

Reading the Proemium of Plato's *Theaetetus*: Euclides in Action

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THE FRAMES of the Platonic dialogues constitute a vexed and contentious issue and have been variously treated by students of Plato throughout the centuries. Proclus classified Plato's ancient commentators as those who pay little or no attention to the prefatory parts, those who acknowledge their moral aspect but deem them irrelevant to a dialogue's subject-matter, and those who contend that they have a bearing on the main philosophical discussion.¹ Modern scholars have adopted a similar stance: while some either completely ignore or attribute little philosophical significance to the proemia, others consider them to be an integral part of the dialogues and not merely 'trimmings' or decorative literary devices.²

This paper focuses on the opening of the *Theaetetus*, one of the most peculiar and paradoxical of the Platonic proemia.³ Two friends, the Megarians Euclides and Terpsion, acci-

¹ Proclus *In Prm.* 658–659 (I 46 Steel); for comments see G. R. Morrow and J. M. Dillon, *Proclus Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* (Princeton 1987) 11 and 47 n.40. For ancient views on the importance of Plato's prologues in general see H. Tarrant, *Plato's First Interpreters* (Cornell 2000) 39–40.

² See e.g. D. Clay, "Plato's First Words," in F. M. Dunn and T. Cole (eds.), *Beginnings in Classical Literature* (Cambridge 1992) 115: "to write competently about the beginning of [any] Platonic Dialogue is to understand the other extremity of the dialogue, its middle, and the unity of the dialogue as a whole." For further bibliography see W. A. Johnson, "Dramatic Frame and Philosophic Idea in Plato," *AJP* 119 (1998) 577–598 nn.1–2.

³ See C. Capuccino, *Αρχή Λόγου. Sui proemi platonici e il loro significato filosofico* (Florence 2014) 101–103.

dentally encounter each other in the streets of Megara and start a conversation. Euclides' reference to his earlier unexpected meeting with the ill-fated Athenian Theaetetus on his way to the port reminds Terpsion of a conversation between Theaetetus, when he was a young boy, and Socrates, which in the past Euclides had mentioned to him that he had recorded. Terpsion asks his friend whether he could narrate it to him, but Euclides insists that he cannot recite it from memory. So the two retire to Euclides' house to "carefully examine" (διελεθεῖν 143A) the written record.⁴ There, a slave reads aloud to them the transcript of the conversation, which forms the main body of the *Theaetetus*. Plato does not return to the dramatic setting with the two Megarians and the slave at the end of the dialogue, so the outer frame remains forever incomplete.⁵

This opening scene was long left in the margin, on the grounds of the existence of an alternative and perhaps earlier prologue attested by the Anonymous scholiast.⁶ However, nowadays this thesis has lost favor, and most scholars argue for the prologue's organic and inseparable relationship with the

⁴ Plato's text is that of the OCT. Translation (with slight modifications) is taken from M. J. Levett, in M. Burnyeat, *The Theaetetus of Plato* (Indianapolis 1990).

⁵ There is no reversion to this framing dialogue, not even in the dramatic continuations of the *Theaetetus*—the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. This is of course quite common in the Platonic dialogues. The introductory dramatic dialogue is resumed only at the end of the *Euthydemus* and the *Phaedo*.

⁶ Anon. *Tht.* iii.28–37: G. Bastianini and D. N. Sedley, "Commentarium in Platonis *Theaetetus*," in *Corpus dei papiri filosofici greci e latini III* (Florence 1995) 227–562, at 268. According to the Anonymous, the alternative prologue began with the phrase ἄρα γε, ὃ παῖ and was rather "frigid" (ὑπόψυχρον). On the issue see M. Tulli, "Platone, il proemio del Teeteto e la poetica del dialogo," in M. Tulli (ed.), *L' autore pensoso. Un seminario per Graziano Arrighetti sulla coscienza letteraria dei Greci* (Pisa 2011) 121–133, and the more recent discussion by Capuccino, *Ἀρχὴ Λόγου* 103–110. On the interpretation and understanding of the dialogue in antiquity see D. Sedley, "Three Platonist Interpretations of the *Theaetetus*," in C. Gill and M. M. McCabe (eds.), *Form and Argument in Late Plato* (Oxford 1996) 79–103.

main philosophical discussion, which revolves around the definitional question “What is knowledge?”⁷ Even though at first sight the proemium seems to represent nothing more than an ordinary scene from everyday life,⁸ Plato orchestrates this fictional vignette in such a way as to introduce significant keywords and hint at several of the issues raised in the main body of the dialogue vis-à-vis the definition, acquisition, transmission, and preservation of knowledge. One of the major questions raised concerns the epistemological status of testimony.⁹ Is Socrates’ testimonial account to be understood to be a faithful rendition of his conversation with Theaetetus? And what about Euclides’ written version? Are we supposed to perceive it as a reliable account of the conversation between Socrates and Theaetetus, or merely as a reconstructed report

⁷ On the *Theaetetus*’ proemium and its relationship with the central philosophical discussion see, among others, S. Benardete, *The Being of the Beautiful: Plato’s Theaetetus, Sophist, and Statesman* (Chicago 1984) 185–188; R. M. Polansky, *Philosophy and Knowledge: A Commentary on Plato’s Theaetetus* (Lewisburg/London 1992) 33–38; R. Blondell, *The Play of Character in Plato’s Dialogues* (Cambridge 2002); A. Tschemplik, *Knowledge and Self-Knowledge in Plato’s Theaetetus* (Lanham 2008) 15; Z. Giannopoulou, *Plato’s Theaetetus as a Second Apology* (Oxford 2013), and “Authorless Authority in Plato’s *Theaetetus*,” in J. Martínez (ed.), *Fakes and Forgers of Classical Literature* (Leiden 2014) 43–58. Some of the best-known commentators on the dialogue, e.g. F. M. Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge* (London 1935), J. McDowell, *Plato: Theaetetus* (Oxford 1973), D. Bostock, *Plato’s Theaetetus* (Oxford 1988), and Burnyeat, *The Theaetetus of Plato*, take little or no notice of the proemium.

⁸ The accidental meeting of the characters of a dialogue is a motif shared by many Platonic works, e.g. the openings of the *Republic*, *Protagoras*, and *Phaedrus*. Although our evidence from other authors of Socratic dialogues is limited, one also finds an ordinary setting in Xenophon’s *Symposium* (1–2) and in Aeschines’ *Alcibiades* (fr.2 Dittmar). See R. M. Dancy, *Plato’s Introduction of Forms* (Cambridge 2004) 26 n.10, who points out that most Platonic dialogues open with the question “where are you coming from?”

⁹ For an extensive discussion on testimony and transmission see J. Lackey, *Learning from Words: Testimony as a Source of Knowledge* (Oxford 2010); see also B. McMyler, *Testimony, Trust, and Authority* (Oxford/New York 2011) 15–19.

open to errors and misconceptions? In other words: is first-hand testimony always reliable? Can it transmit knowledge? Does transmission of knowledge also presuppose transmission of understanding? How is testimonial knowledge preserved? What does Euclides' method of transcription and the 'biography' of his record reveal about the acquisition of testimonial knowledge, and the reliability of our senses and memory?

