹.

Manuwald and Bonazzi tend to some extent to signal the specificity of the μῦθος in the *Protagoras* compared to other texts on the origins and development of civilization dating back to the V century of which we are aware²⁰, in order to consider it a reflection on the nature of man and the opportunities of education. But Graziano Arrighetti, precisely through a study of the link with Hesiod and the literary tradition, has recently attempted to collocate it in the area of Plato's reflection on the origins of man and the organization of communities, by placing it in relation to *Politicus* and *Timaeus*, which definitely demonstrate a singular consonance with the speech made by Protagoras in the youthful dialogue²¹. Arrighetti in this case places himself on the same wavelength as Paul Friedländer, who offers a useful outline of the links between the μῦθος in the *Protagoras* and Plato's late works²². It is undoubtedly true also for the German scholar that, in Protagoras' μῦθος, motifs can be heard that later became important for Plato. In particular in the *Timeaus*, the function that was entrusted to Prometheus and Epimetheus in the μῦθος of the *Protagoras*, that of forming mankind, is entrusted to the lesser gods by the demiurge (41a–44c). Just as, in the *Prota-*

18 See above all Bonazzi (2010, pp. 84–93) and Bonazzi (2012). It is probably no coincidence that in the dialogue (316d) Protagoras inserts Hesiod in the gallery of intellectuals who may have carried out the activity of Sophist prior to him, despite concealing this behind other professions. In this regard, after Brancacci (2002), cf. Boys Stones (2010, pp. 40–45). For Koning (2010, pp. 217–23) Protagoras' interest in Hesiod may be traced to “rhetorical purposes”.

19 Solana Dueso (2011, pp. 5–23). On ὀρθοέπεια and Protagoras' literary reflection, cf. now also Corradi (2012, pp. 144–75) and Rademaker (2013). Calame (2012, pp. 134–36) tackles the links between μῦθος in the *Protagoras* and *Prometheus Bound*.

20 Beresford (2013), however, underlines the aspects that Protagoras' μῦθος shares with Ionian rationalism. On its links with Democritus' anthropology, cf. Hourcade (2009, pp. 90–110). De Sanctis (2012) offers a wide-ranging overview of the theme of humanity at its origins in archaic poetry.

21 Arrighetti (2013). Van Riel (2012) has made a recent attempt to identify the basis for the anthropological doctrine that Plato was to develop in subsequent dialogues in the μῦθος of the *Protagoras*.

22 Friedländer (1964³ [1973²], pp. 176–77).

goras, mankind's body is formed from earth and fire and whatever may be combined with earth and fire, ἐκ γῆς καὶ πυρὸς μείξαντες καὶ τῶν ὅσα πυρὶ καὶ γῆ κεράννυται (320d), in the *Timaeus* the body of the world, whose matter has been borrowed in order to form mortal beings (42e-43a), is made up of fire and earth, between which the other elements, air and water, serve as “bonds” according to the laws of proportion (31b–32c). As has already been observed by Wilhelm Nestle, this μηχανᾶσθαι from the perspective of the σωτηρία of living beings that, in the μῦθος of the *Protagoras*, is attributed to Epimetheus (320e and 321a), in the *Timaeus* belongs to the demiurge and lesser gods (37e, 45d, 70c, 73c)²³. Finally, while Epimetheus exhausts the δυνάμεις to be attributed to living beings before dedicating himself to man, the demiurge achieves the formation of the soul of the world by consuming the mixture of which it is composed (*Pr.* 321b: καταναλώσας; *Ti.* 36b: κατανηλώκει)²⁴.

If instead we consider the *Politicus*, what is immediately apparent in the celebrated myth narrated by the Eleatic Stranger in the dialogue (268d–274e) is that a close link may be deduced between origin of the world and origin of the state, much like what occurs in the μῦθος of the *Protagoras*²⁵. When we come to the details, in this case too there are remarkable parallelisms between the two texts: the primitive men in the *Politicus* have nothing to cover themselves with and live naked, γυμνοὶ δὲ καὶ ἄστρωτοι (272a), just as in the *Protagoras* (321c) in the beginning man was naked, barefoot, with nothing to cover him, unarmed, γυμνός τε καὶ ἀνυπόδητος καὶ ἄστρωτος καὶ ἄοπλος – certainly curiously similar to Eros in Diotima's speech in the *Symposium* (203d: ἀνυπόδητος καὶ ἄοικος, χαμαιπετὴς αἰεὶ ὦν καὶ ἄστρωτος)²⁶. In both stories a phase of history is examined dealing with the evolution of mankind, in which cities do not yet exist (*Pr.* 322b: πόλεις δὲ οὐκ ἦσαν; *Plt.* 271e: πολιτεῖαί τε οὐκ ἦσαν) and men succumb to wild beasts (*Pr.* 322b: ἀπώλλυντο οὖν ὑπὸ τῶν θηρίων; *Plt.* 274b–c: διηρπάζοντο ὑπ' αὐτῶν [*sc.* τῶν θηρίων]). For this reason, in the *Protagoras* Zeus fears that mankind will be destroyed, Ζεὺς οὖν δείσας περὶ τῷ γένει

