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WHAT SOCRATES LEARNED FROM PARMENIDES. PART 2. HYPOTHESIS, ANTILOGY, AND PHILOSOPHICAL SELF-DEFENSE IN THE *PHAEDO*

Abstract. My first study identified the cognitive abilities and argumentative skills developed by the *gymnasia* presented in Plato's *Parmenides*. Since the correspondence with the intellectual virtues Socrates displays in other dialogues is too remarkable to be a coincidence, I concluded that Socrates must have trained with Parmenides' *eightfold routine* in his youth. My second study supports this conclusion by drawing attention to textual evidence found in the *Phaedo*. The autobiographical account Socrates shares in that dialogue indicates how the *gymnasia* impacted his intellectual development, mostly through the action of hypothesizing. This strategic move used by the Eleatics transformed the originally sectarian way Socrates related to Forms and enabled him to protect his theory from attacks in a secure yet non-dogmatic way.

Keywords: pedagogy, *elenchos*, antilogy, *gymnasia*, hypothesis.

1. Introduction

My text *What Socrates learned from Parmenides. Part 1* focuses on Plato's *Parmenides*. In it, I elucidate the preparatory character of Parmenides' *gymnasia* by identifying the training's two dominant telic modes,[1] its *learning*

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[1] What I refer to as a *telic mode* is the type of relation between a training and its goal. In section 2.3. of my first study, I distinguish three such modes: autotelic (training and goal are the same), homotelic (training and goal

X through Y method, as well as the Fundamental Cognitive Abilities and Complex Argumentative Skills it develops.[1] I conclude that the close correspondence between these abilities and skills (elenctic skills in particular), and the intellectual virtues attributed to Socrates elsewhere in Plato's dialogues is too remarkable to be a mere coincidence. There is good reason to believe that young Socrates followed Parmenides' advice and trained with the routine prescribed. But is there any hard evidence to support this conclusion? Do other dialogues inform us about Socrates' reaction to Parmenides' gymnastic prescription? Or are there concrete textual clues indicating that Parmenides' exercise had a lasting impact on him one way or another? As I show here, mainly through an examination of Socrates' autobiographical account in the *Phaedo*, the answer is yes, such clues exist.

1.1. Methodological preamble: taking dramatic features seriously

Let me start with clarifications on the way I approach the *Parmenides* in relation to other dialogues of the Platonic corpus, the *Phaedo* in particular.[2] Most interpretations of the *Parmenides* do not take the dramatic context and characters of the dialogue seriously. Parmenides and Socrates are treated as masks used by Plato to communicate his own ideas—or to criticize them retrospectively, especially the theory of Forms. This liberty taken with the text is so widespread that it has become the norm. The interpreter who refuses this standard approach feels compelled to offer a justification. This situation is absurd. The burden of proof is on interpreters who decide to ignore the dramatic context.

In contrast, my pedagogical interpretation of the *Parmenides* takes the characters and the dramatic context very seriously. The young Socrates is Socrates, Zeno is Zeno, Parmenides is Parmenides. Far from being empty shells whose identity does not matter much, these characters have a consistency, an identity of their own that contributes to the meaning of *Parmenides*. This is not trivial. Not only does this decision guarantee the coherence of the dialogue, but it affords rich hermeneutical possibilities. Obviously, the Parmenides and the Socrates of the dialogue are *Plato*'s dramatic characters. They are historical figures dramatized by the author. But taking these dramatic characters seriously has two implications.

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are distinct but share components and belong to the same sphere), and heterotelic (training and goal don't belong to the same sphere). I conclude that Parmenides' *gymnasia* is both homotelic and heterotelic.

[1] The Fundamental Cognitive Abilities are as follows: doxastic detachement and exploratory mindset, deductive agility and critical vigilance, intellectual mobility and flexibility, comprehensives in considering perspectives on a given topic, sense of relational relevance, intellectual courage and mental endurance, see A. Larivée, *What Socrates learned from Parmenides. Part 1*, section 4. The Complex Argumentative Skills are the ability to resort to offensive defense strategy such as the elenchtic cross-examination or the *reductio ad absurdum* of adversarial arguments through a preparatory training in antilogy, see A. Larivée, *What Socrates learned from Parmenides. Part 1*, section 5.6 & 5.7. (as well as section 3.1. below).

[2] Unless otherwise mentioned I use M. L. Gill & P. Ryan's translation for the *Parmenides*, and C. Rowe's for the *Phaedo*. All English translations of secondary literature in French are mine.

The first is that Plato offers a plausible, substantial, and coherent description of these figures through his dialogues. When he makes the deliberate choice to present Socrates at his earliest age in the *Parmenides* and at his oldest age in the *Phaedo*, it is reasonable to assume that Plato-author is offering what he sees as a credible account of Socrates' intellectual development over time, regardless of when, in his life, he wrote these dialogues.[1] My reading contrasts with a developmental approach focused on Plato's own intellectual evolution as it could be inferred from an examination of the dialogues in their chronological order of composition. This once dominant approach—which typically relies on a division of dialogues into three groups: *early*, *middle*, and *late*—creates the impression that a more mature Plato implausibly assigns skills to Parmenides that really belonged to Socrates, in particular the practice of philosophical cross-examination, or *elenchos*, omnipresent in the Socratic dialogues, regarded as early (and as more faithful representations of the historical Socrates).[2] But if we respect the order of events established by the author—as revealed by the relation of dramatic features between different dialogues—Plato clearly indicates that Socrates *did not* master the art of *elenchos* at the time of his meeting with Parmenides.[3] This suggests that Socrates became Socrates, a virtuoso of the *elenchos*, in part thanks to the Eleatic philosophers he met in his youth.

The second implication is that while one should not confuse dramatic and historical figures, the question of whether Plato's portrayal reveals anything about the historical Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, is not insignificant. These philosophers really existed. They were well known to their contemporaries. The way Plato portrayed them had to appear at least credible to the original readership who knew these philosophers and their work.[4] Taking dramatic characters seriously implies that Plato did not choose to stage Socrates and Parmenides

[1] Dramatic coherence does not require Socrates to express more enlightened views on any subject in a dialogue where he appears older. What matters is the dialogical context in which certain views are evoked and the objective pursued. The idea that the presence of more enlightened views in one dialogue than in another (e.g. the apparently more critical approach to Forms in the *Parmenides* than in the *Symposium* or *Phaedo*) signals an evolution in Plato's thinking is also unjustified for reasons well explained by J. Annas, *What are Plato's 'Middle' Dialogues ...* , p. 5. What she calls *negative* ad hominem *arguments*, present in the so-called *Socratic dialogues* and in the *Parmenides*, are part of a rigorous and vigilant philosophical practice, not a stage to overcome.