The paper falls into three sections. In §1 we focus on the 'writtleness' of the central conversation between Socrates and the young Theaetetus and its presentation as a record based on Socrates' testimony and written down by Euclides. In §2 we draw attention to Euclides' *modus operandi* and the method of transcribing the dialogue into written form. This process, we argue in §3, reveals an extraordinary world of philosophical dialectic.

1. *Euclides' book and his defective memory*

The *Theaetetus* stands out as the only Platonic dialogue whose central conversation is explicitly presented as a written record. In the outer frame the verb γράφω and its cognates are used no less than six times (ἐγραψάμην (2), ἔγραφον, γέγραπται, ἐν τῇ γραφῇ, ἔγραψα), thus stressing the 'writtleness' of the philosophical discussion. A similar effect is achieved through the use of the verb ἀναγιγνώσκω (ἀλλ' ἴωμεν, καὶ ἡμῖν ἅμα ἀναπαυομένοις ὁ παῖς ἀναγνώσεται 143B) and the noun βιβλίον. In fact, through the two references to Euclides' book the reader is encouraged to visualize this βιβλίον and imagine it as a physical and tangible object. In the first case this is effected through the use of the emphatic deictic τουτί (τὸ μὲν δὴ βιβλίον, ᾧ Τερψίων, τουτί 143B), and in the second through Euclides' order to the slave to take the book and read (ἀλλά, παῖ, λαβὲ τὸ βιβλίον καὶ λέγε 143C). In addition, the *Theaetetus* is the only Platonic dialogue "that explicitly identifies the 'writer' of the dialogue within the dialogue itself and specifies that it is not in fact Plato."¹⁰ It is Euclides who is credited with

¹⁰ Tschemplik, *Knowledge and Self-Knowledge* 17; cf. Johnson, *AJP* 119 (1998)

the reproduction of the supposed colloquy between Socrates and Theaetetus and is allocated the role of the “surrogate author.”¹¹ At the same time, however, the dramatic form of the opening scene makes it clear that Euclides is not the author of the *Theaetetus*, within which the main philosophical discussion is embedded and which also includes the opening scene. Plato could have presented the whole dialogue as a testimony by Euclides if he depicted Euclides narrating his encounter with Terpsion to a friend. Nonetheless, he chooses to deliver the opening exchange between the two Megarians in direct speech, thus rendering us ‘witnesses’ to their conversation in the same way that his dramatic character, Euclides, chooses to reproduce Socrates’ narration in *oratio recta*.

There has been much discussion of Euclides’ somewhat unexpected reaction in the opening scene to Terpsion’s request to recite the dialogue ἀπὸ στόματος,¹² that is, from memory (142D–143A):

TER. καὶ ἀληθῆ γε, ὡς ἔοικεν, εἶπεν. ἀτὰρ τίνες ἦσαν οἱ λόγοι; ἔχοις ἄν διηγῆσασθαι;

EY. οὐ μὰ τὸν Δία, οὐκ οὐτῶ γε ἀπὸ στόματος·

TER. Well, he appears to have been right enough.—But what was this discussion? Could you tell it to me?

EU. Good Lord, no. Not from memory, anyway.

Euclides’ qualification is striking and sets him apart from all other Platonic narrators who undertake to recount a Socratic discussion to a friend or a group of acquaintances, such as Phaedo (*Phaedo*), Apollodorus (*Symposium*), and Cephalus (*Parmenides*). Whereas Phaedo has first-hand knowledge of Socrates’ valedictory conversation on the day he was put to death, Apollodorus and Cephalus rely on reports that are transmitted to

⁵⁸⁶: “The text itself, if the reader allows the author’s voice to intrude, can be regarded either as Plato’s copy of Euclides’ text, or Euclides’ text as remembered by Plato, and retranscribed from memory.”

¹¹ For the phrase see M. L. Gill, *Philosophos: Plato’s Missing Dialogue* (Oxford 2012) 103.

¹² Phot. *Lex.* A 2660: ὡς ἡμεῖς, τὸ μὴ διὰ γραμμάτων ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ μνήμης.

them by a third party. Apollodorus recounts a dialogue reported to him by Aristodemus, even though he notes that he checked with Socrates on a few issues (ἔνια *Symp.* 173B);¹³ Cephalus, however, reports Socrates' conversation with Parmenides which he heard from Antiphon, who, in his turn, had heard it several times from a certain Pythodorus and had tried hard to memorize it (εὖ μάλα διεμελέτησε *Pm.* 126C). Despite the indirectness of their reports and their lack of first-hand knowledge, neither Apollodorus nor Cephalus appears skeptical about the reliability of their account, or expresses any serious doubts about the accuracy of their memory to reproduce the testimony of others.¹⁴ Apollodorus (*Symp.* 178A) even concedes that neither Aristodemus, his informant, nor he himself could recall everything, noting that he kept in his memory mainly the events that *he* deemed most worthy of consideration. But although he acknowledges that he has filtered Aristodemus' testimony, he still declares that he knows the conversation "pretty well by heart," stressing that his anonymous friend's request for him to narrate the discussion does not find him unprepared (δοκῶ μοι περὶ ὧν πυνθάνεσθε οὐκ ἀμελέτητος εἶναι 172A; cf. οὐκ ἀμελετήτως ἔχω 173C). Euclides is the only Platonic narrator who raises doubts about his own memory. Even though the narrative comes from Socrates himself, and he spends several hours trying to create the written version, he surprisingly claims he is unable to report it by heart.

Euclides' inability to narrate without the aid of a written text has mostly been interpreted as an indication of his passive acceptance of the Socratic account which fails to "fully occup[y] his soul."¹⁵ For Blondell, Euclides is merely a transcriber who

¹³ On the complicated narrative structure of the *Symposium* see the rich analysis by D. A. Halperin, "Plato and the Erotics of Narrativity," in J. C. Klagge and N. D. Smith (eds.), *Methods of Interpreting Plato and his Dialogues* (Oxford 1992) 93–130.

¹⁴ Phaedo also speaks with assurance except for two points (*Phd.* 102A, 103A) where he appears hesitant.

¹⁵ Polansky, *Philosophy and Knowledge* 37.

“is utterly incapable of producing an oral account, focusing rather on obtaining an accurate verbatim transcription.”¹⁶ A similar view has recently been proposed by Giannopoulou:¹⁷

Moreover, the contrast between Socrates' first-hand knowledge of the conversation and Euclides' passive reception of it foreshadows the distinction between the eyewitness and the jurors in the Jury passage (200c7–201c6). Euclides is in a cognitive position similar to that of the jury in court: he records another's exchange probably without having participated in or received instruction about it—he says only that Socrates “recounted” the discussion to him, and his inability to recollect it suggests that he has not understood it by means of dialectic—and the members of the jury are persuaded but not taught about matters that only an eyewitness can know. The members of the jury form the opinions that the orators inculcate in them, and Euclides assimilates and records Socrates' report.

Two observations are in order here:

a) The ability to provide an accurate verbatim account about something does not always presuppose deep understanding/knowledge and vice versa. An illuminating example comes from Xenophon's *Symposium*, where the phrase ἀπὸ στόματος used by Euclides is employed in a similar context. When Niceratus declares that he is able to recite the Homeric epics by heart (ἀπὸ στόματος), because his father forced him πάντα τὰ Ὅμηρου ἔπη μαθεῖν, Socrates points out that knowing something by heart does not necessarily mean that you also understand it. It is clear (δῆλον), Socrates remarks, that the rhapsodes, who can recite Homer from memory, do not understand what they recite (τὰς ὑπονοίας οὐκ ἐπίστανται).¹⁸ But

¹⁶ Blondell, *The Play of Character* 306. See also Halperin, in *Methods of Interpreting* 115; J. Howland, *The Paradox of Political Philosophy: Socrates' Philosophic Trial* (Lanham 1998) 45.

