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A Lover's State of Belief: The Mark of the Philosopher in Plato's *Republic V*

La Fe del Amante:
La Marca del Filósofo en *República V* de Platón

TRINIDAD SILVA IRARRÁZAVAL**

Abstract

The *Republic* stands as one of the most complete accounts for descriptions of the philosopher. The detailed examination of the philosophers' educational curriculum culminates in *Book VII* with the acquaintance of the Form of Good, the highest achievement in the epistemological ascent. The distinctive advantage of the philosopher is anticipated in *Book V*: by contrast with the lover of sights and sounds, he can contemplate Forms. In this paper I suggest that the primitive mark of the philosopher described in *Book V* (473c-480a) is a state of belief expressed by the Greek verbs *nomizein* and *hēgeisthai*. This state is different from opinion (*doxa*) and starts from the conviction that Forms exist. Endowed with a psychological disposition, the philosopher believes that Forms exist and recognizes them as the object of love and pursuit.

Keywords: Plato, Republic V, Philosopher, Love, Belief.

Resumen

La *República* ofrece uno de los relatos más completos en la descripción del filósofo. El examen detallado del plan de estudios educativo de los filósofos culmina en el *Libro VII* con el conocimiento de la Idea del Bien, el mayor logro en el ascenso epistemológico. La ventaja distintiva del filósofo se anticipa en el *Libro V*: a diferencia del amante de las imágenes y los sonidos, él puede contemplar las Ideas. En este artículo sugiero que la marca primitiva del filósofo descrito en el *Libro V* (473c-480a) es un estado de creencia expresado por los verbos griegos *nomizein* y *hēgeisthai*. Este estado es diferente de la opinión (*doxa*) y parte de la convicción de que las Formas existen. Dotado de disposición psicológica, el filósofo cree que las Formas existen y las reconoce como objeto de amor y búsqueda.

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*Assistant professor at the Philosophy Institute, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, where she teaches ancient philosophy. His line of research addresses the history of ancient philosophy, mainly Plato, the figure of the wise man in antiquity, love, and emotions. She is currently working on a project Fondecyt Iniciación (2024) 11240427 titled 'Salud Mental y Salud de Alma en la Filosofía Antigua: Diagnóstico, Etiología y Terapia' funded by Agencia Nacional de Investigación y Desarrollo (ANID). Her most recent publications are Silva, T. (2024). 'Salud mental y salud del alma en la filosofía antigua: diagnóstico, etiología y terapia'. *LÍMITE Revista Interdisciplinaria De Filosofía Y Psicología*, 19 and Silva, T. (2022). 'La Figura del Sabio Como Modelo Integral de Conocimiento y Conducta en la Filosofía Antigua'. *Méthexis* 34 (1):71-90.

Palabras clave: Platón, República V, filósofo, amor, creencia.

Introduction

When it comes to defining the nature and role of the philosopher in Plato, the *Republic* offers the most exhaustive account. The discussion arises toward the end of *Book V*, where Socrates himself presents the proposal of the philosopher-king as the ‘most difficult’ (χαλεπώτατος; 472a4) and ‘greatest’ (μέγιστος; 473c6) wave of paradox. Such an ambitious project requires a lengthy and detailed examination of the nature and nurture of the philosopher. This examination reveals the philosopher’s exceptional nature. What is most exceptional and distinctive about the philosopher is that he is a lover, but of a particular kind, a lover of Forms.

The characteristic desire of the philosopher has been amply addressed as a running topic in the erotic dialogues and the *Republic*.¹ But because in the *Republic* Plato presents us with an image of the philosopher conquering the highest form of knowledge (i.e. as a *sophos*), the theme of love or desire as a distinctive element tends to fade into the background of the educational curriculum, the Form of the Good, and dialectic. In principle, the characterization of the philosopher as a *sophos* is consistent with the picture that Socrates offers at the beginning of this discussion in *Book V* where he establishes that what marks philosophers is the possession of *epistēmē*.

In the present article I would like to revise the context of the discussion to suggest that a more primitive mark of the philosopher is his state of belief. In *Book V*, where most critics focus the debate on the difficulties of the two-world theory implied by the distinction between *epistēmē* and *doxa*, Plato recurrently uses terminology to establish a difference between the lovers’ state of belief. Whereas the lover of wisdom *believes* (*nomizein, hēgeisthai*) in the existence of Forms and the difference between the one and the many, the lover of sights and sounds (or, who turn out to be the same, the lover of *doxa*) does not even conceive it and therefore is unable to move from *doxa* to *epistēmē*. This state of belief, even when is not as epistemologically strong as *epistēmē*, is what ultimately gives impulse to the

¹ The topic in the *Republic* is addressed by, e.g., Rosen (1965), Kahn (1987), Irwin (1995), Nussbaum (2001), Schoffield (2006), Sheffield (2006), Lane (2007), Ludwig (2007), Cooper (2021).

epistemological ascent. I intend to show that this characteristic state of belief is what drives philosophical love.

