

# THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL MODEL (καλὸς κἀγαθός) IN THE PLATONIC DIALOGUE *CHARMIDES*

CHRISTOS TEREZIS AND LYDIA PETRIDOU  
University of Patras – Hellenic Open University  
terezis@upatras.gr – petridou.lydia@ac.eap.gr

---

ABSTRACT. In this study we investigate the extract 154b8-156c9 from the introductory chapters of the Platonic dialogue *Charmides* so that to examine how the terms of Aesthetics are formed, which focuses on the selfhood and makes it the core of dialectics. Specifically, we structure our study in two chapters each of which includes two subchapters. In the first subchapter we focus on the soul, which in the Platonic text appears to be the criterion for moral perfectness. In the second subchapter, which systematizes the former, we show how Socrates contrives to do the transition from subjective judgments to logical propositions and the terms of the authentic Aesthetics. In the third subchapter, paying attention to the first communication between Socrates and Charmides, we discuss how the Athenian philosopher sets beauty within its true boundaries and activates the logical part of the soul. In the fourth subchapter, we follow the introduction in dialectics, which will lead anyone involved in truth. The main contribution of our study is that we show how in this dialogue Plato succeeds to go from vulgar hedonism to the beauty of the soul, which is a requirement for the inner transformation of selfhood.

KEYWORDS: *Charmides*, dialectics, soul, communication, temperance.

---

## *Introduction*

The Platonic dialogue *Charmides*, which is included in the first Period of Plato's literary activity, is a text that works with the method of nested stories, for Socrates is presented as someone who describes in an unknown interlocutor the argumentation on *sophrosyne* (temperance) developed between him, Chairephon,

Critias and the young Charmides.<sup>1</sup> From a historical point of view, the debate is supposed to have taken place at the palaestra of Taureas after the Athenian philosopher's return to Athens from Potidea in 432 BC. As Socrates appears to be a special counsellor of young men, the topic of the discussion focuses on whether there are any young men who excel at wisdom and beauty, or even both. The purpose of the Platonic dialogue is to form a definition on the virtuous behavior or a moral ideal that would combine Theoretical with Practical Reason and would be approached as the understanding of the relationships that need to be developed between the political factors.

Socrates' description in the first two introductory chapters (153a.1-154b.7) has revealed some terms of the transition from dialogue to dialectics and has introduced the first judgments about how the intellectual and moral quality of the young men is evaluated. In this study, we will focus on the extract 154b.8-156c.9, where these are exemplified even more.<sup>2</sup> The main question is as follows: how is the transition from a superficial discussion to the elaborating dialectics accomplished and how do we proceed from hedonism, which appears in many ways, to intellectual procedures that aim at objective definitions on virtues? Or, else, how is the transition from historical description to systematicity accomplished, which reveals complex intellectual procedures regarding how authenticity is approached. In a second level, we will investigate how in the context of this early Platonic dialogue the question on the moral integrity is raised, which is also the core of the Athenian philosopher's dialectics, and how in this field the priority is given to the soul, without however ignoring the importance of the body? What is the role of this distinction in the prolific communication between two interlocutors, where the first one, as more experienced, undertakes the responsibility of being a counsellor for a second person, who is presented as possessing some capabilities with regard to the criteria of the main question on virtue raised by Socrates?

Our study is structured in two chapters, one for the third (154b.8-155b.8) and one two for the fourth chapter (155b.9-156c.9) of the Platonic dialogue under elaboration, each of which is divided into two subchapters. The title of the first chapter is "From the body to the soul: the formation terms of the Aesthetics of the 'person'" and is divided into the following two subchapters: a) "Soul as the leading

---

<sup>1</sup> This is actually the basic topic of the *Charmides*, where temperance is the virtue to be defined. For a comparison of this attempt with other Platonic dialogues, which also aim at defining temperance, cf. for instance Ch. H. Kahn (1988) 541-549. Cf. also, M. Vorwerk (2001) 29-47.

<sup>2</sup> For an elaboration of this extract, cf. for instance, L. Lambert (2010) 157-169. For a more analytical approach, cf. Th. M. Tuozzo (2011).

criterion of moral perfection”, where we focus on Socrates’ famous skepticism expressed in every new research and we approach first and foremost the realism of his thoughts and the emphasis given on the criteria of objectivity in every question that is raised. We also investigate how the rest of the men interpret Charmides’ beauty and we attempt to present some judgments on the aesthetic-sensual atmosphere that is formed by following the Socratic comments. On this basis, we place the libertine social way of functioning of the Athenian society before the qualitative antibody of Philosophy, from which both the critical reason and the necessary ethical terms of communication might arise. The key question here is how we can define the concept of “person” as a unique being, regardless of its external characteristics. This is a question that also brings out, as it opens the fields of the debate, the social stereotypes of an era, which however have nothing to do with what Socrates seeks through his dialectical attempts. The entire discussion is intended, mainly by him, to show whether Charmides fulfils the conditions for entering into a communication with Socrates, which aims to transform him internally. b) “The priority given by public opinion to the empirical approach of reality”, where we attempt to show how Socrates succeeds in moving from empirical and subjective observations to the domain of logical propositions, which as such can potentially lead to the construction of a knowledge system that aims at truth. Or else, we attempt to discover how the Athenian philosopher undertakes the responsibility to take the gathered crowd from hedonism to the actual aesthetics and from the part of the thymos to the part of the logos. This is a path that clearly gives value and prioritizes the soul over the body, in the perspective of the beginning of the dialectical method to be followed.

The second chapter of our study is entitled “The first dialectical communication between Socrates and Charmides” and includes the following two subchapters: a) “A literary reference as a cause for approaching through debate Charmides”, where we first of all approach in a grammatical and syntactic sense Socrates’ monologue in the light of his first contact with the Athenian young man. We then focus on this first communication between the two interlocutors and on how the dispassionate teacher is currently affected by the young man’s beauty. This allows us to follow how he subsequently returns to the spirit of logic, in order to begin researching Charmides’ inner world. Particularly interesting is here how through a literary text Socrates approaches the young man. This is a highly inventive and educational way of setting from the beginning the terms and conditions of the communication and the philosophical debate. In this part of our study, we also attempt to investigate how irrational criteria are incorporated into rational approaches as a tool of achieving the final goal. b) “The strategy in which a channel of communication opens”, where we examine how Charmides re-

sponds in his own special way to dialectics and leads Socrates to undertake the role of a counsellor and teacher, in the sense of a person who can make possible the transition from hedonism to spirituality, which clearly requires a critical discussion with the participation of everyone involved. This part reveals the beginning of the dialectical method, which, even though it is still at an early stage, serves as the starting point for the course towards truth.

From a systematical point of view, the first and the third subchapter mostly describe the atmosphere in which the persons who are involved in the dialogue communicate. On the other hand, the second and fourth subchapter attempt to show how the communicative atmosphere can be transformed into a dialectical with synthetic requirements, sufficient for composing mental and semantic structures.

Finally, at the end of each chapter there is a table of contents that shows the conceptual richness and the multiple meanings and semantic structures built by Plato according to the content of these concepts. These tables allow us to reveal the depth of the philosophical development of this Platonic dialogue, which constitutes a stage in Plato's research-reflective maturation.