¹⁷ Giannopoulou, *Plato's Theaetetus* 23.

¹⁸ Xen. *Symp.* 3.4.1. This idea is also prominent in Plato's *Ion*, where Socrates argues that Ion's ability to recite Homer does not render him an expert in Homer. As he points out at the beginning (530C), it is not enough for a rhapsode to know the verses (ἔπη) of Homer; he also needs to learn his

one need not look as far as Xenophon. Near the opening of their discussion, Socrates asks Theaetetus whether he knows Protagoras' dictum "Man is the measure of all things: of the things which are, that they are, and of the things which are not, that they are not," and the boy reassures him that he had read it several times (151E–152A). Although he claims to have come across it more than once, his conversation with Socrates reveals that he does not really understand it. He can recite it from memory, but is still unable to grasp its full meaning. To use the terminology employed by Socrates in the aviary model (195C–200D), Theaetetus possesses (κατέχει) this piece of information saved in his memory, but does not comprehend it (ἔχει).¹⁹

b) Considering that other Platonic narrators, such as Cephalus and Apollodorus, appear perfectly capable of reciting from memory dialogues which they hear from others in the form of a δῆγησις, it is not satisfactory to suggest that Euclides' inability to narrate Socrates' exchange with Theaetetus by heart is symptomatic of his passive, non-dialectical reception of it. Giannopoulou tries to support her thesis by associating Euclides' cognitive position with that of the jury in court (201A–C) inasmuch as both parties lack eyewitness knowledge. Euclides, on the one hand, bases his record on what he hears from Socrates; the jurymen, on the other, are obliged to form their verdict based on what they hear from the litigants and orators, who are at pains to use their skill to influence them. Even though Plato emphasizes that because of the lack of first-hand evidence the jurymen are not "taught" but merely persuaded, this obviously does not mean that they blindly adopt and

thought (διάνοιαν): "no one would ever get to be a good rhapsode if he didn't understand what is meant by the poet. A rhapsode must come to present the poet's thought to his audience; and he can't do that beautifully unless he knows what the poet means" (transl. P. Woodruff, in J. M. Cooper, *Plato: Complete Works* [Indianapolis 1997]).

¹⁹ On the difference between the ἔξις and κτήσις of knowledge introduced in the aviary model see e.g. Polansky, *Philosophy and Knowledge* 194–204.

accept everything they hear; otherwise they would always be persuaded no matter what. Despite their second-hand knowledge the jurors are not passive listeners, but engage with the events detailed to them before they reach a decision.²⁰ The competence of the orator or litigant must also be a crucial factor in whether the jurors are persuaded or not.²¹ However, it is not the only factor, and it is reasonable to assume that the jurors can justify their final verdict precisely because they reflect upon what they hear. We argue that a similar conclusion is reached if we closely examine Euclides' handling of Socrates' account.

2. *Checking, rechecking, correcting, and revising*

As well as being the only Platonic dialogue that underlines the 'writtenness' of the main philosophical discussion, the *Theaetetus* also lays particular emphasis upon the meticulous *modus operandi* of its "surrogate author" (143A):

EY. ἀλλ' ἐγραψάμην μὲν τότε εὐθὺς οἴκαδ' ἐλθὼν ὑπομνήματα, ὕστερον δὲ κατὰ σχολὴν ἀναμνησκόμενος ἔγραφον, καὶ ὁσάκις Ἀθήναζε ἀφικοίμην, ἐπανηρώτων τὸν Σωκράτη, ὃ μὴ ἐμεινήμην, καὶ δεῦρο ἐλθὼν ἐπηνορθούμην· ὥστε μοι σχεδὸν τι πᾶς ὁ λόγος γέγραπται.

EU. But I made some notes of it at the time, as soon as I got home; then afterwards I recalled it at my leisure and wrote it out, and whenever I went to Athens, I used to ask Socrates about the points I couldn't remember, and correct my version when I got home. The result is that I have got pretty well the whole discussion in writing.

If Plato's main objective were to put Euclides' defective memory under the spotlight, he would be most likely to represent him taking notes during Socrates' διήγησις and transcribing

²⁰ On the passage see, among others, M. F. Burnyeat, "Socrates and the Jury: Paradoxes in Plato's Distinction between Knowledge and Belief," *PAS Suppl.* 54 (1980) 173–191; F. A. Lewis, "Knowledge and the Eyewitness: Plato *Theaetetus* 201a-c," *CJPh* 11 (1981) 185–197; McMyler, *Testimony, Trust, and Authority* 15–19.

²¹ See Lewis, *CJPh* 11 (1981) 196.

the whole account as soon as he returned to Megara, when he still had it fresh in his mind. However, Euclides does not behave like this; he takes notes (ὑπομνήματα) only after he returns to Megara, and even chooses to postpone the painstaking and demanding task of transcription until a later stage. What is more, he specifies that the fleshing out of his ὑπομνήματα does not take place all at once, but is undertaken progressively and κατὰ σχολήν.

σχολή holds a prominent place in the main dialogue, and its occurrence in the proemium can hardly be coincidental. The term carries the meaning “leisure” but should not simply be equated with free time. Rather, σχολή is typically used to indicate the free time that is dedicated to the pursuit of higher things (e.g. learning) and is not spent in idleness, amusement, or diversion.²² In the central philosophical discussion of the *Theaetetus* σχολή is defined as the necessary condition for engaging in philosophy, and is put forward as a hallmark of philosophical inquiry.²³ Accordingly, it comes as no surprise that from the beginning of the discussion Socrates observes that he and his interlocutors have plenty of leisure at their disposal (154E), an idea that finds eloquent expression in the leisurely style of investigation he takes on.²⁴ Indeed, Socrates’ patient and purposeful analysis throughout the *Theaetetus* is ingeniously juxtaposed with the stance adopted by the representatives of the two philosophical schools that feature prominently in the dialogue: the sophists, who often use up their time engaging in skirmishes, verbalisms, and rhetorical maneuvers (154D–E),²⁵

²² On the notion of σχολή see J. L. Stocks, “Σχολή,” *CQ* 30 (1936) 177–187; J. L. Hemingway, “Leisure and Civility: Reflections on a Greek Ideal,” *Leisure Sciences* 10 (1988) 179–191; B. K. Hunnicutt, “Leisure and Play in Plato’s Teaching and Philosophy of Learning,” *Leisure Sciences* 12 (1990) 211–227; J. Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* (Indiana 1998).

²³ See *Politicus* 272B–D, where σχολή is presented as the feature that distinguishes the philosopher from the animals.

²⁴ See also 172C–D, 175E, 180B, 187D–E.

²⁵ It is notable that in 154D–E, when Socrates refers to the superfluity of

and the Heraclitans, whose rushed and frantic mode of argumentation clouds the coherence of their theses, thus rendering them incomprehensible (179E–180C). The significance of leisure in fostering philosophical insight reaches a climax in the Digression, where the philosopher is contrasted with other “wise men” (201A) such as litigants and orators. The philosopher, on the one hand, is portrayed as the man of leisure who is free to follow an argument wherever it may lead, with no concern for time. Lawyers and orators, on the other hand, are always constrained by time: they can speak only for as long as the water-clock allows, and there is always a presiding judge, who makes sure that they comply with the rules and execute their duties slavishly (172C–173B).

