

What's Wrong with These Cities? The Social Dimension of *sophrosune* in Plato's *Charmides*

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THE DRAMATIC SETTING and the dramatis personae of the *Charmides* strongly evoke the world of late fifth-century Athenian politics. The discussion Socrates narrates takes place the day after his return from a battle at Potidaea at the very start of the Peloponnesian War;¹ his two main interlocutors in that discussion, Critias and Charmides, will play leading roles in the bloody oligarchic regime that rose to power after Athens' defeat nearly three decades later.² Furthermore, the virtue the three of them discuss, *sophrosune* (temperance, moderation, sound-mindedness), also has strong political associations: it was a central element in the self-understanding and propaganda of the oligarchic faction to which Critias and Charmides belonged.³ The philosophical discussion of the various definitions proposed of *sophrosune* in the course of the dialogue, however, for the most part avoids explicitly addressing the social and political dimensions of this virtue. Much of the discussion seems, rather, to concern epistemological issues at some remove from the public sphere.⁴

¹ The battle is not precisely datable; it must fall somewhere between 432 and 429. For a careful discussion of this question, and an argument for summer 431, see G. Bloch, *Platons Charmides* (Tübingen: diss. Eberhard-Karls-Universität, 1973), 12–15.

² In addition, the minor character who brings Socrates and Critias together, Chaerephon, later went into exile with the democratic party when the Thirty came to power. (On the amicable interaction of Chaerephon, Critias and Socrates as meant to contrast with their later political differences, see B. Witte, *Die Wissenschaft vom Guten und Bösen* [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter and Company, 1970], 50.)

³ Cf. H. North, *Sophrosyne, Self-Knowledge and Self-Restraint in Greek Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), c. 3; Witte, *Die Wissenschaft*, cc. 1–3, and G. Grossman, *Politische Schlagwörter aus der Zeit des Peloponnesischen Krieges* (Zurich: Leeman A.G.; reprint: New York: Arno), 126–137.

⁴ The classic treatment of these in English is T. Tuckey, *Plato's Charmides* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951). (Tuckey draws on the fundamental discussion of C. Schirlitz, "Der

At two critical moments in the dialogue, however, the social dimension of *sophrosune* does irrupt into the discussion. At the culmination of his discussion with Charmides, and again at the culmination of his discussion with Critias (which forms the culmination of the dialogue as a whole), Socrates abruptly shifts to the social level in order to evaluate a proposed definition of *sophrosune*. These definitions are put to the test by considering a city governed by *sophrosune* (as in either case defined). In both cases the examination of Socrates' hypothetical city has the effect of discrediting the associated definition of *sophrosune*—in the first case, because the city governed by it would not be “well governed”; in the second, because, although the citizens of the hypothetical city may be happy, their happiness would not result from the city's *sophrosune* as such. In both cases, then, it is the failure of *sophrosune* (as defined) to conduce to the well-being of the city, in a way that both parties to the discussion agree that it should, that leads to the rejection of the proposed definition.

The social context in which Socrates places the most important definitions offered by his two interlocutors does more than allow Socrates to consider, on a social scale, the benefits of *sophrosune* as so defined. It also enables him to raise the question of the proper social relationship between *sophrosune* and the other crafts or kinds of knowledge practiced in a city. This question is first raised in Socrates' discussion of the first hypothetical city with Charmides. When Critias takes over as interlocutor, Socrates continues the investigation into the relationship between *sophrosune* and other kinds of knowledge, but for the most part in purely epistemological terms that abstract both from social context and from all considerations of benefit. The discussion of the second hypothetical city at the end of that conversation returns the question to its social context: the relations between the different sorts of knowledge are investigated via their reflection in the social relations existing between the persons that practice them. The two hypothetical cities thus allow Socrates to consider, within a social context, both questions concerning the benefit *sophrosune* produces (and for whom) and questions concerning its relation to other sorts of knowledge. It is in these discussions, then, that we find the dialogue's most direct contribution to some of the most important questions of Plato's earlier dialogues.

It is my purpose in this essay to examine the treatment of the social dimension of *sophrosune* in the *Charmides* in order to sketch the answers to these questions that, I hope to show, the dialogue provides. This sketch will necessarily be incomplete; a more nearly complete account of this dialogue's contribution to these questions would need to integrate the present study's results with

Begriff des Wissens vom Wissen in Platons *Charmides*,” *Jahrbücher für classische Philologie* [1897]: 451–76, 513–37.) For more recent discussions see note 29 below.

an interpretation of the abstract epistemological and metaphysical arguments that loom so large in the dialogue. Indeed, it is my hope that the results of this study may provide a useful orientation for the study of these famously perplexing arguments. But on the present occasion I shall limit myself to those passages in which the social dimension of *sophrosune* comes to the fore.

The main passages I shall focus on are those in which the two hypothetical cities mentioned above are discussed. But I shall begin and end my essay with a consideration of two further passages that are concerned with the role of *sophrosune* in the city. These passages do not concern a hypothetical city, nor do they figure in refutations of proposed definitions of *sophrosune*. They are, rather, criticisms of Greek and, more generally, human society as it actually is. These criticisms are imbedded in two long speeches—one by Socrates near the beginning of the dialogue, the other by Critias at its center—which parallel each other in several ways. Both Socrates and Critias trace the social criticisms they report back to a god of healing (Zalmoxis in one case,⁵ Apollo in the other). The criticisms in question concern a particular human practice: in the first, medicine, in the second, the more general social practice of greeting. Furthermore, the criticisms are alike in that both diagnose the problem with the practice in question as its ignoring the concerns of *sophrosune*. These speeches, then, raise the same general question that animates Socrates' discussion of his hypothetical cities: what is the proper social embodiment of *sophrosune*? In ascribing their criticisms to gods, these speeches also place this question within the broader context of the relationship between the human and the divine.

These two speeches, I shall suggest, offer, each in its own way, an important supplement to the discussions of the hypothetical cities—even though there are obviously playful elements in each of them. Although the Thracian trappings of Socrates' speech are clearly tongue-in-cheek,⁶ in its substance it raises the question of the proper social embodiment of *sophrosune* that is taken up later in the hypothetical cities. In so doing it sets the problem, and points to some of the constraints on possible successful answers, for those later discussions.

⁵B. Dieterle draws a connection between the role of Zalmoxis here and that of Apollo in the *Apology*: "Die Geschichte von dem 'Gott' Zalmoxis ist eine scherzhaft-besinnliche Variation zu Apolls Auftrag zur Menschenprüfung und -besserung, desselben Apolls, der ja auch der Gott der Heilkunst ist" (*Platons Laches und Charmides* [Freiburg i. Br.: diss. Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, 1966], 147). He does not, however, investigate the relationship between Zalmoxian medicine and Critias' central speech on Apollo in the *Charmides*.

⁶We know that Socrates, at Critias' instigation, is pretending to have a cure for headache; his account of how he came by the remedy must also be pretense. Plato undoubtedly uses information about an actual Thracian cult of Zalmoxis, a cult for which we have other evidence (especially Herodotus IV 93–96). But whether the historical Socrates picked up some such information on a Thracian campaign years before Plato's birth (as is suggested by M. Morgan, *Platonic Piety* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990], 24–5), and whether Plato would have known or cared about it if he did, are irrelevant and unanswerable questions.

The contribution made by Critias' speech to the issues with which we are concerned is of a different order. This is as we should expect, since Socrates is the philosopher-hero of the Platonic dialogues, while Critias is the leader of the oligarchic Thirty, of whose bloody methods, as the *Seventh Letter* tells us, Plato disapproved. But only if we naively accept the thoroughly evil portrait of Critias drawn by Xenophon⁷ will we be inclined to rule out a priori the possibility of Plato's putting anything of philosophical worth in the mouth of Critias.⁸ Critias, it is true, is portrayed as possessing certain character traits that get in the way of philosophizing in the Socratic way: he prides himself on his sophistic learning, is eager for victory in debate, and is reluctant to admit his own ignorance, the *sine qua non* of philosophic progress. But, as portrayed in this dialogue,⁹ he nonetheless has real intellectual gifts: his is an agile, inventive mind, quick to grasp Socrates' points and to offer variably profound but always clever rejoinders to them. I suggest that, although Critias clearly intends his central speech in large part as a dazzling display of sophistic hermeneutics, his account of the god of Delphi's criticism of the standard Greek greeting provides us a picture or image of the conclusions to which a sustained analysis of Socrates' hypothetical cities leads. Critias remains unaware that in his central speech he has hit upon a superficial (but suggestive) image of the account of *sophrosune* towards which Socrates is working at the end of the dialogue. Insightful but undisciplined, Critias' speech hints at a deeper truth about *sophrosune* than he knows. This is what accounts for Plato's giving this speech its central location in the dialogue—which Plato generally reserves for important matters¹⁰—and justifies our discussion of it at the end of this essay.

⁷For the tendentiousness of Xenophon's portrait of Critias, and for a more sympathetic interpretation of at least the aims of the Thirty, see P. Krenz, *The Thirty at Athens* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982). N. Notomi, "Critias and the Origin of Plato's Political Philosophy" (*Proceedings of the Vih Symposium Platonicum*, forthcoming), following Krenz and others, persuasively makes the case for the inaccuracy of the image of the "tyrant" Critias found in the historical tradition.

⁸Most scholars take the view that Plato's portrait of Critias in the dialogue is thoroughly negative. Some make this a guiding principle of their interpretation of the dialogue. W. Schmid, for example, in the most recent book-length treatment of the dialogue (*Plato's Charmides and the Socratic Ideal of Rationality* [Albany: SUNY Press, 1998]), holds that Plato expects the reader to see in Critias' remarks the expression of a godless egoism that will naturally lead to his later tyrannical career. D. Levine, "The Tyranny of Scholarship," *Ancient Philosophy* 4 (1984): 65–72, goes further, and seems to hold that the commentator who finds anything Critias says philosophically attractive has had his own tyrannical propensities revealed by Plato's literary litmus-test.

