

# THE RIDDLE OF THE SKILL OF GLAUKOS

Toward an interpretation of *Phaedo* 108d

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23 juni 2019 | Leeronderzoek Filosofie | begeleider: dr. Maarten van Houte

*Met dank aan mijn vader  
en mijn lieve vriendin Plonia*

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# Introduction

## The passage in the *Phaedo*

Towards the close of the *Phaedo* – Plato’s depiction of the last hours of his dear teacher Socrates – the philosophical discussion between Socrates and his two interlocutors Simmias and Kebes has grinded to a halt.<sup>1</sup> Socrates seems to have exhausted their objections against his arguments for the immortality of the soul, the position which he has defended against their doubts since the start of the discussion. Nonetheless, Simmias says he has some “private misgivings” (107b2) about the matter.<sup>2</sup> To overcome them, Socrates urges him to re-examine the argument from the start. More interestingly, he launches into a description of the soul’s journey after death. It seems to have been Plato’s conviction that when reason and dialectics fail to convince, a myth or a well-described image might still succeed. So he lets Socrates mythologize. After death, pure souls will find fellow travellers and dwell in a place suited to them. For Socrates has been convinced by “someone” that there are many strange places on the earth, the shape of which is unlike what people generally suppose. This piques Simmias’ interest and he asks Socrates to elaborate. His response has paused many a commentator, ancient and modern alike (108d4-9):

Well now, Simmias, I think it does not take *the skill of Glaukos* [ἡ Γλαύκου τέχνη] to describe what it is like, yet to prove it true I think requires more than the skill of Glaukos. It is possible that I myself would not be capable of doing so and, even if I were, my life seems too short for the argument. Yet nothing prevents me from talking about what I am convinced is the form of the earth and its regions.

And so he does, painting a pretty picture of the earth and its different spheres – more or less *sub specie aeternitatis* – as well as the afterlife of the individual soul (108e-14d). These turn out to be closely intertwined. The dialogue closes with “the three simple immortal pages” which depict Socrates’ last moments: his bath and final farewell to his family, his equanimity in taking the hemlock, and, finally, his serene death (115a-8).<sup>3</sup> Yet the reader who wonders what Socrates

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis I shall transliterate Greek words and names with minimal Latinization, although I do not write, say, Platon or Aischylos.

<sup>2</sup> All the translations of Plato are based on the most recent Loeb edition (or that of Shorey for the

*Republic*). All the other translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. I have of course used other translations in producing my own rendering.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Shorey, *What Plato Said* (Chicago, IL: Chicago UP 1933) 183.

and more importantly Plato meant by this “skill of Glaukos” gets the short end of the stick. Is it proverbial or an allusion? Is it meant as a joke? Most importantly, who was this Glaukos, what was his skill, and why exactly does Socrates need either less or more of it? These questions together make up the riddle that this thesis aims to solve. Some may think it of little significance. I would remind them that one should not, as the Greeks said, “start pottery on a wine-jar” (*Suid.* E 1426, Plato *La.* 187b & *Grg.* 514e) and that “it is better to accomplish little well than a great deal unsatisfactorily” (Plato *Tht.* 187e). I would add that understanding this seemingly unimportant allusion aright shall turn out to have substantial consequences for our interpretation of the *Phaedo*, especially since ancient and modern commentators alike have unfortunately not given it the attention it deserves. Too many of them are content to dismiss it as an uncertain proverb. Others believe that it may have been an allusion, but claim that its referent is now irretrievably lost. The few who do endeavour to identify this or that Glaukos invariably stay tantalisingly silent on why this should be so. And that is to say nothing about the interpretations commentators suggest or more commonly fail to suggest. Indeed, it is my contention that all the proposed solutions of the riddle are unsatisfactory, even if each is unsatisfactory in its own way. An interpretation that coheres and convinces remains, to this day, a desideratum.

### **The aim of this thesis**

When I started out, I supposed my thesis could aim to satisfy this desideratum simply by arguing for a specific identification and interpretation. I soon came to view this as less than ideal. For I realized that there are (at least) two serious preliminary problems that need to be addressed before such an argument could even get started. The first is the extremely widespread though ill-conceived assumption that ‘ἡ Γλαύκου τέχνη’ was a proverb when Plato wrote the *Phaedo*. This is the premise from which many commentators have concluded the irrelevance of the riddle. The second problem is that scholars have hitherto overlooked a large number of Glaukoi which nonetheless have a *prima facie* likelihood of being the Glaukos Plato alluded to. It stands to reason that these must be considered before they can be laid aside. Only *after* these two problems have been addressed, is the ground sufficiently cleared for a fresh interpretation. Yet what was supposed to be preliminary grew into over half of the thesis. Accordingly, the aim of this thesis is twofold: (a) clear the ground for a proper discussion about the correct identification of Glaukos and the best interpretation of the passage and (b) contribute to that discussion by setting forth an interpretation of Plato’s meaning.

I have up until this point assumed something about interpreting Plato which is not

*uncontested* but I nonetheless believe *incontestable*, to wit, that any act of interpreting a philosopher's works for historical-philosophical reasons is concerned with the philosopher's meaning.<sup>4</sup> I reject all attempts to read Plato "dialogically" insofar as these assume that we cannot infer Plato's philosophical opinions from his works and rather use these as a philosophical Rorschach test.<sup>5</sup> I shall be quite content to treat Socrates as Plato's mouthpiece, even if I acknowledge that it is sometimes warranted to think that Plato's meaning differed from the one Socrates espouses and rather lies nearer to that expressed by another interlocutor (e.g. *Phd.* 85b-d).<sup>6</sup> My answer to the so-called platonic question of who speaks for Plato in the dialogues, then, is quite traditional.<sup>7</sup> I do, of course, adopt the by now surely orthodox interpretative principle that Plato's use of the dialogue form, far from being empty embellishment or frivolous fluff, deeply affects the philosophical matter it contains. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that Plato's dialogues are dictated by the principle of what he himself calls "logographic necessity" (*Phdr.* 264b7): "every word and every action is planned in advance by the author. The appearance of spontaneity is only an illusion."<sup>8</sup> Applied to "the skill of Glaukos", it means that we should suppose it an elusive purposeful allusion, rather than a hollow word.

If pressed to characterize my interpretative position – and if allowed to be so bold to associate it with one of the most discerning interpreters of Plato – then I would take a stand under the banner of Paul Shorey's sober and dramatically sensitive Unitarianism, stated

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<sup>4</sup> Indeed, I personally believe that any interpretation is, insofar as it is scholarly, an interpretation of the author's meaning, see E.D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP 1967) and more recently and less psychologically Mark Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas* (Cambridge: CUP 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Two important essay collection which the reader interested in this so-called approach may wish to consult are Charles L. Griswold (ed.), *Platonic Writings, Platonic Readings* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP 1988) and Gerald A. Press (ed.), *Plato's Dialogues: New Studies and Interpretations* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield 1993). Perhaps more representative of the work done on this approach, though considerably less interesting, is Victorino Tejera (ed.), *Plato's Dialogues: The Dialogical Approach* (Charlottesville, VA: Edwin Mellen Press 1997).

<sup>6</sup> For an explicated defence of this position, see Lloyd P. Gerson, 'Plato *Absconditus*', in: Gerald A. Press, *Who Speaks for Plato? Studies in Platonic Anonymity* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield 2000) 201-10. I believe that it is untenable to suppose that Plato was ever Socrates' stenograph. For it is as untenable to suppose that Plato was so *throughout his writing career*, as John Burnet and A.E. Taylor did

in the past century, as it is to suppose that *at one point* he was Socrates stenograph – i.e. that at one point the dialogues were works of history and fact – and that he was not at *another, presumably later point*, as many after Gregory Vlastos still wish to suppose. On what not question-begging grounds such a radical change in genre from more or less fact to more or less fiction may be erected, there seems to be little agreement, see Debra Nails, 'Problems with Vlastos's Platonic Developmentalism', *Ancient Philosophy* 13 (1993) 2, 273-91.

<sup>7</sup> The question was already given, in my view, its definitive treatment in René Schaerer, *La question platonicienne : Etude sur les rapports de la pensée et de l'expression dans les Dialogues* (Neuchatel: Mémoires de l'université de Neuchatel 1938). "*Le platonisme est, en son fond, l'une des philosophies les plus simples qui soient. Il découle tout entier de quelques principes dont l'exposé tiendrait en dix lignes*", and later, "*mais, si le message de Platon est simple en son essence, d'où vient que la forme en soit si complexe ? Pourquoi ces obscurités, quand il serait si facile, semble-t-il, d'être clair ?*"

<sup>8</sup> Charles L. Griswold, 'Irony in the Platonic Dialogues', *Philosophy and Literature* 26 (2002) 1, 84-106, there 86.

programmatically in his *Unity of Plato's Thought*.<sup>9</sup> Though old (it was published in 1903) it is far from dated. One of the aims of this dense work is to argue against the three central claims of what is called *developmentalism* – a position then nascent but now widespread. These are that the dialogues may (1) be reliably ordered chronologically and so (2) serve as an independent guide to Plato's philosophical development, (3) which is to account for the many inconsistencies we find between the dialogues. I follow Shorey in rejecting or significantly downplaying these claims.

## The programme

In the first chapter I argue that 'ἡ Γλαύκου τέχνη' was not a proverb when Plato wrote the *Phaedo*, as nearly all commentators have erroneously assumed. This is necessary, because it has led many interpreters to the mistaken conclusion that the identity of Glaukos and the nature of his skill are irrelevant to Plato's meaning. I use a simplified version of Paul Grice's analysis of meaning to explicate the assumptions and argument implicit in many commentaries. My argument against the assumption of proverbiality is three-pronged. After showing that in the extant Greek sources the phrase is never actually used as a proverb, I counter C. J. Rowe's claim that the style of the passage necessitates the assumption and cast doubt on the supposition that the inclusion of the phrase in ancient proverb collections supports the conclusion that it was a proverb when Plato wrote the *Phaedo*.

I begin the second chapter with an overview of the six hitherto overlooked Glaukoi which I believe have some *prima facie* likelihood of being Plato's Glaukos. I then discuss the three Glaukoi suggested by some modern scholars, which formed the basis for various interpretations. I consider and reject Burnet's arguments for Glaukos of Rhegion. The interpretations based on Glaukos of Chios, first by Konrad Gaiser and later by David Sedley, are also given consideration and in turn deemed unsatisfactory. By critically examining the problems of these interpretations, it becomes clear which desiderata a satisfactory interpretation must meet.

This clears the way for the third chapter. I first argue for the historical possibility of the identification with Glaukos of Anthedon man turned soothsaying sea-god. I then interpret a few passages in the *Phaedo* that seem to suggest the identification. Finally, I note the historical popularity of the identification and explain its eventual decline. In the second part, I examine

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<sup>9</sup> Only Shorey's *a priori* rejection of evidence of Plato's philosophical opinions found outside the dialogues, among which the so-called unwritten doctrines, I think no longer defensible. As did his

student Harold Cherniss, who nonetheless went on to reject the extra-dialogical evidence on *a posteriori* grounds in his classic *Riddle of the Early Academy* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 1945).



all the interpretations of  $\gamma$  by scholars who have identified Glaukos as the Anthedonian. I conclude that these all leave something to be desired. This allows me, in the final part, to formulate all the demands an interpretation of  $\gamma$  must meet. I close the chapter by putting forth the interpretation that in my view meets all the demands.

# 1. ‘ή Γλαύκου τέχνη’ was not a proverb

## 1.1 Introduction to the first chapter

At least since the second edition of Desiderius Erasmus’ (1466–1536) *Chiliades Adagiarum*, published in 1508, scholars have noted Plato’s fondness for proverbs. Erasmus dubbed him the “master of proverbs” (ERASMUS 5.220) and was quite justified to do so. For Plato frequently has his speakers turn a phrase (*Resp.* 329a) or reflect on a popular proverb (*Phd.* 66c), which sometimes lead to a philosophical discussion (*Resp.* 331d ff.) not wholly unlike the Spartan practice of philosophizing by way of proverbs which Socrates highly praises (*Prot.* 342d-3c). So it does not surprise to find many interpreters think that the phrase ‘ή Γλαύκου τέχνη’ at *Phd.* 108d is a proverb as well.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, I believe they are wrong. In this chapter I shall argue against the claim that ‘ή Γλαύκου τέχνη’ was a proverb when Plato wrote the *Phaedo*, for I believe this a necessary prolegomenon to a historical-philosophical investigation into the identity of the Glaukos alluded to by Plato. Henceforth, I shall use the shorthand ‘γ’ to mention ‘ή Γλαύκου τέχνη’.

## 1.2 The argument for the irrelevance of Glaukos’ identity

Interpreters make two assumptions that stand in need of clarification, to wit, that γ is a proverb and that the referent of proverbs is not relevant to understand them. These assumptions seem to underly their conclusion that Glaukos’ identity is irrelevant. This would make it difficult to justify any investigation into the referent. In this chapter I endeavour to show that the conclusion does not follow, not because the argument is invalid, but because we should reject one of its premises: that γ was a proverb at the time when Plato wrote the *Phaedo*. Before I do so, I shall first clarify the assumptions made by nearly all commentators and reconstruct the argument their conclusions presuppose. In order to do so, I shall be maintaining a distinction between

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<sup>10</sup> Those who do so explicitly are ERASMUS 2.8.30 “huius paroemiae duplex est usus”; ERIZZO 222 “una forma di proverbio”; HEINDORF 224-5 n. 132 “proverbium”; COUSIN 302-3 “proverbe pour exprimer une chose difficile”; STALLBAUM 227 “proverbium de rebus non multum ingenii et sollertiae requiruntibus usurpatum”; GEDDES 144 “it was a proverb regarding anything ingenious”; WAGNER 168 n. lviii “the origin of the proverb was unknown to the ancients themselves”; WOHLRAB 143

“sprichwörtlich”; ARCHER-HIND 126 n. 4 “the origin of this proverb is obscure”; BONGHI 344 n. 237 “il proverbio”; BURNET 108 “later writers quote the proverb in this form”; APELT 150 n. 108 “diese sprichwörtliche Wendung”; ROBIN 87 n.2 “dicton”; OLDEWELT 96 “de oorsprong van deze zegswijze is onbekend”; HACKFORTH 169 n. 2 “a proverbial phrase”; DE WIN 372 n. 100 “spreekwoordelijk”; GALLOP 223 “proverbial”; VICAIRES 122 n. 93 “expression proverbiale”.

different senses of meaning and qualify my uses of the word accordingly.

### 1.2.1 Grice's analysis of meaning

H.P. Grice (1913–88), British philosopher of language at Oxford and Berkeley, advanced a theory of semantics and pragmatics emphasising the communicative function of language, revolving around the idea of speaker meaning. Later philosophers of language have further systematized his distinctions. Here I draw particularly (but certainly not wholly) from the work of A.P. Martinich and Robert Fogelin. My use of these distinctions is very much simplified and perhaps would be considered a travesty by any of the above three. Nonetheless, I believe my method shall be justified by its product. I accept Martinich's distinction between four senses of meaning, though I neglect two.<sup>11</sup> 'Literal meaning' (1) denotes the dictionary meaning of words and sentences, or, in an utterance, what a speaker says and indicates. 'Communicative meaning' (2) is what someone could be said to *mean* by what he said or wrote. The latter is usually confusingly called 'authorial intent'. It consists of the literal meaning of an utterance together with what a speaker (non)conventionally implicates. This is a difficult notion to grasp, so I shall in the following be content to use in its stead the more workaday 'figurative meaning'. What is implicated is of course much broader than what is figuratively meant, but for the present purposes the two may usually be equated. Thus, 'communicative meaning' as it is used below may be characterized as the combination of literal and figurative meaning.

What is figurative meaning? In what follows, I shall follow the characterization of Fogelin: "Figurative meaning arises, in general, through a (mutually recognized) mismatch of literal meaning with context, and, more specifically, this is how the figurativeness of figurative comparisons arises."<sup>12</sup> I shall be abbreviating literal, figurative, and communicative meaning as l-meaning, f-meaning, and c-meaning respectively. Observe that l-meaning and f-meaning attach to sentences, while c-meaning attaches to utterances, which are particular sentences spoken at a particular time by a particular person. Only utterances have truth value. Perhaps the principal task of interpreting someone's c-meaning by an utterance is ascertaining the relative weight attached to the different types of meaning of a sentence by the utterer. Again, these distinctions are very rudimentary applications of what in origin are nuanced and precise distinctions, but I do not think this will not harm this thesis *qua* history of philosophy.

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<sup>11</sup> 'Significance' (3) is the import or *meaning to someone* of words, sentences, utterances, even whole works; is agent relative and admits of degrees. Finally, intention (4) could be characterized as the desired and foreseen outcome of some utterance or other act. See A.P. Martinich, 'Four Senses of

"Meaning" in the History of Ideas: Quentin Skinner's Theory of Historical Interpretation', *J of the Philosophy of History* 3 (2009) 3, 225-45, esp. 232.

<sup>12</sup> Robert J. Fogelin, *Figuratively Speaking* (Oxford: OUP 2011) 32.

## 1.2.2 A Gricean analysis of proverbs

### 1.2.2.1 Distinctions between kinds of proverbial expression

When interpreters called  $\gamma$  a “proverb” they strictly speaking should have called it an ‘idiom’ (*OED* s.v.). It is important to be aware of this distinction, even when this seems of little consequence, because it is important, as Aristotle says, to be as precise as the subject permits (*Eth. Nic.* 1094b). This holds especially when representing opposing views, and all the more so if these views prevail, as is the case here. Proverbs properly so called and idioms are two species of proverbial expression. They share the features generic to proverbial expressions: a meaning that is general and invariable, a form that is felicitous and fixed, as well as longevity and currency.<sup>13</sup> Proverbs properly so-called are always a complete statement, while idioms are only ever a partial statement, a proverbial phrase.<sup>14</sup> If we furthermore distinguish between literal and figurative proverbial expressions, the result is a fourfold classification: literal proverbs such as ‘once a thief, always a thief’; figurative proverbs such as ‘a leopard never changes its spots’; literal proverbial phrases such as ‘God willing’; and figurative proverbial phrases such as ‘being an open book’. Thus,  $\gamma$  is most strictly speaking a figurative proverbial phrase.<sup>15</sup> I nonetheless shall follow the interpreters and use ‘proverb’ as shorthand for ‘figurative proverbial expression’ in the hopes of keeping my disagreement with their position as clear as possible, even if I draw attention to the above distinctions when profitable.<sup>16</sup>

### 1.2.2.2 Independence of f-meaning and l-meaning in proverbs

Besides believing  $\gamma$  to be a proverb in the above sense of the word, many interpreters also assume that the l-meaning of proverbs is not relevant.<sup>17</sup> Are they correct? In this case I think they are. For it is specific to proverbs that their l-meaning and f-meaning are mutually independent. That is to say, one may know the l-meaning of all the words that make up a proverb and yet fail to grasp its f-meaning, a fact confirmed by the very existence of proverb dictionaries. Conversely, one may be ignorant of the l-meaning of the word ‘leopard’ and no less understand that

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<sup>13</sup> Reinhold Strömberg, *Greek Proverbs* (Göteborg: Elanders Boktryckeri Aktiebolag 1954).

<sup>14</sup> Thus Hackforth was right to call it a proverbial phrase. These features are common to all traditional (i.e. not structural) definitions of proverbs.

<sup>15</sup> It goes without saying that all of the above holds for proverbs in Greek – indeed, for proverbs in any language – a fact which may be confirmed by a perusal of the ancient Greek proverb collections.

<sup>16</sup> Modern-day paremiologists share this habit. They treat figurative proverbs and figurative proverbial phrases as two sides of the same coin. The classic

statement is Archer Taylor, *The Proverb and an Index to The Proverb* (Hatboro, PA: Folklore Associates 1931).