The philosophical significance that Plato places on the notion of σχολή in the main body of the dialogue encourages us—albeit retrospectively—to understand Euclides’ editorial work as a demanding procedure and not merely as a mechanical process. It is, therefore, necessary to view his transcription as the product of active thinking and reflection. In the main body of the dialogue Socrates defines “thinking” (διανοεῖσθαι) as a kind of discourse, “one’s internal dialogue with one’s soul” (189E–190A):²⁶

ΣΩ. τὸ δὲ διανοεῖσθαι ἄρ’ ὅπερ ἐγὼ καλεῖς;

ΘΕΑΙ. τί καλῶν;

ΣΩ. λόγον ὃν αὐτὴ πρὸς αὐτὴν ἢ ψυχὴ διεξέρχεται περὶ ὧν ἂν σκοπῇ. ὡς γε μὴ εἰδῶς σοι ἀποφαίνομαι. τοῦτο γάρ μοι ἰνδάλ-
λεται διανοουμένη οὐκ ἄλλο τι ἢ διαλέγεσθαι, αὐτὴ ἑαυτὴν
ἔρωτῶσα καὶ ἀποκρινομένη, καὶ φάσκουσα καὶ οὐ φάσκουσα.
ὅταν δὲ ὀρίσασα, εἴτε βραδύτερον εἴτε καὶ ὀξύτερον ἐπάξασα,

time during sophistic conversations, he does not use σχολή, but prefers περιουσία, which means both “superfluity” and “money.” The use of this term seems to be intentional and could be associated with the fact that for the sophists time *was* money.

²⁶ On this passage see Polansky, *Philosophy and Knowledge* 183; A. G. Long, “Plato’s Dialogues and a Common Rationale for Dialogue Form,” in S. Goldhill (ed.), *The End of Dialogue in Antiquity* (Cambridge 2008) 45–60, and *Conversation and Self-Sufficiency in Plato* (Oxford 2013), esp. 109–138.

τὸ αὐτὸ ἤδη φηὶ καὶ μὴ διστάζει, δόξαν ταύτην τίθεμεν αὐτῆς.
ὥστ' ἔγωγε τὸ δοξάζειν λέγειν καλῶ καὶ τὴν δόξαν λόγον εἰρη-
μένον, οὐ μέντοι πρὸς ἄλλον οὐδὲ φωνῆ, ἀλλὰ σιγῆ πρὸς αὐτόν·

SOC. Now by “thinking” do you mean the same as I do?

THEAET. What do you mean by it?

SOC. A talk which the soul has with itself about the objects under its consideration. Of course, I’m only telling you my idea in all ignorance; but this is the kind of picture I have of it. It seems to me that the soul when it thinks is simply carrying on a discussion in which it asks itself questions and answers them itself, affirms and denies. And when it arrives at something definite, either by a gradual process or a sudden leap, when it affirms one thing consistently and without divided counsel, we call this its judgement. So, in my view, to judge is to make a statement, and a judgement is a statement which is not addressed to another person or spoken aloud, but silently addressed to oneself.

We propose that this sort of internal discourse, involving the soul’s asking and answering of questions, is what is going on in the case of Euclides. Released from other menial and worldly commitments and duties during his *σχολή*, he can reflect upon his notes and enter into a dialogue with himself. Because of his leisure, he can fully immerse himself in the process of thinking, thus making judgments about the completeness and coherence of his account.²⁷

Euclides’ active engagement with his notes, suggested here, is rendered more plausible by the fact that Socrates’ account touches upon issues which Euclides was familiar with and interested in. Even though Plato remains reticent about the perspective of Euclides and Terpsion, we know that the former was the founder of the Megarian School and the latter was most likely his disciple.²⁸ We have information about the

²⁷ Tschemplik, *Knowledge and Self-Knowledge* 18–19.

²⁸ Diog. Laert. 2.106–108; *Suda* E 3539. Diogenes Laertius attributes a number of Socratic dialogues to Euclides: *Lambrias*, *Crito*, *Eroticus*, *Alcibiades*, *Aeschines*, and *Phoenix*. At *Phaedo* 59B–C Euclides and Terpsion are included among those present during Socrates’ death.

Megarian School from Aristotle, who points out that the Megarians denied potentiality (δύναμις) and granted being only to the immediate and explicit, thus denying the reality of time.²⁹ Potentiality is, in fact, an issue raised several times throughout the dialogue. In 178C, for example, the ability to predict the future with some reliability is seen as a criterion of knowledge: only an expert can make authoritative predictions about the future in his specific field.³⁰ What is more, the central philosophical discussion contains a number of remarks and criticisms (e.g. the references to eristic) that definitely would provoke the objection of a Megarian like Euclides.³¹ Diogenes Laertius reports that “when he [Euclides] impugned a demonstration, it was not the premises but the conclusion that he attacked” (2.106). Interestingly, throughout his conversation with

²⁹ Arist. *Metaph.* 1046b30–1047a20. On the Megarians and the *Theaetetus* see, among others, J. C. Harrison, “Plato’s Prologue: *Theaetetus* 142a–143c,” *Tulane Studies in Philosophy* 27 (1978) 103–123; Tulli, in *L’ autore pensoso* 121–133; P. Stern, *Knowledge and Politics in Plato’s Theaetetus* (Cambridge/New York 2008); M. Narcy, “Why was the *Theaetetus* written by Euclides?” in G. Boys-Stones et al. (eds.), *The Platonic Art of Philosophy* (Cambridge/New York 2013) 150–166.

³⁰ Stern, *Knowledge and Politics* 17–23, claims that Euclides’ editorial choice of direct dialogue is a consequence of Megarian metaphysics, which denies the reality of any kind of change and particularity. According to Stern, the choice of direct dialogue diminishes “the temporal context preserved by narrativity” (19).

³¹ See Diog. Laert. 2.30.7: ὁρῶν δ’ Εὐκλείδην ἐσπουδακότα περὶ τοὺς ἐριστικούς λόγους, “ὦ Εὐκλείδη,” ἔφη, “σοφισταῖς μὲν δυνήσῃ χρῆσθαι, ἄνθρωποις δὲ οὐδαμῶς.” On the Megarians’ association with eristic see Narcy, in *The Platonic Art of Philosophy* 151 n.5. According to Harrison, *Tulane Studies in Philosophy* 27 (1978) 106, the “uninitiated” mentioned by Socrates (155E) could also include the Megarians, given their ideas regarding potentiality. In 163C–164C the issue of memory is part of Socrates’ attack on the Protagorean doctrine and the equation of knowledge with perception. The premises under investigation are: a) if one remembers something, then one knows it; b) one can remember something without seeing it; c) if one does not see something, one does not know it. The absurdity of the thesis is obvious. At the end of this argument, Socrates clearly distinguishes his methods from those of the logic-chopping sophists.

Theaetetus, Socrates keeps putting the premises of the ongoing arguments under scrutiny.