⁹He is also favorably portrayed in the *Critias* if, as I think probable, the character in that dialogue is meant to be the Critias of our dialogue (and not his grandfather).

¹⁰This well-known principle of Platonic composition, exemplified most famously perhaps in the *Republic*, has been christened the "pedimental principle" by H. Thesleff, "Looking for Clues: An Interpretation of Some Literary Aspects of Plato's 'Two-Level Model,'" in G. Press, ed., *Plato's Dialogues: New Studies and Interpretations* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993), 17–45, 19.

1. THE ZALMOXIAN CRITIQUE OF HUMAN SOCIETY

Having heard Critias and others praise Charmides' physical beauty and mental endowments, Socrates expresses an interest in conversing with him. Critias thereupon invents a pretext for summoning his young cousin: without consulting Socrates, he causes Charmides to be told that Socrates knows the remedy (φάρμακον) for the morning headaches Charmides has been suffering. Socrates accedes to the charade and turns it to his own purposes. He explains that in addition to knowing the remedy (a certain herb, φύλλον τι) he also knows an incantation (ἐπωδή) without which "there [is] no benefit from the herb" (155e8). The need to explain the relationship between incantation and herb allows Socrates to return¹¹ to one of his constant themes, the relationship between the good of the soul and other goods such as health.

Socrates begins by recalling to Charmides the holism of the good¹² doctors in Greece. They see that in order to cure the eyes you need to treat the head, and in order to treat that you need to treat the body as a whole (156b4-c5). After Socrates gets Charmides to endorse this holistic principle in his own right, Socrates explains how the "Thracian doctors of Zalmoxis, who are said even to make people immortal" (156d5-6),¹³ take this holism a step farther: one cannot cure the body unless one treats the soul. The fact that Greek doctors do not know¹⁴ that the soul is the whole that they most especially need

¹¹ Socrates had earlier turned the discussion from the beauty of Charmides' body to the beauty of his soul (154d6-e1).

¹² This presumably is meant to distinguish the "scientific" medicine typical of the Hippocratic treatises from more traditional religious healers. (Bloch, *Platons Charmides*, 32 n. 28, refers, less plausibly, to the distinction at *Laws* 720a7ff. between doctors who possess the art and their attendants who cure only on the basis of experience.) At *Phaedrus* 270c-e Plato's Socrates attributes to Hippocrates a holism similar to that described here. (For a roughly parallel Hippocratic passage, see *Ancient Medicine* c. 20.) The Hippocratic author of *The Sacred Disease* is concerned to contrast the "magicians, purifiers, charlatans and quacks," who treat patients with "purifications and incantations (ἐπαιδιάς)," with his own scientific medicine (c. 2). (On the relation between scientific and religious healing, see L. Edelstein, "Greek Medicine in Its Relation to Religion and Magic" in *Ancient Medicine*, O. and C. Temkin, eds., [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967], 205-45.) Ironically, the Thracian medicine that improves on Hippocratic medicine combines an extension of the scientific holistic principle with the use of something like the incantations of religious healers.

¹³ Herodotus tells us that Zalmoxis was the sole god worshiped by the Getae, a Thracian people, and that his worship was connected with a Pythagorean-like belief in the immortality of the soul, either for all or for initiates. The connections among Pythagorean ways of life, Bacchic initiations, and Orphic eschatology have been the topic of intense scholarly activity of late, spurred by the discovery of additional inscribed gold funerary tablets in the 1980's (see T. H. Carpenter and C. A. Faraone, eds., *Masks of Dionysus* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993]). On the connection between such eschatological beliefs and practices and the traditions of religious (and especially Pythagorean) healing, see P. Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), c. 21.

¹⁴ Reading τὸ ὅλον ἀγνοοῖεν with B, rather than Burnet's τοῦ ὅλου ἀμελοῖεν. Considering the importance of self-knowledge later in the dialogue, I think B's reading more likely than that which

to treat explains their failure to cure many illnesses (156d6–e6). For, as Socrates reports having heard from his Thracian doctor-informant (who may himself be reporting the words of the god-king Zalmoxis):¹⁵

All things, he said, spring (ὄρμησθαι) from the soul, both the things that are good and those that are bad for the body and for the whole person, and they flow thence, as they do from the head to the eyes. (156e6–157a1)

The incantations with which the soul must be treated are “fine words” (τοὺς λόγους . . . τοὺς καλοὺς, 157a4–5), which cause *sophrosune* to come about in souls.

Having explained, as it were, the theoretical basis for the superiority of Zalmoxian to Greek medicine, Socrates’ informant goes on to a more general criticism of human society:

Let no one, he said, persuade you to treat his head with this remedy who has not first offered his soul for your treatment with the incantation. For as it is, he said, this is the error (ἀμάτημα) human beings make: they attempt to be doctors, of a sort,¹⁶ of each of these, *sophrosune* and health, separately. And he very strongly enjoined me that there should be no one so rich, noble, or beautiful as to persuade me to do otherwise. (157b2–c1)

Here the fact that human beings separate the production of health from the production of *sophrosune* is diagnosed as a central error in human social organization. Doctors currently cure with no thought of improving their patients’ souls, while those concerned with *sophrosune* pay no attention to physical health. Insofar as Socrates is only pretending to be a doctor here, while he is

Burnet (in part) conjectures. B’s reading is adopted by Croiset, and is defended by van der Ben (15 n. 13) and Bloch. Recent authors who concur are T. and G. West, trans., *Plato’s Charmides* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company 1986), F. Coolidge, “The Relation of Philosophy to *Sophrosune*: Zalmoxian Medicine in Plato’s *Charmides*,” *Ancient Philosophy* 13 (1993): 23–36, and M. McAvoy, “Carnal Knowledge in the *Charmides*,” *Apeiron* 24 (1996): 63–103. These last three, however, take this passage to show that Zalmoxian medicine itself is characterized by a recognition of its own ignorance of the whole. (See Coolidge, 27: “[A] recognition of ignorance of the whole must . . . distinguish [Zalmoxian medicine] from Greek medicine;” cf. West and West *ad loc.*, McAvoy nn. 68 and 74.) This attempt to bring the description of Zalmoxian medicine into line with Socratic professions of ignorance does not seem to have any textual basis. (Coolidge argues that since Zalmoxian doctors are said to “make people immortal” and immortality “seems out of reach” [27], Zalmoxian medicine in the full sense [as opposed to its “foundational activity”] must be impossible. The minor premise of this argument is not in the text; its axiomatic assumption overlooks the fact that the promise of immortality is central to Bacchic/Orphic/Pythagorean initiatory rites, and that Plato may be appropriating this notion for his own purposes.)

¹⁵ See Bloch, *Platons Charmides*, 37 n. 51.

¹⁶ So I translate ἰατροί τινας, following N. van der Ben, *The Charmides of Plato* (Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner Publishing Co., 1985), who makes a strong case against the rendition “some attempt to be doctors . . .” (cf., for example, R. K. Sprague, tr., *Plato. Laches and Charmides*, [Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973]). Van der Ben also convincingly defends the retention of MSS. σωφροσύνης τε καὶ ὑγιείας at 157b6.

surely meant to be seriously concerned with promoting *sophrosune*, and virtue generally, in his interlocutors,¹⁷ he is himself evidence of the disordered social organization of Athens. For it structures its system of producing and exchanging goods such as health with no reference to *sophrosune*, leaving the concern for the latter to take place outside of and “separately from” this system of production.

It will be useful, with a view to our later discussion of Socrates' hypothetical cities, to consider what a society that avoided the error the Thracian here diagnoses might look like. Before doing so, however, it is necessary to investigate more closely the relationship between the goods of health and *sophrosune*. And this requires looking more closely at the relation between herb and incantation in Zalmoxian medicine.

The claim that Greek doctors fail to cure many diseases because they neglect the soul suggests that some diseases can be cured without incantations, or, indeed, the presence of *sophrosune* in the soul.¹⁸ We may therefore be tempted to suppose that Charmides' headache simply falls into the special, if large, class of diseases that need to be treated by incantations as well as by physical means such as herbs. But the Thracian also says that *all* good things for the body take their start from the soul. From this it would follow that when the Greek doctors treat patients that do not possess *sophrosune*, they do them no good, even if they are suffering from diseases which have not eluded their doctor's craft. In point of fact, Socrates had not told Charmides that using the herb without the incantation would have no effect on him at all, that it would not alleviate his symptoms, or even that it would not restore him to physical health. He simply said, “without the incantation there is no benefit (ὄφελος) from the herb.” That the herb would indeed have an effect that those suffering from headache might consider desirable is shown by the insistence with which the Thracian enjoined Socrates not to give it to those who have not been treated with the incantation, no matter how wealthy, noble or beautiful they may be. Such patients would not expend valuable resources to obtain something that had no effect whatsoever on them. It must be the case, then, that (in the Zalmoxian theory Socrates is inventing), though the herb on its own may in some sense set the body to rights, such restoration of physical functioning

¹⁷ This evident fact does not entail that Socrates possesses a *techné* for instilling *sophrosune* that is similar to the *techné* of medicine. One of the themes of the dialogue, here adumbrated, is the question of the nature of the knowledge involved in *sophrosune* and in the ability to promote it in others.

