

柏拉圖論《大阿爾西比亞德斯》 中的自我知識

Plato on Self-Knowledge in the *Alcibiades I*

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摘要

蘇格拉底的自我知識是根據德爾斐神廟上的銘文上面寫著‘*to gnōnai heauton*’(認識你自己)發展出來，對蘇格拉底來說它就是 *sōphrosunē* (健全的魂)，而且它也是他的認識論學說的主題之一。有些學者把柏拉圖的 *sōphrosunē* 理解為「節制」；然而，這篇論文根據柏拉圖的哲學將對它做許多的討論，並給它一個新的解釋。此外，他的自我知識是通過他對神話的運用來闡述的。這篇文章將憑藉著他的神話隱喻來研究他的自我知識的理論。

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Socrates, a thinker who went from studying natural science to discussing the oracle in the Temple of Delphi: Know Thyself (*γνῶθι σαυτόν*). His exploration of this theme started his study of human *aretē* (virtue) and the soul. Evidently, the discovery of self-knowledge includes knowledge of the *psyche* (soul).

Some scholars may think that the Platonic dialectical development of ‘*to gnōnai heauton*’ (self-knowledge) is similar to that of his *muthos* (myth), where the reader can be profoundly baffled and puzzled by his *elenchus* (refutation); however, these two themes are tightly related, since Plato employs his *muthos* as a metaphor to elaborate his philosophical doctrine of self-knowledge. Withal his self-knowledge, which probes his concept of the *psyche* (soul), and which paves the way to being a philosopher-king, *id est*, a wise and free ruler, is the core theme of his virtue, since virtue



enables a man to become free, and evil causes a man to become a slave (*Alcibiades I* 135c).¹

Thus the importance of the Platonic dictum, ‘self-knowledge is the soundness of the soul’ (*to gignōskein heauton sōphrosunē estin*), which is a feature of his philosopher king, who possesses the knowledge of how to judge good and evil in his possessions by virtue of the soundness of the soul which enables him to be just and fair for his city state (*polis*). Once he owns his own science (*to eidenai*), he is able to know the possessions and affairs of others, then he will not be ignorant (*agnoēsei*) of the affairs of state (*Alcibiades I* 133d-e). For him, to effectively manage the

¹ Plato. *Alcibiades I*, translated by W.R. M. Lamb, (London/England: Harvard University Press, first published 1927) pp. 219-221. In this article the Greek term ‘*epistēmē*’ will not be translated into English, since there is no appropriate English equivalent. The reason for this is that in this article the Greek term ‘*gnōsis*’ and its verb ‘*gignōskein*’ have been translated into ‘knowledge’ and ‘to know’ respectively. Another Greek term ‘*to eidenai*’ is also translated into English as ‘science’. There is no single English term that can adequately convey the Greek meaning of the term ‘*epistēmē*’.



affairs of state is to manage and rule other people's possessions. Hence self-knowledge is not only an *epistēmē* of knowing the nature (*physis*) of his self, but also that of other people, that is, it is an *epistēmē* of the essence of soul. Apparently, Socrates's point of view is that the *epistēmē* of knowing oneself is to know the soul itself (*Alcibiades I* 130e). This is the main reason why in the *Alcibiades I* when Socrates talks with Alcibiades, their conversation mainly focuses on the three subjects of *sōphrosunē*, *andreia* (courage – the basic character of man) and *dikaiosunē* (justice), which are the essential characteristics of the philosopher king, who, as Plato describes in the *Republic* VI 500c, “sees and observes things which are regulated and always internally consistent, that do no wrong and are not wrong by each other, are orderly and rational, and these he imitates and models himself on as far as possible”².

² Plato. *Republic*, BK 6, 500c (London/England: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 63.



Briefly, the main purpose of Platonic self-knowledge, as inscribed on the Delphic temple, is to gain the science of the soul (*to eidenai tēs psychēs*) (*Alcibiades I* 132d) in preparation for becoming a philosopher king, whose character is beautiful and good (*kalos kai agathos*), i.e. divine personality, and who resembles *theion* (divine) to enable distinction between good and evil in the human character. Therefore he is not only a genuine politician, but also a true economist. (*Alcibiades I*, 133e-134a) In the *Symposium* 209a Diotima says that the highest and the most beautiful part of *phronēsis* (practical wisdom) is the regulation of the city state and management of finance, personified by the politician, Solon. For Plato, self-knowledge is necessary to the capability of dividing good from evil in human nature; and the philosopher-king is one who possesses virtues – wisdom (*sophia*), *sōphrosunē*, courage, justice and *eusebēs* (piety), since he not only owns the *epistēmē* of knowing himself and his possessions (*ta hautou*) –



good and bad, but also knows the possession of his possession (*ta tōn hautou*), i.e. the *epistēmē* of the possession of others (*Alcibiades I 133e*).

In summation, the purpose of Plato's inquiry into self-knowledge is to fulfill his theory of virtues; and his concept of the philosopher king is the paradigm of these, since he not only has divine wisdom, but also his actions and words are consistent because of his self-knowledge. This article will be divided into three parts to inquire the Platonic theory of self-knowledge; and by these means it is expected that his core concept of self-knowledge can be dialectically manifested, and the picture of the philosopher-king gradually revealed.

I.

The Greek term '*sōphrosunē*' can be rendered into English by the terms 'temperance', 'self-control' or 'moderation'. It would be wrong to append the literal meaning to the word as such a coarse translation has insufficient nuance.



Some scholars assert that it is more appropriate to refer to *sōphrosunē* as ‘soundness of mind’ over ‘moderation’ or ‘temperance’.³ However, it is enough to understand it as ‘soundness of the soul’ or ‘wholeness of the power (*dunamis*) of thought’, since if *sōphrosunē* is an *epistēmē* of self and the other *epistēmai*, it has a certain power whereby it can be *epistēmai* of itself and of something (*Charmides* 168aff). And it is called the power of the soul, which is a motion whose purpose is to know itself, like sight, so that it can be applicable to itself and to some other objects (*Charmides* 169a-b).

³ Cf. Lamb says that a state of the reasoning mind is always the Greeks’ aspiration of moral quality. Socrates and his circle are favourable towards identifying it with a kind of practical wisdom or prudence. In a footnote he holds that *sōphrosunē* originally meant ‘soundness of mind’ or ‘wholeness or health of the faculty of thought (*phronein*)’. Plato. *Charmides, Alcibiades, Hipparchus, Lovers, Theages, Minos Epinomis*, p. 3. (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London/England: Harvard University Press, first published 1927). Julia Annas. ‘Self-Knowledge in Early Plato’ in the *Platonic Investigations* edited by Dominic J. O’ Meara, (Washington D.C./US: Catholic University of America Press, 1985), pp.118-119.