In light of the above, the thesis that Euclides is merely a passive transcriber of Socrates' account is at least problematic, inasmuch as it overlooks one significant factor: Euclides' prior knowledge and genuine interest in the subject-matter under investigation. In fact, this might be the very reason why Plato chose Euclides to act as a "surrogate author" in the first place; if Socrates had narrated his account to a layman with no prior knowledge of such issues, would this person be in a position to embark upon a dialectical discussion with himself? Or if he had, would this internal discourse be of a similar kind? One is reminded here of Theaetetus' confession (155C) that, whenever he comes face-to-face with puzzles similar to the ones posed to him by Socrates during their discussion, he experiences giddiness and confusion.³² Theaetetus is not yet able to deal with such matters alone and cannot tackle them by entering into an internal dialogue with his soul. On the contrary, at this stage he still needs Socrates' guidance in order to come to grips with them.

An additional remark should be made here concerning Euclides' aural perception of Socrates' account. Euclides does not reveal the exact way in which Socrates delivers his testimony to him—for instance, does Socrates narrate his account with no pauses, or does he ask Euclides' opinion on certain issues? Does Euclides interrupt Socrates' narrative to ask for further clarification? Bearing in mind Euclides' knowledge of the various issues raised in the philosophical conversation, and his familiarity with the Socratic method,³³ it would be reason-

³² καὶ νῆ τοὺς θεοὺς γε, ὃ Σώκρατες, ὑπερφυῶς ὡς θαυμάζω τί ποτ' ἐστὶ ταῦτα, καὶ ἐνίστε ὡς ἀληθῶς βλέπων εἰς αὐτὰ σκοτοδινῶ, "Oh yes, indeed, Socrates, I often wonder like mad what these things can mean; sometimes when I'm looking at them I begin to feel quite giddy."

³³ We know from the *Phaedo* (59C) that Euclides, along with Terpsion, belonged to the Socratic circle; therefore he was accustomed to Socrates' method of questioning and answering.

able to argue that, as well as being an active transcriber, he was also an active listener. Besides, if Euclides did not have a good grasp of Socrates' overall account, it would be harder for him to keep track of incongruities and omissions during the transcribing process. As Tschemplik rightly observes, "the only way we could know that we have forgotten something is if we have a good idea of the whole and therefore know when certain parts or links are missing or poorly connected."³⁴ That Socrates' narration must have sparked some kind of metadiscussion between him as the narrator/testifier and Euclides as his listener/recipient of testimony, is evident from Euclides' reference to Socrates' prophecy about Theaetetus in 142C–D, information which he does not include in his book but mentions to Terpsion.³⁵

In addition to entering into a dialogue with himself during the transcribing process, Euclides also discusses his doubts and concerns with Socrates and makes the necessary adjustments and corrections (ἐπινορθούμενη) to his text. Like σχολή, ἐπανόρθωσις is another highly valorized term that plays a major role in the main dialogue. One of the metaphors frequently used by Socrates to describe and visualize their investigation into the nature of knowledge is that of a circle; the interlocutors make a hypothesis, which they then examine and review, only to dismiss it in the end and return to the starting point in order to correct/revise it and continue their investigation. This procedure traces a circular movement that is very much akin to Euclides' editorial process.³⁶ In 167E–168A

³⁴ Tschemplik, *Knowledge and Self-Knowledge* 19.

³⁵ "And as I was coming back, I thought of Socrates and what a remarkably good prophet he was—as usual—about Theaetetus. It was not long before his death, if I remember rightly, that he came across Theaetetus, who was a boy at the time. Socrates met him and had a talk with him, and was very much struck with his natural ability; and when I went to Athens, he repeated to me the discussions they had had, which are well worth listening to. And he said to me then that we should inevitably hear more of Theaetetus, if he lived to grow up."

³⁶ See also 187A–B where, in prompting Theaetetus to revise an argu-

ἐπανόρθωσις is explicitly acknowledged as one of the most significant features of dialectic, and is emphatically juxtaposed with eristic:

ΣΩ. ἐν δὲ τῷ διαλέγεσθαι σπουδάζει τε καὶ ἐπανορθοῖ τὸν προσ-
 διαλεγόμενον, ἐκεῖνα μόνα αὐτῷ ἐνδεικνύμενος τὰ σφάλματα, ἃ
 αὐτὸς ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τῶν προτέρων συνουσιῶν παρεκέκρουστο.

SOC. in discussion he must be serious, he must keep on helping his opponent to his feet again, and point out to him only those of his slips which are due to himself or to the intellectual society which he has previously frequented.³⁷

Indeed, the reviewing and correcting process detailed by Euclides in the proemium serves to portray his book as the product of a long and painstaking process. As Gurd observes, “When an author talks about process, the text in which we read his account is a single but crucial window into the often ungraspable textual plurality that surrounds it.”³⁸ Euclides’ record contains a static and rigid written text; yet this text had to pass through various stages, with each ἐπανόρθωσις becoming a step in an escalating sequence, until it reached its final and crystalized form. Euclides’ book developed and changed *in* and *through* time. The significance of time in the construction of knowledge is touched upon on several occasions in the main philosophical discussion. As Socrates observes at

ment, Socrates employs vocabulary that alludes to textual correction: καὶ ὅρα δὴ νῦν πάλιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς, πάντα τὰ πρόσθεν ἐξαλείψας, εἴ τι μᾶλλον καθορᾶς, ἐπειδὴ ἐνταῦθα προελήλυθας. The verb ἐξαλείφω was a *terminus technicus* and was typically used to mean to “erase something from a public record.”

³⁷ A similar idea comes to the fore in 186B: “But their being, and what they both are [Burnyeat renders this: But as regards their being—the fact that they are] and the oppositeness to each other, and the being, in its turn, of this oppositeness, are things which the mind itself tries to decide for us, by reviewing them and comparing them with one another” (αὐτὴ ἡ ψυχὴ ἐπανιοῦσα καὶ συμβάλλουσα πρὸς ἄλληλα κρίνειν πειρᾶται ἡμῖν).

³⁸ S. A. Gurd, *Work in Progress: Literary Revision as Social Performance in Ancient Rome* (Oxford 2012) 7.

186B–C, some knowledge is acquired directly through the senses, and therefore possessed by humans and animals alike, but what goes beyond mere sensation (i.e. contemplating the “being” of things) demands extensive and meticulous training of which only human beings are capable:³⁹

And thus there are some things which all creatures, men and animals alike, are naturally able to perceive as soon as they are born; I mean, the experiences which reach the soul through the body. But calculations regarding their being and their advantageousness come, when they do, only as the result of a long and arduous development, involving a good deal of trouble and education (μόγισ καὶ ἐν χρόνῳ διὰ πολλῶν πραγμάτων καὶ παιδείας).

The association between time and knowledge is also conspicuous in the jury passage, mentioned above, where time is identified by Socrates as one of the factors that prevent the jurymen from being instructed about the events recounted to them by courtroom speakers and orators (201A–B):

The art of the greatest representatives of wisdom—the men called orators and lawyers. These men, I take it, use their art to produce conviction not by teaching people (τῇ ἑαυτῶν τέχνῃ πείθουσιν οὐ διδάσκοντες), but by making them judge whatever they themselves choose. Or do you think there are any teachers so clever that within the short time allowed by the clock they can teach adequately the truth (τούτοις δύνασθαι πρὸς ὕδωρ μικρὸν διδάξαι ἰκανῶς τῶν γενομένων τὴν ἀλήθειαν) of what happened to people who have been robbed or assaulted, in a case where there were no eye-witnesses?