<sup>17</sup> For example, GALLOP 223: “The identity of ‘Glaucus’ is uncertain. But ‘the skill of Glaucus’ seems to have been proverbial for ‘a great scientist’.” ROBIN 87 n. 2: “*Le dicton, dont il est inutile d’énumérer les interprétations, équivaut à notre ‘ce n’est pas sorcier’.*” LORIAUX 135: “*Dans son sens général, l’expression reste claire, même si son origine est incertaine.*”

the proverb ‘a leopard never changes its spots’ f-means that it is all but impossible to change a bad character for the better. This, of course, is not to deny that f-meaning may in practice often be inferred from l-meaning, nor to reject the historical causal connection that frequently exists between l-meaning and f-meaning of proverbs, very evident in such proverbs as ‘to play your cards right’. Consider a second feature that is specific to proverbs: when they are uttered, one very often need only grasp their f-meaning to come to a complete understanding of the c-meaning of the utterer. For instance, understanding the f-meaning of ‘a leopard never changes its spots’ is enough, given sufficient understanding of context, to be able to interpret Jeremiah to c-mean by uttering it that you cannot do good if you are accustomed to do evil (cf. Jer. 13:23). And from these two features follows a third: it is very often not necessary to grasp the l-meaning of an uttered proverb to understand the utterers’ complete c-meaning.

### 1.2.3 The argument

#### 1.2.3.1 A reconstruction of the argument

So interpreters are quite right to think that the l-meaning of proverbs is not relevant to interpreting the c-meaning.<sup>18</sup> They conclude from this that they need not comprehend either the identity of Glaukos or the nature of his skill. Are they right in this, also? Not necessarily; this is a sound conclusion only *if* the l-meaning of definite descriptions equates to its referent, *if*  $\gamma$  is a proverb, and *if* the interpreter already has an understanding of the proverb’s f-meaning.<sup>19</sup> Interpreters think that each of the three conditionals has been met, so their argument may be formulated thus:

1. If we already understand the f-meaning of a proverb, we need not understand its l-meaning to understand the utterer’s c-meaning.
2. The l-meaning of ‘ἡ Γλαύκου τέχνη’, being a definite description, is equal to its referent.
3. The phrase ‘ἡ Γλαύκου τέχνη’ was a proverb when Plato wrote the *Phaedo*.<sup>20</sup>
4. We already understand the f-meaning of ‘ἡ Γλαύκου τέχνη’.

<sup>18</sup> What about proverbial expressions which are also puns, which by definition turn on the l-meaning? If these are a part of the utterer’s c-meaning, which could be doubted, the difficulty may be side-stepped by replacing in the conclusion above c-meaning with proverbial meaning, which would be prior to c-meaning, often wholly constitute it but sometimes not.

<sup>19</sup> Because it is a definite description. This has little though not nothing to do with the debate about these

being either referential or quantificational constructions.

<sup>20</sup> It would be more precise but much less felicitous to write instead ‘ $\gamma$  was a proverb when Plato uttered it.’ The related notions of writing, authoring, and publishing are wracked with difficulty when used in the context of ancient history. Using the modern term of art ‘utter’ and its cognates is one fairly precise way to circumvent this.

∴ We need not understand the referent of ‘ἡ Γλαύκου τέχνη’ to understand Plato’s c-meaning.

### 1.2.3.2 Problems with the argument

To accept the above conclusion that we need not understand the referent of  $\gamma$  to understand Plato’s c-meaning would, again, throw a spanner in the works of this thesis. After all, what would be the use of a historical-philosophical inquiry into Plato, if it does not improve our knowledge of Plato’s thought by improving our understanding of what he c-meant by his writings? So the above conclusion must be avoided if it may. Fortunately, I believe it can be avoided, for while the first premise may be accepted (with minor reservations) and the second is quite unobjectionable, I think the third and fourth premise are wholly mistaken.<sup>21</sup> I believe interpreters have been wrong to suppose that the explanations of  $\gamma$  contained in the ancient proverb collections successfully lead them to an understanding of the f-meaning of  $\gamma$ , *contra* (4). Furthermore, I believe that they have been mistaken in thinking  $\gamma$  was a proverb when Plato wrote the *Phaedo*, *contra* (3). Given the uncontroversial fact that understanding the f-meaning of a non-proverbial phrase requires understanding its l-meaning, to some degree at least, it follows that, if  $\gamma$  was not a proverbial phrase, understanding the f-meaning of  $\gamma$  requires understanding its l-meaning. Precisely put, if ‘ἡ Γλαύκου τέχνη’ was not a figurative proverbial phrase when Plato wrote the *Phaedo*, then understanding what Plato c-meant in uttering it requires knowing the identity of Glaukos and the nature of his skill. In the remainder of this chapter I shall argue for my claim that (3) is mistaken by showing how the three *prima facie* most convincing arguments for it are all unsound. This is the negative half of the argument for my claim. The positive half depends on my interpretation of the passage and so will have to wait until the third chapter.

## 1.3 Three arguments for the proverbiality of $\gamma$ and their problems

### 1.3.1 Argument from use

Now, an interpreter wishing to know if he should accept (3) would ideally only need to review other uses of  $\gamma$  contemporaneous with the *Phaedo* and ascertain whether they are proverbial or

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<sup>21</sup> And, possibly, (2). If we think that it is possible or even likely that Plato used the proverb to c-mean both the proverbial f-meaning as well as a different meaning, presumably in virtue of the words that make up the proverb, then we cannot accept (2) as it stands. The most convincing reason to think this – other than unfalsifiable intuitions about hidden meanings – is the belief that (2) fails to satisfy the

principle of what Plato himself called logographic necessity, which may be taken as a hermeneutic principle of sufficient reason. I think this is the case, yet proving it would be very laborious – even if sufficient to vindicate the aim of this thesis – so it would be better to devote attention to rejecting either (3) or (4), which would shift the burden of proof to those who accept the above conclusion.

not. Unfortunately, this is not possible, because we possess no uses of  $\gamma$  contemporaneous to Plato. Indeed, the phrase is used *only thrice* outside the *Phaedo* in the entire searchable corpus of Ancient Greek contained in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (TLG), each of which I think are not proverbial and so inadmissible as evidence for (3).<sup>22</sup> Let us consider them.

### 1.3.1.1 *Alexander Romance* rejected

The first of these three non-proverbial uses of  $\gamma$  is contained in the *Alexander Romance*, a fantastic fictional history of Alexander the Great's (356–323) travels and exploits, some of it in epistolary form. Its author is unknown; Byzantine tradition erroneously ascribed it to Aristotle's nephew, the historian Kallisthenes (c. 360–27).<sup>23</sup> The Greek archetype has as *terminus ante quem* 338 CE, when a Latin translation was composed, and for this and other reasons most scholars accept the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE as a rough date of composition.<sup>24</sup> In the third book, in what is supposed to be a letter to his mother Olympias, Alexander is made to describe how, after marching his troops forces from Babylon to the pillars of Herakles – reported to be of hammered gold, not gold enamelling – they head back east and soon find themselves at the Persian palace in Susa (Ps.-Callisthenes *Historia Alexandri Magni* 28).<sup>25</sup> Here he and his men marvel at the splendour and the wondrous sights, among which are an enormous silver mixing-bowl, a sacred prophesying dove, a golden tree and, interestingly enough, “the art of Glaukos, a melodic lyre playing of itself” (29.10-1).<sup>26</sup> A curious image reminiscent of Aristotle's fantasy of “*plectrums plucking kithara* of their own accord” at *Pol.* 1253b33-9.<sup>27</sup> The use of  $\gamma$  in the *Alexander Romance* is evidently not figurative, but it is not immediately clear whether it means the automated playing of the lyre or the lyre itself. The first would seem the most natural reading, the playing of a lyre being a paradigm case of a skill (τέχνη). Yet I think we better understand

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<sup>22</sup> I do not reckon as use *Paus.* 5.26.6.1-2: “Nearby the greater offerings of Miccythus, a work of art by the Glaukos from Argos [τέχνης δὲ τοῦ Ἀργεῖου Γλαύκου], stands an image of Athena with a helmet on her head and wearing an aegis; Nikodamos of Mainalos was its craftsman, but it was dedicated by the people from Elea.” The TLG “contains virtually all Greek texts surviving from the period between Homer (fl. 8<sup>th</sup> century) and the fall of Byzantium in A.D. 1453 and a large number of texts up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.” Thesaurus Linguae Graecae, *The History of the TLG*®, <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu.proxy.library.uu.nl/history.php> (accessed 12 June 2019).

<sup>23</sup> *BNP* s.v. Pseudo-Callisthenes.

<sup>24</sup> In the introduction to his historical commentary, Krzysztof Nawotka suggests that the heydays of the so-called Alexandromania ushered in by the reigns of the bona-fide Alexandrophiles and emperors

Caracalla (198 CE–217) and Severus Alexander (222 CE–235) would be an appropriate context of composition. He also suspects that the author came from Alexandria, or at least Egypt and had enjoyed an upper-class Greek education. Krzysztof Nawotka, *The Alexander Romance by Ps.-Callisthenes. A Historical Commentary* (Leiden: Brill 2017) 4-5.

<sup>25</sup> The pillars of Herakles are the promontories flanking the Strait of Gibraltar, while Susa is located near the Iranian border with Iraq. Clearly, the *Alexander Romance* does not let reasonable logistics get in the way of a well-paced story.

<sup>26</sup> “ἡ Γλαύκου τέχνη, ἐναρμόνιος λύρα αὐτομάτως κρουομένη”

<sup>27</sup> Aristotle is imagining a household where instruments use themselves and so slaves are no longer needed.

“τέχνη” in the sense of ‘a work of art’, as at *Paus.* 5.26.6.1-2, or better still, in the sense of ‘an artful invention’ (*LSJ* s.v. τέχνημα). For it appears that “ἡ Γλαύκου τέχνη” is a member of the class of ‘curious objects at the palace described by Alexander’.<sup>28</sup> So the natural understanding of the l-meaning is that it denotes a concrete and particular object. Since the phrase does not have f-meaning either, we may say that this use of γ lacks the general applicability necessary to become proverbial. This means that γ is here not used as proverb, which seems quite apparent on a natural reading anyhow. We may suppose, then, that the author did not consider it a proverb and therefore disqualify this use as evidence for the proverbiality of γ.<sup>29</sup>

### 1.3.1.2 Julian and Libanios considered

The two remaining uses of γ (outside Plato and registered by the *TLG*) are similar and for this reason I shall treat them together. One is found in the second *Oration* of the later emperor Julian (331/2 CE–363), a panegyric of emperor Constantius II (r. 337 CE–361) which he wrote in 358. Discussing Hektor’s lapses of cowardice, Julian writes (67e): “*he needed neither the craft of Glaucus to help him nor a wiser plan* [οὐχὶ Γλαύκου τέχνης συνεῖναι οὐδὲ σοφωτέρας ἐπινοίας δεῖται], for Homer says plainly that the moment Achilles appeared, ‘he shrank back into the crowd of men’ (cf. *Il.* 20.379).” Nothing in the text itself precludes this use from being proverbial, though it contains equally little to support it. In writing that Hektor did not need “a wiser plan” (“σοφωτέρας ἐπινοίας”) Julian non-conventionally implicates that the f-meaning of γ is a wise plan (σοφὴ ἐπινοία) or something like it. Julian does not discuss the l-meaning.

The final other use of γ is found in the sixty-fourth *Oration* written in 361 by the rhetor Libanios (314 CE–393), where it heads a list of examples of the arts and crafts that Libanios claims have developed for the better over time (20.1-2): “And what was *the art of Glaukos of Chios* [ἡ Γλαύκου τοῦ Χίου τέχνη] in the beginning? and that of Zeuxis not much later?”<sup>30</sup> I have no doubt that Libanios’ phrasing in the first question is an allusion to γ. Indeed, ‘gloss’ would be a better description. However, whether it is an allusion to a *proverb*, as suggested by Schneidewin (*SCHNEIDEWIN* 153 n. 100), remains up for debate. If it is, it is curious that Libanios does not give us any clues about the proverb’s f-meaning. He does interpret the l-meaning,

<sup>28</sup> Glaukos, being the artificer, would have had his name attached to the *object* and not its distinctive *function*, as with the self-moving “statues of Daedalos or tripods of Hephaistos” (*loc. cit.*; cf. also Plato *Euthphr.* 11d-e, *Meno* 97d & Hom. *Il.* 18.369).

<sup>29</sup> Though it is quite possible that the author first encountered the phrase in a collection of proverbs, this does absolutely nothing to change the fact that he did not here use it as a proverb.

<sup>30</sup> Zeuxis was a painter famous for his innovations in perspective and infamous, with some, for his fondness for innovations in general. For a similar sentiment about artistic progress since the so-called *first inventor* (πρῶτος εὐρετής) – which Daedalos, Zeuxis, and Glaukos of Chios each are for their respective skill – see Plato *Hp. mai.* 282a & ff: “the sculptors would laugh at Daedalos if he turned up now doing things like the ones that made him famous” etc., though cf. *Resp.* 529d.



identifying the skill as metal-welding, which was considered the art discovered and practiced by Glaukos of Chios (see *Herod.* 1.25 and *infra*).

### 1.3.1.3 Julian and Libanios rejected

Julian's and Libanios' uses of  $\gamma$  may be accepted as evidence for (3) *if and only if* it can be shown that they are best taken as denoting the same proverb as Plato is supposed to have used. Here it must be remembered that seven centuries separate Julian and Libanios from Plato. Even if  $\gamma$  was a proverb in the fourth century CE, it need not have been in the fourth century BCE.<sup>31</sup> To accept their uses of  $\gamma$  as evidence, then, we must assume that the proverb had remained current from Plato's time to theirs. For only if they denote the same and continued proverb, can we reckon later use as evidence for earlier existence. This assumption strikes me as rather tenuous. It is made suspect by, among other things, the complete absence of  $\gamma$  from the written record during this intermittent period, even if absence of evidence does not *entail* evidence of absence. So even if these two uses are admissible as evidence for (3), I believe that they will fall short from convincing anyone but the convinced.

Besides, I think we have a strong reason to disbelieve the above biconditional and reject these uses of  $\gamma$  as evidence for (3). I think that they do not denote a proverb at all and so certainly do not denote Plato's proverb. Rather, they function as literary reminiscences of the *Phaedo* and we should take them as such. To understand why this is so, it must be recalled that Libanios was not only a learned rhetor and a moderate pagan in the *Third Sophistic*; he also wrote in a mannerized Atticizing style that sought to imitate Plato's.<sup>32</sup> This cannot but have required an intimate acquaintance with Plato's dialogues. Julian, in his turn, also was a neopagan as well as a Neoplatonist, one whose "pages are crowded with echoes of Plato" and one who was wont to interweave his Atticizing style with "half verses, phrases, and whole sentences taken without acknowledgement".<sup>33</sup> Such tacit references and unattributed citations were immensely popular literary tropes with the belletrists of the period. An important fact about them is that they always and only alluded to a neatly circumscribed canon of works from the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. These were the highest esteemed and the most read, increasing the chances of the readers picking up on the allusion, producing the desired perlocutionary effect.

Chief among the canonical writers was Plato, and chief among his works were the dramatic masterpieces such as the *Phaedo*. This makes it a real possibility that Libanios' use of  $\gamma$

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<sup>31</sup> Not to mention the fact that Plato resided for most of his life at Athens and Julian and Libanios lived at multiple places throughout the eastern empire.

<sup>32</sup> Term introduced at Raffaella Cribiore, *The School of Libanios in Late Antique Antioch* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP 2007) 173.

<sup>33</sup> Wilmer C. Wright, *Julian. Orations 1-5*. Loeb (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 1913) xi.

was simply a nifty allusion to the *Phaedo* and that Julian’s use of  $\gamma$  is rightly interpreted as a young man’s attempt to mimic the style, indeed, the very verbiage of his intellectual idol. This interpretation improves on the above proverbial interpretation in that it does not require the tendentious assumption of continuity. It also has greater regard for the literary features of the individual authors and their milieu. If we indeed accept this interpretation as the superior, as I think we should, the above biconditional (“it can be shown that they are best taken as denoting the same proverb as Plato is supposed to have used”) does not hold. We may conclude that none of the uses of  $\gamma$  outside Plato is admissible as evidence for the proverbiality of  $\gamma$ , let alone for its proverbiality at the time of Plato.

### 1.3.2 Argument from style

A second argument for the proverbiality of  $\gamma$  is given by C. J. Rowe in his inestimable commentary on the *Phaedo* (ROWE 132). Rowe judges that the formulation of the sentence containing  $\gamma$ , “ἀλλὰ μέντοι ... ἡ Γλαύκου τέχνη ... οὐκ ἐξαρκεῖν.” (“But I do [not] believe ... the skill of Glaukos ... [the length of my life] is not sufficient.”), has a “harshness” and claims that this “harshness” is explained if  $\gamma$  is taken as a “proverbial expression”.<sup>34</sup> This is a comment of no consequence unless we supply the implicated conclusion: that  $\gamma$  should be understood as a proverbial expression, i.e. that (3) should be accepted. The argument is unconvincing, invalid as it stands and unsound on the best validation. It does not convince because the explanandum is a personal judgement of style. These are often subjective and tend to fluctuate and therefore should not underpin an understanding of c-meaning, which is by definition objective and stable. Moreover, the claim that the “harshness” needs explaining depends on the assumption that Plato could not, or perhaps would not without reason, write a harsh sentence. This may of course be doubted, first by those acquainted with the *Laws*.<sup>35</sup>

Second, Rowe’s implied conclusion is invalid because it does not follow from the premises that (3) should be accepted. Only if it is *also* premised that accepting (3) is the *best* explanation for the “harshness” does the implied conclusion follow. The resulting argument, finally, is unsound because the supplied premise does not hold. It does not hold, because in absence of a review of the possible explanations we have no reason to accept it, while we have a significant reason to reject it: at *Phdr.* 246a2-5 (“οἶον μὲν ... οὖν λέγομεν”) is found a very similar

<sup>34</sup> C.J. Rowe, *Plato. Phaedo* (Cambridge: CUP 1993) 132.

<sup>35</sup> For it is not without reason the satirist Lucian (fl. c. 125 CE–180) could sneer that something was “colder than Plato’s *Laws* [ψυχροτέρους ... τῶν

Πλάτωνος *Νόμων*]” and that even one of its apologists Paul Shorey has admitted that it contains “abrupt or strained transitions” as well as “prosy preachments and tediously minute descriptions”. Shorey, *What Plato Said*, 355.

construction that does not contain any “proverbial expression”.<sup>36</sup> So if the “harshness” is something that requires explaining, it must be explained differently. Indeed, I think the similarity of the two constructions in the *Phaedo* and the *Phaedrus* points away from proverbial meaning to a quite literal, specific, and specifically Platonic c-meaning. I explore this connection in the third chapter.

### 1.3.3 Argument from authority

By far the most common if not *the* reason for scholars to accept (3) is the authority of the ancient paroemiographers (= writers of [collections of] proverbs). Their reasoning is that, because the paroemiographers thought  $\gamma$  was a *paroimia* (which is translated as ‘proverb’), we may consider it a proverb, also. Two facts must immediately be considered. The first is that the paroemiographers were writing, at the earliest, around two centuries after Plato wrote the *Phaedo* (and at the latest over eight centuries after the fact). So again we have the problem that, even if these authors truly believed  $\gamma$  to be a proverb in their time, it does not follow that it was a proverb when Plato wrote the *Phaedo*. It is, for instance, equally possible that the proverb originated from later readings of Plato, who, being a popular and esteemed author, is a likely source for new proverbs – consider Shakespeare.<sup>37</sup>

A second fact to be considered is that such a line of reasoning ignores that the ancient concept of *paroemia* “embraces considerably more than that which we nowadays call a proverb”.<sup>38</sup> It was a special category of literary products that often but *not always* enjoyed a currency like proverbs in the modern sense. So some *paroemiai* were not actually current but more akin to what we would call ‘winged words’.<sup>39</sup> It is a fact that figurative *paroemiai* which have not enjoyed currency for some time lack the independence of f-meaning from l-meaning specific to figurative proverbs, because currency over an extended period is necessary to make the l-meaning obsolete, while preserving speakers’ familiarity with the f-meaning which is the proverbial meaning.<sup>40</sup> Thus the class of *paroimia* may be thought to contain the subclass of proverbial expressions and *a fortiori* proverbs in the modern sense. So if  $\gamma$  was a *paroimia* it does not follow that (3) holds. More evidence would be needed to show its currency and so to guarantee the existence of a proverbial f-meaning. I think such evidence is lacking and that there are indeed three indicators to the contrary:  $\gamma$  does not have a fixed l-meaning, f-meaning, or form. This will be apparent from my review of all the extant proverb collections that contain

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<sup>36</sup> “οἷον μὲν ἐστὶ, πάντα πάντως θείας εἶναι καὶ μακρᾶς διηγήσεως, ᾧ δὲ ἔοικεν, ἀνθρωπίνης τε καὶ ἐλάττονος: ταύτη οὖν λέγωμεν.” For the translation and my discussion of this page see chapter three.