²³ Nestle (1978⁸, p. 93). With regard to the providential design aimed at the conservation of all species put forward by Epimetheus, cf. Demont (2011). Regali (2012, pp. 121–24) carefully considers the images with which Plato characterizes the creative action of the demiurge and lesser gods.

²⁴ Naturally it is impossible to cover the immense bibliography on the εἰκὼς μῦθος in the *Timaeus*. Regarding the contentious problem of its statute, cf. at least Burnyeat (2005) and, as the last in a series of contributions made by the scholar in this area, Brisson (2012).

²⁵ Nor is it possible, with regard to the myth in the *Politicus* to take into consideration the immense bibliography. A recent exegetic contribution has been made by Horn (2012). On the characters of the reconstruction of the past that the Eleatic Stranger offers here, cf. Tulli (1994).

²⁶ Cf. Serrano Cantarín & Díaz de Cerio Díez (2005 & p. 35 n. 4).

ἡμῶν μὴ ἀπόλοιτο πᾶν (322c). Similarly, the god in the *Politicus*, worried that the world will be overthrown by a storm of disorder and dissolve into the infinite sea of inequality, κηδόμενος ἵνα μὴ χειμασθεῖς ὑπὸ ταραχῆς διαλυθεῖς εἰς τὸν τῆς ἀνομοιότητος ἄπειρον ὄντα πόντον δύη, decides to invert its cycle (273d–e). Finally, in both myths the role of Prometheus is recalled, along with that of Hephaestus and Athena for the development of the τέχνη (Prt. 321c–d: ὁ Προμηθεὺς ... κλέπτει Ἡφαίστου καὶ Ἀθηνᾶς τὴν ἔντεχνον σοφίαν σὺν πυρί; Plt. 274c–d: πῦρ μὲν παρὰ Προμηθέως, τέχνη δὲ παρ’ Ἡφαίστου καὶ τῆς συντέχνου)²⁷.

Certainly, there are illustrious precedents for Arrighetti and Friedländer among the ancient Platonists who perceived in the μῦθος of the *Protagoras* genuine elements of Platonic doctrine. As Harold Tarrant²⁸ recalls, in the *De Fortuna* (98d), Plutarch cites as an opinion of Plato’s, κατὰ τὸν Πλάτωνα, the considerations on the condition of primitive man’s disadvantage and want. And in a much more explicit way, in the *Platonic Theology* (V 24, pp. 87, 15–91, 18 Safrey-Westerink), Proclus considers the μῦθος in the *Protagoras* to be an expression of Plato’s thought. In it he finds proof for the identification of Zeus with the demiurge of the *Timaeus*. According to Proclus, in the pages of the *Protagoras*, Plato traces back to Zeus the παράδειγμα of πολιτικὴ τέχνη. In the same way it is the demiurge in the *Timaeus* who established the form of government permeating everything: the demiurge coincides therefore with Zeus²⁹.

2. From the *Protagoras* to the *Republic*: politics, παιδεία and poetry

As far as the more strictly political aspect of the great speech is concerned, Mario Vegetti, in returning to Aristoxenos’ malicious observations, has underlined the link that reflections on the ideal πόλις in the *Republic* have with the great speech

²⁷ Cambiano (1991², pp. 200–4), despite underlining the undoubted affinities between the two myths, identifies two basic variants: in the *Politicus* a divine period of government is acknowledged preceding the phase in which the natural inferiority of man is manifested compared to animals, and intervention by Zeus aimed at resolving the conflict among men by means of the gift of πολιτικὴ τέχνη. On analogies and differences between the two myths, see now also El Murr (2013). The δόσις of fire on the part of Prometheus is recalled, in relation to the origins of dialectics, also in the *Philebus* (16c). On this, cf. Delcomminette (2006, pp. 91–96).

²⁸ Tarrant (2000, p. 76).