However, if we think about it in terms of Plato's explanation in *Alcibiades I*, we discover that it might be comprised of the two words, *sōn* and *phronēma*. The former means 'sound', 'safe', 'healthy' or 'entire', the latter 'thoughts' or 'purposes'; and Plato defines it as follows:⁴

When the soul inquires (*skopēi*) alone by itself (*autē kath hautēn*), it departs into the realm of the pure, the everlasting, the immortal and the changeless, and being akin to these it dwells always with them whenever it is by itself and is not hindered, and it has rest from its wanderings and remains always the same and unchanging with the changeless, since it is in communion therewith. And this state of the soul is called practical wisdom (*phronēsis*). (*Phaedo* 79d)

⁴ Plato. *Phaedo*, translated by Harold North Fowler, Introduction by W.R.M.Lamb, 79d (London/England: Harvard University Press, first published 1914), p. 277. Fowler translates the Greek term '*phronēsis*' into the English 'wisdom', however, it is better to render it as 'practical wisdom' to distinguish it from the Greek '*sophia*'.



Apparently, the concept of practical wisdom means that the soul according to its own self (*autē kath hautēn*) is engaging in the activity of inquiry (*skopia*) without being interrupted by sensation. That is, when the soul inquires its own *epistēmē* according to its own self, it is captivating itself. And once it is looked at (*blepesthai*)⁵ by itself, it enters into the realm of reality, with which it is united, we can illustrate that it is in the state of contemplation (*theōria*).⁶ It follows that the term

⁵ The perfective forms of the Greek term ‘*blepein*’, whose stem is ‘*d-*’ and ‘*eid-*’, are from the root of the Ancient Greek term ‘*eidon*’, and we know that the infinitive of ‘*eidon*’ is ‘*idein*’ (to behold).

⁶ Cf. *Alcibiades I* 133b-c and *Republic* 500c. Here I would like to compare two Greek terms that Plato applies to describe our soul to behold the realities. One is ‘*kathoraein*’; the other is ‘*blepein*’. The former is comprised of ‘*kata*’ (down) and ‘*horaein*’. The conjugation of the strong Aorist ‘*eidon*’ is derived from the present tense of the verb ‘*horaō*’, and the conjugation of its aorist infinitive is ‘*idein*’. Hence, we know that both ‘*blepein*’ and ‘*horaein*’ are related to ‘*idein*’. In the *Phaedrus* 247d-248d Plato uses the term ‘*kathoraein*’ to convey that the soul beholds justice itself, temperance itself and *epistēmē* (*αὐτὴν δικαιοσύνην, καθορὰ δὲ σωφροσύνην, καθορὰ δὲ ἐπιστήμην, Phaedrus* 247d) and the realities (*καθορῶσα τὰ ὄντα, Phaedrus* 248). When the soul ‘contemplates these realities/ true beings (*τὰ ὄντα ὄντως θεασαμένη*) and feeds upon the other eternal verities, after which, passing down again within the heaven, it goes home,...’ (*Phaedrus* 247e). And in the *Phaedrus* 248b Plato says if the soul cannot gain the contemplation of the reality (*τῆς τοῦ ὄντος θέας*), it will go



‘*sōphrosunē*’ essentially connotes the soul itself, contemplating on (*theōrein*) its own self, to inquire into its own *epistēmē* or its own inner self. Thus the term ‘*sōphrosunē*’ essentially means ‘sobriety of, chastity of or soundness of thought or soul’.

In the *Charmides* 159b-160a Charmides’ first definition of *sōphrosunē* and Laches’s definition of courage (*andreia*) in the *Laches* 192a respectively are refuted by Socratic *elenchus* (refutation), since they exhibit neither quickness nor endurance, which are relatively and particularly beautiful and good, but *epistēmē* and *technē* (art) only, which are universally

away from the reality. Here the term ‘ὄντος’(Being) is singular. It could denote ‘god’. While in the *Alcibiades I* 132d-133c, Plato employs the term ‘*blepein*’ to communicate that the soul beholds a soul. He says that if the soul is to know itself, it must surely look at a soul, and especially at that region of it in which occurs the virtue of a soul - wisdom (καὶ ψυχὴ εἰ μέλλει γνῶσεσθαι αὐτήν, εἰς ψυχὴν αὐτῇ βλέπτεον, καὶ μάλιστα’ εἰς τοῦτον αὐτῆς τὸν τόπον, ἐν ᾧ ἐγγίγνεται ἡ ψυχῆς ἀρετὴ, σοφία, 133b) and this part of soul is not only the seat of science and thought, but also resembles god. Clearly, Plato applies the term ‘*kathoraein*’ to depict that the soul beholds the realities and makes use of the term ‘*blepein*’ to portray how the soul looks at a soul. And both these two stages are able to arrive at the moment of *theōria*.



true and teachable, because they have universal rules which can be followed and obeyed. For example, the arts of medicine or farming possess universal rules which can be applied respectively in their *modus operandi*, whether present, past or future, because of their immutability. (*Laches* 198d-199a). But the *epistēmē* of soundness of soul and of courage are different from the art of medicine, since they involve inner truth, which is good and beautiful at all the stages of time both in actions and words, and which is more abstract and profound than intellectual knowledge, i.e. *dianoia*, for example, the art of medicine (*Charmides* 166a-d).⁷

Prof. Hsei-Yung Hsu reads ‘*sōphrosunē*’ as ‘moderation’, which means ‘quietness’ or ‘do your own thing’.⁸ However,

⁷ Plato. *Charmides*, translated by W.R.M. Lamb (London/England: Harvard University Press, first published 1927). Cf. Hsei-Yung Hsu (徐學庸). ‘Knowledge as Understanding in Plato’s Thought’, in the *Universitas: Monthly Review of Philosophy and Culture*, p. 1016, 28(11), 2001, pp. 1012-1018.

⁸ Hsei-Yung Hsu (徐學庸). ‘Knowledge as Understanding in Plato’s Thought’, p. 1014.



Julia Annas disagrees,⁹ seeing self-control as a phenomenon of behaviour which is more plausibly expounded by the state of the agent-that-is-self-knowledge than the state of the agent-that-is-self-control.¹⁰ She does not provide a further or better exposition than this. From my point of view, she does not take account of the Socratic art of measurement. The main task of soundness of the soul (*sōphrosunē*) for a philosopher is to apply the appropriate mathematical proportion to attain the state of the mean with the art of measurement. Arithmetic or mathematics is the core structure of Socratic or Platonic philosophy, i.e., Socrates employs mathematics as the language to set out his philosophical thought. In the *Alcibiades I* 126 c, Socrates asks of Alcibiades,

Socrates: And what art is it that causes states to agree about numbers?

⁹ Julia Annas. 'Self-Knowledge in Early Plato', in the *Platonic Investigations*, edited by Dominic J. O'Meara, p. 120.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121. She holds that self-control is only an aspect of *sōphrosunē*. p.122.



Alcibiades: On account of the art of calculation (*dia tēn arithmētikēn*)

Socrates: And what of individuals? Is it not the same art?

Alcibiades: Yes.

Socrates: And it makes each single person agree with himself?

Alcibiades: Yes.