*1. From the body to the soul: the formation terms of the Aesthetics of the 'person'*

**A. Soul as the leading criterion of moral perfection**

At the beginning of the third chapter,<sup>3</sup> Socrates uses a metaphor to describe his incapability to express precise axiological judgments about the Athenian youth. Or, else, he admits that he is not capable of making objective comparisons and the relevant necessary exemplifications about the external beauty of the young men, by characterizing himself as a measure with no subdivisions for precise applications. The sentence “λευκή στάθμη εἶμι!” is a proverb, which comes from the building art and describes the lack of profession in a particular applied field. Expressions here are metaphorical so that to become more understandable and to form a pleasant psychological atmosphere. Accordingly to this analogical example of the white measure the whole phraseology aims for a short period –and this needs attention and, as long as it is necessary, so that the appropriate impressions and understanding to be formed– to keep the metaphorical sense, which either way is fascinating. This metaphorical sense could be detected in the following extract, which is obviously the source of the Socratic saying, which was widely used at that time: «Παροιμία λευκή στάθμη ἐπὶ τῶν ἄδηλα σημειούμενων κἂν τούτω μηδὲν συνιέναι. Ἡ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς λευκοῖς λίθοις στάθμη λευκή οὐδὲν δύναται δεικνύναι διὰ τὸ μὴ παραλλάττειν [...] Κατ' ἔλλειψιν δὲ εἴρηται ἡ παροιμία. Διὸ καὶ ἀσαφὴς ἐγένετο.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 154b.8-9.

Τὸ δὲ ὄλον ἐστὶ τοιοῦτον. Ἐν λευκῷ λίθῳ λευκὴ στάθμη». This somehow apophatism, even as a form of inability or failure regarding appropriateness, is more than obvious and reveals a sort of realism that has to do with the limits of the cognitive and communicative range of the narrator, either permanently or for a specific period. Modest skepticism is pervasive, a sign of that self-awareness which opposes to the arrogant selfishness.<sup>4</sup> It is actually a realism that results in semantic self-controls and expressive self-adjustments, quite important for the development of the discussion. At the same time, it will work as a pedagogical example for the rest of the interlocutors.

In fact, Socrates, since he intends to declare that Charmides was to him also handsome when he was younger,<sup>5</sup> elaborates a deductive syllogism, which most of the listeners or readers would accept as methodical or at least revealing his non-absoluteness as well as his extremely clear theoretical expectation for what is to come. As usual, he starts with a self-critical remark, according to which a human being is not capable of setting boundaries, limits and gradations in his judgements, that is, to structure them with the appropriate conceptual preciseness, which, if he had it, he would also be led to valid evaluations. So, he discusses the question on the criteria of objectivity and, by extension, of the truth, which appear difficult to be defined by both him and possibly any other man. Thus, it is explained that, while all young men seem to be handsome, he does not have the axiological requirements to distinguish the truly superior. The adverb “ἀτέχνως” here proves to a point his position and places it, under the terms and conditions already developed between the interlocutors, among the inaccurate requirements for this specific axiological attempt. Thinking inductively, Socrates con-

---

<sup>4</sup> On the self-knowledge in the *Charmides*, cf. R. McKim (1985) 59-77. On the relation of this self-knowledge found in the *Charmides* with the contemporary reality, cf. P. Stern (1999) 399-412.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Ger. Santas (1997) 131, who says on the persons with whom Socrates communicates that Lysis and Charmides were two handsome and well-known young men in Athens and only Alcibiades could compete them in beauty, intelligence and aristocratic origin. Critias, who was also an aristocrat, was Charmides' mentor and Plato's uncle, a poet and a politician. We have to mention here that Plato does not hesitate at all to evaluate even a relevant of his, regarding both the reasoning-conceptual tools that he uses and his political decisions-actions that follow. Besides, critical reason is more than obvious in his dialectical argumentation, without any discrimination or fear in relation to the meanings that would arise. However, it is indirectly expressed, which proves his quality. Therefore, Plato's reason becomes the regulatory example of morality and appropriate attitude, which may be combined with the values and directions of the Enlightenment, which obviously is opposite with regard to the dogmatism of the ideologies and the purpose of the individual and collective interests.

cludes that under these data it would be impossible not to consider Charmides handsome as well, obviously for he has in mind that this is commonly accepted and it is not just a strictly personal, different from that of the others, capability of his to evaluate.<sup>6</sup> So, he contends that he just follows the common opinion for approaching reality; therefore, he does not appear as someone superior to them. Since the Athenian philosopher draws the conclusion that Charmides should be naturally handsome, he adds basically physiognomic comments on that anyone interested could observe them and could confirm his conclusion. That is to say, he recalls that anyone who knew Charmides for a long time, regardless of their age, they truly admired him and felt attracted to him as he were a statue, which, note, presents a stable form integrity, at the same time as it represents a notable artistic talent with clear aesthetic extensions. Furthermore, some men had fallen in love with him, without any further explanation of the quality of this feeling, for instance, if it was of vulgar or aesthetic nature.<sup>7</sup> So, the criteria that are clearly set in the dialogues *Alcibiades I* and *Phaedrus* are not found here, at least for the time being.

The deductive with a number of clarifications conclusion of the philosopher with the support of the foundations developed in its microcosm becomes unassailable, since it is also confirmed by proved events as well as relevant repeated experiences. The verbs, expressions and adjectives that assist in an artistic sense Socrates' empiric conclusion («ἐρᾶν», «ἐρασταί», «ἐκπεπληγμένοι», «τεθορυβημένοι», «εἶποντο», «ὥσπερ ἄγαλμα ἐθεῶντο»),<sup>8</sup> confirm even further the conclusion. This is accomplished provided that they project various emotional states and a constant mobility or even ecstasy, intentional projections that seem to have been formed as soon as Charmides became the object of either a thorough or superficial evaluative observation of his fellow-citizens. Any psychological or emotional condition is framed by a number of various exemplifications in narration, at the same time as all those mentioned before have a common subject, so according to formal logic one could also investigate how unity can be evaluated in many ways. After all, they show how the observers loose internal control and rational order, which depended on everyone's resilience over that excellent view which they experienced and which challenged them, with the erotic phantasies being more than obvious here.

Gr. Vlastos, in the section entitled "Ἔρως καλός: its hazards for the boy" referring to some extracts from *Symposium* (183c.5-d.2) and *Phaedrus* (255a.4-6), contends the following: "However glamorized in the fashionable νόμος, the boy's role

---

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 154b.9-c.2.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 154c.4-6.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 154c.2-c.8.

remains risqué; he is placed in an ambiguous and vulnerable position. Still in his teens, emotionally immature, his character barely formed without seasoned judgment of men and the world, suddenly, if he happens to be *καλός*, he finds himself in possession of an asset in short supply and high demand, for access to which an older man will grovel at his feet, prepared to offer great prizes in return for 'favors'. Would he not be under the strongest of temptations to barter his new-found treasure in ways which would corrupt him?... On the scarcity of the *καλοί* within their age group we get some sense in the opening of Plato's *Charmides*: droves of youngsters in the palaestra and one *καλός*, all eyes on him 'gazing on him as on a statue' (154c)». <sup>9</sup> These critical –as well as metaphorical– comments refer to a social status quo particularly libertine –in fact, tending to vulgarization– and not co-operative with the purpose of a systematic and legally binding utilization of the Practical Reason. Therefore, what is further confirmed is that Socrates has to reach Philosophy as an antibody over the uncontrolled hedonistic arrhythmias appeared here. At least, he has to find a balance, possibly for reasons of a temporary moderation in direction. The dialectical opposition between the attitudes-evaluations chosen arises all along unreconciled, but it is up to the Athenian philosopher's intelligence to overcome it, a perspective that will have new results after the general spirit will change unexpectedly with the reference to the soul. This subject matter is quite challenging for moral topics, so it requires a particularly intensive strategy. In this way, the discussion will enter a new status quo with reconstructions and self-adjustments.