²⁹ An able presentation of the characters of Proclus’ Platonic exegesis may be found in Helmig & Steel (2012). On Platonic tradition about the demiurge, cf. now Ferrari (2014).

in the *Protagoras* (320c–328c)³⁰. According to the scholar, it is possible to create a parallel between the overcoming of the ἀδικία on the part of primitive men by means of αἰδώς and δίκη in Prometheus’ μῦθος (322b–d) with the “genealogy of morality” that Glaucon puts forward in Book II of the *Republic*: for Protagoras as for Glaucon (358e–359a) a natural propensity to oppression is intrinsic to men³¹. For Glaucon, men establish a mutual pact not to commit nor have to undergo injustice. For Protagoras, men, despite being gifted with Prometheus’ τέχναι, are not capable of living in a community without inflicting acts of injustice on each other, in so far as they lack πολιτική τέχνη. For this reason Zeus makes them distribute αἰδώς and δίκη, so that good order may be established in the cities, along with constraints that link men in bonds of mutual friendship, πόλεων κόσμοι τε καὶ δεσμοὶ φιλίας συναγωγοί (322b–323a). In the interweaving of σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη, which for Protagoras guarantees all citizens the right to participate in the political συμβουλή (323a), there may be perceived an anticipation of the results of Book IV of the *Republic*: while courage and wisdom may be found only in one part of the city, σωφροσύνη must permeate the whole city in order that harmony be established there (431–432a) and δικαιοσύνη must reign over it, so that every citizen may carry out their appointed task (433a–434c)³². Furthermore, both the great speech in the *Protagoras* and the political project in the *Republic* envisage the presence of two specialist elites in παιδεία. For Protagoras there exists a category of men, to which belongs the Sophist, which excels in the formation of πολιτική τέχνη (328a–b). The philosophers of the *Republic* are described as an elite caste of educators that aspires however to the power to carry out a guiding role in the public παιδεία. This very reflection on the παιδεία is in any case the aspect that more than anything else likens the great speech in the *Protagoras* to the *Republic*. The essential function of music, literature and gymnastics in the formation of the young, emphasized by Protagoras (325d–326c), is in perfect accordance with what is established in Book III of the *Republic*. The connection between φύσις and παιδεία, which for Protagoras is the pre-requisite for successful formation (323c, 327b–c), is indispensable also according to pedagogical reflection in the *Republic*. Take, for instance, the considerations of Book IV (431c): only in a minority of the population, which excels

30 Vegetti (2004).

31 Vegetti (1998, pp. 163–69) identifies the strong influence of Antiphon’s political thought in the theses put forward by Glaucon. For Reeve (2008), instead, Glaucon develops Thrasymachus’ theses.

32 Brisson (2004) effectively highlights the link between the discussion on virtue in the *Protagoras* and the *Republic*. On the rather complex exegetic problems that the presentation of virtue raises in Book IV of the *Republic*, cf. now Rowe (2013).

in natural talents and formation, ἐν ὀλίγοις ... τοῖς βέλτιστα μὲν φύσιν, βέλτιστα δὲ παιδευθεῖσιν, are simple and measured desires to be found. Or, the complex pages in Book VI on the characters of natural philosophy: certainly, even the most gifted souls, εὐφυέσταται, if they are not educated in an appropriate manner, become wicked (491d–492a). Certainly, this theme in Plato is not limited only to the *Republic*: in the *Phaedrus* (269e–270a), Socrates, not perhaps without some irony, perceives in Pericles' speeches the result of a perfect union of natural talents and Anaxagoras' παιδεία; in the *Politicus* (308e–309a) the Eleatic Stanger presents these natural talents as a decisive element for obtaining a result in education. As far as the reflection on φύσις and παιδεία is concerned, it is however possible to establish a link with Protagoras' production. According to the anonymous writer of *De Hippomacho*, edited by Cramer in the *Anecdota Parisiensia*, in the lost Μέγας λόγος, Protagoras had tackled the issue, maintaining that in the didactic arena, both natural talents and practice are necessary (I 171, 31–172, 2 Cramer = 80 B 3 DK):

ἐν τῷ ἐπιγραφομένῳ Μεγάλῳ λόγῳ ὁ Πρωταγόρας εἶπε· ‘φύσεως καὶ ἀσκήσεως διδασκαλία δεῖται’ καὶ ‘ἀπὸ νεότητος δὲ ἀρξαμένους δεῖ’³³.

As Vegetti points out, it is plausible that Protagoras be a significant presence in the *Republic*. Plato, however, goes beyond this presence by means of reference to a new order of absolute values, which precisely the central books of the *Republic* contribute to establishing. This order of absolute values is based on an ontology and epistemology that are clearly opposed to Protagoras' relativism.