In what follows, I introduce the tension around the characterization of the philosopher either as a lover or as a knower in the *Republic* (1) by addressing the distinction between the disposition of a developing philosopher and the epistemic state of a successful one (as addressed by Lane 2007, Weiss 2012, and Hatzistavrou 2006). Having privileged a developmental approach in the pursuit of *sophia* whose first impulse is love, I then assess the importance of *erōs* in the *Republic* by considering other erotic dialogues of the middle period, particularly the *Symposium* (2.1). From here, I identify three elements present in the *Republic* that inform the characterization of the philosopher as a lover in *Book V*: i) the acquaintance with the object of love (*Book II*) (2.2) by assessing the example of the philosophical dog which loves those things familiar to him, and ii) the hydraulic model of loving (*Book VI*) (2.3) which emphasizes the philosopher's mode of loving. I finish by assessing the relevance of the philosopher's state of belief (*Book V*) (3) by rehabilitating the importance of the use of the verbs *nomizein* and *hēgeisthai* in the context of 473c-480a.

There is no technical use of the verbs *nomizein* and *hēgeisthai* in Plato, as there might be for words covering the spectrum of intellectual/epistemic lexica, and even there it is difficult to establish a consistent meaning.² These verbs are regularly used in the dialogues as to convey the position of the interlocutors' views and beliefs in some matter (acc+inf) *as in believe or hold that such is the case*. Importantly, sometimes it does express belief in a more robust way, as engaging a dogmatic stance in some matters. In the context of the *Republic VII*, 'the prisoners would in every way believe that the truth [νομίζοιεν τὸ ἀληθὲς] is nothing other than the shadows of those artifacts' (515c2), and in *Book X*, after the Myth or Er, Socrates declares 'if we are persuaded by me, we'll believe [νομίζοντες] that the soul is immortal and able to endure every evil and every good' (621c1-2). Likewise, at the beginning of *Book III*, once settled that the guardians should not be persuaded by the god-fearing stories of poetry, Socrates states: 'And can someone be unafraid of death, preferring it to defeat in battle or slavery, if he believes in a Hades [τὸν Ἅιδου ἡγούμενον εἶναί] full of terrors?' (386b4). In this vein, it is well established, especially for the case of *nomizein*, but

² Lyons' (1963) structural reading of epistemic terminology in Plato successfully challenges a fixed interpretation of the relevant lexica.

also for *hēgeisthai*, that the form (accusative+inf *einai*) translates into ‘believe that x exists’ or ‘believe in x’ (+acc).³ The most conspicuous case is in the *Apology* expressing the accusation of impiety against Socrates as *oude theous nomizein* (18c3), *theous mē nomizein* (23d6).⁴ Although interpretations are divided on this as to whether Socrates does not recognize (nor worship) the gods prescribed by *nomos* (Burnet 1924, Kato 1991) or does not believe in gods, most critics agree that throughout the *Apology* *nomizein theous/daimonas* and, by attraction, *hegesithai theous/daimonas* mean ‘believe in gods’ (cf. Beckman 1979, Reeve 1989, and Brickhouse and Smith 1989).⁵ It is not a behavioral (external) attitude what is at stake, but a speculative (internal) attitude (cf. Strycker & Slings: 87, 254-5).

In this regard, I am not claiming that Plato is formulating a strong thesis in the context of *Book V*, but rather enriching the position of the philosopher’s belief system, i.e. the way in which he chooses to see reality, for which these verbs bear a special meaning when the object of belief is the Form and the disposition is love.⁶ It is what Stanley Rosen (1965: 453) calls *presentiment* or Melissa Lane (2006: 51) *evaluative attitude* towards the object of love.⁷ The present study aims to raise the question of whether there is a given speculative attitude that is a precondition to love the Forms.

1. Is the *Philosophos* a *Sophos*?

The fact that the philosopher is distinctively characterized by the element of love connects the *Republic* to the erotic dialogues of the middle period, such as *Phaedrus*, *Lysis* and *Symposium*. However, the *Republic* stands apart from other accounts on one significant point. The project of a philosopher-king (from *Book V*) opens the possibility of the philosopher to

³ LSJ *ad locum*. In Plato, *Apology* is the most illustrative example. In pointing out the contradiction of Meletus’ accusation of impiety, Socrates uses interchangeably the expressions *hēgeisthai* and *nomizein*: ‘I believe in divinities [δαμόνια νομίζω]’ (27c6-7); ‘I do believe in spirits [δαίμονας ἠγοῦμαι]’ (27d4); ‘as you state that I do not believe in gods [θεοὺς οὐχ ἠγούμενον], and then again that I do [θεοὺς αὐ ἠγεῖσθαι πάλιν], since I do believe in spirits [δαίμονας ἠγοῦμαι]’ (27d6-7).

⁴ Other contexts in Plato of this expression Sym. 202d, Laws 885c, Prot. 322a, Euthyphr.3b.

⁵ On a thorough investigation of this topic cf. Wilhelm (1969).

⁶ Beckman (1979) claims that Plato translates the attitude towards traditional gods and religion into philosophical objects. “The same profound attitudes of traditional religion were translated to these objects of philosophical inquiry.” (1979: 179).

⁷ According to Rosen, *Eros* is striving for wholeness or perfection, “of need mitigated by a presentiment of completeness. This presentiment cannot be fulfilled, but its goal is knowledge of the Ideas, and thus an adequate vision of the Good”. (1965: 453)

become a successful *sophos*. The philosopher's desire to seek knowledge triggered by the awareness of his ignorance as described in the *Lysis* and the *Symposium* is different from the philosopher's love, triggered as it is by the recognition and discernment of truth in *Book V*. But this, rather than hindering the importance of love as a distinctive feature of the philosopher, allows Plato to define the philosopher more accurately in terms of the specific object of his love and his mode of loving.