¹⁸ Coolidge, “The Relation of Philosophy to *Sophrosune*,” maintaining that, for the Thracian, “*sophrosune* is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for the recovery from physical illness,” argues that the implication here is that the only patients the Greek doctors can successfully treat are those who are already *sophron* (30). It strikes me that Charmides would have found such a suggestion contradicted by experience.

does not in itself count as a benefit or a good. For that, the presence of *sophrosune* in the soul is necessary. In a word, the health which the Greek physicians sometimes successfully produce is only what we may call a conditional good. The condition of its goodness is the healthy person's possession of *sophrosune*.¹⁹

If this is so, then the Thracian's general claim that "all things, both good and bad, for the body and the whole person, spring from the soul" should not be taken, as it is perhaps natural to do at first, to assert that the good state of the soul in and of itself produces health or the other things generally considered good for human beings.²⁰ Rather the true meaning is that none of the things generally considered good are in fact really beneficial for the one who possesses them unless she possesses *sophrosune*.²¹ If so, then the point the Thracian makes about medicine can be generalized to all the crafts that produce conditional goods. They, too, must not be pursued "separately" from a concern with establishing *sophrosune* in souls.

What would a city look like that did not suffer from the error the Thracian diagnoses? Two possibilities suggest themselves. On the one hand, we can imagine a society in which every craft stands to its present Greek counterpart as Zalmoxian medicine stands to Greek medicine. On this picture, every craft, and every craftsman, will have two, strictly-ordered, aims: first, the production of *sophrosune* in the person for whom the craft is being exercised; second, and only after this first aim is attained, the provision of that specific conditional good which is the peculiar concern of the craft in question. In such a society, all craftsmen would exercise their crafts in such a way as to benefit their clients, rather than simply to provide them with conditional goods that may in fact do them no real good.

As we shall see, insofar as this way of incorporating *sophrosune* into a city makes it the concern of persons with a variety of different crafts, it has some-

¹⁹I take the notion of "conditional good" from C. Korsgaard, "Two Distinctions in Goodness," *PR* 92 (1983): 169–195, 178.

²⁰Nor should it be taken in the slightly weaker sense that *sophrosune* is a necessary condition for the possession of health or other such goods (cf. Coolidge, "The Relation of Philosophy to *Sophrosune*"). The implausibility of this interpretation is even clearer when we think of such (conditional) goods as wealth.

²¹This passage finds a close parallel in the *Apology*, where Socrates says, "Virtue does not come from money, but from virtue money and all the other things good for people, both in private and in public" (30b). Here, too, the most obvious reading makes virtue responsible for the existence of the other goods; upon reflection, the more subtle reading that makes virtue responsible for their goodness proves more plausible. The importance of the second reading of the *Apology* passage has been recognized by Burnet *ad loc.*, G. Vlastos, *Socrates. Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 219 n. 73, C. D. C. Reeve, *Socrates in the Apology* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989), 124 n. 21, and T. Brickhouse and N. Smith, *Plato's Socrates* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 20 n. 33.

thing in common with the universal citizen concern with *sophrosune* that characterizes the solution to which the dialogue ultimately points. But as it stands, this proposal is hardly satisfactory. When we generalize the example of Zalmoxian medicine to every craft, it becomes clear that no such craft, not even Zalmoxian medicine, possesses a real unity. Each simply consists of two parts forcibly combined. Such reflections lead naturally to a second way a city might avoid the criticisms of Zalmoxis. Perhaps *sophrosune* should be the object of a recognized, independent craft of its own, whose craftsmen would, like other craftsmen, exchange their product in the marketplace for the products of the other crafts. In a city organized on these lines the craftsmen of *sophrosune* would practice their craft in return for the fee they earn by doing so. The provision of *sophrosune* would not be "separate" from the provision of health and other conditional goods because it would be coordinated with them in a general system of exchange. But there are some obvious problems with this solution, too. It is hard to see how one could fix an exchange rate between the unconditional good of *sophrosune* and the conditionally good products of the other crafts. Furthermore, the claim that *sophrosune*, or rather virtue in general, may be bought and sold in the marketplace is frequently associated by the Platonic Socrates with the sophists, and is among the things he finds most objectionable in them.²² It seems unlikely that Socrates, under his Thracian mask, recommends this way of incorporating a concern for *sophrosune* into society.

The two reformations of human society that are immediately suggested by the Thracian's critique of existing society seem problematic. The source of their problems is the failure to take account of the differences between the pursuit of an unconditional good like *sophrosune* and the crafts that produce conditional goods. The pursuit of *sophrosune* cannot be made a part of other crafts, nor yet a distinct craft of its own. The solution to the problem how to integrate the pursuit of *sophrosune* into the city will require a reconceptualization that reflects its fundamental difference from standard crafts.

Before we proceed to Socrates' hypothetical cities, it may be well to consider the benefits to be expected from having a city in which *sophrosune* and health (etc.) are pursued "not separately," however that is ultimately to be understood. As we have seen, the Thracian's words imply that there will be "no benefit" from the products of any other craft in the absence of *sophrosune* in the soul. The Thracian does not give any concrete account of the kind of benefit that the presence of *sophrosune* in the soul does confer. However, we perhaps

²² On Plato's view of the incommensurability of wisdom with other, conditional goods, and on his criticism of sophists for apparently implying otherwise, see A. Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 47–59.

find a characterization of that benefit in what Socrates says of the Thracian doctors of Zalmoxis at his first mention of them: “[they] are even said to make [people] immortal” (156d5–6). If this detail has any significance, it is doubtless on the symbolic, not literal, level: the good that comes to one with *sophrosune* is divine in a way that conditional goods are not, and in some way makes one divine. As we shall see, the suggestion that *sophrosune* may make one godlike re-emerges in Critias’ central speech on the inscription at Delphi.

2. THE FIRST HYPOTHETICAL CITY: SOCRATES AND CHARMIDES

The third and last definition of *sophrosune* that Charmides offers, a definition he has evidently heard from Critias, is “doing one’s own things” (τὸ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν). Socrates’ constructs his first hypothetical city in the course of a rather complex, two part dialectical examination of this definition. In the first part (161d3–e5) he uses reading and writing as examples of “doing” (πράττειν), and does not invoke a hypothetical city; in the second (161e6–162a9), in which the hypothetical city does figure, he interprets “doing” as “curing, house-building, weaving, and producing by any craft whatsoever any whatsoever of the works of craft” (. . . τὸ ἡτιννοῦν τέχνη ἢ ὅτιοῦν τῶν τέχνης ἔργων ἀπεργάζεσθαι, 161e6–8). We will return to the relation of these two parts shortly; our present concern is with the second of them.²³

Once Socrates has secured the interpretation of πράττειν as producing by craft a craft product, he poses the following question:

Well, said I, do you think a city would be well administered by this law that orders each person to weave and launder his own cloak, and to make his own shoes, and oilflask and scraper and everything else on the same principle: not touching others’ things, but each working and doing his own things? (161e10–162a2)

In this question Socrates makes clear how he is taking “one’s own things”: they are what one needs for one’s own use. Furthermore, given the examples Socrates uses here and immediately above (curing, house-building), it seems that the needs Socrates has in mind are a person’s bodily needs. Socrates’ city is one in which everyone satisfies his own bodily needs by exercising each of the relevant crafts for his own sake alone. Such a city, Charmides finds, would “not [be] well-governed.” Because Charmides acknowledges that any city that is characterized by *sophrosune* must be well governed, he agrees that “doing one’s own things,” as they have construed it, cannot be the definition of *sophrosune*.

Why, precisely, does Charmides hold that this hypothetical city is not well-governed? He does not explicitly tell us, but two possible reasons suggest themselves. On the one hand, in such a city the products of the various crafts will not

²³The fact that Socrates’ argument falls into two importantly distinct sections has not, so far as I know, been noticed by commentators on the dialogue.

be as good or as plentiful as they would be in a city where there was a division of labor; for not everyone will be as gifted as Hippias²⁴ at so many different crafts. The inefficiency in the production of the craft-goods needed for the body is, indeed, the reason Socrates gives in *Republic* II for rejecting a city organized along these lines (cf. 370c3–6). On the other hand, Charmides may reject this city because it does not provide its citizens with other, higher goods, which may need social interaction not simply to be produced efficiently, but in order to arise in the first place. Whether or not this second reason is the one that motivates Charmides, there is evidence that Socrates (and Plato) are aware of such a reason, and that they want to draw it to the attention of the attentive listener and reader.

Such evidence is to be found in the first half of the discussion of the definition “doing one’s own things,” before Socrates invokes his hypothetical city. Here Socrates uses reading and writing as examples of *πράττειν* and he construes “what is one’s own” as one’s own name. Doing one’s own things, then, here comes to reading and writing only one’s own name. Socrates points out that Charmides and his fellow-pupils were taught to write each others’ names in school, and Charmides agrees that in so doing they were not violating the requirements of *sophrosune*. This admission is in itself enough to refute the definition of *sophrosune* as doing one’s own things, as Socrates has construed it. Why, we may ask, does Socrates neglect to point this out, and instead go on to consider the case of the city where everyone performs the productive crafts to meet his own bodily needs?