In a contribution presented on the occasion of the IX Symposium of “The International Plato Society” in Tokyo, I attempted to develop Vegetti's conclusions concerning the link that Plato seems to have set up in the *Republic* with the reflection in the *Protagoras*, on the educational role of literary production³⁴. This link is generally explained in any case in a plausible way as a shared refer-

³³ Without actually advancing the idea of a direct influence, Bonazzi (2009, pp. 461–62 n. 32) perceives the presence of similar concepts in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1103b23–25 and 1104b11–13). On the polemical context to which his testimony refers, cf. Corradi (2012, pp. 15–31). As Brancacci (2013, pp. 83–84) rightly observes, Protagoras maintained that a natural disposition to acquire political virtue through education was intrinsic to man. More in general, with regard to the particular concept of φύσις, which seems to emerge from the great speech in the *Protagoras*, cf. Beresford (2013, pp. 148–61). On the role that natural talents play in the process of παιδεία for Plato, in particular in the *Republic*, useful considerations may be found in Cleary (2007 [2013], pp. 75–84).

³⁴ Corradi (2013).

ence to the educational practice of the time³⁵. However, by observing more closely what is written in the *Protagoras* and the *Republic*, it is perhaps possible to better clarify the meaning that this link assumes from Plato's perspective.

Protagoras describes the path of the young Athenians' παιδεία in a very detailed manner (325c–326e): the youths, after having acquired language and their first concepts of morality at home, then learn writing and music from masters who, more than disciplines, occupy themselves with εὐκοσμία. To this end they pass on their knowledge of the works of the great poets, ποιητῶν ἀγαθῶν ποιήματα, since they contain a great deal of advice, νοουθητήσεις, as well as many descriptions, eulogies and lots of praise of ancient heroes, πολλὰ δὲ διέξοδοι καὶ ἔπαινοι καὶ ἐγκώμια παλαιῶν ἀνδρῶν ἀγαθῶν, so as to spur the young to a μίμησις of the favoured models³⁶. In a similar way, the music teacher occupies himself with σωφροσύνη, teaching the works of other melic ἀγαθοὶ poets to the young, to be sung accompanied on the cithara. In this way, the rhythms and harmonies penetrate into the soul of the young, so they may become more mild-mannered, ἡμερώτεροι, and, by becoming more harmonious and orderly, καὶ εὐρυθμότεροι καὶ εὐαρμοσσότεροι γινόμενοι, trustworthy in word and action, χρήσιμοι ... εἰς τὸ λέγειν τε καὶ πράττειν. Overall, in his life man needs εὐρυθμία and εὐαρμοστία. Along with the literary and musical παιδεία, there is gymnastics. Once studies have been concluded, the πόλις continues to educate its citizens to justice by means of laws and the punishment of those who infringe them.

The starting point of young people's educational formation, as outlined by Plato in Book II and III of the *Republic*, are μῦθοι, which mothers tell their children, and these μῦθοι are certainly inspired by the literary tradition. For Plato, only suitable μῦθοι ought to be selected, ἐγκριτέον³⁷. Therefore those offering a negative image of the gods and heroes have to be excluded. The μίμησις must be limited from childhood to virtuous models, ἀνδρεῖοι, σώφρονες, ὄσιοι, ἐλεύθεροι, καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα πάντα (395c). As far as the musical aspect is concerned, the παιδεία of the young only has to contain Doric harmony, which is capable of arousing determination and the Phrygian one, which is capable of inculcating non-violent behaviour (399a-c). Indeed, refined words, harmoniousness, elegance and rhythmic regularity contribute to the formation of

³⁵ For instance, in Giuliano (2005, pp. 39–40).

³⁶ Capuccino (2011, pp. 71–73) underlines the educational function that emulation has here for Protagoras. For Protagoras as for Plato the young have a tendency to perceive the protagonists of literary works as models to be admired and are therefore worth conforming their behaviour to. Cf. Lear (2011, pp. 212–13).