At the end of *Book V* Socrates concludes that philosophers know (*gignōskein*) and do not merely opine (*doxazein*) (479e7). Similarly, in *Book VI*, he identifies philosophers as 'those who know [τὸς ἐγνωκότας] each thing that is' (484d5-6). The question arises whether the philosopher is more accurately described as someone who is in the process of possessing knowledge or as someone already possessing knowledge.

The shift between the characterization of the philosopher as a lover of *sophia* and as a *sophos* in the *Republic* can be partly explained by its political strand. The possibility of an ideal state ruled by a philosopher-king maximizes the possibility of philosophical knowledge. Provided that the hypothetical situation can be realized, the philosopher should prove to be in possession of the knowledge that makes him an eligible candidate to run the state. As Halliwell observes, 'in *Phaedo*, for example, knowledge of "forms" is said to be attainable only after death, a theme which is integral to the work's theme of immortality. In *Rep.* 5-7, that claim does not figure since it would be of no use in justifying the need for philosophers-rulers' (1993: 202). Thus, in assessing the possibility of the philosopher's political and educational leadership in society, his characteristic zeal or enthusiasm to pursue wisdom does not seem sufficient. Don Morrison hypothesizes: 'Suppose the city were run by a bunch of mere learners, of genuine truth-lovers who do not yet know very much. Such rulers will, out of ignorance, frequently make wrong decisions. Wrong decisions create injustice and instability. A city run by such people cannot be the best city; it cannot be Callipolis' (Morrison 2007: 238).

But what is more important, given the political agenda of the *Republic*, is that Plato seems to offer two versions of the philosopher: the philosopher and the philosopher-king. There is a philosophical nature that because of the intellectual and moral qualities with which it is endowed is most fitted to rule, but to rule, needs to be informed by a particular program of education. In this regard it is useful to consider Antony Hatzistavrou's (2006) distinction

within the notion of *phusis*. According to Hatzistavrou, when Plato refers to the *phusis* of the philosopher-king, he does it in two different senses: (i) a particular person's natural ability (nature₁); (ii) a particular person's developed personality through education (nature₂). The former marks the philosophical nature; the latter, the nature of the philosopher-king. In a more extreme interpretation, Roslyn Weiss (2012) has proposed that there are two irreconcilable paradigms of the philosopher in the *Republic*: the 'philosopher by nature' and the 'philosopher by design'. The first paradigm fits the philosopher's characterization in *Book VI* (until 502c), the innate philosopher who rules by chance; the second belongs to the characterization of *Book VII*, the formed philosopher, constrained to learn and rule. Weiss' basic claim seems to be justified by the text, for Plato alters the focus of his characterization of the philosopher from *Book VI* to *Book VII*. But it is important to consider that the change of focus does not only respond to the distinction between nature and education. This would challenge the established principle whereby the philosopher-king is defined by both nature and education. Of course, this does not mean that the philosopher, born a philosopher, remains a philosopher despite his education; he might become a non-philosopher if corrupted by the wrong kind of instruction. As a result, in the *Republic* we can make a distinction between the disposition of a developing philosopher and the epistemic state of a successful one. Favored by the best possible conditions, the philosopher will be able to acquire knowledge of the Forms: 'those who are able to grasp [δυνάμενοι ἐφάπτεσθαι] what is always the same in all respects are philosophers' (484b3-5). The philosopher's natural disposition and capacity to acquire *epistēmē* does not entail that he already possesses this knowledge; only that he is able and willing to pursue it. As Lane observes, 'the natural virtues do not presuppose or require that the natural philosopher has already gained the knowledge that she or he seeks' (Lane 2007: 45). In general, it is safe to establish that the philosopher's nature is defined by (i) love of true knowledge and (ii) intellectual and moral virtues, whereas the philosopher-king needs to possess (i) philosopher's nature and (ii) specific training and knowledge. In this paper I privilege a developmental approach where the philosophical nature, endowed with the philosophical virtues and educated under the philosophical curriculum, becomes a philosopher-king. For the present purpose, virtue and knowledge are thus understood by the way they are acquired, emphasizing in this case the initial stage of the philosopher as a lover.

The developmental approach, even when emphasizes love as the first impulse for the following epistemic ascent, does not exclude it as a consisting or persisting feature of the philosopher once he has acquired knowledge. It is both. From Socrates' description of the *philia* as *erōs* *Book VI*, which invokes the rhetoric of love in the *Symposium*, love is the natural drive of the philosopher to 'become good' (καλόν τε κάγαθόν, 489e3) and 'giving birth' once the truth is grasped (VI.490a1-b7). But it is also clear, from *Book VII*, that love should not be explained only as an initial force of impulse to search knowledge, but rather as a dispositional virtue of the philosopher. Leading to the educational curriculum, culminating in dialectic and the apprehension of the Good in itself, knowledge rests on natural aptitude, love of learning, love of truth and the other virtues (VII.535a-536a6). The successful philosopher, even considered as *sophos* in his contact with knowledge of the Forms, never ceases to love the Forms.