However, realism should be also preserved, so as to exclude any extremities. It is not logical to push within the unknown cores of the human interiority, one of which is the truly multi-potential eroticism. For some clarifications on these, one could read Yv. Brès, who occasioned by an expression of Alcibiades in *Symposium*, contends the following: «Le mot qu'emploie ici Alcibiade, "ἄγαλμα", semble bien désigner, dans l'oeuvre de Platon, et dans la langue grecque classique en général, beaucoup plus que le simple objet matériel qu'est une figurine ou une statue: il comporte une nuance d'admiration, de fascination et ce sont souvent des mots comme "fétiche" ou "objet magique" qui seraient la traduction correcte... Notre attention a été attirée sur la valeur toute particulière de ce mot par le Dr. Lacan. De fait, dans un bon nombre de textes de Platon, le sens de "fascination magique" paraît incontestable: *Charmide*, 154c; *Phèdre*, 251a, 252de; *Lois*, XI, 930e-931a». <sup>10</sup> It is to be mentioned here that according to the typical expressive statement, there

---

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Gr. Vlastos (1991) 246.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Yv. Brès (1973) 249.

is no religious representation by Plato and the style follows the rules of narration.<sup>11</sup> Yet, the context does not exclude that such a representation is implied.

A brief dialogical episode follows which will come to an end with the calling of Charmides, through a quite artistic planning, to take part. Chairephon starts this episode by addressing to Socrates. Quite impressive is the multitude of three adjectives used by Chairephon («εὐπρόσωπος», «ἀπρόσωπος», «πάγκαλος»),<sup>12</sup> to praise Charmides' beauty with expressions plain but full of predicates. The certainty is more than obvious, and indicates that he had personally experienced the young man's qualities. On the other hand, Socrates' laconic expression with the adverb «ὑπερφυῶς»<sup>13</sup> –which, in the sense of a clarification to the «εὐπρόσωπος», proves even further the view expressed by Charmides– is quite interesting for expanding the predicates. It reveals more meanings. Furthermore, the number of adjectives possibly reveals Chairephon's spontaneity, his tense attempt to persuade his interlocutor and possibly his inexperience on how a consistent argument is formed, as transcending –in the sense of meta-analytical and synthetic reduction– the immediate empirical phenomena. Regardless of these deficits, if

---

<sup>11</sup> The extracts quoted by Yv. Brès, describe the following: a) *Phaedrus*, 251a: «ὁ δὲ ἀρτιτελής, ὁ τῶν τότε πολυθεάμων, ὅταν θεοειδὲς πρόσωπον ἴδῃ κάλλος εὖ μεμιμημένον ἢ τινα σώματος ιδέα, πρῶτον μὲν ἔφριξε καὶ τι τῶν τότε ὑπῆλθεν αὐτὸν δειμάτων, εἶτα προσορῶν ὡς θεὸν σέβεται, καὶ εἰ μὴ ἐδεδίει τὴν τῆς σφόδρα μανίας δόξαν, θύοι ἂν ὡς ἀγάλματι καὶ θεῷ τοῖς παιδικοῖς». *Faidrus*, 252d-e: «καὶ οὕτω καθ' ἕκαστον θεόν, οὗ ἕκαστος ἦν χορευτής, ἐκείνον τιμῶν τε καὶ μιμούμενος εἰς τὸ δυνατόν ζῆ, ἕως ἂν ἦ ἀδιάφθορος καὶ τὴν τῆδε πρῶτην γένεσιν βιοτεύῃ, καὶ τούτῳ τῷ τρόπῳ πρὸς τε τοὺς ἐρωμένους καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ὁμιλεῖ τε καὶ προσφέρεται. τὸν τε οὖν Ἐρωτὰ τῶν καλῶν πρὸς τρόπον ἐκλέγεται ἕκαστος, καὶ ὡς θεὸν αὐτὸν ἐκείνον ὄντα ἑαυτῷ ὅσον ἀγάλμα τεκταίνεται τε καὶ κατακοσμεῖ, ὡς τιμήσῃν τε καὶ ὀργιάσῃν. οἱ μὲν δὴ οὖν Διὸς δῖόν τινα εἶναι ζητοῦσι τὴν ψυχὴν τὸν ὑφ' αὐτῶν ἐρώμενον· σκοποῦσιν οὖν εἰ φιλόσοφος τε καὶ ἡγεμονικὸς τὴν φύσιν, καὶ ὅταν αὐτὸν εὐρόντες ἐρασθῶσι, πᾶν ποιοῦσιν ὅπως τοιοῦτος ἔσται». *Leges*, IX, 930a-931a: «Γονέων δὲ ἀμελεῖν οὔτε θεὸς οὔτε ἄνθρωπος νοῦν ἔχων σύμβουλος ποτε γένοιτ' ἂν οὐδεὶς οὐδενί· φρονῆσαι δὲ χρὴ περὶ θεῶν θεραπείας τοιόνδε προοίμιον ἂν γενόμενον εἰς τὰς τῶν γεννησάντων τιμὰς τε καὶ ἀτιμίας ὀρθῶς συντεταγμένον· Νόμοι περὶ θεοῦ ἀρχαῖοι κείνται πᾶσιν διχῆ. τοὺς μὲν γὰρ τῶν θεῶν ὀρώντες σαφῶς τιμῶμεν, τῶν δ' εἰκόνας ἀγάλματα ἰδρυσάμενοι, οὓς ἡμῖν ἀγάλλουσι καίπερ ἀψύχους ὄντας, ἐκείνους ἡγοῦμεθα τοὺς ἐμψύχους θεοὺς πολλὴν διὰ ταῦτ' εὐνοίαν καὶ χάριν ἔχειν. Πατήρ οὖν ὅτῳ καὶ μήτηρ ἢ τούτων πατέρες ἢ μητέρες ἐν οἰκίᾳ κείνται κειμήλιοι ἀπειρηκότες γήρα, μηδεὶς διανοηθῆτω ποτὲ ἀγάλμα αὐτῷ, τοιοῦτον ἐφέστιον ἴδρυμα ἐν οἰκίᾳ ἔχων, μᾶλλον κύριον ἔσεσθαι, ἂν δὴ κατὰ τρόπον γε ὀρθῶς αὐτὸ θεραπεύῃ ὁ κεκτημένος». These extracts have different origins, which refer to those particular cases in which Plato was interested, which however cause common aesthetic experiences and relevant behaviors.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 154d.1-5.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 154d.3.



we remain in impressions caused by the phenomena, the sequence of the predicates as him being a judge seem obviously successful. At this point a thorough teacher-philosopher takes the responsibility of the discussion and leads it skillfully according to his own way (“ἐαυτῷ δοκοῦν”).