And in the *Statesman* 283d-286d Plato says that all things are measurable; and the art of measurement helps us to keep all things in the mean, that is, not too much nor too little, since the mean produces all beautiful and good things. Hence soundness of the soul without the support of the art of measurement is impossible, because if we do not own the calculating art to support accurately the level of balance to maintain unity, it is as if we are playing seesaw, if we lose balance, the seesaw will fall on one side. From a Socratic point of view soundness of the soul is to attain or to maintain the



state of the mean - not too much nor too little – on the strength of the calculation of the art of measurement to reach the objective *epistēmē*. It follows that the mean is the way to obtain the *epistēmē* of the soul itself, which is the objective *epistēmē* to include both *epistēmē* of oneself and of otherness. So the mean and self-knowledge are the pivotal concepts of the soundness of the soul (*sōphrosunē*) to achieve the platonic divine unity of *epistēmai*, which is oneness, not multiplicity. In brief, the art of self-knowledge is the art of calculation (*arithmētikē*) or the art of measurement (*metrētikē*).

To this extent, Socrates in the *Charmides* 166b and 167a claims respectively that only a man of sound mind (*ho sophron*) will know himself and be able to distinguish essence of good from privation of evil, and that “this one alone (i.e. *sōphrosunē*) is an *epistēmē* of the other *epistēmōn* and of himself (*autē heautēs*)”. It follows that the aim of Platonic self-knowledge and soundness of the soul is to distinguish a



philosopher from a Sophist, to discern phenomenon from appearance and to separate the one, possessing science (*to eidenai*) and happiness (*eudaimonia*) from the other, having ignorance and pleasure (*hedone*). So in the *Theaetetus* 151c Socrates says that thanks to his good will (*eunoia*) his task is to help his fellow citizens to miscarry their possession of false image, and conversely, to bear the true image with his art of Mäeutik, which renders his students into a state of puzzlement (*aporia*) for the formation of the image of *epistēmē*. This process distinguishes him from the Sophist's eristic art, which produces illusive knowledge, i.e., *eikasia*. Christoph Horn describes the Sophists as magicians and liars, while Socrates is a genuine philosopher, the polar opposite to the Sophists.¹¹

Withal, Plato fulfills Socrates' dream in the *Phaedo* 60e-61a, wherein Socrates says that he has to accomplish his duty to cultivate his fellow citizens liberal arts (the Muses),

¹¹ Christoph Horn. *Philosophie Der Antike*, (Germany/München: Verlag C.H. Beck oHG, 2013) S.51.



especially that of philosophy, the greatest of them. Inasmuch as he wants to make (*poiei*) the art of the Muses to complete Socrates' dream for him, he accepts god's vocation to fulfill his commands by means of his refutation, *id est* his art of Mäeutik, which is his gadfly to eliminate ignorance from the soul (*Sophist* 230d).¹²

Kahn takes issue with the fact that when Plato shifts the search for the meaning of *sōphrosunē* to one for self-knowledge, he loses all contact with the ordinary meaning of *sōphrosunē*.¹³ His complaint is borne from his failure to consider that *sōphrosunē* is a Platonic tool of self-knowledge, paving the way to become a philosopher king, i.e., to know one's duty, one has to play the role properly, he can't act excessively or deficiently, but to the mean or with moderation (*to metron*) on the strength of the art of measurement (*he*

¹² Plato. *Sophist* 230d, translated by Harold North Fowler, (London/England: Harvard University Press, first publisher 1921).

¹³ Charles H. Kahn. *Plato And the Socrates Dialogue* (The UK/Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 191.



metrētikē, *Statesman*, 283b-284c).¹⁴ Once he knows himself clearly and distinctly, he will act virtuously, viz, his action is to the mean, neither excess nor deficiency. The fruit of the virtues – wisdom, justice, piety, courage and *sōphrosunē* – will mature. As far as Plato is concerned, a genuine politician – healthy in mind - will act wisely, justly, bravely and piously with his art of measurement to distinguish justice from injustice and goodness from evil, so that someone with a healthy soul can reach the oneness of virtues. In brief, the soundness of the soul (*sōphrosunē*) and self-knowledge (*to gnōnai heauton*) are immutably interdependent.

As far as Plato is concerned, a *sōphrōn* man is one who possesses a sound and healthy soul to be able to distinguish both the beautiful and good things from the bad and evil things and to discern what he really knows and does not know and to

¹⁴ Plato. *Statesman* 283b-284c, translated by Harold North Fowler, 283b-284c (London/England: Harvard University Press, first published 1925).



have ability to judge what other people know and do not know, including to know himself. So the more *sōphrōn* he becomes, the more precise his personal commitments may be.¹⁵ Once he possesses the *epistēmē* of it, he is not only enabled to make sound judgement with the art of measurement (*metrētikē*) (*Charmides* 167a, *Alcibiades I* 126d), but also his actions will be consistent with his words (*Apology* 32a). Consequently, if he has an *epistēmē* which knows (*gignōskei*) himself, he will be similar, himself, to that which he has; for instance, he who has beauty will be beautiful (*Charmides* 169e). From Plato's point of view, this man is an expert (*epistēmōn*) in moral and political art.

II.

The discussion of virtue plays a pivotal role in Platonic philosophical scrutiny, exemplified in his *Apology*, where he

¹⁵ Christopher Moore. *Socrates and Self-Knowledge*, (the UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015) p.131.



says that Socrates reset his philosophical investigations from nature (*physis*) to humanity, delving issues such as the essence of good and evil. Hence Plato wrote some dialogues (the *Protagoras*, the *Meno*, the *Laches*) with the single object of discussing the various forms of virtue, and highlighting the importance of virtue in his philosophical and political realm. In his *Protagoras* and *Meno*, the main theses are whether or not virtues can be taught and are *epistēmai*, and in the *Laches* it is into the concept of courage (*andreia*). All of these theses are tested by interrogation of the essence of the soul.

Plato's *Charmides* not only engages in the discussion of the soundness of the soul, but more significantly, it considers what *epistēmē* is and what *epistēmē epistēmēs* is, which questions the *epistēmē* of virtue, then the origin of the soul. In other words, Plato is setting out to examine the function and the source of the soul, in terms of his *theōria* (contemplation) of virtue, to explore his doctrine of *epistēmē* itself, and, being



intertwined with each other, form tripartite doctrines in one philosophical scheme. Thus for Plato the essence of the soundness of the soul is the subject of self-knowledge (*to gignōskein heauton*). It is questionable for some scholars, for example, Charles Kahn,¹⁶ to claim that the *Laches* and the *Charmides* are paired, since Plato investigates different ethical themes throughout his dialogues to prepare for the doctrine of self-knowledge (*to heauton auton gignōskein*), that being the command with which god endowed him, on the strength of Socrates' mouth or inner voice to dissuade him from *hubris, id est*, knowing your ignorance and not overstepping god's authority. For example, in Plato's *Alcibiades I* Socrates and Alcibiades discuss the essential ethics of 'courage' (*Alcibiades I* 115c ff), which involves the ethical concept of the beauty and goodness (*kalos kagathos*), i.e., virtue, so it is not sufficient evidence to claim that the *Laches* and the *Charmides*

¹⁶ Charles H. Kahn. *Plato And the Socrates Dialogue* (The UK/Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 184.



are paired, albeit the Platonic authorship of *Alcibiades I* has been placed in doubt by Schleiermacher.¹⁷ Notwithstanding, for Plato self-knowledge and the soundness of the soul are inseparable if man wants to know himself; he has to have the soundness of the soul to help him to know the *telos* of his life, which is the seeking of truth, goodness and beauty, as Diotima mentions in the *Symposium*, on earth.