[2] See G. Vlastos, *Socrates*, p. 49. The fact that J. Annas, *What are Plato's 'Middle' Dialogues ...* , pp. 15–16, refers to the *Parmenides* as a *Socratic dialogue* because of the presence of *ad hominem* argumentation typical of dialogues *considered 'early'* shows how hard it is to completely free oneself from the developmental approach.

[3] As mentioned in section 6. of A. Larivée, *What Socrates learned from Parmenides. Part 1*, not only does Socrates fail to answer Parmenides' objections, but he does not himself adopt the interrogative approach characteristic of the *elenchos* to criticize Zeno's argument at 128a–130a. He therefore acquired this competence later.

[4] I fail to understand how C. H. Zuckert's position (in: *Plato's* Parmenides, p. 876) on the significance of the *Parmenides*' dramatic setting is compatible with her decision to portray Parmenides as contradicting himself and *offering a devastating critique* of the historical Parmenides' theory through his training demo. Her reading makes Plato's Parmenides appear incoherent as a dramatic character and inconsistent in relation with the historical philosopher. It also clashes with the admiration Socrates expresses towards Parmenides later in life in *Sph.* and *Tht.*

arbitrarily.[1] Even if the encounter with Parmenides is fictional, as most interpreters seem to believe, by alluding to it in two other dialogues and by including his brothers in the prologue of the *Parmenides*, Plato wanted to create the impression that the events narrated really took place. Which leads one to wonder why. By describing a fictional discussion between a young Socrates and old Parmenides (both of whom Plato could not have met), is Plato attempting to shed light on the possible origin of the intellectual virtues of a philosopher he knew quite well, i.e. mature Socrates? This seems plausible in light of the arguments presented in my two texts.

1.2. Possible configurations of the exercise's influence on Socrates

In the spirit of the eightfold routine prescribed by Parmenides,[2] let's start by distinguishing and assessing possibilities. Either Socrates followed Parmenides' advice and trained thoroughly in his youth,[3] or he ignored it. Four pedagogically relevant possibilities can be envisaged. If he trained, either (1) Socrates benefited from the exercise, or (2) he did not. If he did not practice the *gymnasia*, this can mean that (3) Socrates did not benefit at all from Parmenides' advice, but it is also possible that (4) he benefited from it somehow, for example by borrowing certain features of the *gymnasia* and integrating them in his own philosophical practice.[4]

If we limit ourselves to the *Parmenides*, the abrupt end of the dialogue reveals nothing about Socrates' reaction to Parmenides' long training demo. Are there indications in favor of positive options (1) and (4) in other dialogues? Dialogues where Socrates' encounter with Parmenides is mentioned, i.e. the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*, are a natural place to start the investigation. There, Socrates expresses his admiration for things he heard Parmenides say in the past (*Tht.* 183e & *Sph.* 217c),[5] but allusions to the meeting are brief and the *gymnasia* isn't mentioned. Nowhere in the dialogues is it explicitly stated that Socrates trained. And Plato does not show us Socrates practicing the exercise either (note

[1] In contemporary literature, L. Brisson (in: Platon, *Parménide*, tr. L. Brisson), whose interpretation is linked to the historical Parmenides' cosmology, and B. Castelnérac, *Le* Parménide *de Platon* ... , to Parmenides dialectical practice, are notable exceptions.

[2] As explained in A. Larivée, *What Socrates learned from Parmenides. Part 1*, section 3, I refer to the *gymnasia* prescribed to Socrates as an *eightfold routine* since it consists of a repeated movement successively unfolding from eight positions.

[3] S. Peterson, *New Rounds* ... , p. 247, is bolder than me since she has little doubt about this: *Socrates surely leaves this conversation with Parmenides believing that the exercise is very important.* [...] *Young Socrates will surely go on to do the many further exercises for which Parmenides' lengthy sample demonstration serves as a pattern.*

[4] B. Castelnérac, *Le* Parménide *de Platon* ... , p. 457, describes Socrates as *intimidated* by Parmenides' method. Does he mean that Socrates attempted to train but gave up out of incapacity? Or that Socrates ignored the *gymnasia* from the start by pusillanimity? The fact that he considers it significant that adult Socrates does not use the *gymnasia* in his philosophical practice reveals the essential difference between our interpretations. While he considers it as a method of philosophical discovery, I insist on its *preparatory* character, as does Parmenides.

[5] In the case of the *Sophist*, this brevity is understandable since Socrates is not the main interlocutor of the dialogue. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates evokes his maieutic pedagogy, but the history of his own education is not on the agenda.

that, since the *gymnasia* is to be practiced *in youth*, Plato would have had to write another dialogue featuring young Socrates). This silence seems to support the negative options: Socrates would have ignored Parmenides' advice (option 2) or would not have benefited from the training (option 3).[1] But silence proves nothing.[2] Would Plato go through the trouble of describing in detail a preparatory routine that ended up being completely useless to its recipient? Although conceivable, it seems highly implausible. And if it were the case, Socrates' respect for Parmenides in *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* would seem dissonant and insincere.

Dialogues where Plato describes critical stages in Socrates' philosophical evolution are another place to look for clues. In addition to the *Parmenides*, such descriptions are found in three other dialogues: the *Apology*, the *Symposium*, and the *Phaedo*. Along with the *Parmenides*, the *Phaedo* is the only other dialogue that contains a substantial description of Socrates' early youth, which is why I turn to this text.

2. The young(er) Socrates of the *Phaedo* and his recourse to hypothesis

Parmenides is not mentioned in the *Phaedo*. However, a close examination of the passage where Socrates explains his intellectual evolution reveals surprising textual parallels with the *Parmenides*.[3] To introduce his last argument for the immortality of the soul, Socrates evokes crucial phases of his philosophical development. At the beginning of his story, Socrates portrays himself even younger than in the *Parmenides*. He recalls his early experience in the study of nature, his high expectations when reading Anaxagoras and the disappointment felt in light of his own teleological convictions, the conversion to *logoi* that

[1] B. Castelnérac, *Le* Parménide *de Platon* ... , pp. 253–258, identifies passages in the *Charmides* and the *Republic*, which, in his view, suggest that Socrates rejected Parmenides' method. The reasons he offers to see these passages as alluding to the *gymnasia* are not persuasive. Indeed, the features mentioned (e.g. difficulty and exhaustivity) are very general aspects that could characterize other methods.