The reason, I suggest, is that Socrates (and Plato) wish to draw attention to an important difference between the examples of reading and writing and the sorts of crafts he posits in the hypothetical city, a difference which suggests the important sort of value that this city lacks. The crafts practiced in this city, as we have seen, are concerned with the production (and care) of the things needed for the body. Now these crafts are by their nature simply directed towards the production of these objects; nothing in the craft itself determines whether the craftsman uses its products for herself or makes them available to others. Thus the social arrangements posited in Socrates’ city do not run contrary to the essential nature of these crafts. The case of reading and writ-

²⁴ Many commentators notice that the self-sufficiency in producing what one wears that Socrates describes here is very similar to Socrates’ account of Hippias’ boast at Olympia that he had made with his own hands everything he was wearing (*Hippias Minor* 368b5–c7). See B. Newhall, ed., *The Charmides, Laches and Lysis of Plato* (New York: American Book Company, 1900), 88; P. Friedländer, *Plato*, 2 vols, trans. H. Meyerhoff (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1958), II 71; Witte, *Die Wissenschaft*, 69–70; Dieterle, *Platons Laches und Charmides*, 186 n. 1; Bloch, *Platons Charmides*, 76; S. Solère-Queval, “Lecture du *Charmide*,” *Revue de Philosophie Ancienne* 11 (1993): 3–65, 16; D. Hyland, *The Virtue of Philosophy. An Interpretation of Plato’s Charmides*, (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1981), 73.

ing, however, is quite different. The primary and characteristic purpose of these activities is a social one, communication between people. The product of writing is, in the standard and paradigmatic case, destined for others—whether they read it themselves or listen to it being read or recited to them. While it is true that one can, indeed, write things down for one's own sake alone if, for example, one doubts one's memory,²⁵ this is arguably a parasitic use of writing. However that may be, the details of Socrates' discussion of reading and writing would seem peculiarly to rule out any such purely self-directed use of writing, at least by those possessing *sophrosune*. For Socrates has interpreted "one's own things" in this instance as one's own name, which there is little danger of most people forgetting. The *sophron* use of reading and writing, as Socrates has construed it, would not merely be inefficient; it would be pointless.²⁶

There is a further suggestion in the text that this city lacks important goods that arise only in human social interaction. In listing the body-oriented craft activities that the citizens will engage in for their own benefit alone, Socrates goes beyond such obvious examples as making oneself healthy and making one's own clothes to the activities of making one's own oil-flask and scraper. As others have noted, Socrates draws these examples from the palaestra which is the site of their discussion; anyone who had come to exercise there would have brought an oil-flask and scraper.²⁷ But the palaestra is not just the site for individual exercise such as jogging; it is primarily the place for wrestling, a way of caring for and improving the body that is essentially social. It is hard to see how the citizens of Socrates' city could consistently engage in wrestling—much less in the intellectual discussions, such as that between Charmides and Socrates, which were held on the sidelines. Insofar as Socrates' description of the hypothetical city refers to the circumstances of their discussion, Socrates hints that that city is unacceptable because it lacks a certain care for the body and soul that is characteristically social.

Does this hypothetical city avoid the error the Thracian diagnosed in actual human society: that of pursuing health (and other conditional goods) "separately" from *sophrosune*? Under the definition of *sophrosune* it is constructed to

²⁵It is a part of the paradoxical nature of the Platonic Socrates' criticism of writing that he argues that "he who possesses the understanding (ἐπιστήμης) of just things and of beautiful and good things" will write primarily to "lay up a treasure of reminders for himself against 'the old age of forgetfulness'" (*Phaedrus* 276c3–4, d3). Characteristically, he goes on to add a further use of writing, in a clause so important for understanding Plato's own literary activity: "and for everyone who follows the same footsteps."

²⁶The absence of reading and writing from this city may be indicative of the absence also of any other intellectual exchange. Must one, for example, refrain from speaking all but one's own name?

²⁷So Newhall, *The Charmides*, 88.

exemplify, this city naturally escapes the criticism. For the attainment of *sophrosune* in this case just is for everyone to produce the various craft products (including health) for himself. But with regard to *sophrosune* as conceived by the Thracian, namely as an unconditional good, proper to the soul, which is the condition for the goodness of all other, conditional goods, the answer is less clear. Although Socrates has not said that the inhabitants of this city tend to their soul, he has not explicitly denied that they do. But if they do practice such care, they must do so each for herself alone. If the care for the soul is essentially social, then this city will lack it entirely. Lastly, though the nature of the care for the soul is still vague, we do know that Thracian doctors practice it by using "beautiful words." Unless these words are simply one's own name, there will be little room for a Thracian care for the soul in this hypothetical city.

3. THE SECOND HYPOTHETICAL CITY: SOCRATES AND CRITIAS

Socrates elaborates another hypothetical city at the end of his discussion with Critias, at the close of a long and complicated discussion of what is ostensibly a single account of *sophrosune*. This single conception of *sophrosune* receives a number of quite different formulations throughout the course of the discussion. For our purposes we may take as the basic formulation: "knowledge of knowledge and ignorance."²⁸ When Socrates first introduces this formulation, he maintains that the possessor of *sophrosune*, so construed, "will be able to scrutinize (ἐξετάσσει) what he actually knows and what he does not, and he will be able in like manner to examine others with respect to what a person knows and thinks he knows (if indeed he has knowledge), and, further, with respect to what he thinks he knows, but does not know . . ." (167a1–5). But shortly thereafter Socrates gives an abstract and rather perplexing argument to establish that the knowledge of knowledge and ignorance is, in fact, not equivalent to "knowing *what* one knows and does not know," but only to "knowing *that* one knows and does not know" (169e6–171c10).²⁹ The latter, Socrates argues, is of only limited use. In an apparently wistful vein, he contrasts with this the

²⁸ Socrates derives this formulation from a version Critias offers, "the knowledge of the other kinds of knowledge and of itself," by relying on the principle that there is a single knowledge of contraries (see 166e7–8). This Critian version was itself offered by Critias as an explanation of his original formulation: "knowing oneself."

²⁹ This discussion has recently garnered a considerable amount of discussion, most of which treats it in abstraction from the surrounding dialogue. See R. Ketchum, "Plato on the Uselessness of Epistemology," *Apeiron* 24 (1991): 81–98; S. LaBarge, "Socrates and the Recognition of Experts," *Apeiron* 30 (1997): 51–62; J. Gentzler "How to Discriminate between Experts and Frauds: Some Problems for Socratic Peirastic," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 3: (1995): 227–46; T. Morris, "Knowledge of Knowledge and of Lack of Knowledge in the *Charmides*," *International Studies in Philosophy* 21 (1989): 49–61. M. Schofield, "Socrates on Conversing with Doctors," *Classical Review* 23 (1973): 121–3, seeks to reduce the oddness of the argument by considerable excision of the text, a radical suggestion that has elicited little response in the literature.

great benefit that would be provided by knowing what one knows and does not know. It is in order to illustrate how beneficial the latter would be that Socrates constructs, and sings the praises of, a hypothetical city governed by such knowledge.

The stretch of argument that begins with Socrates' introduction of this hypothetical city can be divided into three sections. The first section consists of two speeches that contain opposing evaluations of this city, with intervening remarks that prepare for the reversal.³⁰ In the first speech (171d1–172a5) Socrates claims that those living in the city ruled by the knowledge of what one does and does not know will be happy; in the second (173a7–d5), he raises doubts about that claim.³¹ The doubts he expresses prompt Critias to affirm that “living knowledgeably” is “consummate well-being,” which leads to the second section (173d8–174b10). In this section, for reasons we shall examine, Socrates abandons for the moment his hypothetical city, and investigates the relationship between knowledge and happiness on the level of the individual. Socrates presses Critias to specify what sort of knowledge leads to happiness, and the section ends when Critias at last offers as an answer “[the knowledge] by which [we know] what is good and what is bad” (174b10). In the third section of the discussion (174b11–175a8) Socrates reverts to the hypothetical city in order to set the newly-introduced knowledge of good and evil against the knowledge of what one does and does not know. Since the former is the source of benefit, Socrates argues, the latter cannot be beneficial at all. And since *sophrosune* is acknowledged by all parties to be beneficial, this results in the final rejection of the knowledge of what one does and does not know as the definition of *sophrosune* (cf. 175a9–b4).

It will be useful to deal separately with the three sections distinguished above.

3.1 *The Hypothetical City: Opposing Speeches*

Socrates' two speeches recall by their language the Thracian criticism of human society Socrates related at the beginning of the dialogue. Socrates emphasizes in his first speech that the city is without error (cf. ἀναμάρτυτοι, 171d6; ἀμαρτίας ἐξ ἠρημμένης 171e7–172a1), and in the second speech considers the case where the whole human race (τὸ ἀνθρώπινον γένος 173c7) is governed in this way. Earlier, the Thracian had been concerned to diagnose

³⁰The brief speech in which Socrates explains the limited usefulness of *sophrosune* construed as knowledge that a person knows and does not know (172b1–c2) is also inserted between the two speeches that concern us.

³¹These very doubts, however, are called into question by the way Socrates opens this speech: “Hearken then, I said, to my dream, whether it has come through horn or ivory” (173a7–8)—that is, whether it is veridical or deceptive.

“the error human beings make” (τὸ ἀμάρτημα περὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους). Socrates’ language here thus invites us to ask whether his hypothetical city has indeed avoided the human error pinpointed by the Thracian: does it manage to produce conditional goods like health in some way not “separately” from a concern for *sophrosune*, conceived as something like the health of the soul?

In the first speech Socrates gives no indication at all of what sorts of activities are knowledgeably practiced in this city; he simply, repeatedly uses forms of *πράττειν* and *ἐπιστήμη*. The city, as he summarizes it, is one in which “everyone of us does what he knows, and leaves the things he doesn’t understand to others who do” (172d8–10). Whether anyone in this city is concerned with the health of the soul, and if so how, is not clear. It is in order to focus attention on this issue, I suggest, that Socrates raises his doubts about the value of living in such a city. A side-remark to Critias indirectly brings to the surface Socrates’ concern for the good of the soul in the hypothetical city: “One must examine what occurs to one, and not reject it for no good reason, if one has even the slightest care for oneself” (ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ . . . κήδεταί 173a3–5). The question is whether the care for oneself that Socrates here evinces is adequately integrated into the structure of his hypothetical city.

In his second speech Socrates is much more specific about the activities that will take place in the hypothetical city. He lists pilots, doctors, generals, as well as the producers of “equipment, clothing, shoes, and all useful items (*χρήματα*), . . . and many other things” (173b7–c2), as those who will perform their activities knowledgeably and correctly. These activities partially overlap with those of the hypothetical city Socrates discussed with Charmides, and, like them, are all ultimately concerned with the body. The principle governing this city, though, is the opposite of that governing the Charmidean city. Instead of each performing all the crafts, here everyone is excluded from engaging in any activity for which he does not possess the relevant knowledge. There must, then, be some system for the exchange of the products of the crafts.³² Yet, given the activities so far ascribed to this city, the social intercourse involved may still ultimately be for the sake of the citizens’ private satisfaction of their physical needs.