2. The Philosopher as a Lover

2.1. *Erōs* as a pervasive topic in the middle dialogues

The depiction of the philosopher as a lover is especially relevant in *Books V, VI* and *IX*. Indeed, almost every attempt at definition takes into consideration this basic trait, namely that the *philosophos* is a lover. In this context, Plato invokes all the relevant terminology associated with love and desire in the *Lysis* and the *Symposium*. So much so that Ludwig calls *Republic V* (474b ff.) a 'Symposium in miniature' (2007: 202, 217).⁸ In *Book V*, the philosopher is said to love (*philein*) something (474c8) and, like other lovers, to desire (*epithumein*) the whole of the object of his pursuit, i.e., wisdom (475b8). Again, in *Book VI*, he is said to be in love (*eran*) with the knowledge of the eternal (485b1) and to desire the whole of it (485b5). Further, the *philosophos* is said to desire (*epithumein*) the pleasures of the soul (485d10). Essential to the purpose of defining the philosopher as a lover is to distinguish him from other lovers, particularly from lovers of sights and sounds (476a9), lovers of the body (485d10), lovers of honor, and lovers of money (485e3; 580d10 ff.).

⁸ The different attitudes towards eros in the *Republic* are addressed by Ludwig (2007) and Rosen (1965) ambivalent approach to love.

In the *Republic*, the philosopher is a lover, like many other lovers, but the specific kind of love by which he is driven is defined by the object of his pursuit, knowledge, particularly knowledge of the Forms. ‘It is an implicit aim of all P.s’ works to give a meaning to the idea of philosophy, but the final section of bk. 5 (with its sequel in bks. 6-7) faces the issue directly: it does so by equating the wisdom, *sophia*, that is the object of the philosopher’s love, with a special kind of knowledge’ (Halliwell 1993: 201). In this there is an important aspect that differentiates the treatment of the erotic dialogues with the *Republic*. As presented in the *Lysis* and the *Symposium*, the *philosophos*, as a *philos*, is in an intermediate state, between ignorance and wisdom; he desires wisdom because he does not possess it. As presented in the *Phaedo*, the philosopher makes his desire for wisdom a lifelong activity; because *sophia* is not humanly attainable, he persists in his desire to attain knowledge until he dies. This picture of the philosopher, as standing midway between ignorance and wisdom, is presented in a different light in the *Republic*. The definition of the philosopher as a lover emphasizes his proximity to knowledge rather than to ignorance. Indeed, the philosopher is no longer defined as a ‘lover of wisdom’ since he lacks wisdom; instead, he is positively defined as a ‘lover of *wisdom*’ because he pursues a certain kind of knowledge: knowledge of the Forms, which is said to be true, eternal, and universal. To be sure, this is what distinguishes him from other lovers in *Books V, VI* and *IX*. In the *Republic* Plato seems to privilege a characterization of the true philosopher in positive epistemological terms. As Keyt (2006: 199) asserts, “the true philosophers of the *Republic* are in fact not philosophers at all, as Diotima explains the concept in the *Symposium*”. However, there is one significant aspect of Diotima’s description that is also captured by Plato’s idea of desire and love in the *Republic*: he is aware of what he lacks, therefore he can direct his desire by a conviction that allows him to search beyond the immediate, i.e. the many testified by the senses. In both contexts there is a form of rational desire accounted by the psychological make up of a (healthy) philosophical soul: “[...] only at the level of reason do the cognitive and desiderative elements fully coincide, so that their highest fulfillment must be achieved together. [...] the erotic ascent to the Form of Beauty in the *Symposium* is essentially equivalent to the dialectical ascent to the vision of the Good in *Republic* 6-7” (Kahn 1987: 91). In the *Republic*, however, the philosopher is directly attracted to his object of love; this is not indiscriminate attraction to knowledge (unqualified) nor is it something that he

discovers in the path of loving ‘beautiful things’ as in the *Symposium*. He loves what he believes to be the truth, i.e., the Forms. This what I identify as the philosopher’s characteristic state of belief discussed below. Particularly in *Republic V*, Plato explores the aspect of desire connected with passion and willingness in a way that reveals the philosopher’s strong commitment to truth and knowledge. As will be shown, he *believes* (*hēgeisthai, nomizein*) there is such knowledge as the knowledge of the one and he is willing and able to pursue it. In what follows, I would like to address three elements which define the peculiar way he loves: i) he loves the already known, ii) he loves all of it, and iii) he loves Forms.

2.2 The philosophical dog (*Book II*)

To understand the meaning of philosophy and the philosopher in the *Republic* it is worth looking at a passage in *Book II*. In discussing the basic traits defining the character of the guardian, namely gentleness, high-spiritedness and love of wisdom (*philosophia*)—a combination that in principle seems impossible (375c6)—Socrates introduces the example of a dog.⁹ To prove that the combination of these traits is possible, he shows that dogs are generally gentle to their friends and harsh to their enemies and that, while the presence of an unknown person angers them, they embrace (*aspazētai*) the presence of an acquaintance (*gnōrimon*) (376a6). According to Socrates, the kindness it shows to its friends is a sign of love for knowledge, as it ‘it judges [διακρίνει] anything it sees to be either a friend or an enemy [φίλην καὶ ἐχθρὸν], on no other basis than that it knows [καταμαθεῖν] the one and doesn’t know [ἀγνοῆσαι] the other’ (376b3-6).¹⁰ The love or sympathy that the dog manifests towards someone supposes the recognition and identification of that person as a friend. ‘Then, may we confidently assume in the case of a human being, too, that if he is to be gentle toward his own and those he knows [πρὸς τοὺς οἰκείους καὶ γνωρίμους], he must be a lover of learning and wisdom [φιλόσοφον καὶ φιλομαθῆ]?’ (376b11-c2). At first sight, this would mean that the philosopher only pursues that which he knows, which seems absurd. As Sandra Peterson observes: ‘Love of the familiar or known is different from love of learning. The latter requires receptivity to the currently unfamiliar’ (2011: 123). But the problem only arises if we understand familiar (*gnōrimon*) as ‘things already learned’ when it can also

⁹ The image of the philosopher-dog also arises in the *Sophist* (231a6) in contrast with the sophist-wolf (cf. 7.3).