Even though Socrates does not expand on the issue of time here, it can be inferred from what he says that, were it not for the time limit, the jurors could be better educated about the issues under investigation.⁴⁰ This is worth noting, as it clearly makes reference to the crucial role that time plays in the acquisition and construction of knowledge.

³⁹ On this passage see Polansky, *Philosophy and Knowledge* 169–171.

⁴⁰ See McMyler, *Testimony, Trust, and Authority* 16.

In light of all the above, Euclides' inability to recite Socrates' conversation with Theaetetus from memory should not be understood as a sign of his passive hearing and transcribing of the Socratic account but rather as an expression of self-consciousness which Euclides develops during the editorial process and his subsequent dialectical engagement with Socrates. We propose that by detailing Euclides' transcription process Plato wanted, among other things, to underline that Euclides gradually becomes aware of the fallibility of memory—perhaps even of the fact that his memory is not his greatest asset. It is within this framework that we could also understand Euclides' admission that, despite his diligent editorial work, what he has recorded is not the whole thing but *nearly* (σχεδόν) the whole thing.⁴¹

3. *Dialogizing the narrative*

Euclides' approach to the transcription reflects his anxious struggle to reproduce an accurate version of Socrates' testimony, but he confesses that he also took upon himself to make certain alterations and adjustments to it, not transcribing Socrates' words to the letter. More specifically, Euclides informs Terpsion that he omitted all the bits of narrative ("I said," "he agreed," etc.) between the speeches, thus representing Socrates speaking directly to his interlocutors (143B–C):⁴²

τὸ μὲν δὴ βιβλίον, ὃ Τερψίων, τουτί· ἐγραψάμην δὲ δὴ οὕτωςι τὸν λόγον, οὐκ ἐμοὶ Σωκράτη διηγούμενον ὡς διηγείτο, ἀλλὰ διαλεγόμενον οἷς ἔφη διαλεχθῆναι. ἔφη δὲ τῷ τε γεωμέτρῳ

⁴¹ On the significance of σχεδόν see also Giannopoulou, *Plato's Theaetetus* 25: "Of course, it is still possible that there were gaps of which he was unaware, and perhaps Euclides hints at this possibility when he says that he has got 'nearly the whole discussion in writing' (143a5). It is equally possible, however, that his qualification expresses modesty rather than concern over the completeness of the transcription. In the absence of any solid textual evidence to the contrary, it is preferable to think of the dialogue as the complete and accurate transcript of Socrates' conversation."

⁴² On the dramatic form of the dialogue and its dating see McDowell, *Plato: Theaetetus* 113.

Θεοδώρω καὶ τῷ Θεαιτήτῳ. ἵνα οὖν ἐν τῇ γραφῇ μὴ παρέχοιεν πράγματα αἱ μεταξὺ τῶν λόγων διηγήσεις περὶ αὐτοῦ τε ὅποτε λέγοι ὁ Σωκράτης, οἷον “καὶ ἐγὼ ἔφην” ἢ “καὶ ἐγὼ εἶπον,” ἢ αὖ περὶ τοῦ ἀποκρινομένου ὅτι “συνέφη” ἢ “οὐχ ὠμολόγει,” τούτων ἕνεκα ὡς αὐτὸν αὐτοῖς διαλεγόμενον ἔγραψα, ἐξελών τὰ τοιαῦτα

This is the book, Terpsion. You see, I have written it out like this: I have not made Socrates relate the conversation as he related it to me, but I represent him as speaking directly to the persons with whom he said he had this conversation. (These were, he told me, Theodorus the geometer and Theaetetus.) I wanted, in the written version, to avoid the bother of having the bits of narrative in between the speeches—I mean, when Socrates, whenever he mentions his own part in the discussion, says “And I maintained” or “I said,” or, of the person answering, “He agreed” or “He would not admit this.” That is why I have made him talk directly to them and have left out these formulae.

The introductory and capping phrases which Euclides omits (known in narratology as ‘attributive discourse’) serve to mark the transition from narrator-text to character-text and vice versa and are particularly useful when a dialogue is transmitted orally by a third person, unless the person who transmits it impersonates the interlocutors.⁴³ For instance, during the archaic and classical periods attributive discourse is to be found in most of the non-dramatic works intended for performance. By contrast, such marking phrases are typically omitted in texts intended for reading, because direct and indirect speech could be distinguished there by the use of punctuation marks.⁴⁴ Seen

⁴³ The introduction of Cicero’s dialogue *De amicitia* (1.3) recalls the *Theaetetus* passage: “I committed the main points of that discussion to memory, and have set them out in the present book in my own way; for I have, so to speak, brought the actors themselves on the stage in order to avoid the too frequent repetition of ‘said I’ and ‘said he’, and to create the impression that they are present and speaking in person” (transl. Falconer).

⁴⁴ Attributive discourse is occasionally omitted in performance-oriented poetry as well, and one can find a few such examples in Homer, Sappho, Pindar, and Aeschylus. On the introductory and capping phrases in Homer see I. J. F. de Jong, *Narrators and Focalizers* (Amsterdam 1987).

from this aspect, it is no coincidence that Euclides' comment on the cumbersome effect of such phrases concerns the written dialogue rather than its oral/aural text: ἵνα οὖν ἐν τῇ γραφῇ μὴ παρέχοιεν πράγματα αἰ μεταξὺ τῶν λόγων διηγήσεις. Of course, this is not to say that Euclides did not intend his transcription for oral presentation. His remark that the exchange between Socrates and Theaetetus is "well worth listening to" (καὶ μάλα ἀξίους ἀκοῆς 142D), most likely a reference to the ancient practice of reading aloud, could also be taken to refer to the aural reception of his transcription. This raises the question: if Euclides' editorial intervention complicates the aural reception of his written record, what is to be gained by restoring orality to Socrates' διήγησις?

When a story is rendered entirely in direct speech, it is not mediated by a narrative voice but through the voices of the characters, who both focalize and speak. This self-effacement of the narrator encourages the illusion of immediacy and the impression that events are unfolding in the *hic et nunc*. In this way, the dialogue preserves the vividness and expressive and evocative force that would be suppressed if it were narrated in the third person, in so far as connotative words and aspects, such as apostrophes, commands, and questions, as well as emotive words, are lost in indirect speech.⁴⁵ Moreover, the reader is rendered a witness to narrated events and is free to see and interpret things for himself without being guided to understand them in a particular way, influenced by evaluative comments from the narrator (e.g. He spoke *convincingly*; He replied *in an abrupt way*; He answered *using words full of irony*).⁴⁶ The significance of this point becomes clearer if we consider other Platonic dialogues, where the central philosophical discussion is narrated by Socrates to a friend or acquaintance. In

⁴⁵ M. Bal, *Narratology. Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*² (Toronto 1997) 46–48.