Socrates denotes the same *epistēmē* as the *epistēmē* of virtue, (*Laches* 199a-e) where in the *Charmides* 168a he holds that it is the *epistēmē* both of other *epistēmōn* and of the self, and which he calls the *epistēmē epistēmēs*. In the *Alcibiades I* 128e Socrates divides the art of attending to our soul into that of attending to its possessions. The former is the thesis of what the self is (*ti pot' eimi autos*), which is the *epistēmē epistēmēs*; the latter is of virtues, which are the possession of the soul, and which is the *epistēmē* itself. Once these two theses are

¹⁷ Julia Annas. 'Self-Knowledge in Early Plato' in the *Platonic Investigations*, edited by Dominic J. O'Meara, p. 113.



discovered, then we are able to know (*gignōskein*) others and to retain the *epistēmē* of others by intercourse of the soul with the soul (*Alcibiades I* 130d). So there is a tripartite of *epistēmai*. The soul itself is different from its possession of virtues, for example, when it acts courageously with its body, it shows its bravery, and when fairly, justice. The soul employs its body to exhibit its possessions, which we are able to know by means of discovery from the soul with the soul. Socrates says that if one discovers the *epistēmē* of himself, he becomes acquainted with his soul; and his actions will manifest the beauty of virtues (*Alcibiades I* 129 b). And if he acts conversely, it is because he remains in ignorance (*en agnoia*) of it (*Alcibiades I* 129 b). So the *epistēmē* of the soul is the same as that of virtues, i.e. the *epistēmē epistēmēs* is the *epistēmē* itself on a different level. That is, the exhibition of virtues is for the sake of acknowledgement of the *epistēmē* of the soul. Once one gains the latter, the former will show them



both in actions and words. Similarly, when he holds the *epistēmē* of the soul, he will cause his soul to discourse with his beloved's soul. By these means he obtains the *epistēmē* of others (*Alcibiades I* 130d-e). This is the characteristic of his vision of the philosopher-king, who is the real economist. In the *Alcibiades I* 133e-134d, Socrates sets out the qualities of the philosopher king. To begin with, he establishes that if a man is ignorant of the affairs of others and of states, he can never be a statesman or an economist. To be in that position and thus unqualified will make him and his subjects wretched. He must acquire virtue to impart virtue to the citizens through justice and temperance. That will ensure happiness for all, and he must be divine as well, for to act thus will be pleasing to god.

To put it succinctly, self-knowledge is *epistēmē* of the soul, since man is his soul (*Alcibiades I* 130a-e), and it is different from the arts, which look after our body. So Socrates



says that neither doctor nor shoe-maker possess self-knowledge in respect of their arts, *id est*, they are ignorant of (*agnoia*) it (*Alcibiades I* 131a-b). As far as Socrates is concerned, paying attention to the health of our soul is more important than to that of our body, since if the former is in a healthy state, it follows that the latter will be. The soul, being the ruler, is like the city-state general; while the body, being the ruled, is like the soldier. If the general dies in battle, his soldiers will flee away. Likewise, if the soul is in an unhealthy state, it will perform unjustly. So Socrates holds that the deeper we possess knowledge of ourselves, the better we understand our souls; on the contrary, the more we fetch the external things, the less we understand our souls, because we pursue other people's possession of things, not their souls (*Alcibiades I* 130e-132a).

The inquiry into the *epistēmē* of virtue, therefore, is the discovery (*to heurein*) of the inner truth of *epistēmē* of the soul



in terms of the Socratic art of refutation. That is, as far as Plato is concerned, self-knowledge is a kind of knowledge discovered from within one's soul by oneself, it is not instilled into our soul by teachers. It follows that self-knowledge is heuristic knowledge, which is inspired by divination (*manteia*), (*Alcibiades I 127e*) i.e., inner insight (*opsis*) or inner vision; while art is practical knowledge with theory, such as medicine, which can be taught.

Besides if we presume to answer Socrates' questions, for instance, what is courage? (*ti pot' andreia estin*), his refutation would undoubtedly baffle us, since courage is only one of the virtues, albeit we comprehend the entirety of virtues by their parts. However, if the part is separated from the whole, the *epistēmē* of virtues is less sound (*phronōn*). In the *Meno 97e* Socrates takes the images of Daedalus as a metaphor to show that if parts of his images run away, his works have less value, if they are bound up, his products are worth a great deal, i.e.



the whole has greater value than the sum of its parts. This applies to the relationship between true opinions (*doxai*), which are practical wisdom (*Meno* 97b),¹⁸ and *epistēmē* itself. If some true opinions depart from the soul, they are of no great value until man makes them fast by means of recollection and turning them into *epistēmē*, which is abiding (*Meno* 98a). This is why *epistēmē* itself is transcendent, which is theoretical knowledge with dialectics through discovery (ὥς ἐξευρών, *Alcibiades I* 114a). If one is not able to discover it, he suffers to be called ignorant (*agnoia*). While true opinions are science with practice through learning (*mathēma*), they are less prized than it, though they are not purely empirical. If one is not able to learn them, one is to be called ignorant (*amathēs*). So we have two approaches to gain different kinds of knowledge, one is the approach of discovery, the other is of learning. And there are also two kinds of ignorance, one is ‘*agnoia*’, the

¹⁸ Plato. *Meno* 97b, translated by W. R.M. Lamb (London/England: Harvard University Press, first published 1924).



other is ‘*amathēs*’. To learn something does not amount to discovery of something. This is the reason that one owns knowledge, but lacks wisdom or the soundness of the soul. However, if he owns wisdom, he will possess knowledge.