[2] Contra C. H. Zuckert, *Plato's* Parmenides, p. 879, according to whom the fact that Socrates never says that *he learned anything from Parmenides*, and the fact that [i]*n subsequent dialogues Plato never depicts Socrates practicing the eristic gymnastics Parmenides recommends*, show that *Parmenides did not, therefore, positively educate Socrates* (p. 877, n. 5). The conclusion does not follow. Why is it, then, that *Socrates never mentions his early exchange with Parmenides as having a decisive influence on the development of, or decisive turn in, his thought*, Zuckert asks (p. 905), while he explicitly mentions others, like his encounter with Diotima? While I don't have an answer to her question, I also think it doesn't matter that much. The allusions Socrates makes to his past in the *Apology*, the *Symposium*, and the *Phaedo* are linked to specific goals he is pursuing in the present. He is not sharing a comprehensive intellectual autobiography in which he would openly acknowledge his debt to the thinkers who impacted him most. In contrast, being able to explain why Plato decided to dedicate a whole dialogue to young Socrates' meeting with Parmenides if he thought that Socrates didn't get anything of value from it, is critical. Interpreting the outcome of the meeting as a *negative lesson*, as Zuckert does, won't do, since this cannot be reconciled with Parmenides' benevolent attitude towards Socrates in the *Parmenides*, and with Socrates' positive appraisal of Parmenides in the *Theaetetus*, and the *Sophist*.

[3] My attention was first drawn to the connection between the *Phaedo* and *Parmenides* by I. Laidley, *The Problem of "Parmenides"* ... . A very condensed version of some of the ideas discussed in what follows can be found in: A. Larivée, *Socrate en devenir*.

followed, and his adhesion to the Forms as a *second sailing* (*Phd.* 96a–100a).[1] This stage in Socrates' philosophical evolution necessarily preceded the meeting with Parmenides since Plato depicts a young Socrates already devoted to the Forms in the *Parmenides*. At the end of his autobiographical account, Socrates describes in more detail the approach he decided to adopt post-conversion to *logoi*, an approach to which he then remained faithful his whole life. Surprisingly, his approach assigns a crucial role to the gesture of hypothesizing, here applied to Forms. This is strongly reminiscent of the training prescribed by Parmenides in the *Parmenides* and his advice to apply it to the Forms (*Prm*. 135d–136c). Let's take a closer look.

2.1. Socrates' decision to hypothesize Forms

Socrates presents his conversion to *logoi* as a way of escaping the confusion into which the explanations of natural philosophers on generation and destruction plunged him in his youth (*Phd.* 96a–99c). This conversion led to the decision to appeal to Forms as the sole cause explaining the generation of sensible objects and their properties. What explains that something is beautiful? The Beautiful. Or that a thing is large? Its participation in Largeness. Nothing else. Socrates decided to say farewell to other types of cause (100b–e). He acknowledges that his approach is simple and unsophisticated, naïve even (100d1–4, see also 101c). But he repeatedly justifies it by stressing the unparalleled *safety* it offers (100d–e & 101d). Curiously, Socrates describes this safety in psychological terms: his method offers protection against *fear*, a recurring theme in this passage (101a5, 101b2, b5, b8 & 101d1). Fear of what? *The salutary fear of letting others baffle you*, as Monique Dixsaut puts it.[2]

Dixsaut is right to emphasize the *defensive* role of Socrates' approach—especially when faced with the confusion generated by contradictory discourses.[3] This reading is well anchored in the text. At 101a, Socrates suggests that Cebes too *would be afraid that some opposite argument would confront* [*him*] and would thus stick to the Forms as an explanatory principle (see *Prm*. 129a–d & 135e). At 101e, he declares that his way of doing things prevents one from getting entangled in the confusion generated by the *antilogicians* (οἱ ἀντιλογικοί) or *specialists of antilogy*. I will return to this. For now, let us concentrate on the role assigned to hypothesis in young Socrates' evolution as explained by old Socrates. Three passages are crucial. First, at 100a, Socrates explains:

[1] In *Parmenides*, Parmenides also uses a maritime metaphor when he compares his demonstration of exercise to him making his way across *a vast and formidable sea of arguments* (137a5–6, trans. M. L. Gill & P. Ryan slightly modified).

[2] M. Dixsaut (in: Platon, *Phédon*, tr. M. Dixaut, p. 381).

[3] See M. Dixsaut (in: Platon, *Phédon*, tr. M. Dixaut, pp. 383–384): *The advice given by Socrates cannot be interpreted as a statement of method, whether it is understood as a method of discovery or exposition. The purpose is purely defensive: to dodge, thanks to a simple answer, a multiplicity of complicated questions. The answer is to refuse to ask such questions and to challenge the terms in which they are asked. Safety consists in relating any possession or acquisition of properties of any kind—sensible, mathematical, etc.—to the only kind of cause that allows one to avoid contradictory discourse*.

> [1] [...] *but in any case, I urged myself on in that direction* [ταύτῃ γε ὥρμησα]*: hypothesizing* [ὑποθέμενος] *on each occasion whatever account* [λόγον] *I judge to be the strongest, I posit as true* [τίθημι ὡς ἀληθῆ ὄντα] *whatever seems to me to be in tune with this* [ἃ μὲν ἄν μοι δοκῇ τούτῳ συμφωνεῖν]*, whether about the reasons for things or about anything else, and as untrue whatever is not in tune with it.* (*Phd*.100a3–4, tr. C. Rowe modified)[1]

The exploratory character of the *gymnasia*—both comprehensive and multidirectional—is absent here. So is the hypercritical, antinomic style that characterizes Parmenides' demonstration. But let's notice the similarity with key terms found in the *Parmenides*. Here too we encounter the dialectical impulse (ὁρμή) Parmenides perceived in Socrates and praised twice (*Prm*. 130b1: ὡς ἄξιος εἶ ἄγασθαι τῆς ὁρμῆς ... , 135d3: καλή [...] ἡ ὁρμὴ ἣν ὁρμᾷς ... , see *Phd* 100a3: ταύτῃ γε ὥρμησα ...)[2] and the hypothesized *logos* whose consequences Socrates systematically examines. That said, Socrates admits that his explanation is not crystal clear and soon adds the following clarification:

> [2] *Actually, the way I'm talking now is nothing new; it's the same old things that I'm always talking about, whenever I get the chance, and that I've not stopped talking about in the preceding discussion. My aim is to try to show you the kind of reasons that engage me, and for that purpose I'm going to go back to those much-talked-about entities of ours—starting from them, and hypothesizing that there's something that's beautiful in and by itself* [ὑποθέμενος εἶναί τι καλὸν αὐτὸ καθ᾽ αὑτό]*, and similarly with good, big, and all the rest. If you grant me these, and agree that they exist* [ἃ εἴ μοι δίδως τε καὶ συγχωρεῖς εἶναι ταῦτα]*, my hope is, starting from them, to show you the reason for things and establish that the soul is something immortal.* (*Phd.* 100b, tr. C. Rowe slightly modified)

Here, clearly, what Socrates posits, the object of his hypothesis, is the very existence of intelligible Forms, individually and collectively. Now, this coin-

[1] It seems plausible that the *logos* he posits constitutes something like a definition focused on an entity's essential properties that helps discriminate true from false beliefs about it (a bit like the use Epicureans and Stoics made of *prolepsis*). Indeed, at this point of the *Phaedo*, Socrates is about to try to prove that the soul is immortal based on its definition as a life principle. Since it is impossible for life itself to *let in* its opposite, i.e. death, the opinion that the soul dies appears to be false and must be discarded, see 105c–106e. See R. Ferber, *Second Sailing* ... , pp. 389–390.