⁴⁶ On the function of attributive discourse in narrative see de Jong, *Narrators and Focalizers* 195–208.

the *Protagoras*, for example, one of the things that captures our attention is that Socrates does not merely narrate what was said at Callias' house to his anonymous acquaintance, but also makes several personal comments about the other participants, as well as about his own and Protagoras' intentions.⁴⁷

In addition, direct speech and *mimesis* in general have a 'dechronologizing' effect, which evokes the illusion of timelessness.⁴⁸ Every time we read or listen to the dialogue, we get the feeling that the conversation is unfolding in the here-and-now. The past becomes present not only for Euclides and Terpsion but also for us, as we adopt the role of an eyewitness and silent participant. If the dialogue is to be understood aurally, it is essential for the slave who reads it to impersonate the interlocutors and adjust his delivery to suit each speaker. In other words, we should envisage the slave's reading as being a sort of performance.⁴⁹ Of course, this does not presuppose the slave's understanding of the content of the dialogue.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ On this point see also L. Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago 1964) 58.

⁴⁸ R. Schechner, *Performance Theory* (New York 1988) 66 n.9. This would be in accord with the Megarian principles, according to which time has no ontological status; see Harrison, *Tulane Studies in Philosophy* 27 (1978) 103–123. On the importance of the dialogue form in Plato and its bearing upon understanding the philosophical content see e.g. A. Krenz, "Dramatic Form and Philosophical Content in Plato's Dialogues," *Philosophy and Literature* 7 (1983) 32–47; M. M. McCabe, "Form and the Platonic Dialogues," in H. H. Benson (ed.), *A Companion to Plato* (Malden/Oxford 2006) 39–54.

⁴⁹ N. Charalabopoulos, *Platonic Drama and its Ancient Reception* (Cambridge 2012) especially 146–154.

⁵⁰ We only have to think of Plato's *Ion*; in spite of Ion's claims to be Homer's interpreter *par excellence*, Socrates maintains that recitation does not presuppose understanding (see n.18 above). Giannopoulou, *Plato's Theaetetus* 24, defines the slave's performance as "mimetic" and contrasts it with Socrates' impersonation of Protagoras in the main dialogue. As she correctly points out, "the slave's impersonation may be termed 'mimetic' in the sense that the slave simply reads aloud others' words, gives voice to a voiceless script without having a deep or philosophical understanding of what he reads; his performance illustrates how perception falls short of knowledge. By contrast, Socrates' impersonation of Protagoras may be termed 'dra-

In the *Theaetetus* the slave remains entirely anonymous⁵¹ and there is a consensus that he is nothing more than a mouthpiece; he merely lends his voice to the three interlocutors without being able to comprehend what he reads. According to Blondell the slave is “a completely uncharacterized functionary, who serves solely as a mouthpiece or passive conduit of the discourse to his audience.”⁵² It would not be far-fetched to argue that the slave is in many respects similar to the uncomprehending readers in 163C who can see the shape of written words or hear what they sound like, but cannot appreciate what they symbolize, since this ability requires more than simple sense-perception. The example of letters (206A) sheds further light on what an uncomprehending reader is. When we learn the letters, we spend our time trying to tell them apart, both when we see them and when we hear them, so that we do not get confused when the single letters are combined into words and phrases, whether spoken or written.

Very often the slave has been put on a par with Euclides. To quote Howland: “the slave’s experience of reading as simply uttering the written word is well-matched with Euclides’ superficial understanding of the act of writing.”⁵³ A similar remark is voiced by Giannopoulou:⁵⁴

The reading of the dialogue by a slave complements Euclides’ passive transcription and reinforces the sense that Euclides and the slave are but dispensable intermediaries between Socrates as source of the conversation and the dialogue’s readers.

matic’ in the sense that Socrates invents and projects onto Protagoras arguments that he thinks the sophist would level at his critics, if he were present at the proceedings.”

⁵¹ The figure of the slave also appears in the *Meno*, even though there he is actively participating in the discussion. See Capuccino, *Ἀρχή Λόγου* 107–108.

⁵² Blondell, *The Play of Character* 305. Capuccino, *Ἀρχή Λόγου* 108, characterizes the slave as “voce neutrale o filtro trasparente.”

⁵³ Howland, *The Paradox* 45.

⁵⁴ Giannopoulou, *Plato’s Theaetetus* 23–24.

Taking into account what has been said above regarding Euclides' method of working, we believe that his role and function should be distinguished from that of the slave. Euclides transcribes the dialogue in stages and *κατὰ σχολήν*, using the very time that is conducive to reflection and thinking. This is in sharp contrast to the slave's reading of the book which is actually an *ἀσχολία* (literally "lack of leisure"). The slave is obliged to read the book (note the imperatives *λαβὲ* and *λέγε* in 143C) from beginning to end without any pauses, unless he is instructed to stop by his master and their guest.⁵⁵ Unlike the slave, Euclides and Terpsion are not in *ἀσχολία*, at least not during the performance of the dialogue. However, both seem to have been in that state and constantly on the move before their encounter: Terpsion had gone to the countryside and upon his return to the city was trying, without success, to find Euclides in the marketplace, and Euclides had met the mortally wounded Theaetetus on his way to the port and escorted him up to Erineus, around 15 km. from Megara. Having been on the go for a long time, the two men express their eagerness to rest, and it is their need (*δέομαι* 143A) and desire (*οὐκ ἂν ἀηδῶς ἀναπαυοίμην* 143B) for a break that prompts them to retire to Euclides' house. Even though *prima facie* one could argue that Terpsion and Euclides listen to Socrates' conversation with Theaetetus *κατὰ σχολήν*, Plato's predilection for the verb *ἀναπαύομαι*—used no less than three times in the proemium—instead of *σχολάζω* is significant and should not be overlooked.⁵⁶ In his *Politics*—the only other text apart from the *Theaetetus* where the notion of *σχολή* is extensively discussed

⁵⁵ *Mutatis mutandis* the slave appears to be in a position similar to the litigants and orators whom Socrates in the Digression juxtaposes with the philosophers (172D–E). As Socrates notes, when they plead at the bar, orators and litigants are always in a hurry, are obliged to talk about specific things, and their speech is addressed to a master. Comparing them to slaves (*ὡς οἰκέται*) enhances this association.

⁵⁶ *ἀναπαύεσθαι* *δέομαι* (143A), *οὐκ ἂν ἀηδῶς ἀναπαυοίμην ... καὶ ἡμῖν ἅμα ἀναπαυομένοις ὁ παῖς ἀναγνώσεται* (143B).

—Aristotle comments on the priority of leisure (σχολή) over unleisure (ἀσχολία) and introduces the notions of παιδιά (amusement/play) and ἀνάπαυσις (recreation). He points out that these two concepts should not be confused with leisure but rather be considered in relation to unleisure, inasmuch as both aim to cure and relax the pain and stress suffered during ἀσχολία.⁵⁷

Aristotle's remark is illuminating and assists with the interpretation of the somewhat peculiar ending of the *Theaetetus*. The dialogue closes with Socrates heading towards the King Archon's Stoa and, as noted above, it is not rounded off with the closure of the outer frame. This somewhat abrupt end that leaves the outer frame incomplete has been interpreted as Plato's attempt to highlight the passivity with which Terpsion and Euclides receive the dialogue.⁵⁸ Indeed, even though the two Megarians are not occupied with any menial tasks or other duties during the performance, and even though they do not seem to be in a hurry, Plato still does not present them as immersing themselves in the kind of thinking embraced by the condition of σχολή. The delivery of the dialogue is rather viewed as a remedy for their tiredness, a pleasant form of ἀνάπαυσις, and not as an opportunity for philosophical thinking and reflection.