³⁷ On the role of κριτής in literary production, which the philosopher tends to assume in Plato's dialogues, cf. Regali (2012, pp. 53–56).

good character, εὐλογία ἄρα καὶ εὐαρμοσσία καὶ εὐσχημοσύνη καὶ εὐρυθμία εὐηθεία ἀκολουθεῖ (400d–e): in fact rhythm and harmony descend deep into the soul, imbuing it with beauty (401d–e)³⁸. To literary and musical παιδεία corresponds an adequate physical education (411a–412a). In the *Republic* Plato therefore seems both to go into greater detail and apply discipline according to more rigid criteria than Protagoras set out in the dialogue by the same name. The link with Protagoras' words however is not limited to Book III. In Book X Plato develops his own criticism of poetry from the past, basing himself on an ontological criterion: art does not imitate being, but appearance, and for this reason it is τρίτον ... ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας (602c). Poetry and in particular its greatest representative, Homer, have to be excluded from the ideal πόλις, wherein only artistic production capable of holding up positive models for imitation by its citizens may be accepted, ὅσον μόνον ὕμνους θεοῖς καὶ ἐγκώμια τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ποιήσεως παραδεκτέον εἰς πόλιν (607a). At the end of his reflection on poetry, Plato therefore arrives at similar results to those of Protagoras, who placed contact with the production of great poets at the centre of young people's educational path, ποιητῶν ἀγαθῶν ποιήματα, full of νοουθετήσεις, many descriptions, eulogies and lots of praise of ancient heroes, πολλὰ δὲ διέξοδοι καὶ ἔπαινοι καὶ ἐγκώμια παλαιῶν ἀνδρῶν ἀγαθῶν, capable of spurring to imitation (325e–326a)³⁹.

As I had already pointed out in my contribution in Tokyo, in outlining the formative path of the guardians, Plato could not but bear in mind the reflection on literature developed by Protagoras: indeed, it is precisely in the *Protagoras* that Plato demonstrates his in-depth knowledge of it. With Protagoras' reflection on literature, Plato could find significant points of convergence. For both of them, poetry is the basis of the traditional παιδεία and the imitation of models put forward by literary texts as an efficacious educational tool. Both Plato and Protagoras, at least on the basis of the testimonies relative to its ὀρθόεπεια, underline the necessity of having a critical attitude towards poetry, and an accurate filter of texts in operation according to rigorous criteria.

38 Pelosi (2010, pp. 14–67) correctly interprets musical παιδεία in the *Republic* as a process that aimed at the conditioning of young people's sensibility. More generally, on the central role of music in the pedagogical project of dialogue, cf. Schofield (2010).

39 For Plato's reflection on μίμησις, Tulli (2013) reconstructs a fertile link with literary tradition. A recent contribution on the rather complex problem of the double treatment accorded to Book III and Book X has come from Casanova (2013). The hymns and encomia allowed in the ideal city probably indicate the same production as Plato. Cf. Gaiser (1984, pp. 103–23).

3. Punishment τοῦ μέλλοντος χάριν

Similar results also emerge from an analysis of another renowned passage of the great speech in the *Protagoras*, which has been attracting scholars' attention for some time now (323e–324c). In order to demonstrate that ἀρετή is held to be the fruit of ἐπιμέλεια, ἄσκησις and διδασχῆ, Protagoras develops reflections on the function of the punishment that come across as particularly innovative. According to Protagoras, nobody – unless he wants to commit an irrational vendetta, ἀλογίστως, on the same level as an animal, ὡσπερ θηρίον, – punishes whoever commits an injustice for the injustice committed. This is because it can in no way ensure that whatever has occurred not have occurred, οὐ γὰρ ἂν τό γε πραχθέν ἀγένητον θείη. Punishment is meted out instead with an eye to the future, τοῦ μέλλοντος χάριν, so that whoever has committed an injustice not repeat his crime and other men, faced with the example afforded, not commit the same crime, ἵνα μὴ αὐθις ἀδικήσῃ μήτε αὐτὸς οὗτος μήτε ἄλλος ὁ τοῦτον ἰδὼν κολασθέντα⁴⁰. Punishment therefore has a preventive purpose, it should deter, ἀποτροπῆς ... ἔνεκα. And – Protagoras emphasises – underpinning it lies the conviction that virtue may be acquired and taught, παρασκευαστὸν εἶναι καὶ διδακτὸν ἀρετήν.

This theme is taken up by Plato, for example in the *Gorgias* (525b) wherein Socrates first of all grasps the utility for whoever is being punished (he is improved and healed of his own injustice by means of the punishment), but he also emphasises the paradigmatic function of the punishment:

προσῆκει δὲ παντὶ τῷ ἐν τιμωρίᾳ ὄντι, ὑπὲρ ἄλλου ὀρθῶς τιμωρουμένῳ, ἢ βελτίονι γίγνεσθαι καὶ ὀνίνασθαι ἢ παραδείγματι τοῖς ἄλλοις γίγνεσθαι, ἵνα ἄλλοι ὀρώντες πάσχοντα ἃ ἂν πάσχη φοβούμενοι βελτίους γίγνωνται⁴¹.