[2] On the imagery evoked by the term ὁρμή, *an athletic word that suggests the eagerness of a runner or racehorse bursting from the starting gate*, see H. Reid & L. Palumbo, *Wrestling with the Eleatics* ... , p. 189. Although they are not incorrect, translations of ὥρμησα such as Rowe's (*this was my starting-point*) or Grube's (*I started in this manner*) erase the lexical parallel between both dialogues and the athletic imagery. Finding an English verb that expresses the energy, the drive, present in the Greek term is challenging. Dixsaut's French translation (*Je pris mon élan dans cette direction*) captures it well.

cides with the theory Parmenides explicitly invited him to preserve and probe in the *Parmenides* right before prescribing his exercise (135a–135e), whose opening gesture consists in hypothesizing. What happened?

2.2. A new, non-dogmatic way of relating to Forms

A change did take place since, in the *Parmenides*, young Socrates did not present his relationship to the Forms in the hypothetical mode at the beginning of his discussion with Parmenides.[1] When Parmenides first asked him if he thought that such entities existed, Socrates immediately and enthusiastically replied that he did.[2] When asked if he believed there are Forms of hair, mud and dirt, Socrates expressed indignation.[3] Now, his explanations of the *Phaedo* insist on the fact that at a certain point in his life, Socrates made the conscious decision to base his search for truth on the *hypothesis* that Forms exist (100a–b). Given the role assigned to the hypothesis of existence in the exercise prescribed in the *Parmenides*, the conclusion that this change occurred following the whole discussion with Parmenides seems inevitable.

In that regard, the pedagogical contribution of Parmenides to Socrates' development is both modest and critical. It is modest since the drive which pulled Socrates towards the Forms in his early youth predated his meeting with Parmenides. And if we believe the *Phaedo*, it remained unchanged until the last day of his life.[4] Parmenides did not directly contribute to Socrates' investment in the theory of the Forms. But his contribution was critical since the way Socrates related to the Forms changed after his discussion with Parmenides. From then on, he stopped adhering to the Forms with the blind fascination of the believer and began to relate to them as a position deliberately seen and chosen *as a hypothesis*. In other words, Socrates now embraces the Forms as a postulate, not as creed. Rather than believing in the existence of Forms dogmatically, Socrates chooses to *posit* that Forms exist. He hypothesizes their existence as a starting point for his philosophical investigations.[5]

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[1] S. Peterson, *New Rounds* ... , p. 245, is right to refer to his initial adherence as a *conviction*. Contra S. Delcomminette, *La méthode du* Parménide ... , pp. 346–347 & p. 351, who presents young Socrates as making the *hypothesis of the Ideas*. One of young Socrates' problems about the Forms is precisely that, like the naïve mathematicians in the *Republic*, he does *not* recognize their hypothetical character.

[2] See *Prm.* 130b: *'Tell me. Have you yourself distinguished as separate, in the way you mention, certain forms themselves, and also as separate the things that partake of them?* [...] *'I do indeed,' Socrates answered* [ἔμοιγε, φάναι τὸν Σωκράτη].

[3] See *Prm.* 130c–d where Socrates describes his negative reaction: *when I get bogged down in that, I hurry away, afraid that I may fall into some pit of nonsense*.

[4] The fact that Socrates does not explicitly mention the Forms in most of the so-called *Socratic dialogues* where he appears older does not entail that he did not subscribe to this theory when these elenchtic discussions took place. Nothing forced Socrates to share all he thought with everyone at all times, which also applies to Plato as an author! See p. 121, n. 1 above & C. H. Zuckert, *Plato's* Parmenides, p. 890, n. 38.

[5] This is the fourth characteristic of what R. Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, p. 107, describes as the hypothetical method: [it] *consists in holding one's opinions provisionally and not dogmatically*. He adds: *By this provisionality, however, Plato does not understand a timidity or weakness in maintaining one's opinions*. Socrates will defend his theory and the conclusions he reaches about the soul, but as a hypothesis that remains open to critical examination. See *Phd.* 107b.

We then have compelling textual evidence to establish that Socrates benefited from Parmenides' advice. These passages don't prove that Socrates practiced Parmenides' exercise in a sustained manner. But they reveal, at the very least, that he benefited from Parmenides' gymnasia by borrowing one of its key moves.[1] Learning to *hypothesize* the objects of his theory, the Forms, was decisive in Socrates' development as Plato presents it.

2.3. Young Socrates and the theory of Forms

Let me open a parenthesis, here, to comment briefly on what can be seen as an incongruous choice on Plato's part: the decision to assign the theory of Forms to (a very young) Socrates in his *Parmenides*. How can my decision to take the dramatic context of Plato's *Parmenides* seriously be reconciled with this apparent historical implausibility? My response is twofold. First, even if the historical Socrates never explicitly subscribed to Forms as a full-fledged theory, which could well be Plato's creation (see Aristotle's *Metaph*. 1078b), there is nothing, in the theory of Forms, that radically clashes with what we otherwise know about the historical Socrates' philosophical practice. Here, I agree with Zuckert who suggests that *we ought to regard Plato's Socrates as a representative of a certain kind of philosophy*.[2] Socrates' inquiry and the Forms were compatible which is all that matters for the sake of historical plausibility. In fact, Plato may have thought that this theory illuminated Socrates' practice, retrospectively.[3]

Second, was ascribing the theory of Forms to such a young philosopher too implausible to be dramatically credible? I don't think so given the fact that nothing suggests, in the dialogue, that Socrates takes full credit for the theory's invention. Recall that Parmenides himself presents the Forms as the condition of possibility of philosophy (135b–c), which suggests that he is well acquainted with this theory and appreciates its worth. Since the theory is also assigned to Timaeus of Locri in the *Timaeus*, Plato may well be attempting to indicate the theory's Italic origin. With this in mind, we could imagine the following scenario. In circumstances unknown to us, young Socrates became familiar with the theory of Forms. As often happens to beginners who discover new trendy theories, Socrates enthusiastically adopts it. He is unexperienced, the theory is half digested, but he is a zealot of the Forms! Then, one day, Parmenides and Zeno come to Athens for a visit. With other young philosophy enthusiasts,

[1] Such a partial appropriation is consonant with the *homotelic* mode described in my first study (where training and goal share some elements). By contrast, declaring, as S. Delcomminette, *La méthode du* Parménide ... , p. 351, does, that *this method* [Parmenides' gymnasia] *is clearly mentioned by Plato in another dialogue*, i.e. the *Republic*, is incautious. Parmenides' *gymnasia* is a complex routine that includes different operations. The fact that it involves the use of hypothesis, which is also the case of the dianoetic disciplines of the *Republic*, is not sufficient to conclude that Parmenides' *gymnasia*, as such, is *mentioned* there. More modestly, there as in the *Phaedo*, Socrates is resorting to one of multiple skills he seems to have developed thanks to Parmenides' training.