In the second part of the speech Socrates adds “prophecy” (*μαντική*) to the crafts practiced in this city. He does so, ostensibly, for the sake of completeness, in order to have a city in which every imaginable craft is exercised by “true craftsmen” (173c2). Indeed, he includes prophecy in spite of his manifest scruples as to whether prophecy is in fact a kind of knowledge at all

³² The social organization that this implies makes possible one of the activities mentioned here that was not mentioned in the Charmidean city: that of the general. It makes no sense to imagine everyone in a city employing the general’s craft for himself; a general needs soldiers.

(ἐπιστήμη, see 173c3–4). The nature of these scruples become clear in the sequel. The only point we need make here is that the inclusion of prophecy into the city does not suggest that there is more to the happiness of this city than the private satisfaction of bodily needs. Knowledge of what will happen in the future—whether it will rain in the spring, whether there will be a storm at sea, whether a fever will break—will enable us to employ the other crafts better, but does not in itself change the nature of the happiness sought or produced.³³ Thus the division of labor that obtains in this city makes it more efficient than the Charmidean city in the provision of bodily goods, but there is no indication that this city manifests any concern for the specific good of the soul, or for any goods that may be essentially social rather than private.

Socrates concludes his second speech by agreeing that the citizens of this city will “act knowledgeably,” while expressing doubts that this entails their happiness. To this Critias responds, “But you will not easily discover any other consummate well-being (τέλος τοῦ εὖ πράττειν), if you reject [acting] knowledgeably (τὸ ἐπιστημόνως)” (173d6–7). The precise connection Critias has in mind between knowledge and happiness is not clear. On the one hand, he could simply be insisting that a city in which all performed only the tasks they understood is the best way of assuring the efficient satisfaction of bodily needs. In this case, he would be positing an instrumental and indirect connection between knowledge and happiness, a connection mediated by social exchange. On the other hand, he could be taken to suggest a tighter connection between them, one where happiness flows directly from a person’s knowledgeable action without the need for any such mediation. Socrates, it soon becomes clear, takes Critias’ comment in this latter sense. For he abandons, for the moment, his discussion of the city and reverts to the level of the individual, asking which particular kind of knowledge it is the exercise of which makes a person happy. Socrates could legitimately do so only if he understood Critias to assert that the exercise of knowledge, or of a particular kind of knowledge, in itself directly results in the happiness of the agent. That Critias does not object to Socrates’ framing his inquiry in this way suggests that he accepts such a connection between (some) knowledgeable action and happiness.

3.2 *Knowledge and Individual Happiness*

It is now a question of which kind of knowledge directly produces happiness for its practitioner. Socrates pursues this question first by offering Critias as possible answers such crafts as shoe-making or bronze-working, which the aristocratic Critias, who had earlier classified shoe-making on a par with prostitution (163b7–8), naturally rejects. Socrates then asks whether the prophet is the one

³³ Nicias offers an account of prophecy similar to this at *Laches* 195e8–196a3.

whose knowledge makes him happy. Critias' answer—"Yes, him, among others"—suggests that he has no clear idea of how knowledge leads to happiness, and is simply swayed by the impressive but vague claim that the prophet knows "everything that is going to be" (174a1). In order to bring matters to a head, Socrates extrapolates from the case of the prophet to the hypothetical case of someone who knows, not only everything that will be, but also everything that is and has been. Such an omniscient knower is, as Critias agrees, a person "than [whom] you could not say anyone lives still more knowledgeable" (174a7–8).³⁴ If knowledge leads to happiness, this person should be happy.

What is it that the knower of past present and future in fact knows? Socrates interprets this hypothetical knower as one who possesses all the different branches of knowledge (cf. 174a10–11). We now understand why Socrates felt scruples about recognizing prophecy as an *ἐπιστήμη*: if knowledge of everything that will be is just the possession of all the different branches of knowledge that will be relevant to understanding such events as will happen in the future—i.e., medicine for understanding future sickness and health, navigation for understanding future stormy voyages, etc.—then prophecy turns out not to be a distinct, unified science, but rather the simple conjunction of all the other sciences. Since a kind of knowledge deals with a specific subject matter without regard to time,³⁵ the prophet proves identical to the hypothetical omniscient knower whom Socrates constructs. With his construct, however, Socrates has made explicit the fact that they are considering a conjunction of the different kinds of knowledge, so that they have not reached the end of their inquiry: they must still determine which of the kinds of knowledge produces happiness.³⁶

Socrates offers Critias three different possibilities for the knowledge that issues in happiness: knowing how to play checkers (*ἢ [οἷδέ τις] τὸ πεπτευκόν*), knowing how to calculate (*ἢ τὸ λογιστικόν*), and knowing the healthy (*ἢ τὸ ὑγιεινόν*) (174b2–7). Critias treats the first two as facetious suggestions.³⁷ He responds more sympathetically to the third, saying that medicine is "more" the sort of knowledge that brings happiness than the other two. It is easy to understand why. When trained upon oneself, the knowledge of what is

³⁴ See van der Ben, *The Charmides of Plato, ad loc.*, for the necessity of taking *ἐπιστημονέστερον* as an adverb.

³⁵ See *Laches* 198d–199a.

³⁶ We may note the interesting resemblance between this hypothetical omniscient and the jacks-of-all-trades that inhabited the Charmidean hypothetical city. Each possesses all the relevant kinds of knowledge, from which, it is supposed, he derives his happiness without any social mediation.

³⁷ He responds to the first suggestion with "What do you mean, checkers!" (*ποῖον . . . πεπτευκόν* 174b5; on the idiom see E. R. Dodds, *Plato. Gorgias* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959] on *Gorgias* 490d10).

healthy does indeed produce a sort of benefit: bodily health. Critias, however, is no more content with such a conception of human good than Socrates. Medical knowledge can, accordingly, serve only as an analogy to the science they seek.³⁸

When Socrates responds to Critias that he is looking for the knowledge which “most” promotes its practitioner’s happiness, Critias returns the answer which readers of other Platonic dialogues have long expected: “[That] by which [we know] what is good and what is bad” (ἧ τὸ ἀγαθὸν . . . καὶ τὸ κακόν) (174b10). The emergence of the notion of a knowledge of good and evil is a climactic moment in the dialogue, and is marked as such by Socrates’ strong response:

You rascal! I said. For a long time you have been dragging me about in a circle, keeping to yourself the fact that it is not living knowledgeably which makes one live well and be happy, not even [living] with all the rest of the kinds of knowledge taken together, but rather with this single knowledge alone, that of what is good and bad (174b11–c3).³⁹

There can be no doubt that Socrates considers Critias’ answer a positive contribution to the discussion, and indeed as in some way correct.⁴⁰ But the formula itself is quite vague, and neither here, nor in any other dialogue, do any of Plato’s characters say anything very informative directly about this sort of knowledge or its object. We are left in every case to infer what features we can about it from the connections or contrasts with other things that Socrates or others draw. In the next section we shall examine Socrates’ account of the

³⁸ So Bloch, *Platon's Charmides*, 138: “[D]ie *iatrike* ermöglicht als einsichtige Verkörperung durch die Analogie eine bildhafte Vorstellung von der *episteme agathou*.”

³⁹ For a good survey of ways of dealing with the unusual grammar of this sentence, see van der Ben, *The Charmides of Plato*, *ad loc.* I disagree with him, however, when he argues that one cannot supply τὸ ζῆν with the troublesome genitives at 174c1–2. He argues that “this . . . is impossible since the words τὸ ἐπιστημόνως represent a unitary notion” (83), and that “the position of ἧν puts particular emphasis on ἐπιστημόνως thereby ruling out detachment from its phrase” (86 n. 3). On the contrary, I would suggest that the hyperbaton τὸ ἐπιστημόνως ἧν ζῆν encourages us, by emphasizing ἐπιστημόνως, to see the subsequent genitives as replacements for it.

⁴⁰ Schmid, *Plato's Charmides*, 138 holds that Socrates’ vocative ὄ μαρδέ (174b11) is a “term of abuse,” and is to be treated as a serious sign of Socrates’ “anger” and disapproval of Critias’ answer. This is a mistaken inference from the basic referential meaning of the term μαρδός as “defiled, polluted, foul, filthy.” In her recent study of Greek forms of address, Dickey sums up the usage of the vocative of this word as follows: “[M]iare was a low-register insult in classical Attic: the orators used it when they were willing to descend to a lower register for effect, Plato used it only as a joke but never in earnest, and no other classical prose author was willing to use it at all” (E. Dickey, *Greek Forms of Address. From Herodotus to Lucian* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996], 167). (That Socrates uses the word “in an ironic, joking way” [*ibid.*] is most clearly illustrated by *Phaedrus* 236e4.) There is much to be said for Schmid’s position that the dialogue up to now has suggested that the knowledge that will conduce to happiness needs to have a certain “self-referential aspect” (138), but he is wrong to think that the formula ἐπιστήμη περὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν τε καὶ κακόν excludes such an aspect. It is in fact a fairly empty formula that awaits specification.

relations between this kind of knowledge and the other crafts practiced in his hypothetical city. We may conclude this section with a look at the kinds of knowledge Socrates suggests as possible candidates for the happiness-making knowledge before Critias hits upon the knowledge of good and evil.