The similarity with the extract of the *Protagoras*, also from a lexical point of view, is even more marked in Book XI of the *Laws* (934a–b). Despite occurring

⁴⁰ Denyer (2008, p. 112) connects the considerations developed here by Protagoras with Diogenes Laërtius' observation that the Sophist was the first to distinguish the μέρη χρόνου (IX 52 = 80 A 1 DK): originally they appear to have been inserted in to the context of a reflection on the differences between past and future. Saunders (1991, pp. 133–36) tends to play down the originality of Protagoras' position. Schlick (2012, pp. 30–32) raises doubts as to its historical consistency. Bonazzi (2010, p. 138 n. 9) collocates it however in a plausible way in the context of the radical humanism advanced by the Sophist.

⁴¹ On the perspective, which is both philosophical and political, in which Plato appears to collocate the reflection on punishment in the myth of the *Gorgias*, cf. Sedley (2009).

in the context of a distinction between different types of guilt, the fruit of one's ἄνοια or others' persuasion, which is lacking in Protagoras' argument, the Athenian perceives how the punishment is not inflicted on the basis of the crime committed – in no case, in fact, may what has occurred, τὸ γεγονός, be ἀγένητον – but rather with a view to the future, τοῦ δ' εἰς τὸν αὐτίς ἔνεκα χρόνον, so that both the person being punished and those who observe the punishment may abhor the nature of the injustice, ἢ τὸ παράπαν μισῆσαι τὴν ἀδικίαν αὐτόν τε καὶ τοὺς ἰδόντας αὐτὸν δικαιούμενον.

The repetition is striking, both in the extract from the *Laws* and in that of the *Protagoras*, of the truism, well-known in Greek literary tradition – Simonides (603 Page), Pindarus (*O.* II 15–17), Theognis (583–584), Sophocles (*Ajax*, 378 and the *Trachiniae*, 742–743), Agathon (39 F 5 Snell-Kannicht), Antiphon (87 B 58 DK) – indeed perhaps proverbial at this stage, according to which it is not possible for what has occurred not to have occurred⁴².

As Richard Stalley has shown so persuasively, the distance between the position attributed to Protagoras and that maintained in other dialogues is not therefore so great⁴³. In particular, the Protagoras of the *Protagoras* (323e–324c), the Socrates in the *Gorgias* (525b) and the Athenian of the *Laws* (934a–b) clearly collocate the punishment in a pedagogical context, sharing the conviction that the πόλις has the task of forming its citizens and that punishment plays a crucial role in this process.

4. An ἀγγεῖον for Protagoras' μαθήματα

From the series of excerpts that have been considered here, a sense of continuity clearly emerges between many points present in the great speech in the *Protagoras* and Plato's subsequent output. In several cases it has been possible to establish a point of contact with what may be reconstructed regarding the thought and figure of Protagoras from other available testimonies. In other cases the situation is more doubtful. Certainly, even if one were tempted to attribute a great deal to Plato's creative genius, the problem would still remain of ascertaining why Plato wished to make Protagoras a mouthpiece for doctrines and teachings that, from what emerges from other dialogues, Plato held to be valid. For this reason I believe it is plausible to think of the presence in Plato's output of a resumption, or

⁴² Cf. Manuwald (1999, p. 208) and Schöpsdau (2011, p. 511).

⁴³ Stalley (1995).

at least a re-elaboration, of Protagoras' doctrines⁴⁴. In any case, right in the initial section of the *Protagoras*, Plato himself, through Socrates, clearly theorized the possibility of acquiring μαθήματα from Protagoras when they may be judged as valid. Sure enough, within the dense exchange on the nature of the Sophist between Socrates and the young Hippocrates, who wishes to become a pupil of Protagoras (311b–314c), an exchange that is frequently interpreted, and understandably so, as a manifesto of Socrates' strongly critical approach towards the Sophists' παιδεία, Plato offers a criterion for the correct approach towards Protagoras' doctrines and teachings. The Sophists are presented, in a very similar way to that present in the *Sophist* (224c–d), as retail and wholesale merchants of μαθήματα, which they praise to the skies in order to sell them, ἐπαινοῦσιν μὲν πάντα ἃ πωλοῦσιν. Some of them may not know what, among the things they sell, is useful or dangerous for the soul of whoever buys it, τούτων ἀγνοοῖεν ὧν πωλοῦσιν ὅτι χρηστὸν ἢ πονηρὸν πρὸς τὴν ψυχὴν. And the client will find himself in the same condition, unless by chance he happens to be a man ἰατρικός, who knows which among these doctrines is good and which bad, ἐπιστήμων τούτων τί χρηστὸν καὶ πονηρὸν. This man may acquire them safely both from Protagoras or from anybody else, ὠνεῖσθαι μαθήματα καὶ παρὰ Πρωταγόρου καὶ παρ' ἄλλου ὁπουοῦν. As Michael Gagarin has already pointed out⁴⁵, this implies that Protagoras' doctrines may contain both useful and deleterious elements. So it is permissible to pick up useful contributions also from Protagoras. But how is the man ἰατρικός to act? In other words, how, without running a risk, is it possible to distinguish χρηστὸν from πονηρὸν in Protagoras' doctrines?