[2] C. H. Zuckert, *Plato's* Parmenides, p. 878.

[3] Like G. Vlastos, *Socrates*, p. 50, I think that *Plato is producing, not reproducing, Socratic philosophizing. Employing a literary medium which allows Socrates to speak for himself, Plato makes him say whatever* he—*Plato—thinks* at the time of writing *would be the most reasonable things for Socrates to be saying just then in expounding and defending his own philosophy*. The difference is that I apply this approach to the whole corpus, not just the early dialogues.

Socrates attends Zeno's reading of his famous arguments. Emboldened by a juvenile *philonikia*, Socrates can't resist resorting to his favorite theory—a theory, remember, with which the Eleatics are well acquainted—to discredit Zeno's arguments and enlighten his outmoded seniors! With the outcome we know. Through a vigorous cross-examination, Parmenides reveals the precarity of Socrates' understanding of the Forms and his dialectical vulnerability. The refutation constitutes a cautionary tale: here is what happens to young philosophers who are *shallow and cocksure in their adhesion*, as Robinson puts it,[1] and eager to regurgitate half-digested theories. Note that Plato presents us with a similar scenario elsewhere. At one point in the *Laches*, Nicias—who is well acquainted with Socrates—proposes a definition of courage visibly borrowed from a previous discussion with Socrates ... only to be refuted by Socrates![2]

My proposed scenario is compatible with Grote's understanding of Parmenides' intention. On his view, Parmenides *seeks to restrain the haste of Socrates—to make him ashamed of premature affirmation and the false persuasion of knowledge* and protect him against *hasty partiality*. In fact, the whole *Parmenides*, Grote thought, is *intended to repress premature forwardness of affirmation in a young philosophical aspirant*.[3] Similarly, Robinson saw the *Parmenides* as *the elenchus of the philosopher, who thought himself beyond the need of an elenchus* and as *a manifesto for more dialectic and less enthusiasm*.[4] With this, I close my parenthesis and return to my main topic.

3. Did Socrates train by affirming and denying the same hypotheses?

> *I have met with many and many Heracles and Theseus in my time, mighty men of words; and they have well battered me. But for all that I don't retire from the field, such a terrible love* [ἔρως δεινός] *has come upon me for this kind of exercise* [τῆς περὶ ταῦτα γυμνασίας]. *You must not grudge me this, either; try a fall with me and we shall both be the better.*
>
> Plato, *Tht.* 169 b–c (tr. M. J. Levett slightly modified)

Drawing inspiration from the two passages of the *Phaedo* highlighted above, one could attempt to identify the presence of other components of Parmenides' eightfold routine in Socrates' philosophical *practice*, as depicted in other dialogues. To consider just one: is there any sign that, in addition to the hypothesizing *move*, young Socrates practiced affirming *and negating* the same hypothesis? Did he practice antilogy in the Eleatic fashion, as a dialectical training?

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[1] R. Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, p. 265.

[2] See *La*. 194c–d & 195a. See also *Prt*. 360c–d.

[3] G. Grote, *Plato and the Other Companions of Sokrates*, p. 294 & pp. 263–265.

[4] R. Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, p. 265.

3.1. Antilogy as agonistic practice and as preparatory training

The antilogic aspect of the *gymnasia* surfaces in the *Phaedo* when Socrates mentions the *noble risk* (91b & 114d). Indeed, the argument seems to rest, implicitly, on a comparison between the consequences unfolding from the positive and negative side of his thesis on the soul's immortality (*If the soul is immortal, then ...* ; *If the soul is not immortal, then ...*). But this case is too subtle to be conclusive. A flash appearance is found in the *Protagoras* when Socrates starts a line of inquiry with the following alternatives: *Is justice a thing or is it not a thing?* and: *Is it itself just or unjust?* (*Prt.* 330c). The first part of the *Phaedrus*, where Socrates produces two opposite discourses in response to Lysias' speech, offers a more manifest example. The virtuosity he displays on this occasion suggests at the very least that Socrates was no neophyte in the practice of *utramque partem* argumentation as found in the *Dissoi Logoi* for instance. However, it is critical to recall that Parmenides' preparatory *gymnasia* should not be confused with the use of antilogy in an agonistic context.[1] Systematically *exploring* and *rehearsing*—alone or with a training companion—the consequences that follow from a hypothesis and its negation is one thing. Applying oneself to *defend* a thesis and its contradictory (like the Sophists did), or to *attack* an opponent's thesis by stressing the impossibilities and contradictions it generates (like Zeno did), is another. The former practice has pedagogical and heuristic functions. The latter can play a useful probationary role in a variety of contexts—legal, political, philosophical—where truthfulness and competence need to be put the test, or it can be used with an eristic intent, when all the practitioner seeks is victory.[2]

This difference, however, does not mean that there is no link between the pedagogical and agonistic practices. The antilogic component of Parmenides' *gymnasia* is certainly an excellent preparation for argumentation in agonistic contexts. That's precisely the suggestion behind Parmenides' advice, addressed to Socrates, to prepare while young by following Zeno's example (*Prm.* 135d). Both Zeno and Parmenides use an *offensive-defense* type of tactic in *Parmenides*, and it appears to be the *gymnasia* that gave them the skills and tools required.[3] The necessity for philosophers to resort to antilogy for defensive and probatory purposes appears to be the meaning of Socrates' enigmatic allusion to Zeno, in the *Phaedrus*, when he mentions the antilogical virtuosity of the *Palamedes of Elea* (261d).[4] Although antilogical skills and tools can be used for eristic purposes, it does not make philosophers who master them Eristics.[5]

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[1] See A. Larivée, *What Socrates learned from Parmenides. Part 1*, section 5.7.

[2] L. Godin-Tremblay, *Le Raisonnement dialectique* ... , pp. 99–103, does a remarkable job at explaining the probationary role of agonistic dialectic in her thesis on Aristotle's *Topics.*

[3] See A. Larivée, *What Socrates learned from Parmenides. Part 1*, section 3.

[4] See L. Gardella, *Antilogía y gimnasia intellectual*. See also the section on the Eleatics and the Sophists as predecessors of Aristotelian dialectics in: P. Moraux, *La joute dialectique* ... , esp. pp. 296–300.