We have already noted the ways in which the knowledge of medicine serves as an (imperfect) analogy for the knowledge of the good. I would like to suggest that the two other possibilities offered by Socrates are not meant solely facetiously, but also contain hints as to the nature of the knowledge of the good. Indeed, the art of calculation, Socrates' second suggestion for the happiness-making knowledge, has already figured in the dialogue. It was introduced by Critias when Socrates pressed him to identify the product of *sophrosune* (construed, at the time, as self-knowledge). Critias insisted that *sophrosune* was unlike crafts such as medicine in not having a product in the way they do,⁴¹ and that it resembled in this respect crafts such as geometry and calculation (λογιστική) (165e3–166a2). Socrates' reference to calculation here is surely meant to recall this earlier passage, and so to emphasize the point that the craft we are looking for must not benefit its practitioner by producing an external product to be exchanged for something else.

Unlike calculation, the knowledge of how to play checkers, Socrates' first suggestion as the happiness-making knowledge, has not figured previously in the dialogue. It is natural to suppose, with Critias, that Socrates is here simply being facetious. But when viewed as a possible analogue to the knowledge of the good, this example takes on a certain significance. On the one hand, checkers, like calculation, has no external physical product.⁴² More importantly, unlike calculation, checkers is an essentially social activity. Although itself too trivial to be the knowledge they seek, it nonetheless provides a model for a kind of knowledge of which the value resides in an activity that essentially involves other people. Furthermore, within the broader horizon of Socratic discussion depicted in the earlier Platonic dialogues, checkers (πεττεία) has a particular significance. For the language Socrates constantly uses for "positing" (τίθεσθαι) a definition or other answer in response to Socrates' questioning, and for "taking back" (ἀνατίθεσθαι) or "changing" (μετατίθεσθαι) such a definition or answer, is borrowed from the terms used for making, taking back, or changing a move in checkers.⁴³ For those aware of the metaphorical

⁴¹ Cf. τοιοῦτον ἔργα, τοιοῦτόν τι ἔργον (165e7–166a1). Critias does not deny that they have some sort of work, only that they have the separate product characteristic of, e.g., medicine and house-building.

⁴² Bloch, *Platons Charmides*, noting the grouping of πεττευτική with ἀριθμητική, and γεωμετρική at *Gorgias* 450d6–7, treats it simply as one of the "mathematischen" *epistemai*" (138 with n. 37).

⁴³ The connection is made explicitly in the probably spurious dialogue *Hipparchus*: "But, just as though I were playing checkers (ὥσπερ πεττεύων), I am willing for you to take back in our

connection between Socratic discussion and checkers, the ironic query whether knowledge of checkers is the source of happiness suggests more than that the relevant knowledge may be essentially social; it suggests that it may be akin, or even identical, to the peculiarly Socratic mode of conversation.

3.3 *The Hypothetical City and Knowledge of the Good*

Critias, then, has identified the knowledge of good and evil as the source of happiness in a discussion conducted without any reference to Socrates' hypothetical city. In order to address the relation of this knowledge to happiness, on the one hand, and to the other kinds of knowledge, on the other, Socrates returns the discussion to this social context. Because in the hypothetical city the knowledge of what one does and does not know ensures that all sciences are practiced by qualified practitioners, the knowledge of good and evil, too, will be correctly practiced there. And as the practice of this knowledge made the omniscient individual happy, so too, apparently, will it make the inhabitants of our hypothetical city happy. Socrates accordingly gives up the suspicion he earlier expressed that the knowledgeable-acting citizens of this city would not be happy. The point he now insists on is that, since the source of their happiness has been found to be the knowledge of good and evil, the knowledge of what one does and does not know is of no benefit to them. Therefore, if knowledge of knowledge and ignorance were equivalent to knowing what one does and does not know, it could not be *sophrosune*. For *sophrosune* must be itself beneficial, and the knowledge of what one does and does not know has been shown not to be beneficial.

The way Socrates conducts the argument is puzzling, on three counts. First, it seems odd that Socrates should rule out the knowledge of what one knows as a candidate for *sophrosune* because of its failure to satisfy the criterion of being beneficial, while failing even to consider the knowledge that meets this criterion, namely, the knowledge of the good, as a candidate. Second, given the role that has been assigned to the knowledge of what one knows and does not know, Socrates' contention against Critias that it is not beneficial seems dubious. After all, as Critias points out, this knowledge ensures that the knowledge of the good is practiced by competent practitioners in the hypotheti-

discussions (ἐν τοῖς λόγους ἀνατίθεσθαι) whatever statement you want to, so that you don't think you are being deceived" (229e3–5). For examples of uses of the terms in this sense, see *Charmides* 164d1, *Meno* 98d4, *Phaedo* 87a2, *Protagoras* 354e8, *Gorgias* 461d3, 462a3 (ἀνατίθεσθαι); *Laches* 199d1, *Gorgias* 493c5, d1, d3, *Republic* 334e5, e9, 345b8 (μετατίθεσθαι); *Charmides* 169b5, 172c8, *Laches* 196e8, e9, *Euthyphro* 11c2, 15c9, *Republic* 340b8, 348e7, 352d2 (τίθεσθαι). The metaphor is also used by Antiphon: "It is not possible to take back one's life like a checker (ἀναθέσθαι ὡσπερ πεπτόν)" (B52). See Dodds, *Plato. Gorgias*, on *Gorgias* 461d3. Contrary to R. Robinson (*Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, 2nd edition [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962], 95), the passages from Antiphon and the *Hipparchus* suggest that ἀνατίθεσθαι, at least, was felt to be a metaphor from checkers.

cal city; without it, the city would presumably have no defense against impostors (cf. 173c5) who could well cause it considerable harm. It seems there should be some sense in which the knowledge of what one knows—if there is such a knowledge, as here conceived—is beneficial. Third, the relationship in the city between the ordinary crafts that produce conditional goods (e.g., medicine) and the knowledge of the good is extremely unclear. Socrates insists that the other crafts can produce their characteristic products in the absence of the knowledge of the good, but that in such case these products will be of no benefit (174c9-d1). But there is no indication of how the knowledge of the good is to interact with the other crafts so that their products prove beneficial.

The three points made above all concern the relations between the various kind of knowledge in the hypothetical city. The last point, which concerns the relation of knowledge of the good to the other, more ordinary crafts in the city, has a strong parallel in the earlier discussion of the proper social role of Zalmoxian soul-therapy. As we saw, that therapy produced the unconditional psychic good without which the conditional goods produced by such crafts as medicine were of no benefit. Since the knowledge of the good here performs the same role,⁴⁴ we are undoubtedly meant to consider identifying Zalmoxian therapy with the knowledge of the good. But the discussion here, like the earlier discussion, leaves it vague just how this therapy/knowledge of the good is to be integrated with, and practiced “not separately” from, the other crafts.

The hypothetical city here is more complex than the social system envisioned (however vaguely) in the Thracian discussion, however, because it contains a kind of knowledge not present in that earlier discussion: the knowledge of what one knows and does not know (or, the knowledge of knowledge). The relation of this knowledge to the knowledge of good and evil gives rise to the two other points mentioned above. As we have seen, the knowledge of what one does and does not know is responsible for the correct practice of the other crafts in the city. Critias suggests that the knowledge of good and evil may simply be counted as one more craft that the knowledge of knowledge supervises. But if this is the case, as Socrates points out, the knowledge of knowledge can no more be credited with the good done by the knowledge of the good than it can be credited with producing the health that medicine produces (174e3–175a8). Nonetheless, there seems to be something to Critias' point that the knowledge of knowledge, in ensuring that the knowledge of the good is competently practiced, would itself be beneficial (our second point above).⁴⁵ The conclusion to draw from this is that the knowledge of the good

⁴⁴With the exception that here the condition of the benefit of the conditional goods is not explicitly said to be psychic health.

⁴⁵In arguing against Socrates' proof that the knowledge of knowledge is not beneficial, Santas makes a slightly different point from that of Critias. He writes, “If anything, it is tempting to argue

cannot, after all, simply be one more craft alongside others supervised by the knowledge of knowledge.⁴⁶

What place, then, could it have in the city? An obvious possibility would be to identify it with the knowledge of knowledge and ignorance (cf. our first point above).⁴⁷ It is not clear, however, what such an identification would entail. It must not amount to a mere reduction of the knowledge of the good to the knowledge of knowledge as it has already been analyzed. For the only task the latter has so far been shown to be able to perform is ensuring that the ordinary crafts are practiced competently; and this by itself, as Socrates has pointed out, does not result in anything actually good. If, however, this identification requires the knowledge of knowledge to produce, in addition, the condition of the benefit of these crafts' products, we will need an account of the relation between its two functions. A further puzzle arises when we realize that, on the one hand, the unconditional good that this knowledge is now to produce is *sophrosune* (as the discussion of Zalmoxian soul-therapy shows) and, on the other hand, this knowledge, as the knowledge of knowledge, is supposed itself to be identical to *sophrosune*. We are thus faced with the paradox of a knowledge whose product is nothing but itself.

Paradoxes of reflexivity are no stranger to the *Charmides*; the central portion of the dialogue is notoriously concerned with evaluating the possibility of the knowledge of knowledge understood not as the knowledge of what one does and does not know (as it is understood in the hypothetical city), but as a kind of knowledge that has itself for its object (167b6–169a7). That discussion ends in *aporia*. While the notion of a knowledge that produces itself is not explicitly discussed in the *Charmides*, it is discussed in at least one other Platonic dialogue;⁴⁸ the discussion there, too, ends in *aporia*. These *aporiae* have sometimes been taken to signal Plato's own rejection of the philosophic viability of

that life in accordance with knowledge of knowledge would be a greater good than life in accordance with knowledge of good and evil *alone*, since the former would be life in accordance with the other 'sciences' as well as with the knowledge of good and evil," (G. Santas, "Socrates at Work on Virtue and Knowledge in Plato's *Charmides*" in E. Lee, A. Mourelatos, and R. Rorty, editors, *Exegesis and Argument* [New York: Humanities Press, 1973], 131, emphasis in original). Santas here obscures the point that he had earlier made: that even in this situation the sole source of the entire benefit of living such a life must, by definition, be the knowledge of the good. If both the knowledge of the good and the knowledge of knowledge are real kinds of knowledge, and, for whatever reason, we acknowledge the knowledge of knowledge to be productive of an unconditional good, then the knowledge of knowledge must be either identical to or a part of the knowledge of the good.