<sup>37</sup> Taylor, *The Proverb*, 34 ff. & 174.

<sup>38</sup> Strömberg, *Greek Proverbs*, 9.

<sup>39</sup> Paolo Vivante, ‘On Homer’s Winged Words’, *The Classical Quarterly* 25 (1975) 1, 1-12, there 2 esp. n. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Taylor, *The Proverb*, 67-81.

the *paroimia*, to which I now turn. I shall in passing catalogue ancient opinions on the l-meaning of  $\gamma$  and note their problems as a starting point for my own attempt to understand the l-meaning of  $\gamma$  in the *Phaedo*. I shall refer to explanations of the f-meaning of the proverb as ‘definitions’, and to explanations of the l-meaning, usually called ‘origin’ by the paroemiographers, as ‘identifications’. Most paroemiographers give both. I use the word ‘explanation’ *sans phrase* to refer to both together.

### 1.3.3.1 Dionysodoros, Seleukos, Diogenianos

The earliest extant mention of the phrase is an explanation of its f-meaning and l-meaning by the grammarist Dionysodoros of Troezen (fl. second half 2<sup>nd</sup> century) as reported by the lexicographer Hesychios (fl. 5<sup>th</sup> century CE) at *Lex.* Γ 616: “Skill of Glaukos: a proverb about things easily completed. Dionysodoros says that this is about the welding of iron; for Glaukos of Chios discovered iron-welding.”<sup>41</sup> This was probably contained in a proverb collection (Plut. *Arat.* 1-2). Herodotos already makes mention of Glaukos’ of Chios discovery in a discussion of the marvellous mixing-bowl and welded tripod he constructed (*Hdt.* 1.25), the latter still visible at Delphi at the time of Pausanias’ travels (second half 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE), who too makes note of the welding (*Paus.* 10.16.1), as do Hegesandros of Delphi (fl. 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE) in his catalogue of Delphian votive articles (*FGrH* 87 F 21b) and Athenaeos of Naukratis (fl. c. 190 CE, after Hegesandros) in his *The Learned Banqueteers* (210b-c), the latter judging it “truly worth seeing for the reliefs of insect-figures”. Plutarch calls it “the widely renowned stand and base for the mixing-bowl” (*De. def. or.* 436a).

The next oldest explanation of  $\gamma$  is by the scholar Seleukos Homerikos, active at the court of Tiberius (Suet. *Tib.* 56; *Suid.* Σ 200), in his now lost compilation of proverbs, preserved in epitomated form as a spurious work of Plutarch (ps.-Plut. *De proverbiiis Alexandrinorum* 2.25): “Not the skill of Glaukos: a proverb about things done well and hard to understand. For there existed a certain Glaukos, a craftsman of Samos, who first discovered iron-welding.”<sup>42</sup> Note the negation (“οὐχ”) in the lemma and the confusion of a Glaukos of Samos for the one of Chios (see *infra*). Note also the difference in f-meaning with Dionysodoros: suddenly it is not only the difficulty of the thing (“δυσκατανοήτων”) but also the quality with which it is executed that now matters (“εὖ εἰργασμένων”).

Another related though again altered explanation of the f-meaning and the l-meaning of

<sup>41</sup> *BNP* s.v. Dionysodoros & Hesychius.

<sup>42</sup> Both titled ‘Περὶ τῶν παρ’ Ἀλεξανδρεῦσι παροιμιῶν’. *BNP* s.v. Seleucus; Stephanos Matthaios, ‘Greek Scholarship in the Imperial Era and

Late Antiquity’, in: Franco Montanari et al. (eds.), *Brill’s Companion to Ancient Greek Scholarship I* (Leiden: Brill 2015), 184-296, there 217 n. 110.

γ is found in a treatise probably put together by the paroemiographer Diogenianos of Heraklea, active during the reign of Hadrian (Diogenian. *De proverbiiis* 4.8):<sup>43</sup> “Skill of Glaukos: a proverb about things not easily accomplished. It comes from Glaukos of Samos who first discovered iron-welding. Or it is about the *skilful* [τεχνικῶς] construction of things.” The second suggested f-meaning – no doubt an inference by Diogenianos or his source from the identification with a craftsman – implies the notion of quality, for what is done skilfully is of course done well. Amazingly, Diogenianos’ first suggestion is so garbled that it turns the f-meaning on its head: whereas before the skill of Glaukos f-meant something easy (Dionysodoros) and its negation was something difficult (Seleukos), the skill of Glaukos is now defined as f-meaning something difficult (literally “*not easy* [μὴ ῥαδίως]”).

### 1.3.3.2 Zenobios, the scholiast

Diogenianos’ contemporary Zenobios gives us an altogether different definition and identification in his epitomated reworking of the proverb collections of Didymos Chalkenteros (fl. second half 1<sup>st</sup> century) and Lukillos of Tarrha (fl. middle 1<sup>st</sup> century CE). His definition runs (*Zen. Epitome collectionum Lucilli Tarrhaei et Didymi* 2.91): “Skill of Glaukos: a proverb about things easily accomplished and completed with much care and skill.” Thus, the skill of Glaukos is again something “easy” (“ῥαδίως”), but the element of technical skill is now emphasized (“πάνυ [...] ἐντέχνως”) and an element of care (“ἐπιμελῶς”) is added. Zenobios’ suggested identification is found nearly verbatim and expanded on in the Neoplatonic scholion to *Phd.* 108d (the shared passage is underlined):

Skill of Glaukos: a proverb about things *not easily* [μὴ ῥαδίως, cf. Zen.] accomplished and completed with much care and skill. For a certain Hippias fashioned four bronze disks in such a way that their diameters were equal, but the thickness of the first disk was *epitritic* [4:3] with regard to the second one, *hemiolic* [3:2] with regard to the third one and the double of the fourth one, and when they were struck they produced a certain harmony. And it is said that when Glaukos noticed the sounds of the disks, he was the first to try to make music with them and from this affair even to this day it is said that this is called the skill of Glaukos. Aristoxenos makes mention of these things in his *Περὶ μουσικῆ ἀκρόασις* (Aristoxenus fr. 90 Wehrli) and Nikokles does as well in his work *Περὶ θεωρίας* (Nicocles FGrHist 587F4). There is also the *skill of letters*

<sup>43</sup> Note well that this is not the same work as the hugely influential *Περιεργοπένητες* (“for industrious poor students”), which is preserved in altered form and ultimately derives from the grammarist

Zopyrion’s part of the enormous alphabetic lexicon he produced together with the grammarist Pamphilos (both fl. second half 1<sup>st</sup> century CE), see: Matthaios, ‘Greek Scholarship’ 288-90.

[τέχνη γραμμάτων], which has been attributed to Glaukos of Samos, from which the proverb perhaps derives. And he is the one who discovered iron-welding, according to Herodotos.<sup>44</sup>

Again the definition has been completely garbled in transmission: if the scholiast is to be believed, now when it is said of something that it is *not* the skill of Glaukos it f-means that it is *not* easy but does *exemplify much care and skill* (“πάνυ ἐπιμελῶς καὶ ἐντέχνως”).<sup>45</sup> This can no doubt be attributed to the change from a positive to a negatory formulation of the lemma, but this explanation of the error of course makes it no less an indication that the f-meaning of the proverb was unknown to the scholiast. He inferred that it must have something to do with skill or something requiring skill, but the exact semantics eluded him. This suggests that he did not know it as a proverb. The second suggested identification may be equated to Glaukos the Samian grammarist, who was a peripatetic and so postdates Plato, and so it cannot be correct.<sup>46</sup> The musician of the story is to be identified with the scholar from Rhegion, author of a work *On Poets* (ps.-Plut. *X orat.* 833d) and a younger contemporary of Socrates.<sup>47</sup> Scholars think the shared passage ultimately derives from the mentioned work of Aristoxenos of Taras, a student of Aristotle with Pythagorean leanings.<sup>48</sup> If this is so, this would make it a valuable source for the identification of the proverbial Glaukos, being near contemporary to Plato and much older than the explanation of Dionysodoros.

But did Aristoxenos in fact connect this story to the proverb, or was it the conclusion of some later writer, perhaps even the scholiast himself? The former option has the authority of John Burnet (BURNET 150). More significantly, it could be argued that we may infer as much from the scholiast’s reference to the “Περὶ μουσικῆ ἀκρόασις”, which suggests that he had the work at hand. But this is to assume that the scholiast follows up on his citations, which is belied by the mistaken reference to Herodotos, who of course only mentions Glaukos of *Chios* and not *Samos*. It could, further, be claimed that Burnet’s interpretation is confirmed by the fact that the back-reference of “these things” (“τούτων”) includes “and from this affair even to this day it is said that this is called the skill of Glaukos”. But this is at best only to stress the point, and

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<sup>44</sup> Translation of the underlined passage based on André Laks & Glenn W. Most, *Early Greek Philosophy. Volume VI* (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library 2016) 139. I omit the corresponding lemma (“ἡ Γλαύκου τέχνη”) because the lemmata are modern additions, Eleanor Dickey, *Ancient Greek Scholarship* (Oxford: OUP 2007) 46.

<sup>45</sup> The name ‘scholiast’ is really a catch-all for a pot-pourri of scholars and scribes from different times and various backgrounds, see Green article 192.

<sup>46</sup> That is, as Plato’s c-meant referent of  $\gamma$  in the *Phaedo*. *BNP* s.v. Glaucus.

<sup>47</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>48</sup> *Epitome collectionum Lucilli Tarrhaei et Didymi* 2.91 = fr. 90 *Werhli*. *BNP* s.v. Aristoxenus.

at worst it begs the question.<sup>49</sup> However, while Greene opts for the plural “τούτων” in his *Scholia Platonica*, Diels and Kranz’s *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* prints the singular “τούτου”, which, if correct, would make it incontestable that the reference is to the story of Glaukos alone.<sup>50</sup> It also, to my mind, makes it likelier that the back-reference included the identification, though I believe this may still successfully be contested for other reasons. For observe that Zenobios’ explanation does not *explicitly* state the identification; this is only done by the scholiast.<sup>51</sup> This strongly suggests that Aristoxenos did not make the identification, even (or *especially*) if these are his *ipsissima verba* as Burnet assumed. Finally, perhaps the strongest reason not to suppose with Burnet that Aristoxenos (or, for that matter, Nikokles) had made the identification, is that the scholiast suggests a second Glaukos “from which the proverb perhaps derives”, which we may reasonably expect him not to have done *if* he had looked into Aristoxenos’ work and *if* he had found the identification there.

As the other explanations of the l-meaning were first given by some paroemiographer and this specific explanation is found nowhere else, I think we have a *prima facie* reason, in light of the absence of evidence, to assume that this one was invented by some paroemiographer as well. This was probably Lukillos rather than his epitomator Zenobios, who is nonetheless thought to be the origin of many of the paroimiographical *scholia vetera*; in any case the explanation of the proverb significantly postdates that of Dionysodoros and certainly does not afford us access to “genuine tradition”, making it only of slight interest to the interpreter of Plato.<sup>52</sup>

### 1.3.3.3 The Byzantines, Markellos

The explanations of the Byzantine lexicographers are clearly muddled paraphrases of those already discussed.<sup>53</sup> This means that they do not only add little to our knowledge of the

<sup>49</sup> What “these things” refers to is a question the answer to which is a matter of interpretation, which is formed by our understanding of the text and is not something above and beyond it. Both interpretations are possible and natural enough, especially considering that the *scholion* is the product of multiple hands.

<sup>50</sup> Hippasos F12, p. 109 of the first volume. One reason I remain partial to Greene’s reading is that I believe it very probable that Aristoxenos knew Glaukos’ of Rhegion work on the ancient poets and musicians, in which Hippasos certainly would have made an appearance.

<sup>51</sup> “καὶ ἀπὸ ταύτης τῆς πραγματείας ἔτι καὶ νῦν λέγεσθαι τὴν καλουμένην Γλαύκου τέχνην.”

<sup>52</sup> Other candidates are Didymos’ collection of proverbs or Diogenianos’ lexicon, a major source via Hesychios for the *scholia vetera*, see William Chase Greene, ‘The Platonic Scholia’, *Transactions and*

*Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 68 (1937) 2, 184-96, there 191-2; BURNET 150.

<sup>53</sup> “Skill of Glaukos: a proverb for things that are not easily accomplished, or for things that are done with much care and skill.” (Photios [fl. 9<sup>th</sup> century CE] Γ 125); “Skill of Glaukos: a proverb about things that are easily accomplished, and yet hard to understand.” (*Suid.* [10<sup>th</sup> century CE] O 982); “A certain Glaukos of Samos first discovered iron-welding. And there is a proverb, skill of Glaukos, about things easily accomplished.” (*Suid.* Σ 376, almost identical is Γ 282); “Skill of Glaukos: a proverb about very artistic things.” (Markarios Chrysokephalos [fl. 14<sup>th</sup> century CE] *Paroemiae* 2.100); “Skill of Glaukos: a proverb used of things accomplished with difficulty. Or it refers to things completed with much care and skill. For he discovered iron-welding. He was from Chios.” (Michael Apostolios [fl. 15<sup>th</sup> century CE]

significance of the proverb in ancient times, but that they also strengthen our thesis that the f-meaning and l-meaning of the purported proverb γ were unknown. An ancient explanation that does shine new light on the matter is found in the Church Father Eusebios' of Kaisareia (c. 260 CE–340) *Contra Marcellum*, written near the end of his life.<sup>54</sup> In this *philippic* against Bishop Markellos of Ankyra (c. 280 CE–374), who had opposed him at the *First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea* (325), he quotes his opponent's discussion of several proverbs and their difficulty, which was supposed to unmask these purported nuggets of ancient wisdom (cf. Arist. fr. 8 *Ross*) as pagan imitations of Solomon's proverbs.<sup>55</sup> Among these is a discussion of the l-meaning (though not the f-meaning) of the skill of Glaukos, which I quote in full (Eusebius *Contra Marcellum* 1.3.4-5 = Marcellus [*Contra Asterium*] fr. 23 *Vinzent*):

The proverb is the skill of Glaukos. When wise pagans make mention of this proverb, they each explain it differently. For one of them says that a certain Glaukos had become very knowledgeable about some skill, which was <most admired><sup>56</sup> among many, and which was lost together with him at sea (for no one had yet learned it from him).<sup>57</sup> A second, giving evidence of Glaukos' great experience in music, says that he fashioned four bronze disks and that striking them in unison produced a harmony – this is what he says the proverb is about. A third thinks that laid up among the offerings of Alyattes was a mixing-bowl with a sublime stand, a construction of Glaukos of Chios. A fourth says that Glaukos dedicated a bronze tripod to Delphi and that, after he had fashioned it, he struck in unison the feet, the vase, the ornament at the top of the vase and the rods fastened round the middle, making the sound of a lyre. And a fifth holds that the proverb is said about some Glaukos, who was reputed for being in the habit of producing special things.

Five Glaukoi are here identified, each of them attributed to a wise pagan, some of whom presumably were paroemiographers. The second Glaukos mentioned by Markellos is the musician from Rhegion, the third the welder from Chios, and the fourth appears to be a curious blend of these (though see *infra*). The first and the fifth are ambiguous. Can we identify them? The

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*Paroemiae* 5.45 = Arsenios Apostolios [his son, fl. first half 16<sup>th</sup> century] *Paroemiae* 14.94 ).

<sup>54</sup> *BNP* s.v. Eusebius.

<sup>55</sup> We possess only fragments of this work. It was published between 330 CE–337, see Markus

Vinzent, *Markell von Ankyra. Die Fragmente. Der Brief an Julius von Rom* (Leiden: Brill 1997) lxxvi.

<sup>56</sup> Following Schneidewin's suggestion to read 'εὐδοκμηῆσαι' at the corruption after 'γεγονόται', see: SCHNEIDEWIN xxii.

<sup>57</sup> Or: "no one had yet heard it from him".



description of the fifth Glaukos is much too general to be of significance – perhaps it is also in reference to Glaukos of Chios? The mention of the sea in the description of the first Glaukos reminded Schneidewin of Glaukos of Anthedon, a fisherman who upon eating a magical herb jumped into the sea and transformed into a god with prophetic powers (SCHNEIDEWIN xxii: “*fuit, si recte conjicio, Glaucus Anthedonius*”).<sup>58</sup> Diskin Clay has quite recently agreed with this identification: “[the sea-god from Anthedon] is no other than our mysterious Glaukos” (CLAY 233).

I disagree with this estimation. Schneidewin and Clay silently pass over the many considerable disanalogies between the two descriptions. Importantly, in the traditional version of the tale, Glaukos of Anthedon had no special skill *before* he jumped into the sea – as Markellos’ mysterious Glaukos had – but only *after* he had done so. This also means that his skill could not have been “lost” (“ἀπολέσθαι”) at sea with him. Nor could Glaukos have failed to teach the skill – suggested by “no one had yet learned it from him” – the skill being *divine prophecy*, which is by definition unteachable.<sup>59</sup> Clay here muddles the waters by translating this final sentence as “for there was no longer anyone who had heard of it” (CLAY 231), strangely taking “πῶ” as “no longer” rather than ‘up to this time’ or ‘yet’ (*LSJ* s.v.). While ‘heard’ is indeed an alternative translation of “διακηκούτος”, the context precludes it from being correct here. For Markellos writes that many people had renowned the skill and *a fortiori* “had heard of it”, or at least the narrator must have heard of it to draw this conclusion. This Glaukos, further, seems to have been typified by his knowledge of this skill. So how could it never have been “heard of” by anyone? Surely, it was heard of by people; it was just that no one had learned it from him, which equally accounts for its later loss. In sum, I think that if the description of Markellos’ Glaukos is to be rhymed with the ancient mariner from Anthedon, it is in an altogether different version of that legend. One variation on the traditional account may perhaps be squared with Markellos pithy description, but an investigation of this I postpone, lest we here stray too far from the main thread of the argument.<sup>60</sup>

#### 1.3.3.4 Conclusion of the review

From the foregoing catalogue I draw the following conclusions. First, the paroemiographers did not agree on the l-meaning of the supposed proverb. This suggests that there was no consensus on the l-meaning in general, which in turn suggests that there was no fixed l-meaning – Markellos and the scholiast admit as much – and that the identifications of the

<sup>58</sup> *BNP* s.v. Glaucus. Sources on this Glaukos are examined in chapter two.

<sup>59</sup> Though consider the originally Stoic distinction between divination from something and speaking prophetic words, Cic. *Div.* 1.1-9.

<sup>60</sup> See the appendix.

paroemiographers were no more than educated guesses. Second, the form of the supposed proverb is not fixed, with the negatory and the positive formulation obviously being confused with one another.<sup>61</sup> Third and most importantly, the f-meaning seems to be in a state of flux and its changes appear to trail those of the l-meaning. The general image is that of a game of Chinese whispers. The differences in f-meaning have been noted in the foregoing. That these trail the l-meaning is illustrated by the examples of Dionysodoros, who defines the phrase in terms of *ease* because his explanation of the origin centres on the *welding*, and Seleukos, whose f-meaning of *difficulty* accords well with the substitution in his l-meaning of the welding for its *discovery*. This suggests, *at the very least*, prevailing uncertainty with regard to the f-meaning. Combined with the uncertainty about the l-meaning and the form, this points to a general unfamiliarity of the learned paroemiographers with the phrase, which indicates a lack of currency of the phrase. This is best explained if it, though a *paroimia*, was not a proverb in the modern sense of the word. In other words, the treatments of  $\gamma$  in the ancient collections of *paroimiai* speak against its proverbiality. So they do not support (3).

## 1.4 Conclusions of the first chapter

In this chapter I have argued that we have no reason to believe that the phrase ‘ἡ Γλαύκου τέχνη’ was a proverb when Plato wrote the *Phaedo*, as many interpreters have claimed. The argument may of course be reinforced in many ways. To note one: I suspect an investigation into Plato’s use of proverbs would reveal that he often has the speaker point out that he is speaking proverbially either by saying as much (e.g. *Cra.* 384a-b) or by commenting on the proverb’s quality, be it its antiquity (*Lys.* 216c), correctness (*Soph.* 231c, *Menex.* 247e), or familiarity (*Resp.* 329a). However, as the burden of proof is on the shoulders of those who make this claim, rejecting the most convincing reasons *for* the claim is sufficient to deny it and in any case all I can do in the limited space. I have shown that  $\gamma$  is used only thrice outside the *Phaedo* and never as a proverb, that there are no stylistic grounds for considering it a proverb, and that the paroemiographers considered it a *paroemia* without thinking it a proverb in the modern sense of the word, because the phrase seems not to have been actually current. In what follows I shall present my positive case against (3): an interpretation that rejects the premise and explains more and coheres better than interpretations that do accept it.