¹⁰ Trans. by Grube and Reeve in Cooper and Hutchinson (1997).

express acquaintance. Socrates' example of the dog only shows that there is a natural love for things known and not for knowledge. As we shall see, the philosopher's disposition to pursue Forms is given by a sense of familiarity with this object: he believes it is true, good, and beneficial.

This rather broad definition of the philosophical nature is useful to understand the narrower and more precise sense in which true philosophers are described later in *Book V*. Just as the dog can show love to its friends from the experience of being acquainted with them, the philosopher embraces true knowledge by having recognized it and distinguished it from opinion. In principle, this notion of philosophical love would be consistent with Diotima's account in the *Symposium*: the philosopher's impulse to pursue truth allows him to move from the perception of beautiful things to the contemplation of Beauty itself.¹¹

2.3 The hydraulic model (*Book VI*)

The philosopher's natural disposition to love knowledge distinguishes him from lovers of sights and sounds, lovers of the body, lovers of honor and lovers of money. The advantageous position of the philosopher as a desiring agent is explicitly discussed in two passages of the *Republic*, both of which consider his psychological pre-disposition to love and the rational grasp of the value of the object. The first of these passages appears at the beginning of *Book VI* when Glaucon and Socrates reassess the philosopher's natural qualities to establish his suitability to run the state. In doing this, Socrates invokes a principle to understand the philosopher's tendency to love some objects rather than others. This principle, called by Lane (2007) 'the hydraulic model', establishes the following: 'when in a man the desires [ἐπιθυμῖαι] incline strongly to any one thing, they are weakened for other things. It is as if the stream had been diverted into another channel' (485d6-8). In the case of the philosopher this translates into a love of the pleasures of the soul over those of the body (485d10).¹² But while the hydraulic model describes the mechanics of desire applying to every desiring agent, it does not account for the philosopher's attachment to a particular

¹¹ Nussbaum (2001: 182) claims that Diotima's description of the lover's ascent is faithfully represented in the *Republic*: 'The lover's final contemplative activity meets the *Republic*'s standards of true value in every way.'

¹² The desire or love for learning concerns the soul exclusively. Consequently, the emergence of other desires, particularly those that concern the body and not the soul, would reduce the desire for learning. 'In one whose desires "set strongly" towards one all-absorbing object, the channels of the body must run dry' (Nettelship 1935: 24).

object, namely the pleasures of the soul. The hydraulic effect satisfactorily explains why the philosopher's desire focuses on one thing at the expense of another, but not why it flows in that direction. This is significant, especially considering that Socrates is allowed to conclude from here that the philosopher, unlike others, is temperate (*sōphrōn*), since he does not take seriously the things for the sake of money (485e3); and that his soul 'is always reaching out [ἐπορεύεσθαι] to grasp everything both human and divine as a whole' (486a5-6); that he is not afraid of death, because he is 'a thinker high-minded [ὑπάρχει διανοία μεγαλοπρέπεια] enough to study all time and all being' (486a8-9), all of which suggests that he is not driven passively towards his object of desire, but that he is knowingly and deliberately pursuing it. 'The natural philosophers become aware of what it is they love, and reflect on why, and although they do not yet have knowledge, they endorse the value of the truth which is the object of their loving pursuit' (Lane 2007: 51). It must be considered that this is the desire of the natural philosopher. His natural advantage is that he can grasp what is truly good. Given his psychological structure (as described in *Book IX*), the philosopher, as opposed to lovers of money and honor, directs his desire from the rational part of the soul. On this, Frisbee Sheffield asserts: 'The point, I take it, is that those who indulge the lower parts of the soul share some similar traits—from an epistemological point of view. They [lovers of money and honor] are both those who fail to develop their reason properly and are concern with appearances rather than reality' (2006: 235). This means that each part of the soul has a grasp of its own good, but only the rational part, that is, the part that governs the soul of the philosopher, has a conception of what is truly good.¹³

3. The Philosopher's State of Belief: Philosophers and Lovers of Sights and Sounds

3.1. The philosopher's love

With the purpose of defining who the philosophers are and distinguishing them from other lovers of learning, i.e. lovers of sights and sounds, the *philosophoi* are characterized by

¹³ From a developmental point of view, the successfully educated philosopher-king shows that the desire to contemplate the Forms, although being a driving force, cannot be the only motivation. Competing against the desire to contemplate the Forms is the need to rule Kallipolis. Philosophers, who are not ruling lovers, must govern for the greatest good (cf. *Book VII* 519b-521b).

both a desiderative and an epistemic component in *Book V*, the two aspects of the psychic unity recently discussed.

Driving the psychological disposition to love the Forms and the cognitive state of knowledge characteristic of the philosopher there is a state of belief, which should not be understood as opinion (*doxa*) in opposition to knowledge (*epistēmē*), but rather as a conviction conveyed more accurately by the phrasal ‘believe in’, i.e. ‘having faith in’ or ‘trust’. This use is attested for both Greek verbs relevant *hēgeisthai* and *nomizein* in Plato and elsewhere.¹⁴ Unlike lovers of sights and sounds, the philosopher believes (*hēgeisthai*, *nomizein*) that there is something beyond appearances. Only the philosopher sees the difference between the multiple and the one, which makes him both willing and able to find something that is universal and stable. Ultimately, the philosopher’s conviction, the way he chooses to see reality, is what gives impulse to acquire *epistēmē*.