[5] C. H. Zuckert's ironic interpretation of the *Parmenides* (in: *Plato's* Parmenides) indicates a failure to distinguish between a sophistic/eristic use of antilogy and a philosophical one. L. Gardella, *Antilogía y gimnasia intellec-*

This is relevant to understand Socrates' intellectual development. In *What Socrates learned from Parmenides. Part 1*, I mentioned the preparatory virtue of the Parmenidean *gymnasia* for elenctic cross-examination, a complex interrogative practice focused on the detection of contradictions in the discourse of an interlocutor.[1] Now, many dialogues show us a mature Socrates mastering the art of cross-examination and refutation *in action*. This mastery calls for an explanation. One is not borne with such complex argumentative skills. And submitting an opponent to an elenctic cross-examination on a particular topic cannot be improvised, one needs preparation.[2] But, as Ryle puts it, [w]*e have uninquisitively failed to ask what trained his dialectical powers*.[3] Assenting to the idea that Socrates did train with the Eleatic antilogic exercise in his youth would help explain how Socrates came to excel in the sophisticated art of refutative cross-examination like Parmenides before him. For there is a kinship between elenchos and antilogy:

> [...] *the process of elenchus in the Platonic dialogues takes many forms. But one of the commonest forms is to argue that a given statement leads to a self-contradiction, in other words to two statements which are mutually contradictory. But two statements which are mutually contradictory are the essential feature of antilogic.*[4]

3.2. Did Socrates train by negating his most cherished Forms?

This leads straight to the idea that negating the Forms (especially Forms that were the object of his elenctic examinations, i.e. ethically relevant Forms) was part of the preparatory training Socrates underwent in his youth. For example, Socrates would have inspected and rehearsed the consequences of hypotheses such as the following: *If Justice does not exist* (or: *is not a thing*, see *Prt.* 330b) ... , *If the Good in itself does not exist, ...* , or *If virtue does not ensure happiness, ...* etc.[5] This preparation would explain why, later in life, Socrates was so well equipped to put to the test and refute opponents holding ethically

tual, offers a useful corrective. See also G. Ryle, *Plato's Progress*, ch. 6 and L. Godin-Tremblay, *Le Raisonnement dialectique* ... , pp. 102–104.

[1] See A. Larivée, *What Socrates learned from Parmenides. Part 1*, sections 3, 5.6. & 5.7.

[2] This is well illustrated by Polos' failure to adequately play the role of the questioner when he attempts to refute Socrates in the *Gorgias.*

[3] G. Ryle, *Plato's Progress*, p. 207. Ryle is speaking of Plato but this is equally true of Socrates.

[4] G. B. Kerfeld, *The Sophistic Movement*, p. 65.

[5] R. Ferber, *Second Sailing ...* , pp. 383–384, suggests that, in the *Phaedo*, it is the lack of time that explains that Socrates does not ask the question *What are the consequences if 'the beautiful, the good and every such reality' (Phd. 76d8–9) are hypothesized not to be?* Since Parmenides presents his exercise as a propaedeutic, if Socrates practiced it, he has probably already examined these consequences thoroughly in the past.

subversive views, such as Thrasymachus and Callicles, or friends playing devil's advocate, such as Glaucon in Book II of the *Republic*.[1]

That said, if scrutinizing such negative hypotheses was part of Socrates' training, one might wonder why the dialogues don't show us Socrates exploring them. First, given the moral nature of Socrates' philosophical investigations, we can understand why Plato chose not to present him developing the negative side of his hypotheses in his writings, not even in the context of a private discussion in a small group (see *Prm.* 136d7–10 & 137a6–7). The *gymnasia* requires and cultivates doxastic detachment, which is not typically practiced or recognized as such by non-philosophers. As Aristotle observes in his *Topics*, the risk is high that the uninitiated public will assign immoral beliefs to dialecticians (*Top.* 160b17–22). For, as P. Moraux puts it:

> *The public is not always able to clearly distinguish the speaker's personal convictions and the ideas which the needs of the discussion lead him to support; it condemns, for example, those who, in a discussion, champion immoral ideas; it is therefore better to refrain from defending theses that are too paradoxical or too daring.*[2]

Now, did the *historical* Socrates explore such negative hypotheses publicly? If so, this could explain why Aristophanes portrayed Socrates as a teacher of immoral dialectical arguments, and why he was trialed for impiety and for corrupting the youth. Be it as it may, in Plato's dialogues such negative theses appear exclusively in the context of elenctic examinations to which Socrates subjects opponents.[3] It should be noted in passing that Aristotle's attitude towards people who subscribe to ethically subversive theses is less philosophical than (Plato's) Socrates' when he declares that they are in need of punishment, not argument.[4] But couldn't we say that the public refutations to which Socrates submits immoralist characters suffering from tyrant-envy, such as Callicles and Thrasymachus, constitute a non-violent form of punishment?

Let's sum up. If we consider Socrates' formidable elenctic skills, if we agree with Aristotle that practicing refutation cannot be improvised, and if we acknowledge that Parmenides' *gymnasia* is an excellent preparation for the

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[1] S. Peterson, *New Rounds ...* , p. 252, who imagines Socrates training with the Form of justice, writes: *If the exercise should turn out to reduce to absurdity the negative hypothesis that there is no such thing as justice, Socrates would welcome that result*.

[2] P. Moraux, *La joute dialectique ...* , p. 280.

[3] This examination can be done in a depersonalized manner, as is the case in *Republic* II onward. But Socrates himself (unlike Glaucon in *Rep.* 358c) is not presented as lending his argumentative resources to exploring the negative side. See *Lg.* 660e–664a on how the legislator should deal with the question of the link between virtue and happiness, i.e. pragmatically.

[4] See Aristotle, *Top.* 105a4–6: *Not every problem, nor every thesis, should be examined, but only ones which might puzzle one of those who need argument, not punishment or perception. For people who are puzzled to know whether one ought to honour the gods and love one's parents or not need punishment*. See also *Top.* 160b17–22: *He* [*the dialectician*] *should beware of maintaining an implausible hypothesis* [...] *(e.g., that pleasure is the good, and that to do injustice is better than to suffer it). For people then hate him, supposing him to maintain them not for the sake of argument but because he really thinks them.*

practice of *elenchos* as refutative cross-examination (notably through the systematic exploration of the consequences of contradictory hypotheses, or antilogy),[1] it seems highly probable that Socrates inspected the consequences of negating ethical Forms in his youth, as Parmenides' *gymnasia* prescribes. The antilogic component of his Eleatic coach's training helped Socrates develop his formidable elenctic skills and equipped him to defeat the Sophists and their immoralist followers.