The analysis of two singular images utilized by Plato in this context may perhaps offer a key. The image of the man ἰατρικός, the doctor of the soul⁴⁶, which will certainly be greatly developed for example in celebrated pages of the *Gorgias* for the definition of rhetoric (463e–465d), may occupy a function that is similar to the image of φάρμακον in Book X of the *Republic*. When the discussion of po-

⁴⁴ For Van Riel (2012, p. 162) the Platonic character of many doctrines contained in the μῦθος does not negate a link with ideas of the historical Protagoras. Schlick (2012) is of the opposite opinion: Plato appears to attribute to Protagoras his own doctrine in order to better highlight his own distance from the Sophist on a methodological level. In my opinion, Friedländer (1964³ [1973²], p. 177) is more plausible, who maintains: “Just as the general position of the Sophists is not only opposed to Socrates as something to be fought and overcome, but is, at the same time, a first approximation to the problems discussed, so the myth of the Sophist is a first hint – though not more than that – not altogether estranged from Plato's thoughts, but something that continues to grow within him throughout the years”.

⁴⁵ Gagarin (1969).

⁴⁶ Desclos (1992, pp. 111–18) looks at the image of Socrates the “doctor” in *Protagoras*. Marino (2010, pp. 79–90) sees there the paradigm of the Hippocratic τέχνη.

etry is taken up again at the beginning of the book (595a–b), Socrates underlines the necessity of not accepting imitative poetry in the ideal city. In fact, imitative poetry constitutes a λώβη for the δίανοια of whoever among the public is not in possession of a φάρμακον, that is to say, does not know its nature, τὸ εἰδέναι αὐτὰ οἷα τυγχάνει ὄντα. A φάρμακον that ought perhaps to be identified with the discussion itself that took place in the *Republic* on facilitating a correct and safe approach to the poets' texts, if not, as Stephen Halliwell⁴⁷ has recently maintained, with the knowledge of the true philosopher, whose paradigm has been outlined in the central books of the *Republic* as the pursuit of the idea of good. As in the case of poetry, the true philosopher may draw near to Protagoras' knowledge without risk, managing even to gain from it elements of manifest utility⁴⁸.

But it is perhaps possible to go even further. Continuing with the reading of the *Protagoras*, a curious image is encountered, put forward by Socrates (313e–314b). Socrates advises Hippocrates not to assimilate Protagoras' teachings, should he not be able to distinguish within them between what is advantageous and what is damaging. Taking up the parallelism again of the buying and selling of food, Socrates points out how, in the case of the teachings, the situation is much riskier compared to what occurs when dealing with food, γὰρ δὴ καὶ πολὺ μείζων κίνδυνος ἐν τῇ τῶν μαθημάτων ὠνῆ ἢ ἐν τῇ τῶν σιτίων. Whoever buys food wholesale from a merchant or retail, may place it ἐν ἄλλοις ἀγγείοις, in other containers, and bring it home before consuming it and ingesting it into one's body. In this way, a person may turn to an expert and enquire whether he may eat it, in what quantity and how, ἔξοιστιν συμβουλεύσασθαι, παρακαλέσαντα τὸν ἐπαίοντα, ὅτι τε ἐδεστέον ἢ ποτέον καὶ ὅτι μή, καὶ ὅποσον καὶ ὅποτε. For this reason, buying food like this does not constitute a great risk. On the other hand, teachings may not be stored in another container, ἐν ἄλλῳ ἀγγείῳ, in order to be evaluated by an expert; once they have been assimilated, they penetrate the soul and whoever takes them on board, returns home either improved or damaged, ἀνάγκη καταθέντα τὴν τιμὴν τὸ μάθημα ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ψυχῇ λαβόντα καὶ μαθόντα ἀπιέναι ἢ βεβλαμμένον ἢ ὠφελημένον. Therefore, for Socrates a container does not exist, an ἀγγεῖον capable of containing Protagoras' μαθήματα, a space in which they may be analysed without risk in such a way as to be able to choose useful doctrines and reject those that are dangerous. Certainly, as Lidia Palumbo⁴⁹ has noted, in the course of the dialogue, Hippocrates, with Socrates'

⁴⁷ Halliwell (2011).