In *Book V*, the question of who the philosopher is immediately related to the question of what the philosopher loves. ‘He focuses on the etymology of *philosophos*, a compound of *philia*, meaning love or friendship, and *sophia*, meaning wisdom. Hence, the philosopher is literally the “lover of wisdom” (Sheppard 2009: 88). And as a lover, a second—less obvious—assumption arises, namely that he loves ‘all of it’. In a general sense, this means that he desires (*epithumein*) the whole of the object he loves (*pantos tou eidous*) and not a part of it (475b5).

This needs an explanation, for one might think that someone who loves wine might love some wine rather than another. But as Halliwell (1993: 203) asserts, the text is not describing someone who loves, but the dispositional character of a ‘lover’, that is, someone who tends to love this class of things. In a greater or lesser degree, the tendency can be described pathologically as an obsession or even an addiction. The point to show is that in that desire (or compulsion), there is no qualification or discrimination. Thus, we might well think that the lover of wisdom loves wisdom the way an alcoholic loves drinks: they love ‘all of it’. Just like the lover of adolescents, the lover of honor and the lover of wine find no excuse to restrain or limit their desire, the lover of wisdom desires all wisdom (475b7). As in the *Symposium* and the *Lysis*, the philosopher’s desire is comparable to other forms of

¹⁴ Elsewhere, for *nomizein*, cf. Xen. Sym. 8.35, Mem. 1.1.1., Ap.10, Hdt.4.59: for *hēgeisthai*, Hdt. 2.40, Eur. Hec. 800, Eur. Ba. 1326.

desire that are deprived of an intellectual or a rational component.¹⁵ To make the explanation clearer, Socrates illustrates the case by producing the first definition of *philosophos*: ‘the one who readily and willingly tries all kinds of learning [παντὸς μαθήματος], who turns gladly to learning and is insatiable for it’ (475c6-7).

The lover of wisdom (*philosophos*) is firstly characterized as a lover of learning (*philomathēs*) (475c2) and, as such, he is said to pursue every branch of knowledge (*pantos mathēmatos*). Interestingly, this first attempt at definition depicts the philosopher as a *polumathēs*; being keen to learn, he desires to learn everything. But this does not seem to satisfy the demand for a trait that belongs exclusively to philosophers. As Glaucon observes (475d2), unless Socrates is willing to include ‘lovers of sights’ (*philothēamones*) and ‘lovers of sounds’ (*philēkooi*) under the title of *philosophos*, this definition is too general. Of course, this does not mean that the description is incorrect, only that it is insufficient. Indeed, the love of learning is a characteristic that philosophers and lovers of sights and sounds share. Although the latter will prove to love different objects of learning, Socrates explicitly admits that ‘they are like philosophers [ὁμοίους μὲν φιλοσόφοις]’ (475e2). Socrates does not state in which specific sense they are alike, but it seems safe to assume that it is because of their keenness or desire to learn (*chairontes katamanthanein*; 475d3). I venture to suggest that it might even be the same object, i.e., *sophia*, the difference laying in the quality of the love: based on the element of acquaintance and the hydraulic model (two elements already discussed), the stream of desire is directed only to one object, i.e., Truth. Both, philosophers and lover of sights and sounds, are said to love wisdom *sophia*, but the term could be understood intensionally, by reference to Truth (i.e., Forms) and extensionally, by reference to all the objects it denotes, i.e. every art and learning. Although the philosopher aspires to obtain knowledge of the whole, there is a fundamental difference with the kind of knowledge the sophists boast, a sort of omniscience, encompassing all possible subjects and arts. As Rosen (1999: 158) asserts: ‘philosophy is concerned with the whole, and not simply with this or that art’, i.e., not everything but the whole.

To avoid any potential confusion, Glaucon now qualifies the question: he asks who the ‘true’ (*alēthinous*) philosophers (475e3) are. A second attempt at definition results: ‘those

¹⁵ The apparent rationality of philosophers is in some sense comparable with an irrational appetite. (Cf. Pappas 1995: 143).

who love the sight of truth [Τοὺς τῆς ἀληθείας φιλοθεάμονας]’ (475e4). The element of love persists in the definition, but now the object is specifically qualified as truth. This jump from one general to another more specific definition may bear witness to Plato’s attempt to redefine the notion by dissociating it from a more ample usage.¹⁶

3.2. The philosopher’s state of belief

Socrates’ argument (from 476a9 onwards) aims to describe how the distinction between the one and the multiple is relevant to discriminate the lover of sights and sounds from the lover of wisdom:

The lovers of sights and sounds like beautiful sounds, colors, shapes, and everything fashioned out of them, but their thought *is unable to see and embrace* the nature of the beautiful itself [αὐτοῦ δὲ τοῦ καλοῦ ἀδύνατος αὐτῶν ἢ διάνοια τὴν φύσιν ἰδεῖν τε καὶ ἀσπάσασθαι.]” (476b 4-8)