But are there reasons to believe that Socrates went so far as to apply this aspect of the *gymnasia* to his theory of Forms in general? Challenged by Parmenides in his youth, did Socrates reach the *synoptic stage* about them?[2] In other words, was Socrates' life-long commitment to the theory of Forms—in a hypothesized fashion—sustained by an exploration of the inadmissible consequences of *negating* their existence in general? This question brings us back to the *Phaedo*.

3.3. Did Socrates use antilogy to defend his theory of Forms?

The third passage from the *Phaedo* relevant to my investigation alludes to the possibility of negating the existence of Forms in general. Socrates does not present this initiative as his own and describes his reaction as a defensive type of maneuver. Interestingly, the defense mechanism he describes—which is not explicitly mentioned in the *Parmenides*—also implies recourse to hypothesis:

> [3] *As for you* [Socrates is talking to Cebes], *fearful of your own shadow, as they say, and of your lack of experience, you'd hold on to the safety that's to be found in the hypothesis* [ἐχόμενος ἐκείνου τοῦ ἀσφαλοῦς τῆς ὑποθέσεως] *and answer accordingly. Then, if someone held on to the hypothesis itself* [εἰ δέ τις αὐτῆς τῆς ὑποθέσεως ἔχοιτο], *you'd dismiss him and refuse to answer until you'd examined its consequences to see if they were in tune with each other, or out of tune; and when you had to give a reasoned account of the hypothesis itself* [ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἐκείνης αὐτῆς δέοι σε διδόναι λόγον], *you'd do it in the same way, that is, by positing another hypothesis* [ἄλλην αὖ ὑπόθεσιν ὑποθέμενος], *whichever appeared best of those above the first one, until you arrived at something sufficient for the purpose. Right? And you wouldn't muddle everything up together as the antilogicians* [οἱ ἀντιλογικοί] *do, by talking about your starting-point and its consequences as if there were no difference between them—that is, if you wanted to find the truth about anything. That sort probably don't give a moment's*

[1] See A. Larivée, *What Socrates learned from Parmenides. Part 1*, sections 5.6. & 5.7.

[2] On the synoptic stage, which does not belong to the exercise itself, see A. Larivée, *What Socrates learned from Parmenides. Part 1*, section 5.5.

> *thought to finding things out, or care about it; their wisdom allows them to stir everything together and still be pleased with themselves; but you, I think, if you're of a philosophical sort, will approach things in the way I describe.* (*Phd*. 101d–e)[1]

Here we encounter elements present in the *Parmenides* such as the theme of lack of experience (see *Prm*. 130e & 135c & *Phd*. 89d–90e), the action of hypothesizing, the consideration of the consequences arising from a hypothesis, and the defense against opponents (*Prm.* 128c–d & 135a–c, *Phd.* 88d–e & 89b–c). However, explanations of how to give a *reasoned account* for a hypothesis by resorting to another hypothesis are cryptic.[2] Socrates does not explain here what a *hypothesis above the first one* consists of and how using it makes it possible to *account* for a *lower* hypothesis (i.e. the hypothesis of the existence of a particular Forms such as the Beautiful, the Large in itself, etc.).

Could Socrates be referring to the kind of pragmatic, über-foundational hypothesis evoked by Parmenides at *Prm*. 135b–c? As mentioned earlier, there, Parmenides unexpectedly presents the existence of Forms as philosophy's very condition of possibility. He uses ordinary language, but if we were to translate his idea in the minimalistic antilogical style of the *gymnasia*, we could say: *If Forms are, ...* a consequence of which would be: *... then philosophy can be*, whereas the hypothesis' negation would be: *If Forms are not, ...* , from which *... then philosophy cannot be* would follow. Unless the opponent of the Forms is ready to give up on philosophy, then this *higher* hypothesis on the existence of Forms in general should suffice to protect the *lower* ones (such as the hypotheses of the existence of Justice or of the Beautiful, say, in which Socrates finds safety).

This offensive-defense move based on antilogy reminds the *reasoned account* provided by another Italic philosopher, Timaeus, who uses a similar strategy to secure the existence of Forms in terms highly reminiscent of both the *Parmenides* and the *Phaedo*. In the context of his explanations on the origin of the universe, Timaeus shares the following reflections:

> *We must prefer to conduct our inquiry by means of rational argument. Hence we should make a distinction like the following: Is there such as thing as a Fire by itself? Do all these things of which we always say that each of them is something "by itself" really exist? Or are the things we see, and whatever else we perceive through the body, the only things that possess this kind of actuality, so that there is absolutely nothing else besides them at all? Is our perpetual claim that there*

[1] B. Castelnérac, *Le* Parménide *de Platon* ... , pp. 258–259, refers to this text and also detects an allusion to *Parmenides*, but our interpretations are *very* different.

[2] For a rigorous analysis of this difficult passage, see M. Dixsaut [in: Platon, *Phédon*, tr. M. Dixaut, pp. 380–387].

> *exists an intelligible Form for each thing a vacuous gesture, in the end nothing but mere talk?* (*Ti.* 51b–c)

Timaeus admits that to dismiss opponents and *just insist that such things exist* won't do. Interestingly, he proposes to face a challenge to the Forms' existence by resorting to another hypothesis: ... *if understanding* [νοῦς] *and true opinion are distinct,* he explains, *then these "by themselves" things definitely exist—these Forms, the object not of our sense perception, but of our understanding only* (*Ti.* 51d). In other words, if critics of the Forms acknowledge that understanding and true opinion are two different things, and that understanding (νοῦς) cannot apply to sensible things, unless they are willing to accept that there is no such thing as understanding, they must admit that Forms exist. Following Kahn, Ferber designates this reasoning as the only *direct argument* in the Platonic corpus in favor of the existence of Forms.[1] Strictly speaking, the *reasoned account* Timaeus offers to defend the Forms takes the shape of a positive *hypothesis*: *if understanding and true opinion are distinct, then ...* , to which Timaeus opposes the corresponding negative hypothesis: *... if—as some people think—true opinion does not differ in any way from understanding, then all the things we perceive through our bodily senses must be assumed to be the most stable things there are* (*Ti*. 51d). It is somewhat amusing to note the similarity between this ancient strategy and Reichenbach's pragmatic solution to the problem of induction, as summarized by Bertrand Russell: *If induction is valid, science is possible; if it is not, science is impossible, since there is no other imaginable principle to take its place. Therefore you will do well to act on the assumption that induction is valid, since, otherwise, you can have no reason for doing one thing rather than another*.[2]

To recapitulate, in light of the textual parallels highlighted between the *Phaedo*, the *Parmenides*, and the *Timaeus*, it is reasonable to infer that the defense tactic Socrates alludes to in the third passage of the *Phaedo* quoted above draws inspiration from Parmenides' *gymnasia*. When challenged by an opponent who *objects that they* [*the Forms*] *do not exist, and that, even if they do, they must by strict necessity be unknowable to human nature* (*Prm*. 135a), Socrates learned to apply the offensive-defense strategy used by Italic philosophers such as Parmenides and Timaeus, and resort to another hypothesis *above* to protect the first (*Phd*. 101d). Although that tactic is not included in the *eightfold routine* per se, it relies on antilogic hypotheses and is a move that Parmenides hinted at after he refuted young Socrates (*Prm*. 135c). Even if the old Socrates of the *Phaedo* never reached the point where he was able to positively prove his theory of Forms and *to teach someone else*,[3] he appears to have found stability and safety in a defense strategy used by, and possibly taught to him by Parmenides himself. We find, again, that Socrates borrowed critical

[1] See R. Ferber, *Second Sailing ...* , p. 394 & C. H. Kahn, *Parmenides and Plato*.