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<sup>61</sup> The dominance of the positive formulation (though the negatory is found in the *Phaedo*) may be explained by the alphabetic structure of the proverb collections, which must have made it attractive to

omit the negation for ease of reference. The only negatory formulations are, wholly in line with this conjecture, found in the unordered work of Seleukos and the scholion.

## 2. Other Glaukoi

### 2.1 Introduction to the second chapter

In the first chapter I have argued that  $\gamma$  was not a proverb when Plato wrote the *Phaedo*, and that it follows from this that its l-meaning is of interest to the interpreter of Plato's c-meaning. In other words, in order to come to a satisfactory interpretation of this passage of the *Phaedo*, it is necessary to determine, if possible, the identity of Glaukos as well as the nature of his skill. As we have seen, quite a few ancient scholars have made suggestions for each. Yet if we leave aside the chronologically impossible and otherwise obviously confused explanations, only two suggestions remain: the welder from Chios and the musician from Rhegion.<sup>62</sup> Modern scholars have done little to expand on this numerically poor yield. They have considered only one more possibility, that of Glaukos of Anthedon.<sup>63</sup> This is regrettable, a consequence of the fact that scholarly interpretations have invariably departed from the assertion of one or another particular identification, which has stifled debate. We know of sundry Glaukoi in Greek myth and history, many of which predate Plato and some of which may very well have been known to him. As Plutarch once wrote, "there is set before us a bowl of myths and stories combined" and I hope, like he, to meet with kindly readers for testing these stories, as one tests coins from foreign lands (Plut. *De. def. or.* 420f).

The present chapter is a first attempt to counteract the above state of events. I shall begin by examining each and every of the *possible* Glaukoi, i.e. those who predate the *Phaedo* and of whom we may reasonably assume that they were known to Plato. I shall then review the arguments given by modern scholars for Glaukos of Rhegion and Glaukos of Chios, and conclude by arguing for the rejection of all but one, viz. Glaukos of Anthedon.

### 2.2 Overlooked Glaukoi

I reckon as possible identifications those Glaukoi who, first, predated Plato or were contemporaneous with him and, second, had some minimal renown. Only to these we may reasonably expect Plato to have alluded. The latter demand is of course open to interpretation. There were

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<sup>62</sup> The former was first given by Dionysodoros and is repeated with variation by many later paroemiographers and lexicographers. The latter first occurs in Zenobios, which may with some certainty be traced

back to at least the proverb collection of Lukillos (fl. middle 1st century).

<sup>63</sup> For a review, see *infra*.

quite a few more or less well-known Glaukoi when Plato wrote the *Phaedo*, none of whom has been suggested by modern scholars but each of whom is worthy of consideration. Some were mythical or legendary figures and some were historical persons. The latter are all quite insignificant and of minor interest at best. Nonetheless, I here list the three likeliest candidates.

### 2.2.1 Historical persons

We know of a 7<sup>th</sup> century Thassian, friend of the poet Archilochos (Archil. *fr.* 117 & 131.1 *West*) who probably is the person addressed in the *paroimia* “Glaukos, an ally is a friend only as long as he fights” (i.e. ‘a friend in need is a friend indeed’ Arist. *EN* 7.1236a33). Perhaps we may even be so bold as to equate him with the “Glaukos, brought up on the shores of Thasos, who conducted those crossing by ferry to the island” mentioned by Antiphilos of Byzantium (fl. middle 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, *Anthologia Graeca* 9.242). This would suggest a skill, but not a likely one; Socrates stands not in need of a ferry, unless perhaps we take it figuratively as a ferry to the “aethereal sphere” he speaks of, but this is unlikely for sundry reasons.<sup>64</sup> Second, we know of a 6<sup>th</sup> century Spartan whose injustice was punished by the gods (*Hdt.* 6.86, *Paus.* 8.8.8) but not much beyond that. Third, we know of a 6<sup>th</sup> century boxer from Karystos claiming descent from the Anthedonian sea-god (*Paus.* 6.10.1) whom the 4<sup>th</sup> century orators considered a “famous man of ancient days” (Aeschin. *In Ctes.* 189 & Dem. *De cor.* 119) and against whom “not even might Polydeukes would have raised his hands” (Simon. *fr.* 3.127 *Macleod*). It seems superfluous to argue here against the equation of Plato’s Glaukos with this one. After all, what’s boxing got to do with it? So even if Plato had indeed come across them (as he very well might have, cf. respectively *Resp.* 365c, 566c & 331d) none of these Glaukoi had a skill apparently applicable to the context of *Phd.* 108d.

### 2.2.2 Mythical or legendary figures

From the realm of myth and legend, too, no more than three Glaukoi deserve mention. These are at first face more promising. There is, first, the leader of the Lycians at Troy, famous for losing his wits and exchanging his golden arms for the bronze of Diomedes, described by Homer (*Il.* 6.232-36), alluded to by Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* 1136b10) and Plato (*Symp.* 218e), and explained by Porphyry (*Quaest. Hom. Il.* Z 234). Homeric persons have a *prima facie* likelihood as the referent of an allusion in Plato – Homer was his favourite poet to cite (perhaps after Simonides) – and this Glaukos was evidently known by Plato. Besides these considerations,

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<sup>64</sup> First of which being that we should expect Plato to have mentioned Chairephon instead, if this was his c-meaning.

giving use the bare possibility, we have very little reason to actually make the identification, especially because this Glaukos does not only lack a definite skill but was famous, it need hardly be emphasized, for *losing his wits*.

The Lycian's great-grandfather was another Glaukos, who was the son of *the* Sisyphos, hailed from Potniai, and was king of Corinth in his day. He was torn to pieces by his own mares, which had fallen into a frenzy either by drinking from a magic spring (*Paus.* 9.8.2) or by being fed flesh (Asklepiades of Tragilos, fl. 4<sup>th</sup> century, *FGrHist* 12F1).<sup>65</sup> The story was the subject of the third part of Aeschylus' Persian trilogy (*fr.* 36-42a *Radt*). Once again, there is not anything that could qualify as the skill to be equated to γ. Add to this that, though Aeschylus had written a drama on this Glaukos, he was clearly lesser known than the Lycian, and we may leave this suggestion for what it is and turn our attention to the last of the mythical or legendary Glaukoi overlooked by scholars.

This is Glaukos the son of the Cretan king Minos, who died after falling in a jar of honey and was restored to life by the seer Polyides (*Hyg. Fab.* 136). Some versions have Polyides teach Glaukos the art of divination at the demand of Minos (and shortly thereafter make him forget it again by spitting into his mouth, see *Ps.-Apollod. Bibl.* 3.17-20). Most commentators believe that these fairly late versions – for Hyginus is likely dated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE and Pseudo-Apollodoros the same or the century before – reliably preserve something much older.<sup>66</sup> At any rate, the story had spread from Crete – if that is indeed its place of origin, as scholars believe – and was well-known at Athens in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, for the story was the subject of plays by Aeschylus (*Cretan Women*, *fr.* 116-20 *Radt*), Sophocles (*Seers*, probably a satyr-play, *fr.* 381a-400 *Radt*), Euripides (*Polyides*, *fr.* 634-46 *Nauck*) and Aristophanes (*Polyides*, a parody of Euripides' play, *fr.* 468-76 *PCG*), all now lost entirely except a few fragments. It is possible that Plato alluded to this skill of divination. This is belied by the tangential role of Glaukos' skill of divination in the story, and would be further undermined by the possibility that this part of the story postdates Plato's writing of the *Phaedo*, as neither the dramatists nor Palaiphatos (*De incredibilibus* 26, see *infra*) seem to have included it. The fragmentary state of the dramas and the uncertainty of Palaiphatos' date of course prohibit us from attaching too much significance to this consideration. In any case, Glaukos' return from death seems the central element of the story, making it the natural candidate for the skill.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Cf. the euhemeristic version at Palaiphatos *De incredibilibus* 25.

<sup>66</sup> Axel W. Persson, *The Religion of Greece in Pre-historic Times* (Berkeley, LA: University of California Press 1942) 5-24 & Ronald F. Willetts, 'The

Myth of Glaucus and the Cycle of Birth and Death', *Klio* 37 (1959) 1, 21-8.

<sup>67</sup> This is supported by the later *paroimia* "Glaukos drank honey and rose [from the dead]" ("Γλαῦκος πῶν μέλι, ἀνέστη", Apostolios *Paroemiae* 5.48).

So perhaps we should understand as the Cretan's skill that, like the vampire, he has been dead and learned the secrets of the grave? Yet this requires a rather figurative understanding of “τέχνη” or “skill”. More significantly still, some reflection shows that this interpretation makes little sense of Socrates' claim that he needs *less* than “ἡ Γλαύκου τέχνη” to tell the tale and *more* than “ἡ Γλαύκου τέχνη” to prove his account true. As his interlocutors would not be helped in the slightest by Socrates' ability to return from the death, his remark seems off-base. Maybe if he had said that *they* did not need it, it would have been a relevant remark. Thus, even though this identification with the Cretan Glaukos is historically as well as textually possible, it does not seem to provide the basis for a coherent interpretation, and for this reason it is for now to be laid aside.

## **2.3 Glaukos of Rhegion**

In the commentary to his critical edition of the *Phaedo*, John Burnet claimed, as we have seen, that Glaukos is to be identified as the Rhegian musician. Accordingly, he believes that  $\gamma$  refers to “a working model of the ‘harmony of the spheres’ originally designed by Hippasos” (BURNET 108), which I suppose he took to be in reference to the cosmology that directly follows the reference and in which the balanced position of the earth plays a central role – though he does not say as much. Let me immediately note that this interpretation fails to make much of Socrates' qualification that he needs less than the skill to tell the tale and more to prove it true. Perhaps Burnet thinks describing the harmonious cosmos requires less than constructing a replica of that cosmos which is in turn is easier than proving the truth of its harmony, yet this is a rather prosaic truism not befitting of Plato's wrought allusion. Moreover, we should not forget that Glaukos, in the version related by the scholiast (and Zenobios) did not construct the spheres but made music with them. What the supposed f-meaning of this could be, Burnet does not say. So his interpretation immediately leaves much to desire. Why did Burnet opt for this particular identification? He seems to have had three reasons.

### **2.3.1 Two Pythagorean reasons for Burnet's interpretation**

First, he supposed that the scholiast's reference to Aristoxenos guarantees us access to a “living Pythagorean tradition” about Glaukos' identity (BURNET 150). I have already argued that we have strong reasons to doubt this supposition and that the natural interpretation of the evidence instead suggests that Aristoxenos probably did tell the story of the Rhegian musician but was

not the one who connected it to  $\gamma$ .<sup>68</sup>

Second, Burnet thought it was “not without significance” that Socrates should allude to Hipposos’ bronze discs, these being “a distinctively Pythagorean invention” (*loc. cit.*). It is true that the thickness of the bronze discs demonstrates the numerical basis of the concords, which early Pythagoreans such as Hipposos (fl. c. 500) privileged “as an exclusive set with a mystical significance” and whose ratios they thought embodied by the *tetraktys*.<sup>69</sup> So I suspect Burnet believed this allusion significant, because it cohered with his two most fundamental hypotheses about the *Phaedo*, both of which were already controversial in his own time: that the *Phaedo* is more or less a faithful depiction of historical events and that Socrates was sympathetic toward Pythagorean doctrines.<sup>70</sup> It is clear how these make a Pythagorean allusion quite apposite. However, I believe them problematic. Apart from the threat of circularity of such lines of reasoning, there is the fact that both theses have been wholly abandoned by modern scholarship, and I believe for good reason.<sup>71</sup> So we cannot accept Burnet’s second reason for his claim that  $\gamma$  refers to Hipposos’ discs.

### 2.3.2 Markellos’ second identification as independent testimony

Let us turn to his third reason, which is Burnet’s belief that there are several independent ancient testimonies of the identification, in other words, that we have multiple sources for the identification of the Rhegian musician as the referent of  $\gamma$ , which do not directly depend on one another. These would of course each count as evidence.<sup>72</sup> The key question is if Burnet is right to claim that we have independent testimonies of the identification with Glaukos of Rhegion. This is difficult to assess. He is of course quite correct to equate the Glaukos of the second identification listed by Markellos with the Glaukos in the scholion. However, it may reasonably be argued that, because Markellos’ version presents Glaukos as the craftsman of the discs rather than

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<sup>68</sup> Chapter 1.3.3.2 *supra*.

<sup>69</sup> M. L. West, *Ancient Greek Music* (Oxford: OUP 1992) 234-5. The *tetraktys* is a triangular arrangement of four rows of respectively one, two, three and four eyes. As such, it can definitely be viewed from the bottom up as a spatial representation of the ratios of the fourth (4:3), the fifth (3:2), and the octave (2:1).

<sup>70</sup> James W. Hulse, *The Reputations of Socrates. The Afterlife of a Gadfly* (New York, NY: Peter Lang 1995) 184-6. For the contemporary controversiality see, for instance, Paul Shorey’s incisive review of A.E. Taylor’s provocative *Varia Socratica* in *Classical Philology* 6 (1911) 3, 361-4 and their later discussion *Varia Socratica Once More*, pp. 85-91 of the seventh volume of that journal. Taylor was Burnet’s

countryman and compatriot in propounding the historical line of interpreting Plato, which Taylor carried out so far that his general treatment *Plato, the Man and his Work* (1908) to my knowledge ascribes to Plato not one philosophical doctrine, indeed, not an idea or a thought (other than dramaturgical).

<sup>71</sup> This is of course not the place to discuss such questions. It may be observed that even if these are rejected, we may still accept the alternative thesis that it was Plato rather than Socrates who was so taken in by this Pythagorean instrument that he made a contrived allusion to it, which would just as well support Burnet’s conclusion. However, this likewise strikes me as unconvincing.

<sup>72</sup> Insofar the ancient testimonies are to be counted as evidence toward an interpretation, at all.

Hippasos, it is a garbled version of that in the scholion and so not independent evidence.

Yet it is perhaps likelier to suppose that Glaukos would have needed to construct his own instrument to start playing it and that this fact was simply omitted in the scholion, as he probably could not use the invention of Hippasos, who lived – it should be pointed out – almost a century before him.<sup>73</sup> If so, the version related by the scholiast came to be when someone connected the two stories on account of their common denominator of the four harmonious discs. This someone could have been Glaukos of Rhegion himself, but this would disqualify the version as an independent identification, because he could of course never have identified himself as the subject of the *paroimia* γ.<sup>74</sup> However, if it was another person, it would also be at a price Burnet’s interpretation cannot afford. For it would effectively cut off Markellos’ Glaukos from Hippasos “harmony of spheres”, with which it would only later be connected, and so discount it as independent testimony anyway. So it appears that we have, on scrutiny, little reason to accept Markellos’ second Glaukos as independent testimony of the identification. To do so would require the double supposition that, first, it is a garbling of a story that originally included the attribution of the spheres to Hippasos and, second, that it nonetheless does not depend on the tradition to which that of the scholiast belongs. I consider this much less likely than the alternatives.

### 2.3.3 Markellos’ fourth identification as independent testimony

Burnet also suggests that the fourth identification of Markellos is a variation on the story in the scholiast. This is not impossible, and we may readily note the similarities that exist between the two when we recall that this Glaukos had constructed a bronze tripod and struck in unison each of its four parts to produce the sound of a lyre – but to say that they are the same story? How is this Glaukos’ tripod even to be connected with Hippasos “harmony of spheres”? The above problematic dilemma likewise plagues this identification.

Nor does trouble end there. For one, the story appears to me sooner to have originated in relation to the “τρίπους” of Pythagoras of Zakynthos (fl. c. second half 6<sup>th</sup> century, Diog. Laert. *Vit. Phil.* 8.1.46), a musical instrument that looked like a votive tripod but was really a triple lyre.<sup>75</sup> In fact, at Hes. *Lex.* T 1412 the instrument seems to be confused with an actual

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<sup>73</sup> Note well that Burnet’s “invention” derives from his supposition – with West *Ancient Greek Music* 234 – that Hippasos had innovated the contraption but finds no mirror in the Greek – both the scholiast and Markellos speak of (“κατεσκεύασε” *vel sim.* which translates as ‘arrange’, ‘build’, or ‘fashion’ (*LSJ* s.v. κατασκευάζω).

<sup>74</sup> The version either goes back at least as far as Aristoxenos and perhaps to Glaukos of Rhegion himself, or it may be the work of a later writer, presumably a paroemiographer. This, again, depends entirely on whether we read “τούτων” with Greene or “τούτου” with Diels, respectively (cf. 1.3.3.2 *supra*).

<sup>75</sup> These lyres could be played simultaneously by one person in the Dorian, Phrygian, and Lydian



tripod. Burnet, further, seems to have misread Markellos when he omits the words “εἰς Δελφοῦς” (“to Delphi”) from the fourth identification (transposing them to the third, BURNET 150). This is significant, because “a bronze tripod dedicated to Delphi” brings with it a number of fresh associations. At least by the Hellenic period was ‘Delphic tripod’ (‘Δελφικὸς τρίπους’) synonymous with ‘votive tripod’ (‘ἀναθηματικὸς τρίπους’, see Apoll. Soph., fl. 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, *Lex. Homer.* s.v. τρίποδας), and already in the archaic period was Delphi renowned for the valuable tripods it contained (Hdt. 8.35) which it was customary to put up as an offering (Hdt. 9.81). Usually, this was a thanks to the Pythia, “the Delphian priestess who sits upon her sacred tripod and cries aloud to the Greeks whatever Apollo utters” (Eur. *Ion* 91-2). Indeed, the tripod was closely connected to the oracles of Apollo generally (cf. Nikandros of Kolophon the Younger, fl. c. 200, *Alexipharmaca* 10-1: “sitting beside the Klarian tripods of Apollo”). As it was not the prophetess herself speaking – she simply gave voice to the prophecies Apollo wished to dispense (Ar. *Plut.* 8-9) – Apollo’s oracular voice came to be equated to the sounding of his tripods (e.g. *Plut. De Pyth. Or.* 407c). This is made especially clear in the writings of the rhetor Himerios of Prusias (c. 320 CE–383, *Decl. et or.* 68.8, cf. 60.1): “Let us also, my boys, imitate Apollo’s most clever lyre. How did he tune it? Well, Kolophon has his lyre, but *his tripods at Delphi resound with his oracular utterances, as well.*”<sup>76</sup>

Now, were we to relate these facts to Markellos fourth suggested identification, then a particular skill of Glaukos readily suggests itself. His skill is described as striking a tripod and having it produce a harmonious sound. As this was a Delphic i.e. Apollonian tripod, it is not a large leap at all to suppose that this harmonious sound means – as in Himerios – Apollo’s oracular prophecy. If so, we may take Glaukos’ skill as being his ability to make the sacred tripod at Delphi resound at his will, i.e. to have Apollo *dispense prophecy at his command*, independent of the god’s own whims (which could be fickle, see *op. cit.* 48.10). It is clear how this might fit into Socrates’ qualification that he needs less than the skill to tell the tale and more to prove it true – for prophecy is true but does not prove its own truth. I further develop this point in the third chapter, for I believe that in the *Phaedo* γ indeed denotes prophecy, though – it shall become clear – not figuratively but literally. For now I conclude that this is a historically likelier and more natural reading of the suggestion, which also produces a more promising interpretation, all of which, to my mind, makes it the likeliest source for Markellos’ fourth

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modulations. The grammarist Artemon of Kassandreia relates the tale, preserved as part of Athenaeos’ ponderous treatment of lyres in his *The Learned Banqueteers* (14.637b-d).

<sup>76</sup> Kolophon or rather the nearby Klaros was the location of an important oracle of Apollo where an enormous statue stood of Apollo holding his lyre.

identification. Hence this is not probable to have originated with Hippiasos' sphere-business. So Markellos' fourth identification cannot be equated to that of the scholiast and so *a fortiori* cannot be an independent testimony of it.