Furthermore, in his *Phaedo* 83a-b he discerns the tripartite of ‘sight’. He says,

...,πιστεύειν δὲ μηδενὶ ἄλλω ἄλλ’ ἢ αὐτήν αὐτῆ, ὅτι
 ἰ ἂν νοήσῃ αὐτὴ καθ’ αὐτήν αὐτὸ καθ’ α
 ὑτὸ τῶν ὄντων: ὅτι δ’ ἂν δι’ ἄλλων σκοπῇ ἐν ἄλλοις ὄν
 ἄλλο, μηδὲν ἡγεῖσθαι ἀληθές: εἶναι δὲ τὸ μὲν τοιοῦτον
 αἰσθητὸν τε καὶ ὁρατὸν, ὃ δὲ αὐτὴ ὄρᾷ
 νοητὸν τε καὶ αἰδέεσ. (*Phaedo* 83a-b)

Here Plato adopts the concept of trio - *noein*, *skopein* and *idein* - to describe the activities of ‘sight’ of the soul respectively. The first, ‘*noein*’, means that when the soul is grasped by philosophy, the eye of the soul contemplates the thing itself according to itself, *id est*, Form. Christoph Horn says that



“philosophy is an ascension (*epanhodos*) of the soul”¹⁹. The second, ‘*skopein*’, is when the soul looks at the essence of the perceivable and visible things, which is owned by the visible world of *pistis*, i.e., perceptual knowledge. The last, ‘*idein*’, explicates that the soul itself beholds the intelligible and invisible things, which belong to the thinkable world of *dianoia*, i.e., intellectual science. Albeit the meanings of these three verbs appear to be similar to each other, they denote different Platonic levels of philosophical significance and activities and faculties of the soul. The verb ‘*idein*’ is when the soul beholds the inner essence of the soul, which we call noetic science, *id est, noesis*; and ‘*noein*’ shows that when the soul is seized by philosophy, it is enabled to see the Form.²⁰ So Christopher Moore holds that *noesis* is not only the intellectual part, but also the most divine part, i.e. god or

¹⁹ Christoph Horn. *Philosophie Der Antike*, S. 52.

²⁰ Cf. LOH Yip-Mei. ‘On the Relationship between the Method of Hypothesis and the Theory of Idea in Plato’s *Phaidon*’ in the *Hwa-kang Journal of Philosophy*, pp.63-64, no. 2, June 2010, pp. 51-66.



rationality.²¹ For example, in the *Symposium* 174d when Socrates is on his way with Aristodemus to Agathon's house, he is caught by the divine and becomes absorbed in his own thought (*prosechonta ton noun*). Hence Socrates's refutation assists us to behold our most rational part. In the quote above, Plato uses the term 'skopein' to indicate that the activity of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) is to captivate the substance of the perceivable and visible things in the phenomenal world. Here there are three kinds of acquaintance, the first is the phenomenal or perceptual knowledge, *gnosis*, the second is the intellectual or noetic science, *to eidenai*, and the last is the *epistēmē* of Form, the *epistēmē* itself. And self-knowledge belongs to the first. So it is obvious that for Plato, knowledge of the self is the process of ascent from a state of *gnosis* through one of *to eidenai*, to *epistēmē* itself. It is the dialectical process of ascent to beauty and goodness themselves as

²¹ Christopher Moore. *Socrates and Self-Knowledge*, p. 128.



Diotima said in his *Symposium* 210a-e. Or we can say that it is a journey of beholding our ‘inner selves’²² or a ‘voyage of intellectual baptism’. Christoph Horn asserts that the journey of *epistēmē* of the self “is as possible as *like to god (homoiōsis theō)*”,²³ which is the central motive of Plato’s moral philosophy, and which Plato emphasizes several times as the goal of philosophical endeavours.²⁴ And Plato, in the *Statesman* 300b-d, claims that the true politician is one who truly possesses the political *technê*, and will virtuously govern and rule according to this without regard to the written laws if the solution to the emergent situation violates the written laws. Hence it follows that a philosopher king is to seek beauty and goodness (*kalos kagathos*), that is, virtues.

Furthermore, it is evident that an inquiry into self-knowledge is the state of belief (*pistis*), because once the soul

²² Christopher Moore. *Socrates and Self-Knowledge*, p. 128.

²³ Christoph Horn. *Philosophie Der Antike*, S. 51.

²⁴ Christoph Horn. *Philosophie Der Antike*, S. 51.



engages into contemplation of its own self alone, or is looking at (*skopein*) itself by itself, to remove physical restriction and not to be hindered by the body, the soul itself sees itself, through which it discovers itself. It is what practical wisdom is. In other words, from Plato's point of view, the investigation into the principle (*archē*) of self-knowledge starts from the phenomenal world by means of mind (*nous*) to reach the state of inquiry into (*skopein*) the state of the essence of the soul itself. In the *Alcibiades I* 132d Socrates expounds on the care of the soul, using the words of the inscription at Delphi as addressed to the eye '*ide sauton*' (behold thyself). He asserts that the image of the beholder's eye is to be found reflected in the eye - or more particularly, the pupil - of another. This is done with our eye looking at (*blepein*) the most perfect part of another. Then if an eye is to see itself, it must look at an eye, and that region of an eye in which the virtue of an eye is found to occur. Thus for the soul to know itself, it must similarly



look at a soul wherein the essence, or virtue, of a soul may be found, and that is wisdom. And wisdom is divine, being where science (*to eidenai*) and thought (*to phronein*) reside, and in doing so, resemble god. Because of this, the beholder can gain the best knowledge (*gnōsis*) of himself. (*Alcibiades I* 132d-133c). It is what Plato's '*sōphrosunē*' means. He declares that we are able to behold the soul itself from inquiry (*skopia*) into the state of belief to dialectically elevate it to that of *noesis*. In brief, the intellectual world of mathematics is the bridge from the phenomenal world of inquiry (*skopia*) to the noetic world of Form. Prof. Hsu says that the philosopher possesses the knowledge of Form, by means of which he/she is not only able to make a rational and appropriate decision, but also to hold an accurate opinion.²⁵ But Christoph Horn believes that Plato builds an emphatic concept of the personality-changing effect of the philosopher: the philosopher possesses *epistēmē* in

²⁵ Hsei-Yung Hsu (徐學庸). 'Knowledge as Understanding in Plato's Thought', p.1015, p. 1017.



contrast to mere opinion (*doxa*), for the objects of his *epistêmê* are always unchangeable.²⁶ Likewise, Moore also thinks that “self-knowledge is not simply any knowledge about oneself. It must be what one would be changed to get, and this would be knowledge concerning one’s self-improvement, and thus one’s level of goodness”.²⁷ Their assertions can be found in the *Timaeus* 31c, where Plato shows that the nature of things is created according to the proportion of numbers, so that we can sublimate to the world of forms through numbers. In brief, numbers are the *logos* of the Platonic god, that is, we understand god itself through numbers. And in the *Symposium* 219a Plato calls this vision the sight of intellect (*he dianoia tēs oopsis*). And Jaeger names this ‘an inner sight’ (ein Schaunis) or ‘inner intuition’ (innere Anschauung).²⁸

²⁶ Christoph Horn. *Philosophie Der Antike*, S. 51.

²⁷ Christopher Moore. *Socrates and Self-Knowledge*, p. 129.

²⁸ Werner Jaeger. *Paideia: Die Formung Des Griechischen Menschen*, Zweiter Band (Berlin: Walte De Gruyter & Co, 1944), pp. 236-327.