Even so, we suggest that the two men should not be compared to the slave, and that each of them is engaged with the dialogue in a different way. Being the writer, Euclides knows the text and had the time to reflect upon it in the past. He also discussed it repeatedly with Socrates and developed, as we argued, a dialectical relationship with it. For Terpsion things are quite different in that, unlike Euclides, he is listening to the dialogue for the very first time. Considering that he was Eu-

⁵⁷ Arist. *Pol.* 1339a. See further Stocks, *CQ* 30 (1936) 179.

⁵⁸ Giannopoulou, *Plato's Theaetetus* 48: "The absence of a dramatic exchange at the end of the inner dialogue suggests the intellectual lethargy into which the slave's reading has plunged Euclides and Terpsion."

clides' friend, one would expect him to be more engaged with the epistemological issues raised by Socrates and more eager to enter into a kind of dialectical discussion with Euclides regarding Socrates' views. However, unlike Echecrates, who in the *Phaedo* pops up twice and interrupts Phaedo to ask for further clarification (88D, 102A), Terpsion remains silent throughout the delivery. Should we assume that despite his silence he enters into an internal dialogue with his soul? This could, indeed, be a possibility. Yet the way in which Plato depicts Terpsion in the proemium seems to undermine this hypothesis and rather encourages us to look on him mostly as a passive recipient. In 143A, for instance, Terpsion confesses that, even though he knew about the book and always intended to ask Euclides to present it to him, he let time pass: ἀλλ' ἤδη ἤκουσά σου καὶ πρότερον καὶ μέντοι ἀεὶ μέλλων κελεύσειν ἐπιδειῖξαι διατέτριφα δεῦρο. His negligence acquires special poignancy if we take into account that Euclides must have completed the book before or soon after Socrates' death, no less than nine years earlier. The casual way that Terpsion asks Euclides to narrate the account to him on the spur of the moment (ἀτὰρ τίνες ἦσαν οἱ λόγοι; ἔχουσιν ἂν διηγήσασθαι; 142D) leads to the same conclusion. As Harrison rightly observes, Terpsion's impulsive request "trivializes" the significance of what Euclides has heard.⁵⁹ Even though Euclides shows some willingness to scrutinize the dialogue (note the use of διέρχομαι at 143A: ἀλλὰ τί κωλύει νῦν ἡμᾶς διελθεῖν;), in the end he is overwhelmed by the dialogue *per se* and not by its philosophy. In Blondell's words (even though her remark concerns both Megarians), "Terpsion treats the reported conversation neither as a vehicle for ideas, nor as a stimulus to thought, but as a glorified specimen of philosophical gossip."⁶⁰ In light of this, his name proves to be a *nomen-omen*; Terpsion's only—or at least main—concern is τέρψις.

⁵⁹ Harrison, *Tulane Studies in Philosophy* 27 (1978) 119.

⁶⁰ Blondell, *The Play of Character* 306.

A further point is that Terpsion's inactivity and procrastination vis-à-vis the transcription contrast with Euclides' overactivity (visualized through his repeated travels to Athens). We suggest that the respective rest and unrest that characterize the two Megarians ingeniously reflects their engagement with Socrates' account. At 153B in the main dialogue, learning and study are visualized as motions of the soul, in so far as they are both processes that lead to change and transformation through the gain of new, and the preservation of existing, knowledge. By contrast, ἡσυχία, which stands for absence of study and learning, leads the soul to a state of rest:

ἡ δ' ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ ἕξις οὐχ ὑπὸ μαθήσεως μὲν καὶ μελέτης, κινήσεων ὄντων, κτᾶται τε μαθήματα καὶ σφίζεται καὶ γίγνεται βελτίων, ὑπὸ δ' ἡσυχίας, ἀμελετησίας τε καὶ ἀμαθίας οὔσης, οὔτε τι μανθάνει ἅ τε ἂν μάθῃ ἐπιλανθάνεται;

And what about the condition of the soul? Isn't it by learning and study, which are motions, that the soul gains knowledge and is preserved and becomes a better thing? Whereas in a state of rest, that is, when it will not study or learn, it not only fails to acquire knowledge but forgets what it has already learnt?

The point about forgetting in this passage is noteworthy, as it could offer a further explanation for Euclides' inability to narrate the dialogue from memory. Even though, as argued above, Euclides actively engages with Socrates' testimony during its transcription in written form, the knowledge he acquires during this process fades away because he has not engaged with the specific record for a long time. Hearing Socrates' exchange with Theaetetus once again enables him to retrieve the knowledge that he acquired in the past.

4. *Concluding remarks*

In this paper we concentrated on some of the nimble-fingered ways in which Plato uses the outer frame of the *Theaetetus*, with a view to underlining the significance of the prologue's dramatic details for a better and fuller understanding of the dialogue as a whole. We have argued that Plato uses the proemium: a) to introduce significant key terms (e.g. σχολή, ἐπανόρθωσις) and foreshadow several of the major

themes that he comes to grips with and tackles in the main body of the dialogue; b) to pave the way and prepare us, so as to be active readers of the ensuing philosophical discussion. The detailed disclosure of Euclides' editorial work and the different way in which each of the characters of the proemium (Euclides, Terpsion, slave) engages with and perceives Socrates' exchange with his young interlocutor provoke reflection upon various issues regarding the nature, construction, transmission, acquisition, and preservation of knowledge. As we have seen, one of the major questions that come to the fore in the *Theaetetus* concerns the epistemological status of testimony. Euclides comes face to face with the challenge to reproduce a faithful report of a conversation between Socrates and Theaetetus, narrated to him by the former just before his death. Far from being an easy and mechanical activity, preserving and understanding this piece of knowledge proves to be a tortuous and painstaking experience, which presupposes much time and energy.

Whereas by the end of the *Theaetetus* many of the questions regarding knowledge raised in the proemium and the main body of the dialogue remain unanswered, and we are left pondering on what knowledge is, we definitely know better. Just like Theaetetus, who during his discussion with Socrates manages to give birth to all his misconceptions, and like Euclides, whose experience with the transcription of Socrates' account makes him more aware of the fallibility of his memory and perhaps also of his ignorance on various other issues, we come to realize that knowledge is a much more complicated and complex issue than we often tend to believe. At 150C Socrates attributes to his midwife's art the power of testing a man and his opinions through questioning, so as to discriminate between what is true and what is false. Later on (158B–C) he asks Theaetetus for proof that they are awake, and not dreaming. In the case of Euclides, Socrates is not there to exercise his art, so in transcribing his testimony Euclides is left alone to battle with himself. Having internalized Socrates' dialectic, he enters into a dialogue with his own soul. If one thing, the *Theaetetus* makes clear that only through this internal and silent dialogue with

our soul can we approach as close to knowledge as possible for human beings. This applies not only to testimonial but also to perceptual knowledge, in so far as perception is often fallible and cannot be equated with knowledge.

All in all, Plato's whole strategy is exceedingly clever. Perhaps it is simply too clever, since it incites his readers to start thinking about and reflecting upon the nature of knowledge from the very beginning of the dialogue, even before the declaration of the definitional question in 145E–146A. What is most worth emphasizing, however, is that we can observe the Platonic dialectic in its full force in a seemingly common, even trivial, scene of everyday life. Indeed, its creativity and audaciousness are impressive, even for a philosopher who is a *maître* in creating lively scenes and spectacular images.⁶¹

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