### 2.3.4 Assessment of Burnet's interpretation

Where does this leave Burnet's interpretation? I have suggested that it is unsatisfactory and, further, that the three reasons he appears to adduce for his claim that  $\gamma$  refers to "a working model of the 'harmony of the spheres' originally designed by Hippiasos" are each unconvincing. The identification is not part of a 4<sup>th</sup> century tradition we have privileged access to, the allusion is not likelier to have been to a *Pythagorean* Glaukos than to any other, and the two independent testimonies of the identification suggested by Burnet are each faulty as such. Add to this the fact, acknowledged by Burnet, that it is "the more complicated explanation" (BURNET 108) than the others given by the paroemiographers, and it becomes all rather unlikely. So let us now turn to the identification with Glaukos of Chios. Although it possesses the virtue of parsimony, it does not seem to produce a coherent interpretation of the text.

## 2.4 Glaukos of Chios

Konrad Gaiser, not the least of Plato's interpreters, has developed a philosophical interpretation of the passage based on the identification with the welder in his 1984 lecture series at Naples published as *Platone come scrittore filosofico. Saggi sull'ermeneutica dei dialoghi platonici*.<sup>77</sup> This interpretation gets support from David Sedley in his 1989 'Teleology and Myth in the *Phaedo*', though he does not add to it.<sup>78</sup> These two are the only substantive interpretations on the basis of the identification with the Chian welder. As Sedley does not argue for the interpretation but simply states his agreement with it, his interpretation need not, indeed, cannot be considered separately. In what follows, I try to examine the argument of Gaiser and show where it, in my view, goes wrong.

### 2.4.1 Gaiser's interpretation

To understand Gaiser's interpretation of  $\gamma$  we must understand how he arrives at it. He opens the fifth lecture of the series by asking, "how do the myths of Plato, so obviously interwoven with imagination and poetic invention, relate to the philosophical knowledge of truth?" (GAISER 127).<sup>79</sup> His answer, in brief, is that they do so either by way of an appeal to authority, or through

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<sup>77</sup> = GAISER.

<sup>78</sup> = SEDLEY.

<sup>79</sup> GAISER 127: "*come si rapportano i miti di Platone, così manifestamente intessuti di fantasia ed*

*invenzione poetica, alla conoscenza filosofica della verità?*"

their content (GAISER 128).<sup>80</sup> The myth's content may relate to truth either by confirming the findings of the philosophical discussion that precedes it, or by hinting at a dependency on other and deeper philosophical knowledge (*loc. cit.*). Indeed, Gaiser goes further than this and theorizes that myths are not just an *illustration* of a deeper philosophical truth – and as such dependent on it – but a “*practical argument*” for that very truth (GAISER 128-9). This underlies his provocative conclusion, that the *Jenseitsmythos* in the *Phaedo* (107c-15a) is nothing less than an argument for the necessity of the Idea of the Good.

Gaiser's argument is dense and requires, to use a worn figure, *unpacking*. If I understand him correctly, he thinks that the *Jenseitsmythos* in the *Phaedo* illustrates what he takes to be Plato's fundamental “moral postulate”: that cultivation of the soul's virtue is the only road to *eudaimonia*. It does this by showing that the moral postulate requires a hierarchical or graded understanding of soul and that this, in turn, requires a hierarchical view of the cosmos. This analogous ordering of soul and cosmos cannot be happenstance, as the order of the one depends on that of the other. What is necessary for this not to be happenstance? That they are the consequences of the same foundational principle. What is this foundational principle? Gaiser thinks the answer is not explicitly contained in the myth and that Plato trusts the reader to figure it out;  $\gamma$  is the necessary “hermeneutical nod” (“*cenno ermeneutico*” GAISER 137) to put the reader on the right track. Identifying Glaukos as the Chian welder, Gaiser avers that “[t]he art of Glaukos consists in the homogeneous, stable combination or unification of different components” (GAISER 138).<sup>81</sup> This should spark in the reader a remembrance of an earlier passage (99c) where Socrates defines “the Good” as the principle that “binds and keeps together all things”, being their normative cause (97c-101e). Thus, infers Gaiser, Socrates needs more than the skill of Glaukos to prove the truth of his myth, because it “rests on a combination or unification that is even more solid [than welding]: a spiritual *dialectical synthesis*” (GAISER 138).<sup>82</sup> This would suggest that this principle of “the Good” is the very same as that “Idea of the Good” we find in the *Republic* (508e3 “τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέαν”).<sup>83</sup> The principle that *binds* the order of the soul and the cosmos, proves to be the most foundational principle of Plato's ontology, that which alone “is in the highest degree” and true *sans phrase* (GAISER 139). So rather than explaining these

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<sup>80</sup> I believe the former finds expression in the *Phaedo* in Socrates' claim that he has been “persuaded by someone” (108c) as well in the superficial similarities of his *Jenseitsmythos* with the traditional Homeric picture of the afterlife in the *Nekyia* (= Hom. *Od.* 11).

<sup>81</sup> “*L'arte di Glauco consiste nella combinazione o unificazione omogenea, stabile, di differenti componenti.*”

<sup>82</sup> Similarly, Sedley thinks that this is “the task Plato presents as beyond Socrates' present competence”, to wit, “showing precisely how ‘the good and the binding binds and holds things together’ (99c)”.

<sup>83</sup> And also, more dubiously, “the principle of unity of the unwritten doctrines”, GAISER 139.

phenomena, this principle is itself proved by the phenomena being as they are. Accordingly, Gaiser concludes that the *Jenseitsmythos* of the *Phaedo* turns out to imply a transcendental argument for the Idea of the Good and that this implication is understood aright only when the “hermeneutical nod” of  $\gamma$  is understood to be an allusion to the Chian Glaukos’ *skill of welding*.

#### 2.4.2 Problems with Gaiser’s interpretation

I have reservations about this interpretation. Although I accept Gaiser’s claim that the content of the *Jenseitsmythos* in the *Phaedo* hints at its dependency on a foundational principle, I reject his claim that Plato thought this myth *an argument* for the truth of this principle. Indeed, I categorically reject the possibility that in Plato’s view myths, being *images*, could serve as an argument for the truth of anything. I do also accept Gaiser’s theory – supported by Sedley, albeit couched in different terms – that this hinted-at principle should be equated with “the Good” and that this, ultimately, is the same as the Republic’s “Idea of the Good”. Yet – and this is my second objection to Gaiser’s interpretation – I disagree with how he comes to this conclusion.

Both these objections obviously hang together. When the myth is not an argument for the truth of the principle, it cannot show that this principle in truth is the Idea of the Good. Yet I wish to make the stronger claim that the myth cannot be an illustration or image of that truth, either. For I believe Plato tells us that the myth stands at two remove from truth *sans phrase*. This is the point I wish to make against Gaiser. Far from being an argument for the truth of its foundational principle, the myth does not even illustrate it. In other words, we cannot conclude from the content of the myth itself that its foundational principle is the Idea of the Good, which of course for Plato *is* truth *sans phrase* (*Resp.* 534b ff.). This means that no hint could put us on the right track to make an inference from the content of the myth to the Idea of the Good. We cannot work bottom-up like that, the only way is top-down. That is to say, the truth of the myth may be rhymed with the higher truths (first the Good and then the Idea of the Good) only by presupposing the latter. What sets apart these higher truths is their object (511c). The highest truth is unchanging and most unlike the fluctuating phenomena. As each object has its own method of ascertaining it, what really sets apart these truths is the method by which they were arrived at.<sup>84</sup> The highest truths are the most certain, indubitable, and the farthest removed from the uncertainty of sensory experience (537d), attained by the method of dialectic (534d). So if the allusion to  $\gamma$  is to be a “hermeneutical nod” into the direction of a correct interpretation of the myth, it cannot be about the *content* of the myth but only about its *method*. For only by

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<sup>84</sup> For an exposition of these basic points about Plato’s conception of science and dialectic, I refer the reader to Richard Robinson’s classic *Plato’s*

*Earlier Dialectic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1962), esp. 62-7.

understanding how the method of the myth falls short of approaching truth *sans phrase*, can we know how its content relates to that truth.

Why should we accept the above point, that the content of the myth stands at two removes from truth of its foundational principle? Because Plato implicates as much when he has Socrates say that “it does not befit a man of intelligence to affirm [the truth of the myth] with confidence” (*Phd.* 114d). Plainly put, that the general tenor of the tale is right but we should not press the details. This qualification only makes sense if the myth has truth value and thus could be proved true. If Socrates could do so, it would appear that the myth is an image at one remove from the truth it depicts. That he cannot, he makes it a point to say (108d7-8). This could only be the case if Socrates has knowledge not of the truth *sans phrase* but only of some derived truth, which cannot be proved. Seeing as the myth is intended to confirm and indeed confirms the foregoing discussion, we may conclude that the findings of this discussion, while not wrong, are not unqualifiedly true. They are themselves only a likely image of the truth. This makes the myth a likely image of a likely image, if you will.

#### **2.4.3 Assessment of Gaiser’s interpretation**

Gaiser thinks Plato meant by “more than  $\gamma$ ” to prove the truth of his myth that this myth “rests on a combination or unification that is even more solid [than welding]: a spiritual *dialectical* synthesis” (GAISER 138), which is to say, an non-hypothetical first principle, to be equated with the Idea of the Good. This is a conclusion about the content of the desired proof. Again, I do not think it is false; I merely believe that the content of a myth, a derived image, for Plato could never lead to the content of true knowledge. The only way a myth may point into the direction of truth is when it illustrates the shortcomings of its method and as such points the way to the right method to, in time, arrive at the true foundational principle of its images. So, again, if the allusion to  $\gamma$  is to be a “hermeneutical nod” into the direction of a correct interpretation of the myth, it cannot be about the *content* of the myth but only about its *method*. It would appear, then, that  $\gamma$  must allude to a method of inquiry that is superior to mythologizing and inferior to proof. In the third chapter I shall show that there are a couple of such intermediate methods but that there is only one that really fits for textual reasons and which is also suggested by the identification with Glaukos of Anthedon, to wit, divine prophecy. Let this be taken, then, as an argument in favour of that interpretation.

The foregoing is of course not an argument for the *tout court* rejection of interpretations based on the Chian welder. It is intended as an argument against Gaiser. All I have wished to do is to show how Gaiser’s interpretation presupposes the possibility of moving from an

understanding of the content of a myth to knowledge of the deep philosophical truths on which it depends. This presupposition is premised on the, in my view mistaken assumptions that, for Plato, (1) myths may be arguments and (2) that insight into lower truths could ever entail insight into higher truths. Both, so I have claimed, run counter to Plato's belief in a categorical difference of *object* and consequently of *method* between truth in a qualified sense and truth *sans phrase*. Seeing as the text strongly suggests that the myth is an image at two removes from its foundational principle, this would force Gaiser into the following dilemma: reject that Plato upheld a categorical distinction between different kinds of knowledge, or reject his interpretation of  $\gamma$ . I believe the latter horn is to be preferred.

## **2.5 Conclusions of the second chapter**

In this chapter I have argued that it is important, for the debate about the interpretation of  $\gamma$ , to give consideration to those Glaukoi which have not yet been considered but are nonetheless possible and have at least *something* speaking for them. I have examined three historical persons and three mythical figures, and concluded that all these except the son of Minos may be dismissed, and this Glaukos too is much less likely than either of the three suggestions made by scholars. Reviewing Burnet's suggested identification of Glaukos of Rhegion, I concluded that his interpretation leaves much to be desired and the identification, upon scrutiny, is far from probable. Finally, Gaiser's interpretation of  $\gamma$  as the Chian's skill of welding, while incisive and of great philosophical depth, relies on what I take to be a misunderstanding of Plato's theory of knowledge. This, in my view, clears the way for a fresh consideration of the merits of the identification with Glaukos of Anthedon.

## 3. Glaukos of Anthedon

### 3.1 Introduction to the third chapter

I shall first examine the historical evidence we have for the story and its currency in Plato's time, and conclude that it strongly supports the identification. I then point out a number of features of the *Phaedo* that seem to hint at the identification and so offer support for it. Following this is a brisk overview of the modern interpretations based on the identification, all of which centre on his skill of prophecy even if they did not develop it far. In the next section, I review the interpretations of γ advanced by scholars who have identified Glaukos as the Anthedonian. I conclude that each, in the end, falls short from satisfying. I hope to use these shortcomings as stepping stones for my own interpretation, which I advance in the final section and which I hope shall meet all the desiderata.

### 3.2 Reviewing the evidence

#### 3.2.1 Historical evidence

##### 3.2.1.1 Sources contemporary with Plato

Unlike any other Glaukos, we have in my view irrefutable evidence that Plato was familiar with Glaukos of Anthedon, for in the final book of his very own *Republic* we read (611d, Socrates speaking to Glaukon):<sup>85</sup>

But though we have stated the truth of [the soul's] present appearance, its condition as we have now contemplated it resembles that of *Glaukos of the Sea* [τὸν θαλάττιον Γλαῦκον]. His original nature can hardly be made out by those who catch glimpses of him, because the original members of his body are broken off and mutilated and crushed and in every way marred by the waves. Other parts have attached themselves to him, accretions of *oysters, sea-weeds, and also rocks* [ὄστρεά τε καὶ φύκια καὶ πέτρας], so that he is more like any wild creature than what he naturally was.<sup>86</sup>

Valuable as evidence though this passage is, it unfortunately affords us little insight into Plato's understanding of the actual myth. We learn only that he knew of his transformation from man

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<sup>85</sup> At Symp. 218e Plato does not explicitly mention the Lycian Glaukos.

<sup>86</sup> I do not translate "sea-god" with Shorey for reasons that will become clear in the following.

to god. This might be thought a trifle. The myth enjoyed popularity throughout antiquity and was retold numerous times, quite a few of which have come down to us.<sup>87</sup> That is true, but I would like to point out that we cannot simply assume that Plato knew the myth as these later writers relate it – as Clay and other interpreters have done.<sup>88</sup> Such myths, especially when they are tied to local legend as is the case here, are subject to change. Nor do writers always cohere on all points of the story. So it would seem the only reliable sources to learn what Plato might have known about this Glaukos, other than this own testimony, are writers predating or contemporaneous with him. I will review these now.

Pindar (born 522 or 518, see *fr.* 263 *Snell-Maehler* = *Paus.* 9.22.7) was probably the first – to our knowledge – to have written a work on the story, though we only know its title, *Glaukos of the Sea*. Aeschylus (525/4-456 or 455) wrote a Satyr play of which we possess some fragments (*Glaucus Pontius fr.* 25a-31 *Radt*, translations from the *Loeb*). This Glaukos also appears in Euripides’ (485-406) *Orestes* (362-7). As the writers of these sources were well-regarded by Plato, they are our reliable evidence for his understanding of the myth. In Aeschylus’ play, Glaukos is a man “who ate the herb that gives undying, eternal life” (*Aesch. fr.* 28 “ὁ τὴν ἀείζων ἄφθιτον πόαν φαγών”) – no mention of his being a fisherman or his motivation for consuming the herb, as in later versions – and thereupon transforms into “a beast that looks like a man, living in the water” (*fr.* 26 “ἄνθρωποειδὲς θηρίον ὕδατι συζῶν”).<sup>89</sup> He dwells in the “Euripos” (*fr.* 25c) – the strait between Euboia and Attica, near Corinth, which is presumably where he jumped in, though no mention is yet made of his later hometown Anthedon but cf. *Paus.* 9.22.7 – and traverses the waters quickly (*fr.* 25e). In Euripides’ play, Glaukos suddenly appears from the waves next to a ship to dispense “truthful” prophecies (*Eur. Or.* 362-7), and in this he is like the old man of the sea, “Nereus” (*op. cit.* 364, cf. *Hes. Theog.* 233).<sup>90</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Beside those discussed in what follows, we also know of a number of *Glaukos* plays of Middle and New Comedy (*Eub. fr.* 18-9 *Kock*, *Antiph. fr.* 76 *PCG II* & *Anaxil. fr.* 7 *PCG II* and we possess a few retellings from post-Hellenistic periods, such as *Diod. Sic.* 4.486, *Vell. Pat. Historiae* 2.83.1-2 (about a certain groveler Plancus’ dress-up dance as Glaukus), *Verg. Aen.* 5.822-4, *Statius Theb.* 7.333-7 & *Silv.* 3.2.35-8, *Paus.* 9.22.6-7.

<sup>88</sup> CLAY 234: “man who became a god of the sea and a prophet” & e.g. GREENE 69, “Glaucus the sea-god exists in both texts [*sc. Republic* and *Phaedo*].

<sup>89</sup> It may be observed that the trope of the revivifying herb is common to the story of the Anthedonian, the Cretian and to some versions of the Potniaian. Some have wished to see in this the common ancestry from

an *Ur-myth*, but this is shown mistaken by Marie-Claire Beaulieu, ‘The Myths of the Three Glauci’, *Hermes* 141 (2013) 2, 121-41. Cf. Ovidius *Ibis* 555-8: “May you, like Glaucus, suffer the bites of Potnian mares, and may you, like another Glaucus, leap into the waters of the sea. And like he who has the same name as these two, may your breath be choked by Cretan honey.”

<sup>90</sup> There are also physical similarities in Aeschylus and Plato: for he wears a “shaggy” beard (*fr.* 27 “δαῦλος”) and presumably has traded his legs for a fish-tail and assorted oceanic accretions (*Rep.* 611d, “the original members of his body are broken off [...] and other parts have attached themselves to him”).



### 3.2.1.2 The problem of two traditions

This is already quite a bit fuller than Plato; a sufficient basis, it would seem, for an interpretation based on this identification. There is, however, one serious problem: there is no indication that Aeschylus discussed prophecy, nor does Euripides mention the transformation. Is it possible that, in the time of Plato, there were two disconnected traditions about Glaukos the sea-god, one about his transformation and another about his prophecies? As Plato's version would belong to the former, this would mean we are not actually justified to suppose that he knew about Glaukos' prophetic powers. The problem would be that there are two different traditions about two different though perhaps somehow connected figures, which later writers felt free to equate, but which Plato would have never considered to be the same. This would throw a spanner in the works of all interpretations based on this identification that turn on the skill of prophecy – including mine. Of course, the highly fragmentary state of Aeschylus' play, which can hardly be overemphasized, and the brevity (four lines!) of the episode in that of Euripides go a long way to defuse the threat of this rather inconvenient possibility. However, it must be acknowledged that the problem persists if there exists a same divide between versions about the transformation and versions about the prophesying in the latter retellings. For this would suggest that this divide between the version of Aeschylus and Plato on the one hand and that of Euripides on the other, is real and not imagined. Of course, if there is any reason to believe that some writers did not uphold the distinction, then I think we have a *pro tanto* reason to reject the theory that Plato did (especially in light of the mentioned problems with the evidence). Indeed, one or two counter-examples would be enough to undermine the theory.

### 3.2.1.3 Three retellings

Maybe the four most elaborate retellings should be examined first, for this will *en passant* give us a good idea of the narrative of the myth. First, Apollonios of Rhodes (fl. middle 3<sup>rd</sup> century) in his epic *Argonautica* gives what seems to be the oldest retelling in the *Euripidean* tradition (1.1310-28):

But to them [sc. the Argonauts] out of the salty depths appeared Glaukos, the wise interpreter of divine Nereus. Raising up his *shaggy* [λαχνῆέν, cf. Aesch. *fr.* 27] head and chest down to his waist, he seized the ship's keel in his mighty hand and shouted to the men in their haste. [Here follows a prophecy about the fates of Herakles, Polyphemos, and Hylas.] So he spoke and cloaked himself in the restless wave as he plunged below. Around him the dark water foamed as it was stirred in whirlpools and washed the hollow ship on through the sea.