Since totally everyone agrees with Chairephon, Socrates describes a quality, which, if it truly exists, proves the acceptable as complete beauty of Charmides and justifies even more the relevant axiological comments. That is why the adjective “ἄμαχον”<sup>14</sup> is used, as well as the verb “τυγχάνει”<sup>15</sup> (here in the sense of “accomplish” after a personal course), which show how difficult is to find –or how necessary is to wait until to find– this quality in a human being and especially a young man. Both this expressive modes aim at founding what has been already stated, by adding a firm quality. We could generally contend that the methodology for the strategies to be followed in a particular case, need to be articulated in such a way so as to perform crucial reconstructions, which will prove that anything which takes place is something natural. The holistic model becomes intensive, and reveals the intention not to be inflexibly included in abstractive general comments. Yv. Brès, referring to Plato's medical knowledge, which will be discussed next, says about this preparation presented in the text: «Platon commence bien par voir dans la médecine une technique comme les autres, mais elle devant très vite, à ses yeux, une façon d'appréhender l'homme concret dans sa totalité. A lire, par exemple, certains textes de *Charmide*, on voit se profiler un point de vue que les modernes appelleront “psychosomatique” et même se faire jour l'idée d'une médecine qui s'identifierait à la philosophie ou à la connaissance de l'homme en général».<sup>16</sup> In the extract mentioned before, the Platonic holism is quite explicit, since it is explained how the founder of the Academy connects philosophical reflection with scientific knowledge, which is obviously considered to be multi-dynamic in its investigations, or else, a great spiritual achievement.

Critias, as a relative of Charmides, seems surprised and takes the floor to get to know the qualities of his. The spirit of the debate is now completely different, since it focuses on details that the interlocutors did not have in mind, with the exception of Socrates, who had spoken of philosophy as one of the most important spiritual and social goals, as contributing to a collective open perspective. However when the man to become a tyrant gets to know that they are speaking about the beauty of the soul, he immediately mentions, in our judgment unreasonably due to the seriousness of the evaluative positions mentioned here, that Charmides possesses it, by using two successive adjectives (“καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθός”),

---

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 154d.7.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 154d.8.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Yv. Brès (1973) 287-288.

which describe intensively the anthropological and political status of that era.<sup>17</sup> Socrates, which obviously is capable of detecting his interlocutor's tendency to confirm the information, attempts in the first place and before any response, to show that he agrees with him by praising his family, which originates from Solon, a great personality for the historical improvement of Athens in a number of fields, apart from the political and legislative one.<sup>18</sup> The reference to the greatest legislator defines the criteria that clearly are independent from any emotional or related with blood relationships limitations, they are quite objective.

Since Critias does not put his own word under a critique or thorough examination, it is necessary to be placed in the order of the objective and structured by sober interventions syllogisms, even by using an argument that generally is quite consistent, for the reference contributes to a point to a human's quality and is not a mechanistic way of reproducing or automatically repeating. Heredity is acceptable but an intense typical passing of the personal features from a generation to another during time is not explainable. Any judgments about the content and the estimations arisen from them are set under examination with regard to the results to be followed. Therefore, combining all those discussed before some questions arise on how we could define the social or historical person, given its natural origin. In an open perspective, human being, under the criteria of Enlightenment, has to be defined by individuality, uniqueness, unpredictability and unconventionality against standardization, so any conscious change of the typical course of the family or social standards is placed within the normality, democratic responsibility, purpose and desire. Otherwise, collective schemata with a time and culture distance arise not only from the rise of the Ancient Greek Enlightenment but also the liberal democratic political and state formations. However, the tradition of the glory of a family tree definitely sets the principles and the directions to be followed by the descendants. Socrates pays great attention on how he will deal with these, since their content is usually deconstructed by humans, for reasons of emotional or extremely conservative prejudices because of selfishness, especially when an evaluation of the values arises, which mostly as to their family genus, become obsessive.

In a greatly unexpected way, the Athenian philosopher makes a remarkable comment, which opens the way for a quite overturning argument at the same time as he requires an active presence of Charmides. An extreme reflection is suggested, which challenges, through the intense interaction of the words, interlocutors to make a critical reading of their selfhood. So, Socrates raises the question on why interlocutors observed first and foremost the young man's appear-

---

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 154e.4.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 154a.1-3.

ance, by remaining in his superficial qualities and forming analogous univocal axiological judgements.<sup>19</sup> And unless Socrates expressed some thoughts about the soul, due to the circumstances, the discussion would be limited exclusively to the physical appearance and the impressions caused by it, so hedonistic extremity or vulgarization would inevitably arise, and in fact immediately afterwards, so the spirit of Enlightenment would be annulled. One could argue that here Socrates' dialectical method appears, at least to an introductory point, who actually wonders, in a clearly flexible critically way, on why there was no suggestion to investigate first, or at least at the same time, Charmides' psychical depth in comparison to his physical beauty, obviously under the perspective of the axiological priority established.

We should parenthetically explain that there is no distinction here between being and appearance, for the external beauty is not presented as opposite or contradictory against those things which are formed in the internal world. The two conditions which are found in one hypostasis are clearly placed within the axiological horizon of Athens. Sociologically speaking, this is quite important, since it reflects how human being is evaluated as a multi-power person within a specific collective –and cultural– context. In addition, Socrates, who moves in this spirit, believes that this young man, at that age, would have a positive tendency for making discussions and in this perspective he introduces, once again according to his common strategy, the spirit of Enlightenment that was during the fifth century dominating in Athens and which he had placed in the highest position, by teaching in his daily socializing mostly the young men. So, in the philosopher's suggestion to invite Charmides in their gathering, Critias stresses the capabilities of the young man in philosophy and poetry, by using two adjectives that strengthen the general characterization («φιλόσοφος», «πάνυ ποιητικός»)<sup>20</sup>. In fact, the first adjective is explicitly stated, while the second is presented as resulting from the judgment of many evaluators including Charmides. Yet, we are not able to contend that Critias uses the term “philosopher” in the same meaning as Socrates does, which clearly gives priority to the rational criteria that stress the intention to overturn the conventional conditions<sup>21</sup>. However, with the expression that he uses, this protagonist shows that he follows Socrates' initial question.

---

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 155e.5-7.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 154e.8-155a.1.

<sup>21</sup> On how Socrates adds rational criteria in the *Charmides*, cf. W. Th. Schmid (1998), who also attempts an analysis of the traditional skepticism in relation with the question of self-knowledge and how this synthesis is connected with the knowledge of the Good and Metaphysics.

The Athenian philosopher then reminds once again Critias that his intention is not to elaborate negative evaluations about his family. On the contrary, he refers in its quality in really good words, since it originates from the glorious Solon; in this way he forms the context of a psychological euphoria for a discussion of topics that have to do with selfhood and spirituality, which are both connected with the institutional politics and legislative memory. He also expresses the judgment that Charmides could take part in dialectical discourses, although he was younger than the rest, with Critias being an enhancing factor for this kind of spiritual activity, who was a close relative of his and, because of their age difference, his custodian<sup>22</sup>. A question here is whether this presence will cause a psychological ease or hesitation to Charmides, because of his age as well. A criterion is also important to be established, which an intelligent young man cannot ignore. Socrates' spirituality and the demands raised by it in the interlocutors were extremely known in the Athenian society, so, anyone who intends to have a discussion with him had to follow specific principles on how they would structure and develop their thought. And obviously Charmides must have known his weaknesses that were due to his limited experiences and the fact that they were not enough for those synthetic judgments that a more mature man can make.

What follows proves the concern mentioned before. Specifically, Critias corresponds to the suggestion. But he also attempts to persuade Socrates to introduce himself as a doctor who is scientifically capable of healing Charmides' headache, in order to give the necessary and justified opportunity to this young man to participate in their discussion<sup>23</sup>. This is a quite brilliant thought, which Socrates accepts, since he can easily understand the young man's hesitation. Indirectly, it seems that Charmides as well as any other young Athenian man were not used to this sort of discussion, for they dealt with other activities, so it was necessary to form the appropriate psychological context which would challenge for new kinds of communication.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 155a.2-7.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 155a.8-b.6.