[2] B. Russell, *The Art of Philosophizing and Other Essays*, p. 75.

[3] See *Prm.* 135a–b: *Only a very gifted man can come to know that for each thing there is some kind, a being itself by itself; but only a prodigy more remarkable still will discover that and be able to teach someone else who has sifted all these difficulties thoroughly and critically for himself*.

elements from Parmenides' lesson and integrated them in his own philosophical practice.

4. Conclusion. Protection against misology and intellectual benevolence. Back to the theme of defense

> *Pythodorus said that, while Socrates was saying all this, he himself kept from moment to moment expecting Parmenides and Zeno to get annoyed; but they both paid close attention to Socrates and often glanced at each other and smiled, as though they admired him. In fact, what Parmenides said when Socrates had finished confirmed this impression.* (Plato, *Prm*. 130a)

> *Echecrates, I'd often had cause to wonder at Socrates before, but never more than for what I observed in him on this occasion. That Socrates should have had something to say in response to Cebes and Simmias is presumably not so surprising; what I wondered at particularly about him was first of all the pleasant, kindly and respectful way he received what these young men had to say.* (Plato, *Phd.* 88e–89a)

Read in parallel with the sections of the *Parmenides* examined in *What Socrates learned from Parmenides. Part 1*, the three passages of the *Phaedo* examined here offer compelling textual evidence that Parmenides' *gymnasia* had a crucial impact on Socrates' development (as understood and portrayed by Plato). Furthermore, there is a striking correspondence between the motive that led young Socrates to the decision of hypothesizing Forms on the one hand, and one of the possible aims of the Eleatic *gymnasia*. To illustrate this, let me return, in closing, to the question asked in section 2.4 of my first study. Is Parmenides' training: (A) autotelic (where training and goal are identical), (B) homotelic (where training and goal, although distinct, share common elements), or (C) heterotelic (where training and goal belong to a different sphere)?

When we pay attention to the context of the three passages of the *Phaedo* examined above, it is striking to see how much Socrates emphasizes the defensive virtues of the recourse to the hypothesis of Forms, and to the process of hypothesizing in general. If we assume that this defensive objective reflects the spirit of the training Parmenides prescribed to Socrates in his youth, the preparation provided by the *gymnasia* would correspond—at least partially—to the third telic mode listed in my first study, the heterotelic training (C). That is, a preparatory training whose goal does not belong to the same sphere as the exercise, like the athletic practice of martial art or archery can be used to prepare a soldier for war.[1]

In accordance with Socrates' explicit characterization of his intellectual development, hypothesizing the existence of Forms and grounding his investigations on these starting points proved to be a simple way for him to protect himself from *confusion*, from *fear*, and to find *safety*. Positing the existence and

[1] I would point out, however, that telic mode (B) and (C) are compatible and complementary.

causality of the Forms is comparable to the unfailing move learned by soldiers to dodge enemies' attacks and remain steady on their feet.[1] If a specialist of antilogy ever tries to confuse him, or if a philosopher of nature risks plunging him into perplexity with sophisticated explanations on the sensible world, Socrates will not be seized with fear. He will quietly return to his basic postulate, the simple and secure starting point which he deliberately adopted to consider its consequences.[2]

Similarly, if someone tries to destabilize Socrates by questioning him on the participation of sensible things to Forms—as Parmenides did in the past—he has a countermove ready as *Phaedo* 100d indicates. He can reply that although he does not yet understand the modality of their relationship, this ignorance does not affect his decision to *posit* that Forms exist, nor does it detract from their explanatory power. Positing Forms remains the only way to explain the generation of sensible things without succumbing to confusion. The apparently minor decision to consider his theory of Forms under the mode of hypothesis has a major consequence for Socrates' pursuit of truth. It acts as a rampart against the mental chaos caused by contradictory arguments and the misology they may cause.[3] It is a defensive maneuver that *protects* the urge towards truth by safeguarding the philosopher's epistemic and psychological stability.[4]

Is this the kind of protection Parmenides was hoping young Socrates would acquire? It is striking, in any case, to observe the resemblance between the relaxed, kind, trusting attitude with which Parmenides welcomed Socrates' objections in the *Parmenides* and the way in which the old Socrates of the *Phaedo* helps his young companions to persist in their search for truth without succumbing to discouragement and misology.[5] In the face of contradictory arguments, both Parmenides and Socrates are surprisingly stable, confident, and optimistic. They are benevolent and intellectually nurturing. The most convincing piece of evidence confirming that Socrates used Parmenides' *gymnasia* may well be Socrates himself, what he became thanks to this training.

[1] On the importance of being able to resist and come to the rescue of a *logos* under attack, see *Phd.* 88c–89c, where Socrates uses the metaphor of combat. After sharing his thoughts on the risk of misology, Socrates comes to the rescue of his thesis against Simmias' objection by resorting to the Forms, which, as he insists later, provide him with a *safe answer*. See 105b7.

[2] Throughout the passage, the presence of pronouns of the first (and second) person accentuates the fact that this is Socrates' *own* hypothesis, a hypothesis that Cebes is invited to embrace. See M. Dixsaut [in: Platon, *Phédon*, tr. M. Dixaut, p. 381].

[3] On the risk of misology, see *Phd.* 89a–91a. This aspect of my interpretation is radically opposed to Zuckert's, *Plato's* Parmenides, pp. 881–882, who portrays the Eleatics as alienating students and crushing their desire to practice philosophy with eristic arguments. On the contrary, I think Parmenides' intention is precisely to help Socrates protect himself against the discouraging impact of eristic arguments.

[4] My interpretation provides an answer to S. Peterson's question (in: *New Rounds ...* , p. 271): *why is this sort of exercise a preliminary to marking off forms or defining them?*

[5] See *Prm.* 130a & *Phd.* 88e–89a highlighted above.

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