This version has so much in common with the lines in Euripides – a mention of Nereus in relation to his prophetic powers, a description of Glaukos rising up out of the depths to appear to sailors, an unrequested prophecy – that we may with some certainty say that they are not only in the same tradition, but that there is some dependency, be it direct or indirect. However, the mention of the “shaggy head and chest” and the overall image of the god’s strength (“seized”, “mighty”, “shouted”, “restless”, and “stirred in whirlpools”) suggest another source, for Euripides’ Glaukos is more like an apparition than a sea-beast. Of course, this might have been Aeschylus, or any of the lost Hellenistic retellings for that matter, but I think it is not unreasonable to suppose that some of these images were drawn in part from the lost *Glaukos* poem of Kallimachos (320 to 303–c. 240, *Suid.* K 227). Except for its titular subject, nothing is known about the content of this poem, so this cannot anything more than a supposition, but it is made rather likely by two facts, to wit, that the poem exercised influence in antiquity and that Kallimachos was Apollonios’ teacher and predecessor as librarian at the Alexandrian Library.<sup>91</sup> If there is some likelihood in this – if only for being the least unlikely possibility – then this is significant. To see why, we must first review Ovid’s (43 BCE–17 CE) elaborate, almost prolix retelling of the story (here heavily abridged) in his *Metamorphoses* and in connection to the narrative arc of Scylla (13.898-968):

Behold Glaucus, speeding along the surface of the sea; a new-come dweller in the deep waters; for his form had been but lately changed near Anthedon in Euboea. [To court Scylla] he said: “Maiden, I am no monster or wild creature; I am a sea-god. [...] I was mortal once, but, being destined for the sea, I spent my life in it even then. Now I would draw in the nets full of fish, and now, sitting on some projecting rock, I would ply rod and line. [...] Plucking some of the herbs with my hands, I chewed what I had plucked. [...] I cried aloud: ‘Farewell, O Earth, to which I shall nevermore return!’ and I plunged into the sea. [...] Then for the first time I beheld this beard of dark green hue, these locks which sweep on the long waves, these huge shoulders and bluish arms, these legs which twist and vanish in a finny fish.”

Clearly, this is a version in the *Aeschylan* tradition; no mention is made of any prophetic powers, all the emphasis is on the transformation. Is it, then, evidence for the theory that there existed two different versions of the myth, each with their own tradition, down from the 5<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> It is no longer believed the stories of their reported artistic quarrels have any basis in fact, on the

contrary, Kallimachos was a large influence on Apollonios, see *BNP* s.v. Callimachus & Apollonius.

century? I would answer by drawing attention to the title of the work; if there is any poem that we should doubt as such evidence, it is this one, which shifts the focus of every myth to the transformation. What is more, scholars have surmised that the basis for Ovid's treatment was Cornificius' (died 42) epyllion *Glaukos*, as many of the other episodes were based on epyllia. Cornificius is, like many of his contemporaries, thought to have been strongly influenced in many respects by Kallimachos. His *Glaukos* is therefore suspected to depend on the *Glaukos* of Kallimachos, and the same for Cicero's (106–43) *Glaucus Pontius* (a *juvinalium* in tetrameter, Plut. *Cic.* 2.3.6).<sup>92</sup> If this is true, it would run counter to the supposition that there were for long two separate traditions of Glaukos of Anthedon, one about the transformation of the fisherman from Anthedon and one about the prophet of sailors and friend of Nereus. Let us now continue on to the third and fourth sizable retelling, by Pausanias (fl. second half 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE) in his *Periegesis* (9.22.7) and by Philostratos the Elder (born c. 170 CE) in his *Imagines* (2.15). The quote both here in part:

Their tombs then are in Anthedon, and by the sea is what is called the Leap of Glaukos. That Glaukos was a fisherman, who, on eating of the grass, turned into a deity of the sea and ever since has foretold to men the future, is a belief generally accepted; in particular, seafaring men tell every year many a tale about the soothsaying of Glaukos.

For [the Argonauts] see Glaukos Pontios. The story is that he once dwelt in ancient Anthedon and that he ate of a certain grass on the seashore, and that when a wave came upon him unawares he was borne away to the haunts of the fishes. Now he is probably uttering some great prophecy, for he excels in this art. [Here follows a very elaborate description of his appearance] [...] The breast, what a *shaggy* [λάχνη] covering of seaweed [φουκίων, cf. *Resp.* 611d) and tangle is spread over it like a coat of hair; while the belly beneath is undergoing a change and already begins to disappear.

A few things are readily noticed. The latter's reliance on Apollonios is apparent. More significantly, both are a combination of the transformation and the prophesying. The problem is that these accounts are rather late. The former, especially, relying on local legend, is unlikely to date back far. In and of itself, these two accounts are unsatisfactory as a counter-example to the theory that there were two traditions of the myth.

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<sup>92</sup> For the connection between Ovid and Cornificus, see M. Marjorie Crump, *The Epyllion: From Theocritus to Ovid* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1931) 127. For the connection of Cornificius and Cicero with

Kallimachos, see Jane L. Lightfoot, *Parthenius Nicaenus. The Poetical Fragments and the Erōtika Pathēmata* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1999) 68-9.

#### 3.2.1.4 The Hellenistic fragments

Perhaps the natural place to look is Athenaeos of Naukratis (fl. c. 190 CE) *The Learned Banqueters* (296a-7c), where we find a *bric-à-brac* of noteworthy variations on details of the myth. Erasmus thought that Athenaeos “chatters on enough to put you off and make you sick about Glaucus” (ERASMUS 4.1.63).<sup>93</sup> I am willing to forgive him, simply because he provides us with a storehouse of names and attributed citations, of much use to our present inquiry. I shall treat the noteworthy few very swiftly and pass judgement on their reliability as evidence for the theory that there were two separate traditions of the Glaukos myth.

Nausikrates (fl. 4<sup>th</sup> century) relates the *Euripidean* version but does so in connection with fish and in a very nautical context – the play is titled *Sea-Captains* – so perhaps such is to be expected. Ps.-Aristotle (384–322) in his *Constitution of the Delians* “reports that Glaukos settled on Delos and joined the Nereids in offering prophecies to anyone who wanted them.” Perhaps the Delians did not appreciate the Anthedonian heritage. Or consider the obviously *Aeschylean* version of Alexander Aetolos (fl. c. 280) in his poem *The Fisherman*, of which Athenaeos quotes a few lines, “he descended into the sea after he tasted the plant the pure earth produced”. In what Athenaeos quotes of him, Theolytos of Methymna (“undatable”) writes of neither transformation nor prophecy, but he does relate Glaukos’ exploits as a “sea-god” as well as his origin from “Anthedon, beside the sea opposite Euboea, close to the streams of the Euripos”. So too Aeschryon of Samos (presumably a student of Aristotle at the Peripatos, *Suid.* A 354). This I think a clue to a correct understanding of the matter. Glaukos’ transformation could properly be said to belong to his origin, his rise to stardom, while his prophesying powers belong to the job description of his present, divine life. As Pausanias put it, “[he] turned into a deity of the sea and *ever since* has foretold to men the future” (9.22.7). Perhaps this distinction between background and foreground underlies what I have perceived to be a distinction between transformation and prophecy. If so, this would turn out not the consequence of two traditions or versions, but merely a difference of emphasis within the same version. This seems to be corroborated by the following: Athenaeos reports the words of the periegetic poet Nikandros of Kolophon the Elder (fl. second half 3<sup>rd</sup> century) from his *History of Aetolia*. He relates an alternative, presumably local version of the *herb story*, involving a hare rather than fish but nonetheless culminating in a plunge; and he also relates that “Glaukos taught Apollo the art of prophecy”. If we may assume that the plunge was followed by a transformation, then here we have a counter-example to the theory postdating Plato little over a hundred years. This suggests,

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<sup>93</sup> Luckily for Erasmus, he did not live to read this thesis.

then, there were not two separate traditions. If Plato knew of the prophesying activities of the divine Glaukos – and he will have known his Euripides – he will have been free to equate it with that other sea figure, the former fisherman from Anthedon.

#### 3.2.1.5 Conclusion of the historical review

It is indubitable that Plato knew Glaukos of Anthedon. It is extremely likely that he based his description in the *Republic* on that of Aeschylus. The question of whether Plato knew of the prophesying powers described by Euripides, essential to my interpretation, was problematized by the possibility that these were two separate traditions. This is not the same as two different versions with different emphases; for these can mix and mingle and in the end pertain to the same figure. The potential problem was that there were two different traditions about two different though perhaps somehow connected figures, which later writers felt free to equate, but which Plato would have never considered to be the same. I thought this a serious possibility, but think it is made sufficiently unlikely by the problematic nature of the evidence and the two counter-examples adduced above.

### 3.2.2 Textual evidence for Glaukos of Anthedon

Beside the above historical evidence, I believe there are also two pieces of textual evidence that seriously increase the likelihood of the identification with the Anthedonian. One has been noted by many commentators, though not always in connection to  $\gamma$ . The other has hitherto been overlooked. Both pertain to Glaukos habitation among the waves. I will review these here quickly and return to them in chapter 3.4 as I advance my interpretation of  $\gamma$ .

#### 3.2.2.1 The life of a fish

After  $\gamma$  has assented to Simmias' request to tell the tale, he begins by saying that the earth is spherical and at the center of the cosmos, that it is large, and that the known world i.e. the Mediterranean and its environs is only "a small portion" (109b). Indeed, it is one of the many "hollows" beyond which lies the "aethereal sphere" (109c). Socrates has been persuaded that "we who live in its hollows have failed to observe this and think we live above on the earth, as if someone living in the middle of the depths of the ocean were to think he was dwelling on the surface of the sea" (*loc. cit.*) continuing, "since if someone were to get to the surface, or grew wings and flew up, he'd lift up his head and see, just as fish here look up out of the sea and see what's here, so someone would see what's up there" (109e). The f-meaning is quite apparent; the human condition is to live under the impression to be on top of the world, while his world is really only intermediary. Plato's imagery is supposed to make this clear. Yet I believe it is at the same time a hermeneutical nod to the reader who earlier has passed over the allusion to

Glaukos. Our situation is like that of Glaukos the Anthedonian. We are on a level that is really below our best potential, for humans may potentially reach the aethereal sphere, as Glaukos is living on a lower grade of existence. This is because we both began on a higher level; before birth human souls inhabited the aethereal sphere, while Glaukos before his divine transformation inhabited the earth i.e. the sphere of air rather than of water. This is supported by *Epin.* 984b-5c, a discussion of the different grades of living beings, in descending order: fire, aether, air, water, earth. What is more, it connects us back again to the *Republic*. James Adam first drew attention to the parallelism between *Reso.* 611c and *Phd.*, 109b-110b.<sup>94</sup>

### 3.2.2.2 The Euripos

Read as a drama, the *Phaedo* tells, among other things, the story of the realization of this fact, that we are not really living in the aerial sphere but rather in water. The low-point of this story arc comes at 88c, when all present “felt very uncomfortable [...] because after being very much won over by the earlier discussion, [Simmius and Kebes] seemed to have thrown us into confusion again and to have destroyed our conviction not only of what had been said earlier, but also of what was going to be said later”. This “*momento di estrema crisi*” is overcome when Socrates comes to the rescue, diagnosing the problem (90b-d), issuing a warning (90e-1c), and taking the argument of Simmius and Kebes by the horns (91e-5a).<sup>95</sup> In the end he refutes or at least sufficiently confutes his interlocutors and carries the day. The warning Socrates issued was against “misology”, a hatred or low regard for argument, brought about by the problem of an apparently irresolvable argument that “flows back and forth just like the Euripos and never stays in place for any length of time” (90c). This is a reference to the Sophistical debating technique of *antilogic* (*Euthyd.* 275b ff.) that is grounded in a Protagorean value-theory (*man is the measure of all things*) and a Kratylean or at any rate Heraclitan world-view (*matter in continual flux*) already found at *Tht.* 152-60 (90b-c). Most commentators have noted this. What none has made mention of is that the Euripos, as we have seen in chapter 3.2.1, is the strait in which Glaukos takes his “leap” (“Γλαύκου πήδημα” *Paus.* 22.7). Here I believe we have another hint that we our situation is comparable with that of Glaukos; the arguments and the world around us is in a flux, just like Glaukos’ environment, the Euripos.

It may be remarked against this that the Euripos was in fact a figurative proverbial phrase for someone or something that was unstable, unpredictable, or confused. This may be

<sup>94</sup> James Adam, *The Republic of Plato. Volume II* (Cambridge: CUP 1902) 428.

<sup>95</sup> Greta Castrucci, ‘L’Euripo sulla rotta di Troia, secondo Euripide’, *ACME: Annali della Facoltà di*

*Lettere e Filosofia dell’Università degli Studi di Milano* 65 (2012) 3, 243-52, there 251.

thought to weaken the connection with the Anthedonian. The premise is true but that conclusion does not follow. It is true that, for instance, Euripides already used the Euripos to emphasize the mental changes his characters go through to the extent that a “mention of the Euripus is never casual or accidental in *Iphigenia at Aulis*”.<sup>96</sup> And this is already quite close to the sense of “an unstable person” (Diogenian. *De proverbiiis* 3.39). Yet consider Stat. *Theb.* 7.333-7: “Euripus whose current ebbs and flows, and you most remote of our lands, Anthedon, where from the grassy shore Glaucus plunged beneath the waters that summoned him, sea-green already in face and hair, and began to view the fish-tail growing from his waist.” The conclusion does not follow, because the fact that the river’s name was so used does not make its occurrence here commonplace. It is the only occurrence in Plato, while what it denotes is found all across the corpus, “der sprachliche Nenner ‘ἄνω (καὶ) κάτω’”.<sup>97</sup> This phrase is used fifty-six times (compensated for directly consecutive uses and other false positive) in the non-spurious corpus of Plato. It sometimes has a “neutralen Bedeutung” and sometimes a “negativen Färbung”.<sup>98</sup> When the use is negative, Plato more than once invokes a comparison with the self-moving statues of Daidalos (*Euthphr.* 11c-e, 15b, *Meno* 97d, *Hp. mai.* 282a, *Ion* 533a, *Resp.* 529d, *Leg.* 677d) or the shapeshifter sea-god Proteus (*Euthphr.* 15d, *Euthyd.* 288b, *Ion* 541e, *Resp.* 381d) – but never with the Euripos, except for in the *Phaedo*. This means the allusion has a prima facie significance on the interpretative principle of logographic necessity. I believe this significance to be its hint for the reader to identify correctly the referent of γ.<sup>99</sup> So I think this allusion to the Euripos, together with the maritime description of the human condition at 109c-e, suggests rather strongly that that Glaukos at 108d should be taken as the Anthedonian.

### 3.2.3 The soothsaying sea-god in modern scholarship

The first modern scholar to explain γ was Ludwig Heindorf in his 1809 edition of the *Phaedo*, and he already conjectured after an extensive doxography that Glaukos should be identified with the fisherman from Anthedon, even though “none of the ancients” had made the identification (HEINDORF 224-5 n. 132).<sup>100</sup> Heindorf’s edition was highly regarded and the conjecture

<sup>96</sup> James Morwood, ‘A Note on the Euripus in Euripides’ *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *The Classical Quarterly* 51 (2001) 2, 607-8 & Castrucci, ‘L’Euripo’, 243.

<sup>97</sup> Eva Lidauer, *Platons Sprachliche Bilder* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag 2016) 106.

<sup>98</sup> Lidauer, *Platons Sprachliche Bilder*, 106-8.

<sup>99</sup> The objection that, unlike all those other occasions where the phrase is used, at *Phd.* 90c the confusion Socrates and his friends have been thrown into is so great and their straits are so dire, that Plato needed to resort to such a powerful imagery, I find unconvincing.

<sup>100</sup> Nor did the Leiden classicist Daniel Wytttenbach a year later, but he contented himself with referring to a few paroemiographers (Diogenianos, Zenobios, Erasmus) and the scholion (WYTTTENBACH 296). All scholarship after the rise of textual criticism and the dawn of *Altertumswissenschaft* at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, I call modern. The distinction is fuzzy, though it seems safe to say Johann Winkelmann (1717–1768) was not a modern scholar but August Immanuel Bekker (1785–1871) was.

was copied by most commentators of that century.<sup>101</sup> It was exported to the anglophone world in 1863 by the Scottish scholar William Geddes, who thought it “somewhat remarkable” that the ancient writers did not “connect the proverb with the prophetic craft of the Glaucus, who was regarded as the wizard of the sea” (GEDDES 144). Note that Geddes expands on Heindorf by equating “ἡ Γλαύκου τέχνη” to the fisherman’s prophesying powers, while Heindorf had only identified the Anthedonian Glaukos without specifying his skill. Martin Wohlrab, in his 1878 school commentary of the *Phaedo*, went even further and asserted with some surety that it had been Glaukos’ very status as prophet that had caused it to become “proverbial to say of all things requiring much acuteness and insight to conceive and execute, that it belongs to the art of Glaukos, and of the contrary things, that it does not belong to it” (WOHLRAB 143).<sup>102</sup> The influence of Wohlrab’s commentary ensured that the Anthedonian prophet appears in many a 19<sup>th</sup> century commentary (e.g. ARCHER-HIND 126 n. 4).

This was cut short in anglophone scholarship by the 1901 critical edition of John Burnet, which fails to consider the Anthedonian Glaukos and which was the standard up until very recently.<sup>103</sup> His simultaneously aporetic and apparently exhaustive treatment, which we have considered, contributed heavily to the image of Glaukos’ identity as an uncertainty unworthy of further investigation.<sup>104</sup> It was also influential in France and The Netherlands (and perhaps elsewhere), thanks to Robin’s Budé edition (1926), where one finds in explicit reference to Burnet that “it is no use to list the explanations” (ROBIN 87 n. 2).<sup>105</sup> The editions of Burnet and Robin for long functioned as a firewall between 20<sup>th</sup> century scholarship and the suggestion of Glaukos of Anthedon made in the German commentaries. This trend was undoubtedly aided in

<sup>101</sup> Only two do not, Victor Cousin in the notes to his 1822 translation: “*Glaucus était un habile ouvrier en fer*” (COUSIN 302-3); and Wilhelm Wagner, though his 1873 edition relies “especially on the labours of Heindorf” and though he acknowledges the ignorance of “the ancients themselves”: “the cunning smith of Chios” (WAGNER 168 n. lviii). Interestingly, both refer to him as a smith or a worker of iron rather than a welder. As far as I know, none of the ancient sources describes him in this way. Perhaps each erred independently. It seems Paul Vicaire based his note to the passage in his 1983 reworking of Léon Robin’s Budé on that of Cousin (VICAIRE 122 n. 93): “*Expression proverbiale, pour une chose qui n’est pas très difficile. Glaukos aurait été un fondeur en bronze.*”

<sup>102</sup> “*sprichwörtlich, von allem, dessen Auffassung und Ausführung viel Scharfsinn und Einsicht erforderte, zu sagen, es gehöre des Glaukos Kunst dazu, sowie vom Gegenteil, sie gehöre nicht dazu*”

<sup>103</sup> Yet the identification can hardly have been unknown to him (especially considering his countryman Geddes had made it as well).

<sup>104</sup> Reginald Hackforth notes that “the origin of [γ] was variously explained by the paroemiographers” but like Robin thinks it “unnecessary to give them” (HACKFORTH 169), Richard Bluck believes “we cannot be sure who this Glaucus was” (BLUCK 130), and David Gallop is content to claim his identity “uncertain” (GALLOP 223).

<sup>105</sup> “*Il est inutile d’énumérer les interprétations.*” Robin’s contentment with scholar’s ignorance about the correct identification is reflected in his perplexing translation of γ as “*le secret de Glaukos*”. Cf. VICAIRE 122 n. 93. Dutch commentaries rely solely on BURNET or ROBIN and do not deviate from their treatments of the passage. So OLDEWELT vi & 96 “*de oorsprong van deze zegswijze is onbekend*”, DE WIN xxxii-xxxiii & 372 n. 100 “*men hoeft geen wetenschappelijk genie te zijn*”, and KOOLSCHIJN i & n. 28 “*onzekere verwijzing*”.



the post-war years by the general disdain for German scholarship, and still later by British-American (i.e. analytic) disregard for anything in the dialogues beyond the purview of what Gilbert Ryle has called the “philosophical meat”. As a consequence, the only interpreters continuing to refer to Wohlrab after the turn of the century were German (APELT 150 n. 109) or Italian (REALE 194 n. 18, SCHOEPFLIN 125 n. 110), the latter by way of Ruggiero Bonghi’s paraphrase of Wohlrab’s note in his own 1881 school edition of the *Fedone* (BONGHI 344 n. 237).<sup>106</sup>

This trend prevailed until the 1980s, when scholarly interest in the I-meaning of  $\gamma$  renewed. In 1984, Diskin Clay simply returned to the identification of Heindorf and Wohlrab in his article ‘The Art of Glaukos (Plato *Phaedo* 108D4-9)’. His interpretation was considered (independently) by Francisco Lisi, Christopher Green, and most recently by William Altman.<sup>107</sup> Though there are some minor differences between these readings – mostly with regard to the nature of the skill, to be examined below – they all identify Glaukos as the Anthedonian fisherman.