<sup>24</sup> The question raised here is whether there is a medical expertise or whether this is just a cover with strong evidence of objectivity. Yv. Brès (1973) 291, mentions: «Le jeune Charmide est là, entouré de ses admirateurs, et Socrate lui-même n'est pas insensible à ses charmes. Il s'agit d'aborder sous un prétexte décent. Or, justement, Charmide se plaignait d'avoir mal de la tête: Critias va faire passer Socrate pour un médecin». On the other hand, one should keep in mind how crucially medicine had contributed to the formation of the Philosophical Anthropology from the sixth to the fourth century.

**B. The priority given by public opinion to the empirical approach of reality**

Approaching in a more systematic way the former discussion, we would say the following: Socrates manages with two insightful comments to free the dialogic discussion –to which he is a protagonist– from its superficial empirical and subjective dependencies and to open a perspective for an intersubjective communication, which will exceed what is subjectively considered to be the empirical context and will seek for solutions on crucial topics in the field of thought, at the same time as it would provide stability as well as self-reliant and comparative categorical inclusions. Namely, he will attempt to structure a knowledge system, by insisting on the logical ramifications, which will also provide its structure and could detect to a point the prospects of transcendence as an inherent capability for reaching authenticity. In this direction, a limitation of nominalism or an attempt to be appropriately included in realism is inevitable.

The attenders ask the Athenian philosopher to judge Charmides' appearance having in mind his past empirical observations, since all of them can now see the person under evaluation. Nevertheless, they take the chance to use this discussion for a particular evaluation, to direct their interlocutor to think positively for Charmides by using exaggerating descriptions (“εὐπρόσωπος”, “πάγκαλος”, “πάνυ ποιητικός”). They intend to make the well-known dialectician to prove by his own evaluation their point of view. Socrates, however, since he is interested in discussing with a particular person who is able to deal with his dialectical method, asks them to inform him about the quality of this young man's internal world. He challenges them to transfer the subject from the axis of the external aesthetics to the internal one, which is established on dialects and feeds it for making possible a further investigation of consciousness with regard to those which are considered to be major in life.

The obvious thing here is the inactivity of the Athenians' spiritual investigations –at least for a short time– who make only empirical comments that aim at satisfying the eye or, in addition, hedonism. This is an aesthetic and tending to sense description, which remains, and in fact is annulled as to its possible critical resistance, to the limits set by superficiality and, by extension, to questionable evaluations with no continuity. It only meets the requirements of the inferior expression of the epithumetikon part of the soul. On the other hand, through his intellectual demands the gifted teacher who has just arrived exceeds the empirical-sensual observation and he obviously does not consider them as the only criterion for choosing Charmides as an interlocutor for a dialectical discussion to be done or the general approach of the current circumstances. Objectivity raises demands for taking initiative or even exclusiveness and, but those demands, attempts to expand the reflection, so as the spiritual capabilities to be revealed.

This perspective does not annul subjectivity but reveals in a special way the internal capabilities of particularity so as to involve even transcendence, as it was an a priori body of capabilities for actualizing the authentic.

In addition, Critias positive response to Socrates' question overcomes any possible hesitation of the famous philosopher to approach Charmides to make a discussion with him. However, at this point Plato's inspired teacher expresses a crucial comment for the result of the whole dialogic episode. Including him, he makes a self-critical statement, which needs further elaboration, in a level that will exceed sensory experience. That is, Socrates asks why the former discussion was just a starting point and remained to Charmides' external appearance and did not involve the "internal" one? Even Socrates himself, the leader of dialectical method, deviated for a moment from his usual "course", according to which he understood the young men as "soul and body", that is, in a holistic way, which corresponds to a great anthropological example, inspired by the principles of the Enlightenment, which considered the subject as the most important value. So, he raises a quite crucial question revealing of the social pathogeny: how easily can thought be disorientated from what composes essentially the world of the social presences-symbols.

Considering the Socrates' personality, we would contend that, in order to form this question, an internal debate with himself preceded, namely, a sort of self-investigation, which then was expressed in an aporetic way to his interlocutors as a collective responsibility-concern. Keep also in mind that we are still at the beginning of the dialectical process, which raises also demands on a structural articulation of the syllogism-arguments during the process of their functional course. Since Socrates' spirit starts to activate and reverts to his main critical and regulatory decisions, investigation on the rest becomes intense and the whole discussion goes from the temporal and sensible elements discussed before to the supersensible and intelligibly explainable points of an extended debate process. Reflection and reconstruction form a dynamic status of transitions of that which could be defined as reversal of the experiential meaning and existential teleological directions established to that point. The sentence «πάντως γὰρ που τηλικούτος ὢν ἤδη ἐθέλει διαλέγεσθαι» makes obvious the Athenian teacher's intention and final decision to discuss with the young Charmides, opening in this way the pedagogical dimension of dialectics as well. We could also contend that his decision to discuss mostly with young men was based on his intention to maintain his investigation unaffected, as far as possible, from the intervention of already formed stereotypes that the adults of his era had adopted. So, indirectly, Socrates has a critical attitude over the status quo and decides to make, in modern terms, a phenomenological investigation of the topics under question, that is, with no

conventional interference. The question is whether he will maintain this integrity, which includes a clear risk regarding the formation of topical syllogistic failures or he will use cognitive products that have already been formed, obviously however free from the current circumstances. Nevertheless, before the possibility that valid certainties will arise at the same time as dogmatic, simplistic and superficial opinions will be deconstructed, it seems that he will start the discussion by his own conscious experiences; the only thing is now to see if he will somehow include and in what way relevant experiences from other personal or collective fields.

Table of contents in section 154b.8-155b.8\*

|              |                                |
|--------------|--------------------------------|
| ἀγαθός:      | moral (1)                      |
| ἄγαλμα:      | artistic (1)                   |
| αἰσχρόν:     | aesthetic, moral (1)           |
| ἀκόλουθος:   | order (1)                      |
| ἄμαχος:      | martial (1)                    |
| ἀνεψιός:     | relative (1)                   |
| ἄνθρωπος:    | anthropological (2)            |
| ἀπρόσωπος:   | lack (1)                       |
| ἀσθένεια:    | condition (2)                  |
| βλέπω:       | epistemological (1)            |
| βούλομαι:    | volitional (1)                 |
| διαλέγομαι:  | dialectical (2)                |
| δοκῶ:        | epistemological (3)            |
| εἶδος:       | aesthetic (2)                  |
| ἐκπλήσσομαι: | emotional (1)                  |
| ἐπιδείκνυμι: | apodictic, epistemological (1) |
| ἐπίσταμαι:   | epistemological (1)            |
| ἐπίτροπος:   | guardiancy, counselling (1)    |
| ἐραστής:     | erotic (1)                     |
| ἐρώ:         | erotic (1)                     |
| ἐταῖρος:     | social (1)                     |
| εὖ:          | aesthetic, moral (1)           |
| εὐπρόσωπος:  | aesthetic (1)                  |
| ἡλικία:      | anthropological, age (1)       |
| θαυμαστός:   | aesthetic (2)                  |

---

\* In this section, we present the concept as it appears in the text, we then characterize it and within the parenthesis we note how many times it appears, namely the frequency.