⁴⁸ Notomi (2011) highlights the affinities that poet and Sophist present from the Platonic perspective.

⁴⁹ Palumbo (2004).

help, may get a taste of Protagoras' doctrines at no danger to himself. Socrates is therefore the *ιατρικὸς περὶ τὴν ψυχὴν*, capable of dealing correctly with Protagoras' *μαθήματα*. To all intents and purposes, cannot the container perhaps be identified with the same dialogue by Plato? An *ἀγγεῖον* that, in the literary pretence of the prologue of the *Protagoras*, for Socrates does not exist and cannot yet exist: it is Plato who, precisely in Socrates' name, has understood how it may be created⁵⁰. Certainly, the image of the *ἀγγεῖον* does not always have a positive connotation in Plato. In the *Gorgias* (493e), for instance, the perforated container becomes a symbol for a life given over to pleasure. In the *Symposium* (175d) Socrates is ironic about a model of knowledge as if it were a decanting from a full container – in this case a *κύλιξ* – to an emptier one. In the *Phaedrus* (235c–d) it is Socrates himself however who becomes an *ἀγγεῖον*, even if of a type of knowledge that will be seen to be spurious: after having listened to Lisia's speech read by Phaedrus, Socrates declares that he knows the best speeches, whose authors, however, he does not exactly remember, perhaps Sappho, maybe Anacreon or some other prose writer. In fact, he feels his chest is full of *λόγοι* that are not the fruit of his learning, given his ignorance, but come from some other source, which he has been filled up with through listening, *ἐξ ἀλλοτρίων ποθὲν ναμάτων διὰ τῆς ἀκοῆς πεπληρώσθαι*, like a vase, *δίκτην ἀγγείου*⁵¹. And in the *Theaetetus* in any case an *ἀγγεῖον* is the cage in which *ἐπιστήμαι* (197d–e) similar to birds accumulate from the earliest age⁵².

50 Denyer (2008, p. 78) takes into consideration the hypothesis that a suitable container for holding the *μαθήματα* may be the book, only to reject it on the basis of Socrates' and Plato's well-known mistrust of writing. There is not sufficient space here to return to the *vexata quaestio* concerning Plato's judgement of the written word. Certainly, Gaiser (1984, pp. 31–54 and 103–123) claims a statute that is anything but marginal for the dialogue. In this regard, cf. at least Erler (2007, pp. 60–98, 416–18 and 486–97).

51 Concerning the image of the perforated jar in the *Gorgias*, cf. Dalfen (2004, pp. 376–77). Corrigan & Glazov Corrigan (2004, pp. 33–37) interpret the criticism of the transmission of knowledge as a simple passage of concepts that Socrates develops in the *Symposium* in the context of Plato's polemic against the Sophists. For the passage in the *Phaedrus*, Yunis (2011, p. 107) recalls Democritus (68 A 126a), according to whom hearing is like liquid filling a jar, *ἀγγείου δίκτην*. For a convincing analysis of this passage, see now also Capra (2014, pp. 69–71). The image of dialogue as a container does not appear to be an *ex nihilo* creation by Plato: already in the VI *Istmica* (1–3), Pindarus conceives of his own ode as a crater of songs, *κρατήρ Μοισαίων μελέων*, while in a fragment, attributed uncertainly to the poet (354 Snell-Maehler), reference is made to the opening, *ἀνοιξαι*, of a *πίθος ὕμνων*. Cf. Nünlist (1998, pp. 199–205). On foodstuff metaphors, Curtius (1954² [2013²], pp. 134–36) offers a wide-ranging panorama from ancient times to the Latin Middle Ages.

52 On this famous analogy and its limits, cf. Ferrari (2011, pp. 103–4), who among other things offers an extensive bibliography on this topic.

In the new container represented by dialogue, Protagoras' μαθήματα may therefore be observed close up and studied without risk in the presence of Socrates, the doctor of the soul who, with his dialectic art, enables us to separate the χρηστόν from the πονηρόν. This χρηστόν, as we have already seen, is a precious legacy for Plato in the mature pages of the *Republic*, of the *Politicus* and the *Timaeus*, as well as the *Laws*, written in his in old age. This precious legacy gave rise to fruits that have a different taste to the one, perhaps still unripe, they had at the stall of the merchant Protagoras, because they have acquired maturity and flavour through the heat of the sun under whose rays Plato's art and thought have perceived the paradigm of ἀγαθόν.

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