### 3.2.4 Conclusion of the review

The identification with Glaukos of Anthedon, the fisherman who eats a magical herb and promptly finds himself transformed into a soothsaying sea-god, is historically the most likely of all the possibilities. It was arguably the best-known Glaukos and Plato refers to him in the *Republic*. The *Phaedo* also seem to contain two significant suggestions that this is the intended Glaukos. Moreover, the majority of interpreters who have treated the question less than superficially have identified him, in spite of his absence from the ancient paroemiographical record.

## 3.3 Interpretations of “ἡ Γλαύκου τέχνη”

In this section I discuss three identifications of the Anthedonian Glaukos’ skill and note their shortcomings. In the next section I argue for a conjoining of the traditional identification of prophecy put forward by Wohlrab *et al.* – already discussed above – and that of transcendence advanced by André Dacier and Diskin Clay. In this way I hope to show the third way that lies between these, grounding the imaginativeness of the latter in the sobriety of the former, for I think each is only half of the story: “the one correctly divined the cause, the other the purpose”

<sup>106</sup> BONGHI *loc. cit.* paraphrases Wohlrab, to whom it refers: “The legend of Glaukos Pontios seems to have been born in the fishing village Anthedon, on the Boeotian beach of the Euripos. Glaukos was held to be the patron saint of all fishermen and divers, as well as the seamen, to whose aid he came in the storm, and he was also held to be an infallible prophet.” (= “*La leggenda di Glauco Pontio pare*

*fosse nata nel villaggio di pescatori, Antedone, alla spiaggia Beota dell’Euripo. Glauco era tenuto per il patrono di tutti i pescatori e palombari, ed anche dei marinari, a’ quali egli veniva in aiuto nella tempesta, ed anche per un Profeta infallibile.*”)

<sup>107</sup> LISI 436-8; GREEN 69-71; ALTMAN1 348-55; ALTMAN2 2-5.

(Plut. *Per.* 155.3).

### 3.3.1 “Sight of its true nature”

William Altman is the most recent commentator to devote some attention to  $\gamma$ . He identifies Glaukos as the figure from the *Republic*, which he equates to the “sea-god” from the myth (ALTMAN1 350). Altman has it that Plato c-meant the same by his reference to Glaukos in the *Phaedo* as he did in the *Republic*. In the *Republic*, the condition of that “mutilated” and “encrusted” beast is held up as an image for the “condition of our soul when we view it, beset by countless evils” (611d-e). According to Altman, the *skill* of Glaukos could here be said to be the *skill* of seeing Glaukos’ true nature, “cleansed and scraped free of the rocks and barnacles” (611e). The “Γλαύκου” must be taken not as a *subjective genitive*, i.e. as the art ‘of Glaukos’, but as an *objective genitive*, i.e. as the art ‘pertaining to Glaukos’. Accordingly, he defines  $\gamma$  “not as a reference to some desiderated art possessed by Glaucus but rather as *the art of seeing Glaucus’ true nature* despite the distortion created by his submarine appearance or rather on our soul-blinding reliance on sense-perception in general” (ALTMAN2 4). He does much to argue for his interpretation and elaborates its implications. Yet for all that, I believe that it has three insurmountable problems.

First is Altman’s argument that “Γλαύκου” is to be taken as an objective genitive. I am not qualified to discuss the finer points of Greek grammar. Luckily, I think there is one objection to Altman’s point that anybody with but a smattering of Greek could lay at his door: there is no hint in the text that the skill of Glaukos pertains to *seeing*, nor does the Anthedonian’s myth itself suggest it. In fact, the element of *seeing Glaukos’ encrusted state* is introduced by Plato himself in the *Republic*. Altman assumes that this in and of itself is sufficient justification to import it in the *Phaedo*, but I believe that is a rather tendentious assumption.<sup>108</sup> Would a correct understanding of this passage of the *Phaedo* really be dependent entirely on a correct understanding of the *Republic*? Moreover, it presumes that Plato had already written that part of the *Republic* or had planned it; contrary to longstanding scholarly consensus.<sup>109</sup> Finally, it is a significant point against Altman’s claim that *none* of the ancients has interpreted the phrase as such.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> It is part of his general argument for more intertextuality in the interpretation of Plato, the general sentiment of which I have sympathies with (ALTMAN2 15-6).

<sup>109</sup> Already supported by Schleiermacher and down to this day. For all its nuancing of the developmentalist paradigm, 21<sup>st</sup> century scholarship has not wavered in asserting the chronological priority of the

*Phaedo* to the *Republic*, related though they may be, see Gerald. A. Press, ‘The State of the Question in the Study of Plato: Twenty Year Update’, *The Southern J of Philosophy* 56 (2018) 1, 9-35, there 15.

<sup>110</sup> This is not at odds with my defence of an identification of Glaukos which none of the ancients made, because the first is a point of grammar and the second a literary allusion.

A second problem with Altman’s claim that  $\gamma$  is the skill of *seeing Glaukos in his encrusted state*, is that it seems beside the point. Recall Socrates’ claim that  $\gamma$  is superfluous for giving an account of it but not enough to prove it. Here ‘it’ denotes “the earth”, specifically its “many wonderful places” and its “kind and size” (108c-d), as is confirmed by the content of the myth itself. Yet “Glaukos in his encrusted state” is not a figurative expression of the earth but of the soul. This would make Socrates’ reference to  $\gamma$ , on Altman’s interpretation, on the most charitable interpretation irrelevant and probably simply contradictory. Being aware of this difficulty, Altman argues at length that Socrates’ formulation at 108d7-9 suggests that he is *really talking about the soul* (ALTMAN1 352-4). Even if this were so, and even if we were to grant Altman that the myth could be read as being “about the soul’s condition when placed in alien surroundings”, this would do nothing to change the fact that Socrates very explicitly announces the subject of his myth at 108c-d, quoted above. This seems to me a very important indication that Altman’s interpretation is lacking.

### 3.3.2 Purification

A third problem that I see with Altman’s interpretation is his reading of the passage in the *Republic* – is Plato really saying that we should be taking a view of Glaukos removed from the sea and without, happily, any of its concomitant crudities? It seems to me that Altman is neglecting an important part of the passage, a mistake which also seems to underly Christopher Green’s pausing claim that  $\gamma$  f-means *the soul’s purification* (GREEN 69-71 *et passim*). What does Plato actually write? In Shorey’s translation, he has Socrates say (*Resp.* 611d & 612a): “Such, too, is the condition of our soul when we view it, beset by countless evils. But we must look elsewhere, Glaukon.’ ‘Where?’ said he. ‘To its love of wisdom. [...] And then one might see its real nature...’” This mention of “love of wisdom” or “philosophy” (“φιλοσοφίαν”) is significant. Plato writes that we at present see our soul as we would see Glaukos in the ocean. To possibly see “its real nature” (“αὐτῆς τὴν ἀληθῆ φύσιν”) we must look “to its love of wisdom” (“εἰς τὴν φιλοσοφίαν αὐτῆς”). This love of wisdom (or, less literally, philosophy) Plato equates to the impulse that raises the soul “out of the depths of this sea in which it is now sunk” and cleanses it from the oceanic accretions (612a). It appears that the soul’s love of wisdom is the gate through which one must pass on the road to a true view of the soul. Here it must be remembered that the soul *in casu* is not the abstract entity but an individual person’s *own* soul. Hence, to view our own soul as it is now and give an account of what it is like – this Socrates has endeavoured in the foregoing of the *Republic* – is akin to looking at a submerged Glaukos, while by concentrating on the soul’s “philosophy” one might hope to view the soul as if it were

cleansed from the accretions of the earth and raised up out of it, and so see its true nature. Note, however, that it is no certainty that one will reach this destination (note the optative “ἴδοι”). This reminds of the uncertainty and arduousness of philosophy in the fifth and sixth book of the *Republic*. I conclude that for Plato, to view the soul’s true nature is purification and nothing less than an essential part of philosophy, indeed the very jewel in its crown. I might add that both Plotinos (203 CE–270) and Proklos (412 CE–485) both understood it so (cf. *Enn.* 1.1.12.13 & *In Alc.* 224.10, respectively).

If the above is the right way to read the passage – and I do not see how there could be any serious doubt about it, the text is quite explicit – it would follow that, according to Altman and Green,  $\gamma$  f-means philosophy. That this cannot be so, hardly needs stressing. Philosophy in Plato’s sense is concerned with truth achieved by way of the method of dialectic (*Resp.* 534d). This is the business of proving things true *sans phrase*. This would, of course, make a muddle of the latter half of Socrates’ *less* and *more* qualification. Indeed, he should have said – to not contradict himself within the space of three lines – that he *would* need  $\gamma$  to prove the truth of it. This I think the most serious problem plaguing the interpretations of Altman and Green alike.

### 3.3.3 Transcendence

Time to take stock. At this point it has become clear that we have various reasons to suppose that  $\gamma$ , rather than being proverbial (chapter 1), was said in connection to a certain Glaukos. Not any of the overlooked Glaukoi (2.2), Glaukos of Rhegion (2.3) or Chios (2.4), but in connection to Glaukos of Anthedon (3.2), who Plato refers to in the *Republic* and in all probability was the same as the prophetic sea-god (3.2.1). Moreover, we may also suppose that it l-means some skill possessed by this Glaukos (3.3.1) and that it f-means a method of inquiry (2.4.2) that is superior to mythography and inferior to philosophy when speaking not of the soul but of the earth as it really is (3.3.2). I believe prophecy would at least fit these qualifications, and in chapter 3.4 I argue as much. However, two alternative candidates have been suggested. Each equates  $\gamma$  to a form of transcendence from the sublunar to the higher aethereal sphere. I think they come up short. I shall now show how.

#### 3.3.3.1 Dacier’s “*plongeur*”

It turns out that the unassuming fisherman we find in most sources is only part of the story. There also existed a an alternative, rationalizing telling of the story about a deceiving double – a *Bizarro* Glaukos, if you will, who did not transform into a sea-god but was a diver in the deep seas and who pretended to his friends to live there and ultimately perished there. Only one interpreter seems to have picked up on this story. In one of the “*remarques*” to *Phd.* 108d in his

1699 translation of some of Plato's dialogues, André Dacier (1651–1722), who was a known classicist and the keeper of the royal library at the Louvre, gives an imaginative interpretation that turns on the identification of this Glaukos and his skill of diving. I reject the identification it is based on, because I believe Plato could not have referred to this version, for three reasons. First, the only other occasion he refers to Glaukos, it is to the traditional tale of the transformation and not the rationalization. Second, Plato had a low regard for such mythological rationalizations (*Phdr.* 229c-e), so a reference to one would not only be unexpected but by his own standards a bathos at such a dramatically climactic point in the dialogue. Third, the author of the oldest source and likely origin of this variant was Palaiphatos, who was a student at the Peripatos no earlier than 340 (*Suid.* II 69) and so the rationalization must be believed to postdate Plato. (The arguments I adduce in support of all these claims may be found in the appendix.)<sup>111</sup>

Yet even if it is impossible, we should learn from it and figure out why it appeals, for it is a plausible impossibility and so to be preferred to the unconvincing possibilities – as Aristotle said (*Poet.* 60a21) – suggested by the paroemiographers and modern scholars. All the more because the interpretation has been wholly neglected by later scholarship. Dacier writes that “in order to visit the earth of which he speaks – of which ours is only a sediment – that is, to cross the currents and pass the seas that separate us [from this earth], one must be a better diver than Glaukos. One must raise one's thought above all earthly and material matters” (DACIER 498). I think this rightly connects  $\gamma$  to Socrates' account about the human condition (109e-11d) and rightly takes the l-meaning of the alluding passage as, also, a visual expression of a process that takes place inside an individual soul.

### 3.3.3.2 Clay's “*trasumanar*”

These elements are picked up Diskin Clay. He interprets  $\gamma$  to l-mean “passing beyond the mortal” (CLAY 236) or, in Dante's neologism for the Christian idea of “transcendence of the earthly realm”, “*trasumanar*” (Dante *Par.* 2.67-72).<sup>112</sup> He takes it to f-mean the psychic transcendence to the higher spheres. Clay adduces a few reasons for this interpretation which I generally believe valid and shall discuss as part of my own interpretation of  $\gamma$ . Nonetheless, this interpretation is, like that of Altman and Green, compromised by its lack of distinction between  $\gamma$  and philosophy. Is there room, on Plato's understanding, for two forms of psychic transcendence,

<sup>111</sup> One more argument against it may mentioned here. Would we not have sooner expected to use a proverbial phrase he is actually believed to have used: “What I have understood is excellent, and I suppose what I have not understood is too – except that it needs a *Delian diver* not to drown in it.” ,

*Diog. Laert. Vit. Phil.* 2.22 = *Apostol. Paroem.* 5.100 = *Suid.* Δ 400.

<sup>112</sup> The definition by Charles Segal, “‘The Myth Was Saved’: Reflections on Homer and the Mythology of Plato's Republic”, *Hermes* 106 (1978) 2, 315-36, there 332.

one inferior to philosophy and one equal to philosophy? What exactly could be the difference between them? And could such an interpretation be justified by the text? I think the answer to each of these three questions is positive. The reason for this, however, is not to be found in Clay's interpretation. Clay comes up short by lacking a justification for his assumption that the psychic ascendance denoted by  $\gamma$  is distinct from philosophy. This could only be a real difference between the two forms of ascendance, one that has a basis in Plato's works and ideally in the *Phaedo* itself. Viewed in this way, Clay's interpretation leaves the most important desideratum unsatisfied; he does not really solve the riddle as much as he correctly guesses at the answer. In what follows, I shall reinterpret the notion of non-philosophical psychic ascendance, not as the slow and steady rising up to a new level as Dacier and Clay do, but rather as an occasional glimpse of those things of which true knowledge *sans phrase* is only attainable by philosophy (maybe) and by communion with the gods after death.

### 3.4 Prophecy as glimpses of the divine

#### 3.4.1 Glimpses of the divine

Let us retrace our steps once more. We have concluded already that  $\gamma$  must I-mean some skill possessed by Glaukos of Anthedon and f-mean some method of inquiry between mythography and philosophy dialectic. We have seen in the last chapter that this cannot simply be purification or ascendance, for these are equated in the *Republic* and the *Phaedo* alike to dialectic. Let us now give consideration to the possibility that  $\gamma$  denotes prophecy, the sea-god's skill *par excellence*. I noted that the reference to the Euripos at 90c suggests that the identification with the Anthedonian is correct. What I neglected to note, is the cause of someone falling into the Euripos and risking becoming a misologue: that he "believes a certain argument is true without having *the skill of argumentation* [τῆς περὶ τοὺς λόγους τέχνης]" (90b). A lack of *skill* is what brings one into a state like Glaukos. Perhaps it is a skill that gets one out again. How did Plato think one could get out of the sublunar sea world? Philosophy, as we have seen, is the slow and steady way journey along the "longer way" (*Resp.* 504b). Images, on the other hand, are of no use; they are sooner to mislead than lead to knowledge of truth.

This leaves the question of how to kick-start the dialectic; it cannot be philosophy all the way down. Plato, throughout the dialogues, suggests a number of different ways in which dialectic might be kick-started. In the *Symposium*, it is the sight of beauty that can set one on the right track (209e), by leading one from a desire for earthly beauty to a desire for intelligible beauty or beauty of the soul (210b) to, eventually, the Beautiful, which is the same as the Good

(211a-c). In the *Crito* (44b-c) and the beginning of the *Phaedo* (60e), it is a dream that gets Socrates started on the search for truth. In the *Apology*, Socrates relates his obeisance to a *daimon* (31c-d). In the same work, the Pythia's pronouncement (21a) is cited as Socrates' ultimate origin of his quest for truth. Compare *Epin.* 985c: “[Gods] have had various types of encounters with humans, whether through *dreams* in sleep or in audible communications through *divine voices* or *prophecies*. [...] The resulting beliefs [...] have been the origin of many *religious rites*.”<sup>113</sup> All of these are touches of the true, glimpses of the divine, which Plato thought are not within human power but can be bestowed upon us. It is not necessary that one is a philosopher to be touched by any of them. As a consequence, they are not unqualifiedly true. That is to say, these glimpses are true but the person doing the glimpsing does not have the full grasp of the other true things necessary to appreciate of something the truth *sans phrase*.

### 3.4.2 $\gamma$ as mantic prophecy

As noted in the *Epinomis*, prophecy is one vehicle for such glimpses of the divine.<sup>114</sup> How should we understand this? In the *Phaedrus*, Plato distinguishes what we would call ‘divination’ (inspection of birds or entrails and such) from prophecy (244c-d). Prophecy properly so called – the sense I have been using it in thus far in this thesis – is caused by a touch of madness, hence it is called *mantike*, the skill of madness. This madness is benign, indeed, “it is given as a gift of the gods” (244a, 244c) Thus, prophecy is a divine and benign madness. Yet this requires proof (245c) and this requires an understanding of the nature of the soul. First, Socrates gives a proof for the immortality of the soul (245c-e) and then when he wants to turn to its structure, he says (246a): “To describe what it really is would require a very long account, altogether a task for a god in every way; but to say what it is like lies within human powers and takes less time. So let us speak thus. We will liken the soul to the composite nature of a pair of winged horses and a charioteer.”

And so he does, describing the rational charioteer's struggle to check to reins and guide his horses (desire and honour) upwards to “the place beyond heaven” (247c). This, of course, is an imaginative depiction of the long way of philosophy until it catches sight of “a being that really is what it is, the subject of all knowledge, visible only to intelligence, the soul's charioteer” (246c). Yet let us return to Socrates' qualification that prefaced this description. It is similar to Socrates' *less* and *more* qualification in the *Phaedo*. Proving it, in the *Phaedo*, requires more than  $\gamma$  and time. Describing what the soul really is, in the *Phaedrus*, requires also time and

<sup>113</sup> Although its authenticity is doubted, it sums up nicely the separate findings from the other dialogues, even if it is not necessary to

<sup>114</sup> Cf. *Phd.* 84b-e, which is very suggestive with regards to prophecy as an epistemic foundation of knowledge.

divine powers. If the analogy holds, this tells us that  $\gamma$  is something between the “human powers” required to describe the sublunar state of the soul and the divine powers to say “what it really is”. What is this method of inquiry that lies between the divine and the human? I would say the above discussed divine glimpses, and in light of the *Phaedrus* emphasis on *mantike* in the immediately foregoing, I would say: prophecy.

### 3.4.3 Prophecy as transcendence

Let us tie up the final loose ends. I believe  $\gamma$  l-means prophecy, which is a method of inquiry that lies between the provenance of belief and the provenance of knowledge, between opinion and truth. For prophecy affords one an insight into matters divine, without giving one complete and unqualified knowledge of those truths. This makes sense of Socrates' claim that he needs less than  $\gamma$  to give a description of the earth's true form, and more than  $\gamma$  to prove it true – as well as more time than he expects to have remaining, for the longer way of dialectic is arduous. The reference to Glaukos of Anthedon is apt, because he was a prophet. Yet there is of course more to it than that. For Glaukos of Anthedon was a sea-god dwelling in the rough strait of the Euripos. This is similar to the human condition as sketched by Socrates. If to learn the truth of the aethereal sphere is to purify one's soul and, in that state, have it so transcend to that level (109d), which perhaps the philosopher will do definitively after death (*Phd.* 114d-5a), then to be afforded a view of that truth by way of prophecy is to take the shortcut upwards and peek, temporarily, above the water surface and catch a glimpse of the aethereal sphere. Thus, prophecy is figuratively expressed by Glaukos' temporary transcendence above the water surface when he is dispensing his prophecies. This does not involve any cleansing, and indeed “those who catch a glimpse of him can hardly make out his original nature” (*Resp.* 611b). In this way, then, the transcendence identified by Dacier and Clay is justified. Prophetic transcendence differs from philosophical transcendence in that it is temporary and imperfect – but transcendence none the less.

## 3.5 Conclusions of the third chapter

In this chapter I have stated my case for my interpretation of  $\gamma$  as being a definite description that l-means the Anthedonian's skill of prophecy and f-means the ability to transcend one's own sphere of being to a higher one. I have argued that the identification with Glaukos of Anthedon is historically possible and likely, suggested by the text, and supported by a large number of scholars. I have further argued that the hitherto advanced identifications of the l-meaning of the skill based on this identification of Glaukos, have fallen short of being convincing. Finally, I



have shown how the intertextual connections between three of the four important middle dialogues – *Republic*, *Phaedo*, and *Phaedrus* – point us toward what I believe to be a satisfying interpretation of the l-meaning and f-meaning of  $\gamma$ .