|              |                               |
|--------------|-------------------------------|
| θεῶμαι       | : epistemological (2)         |
| ιατρός:      | scientific, professional (1)  |
| κάλλος:      | aesthetic (1)                 |
| καλός:       | aesthetic (4)                 |
| κεφαλή:      | anthropological (2)           |
| μέγεθος:     | aesthetic, condition (1)      |
| νεανίας:     | age, anthropological (2)      |
| νεώτερος:    | age, comparative (1)          |
| νοῦς:        | anthropological (1)           |
| οἰκία:       | constructive, residential (1) |
| πάγκαλος:    | aesthetic (1)                 |
| παῖς:        | anthropological, age (2)      |
| πέφυκα:      | cosmological (1)              |
| ποιητικός:   | artistic (1)                  |
| σμικρότατος: | quantity, comparative (2)     |
| στάθμη:      | measure (2)                   |
| συγγένεια:   | family (1)                    |
| θορυβοῦμαι:  | emotional (1)                 |
| τηλικούτος:  | quality (1)                   |
| φαίνομαι:    | epistemological (3)           |
| φάρμακον:    | therapeutic (1)               |
| φιλόσοφος:   | epistemological (1)           |
| ψυχή:        | anthropological (1)           |

## 2. *The first dialectical communication between Socrates and Charmides*

### A. A literary reference as a cause for approaching through debate Charmides

The fourth paragraph of the Platonic dialogue under investigation includes Socrates' first approach of Charmides and the preparation of the second one before the educational –and indirectly scientific– dialectics, which he is about to receive. This almost dominating method and teaching of the Athenian philosopher to any communication will challenge Charmides' ideology –in the broad sense– and the way in which he thinks and will attempt to make him investigate the appropriate and objectively established course for detecting the truth.<sup>25</sup> So, the methodologi-

---

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Ger. Santas (1997) 4, who stresses that the Athenian dialectician, regardless of who he spoke to, set the same goal: he spoke to the same men, raised the same questions, discussed with them in the same way and always ended to experience the same mixed feeling of success and failure. It is an endeavor that was not a part of an already formed expectation, which as such constantly appertain to the risk of a strategy that is not ex-



cal question as a system of strict regulating principles in the hierarchized sequence of thoughts, in relation to the theoretical goal set every time, will be gradually revealed. For the time being, the strategies which will exemplify the factors that will bring closer –regarding the emotions produced– the two interlocutors, as thinking and acting subjects and not as exponents of indefinite ideologies, which in fact can be also considered as complementary factors of the expressive means, have to be defined.

This paragraph, which begins with a monologue of Socrates,<sup>26</sup> describes the difficult, and quite challenging for derisive comments, attempt of the attendants to bring Charmides into their circle. Plato here takes the opportunity to show his literary skills and his ability to narration, since he describes as realistically and descriptively as he can the reactions-facts that took place, as expressive of the psychological conditions, either the existing or those that appear for a moment. The special importance of the narration is revealed by the verbs in comparison with the adverbs that accompany them, which structure their special modes, the world of the intentions and somehow transformations, the underground world of the arisen from the emotions-experiences meanings. Indirectly, they actually reveal a social critique, since they reflect in great precision the choices by habituation made by the Athenian citizens, which are clearly caused by criteria that, more or less, are based on hedonism or some tempting parameters. We believe that this is actually a sort of criticism on the degenerative tendency of the fourth century.

Eventually, Charmides takes his place between Socrates and Critias and the philosopher, who is delighted, loses the appropriate self-control («ἐνέβλεψέν τέ μοι τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἀμήχανόν τι οἶον καὶ ἀνήγετο ὡς ἐρωτήσων, καὶ οἱ ἐν τῇ παλαίστρᾳ ἅπαντες περιέρρεον ἡμᾶς κύκλω κομιδῇ, τότε δὴ, ὦ γεννάδα, εἰδόν τε τὰ ἐντὸς τοῦ ἱματίου καὶ ἐφλεγόμην καὶ οὐκέτ' ἐν ἑμαυτοῦ ἦν»<sup>27</sup>) and gets carried away by the young man's impressive external appearance. In fact, Socrates' emotions are described by Plato through the lines of Kydias, who compares the person in love with a deer full of admiration and the person who causes love as a lion, who paralyzes with his appearance any intellectual or emotional centers of self-control of the person who experiences the admiration and forms a condition of complete subordination. The deer actually is presented as even someone who ignores death before the lion<sup>28</sup>. Socrates is said to be feeling in this way since the moment

---

plicity objective, no matter how it is attracted by it. Socrates placed all these under the principles of rationality.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 155b.9 ff.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 155c.8-d.4.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 155d.4-e.1.

he focused on the young man's body. The metaphorical meaning of this analogy is impressive for its precision, regardless of the exaggerations made, given actually the famous sobriety-self-control of the Athenian dialectician and the criteria in which he approached his interlocutors to examine in a rational way the data derived from experience and the current perceptions.

Gr. Vlastos, having in mind Socrates' personality and how he communicated, contends the following: "Socrates knows well enough that at times a desire may flare up momentarily contrary to one's judgement of what is best: he would hardly be human if he did not. What he will not concede is that such desire may persist in the face of reason's veto. Thus in the *Charmides* catching a glimpse 'of the inwards of the garment' of the seductively beautiful boy, Socrates is 'inflamed and is beside himself', losing his customary self-possession, 'barely able' to converse coherently with the boy (155 D-E). But a moment later he has recovered his balance: no sign of the least abatement of Socrates' usual composure throughout the rest of dialogue. They part with cool, ironically flirtatious, banter"<sup>29</sup>. We need to assume that a different strategy arises here in a quite creative way. Socrates' description forms hypotheses on the attitude of the rest, which clearly is more extreme, since the range of their expressions are constantly affected by the current circumstances. The Athenian dialectician represents this current collective reaction and leads to more general conclusions. In addition, we may not exclude that Socrates illuminates how regularity can interfere, which gradually is invited to transform a sensual attraction of a single person and to include it in a world that intends to incorporate the development of the expectations of the Enlightenment into eternally updated conditions, presences, relationships or institutions of any kind.

The order and self-control of the Athenian teacher are, to a point, recovered on the occasion of a question raised by Charmides. This parameter challenges different procedures-references and provides to Socrates the opportunity to bring to the surface the world of meanings that he is aware of in a broader sense, namely, to detect the selfhood of his interlocutor through a gradually developing philosophical discussion. At this point, an interlocutory episode follows the monologue and changes the general spirit. Note that Socrates does not deal from the very first moment and directly with his great discomfiture, as appears in Plato's expressions («μόγισ»<sup>30</sup>). After a brief discussion, however, the dialectician regains the accuracy of his expressions and ends the paragraph with a monologue and

---

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Gr. Vlastos (1991) 87.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 155e.3.

two questions<sup>31</sup>. As a whole, though, the developing emotional scheme is about to be relieved as it meets with realism, since transformations cannot be accomplished in terms of behavioral automatism. An unnatural condition would arise in relation with how communication has been formed to this point.

The remedy is the stimulus of the discussion, since Socrates knows that it can heal his interlocutor.<sup>32</sup> It is actually a product composed by an herb and some magic lines, which are characterized as “epodos” (incantation).<sup>33</sup> Plato shows the unpredictable nature of their metaphysical result in the most effective way by using the verb «τυγχάνω» in the expression «οἶα τυγχάνει οὐσα»,<sup>34</sup> with the first word indicating a special capability formed in terms of ingenuity. The incarnation is an expedient that Socrates uses to bring discussion into his own goal, at the same time as it reveals how people were educated in studying and expressing back then. Furthermore, the fact that Socrates presents a great piece of literature is a typical example of the spiritual peoples’ and mostly Plato’s as a talented poet artistic tendency and aesthetic evaluation. The Athenian dialectician explains to Charmides that, as the good doctors heal all the body to heal a specific injured part of it, similarly this remedy will not just heal his head. Excluding the problem of a part, the intervention can heal the whole.