Thus far, Socrates has not asserted that the cognitive state of the philosopher, here depicted as a ‘waking state’ as opposed to dreaming, necessarily entails the knowledge of the Form of beauty, but rather the recognition of the difference between beauty in itself and beautiful things (See 476c9). The analogy between being asleep and awake has epistemological significance. The dream-consciousness indicates epistemic weakness, but more significantly for the present analysis, it also indicates lack of consciousness: ‘its occasionally genuine but transmogrified grasp of truth; its characteristically being deceived, systematically, with regard to its own true state’ (Tigner 1970: 211). The contrasting states of consciousness between the lover of wisdom and the lover of sights and sounds allow Socrates the following comparison:

What about someone who *believes* in beautiful things [Ὁ οὖν καλὰ μὲν πράγματα νομίζων], but *doesn’t believe* in the beautiful itself [αὐτὸ δὲ κάλλος μήτε νομίζων] and isn’t able to follow anyone who could lead him to the knowledge of it [τὴν γνῶσιν αὐτοῦ]? Don’t you think he is living in a dream rather than a wakened state? Isn’t this dreaming: whether asleep or awake, to think that a likeness is not a likeness but rather the thing itself that it is like? I certainly think that someone who does that is dreaming. But someone who, to take the opposite case, *believes* [ὁ ἠγούμενός τέ τι αὐτὸ καλὸν] in the beautiful itself, can see both it and the things that participate in it [δυνάμενος καθορᾶν καὶ αὐτὸ καὶ τὰ ἐκείνου μετέχοντα] and *doesn’t believe* that the participants are it or that it itself is the participants

¹⁶ Cf. Herodotus (1.30.2) and Thucydides (2.40.1). As Andrea Nightingale shows, *philosophēin* and cognates did not have a technical use before the fourth century (1995: 14-5).

[οὔτε τὰ μετέχοντα αὐτὸ οὔτε αὐτὸ τὰ μετέχοντα ἠγούμενος]—is he living in a dream or is he awake? (476c1-d2)

He (the philosopher) ‘believes’ (*hēgeisthai*) in the reality of beauty and consequently he can pursue it. By contrast, the lovers of sights and sounds do not consider (*nomizein*) the difference between beauty and beautiful things and consequently live in a state of deception, comparable to dreaming. Although none of the verbs (*hēgeisthai*, *nomizein*) suggests knowledge in a strong sense—these are weaker forms of cognition, such as the English ‘consider’, ‘hold’, ‘think’, ‘believe’, the distinction is still relevant in cognitive terms. If the analogy with dreaming is taken seriously, the distinction is ultimately made in terms of state of consciousness. To know the difference between multiple manifestations of *f* and *f* in itself already implies a level of acquaintance with Forms, i.e. reality. At this point it might be relevant to recall the example of the dog discussed above, which illustrates the philosophical nature in that it embraces (*aspazētai*) the presence of an acquaintance (*gnōrimon*) (376a6), ‘embracing’ (*aspazesthai*) being a key word in both passages.

From here, it seems that what separates the lover of wisdom from other lovers is this simple conviction that Forms exist. But it seems unlikely that the difference is set over the recognition that such an object exists; after all, they could be turned into philosophers only by admitting the existence of such an object. This contention only holds if we underestimate the pervasive importance of love discussed above. Let us remember that the love of wisdom is something that both the lover of sounds and sights and the philosopher share, the difference lying on the way they love. The philosopher’s stream of desire is directed to only one object, i.e. the Form, which results from an acute awareness that is not shared by the lover of sights and sounds. Although they both passionately love their object, the healthy rational soul of the philosopher loves in a peculiar way. Philosophers recognize, embrace, and believe in the existence of Forms, the object of their desire. Unlike the lover of the *Symposium*, whose erotic ascent goes from particular to universal by proximity, i.e. from beautiful things to Beauty itself, the philosopher in the context of *Republic V*, because of his psychological rational disposition and firm conviction in the existence of Forms, is able to discriminate beautiful things from Beauty itself and love only the latter.

This conviction emerges from a sense of lack enables the philosopher to recognize Forms and start the epistemological ascent in the pursuit of wisdom; the lack of such a

conviction, on the other hand, prevents the non-philosopher from even starting the ascent. This might be not too far from what is described in the *Symposium*, where only the one who is aware of his ignorance can desire wisdom and start the ascent. Philosophizing is there explained in terms of ‘wanting to become wise’ (*epithumein sophos genesthai*; 204a3-4). But the intermediate state (between ignorance and wisdom) of self-inspection or awareness of a lack (ignorance) that triggers the desire in the *Symposium*, in the *Republic* is positively described as a state of recognition, embracement and acceptance of Forms as their object of pursuit.

However, in the *Republic* the argument is articulated to finally prove that philosophers possess knowledge and non-philosophers do not. Here I concur with David Sedley: ‘The nonphilosophers do not know what they are missing, since they have never themselves distinguished Forms from their sensible instances. Nevertheless, the formal argument is meant to be sufficient to persuade them that they do not after all possess knowledge’ (Sedley 2007: 260). The final trait for the characterization of the philosopher is the possession of knowledge. ‘So we’d be right to call his thought knowledge, since he knows [τὴν διάνοιαν ὡς γινώσκοντος γνώμην], but we should call the other person’s thought opinion, since he opines [τοῦ δὲ δόξαν ὡς δοξάζοντος;]?’ (476d5-6). Plato seems to be comparing the lover of sights and sounds with a successful and accomplished *sophos*. This is accurate if we understand that knowledge and opinion are described mainly as capacities in which there is a psychic unity between the desiderative and the epistemic.