In the *Alcibiades I* Socrates claims that when the eye, with concentration, looks at (*skopein*) something, in so looking it will behold (*idein*) itself. Likewise, in the *Symposium* 210c Diotima holds that a philosopher king contemplates (*theasasthai*) the beauty of the practice and the laws and beholds (*idein*) their beauties themselves as a whole. Apparently, the doctrine of Platonic self-knowledge is to inquire into the essence of the soul, i.e., what the soul is, since only this part of the soul resembles god, and it is the seat of science (*to eidenai*) and thought (*to phronein*), by which we are able to come to know the divine (*theion*) and to obtain the greatest knowledge (*gnōsis*) of ourselves (*Alcibiades I* 133c). It seems that Socratic self-knowledge entails the establishment of the doctrine of conscience (*syneidesis*). If we analyse the Greek term ‘*syneidesis*’, we observe that it is divisible into two parts: ‘*syn*’ (from) and ‘*eidenai*’ (to know), so that the concept of *syneidesis* means from one inner voice (*daimonion*) to know



oneself. If man knows that his soul is formed by god, his deeds will conform to those of the divine, i.e. virtues, since god is good, in him there is no jealousy (*Timaeus* 29e),²⁹ so that only the philosopher king has these characteristics apart from god.³⁰ From this point of view, it appears that self-knowledge is not only ‘the discovery of self-consciousness’ (die Entdeckung des Selbstbewußtsein³¹) as Prof. Horn asserts, but more importantly, it is the prelude to consciousness of conscience, since the former is a necessary condition of the latter. Only when self-consciousness is on the alert, can conscience awaken from its slumber. Additionally, in the *Timaeus* 29a Plato says that the cosmos can be grasped in terms of practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) and reason (*logos*). In view of this, from Plato’s point of view, self-knowledge is to return back to our

²⁹ Plato. *Timaeus* 29e, translated by R. G. Bury (London/England: Harvard University Press, first published 1929).

³⁰ Christoph Horn. *Antike Lebenskunst: Glück und Moral von Sokrates bis zu den Neuplatonikern*, 3 Auflage. (München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2014), S. 231.

³¹ Christoph Horn. *Antike Lebenskunst: Glück und Moral von Sokrates bis zu den Neuplatonikern*, S.228.



original seat, where god creates our soul with his sight into the eternal (*to aidion*), to dialectically behold (*idein*) the nature of the soul from the state of inquiry (*skopia*) through that of mind (*nous*) to that of idea, which is the vocation of a philosopher king or a philosopher.

In respect of inquiry into the Platonic concept of *epistēmē heautēs* (of the self), he, in the *Alcibiades I* 123d, proposes two pivotal terms: *epimeleia* (attention or diligence) and *sophia* (wisdom), with which he sets forth the self-knowledge of whether or not man knows what art makes him himself better if he is ignorant of what he himself is (*Alcibiades I* 128e), because if we possess the *epistēmē* of self-knowledge, we will know what kind of attention (*epimeleia*) to take over ourselves, if we do not know, we will remain in ignorance of it, and pay attention to something, not to ourselves (*Alcibiades I* 129a-b, 132b). In Socrates' terms, the command of the temple at Delphi "know yourself" (*to gnōnai heauton*) is *epistēmē* of



self-knowledge (*Alcibiades I* 130e). As a result, it supposes that the art of attention is the art of refutation (*elenchus*), which enlightens one's mind to awareness of the fact that they do not truly know what they believe they know, so they start to seek out for themselves to avoid the state of dogmatical slumber. It tells us that knowing our self-ignorance is the prelude to discovery (*to heurein*) of self-knowledge. The relationship between self-knowledge and self-ignorance will be discussed in section 3.

Furthermore, the concept of attention differs from that of 'therapeia' (treatment)³², which means to satisfy or to cure our lowest physical desires, *epithymētikon* (*Alcibiades I* 131b) with the art of cookery that produces gratification and pleasure (*hedonē*) through practice (*Gorgias* 462e-463a)³³ and that

³² In the *Laches* 185e Socrates avers that '*peri psychē therapeian*' (the treatment of the *psychē*) refers to the treatment of *epithymētikon* to ridicule the sophists, who claim that they are able to make their students become beautiful and good men, but instead, merely satisfy their vanity with their art of Eris.

³³ Plato.. *Gorgias* 462e-463a, translated by W.R. M. Lamb, (London/English: Harvard University Press, first published 1925).



bears ignorance. Evidently attention (*epimeleia*) looks after the health of the soul with the Socratic art of the gadfly, which is to constantly probe the Delphic aphorism – “know yourself” (*to gnōnai heauton*). From Socrates’s point of view, the pursuit of truth, goodness and beauty is hard labour, since the process of discovery is to walk a long and difficult path, searching with attention; nevertheless, it can nurture the Eros in our soul.

Thus, in *Apology* 38a does Socrates say that “the unexamined life is not [worth] living for men” (*ho de anexetastos bios ou biōtos anthrōpōi*). Here there are two terms that merit further scrutiny. First, the Greek verb ‘*exetazein*’ means ‘to question, examine, inquire’, so that from a Socratic point of view, a well examined life involves an investigation of the self, thereby not only distinguishing man from other creatures in a morally bankrupt society, but also preventing him from reciting words parrot-fashion, and



standing out from the crowd, on the strength of his refutation (*elenchus*), which is his means to spiritually stimulate his fellow citizens from their intellectual laziness to intellectual diligence, and with which he seeks truth (*alētheia*) through inquiry (*skopia*). So as far as Socrates is concerned, virtue is the expression of strict self-examination.³⁴ He holds that without the process of self-examination life is not alive and vivid, but inanimate and sluggish. Socratic self-examination *in nuce* is attention of the soul or “*to heautou epimeleisthai*” (*Alcibiades I 127e*).

Second, the term ‘*bios*’ means ‘physical or bodily life’, i.e., biological life caused by deficiency in *theōria* (beholding god or contemplation). As far as Socrates is concerned, he assumes that the satisfaction of intellectual beauty, which is the *ultima telos* of man, is more important than that of biological need. And his mission is to assist his students to

³⁴ Christoph Horn. *Antike Lebenskunst*, S. 229.



convert *bios* to *zōē*, which means life possessing the stream of vividness or animation in the stage of contemplation, with his art of refutation. Briefly, his art of refutation is to help them to undergo intellectual baptism, which turns their life from unworthiness to goodness, from the biological life to the intellectual one, from external inquiry to internal, which he insists he is obligated by his *daimonion*, to prioritise. Briefly, Socratic self-examination emphasizes the engagement in the inner life of mind (*nous*), i.e., *zōē*, which, as Moore says, is to “yield the benefits the *kalos kagathos*”.³⁵

Furthermore, Plato seems to liken the *philia* of, and the subsequent quest for, wisdom (philosophy) to the *philia* of Damon³⁶ and Pythias, whereby Pythias faced all manner of

³⁵ Christopher Moore. *Socrates and Self-Knowledge*, p. 229.