Yv. Brès, including what is here said in the general theoretical spirit of the dialogue, elaborates a long description, a part of which we shall quote, since it is appropriate to exemplify Socrates’ endeavor: «A travers des scènes plaisantes qui donnent un tour badin à la discussion sur la σωφροσύνη on voit alors se profiler une médecine qui n’a vraiment rien de technique. Socrates commence par parler d’un remède (φάρμακον) contre le mal de tête qui consiste en une plante dont l’action n’est efficace que si elle accompagnée d’une incantation»<sup>35</sup>. The breakthroughs of that era in the field of medicine are more than obvious in the text under elaboration and reveal a holistic way of approaching human organism. Nevertheless, in this healing process there are also some irrational points, or at least incompatible with the intellectual general spirit that was formed. So, the need for some magical lines for the healing appears also in the expression «ἄνευ τῆς ἐπωδῆς οὐδὲν ὄφελος εἶη τοῦ φύλλου».<sup>36</sup> Indirectly, it arises that the holistic example, which is not strictly defined as to the expected details, includes all these

---

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Ger. Santas (1997) 115-116, and 118, where the details on Socrates’ method of questions are analyzed.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 155e.5-8.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 156b.1.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 156b.1.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Yv. Brès (1973) 291.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 155e.7-8.

things that have to do not only with the strict science but also with factors that work in a somehow magical way upon the human existence, at least when it suffers from a disease.

From the communicative point of view, it is obvious that the discussion is still in the level of identification, completely normal in a dramatization that aims to be a realistic one. It is also remarkable how Plato manages to describe the fame of the greatest Athenian philosopher, mostly among the young men. The verb «ἀδίκῳ» used by Charmides as a brief reply of Socrates<sup>37</sup>, who raises the question on how he knows him, shows clearly how important was this dialectician thinker for the Athenian society and, basically, the Athenian youth. This is also proved in a factual way and, in fact, universally and has nothing to do with obsessional axioms, or a typical-conventional politeness. Besides, in an open society –clearly different from what takes place in the fourth century– this fame is not something out of the ordinary. It is a common place, which also reveals how a good receives collective characteristics and not by choice of a single one social group or order with a special direction. Socrates was willing to offer his spiritual help to any young man, regardless of his ancestry or skills –and this is where we should bear in mind his maieutic dialogue with the slave in the *Meno*–, so the whole spirit moves normally and with expectations to be proved regarding his evaluative praise by the attenders.

In conclusion, we would contend that to this point of the argumentation the foundations of a philosophical discussion have been established, during which Socrates' dialectical and maieutic method are to be revealed. At least the psychological preparing terms have been formed, so the subject-matter gets a clear epistemological nature, even by means of narration and the analogies of the descriptions that he artistically uses. Therefore, we could argue that there are arguments coming from different fields and regardless of their rational basis, in order the purposes to be accomplished to become approachable. Human organism has to be completely activated, so that the dialectical discussion to come to the appropriate conclusions, which will reveal a somehow intellectual healing.

Furthermore, the reference to medicine as a science of a strict diagnosis and anatomy is a typical example of the regulating principles that have to rule method as well, so as to have a scientific character, at the same time as Plato provides some additions to the general spirit of the enlightenment and humanism that he identifies in research, so as to avoid prejudices and superstitions on how the medical tools-remedies are used or their healing intervention. In fact, we could generalize our comments on the social functions-effectiveness of the rest sciences,

---

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 156a.6

which obviously aim at reconstructing in better terms Athens on the basis of the requirements of rationality. The optimistic spirit of the urban democracy clearly aims at the development of sciences, not only to correspond to the research admiration but also to improve the life of the citizens, so as to be able to participate easily in the cultural and entertaining institutions or even to form them. The middle question raised here is whether Plato is optimistic about the development of things in the fourth century. However, using irrational modes possibly raises some questions about the standard position of science, that is to say, the non-absolute nature of its implementation, or the presence of even more prejudices<sup>38</sup>. Is it, however, possible, that another thing revealed is the great contribution of the religious values, which are identified as capable of causing an internal change that could transform and make better the strength of healing from a disease?

### B. The strategy in which a channel of communication opens

Attempting to place the former discussion in a more systematic methodological and philosophical context, we have to mention first of all that the remarkable external beauty of the young man does not allow –even in the context of a strategy–, in the first level of the encounter, the protagonist of the Platonic dialogues to proceed in precision and with ease his rational reflection. The impressive thing is actually that Charmides will free him from this difficult situation, which turns into that person who will start a communication with him and the rest interlocutors, since he will be self-transformed by his capabilities into a deliberative dialectical partner. This prospect helps Socrates to regain almost immediately his self-control and to begin to systematize his reflection according to his usual practice, which makes him a critical reader-interlocutor-investigator-reformer of the current circumstances. The question is to what extent we can identify here a strategy of Socrates, in order to show the process of transformation of the hedonistic criteria into spiritual, or the conscious differentiation in a man of the ways of thought-intention that he usually chooses. If so, then we can obviously discuss the internal dialectics which comes before of that of the interlocutors, a require-

---

<sup>38</sup> On the medical treatment, Yv. Brès (1973) 291, contends the following: «Il semble se comporter comme le plus banal des guérisseurs. Mais n'est-ce pas un jeu donné personne n'est dupe, et qui ne signifie rien de bien précis quant à l'attitude de Platon envers la médecine populaire? On peut se le demander. Voici, cependant que le point de vue se transforme: ce remède, Socrate le tient d'un médecin thrace, qui l'a lui-même appris de Zalmoxis, lequel professe toute une théorie, quasi-philosophique, de la thérapeutique». The concept of “somehow” can be explained in many ways, for instance, in a skeptical way or in crucial one with regard to what follows.

ment that for Socrates is non-negotiable, since it is connected with self-knowledge.

The first preliminary action of the intelligent educator of Athens is to investigate his interlocutor's intentions as well as his willingness-ability to co-operate. The expression «ἐάν με πείθῃς ἢ κἄν μη;»<sup>39</sup> is used to describe the first impression of his character as an aspiring interlocutor, so that in a short time the first evaluation of the topics to be discussed to become possible. Despite the fact that the entire atmosphere is still relaxed and cheerful, the emphasis given to persuasiveness defines a status of argumentative commitments, without which the discussion will not ensure mutuality and will follow a one-dimensional direction. So, the answer to this question will determine whether the young Charmides can accept what his interlocutor has to say and whether he intends to follow him in order to accomplish together a common goal, as it is the healing of a headache and, by utilizing the healing, the identification of truth to that question which will be raised later. The healing from the practical-applied level will constitute a theoretical term of approaching things. Socrates' conclusions on this question are quite important for the future dialectical process, which requires the subjects of communication to have the same mood and to be released from dogmatism, critical judgment and not just uncritical acceptance. The Athenian philosopher's interlocutor seems, considering his age, that he possesses both of these required qualities and that he is familiar with the fame of the erudite teacher, which will empower an as far as possible better understanding of his reflection and at least a satisfactory encounter with it.