⁴⁶ Another reason for rejecting such a view are the difficulties involved in a system wherein conditional goods are exchanged for, and as on a par with, an unconditional good.

⁴⁷ This is the suggestion of, for example, Sprague, *Plato. Laches and Charmides*, 92–3, nn. 75 and 77, who however does not elaborate it.

⁴⁸ See *Euthydemus* 288d5–292e7. A similar paradox is raised in the (doubtfully authentic) *Cleitophon*.

these reflexive notions.⁴⁹ I would like to suggest, however, that the notion we have been led to here, that of a knowledge that has itself as its product, does not entirely resist understanding, and that a consideration of it may cast light on the peculiar nature of the knowledge of the good.

The notion of a knowledge that produces itself can be at least partially understood if we conceive of it as a kind of knowledge whose exercise essentially involves its propagation, that is, essentially involves something like teaching or otherwise attempting to engender itself in others. Such a kind of knowledge, if adequate sense can be made of it, would necessarily have a very different role in the properly constituted city from crafts such as medicine. Since what this knowledge produces, i.e., itself, is the unconditional good that is the condition for other goods, it makes no sense to suppose that it is simply exchanged for the products of the other crafts in the city. But since it is itself the good which it is also concerned to produce in others, the practitioner of this knowledge does not need the prospect of receiving anything in return to induce him to practice it on others. Its practice is both directly beneficial to the practitioner as well as beneficial to those towards whom it is directed. It would thus seem to be such that its exercise is both essentially social and yet beneficial to its practitioner directly, without the mediation of a system of exchange.

So much, then, for the way the knowledge of the good benefits oneself and others, and so provides the condition for the beneficial exercise of the other crafts. But can such a knowledge also fulfill the other task we assigned to it above, that of providing for the *competent* practice of the crafts? It would seem not; if we are to identify *sophrosune* with the knowledge of the good, we must reject its identification with the knowledge of knowledge and ignorance (where the latter is understood as a knowledge that ensures that only competent craftsmen ply their crafts).⁵⁰ This course of action is justified by the fact that Socrates himself has already argued in the dialogue that the knowledge of knowledge is not, in fact, equivalent to knowing what one knows and does not know, but rather only equivalent to knowing *that* one knows and does not know.⁵¹ He has only assumed the former equivalence in order to explore the

⁴⁹J. Annas, "Self-knowledge in Early Plato," in D. J. O'Meara, ed., *Platonic Investigations* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1984), 111–38 (on the *Charmides*); J. Annas, "Virtue as the Use of Other Goods," *Apeiron* 26 (1993): 53–66 (on the *Euthydemus*).

⁵⁰This does not entail that the formula "knowledge of knowledge and ignorance" cannot be appropriately applied to the knowledge of the good when understood in one of the other senses of that elastic formula which are investigated in the dialogue. Schmid, *Plato's Charmides*, emphasizes the appropriateness of one of those other senses, but fails, in my view, adequately to explore its relation to the knowledge of the good. See further below, n.64.

⁵¹The notion of a knowledge that knows simply that one knows and does not know was not given very much content in the earlier argument. As I argue elsewhere, it serves as a place-holder for the knowledge of the good that only appears towards the end of the dialogue.

possible benefit of knowing what one knows and does not know. Now that he has argued that it is not beneficial, we can accept without regret the earlier proof that knowledge of such a kind is in fact impossible. Neither the knowledge of the good, nor any other single kind of knowledge, will be capable in principle of distinguishing the true carpenters and physicians from the sham. But this is no real loss. What counts as successful performance of these crafts is sufficiently well-recognized that for the most part only competent craftsmen will be able to pass as such for any length of time. In addition, true craftsmen will be able to detect the quacks, so that any ongoing and recognized craft will be able to police itself. There is, I think, no difficulty in ascribing this position to Plato. It is obvious that for him the fundamental error of cities such as Athens was not that they mistakenly employed charlatans to build their ships and walls or grow their food; it was rather the charlatans who claimed to possess knowledge of what was good for the city that caused ruin, through the misuse of efficiently-supplied ships and other resources.

Socrates' hypothetical city was based on the assumption that a knowledge that can separate the quacks from the craftsmen in every craft was possible, and that *sophrosune* was identical to it. His subsequent discussion with Critias brought to light the knowledge of the good as the sole source of true benefit in the city. Since *sophrosune*, it is agreed by all, must be beneficial, we must reject the identification of *sophrosune* with the knowledge of what one knows (understood as the quack-detecting science). There is, therefore, no reason any further to entertain the counterfactual proposition of its possibility. But throwing away the ladder does not mean ending up where one started. Through the analysis of Socrates' hypothetical city we have arrived at the notion of a knowledge of the good of which the exercise is essentially social, directly beneficial both to its practitioner and to others, and itself the unconditional good that is the condition for the goodness of everything else. Because it is beneficial in this way, it is reasonable, on the dialogue's own terms, to identify it with *sophrosune*.

This conception of *sophrosune* is hardly more than an outline that addresses its peculiar structure without saying much about its substance. While our focus on the social dimension of *sophrosune* is partly responsible for this, and other parts of the dialogue can help flesh out this conception, it is obvious that neither the *Charmides* nor any other Platonic dialogue gives a full account of the sort of knowledge virtue turns out to be. Nonetheless, even from the point of view of its social dimension our dialogue has more to tell us about *sophrosune*. The speech Critias gives at the heart of the dialogue contains a criticism of human society that parallels the criticism in Socrates' earlier account of Zalmoxian medicine. Furthermore, the reform it recommends presents certain parallels with the sort of knowledge we have been led to identify with *sophrosune*. Critias' reform offers

us a superficial but suggestive image of a knowledge whose practice is social and directly beneficial to both self and others. It is thus an important supplement to the passages we have discussed above.

4. THE APOLLONIAN CRITIQUE OF HUMAN SOCIETY

Critias offers his speech on the Delphic inscription in support of the definition of *sophrosune* as “knowing oneself,” a definition to which he turns after the first definition of *sophrosune* he defends, “doing one’s own things,” has been refuted. At the close of that refutation, Socrates uses language plainly designed to remind Critias of the connection between self-knowledge and *sophrosune*.⁵² Critias takes the hint, and takes the sting out of his having to retract his earlier definition by appealing, with some sophistic flair, to the authority of the Delphic inscription. The connection between *sophrosune* and self-knowledge was by this time traditional,⁵³ and needs no story of the sort Critias here invents for support. Critias’ story demonstrates his ingenuity in providing an unexpected interpretation of a well-known proverb;⁵⁴ more importantly (for us), it suggests a model for an essentially social conception of *sophrosune*.

Critias self-consciously opposes his interpretation of the inscription to the traditional one. The three inscriptions Critias mentions were sometimes said to have been dedicated to Apollo by the Seven Wise Men of the early sixth century.⁵⁵ “Nothing too much” expresses in most general terms the ethos of self-restraint and observance of limits that was from early on particularly associated with Apollo. “Know thyself,” the most influential and widely-cited of the inscriptions, was traditionally understood as the most important application of this ethos: it is equivalent to “Remember that you are a mortal, not a god.”⁵⁶ The third inscription, “Standing surety ensures your doom,” seems, on the other hand, to be merely a prudential maxim, rather than an injunction binding on human beings in virtue of their place in the cosmos; it is no surprise that it was of far less importance than the other two for subsequent Greek moralizing.⁵⁷

⁵² See 164c1, 6.

⁵³ See, for example, North, *Sophrosyne*, 50–68 (on Sophocles). The text that most explicitly associates *sophrosune* and self-knowledge is Heraclitus B 116: “All human beings have a share in knowing themselves and in being *sophron*.” The Heraclitean conception of self-knowledge is, however, doubtless different from the traditional conception of simply knowing that one is a mortal and not a god. On the development of the notion of self-knowledge, see P. Courcelle, *Connais-toi toi-même. De Socrate à Saint Bernard*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1974).

⁵⁴ In this Critias’ central speech resembles his briefer exercise in Hesiodic exegesis at 163b3–c8.

⁵⁵ See H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956), I 387, and W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, J. Raffan, tr. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985) 148.

⁵⁶ See Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 148; Courcelle, *Connais-toi toi-même*, 12–13.

⁵⁷ See Parke and Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle*, I 387.

In his interpretation Critias assimilates “Nothing too much” to the status of the third inscription: both of them are simply bits of “good advice” (συμβουλὰς χρησίμους, 165a7), dedicated at Delphi by men who wished to compete with the one who had earlier dedicated “Know thyself” there.⁵⁸ In so doing, Critias insists, they misunderstood this original inscription. It was meant not as a piece of advice, but as a greeting (πρόσρησις) of the god to his worshipers (164d6–7). Furthermore, this divine greeting itself constitutes an implicit criticism of, and call to reform, the standard human practice of greeting. As Critias puts it, the god greets us in this way “in place of ‘Be joyful’ (χαῖρε), on the grounds that this greeting, ‘being joyful,’ is not correct (οὐκ ὀρθοῦ), nor ought one bid one another do this, but rather to be *sophron* (σωφρονεῖν)” (164d7–e2).

These two parts of Critias’ interpretation of the inscription—it is both Apollo’s greeting to his worshipers and his admonition that humans should greet each other this way—are importantly connected. The first suggests, in a spirit quite contrary to the traditional Apolline wisdom, that men and gods can meet each other on something like an equal plane:⁵⁹ Apollo greets us to his house, rather than insisting on an unbridgeable gulf between him and us.⁶⁰ The second suggests that our failure to recognize that we have something in us that might allow us to associate with the gods is connected with our failure to associate appropriately with each other. χαίρειν is not infrequently used by Plato for pleasure in a negative sense, when, for example, he describes the aim of the vulgar hedonist’s life;⁶¹ there can be little doubt here, where Apollo

⁵⁸ See 165a4–7. For a similar conception of the Seven Wise Men as attempting to top each other’s saws, see *Protagoras* 343a–c.