³⁶ In Plato's *Laches* 197d, 200c, *Alcibiades I* 118c and *Republic* 400b and 424c he mentions Damon and an ambiguity occurs. He might be Damon, the Athenian musician and sophist. (see footnote 3, *Alcibiades I* 118c); or for Plato, as a Pythagorean, the term is more likely to refer to the *philia* of Damon and Pythias. Cicero. *De Officiis*, with an English translation by Walter Miller, Bk. III. x. 45. (London/England: Harvard University Press, first published 1913).



dangers and obstacles in order to try and save his friend's life. Plato employs this metaphor to suggest that a philosopher must possess courage to challenge the hardship with attention (*epimeleia*), tell the truth with piety and wisdom and be able to face false accusations with justice and self-control, thanks to the beauty and goodness of his teacher, Socrates, whose actions are consistent with his words out of heavenly love (*agape*, *Alcibiades I* 131e, *Symposium* 180b and 181c)³⁷ of the truth on the strength of that when he says "*philia is homonoia*" (*Alcibiades I* 127a). And this is the destiny of a genuine philosopher, i.e., a truly virtuous man whom through his life serves to redeem wisdom from the collective *amnesia* of the crowd. So Christoph Horn says that "philosophy represents a

³⁷ Plato, in different dialogues, uses the term '*agape*', for example, the *Alcibiades I* 131e and the *Symposium* 180b and 181c. John M. Rist says that 'there is in fact no distinction in Scripture between the two terms *Eros* and *Agape*'. He mentions that Origen is the first Christian to call God *Eros* in his writings on Song of Songs, which paves the way for Dionysius to further develop it. John M. Rist. 'A Note on *Eros* and *Agape* in Pseudo-Dionysius' in *Vigiliae Christianae*, Dec., 1966, Vol. 20, No.4, pp. 239-240, (Dec., 1966), pp. 235-243.



‘care for the soul’(epimeleia tês psyches), i.e. an attempt to shape a harmonious personality (harmonische Persönlichkeit)”.³⁸

³⁸ Christoph Horn. *Philosophie Der Antike*, 2013: 39.



III.

This quote from *Apology* 21d, “I do not think that I know what I don’t know” (ὅτι ἄ μὴ οἶδα οὐδὲ οἴομαι εἰδέναι), and this from *Phaedrus* 235c, “I am conscious of my own ignorance” (συνειδῶς ἐμαυτῷ ἀμαθίαν), encapsulate the theme of Socratic self-ignorance. Moore claims that the path of seeking one’s self-knowledge must entail acknowledgement of one’s ignorance.³⁹ It seems that self-knowledge and self-ignorance are notorious Socratic paradoxes.⁴⁰ They are closely related in Socratic refutation, because in his own dialectical development Plato says that for someone to possess a knowledge of his ignorance implies that he “becomes a philosopher, he must undergo a transformation and conversion

³⁹ Christopher Moore, *Socrates and Self-Knowledge*, p.36.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Socrates and Self-Knowledge*, p.39.



(*periagôgê*, *peristrophê*)”⁴¹, because “philosophy is an ascension (*epanhodos*) of the soul”⁴².

With regards to the paradoxes between self-knowledge and ignorance of oneself that Socrates invents, in the *Symposium* 215b he was vividly portrayed by means of an *eikos* (similitude) as the aulos-playing satyr Marsyas to bravely challenge the Sophists by Alcibiades. He is sentenced to capital punishment by the Athenians due to both their ignorance and his gadfly figure, symbolized as *hubris* by the Sophists, who send him to the court at the age of 70.⁴³

The metaphor of the double-piped aulos is the Socratic dialectical development of the concept of the opposite, such as death and life in the *Phaedo*, where he argues that death comes from its opposite, life, for which there is no source other than death, *id est*, opposites from opposites, and for which there are

⁴¹ Christoph Horn. *Philosophie Der Antike*, S. 52.

⁴² Christoph Horn. *Philosophie Der Antike*, S. 52.

⁴³ Plato. *Apology* 17d, translated by Harold North Fowler, 17d (London/England: Harvard University Press, first printed 1914), p. 71.



two processes of generation (*to gignomenon*) – that the generation of death is of life that is revived (*to anabiōskesthai*) (*Phaedo* 70b-72a), and where he depicts that one who loves his life will not be afraid of death, as per the philosopher's practice (*Phaedo* 62d-63d, 67bff). Likewise, one who knows that he is ignorant is motivational to the discovery of knowledge. The discovery of ignorance of himself is the germination of knowledge of himself; and vice versa. This applies to the relationship between friendship (*he philia*) and hatred (*to misein*). When friendship is present, hatred will be absent, and vice versa (*Alicibiades I* 126b-c). They are in agreement (*homonoiā*) thanks to their opposite with the art of *arithmētikē*, i.e., their unity is the resultant of their differences on account of the calculation.



Taking on the role of *Thaumas*⁴⁴, Socrates' cause is one of constant interrogation, to discover self-knowledge out of wonder, being the impetus of inquiry into hidden truth, and which is the birth of the Damon-quest of wisdom. That is, Socrates wonders who he is and from whence he comes, thanks to discovery of his ignorance, which is the becoming of his pregnancy of self-knowledge. So the discovery of his ignorance is pivotal to seeking knowledge of himself; without it, he will not be driven to self-examine. That is, if he is totally ignorant, it is impossible for him to ask questions, this being the basis for Socrates' claim that ignorance is evil. So interrogation is prerequisite for the discovery of anything that one does not know. If one knows that he does not know something, it implies that he is not completely ignorant. Thus, it seems that Socrates' position is between knowledge (*to*

⁴⁴ Cf. Plato. *Theaetetus*, 155d, translated by Harold North Fowler, 155d (London/England: Harvard University Press, first published 1921).



gignōskein) and ignorance (*he agnoia, he amathia*), or rather, between acquisition and want of knowledge or want of learning, which has been elaborated by Diotima, who in the *Symposium* tells us that Socrates is a spiritual man (*daimonios anēr*) (*Symposium* 203a), whose nature is as the nature of Eros, between resource (*Poros*) and want (*Penia*) (*Symposium* 203a-204a).⁴⁵ She says,

For wisdom has to do with the fairest things, and Eros is a love directed to what is beautiful, so that Eros must be a philosopher, who is between wise and ignorant. This is a reason for which he has to thank his birth (*genesis*). (*Symposium* 204b)

With this Plato avers that Eros possesses two features: one is that the nature or birth of a philosopher is between richness and deficiency, fullness and emptiness, so that he is constantly seeking knowledge, when he is ignorant by means

⁴⁵ Plato.. *Symposium*, translated by W.R.M. Lamb, 203a-204a (London/England: Harvard University Press, first published 1925).



of the art of refutation to discover (*heurein*) a likely account (*eikōs logos*) or a correct opinion (*to ortha doxazein*), which is between practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) and ignorance (*amathia*) (*Symposium* 202a); and that Eros loves the beauty of the soul, where a philosopher, upon reaching maturity can bring forth his most telling works. Plato states that he remains in constant contact and dialogue with Socrates, and that he can beget those of his works with which his soul is pregnant. It doesn't matter that he is actually present or absent; he always remembers him and he is always in his thoughts (*Symposium* 209b-c). So his works are the fruit of their mutual minds, which are immortal and beautiful (*Symposium* 209d); and their *philia*, like Damon and Pythia, is firm and unbreakable, as Christoph Horn says above “to shape a harmonious personality”. And this is what Platonic self-knowledge is: soundness of the soul (*sōphrosunē*) – birth in *philia* because of deficiency of hatred and jealousy. In other words, the philosopher’s knowledge is



not only contemplative knowledge (*theōria*), but also practical knowledge. Once he is capable of gazing upon *epistēmē* itself, the birth of his production will be rich.⁴⁶

Most impressively, Plato used the goddess Artemis in the dialogue of *Theaetetus* 149b-c to express Socrates's double meaning in Athens. The goddess does not give birth to children herself, - she is a virgin- but she helps other women to give birth. And she does not allow barren women to become midwives because if they themselves lack of the experience of giving birth, they will not possess the *techne* of assisting others in giving birth. In his *Theaetetus* Plato endows Socrates two missions, one is that Socrates imitates the goddess Artemis, so he assists his students to give birth to their spiritual works while he himself does not produce any works. Socrates says,

⁴⁶ Hsei-Yung Hsu (徐學庸). 'Knowledge as Understanding in Plato's Thought', p. 1015.