On the other hand, Socrates, immediately after presenting a well-ordered argumentation for the healing of the part and whole, raises a question, by which he attempts through a logical process to distract his interlocutor's agreement with his suggestions. That is to say, he addresses a critical question to Charmides on whether he agrees or not with his reflection. The question obviously serves two goals. First of all, it attempts to avoid a conceptual confusion and to open the possibility of answer to other questions. With the appropriate procedures this process will result in some valid logical extensions, typical of the structured consciousness of the interlocutors. Secondly, it will make possible for the person who speaks –through this type of questions– to understand whether the would-be dialectical partner has followed all the steps of his argumentation, without logical or conceptual gaps and whether he eventually agrees with the goals that form a particular cognitive effect.

---

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Charmides*, 156a.3.

At this point the analogy of the examples brings to the light an ontological parameter: many areas of being have common characteristics, regarding both the substance and properties and relationships, and this is the reason why they can be included in common conceptual categories. Under these conditions, the interlocutor will have no possibility –or the dialectical right– to question Socrates' argument, since he has already accepted it as to its source. Dialectical reflection, therefore, which ensures the required principles, depending on the topic discussed, establishes its rational validity, but on a basis that involves a thorough agreement and has entrenched a regulatory course of thought. At this point of the Platonic work, however, there is only a “conventional” discussion of those who share their concerns, which describes a discourse of not special reconstructive requirements. The reasons are two: first of all, the requirements for an actual complete agreement have not been yet formed and, secondly, this great topic to be discussed and the obviously objective truth that accompanies it through the successive dialectical steps that would reach a more mature thought have not yet been revealed. Besides, the beginning is still at the level of detections, which first and foremost have to restrict the intensity and superficiality of the enthusiasm about finding the truth. Dialectics means reflective judgments, even in ways in which the emotional world should be adjusted, both in itself and in how it will open channels of communication with the intellectual standards. The principle of any anthropological univocity in how the reasoning is expressed has no power here, since not only is by definition axiomatic or even dogmatic but also because it is possible that it would lead to questionable schemata, for it would not have the appropriate support by the multiple, the somehow necessary, readings. It should be also mentioned, here as well, that Socrates by following a phenomenological approach attempts to form a pure consciousness and its effects, without any naturalist, in a manner of speaking, considerations.

Table of contents in section 155b.9-156c.9

|                     |                                      |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| αἰσθάνομαι:         | anthropological, epistemological (1) |
| ἀκούω:              | anthropological, epistemological (1) |
| ἀπορῶ:              | investigating, dialectical (2)       |
| γελῶ:               | emotional (1)                        |
| γέλως:              | emotional (1)                        |
| δοκῶ:               | epistemological, doxastic (2)        |
| δύναμις (δύνασθαι): | ontological (1)                      |
| ἐνδείκνυμι:         | apodictic, epistemological (1)       |
| ἐπίσταμαι:          | epistemological (3)                  |
| ἐπωδῆ (ἐπάδοι):     | artistic (5)                         |

|                |                                      |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| έρωτῶ:         | dialectical, epistemological (2)     |
| ἡλικιώτης:     | anthropological, age (1)             |
| θεραπεύω:      | therapeutic (3)                      |
| θρασύτης:      | moral (1)                            |
| ιατρός:        | scientific, professional (1)         |
| ἱμάτιον:       | sartorial (1)                        |
| ἰῶμαι:         | scientific, therapeutic (2)          |
| καλός:         | aesthetic (1)                        |
| κεφαλή:        | anthropological (4)                  |
| λόγος:         | logical, expressive (2)              |
| μέμνημαι:      | epistemological (1)                  |
| οἶμαι:         | epistemological/ doxastic (1)        |
| ὄμμα:          | anthropological, epistemological (1) |
| ὄνομα:         | predicative (1)                      |
| ὀφθαλμός:      | anthropological, epistemological (3) |
| παῖς:          | anthropological, age (2)             |
| παλαίστρα:     | athletic (1)                         |
| παρρησιάζομαι: | linguistic (1)                       |
| πειθω:         | argumentative (2)                    |
| σοφώτατος:     | epistemological (1)                  |
| σῶμα:          | anthropological (2)                  |
| φάρμακον:      | therapeutic (4)                      |
| φύλλον         | : natural, therapeutic (2)           |

### Conclusions

Since in this study we discussed the terms in which we enter the dialectical method and how the transition from the beauty that is the object of the corporeal eros to that of the soul, which can be the ground for internal transformations, is accomplished, not only we brought into light the way in which we go from historicity of the social readings to the theoretical systematicity but also Socrates' main suggestion for forming a new order of things in Athens. This suggestion makes philosophical approach a basic parameter in the sense of a combination of the Theoretical with Practical Reason in the field of the socio-political actions.

So, assuming that the dialogue and the more complex dialectics that appears as both its development and the crucial basis for forming definition on great virtues constitute a particular aporetic system, we could contend that the introductory chapters of *Charmides* can reveal –at least indirectly– the principles of this system. This is due to the fact that this dialogue reflects in the introductory chap-



ters in a precise way the transition from the persons to their conceptual performances.

In addition, taking into account that the dialogue is for Plato the way in which the readers are introduced in the dialectical process in a somehow reconstructing experiential way, in order to approach through this method step-by-step complex definitions of concepts-virtues, which compose the substrate and the goal of a discussion, another thing to be further investigated is whether and in what degree this introduction in the process of forming definitions on a virtue which are presented in an early Platonic dialogue is the same or a different one in comparison to the middle and late dialogues of Plato. Extending this, we could also investigate whether there could be proved since the introductory chapters a proleptic reading of *Charmides* in relation to the later Platonic works. In our view, this study has provided the tools for this kind of research, which could give us an answer to whether the didactic meaning of a Platonic text requires combinations or, on the other hand, whether a single Platonic dialogue can work independently from the others with regard to the provided definitions, that is to say, to be sufficient on its own for a gnoseological-logical performance of this type, without the need to be supported by any other Platonic dialogue. Our estimation is that the *Charmides*, at least to this point mostly from a narrative perspective, is all-in-all included in what can be defined as Plato's Epistemology.

#### REFERENCES

- Brès Yv. (1973) *La psychologie de Platon*. Paris.
- Kahn, Ch. H. (1998) "Plato's Charmides and the Proleptic Reading of Socratic Dialogues," *The Journal of Philosophy* 85/10, 541-549.
- Lambert, L. (2010) *How Philosophy became Socratic: A study of Plato's Protagoras, Charmides, and Republic*, Chicago-London.
- McKim, R. (1985) "Socratic Self-Knowledge and 'Knowledge of Knowledge' in Plato's Charmides," *Transactions of the American Philological Association (1974-2014)* 115, 59-77.
- Santas, Ger. (1997) *Σωκράτης: Φιλοσοφία στους πρώιμους διαλόγους του Πλάτωνα*. Trans. in Greek D. Vouvali. Athens.
- Schmid, W. Th. (1998) *Plato's Charmides and the Socratic ideal of rationality*. New York.
- Stern, P. (1999) "Tyranny and Self-Knowledge: Critias and Socrates in Plato's Charmides," *The American Political Science Review* 93/2, 399-412.
- Tuoizzo, Th. M. (2011) *Positive Elenchus in a "Socratic" Dialogue*. Cambridge.
- Vlastos, Gr. (1991) *Socrates. Ironist and Moral Philosopher*. Cambridge-New York.
- Vorwerk, M. (2001) "Definitions of ΣΩΦΡΟΣΥΝΗ in Plato's Charmides and in Plotinus Enneads 1.2 (19)," *The American Journal of Philology* 122/1, 29-47.