⁵⁹ The apparently symmetrical relationship between god and worshiper is mirrored in Critias’ syntax: he literally says that the inscription is “the greeting of the god of those entering” (πρόσρησις . . . τοῦ θεοῦ τῶν εἰσιόντων, 164d7); it is not clear which of the genitives is subjective, which objective. The greeting could just as easily be that of the worshipers to the god.

⁶⁰ Three recent commentators take Critias’ insistence that the inscription is a greeting as significant. Hyland, *The Virtue of Philosophy*, 90, holds that greeting is a “well-chosen image for the . . . responsive openness to things” that he identifies with Socratic philosophy. He does not comment on the virtual equality with the gods implied in Critias’ interpretation. Schmid, *Plato’s Charmides*, 37, on the other hand, argues that Critias’ rejection of the traditional “Apollonian ideal[, which] is no greeting of equal to equal,” is Plato’s way of signaling Critias’ impiety. (Schmid also suggests that Critias’ recognition that the inscription was dedicated by a human being is evidence of his atheism [38].) G. Müller (“Philosophische Dialogkunst Platons [am Beispiel des Charmides],” *Museum Helveticum* 33 [1976]: 129–61, reprinted in *Platonische Studien*, Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1986) is, in my view, right to insist that Plato’s own thought represents a break with this aspect of the Apollonian tradition. “Die Selbsterkenntnis . . . macht gottähnlich (dies ist die Lehre des vorliegenden Dialoges)” (83) perhaps puts the point too strongly, but is essentially right.

⁶¹ See Witte, *Die Wissenschaft*, 98 with n. 73, who cites Callicles’ ideal in the *Gorgias*: χαίροντα εὐσαμῶνως ζῆν (494c3).

objects to the term, that Plato has this negative sense in mind. In bidding each other *χαίρειν* when we meet and take our leave, we are sealing all of our social interactions with an exhortation to “take pleasure.” We thereby fail to act in accordance with our status as beings capable of associating with the divine. Such beings are addressed by god with the admonition to “know themselves,” that is, to “be *sophron*,” and so they should address one another.

According to Critias’ Apollo, then, our current practice of greeting errs in promoting pleasure and ignoring *sophrosune*. This criticism parallels the earlier criticism of Socrates’ Zalmoxis, that our current practice of medicine errs in promoting human health while ignoring *sophrosune*. The upshot of this earlier criticism was that health and other conditional goods should not be pursued “separately” from *sophrosune*, but it was not clear how the pursuit of the latter should be integrated with the former. So long as the concern for *sophrosune* is conceptualized as a craft like other crafts, it is difficult to see how this integration is possible. Critias’ reformed practice of greeting presents the example of a practice that has a very different place in social life. Greeting as a practice differs in kind from the familiar crafts: it is preliminary to, and marks the initiation of, social interaction concerned with any other matter. It is, quite literally, prior to such interaction. In recommending that greeting consist in an exhortation to *sophrosune*, Critias’ Apollo seems to suggest that a concern for *sophrosune* should be embodied in a social practice that is in some sense prior to, and provides the framework for, all other social intercourse. Furthermore, the fact that Critias is concerned with the proper form of verbal greetings offers another point of comparison with the discussion of Zalmoxian medicine, where the production of *sophrosune* is said to proceed by way of “beautiful speeches.” These speeches are specified in Critias’ account as a call to attend not to pleasure, but rather to knowing oneself. And just as the ultimate effect of the Zalmoxian beautiful speeches was a god-like immortality, so too this practice of self-knowledge is a condition of our ability to associate with the god.

The pursuit of *sophrosune*, then, should be like greeting: it should be in some sense prior to other forms of social interaction. Furthermore, like Apollo’s greeting, it should involve a summoning of another to know himself. Such practice would be impossible in the first, asocial hypothetical city Socrates constructed in the dialogue, in which citizens are not permitted so much as to write another’s name. From the point of view of this city, it would seem that telling others to concern themselves with knowing themselves is a paradigmatic case of failing to practice what one preaches. But Critias’ interpretation of the Delphic inscription suggests otherwise. The inscription is both the god’s greeting to us—therefore, his recommendation to us that we know ourselves—and

also his recommendation that we, in our greetings, bid others know themselves. If the god is consistent, the latter must not be an instance of failing to know oneself. Indeed, the fact that the god accomplishes both recommendations with a single greeting suggests a closer connection: that calling others to self-knowledge is in fact the way to pursue the project of one's own self-knowledge. That is to say, Critias' account of the Delphic inscription presents an image of a self-knowing that has an inherently social dimension. This self-knowing thus has the same structure as the knowledge to which the analysis of Socrates' second hypothetical city led. That analysis, we may recall, led us to the notion of a kind of knowledge the practice of which consists in propagating that knowledge in others, and which is itself directly valuable for both parties. Critias' speech treats self-knowledge as a godlike benefit, the practice of which involves promoting that same benefit in others.

The reformed practice of greeting advocated by Critias' Apollo is, of course, merely an image or analogue of *sophrosune*. We are given little indication of the precise nature of the social practice of *sophrosune* that would be analogous to greeting. As we have seen, the practice of *sophrosune* requires a certain social priority to match the priority in terms of goodness that the Thracian accords it and which comes to the fore again in the discussion of the second hypothetical city. But the priority of greeting to the familiar crafts is only analogous to the required priority.

In closing, I would like to suggest that two distinct accounts of the social practice of *sophrosune* could be developed from the example of greeting. On the one hand, we can imagine an account similar to that offered by Protagoras in the first part of the *Protagoras*: a practice of social conditioning, wherein everyone exhorts, and is exhorted by, everyone else to live up to certain rules for living together that make the exchange of goods and other sorts of social interaction possible.⁶² On this view the self known by self-knowledge would be nothing other than the socialized self that the process of social conditioning itself creates. The rules and standards that constitute this self and are propagated by this practice need have no other origin than that of contingent historical discovery of what has worked to make social organization possible.

The other account that could be developed from the example of greeting takes a less fully social view of the self. On this account, the verbal practice of calling one another to self-knowledge is not the exhortation to live up to received, possibly evolving standards, but rather a call to a true self-discovery that, perhaps paradoxically, necessarily involves discussion with others. This account would take its bearings not from the Protagoras of the *Protagoras*, but

⁶² See *Prot.* 357b1–4: "For each other's justice and virtue, I suppose, benefits them; for this reason every one eagerly tells and teaches everyone what is just and lawful."

from the Socrates of the *Apology*.⁶³ That this is the account towards which the *Charmides* ultimately points is clear from the following passage, in which Socrates responds to Critias' complaint that Socrates is more interested in refuting him than discovering the truth:

How you treat me! I said, in thinking that no matter how hard I try to refute you, I do so for any other reason than the one I would have for investigating what I myself am saying, fearing I might remain unaware that I think I know something while not knowing it. And I say that I am doing this right now: investigating your statement for my own sake most of all, but perhaps also for the sake of the rest of my companions. Or don't you think it is a good thing for practically all people, that each of the things that are should be made clear—as they are? (166c6–d6)

Socrates pursues the question of what he knows by questioning what others claim to know; his pursuit of self-knowledge in this respect thus involves attempting to bring others to self-knowledge of the same sort. What is more, the practice of self-knowledge here, no less than in the Protagorean case, involves at the same time knowledge of something else. Instead of (evolving) conventional rules and standards, however, here this additional subject matter is “each of the things that are.” It must be said that the dialogue does not make clear what the relationship is between the knowledge of these entities and the knowledge of self with which it is connected.⁶⁴ Nor is it clear how this Socratic practice of self-knowing and inquiry into truth is to be incorporated into a city so as to underlie, after the fashion of greeting, all other social interaction. The *Charmides*, like all of Plato's dialogues, designedly leads us to important questions that it leaves unanswered. Nonetheless, I hope to have shown that the four passages in the dialogue explicitly concerned with the social dimension of *sophrosune*—Socrates' Zalmoxian critique of the practice of medicine, Socrates' two hypothetical cities, and Critias' Apollo's critique of the practice of greeting—plainly lead to the view that *sophrosune*, no matter what

⁶³In the *Apology* Socrates himself describes his engagement with his fellow citizens as a call to self-knowledge that takes the place of greeting: “. . . I shall not cease to practice philosophy, to exhort you and in my usual way to point out to any one of you whom I happen to meet: Good Sir, . . . are you not ashamed of your eagerness to possess as much wealth . . . as possible, while you do not care for nor give thought to . . . the best possible state of your soul?” (29de).

⁶⁴Schmid, who sees the essentially social nature of self-knowledge (“[The soul] exists essentially in relation to others, through the practice of dialogue, and she knows herself—or may come to know herself—in and through such dialogue” [*Plato's Charmides*, 81]), argues for what seems to be a position intermediate between the Protagorean and Socratic positions I have sketched above. Instead of pointing to the “things that are” as a necessary correlate to Socratic discussion, Schmid emphasizes the necessity of adhering to rational standards in the discussion that produces self-knowledge. The result seems to be a discourse-based ethics: “For on this view, *Socrates' ethics would emerge out of and reflect the practice of rational inquiry itself*, the values of moral-philosophical discourse” (74, original emphasis). For further discussion of what might be called Schmid's Habermasian position, see my review of his book: *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 98.08.16.

else it is, involves a fundamentally social practice of self-knowledge that promotes the self-knowledge of oneself and others, is the condition of the goodness of all other goods, and, in the best city, would provide the context for all other forms of social interaction.⁶⁵

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