I am sterile in point of wisdom, ...the god (ὁ θεός) compels me to act as midwife, but has never allowed me to bring forth. I am, then, not at all a wise person myself, nor have I any wise invention, the offspring born of my own soul; but those who associate with me, although at first some of them seem very ignorant, yet, as our acquaintance advances, all of them to whom the god is gracious make wonderful progress, not only in their own opinion, but in that of other as well. And it is clear that they do this, not because they have ever learned anything from me, but because they have found in themselves many fair things and have brought them forth. But the delivery is due to the god and me. (*Theaetetus* 150c-d, p. 35-37)

The god Socrates mentions here is Apollo, twin brother of Artemis,⁴⁷ and the god of Delphi, whom, in *Apology* 21e

⁴⁷ With regards to the story between Artemis and Apollo, please see Maureen O' Sullivan. *The Greek Gods – An Iconoclast's Guide*,



Socrates says is his witness, because once Chaerephon went to Delphi to ask whether there were anyone wiser than Socrates, and the Pythia replied that there was no one wiser.⁴⁸ Thus it follows that Socrates' second mission is as a gadfly with his *elenchus* to rescue the Athenians (*Apology* 30a-31e, 33c) because it is the oracle in the Temple of Delphi which urges him to know himself, i.e., to inquire into his soul, not to investigate other things; thereby Cicero historically positioned Socrates as the founder of virtue.⁴⁹ So Socrates plays two roles: one is as a spiritual midwife for his students, which, as Alcibiades' metaphor shows, Socrates' role with his students can be likened to Silenus (*Symposium* 215b); he is a genuine teacher of the youth, who assists his students to become pregnant from the beginning of their ignorance (*agonia*) and to

pp. 53-55 (Thessaloniki: Efstathiadis Group S.A., 1985). Cf. G.E. Elderkin. 'The Bee of Artemis' in *The American Journal of Philology*, 1939, Vol. 60, No. 2 (1939), pp. 203-213.

⁴⁸ Plato. *Apology* 21a, p. 81.

⁴⁹ Cicero. *Tusculan Disputations*, edited by Jeffrey Henderson, translated by J.E. King, V. iv. (London/England: Harvard University Press, 1911), p.435.



beget their spiritual children at the completion of their knowledge through the approach of Socratic *epagōgē*. The second one is as a gift that god sent to Athens.

For Plato, Solon was not only the philosopher king, but also the true economist. Aristotle in *Athenian Constitution* credits him with not only passing the law, *seisachtheia* (... , ὡς *σεισάχθειαν καλοῦσιν*),⁵⁰ but also to push through constitutional reforms (*Πολιτείαν δὲ κατέστησε καὶ νόμους ἔθηκεν ἄλλους*), which brought economic reform to cancel all people's debts and break down class divisions;⁵¹ displaying his practical wisdom in all that he did, thanks to his possession of the *epistēmē* of knowing oneself (*Alcibiades I* 130e). This is what Plato calls practical wisdom and virtue (*Symposium* 209a). It follows that Solon is neither ignorant of others'

⁵⁰ Aristotle. *Athenian Constitution*, translated by H. Rackham, VI (Harvard University Press, first printed 1935), p. 23. Cf. Diogenes Laertius. *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, with an English Translation by R. D. Hicks, Vol. 1, p. 47. (London/England: Harvard University Press, first published 1925)

⁵¹ Aristotle. *Athenian Constitution*, VII-VIII, pp. 25-31.



affairs, nor is ignorant of the affairs of states, and he is the genuine economist because he possesses virtues and divine nature. (*Alcibiades I* 133e-134c, *Symposium* 209a). In *Alcibiades I* 126c Socrates argues that if the conditions of the city-state have been improved and the populace treated with good management and rulership, friendship, which is harmony (ἡ φιλία ὁμόνοια ἦν, *Alcibiades I* 127a), with one another will prevail, while factions and hatred will be absent (ὅταν φιλία μὲν αὐτοῖς γίγνηται πρὸς ἀλλήλους, τὸ μισεῖν δὲ καὶ στασιάζειν ἀπογίγνηται).

To sum up, Eros is the witness of pursuit borne of deficiency out of wonder, while Pythias' quest for Damon is an example of love for wisdom, put into practice. A further example can be found in the *Parmenides* 137a, where Parmenides says that even though he may be old, he has to challenge the fearful ocean of words thanks to his *philia* of Zeno. A genuine philosopher is one who acts according to his



words. With Christoph Horn's insight that Plato's self-knowledge is equated with 'care for oneself' or 'care for one's soul' as per Plato's *Alcibiades I*⁵², it follows that not only can a harmonious personality with others be formed, but also the paradoxes between self-knowledge and self-ignorance can be offset.

Plato holds that the motivation of inquiry into self-knowledge is that one is conscious of one's own ignorance. Socratic self-knowledge is that 'the soundness of the soul' is different from other subjects of acquaintance, which are instilled and taught, because it is discovered by the individual, possessing soundness of the soul, which can guide him to behold (*blepein*) the *epistēmē* itself, god. And the philosophical king is also a philosopher who endeavours as far as possible to liken himself to god, and who is not only a genuine politician, but also a true economist because he is able

⁵² Christoph Horn. *Philosophie Der Antike*, 2013: 40.



to wisely manage and treat other people's possessions with his virtues, which is called 'ή φιλία όμόνοια ήν'.



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Abstract

Socratic self-knowledge is a development of the inscription on the temple at Delphi which reads, ‘*to gnōnai heauton*’, which is Socrates’s *sōphrosunē*, and which forms one of the themes of his doctrine of epistemology. Some scholars understand the Greek term ‘*sōphrosunē*’ as ‘self-control’ or ‘temperance’; however, this paper will discuss this and offer a new interpretation based on Plato’s philosophy. In addition, Plato’s doctrine of self-knowledge is elaborated by his employment of myth, and this article will investigate his theory of self-knowledge through the medium of his metaphor of myth.

Keywords: *aretē*, *elenchus*, ignorance, self-knowledge, *sōphrosunē*.