In the argument running from 476e to 478e two points arise that deserve our attention: (i) both *doxa* and *epistēmē* are described as different capacities, and (ii) *doxa* is characterized as an intermediate state between ignorance and knowledge. The difference between philosophers and lovers of sights and sounds is not a difference between opposites drawn in terms of ignorance (*amathia*) and knowledge (*epistēmē*), but between *doxa* and *epistēmē*, where *doxa* is defined as an intermediate state between ignorance and knowledge (478c8), a mid-region between what is and what is not (478c6; 479d).¹⁷ Both *doxa* and *epistēmē* are

¹⁷ What the difference is between them is a matter of discussion and largely depends on how we understand the verb ‘to be’: the knowledge of the philosopher is set over what is; the knowledge of the lover of sights and sounds over what is and what is not. This can be interpreted in the existential, veridical, or predicative use of the verb to be. For an interpretation in the predicative sense, see Annas (1981); based on the veridical sense, see Fine (1999; 2003) and Kahn (2009); based on the existential and predicative see Gonzalez (1996); for an undifferentiated interpretation (based on both the veridical and the predicative sense) see Taylor (2008).

described as cognitive capacities, a capacity being defined by its object and its effect (477d1): the former is that by which we are able to opine (477e2), the latter that by which we are able to know. Yet they are different capacities: (i) *doxa* is fallible (*mē anamartētos*), *epistēmē* is infallible (*anamartētos*, 477e6); (ii) they are set over different objects, the opinable (*doxaston*) and the knowable (*gnōston*) (478b3). The principle of differentiation of capacities should not be interpreted trivially. ‘Plato is not aiming at the trivial connection between knowledge and the knowable but at the connection, necessary but not trivial, between knowledge and the character of what is known—namely, that knowledge is of what is true and/or real, whereas belief lacks those necessary connections with truth and reality’ (Taylor 2008: 178). By connecting each lover’s capacity with his object of pursuit, Plato is reserving the possibility of obtaining true knowledge for the philosopher only. So even if both lovers are in an intermediate state between ignorance and wisdom, the advantage of the philosopher is that he is able and willing to pursue *epistēmē*. It is precisely from this common ground—a midway territory—that the most distinct element of the philosophical nature emerges. While other lovers remain in a permanent state of *doxa*, with no prospect of ever contemplating true knowledge, the philosopher *can* move from *doxa* to obtain *epistēmē*.

Like philosophers, lovers of sights and sounds love and pursue learning and have the capacity to apprehend their learning object, but the object of their love is restricted to the many. They may be said to pursue the same class of object, but only by ignoring the difference between the one and the many. The constraint to opine is ultimately explained by their inability to *see*, *recognize* and *welcome* the Forms, as passage 476b 4-8 cited above anticipated. Towards the closing of the argument, Socrates addresses the lover of sights and sounds, once more describing him as someone who does not think (*hēgeitai*) there is an idea of beauty but believes (*nomizei*) in many beautiful things (479a1).¹⁸

Now that these points have been established, I want to address a question to our friend who doesn’t believe in the beautiful itself or any form of the beautiful itself [ὄς αὐτὸ μὲν καλὸν καὶ ἰδέαν τινὰ αὐτοῦ κάλλους μηδεμίαν ἠγεῖται] that remains always the same in all respects but who does believe in the many beautiful things [πολλὰ δὲ τὰ καλὰ νομίζει]—the lover of sights who wouldn’t allow anyone to say that the beautiful itself is one or that the just is one or any of the rest. (478e7-479*8).

¹⁸ Primary MSS attest both a present indicative *hēgeitai* and a perfect *hēgetai*. The difference, according to Slings (2005: 97), is that the perfect refers to a ‘firm, permanent conviction’, which would fit in this context.

This description at this point of the closing argument cannot be accidental; Plato is restating the trait of the non-philosopher. They love and contemplate ‘beautiful things’ without any regard to the idea of beauty and, therefore, the lover of sights’ account of reality is restricted to *doxa* (479e1). Unable to see the difference between the one and the many, lovers of sights and sounds cannot be driven to pursue the one and therefore cannot come to possess *epistēmē*. As a result, they belong to another class of lover, the *philodoxous* (480a6).

Conclusion

The *Republic* is Plato’s most complete account of the philosopher, as it explores the psychological, epistemological, and moral strands shaping his identity. Insofar as it presents us with a positive image of the philosopher conquering the highest form of knowledge, i.e. the Form of Good, most accounts tend to oversee the importance of his characteristic state of belief as a distinct and more primitive mark in *Book V*. In this paper I intended to remedy this by restoring the importance of the element of love which presupposes awareness of the object of love, a mode of loving, and a healthy soul.

I have claimed to be crucial to distinguish the philosopher from non-philosopher. In this context, the philosopher is not described as a ‘knower’ in a strict sense, but as a ‘lover of wisdom’. This, a running theme in the erotic dialogues, has a notable presence in the *Republic* to explain the philosopher’s state of belief or initial conviction in the pursuit of wisdom. In *Book V*, where most critics focus the debate on the difficulties of the two-world theory implied by the distinction between *epistēmē* and *doxa*, Plato recurrently and consistently uses terminology to establish a difference between the lovers’ state of belief. Whereas the lover of wisdom *believes* in the existence of Forms and the difference between the one and the many, the lover of sights and sounds (or, who turn out to be the same, the lover of *doxa*) does not even conceive it and therefore is unable to move from *doxa* to *epistēmē*. This state of belief, even when is not as epistemologically strong as *epistēmē*, is what ultimately gives impulse to the epistemological ascent.

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