## Conclusion

How should we interpret the phrase ‘ή Γλαύκου τέχνη’ at *Phd.* 108d4-5? This has been the question this thesis has sought to answer. *En passant*, it has also tried to satisfactorily treat two problems that seem to have plagued the debate about the correct interpretation of the passage since its inception. First is the universal unjustified supposition that ‘ή Γλαύκου τέχνη’ is a proverb. Second is the prevalent unscholarly assumption that the Glaukoi other than the three identifications which have received attention from other scholars, do not deserve consideration. In accordance with this tripartite goal, the thesis is divided up into three chapters.

In the first chapter I have argued that we have no reason to believe that the phrase ‘ή Γλαύκου τέχνη’ was a proverb when Plato wrote the *Phaedo*. I have shown that ‘ή Γλαύκου τέχνη’ is used only thrice outside the *Phaedo* and never as a proverb, that there are no stylistic grounds for considering it a proverb, and that the paroemiographers considered it a *paroemia* without thinking it a proverb in the modern sense of the word, because the phrase seems not to have been actually current. In the second chapter I have argued that it is important, for the debate about the interpretation of ‘ή Γλαύκου τέχνη’, to give consideration to those Glaukoi which have not yet been considered but are nonetheless possible and have at least *something* speaking for them. I have examined these as well as Burnet’s suggested identification of Glaukos of Rhegion, and Gaiser’s interpretation of ‘ή Γλαύκου τέχνη’ as the Chian’s skill of welding. I have thought all unsatisfactory and argued for their rejection. This, in my view, cleared the way for a fresh consideration of the merits of the identification with Glaukos of Anthedon, advanced in the third chapter. Finally, I have put forward what I believe to be a satisfying interpretation of the l-meaning and f-meaning of ‘ή Γλαύκου τέχνη’.

Plato c-meant with ‘ή Γλαύκου τέχνη’ that between mythology and philosophy there are intermediary methods of inquiry. One such method is divine prophecy, the l-meaning of ‘ή Γλαύκου τέχνη’. I think there is still much to be said about prophecy in the *Phaedo*. Socrates at other points mentions it and one wonders if those statements may be squared with ‘ή Γλαύκου τέχνη’. If they may, this would be evidence in support of my interpretation.

It was the skill of Glaukos the sea-god of Anthedon to appear from the water to sailors and prophecy. Like Glaukos, those who possess his skill will transcend their normal level for a short while. This temporary transcendence to a higher level is the f-meaning of ‘ή Γλαύκου τέχνη’. I still wonder to what extent Plato maintains this figurative expression of prophecy as

transcendence in the other dialogues, especially those key three middle dialogues I have already connected to the *Phaedo* in this thesis. Or perhaps it could be investigated whether the other intermediate methods of inquiry are given figurative expression. I think this a promising avenue of inquiry, for it would contribute not only to our understanding of individual works of Plato, nor simply to his philosophical position. In the end, it would help us understand better how the individual dialogues relate to one another – the ultimate riddle of platonic scholarship.

## Appendix: Dacier's identification of the deceiving diver

### 1. Dacier's interpretation and its problems

In one of the “*remarques*” to *Phd.* 108d in his 1699 translation of some of Plato's dialogues, André Dacier (1651–1722), who was a known classicist and the keeper of the royal library at the Louvre, gives his imaginative and compactly formulated interpretation.<sup>115</sup> It has wholly escaped the attention of later scholarship.<sup>116</sup> Undeservedly so, because it is as discerning as any of theirs. The *remarque* reads:

To say that something was very difficult, [the Greeks] said, by way of a proverb, that they needed the art of Glaukos, who was a man turned a sea-god. However, those who have explained the proverb claim that it originated with another Glaukos, the one who had invented iron-forging. Yet I am induced to believe the contrary by this: that the fable of Glaukos the sea-god was founded upon his being an excellent diver, a fact to which Socrates apparently alludes. Indeed, in order to visit the earth of which he speaks – of which ours is only a sediment – that is, to cross the currents and pass the seas that separate us [from this earth], one must be a better diver than Glaukos. One must raise one's thought above all earthly and material matters.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> His wife Anne, better known as Madame Dacier, was also a classicist. Both produced editions and translations of Latin and Greek texts. In 1699 Dacier. Many scholars writing in English about Plato's influence on the Romantics have thought that she was the author of the “*Les Œuvres de Platon*”, e.g. Peter J. Sorensen, ‘On Keats's “Unheard Melodies”’, *The Keats-Shelley Review* 8 (1993) 1, 27-31, there 29 & Anthony Hecht, ‘Keats's Appetite’, *The Keats-Shelley Review* 18 (2004) 1, 68-88, there 71. This is a mistake stemming from the misattribution of the work to her by the 19<sup>th</sup> century English translation. The misattribution is natural in light of the absence of a specification of Dacier (not even *M.* or *Mme.*) in the first French edition of 1699 and the much greater fame of Anne in England after her well-regarded translations of Homer, her role in the *ancients versus moderns* debate, and, after this, her polemic against Pope over his translation of the *Iliad*. The reason it is quite likely that her husband's André was the author – at least the person who is to be credited as such, for the couple often worked together – is that he is specified as such on the from the second edition (1711)

on as well as on the first bootleg translation to English of 1699, and also that Anne published herself in the same year (1699) as the Plato her translation of the *Iliad*.

<sup>116</sup> I did not find a single citation of the work reference to it while compiling my catalogue of opinions on γ.

<sup>117</sup> DACIER 498: “*C'étoit un proverbe, pour dire qu'une chose étoit très-difficile, on disoit qu'on avoit besoin de l'art de Glaucus, qui d'homme étoit devenu Dieu marin. Ceux qui ont expliqué ce proverbe prétendent pourtant qu'il a été fait sur un autre Glaucus, qui avoit trouvé l'invention de forger le fer ; mais ce qui me persuade le contraire, c'est que la fable de Glaucus, Dieu marin, étant fondée sur ce qu'il étoit excellent plongeur, il y a de l'apparence que Socrate y fait allusion. En effet, pour aller voir cette terre dont il parle, & dont la nôtre n'est que le sédiment, il faudroit être encore meilleur plongeur que Glaucus, pour traverser les torrens & les mers qui nous séparent. Il faut élever sa pensée au-dessus de tout ce qu'il y a de terrestre & de matériel.*”

Dacier makes three crucial interpretative decisions. First, he identifies the skill of Glaukos with diving. Second, he understands “more than the skill of Glaukos” (108d6) as *superior to Glaukos at his characteristic skill*. Third, he explains “proving [the account of the aethereal sphere] true” (108d5) as “visiting the earth [Socrates] speaks of”. As a consequence, Dacier understands Socrates’ claim that “proving it true seems to require more than the skill of Glaukos” as *to visit the aethereal sphere one must be a better diver than Glaukos*. This he takes to be a metaphor for a process inside an individual’s soul. Like a diver who, rather than swimming deep down into the ocean, swims up and breaches the water’s surface, “one must raise one’s thoughts above all earthly and material matters” if one wishes to visit the aethereal sphere. According to Dacier, then, Plato c-meant that, if you want to transcend to the aethereal sphere, “of which ours is only a sediment,” you “must be a better diver than Glaukos” in order to “cross the currents and pass the seas that separates us [from that sphere]”.<sup>118</sup> Although I think this interpretation of Plato’s c-meaning is not altogether incorrect, I think Dacier’s reasons for holding it and his specific formulation of it are mistaken. Each of Dacier’s three interpretative decisions is simply wrong-headed.

To begin with the third, I have strong reservations about Dacier’s understanding of “proving [the account of the aethereal sphere] true” as “visiting the earth he speaks of”. It is true that Socrates sometimes calls the aethereal sphere “the earth *itself* [αὐτὴν]” (108b) or “the *real* [ὡς ἀληθῶς] earth” (110a). So, sure, *Socrates’ earth* may for present purposes be equated to the *aethereal sphere*. However, is visiting the aethereal world really the same as proving one’s description of it true? I believe not. I shall argue for this at length in presenting my own interpretation. Here it is sufficient to note the following. Plato thought that the phenomena of personal experience can never serve as the guarantor of truth but that they themselves need to be *saved* by hypotheses about the more fundamental principles that unify them (*Resp.* 533a).<sup>119</sup> For the phenomenal world, these are the Ideas, but even knowledge of their truth is ultimately dependent on the grasping of the unhypothetic first principle, in the *Republic* explicitly equated to the Idea of the Good and the object of study of the dialectician (533d). So in what follows I shall argue for an interpretation that categorically differentiates between an acquaintance with the aethereal sphere and true knowledge of it. This ties in with my qualms about Dacier’s reading of “more than the skill of Glaukos” as ‘superior to Glaukos at his characteristic skill’. I think the “more than” denotes a qualitative distinction rather than a quantitative one, as Dacier

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<sup>118</sup> My emphasis, quoted from DACIER 498 “pour aller voir cette terre dont il parle, & dont la nôtre n’est que le sédiment, il faudroit être encore meilleur

*plongeur que Glaucus, pour traverser les torrents & les mers qui nous séparent.”*

<sup>119</sup> Paraphrasing Simpl. In *Cael.* 493.2-4.

understands it. That is to say, I do not take it as ‘better than Glaukos at the same skill’ but instead as ‘possessing a skill better than that of Glaukos’. I develop both points in the third chapter.

Third, Dacier’s claim that “the fable of Glaukos the sea-god was founded upon his being an excellent diver”; where did he learn this? In none of the ancient accounts we have examined is the Anthedonian Glaukos praised for his skill in diving. Did Dacier misremember or misinterpret one of the accounts of the story? It is not likely. Dacier was usually both knowledgeable and scrupulous about his sources, and he himself says that the paroemiographers he has consulted (“those who have explained the proverb”) identify Glaukos as the welder of Chios. So, again, what was his source?

## 2. Dacier’s source for *the skill of diving*

### 2.1 Erasmus, Apostolios, Palaiphatos

One possibility is that he is drawing on Erasmus’ highly popular *Chiliades Adagiarum*, first published in 1508 by Aldus, where Glaukos of Anthedon is called “by far the best swimmer of all” (“*natandi peritia longe omnium primus*”). Note well, not in connection to γ but in Erasmus’ explanation of a different proverb, to wit, “Glaukos who ate a herb and lived in the sea” (“Γλαῦκος φαγὼν πόαν οἰκεῖ ἐν θαλάσση”, 4.1.63).<sup>120</sup> It is likely that this explanation was known to Dacier. Yet a more probable candidate may be found in Erasmus’ source for this story, the proverb collection of Arsenio Apostolios (c. 1468–1538).<sup>121</sup> In connection to the same proverb as Erasmus, Apostolios relates that “Glaukos was a diver surpassing all other divers” (“ἦν δὲ κολυμβητής, ἐν τούτῳ ὑπερφέρων πάντων κολυμβητῶν”, *Paroemiae* 14.94).<sup>122</sup> Dacier was most probably familiar with Apostolios’ work.<sup>123</sup> Of course, “*plongeur*” (= diver) is likelier a translation of “κολυμβητής” (= diver) *vel sim.* than of “*natandi peritia*” (= skilled at

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<sup>120</sup> It was a continuation of Erasmus’ earlier, much slimmer book on proverbs taken from Diogenianus and culled from Latin authors, titled *Adagiorum collectanea*, which he had published in Paris in 1500. Aldus Mantius was the pioneering publisher of Greek works and collaborator of Erasmus.

<sup>121</sup> A member of Aldus’ circle, Girolamo Aleandro, had lent Erasmus a manuscript of this work the year he arrive in Venice (1508), see: John N. Grant, ‘Erasmus’ Adages’, in: John N. Grant & William Barker (eds.), *Prolegomena to the Adages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2017) 1-84, there 41. Erasmus’ use of Apostolios is confirmed by the similarity of the head phrase as well as the general diction, also

found in many other proverbs of the work (e.g. almost all of 3.3.2-99).

<sup>122</sup> Which is the same as Michael Apostolios *Paromiae* 5.45. Arsenios’ collection of *paroimiai* continued the work of his father Michael (c. 1420–1486). Arsenio’s brother Aristobolos wrote in a preface to one of Aldus’ publications that both works bore the title *Violets (Ἰοβία)*.

<sup>123</sup> Dacier refers to Apostolios in a note to his translation of Plutarch’s *Theseus* in the 1721 edition of that work, though not yet in the 1695 one: André Dacier, *Les vies des hommes illustres de Plutarque, reveues sur les MSS et traduites en François avec des remarques historique et critiques* (Paris: Michel Clousier et al. 1721) 518 & 525.

swimming).<sup>124</sup> A third possible source for Dacier’s claim, that the fable was founded upon Glaukos’ “being an excellent diver”, is the source Apostolios used and of which he gives a lightly epitomated paraphrase: Palaiphatos’ (fl. 4<sup>th</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> century) mythological rationalization of the story of Glaukos of Anthedon in his work *On Unbelievable Tales*, which we possess in epitomated form (*De incredibilibus* 28).<sup>125</sup> For here, too, we find “κολυμβητής” (= diver) *vel sim.* and we know that Dacier had met with it by the time he was writing his translation of the *Phaedo*.<sup>126</sup> Although I have no doubt that Dacier used at least one of these two sources, it seems we cannot determine which. Luckily, this is no problem, as Glaukos is to my knowledge nowhere else spoken of as diver and Apostolios’ account ultimately derives from that of Palaiphatos in any case. (I do believe that it can be shown that Erasmus used both Apostolios and Palaiphatos, though this is not germane to the argument, see note.<sup>127</sup>) Dacier’s interpretation, we must conclude, ultimately depends on Palaiphatos’ mythological rationalization. I shall show why this is significant for our estimation of his interpretation of Plato’s c-meaning.

## 2.2 Palaiphatos’ version

Palaiphatos rationalized the traditional tale of the Anthedonian soothsaying sea-god, as being a tall tale that arose from the downfall of a deceptive diver. We may call this euhemerism *avant la lettre*.<sup>128</sup> He relates how Glaukos supposedly fooled his family and friends into thinking that he lived in the sea by diving under water, swimming out of sight, hiding for a while, and returning. Palaiphatos’ version ends with sufficient poetic justice: accustomed to his periodical disappearances, no one noticed it when Glaukos “perished in an encounter with a sea-beast” (“περιτυχὼν θηρίῳ θαλασσίῳ ἀπώλετο”) and it was only much later surmised that Glaukos had become a god and gone off to live in the sea. I relate this so-called euhemeristic version for two reasons. First, because I want to give an indication of its many and significant differences with the traditional account. Second and more importantly, because I think it possesses each of the

<sup>124</sup> But the latter option is of course far from impossible. After all, Erasmus had translated it so, if the other way around.

<sup>125</sup> For Apostolios’ reliance on Palaiphatos, see: Jacob Stern, *On Unbelievable Tales. Translation, Introduction and Commentary* (Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci 1996) 5-6. For the evidence that we possess an epitome: *op. cit.* 4-5.

<sup>126</sup> André Dacier, *Les vies des hommes illustres de Plutarque, traduites en François avec des remarques* (Paris: Claude Barbin 1695) 67-8.

<sup>127</sup> Erasmus undoubtedly knew the work of Palaiphatos, because Aldus had published it as part of a potpourri of Greek works best known for containing Aesop’s fables three years prior to Erasmus arrival

in Venice (1505). Actual use by Erasmus is suggested by his observation that “this [proverb] appears to be said jokingly” (“*dictum apparet per iocum*”), which finds no mirror in Apostolios but may very well be inspired by Palaiphatos’ judgement (omitted by Apostolios) that “well, it is a silly story” (“μάταιος οὖν ὁ λόγος”).

<sup>128</sup> There are minor differences between the techniques of rationalization of Palaiphatos and Euhemerios (fl. 4<sup>th</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> century) – who gives the name to the genre – but these are not of significance here. Marek Winiarczyk, *The Sacred History of Euhemerus of Messene* (Göttingen: De Gruyter 2013) 1-10.

characteristics of the story of the first Glaukos suggested by Markellos (*fr.* 23 *Vinzent*), the one whom Schneidewin and Clay mistook for the fisherman of Anthedon. The similarities are brought out by comparison. Like Markellos' mysterious Glaukos, Palaiphatos' Glaukos "had become *very knowledgeable about some skill* [ἐπιστήμονα τέχνης τινός]", to wit, diving.<sup>129</sup> This was also "most admired among many". Indeed, it is specified that his skill exceeded that of all the other divers, who must have admired it. What is more, the diver's skills "perished together with him at sea" after the attack of a sea-beast – presumably because he was too busy deceiving others to teach them. Indeed, the similarities are such that I see no reason *not* to equate the two.

If we do, the result could be very significant for our assessment of Dacier's interpretation. Remember that Markellos himself did not suggest the connections between the *paroimia* γ and various Glaukoi; he just listed different explanations given by the "wise pagans" he had read. This means that one of these wise pagans had already made the identification between Glaukos the diver and the *paroimia* γ. We may note two things about this identification. First, it must predate Markellos' work (perhaps titled *Contra Asterium* and composed between 330 CE–337) and probably does so by quite a bit.<sup>130</sup> Second, it must have been made in the work of a paroemiographer, though we can only guess which.<sup>131</sup> It follows that Dacier's connection of Glaukos the diver and γ turns out to be, unbeknownst to him, a rediscovery of an explanation already given by an ancient paroemiographer. Dacier was nonetheless the first to connect it to the use of γ in the *Phaedo*. His claim is that Plato alluded to this particular version of the tale of Glaukos of Anthedon and that γ therefore must be equated to diving. I think this cannot be correct. For I think that Plato cannot have alluded to this rationalizing reimagining of the traditional tale. There are three reasons I think so.

<sup>129</sup> Plato, at least, certainly thought diving a skill. Consider *Lach.* 192c "to descend into a well and *dive* [κολυμβῶντες]" some "do with proper *skill* [τέχνης]." Consider also *Prt.* 350a: "Now do you know who daringly *dive* [κολυμβῶσι] into wells? I do, *divers* [οἱ κολυμβηταί]. Because of *knowledge* [ἐπίστανται] or for another reason? Knowledge."

<sup>130</sup> So even if it was not written by the real Palaiphatos (probably a *nom de plume*, translating as "said long ago") it cannot have been a Byzantine interpolation, as Nicola Festa surmised, 'Nuove osservazioni sopra l'opuscolo di Palefato', *Studi italiani di filologia classica* 4 (1897) 225-56, *passim*.

<sup>131</sup> All we know is that this work (or this particular part of it) is no longer extant. Perhaps it was the work of *paroemiai* of the distinguished grammarist Aristophanes of Byzantium (fl. second half 3<sup>rd</sup> century)

which I believe Markellos refers to directly after his discussion of the pagan proverbs, at [*Contra Asterium*] *fr.* 23.53-5: "six books, two of them about proverbs in verse and the other four about proverbs in prose", cf. *BNP* s.v. Aristophanes. If Markellos' second, third, and fourth Glaukos derive from Zenobios, which is very well possible, it would make sense that the first (and perhaps the last) would come from Aristophanes, whose work he apparently held in high regard (*op. cit.* 23.51-5). This identification is lent credence by the division of Aristophanes' work into verse and prose, suggesting that he (for the most part) culled his proverbs from actual works rather than collating existing collections, as for instance Zenobios and Diogenianos did, and so we may expect its selection to have differed from others.



### 3. $\gamma$ is not an allusion to Palaiphatos' euhemerism

First, there is the fact that the only other time Plato refers to Glaukos of Anthedon (*Resp.* 611c-d), it was to the traditional account, barnacles and all. Indeed, the very point of the image in the *Republic* is that Glaukos' appearance *in the sea* – “encrusted by each tide / that since the seas began / hath surged against his side” – obscures his true nature *as a man*.<sup>132</sup> If Plato in the *Republic* considered the divine transformation of singular significance to the story, he could not have tacitly omitted it in the *Phaedo*. Second, there is the plain chronological fact that Palaiphatos postdates Plato. Although even his rough dates are uncertain, scholars agree that he was in all likelihood a student at the Peripatos no earlier than 340 (*Suid.* Π 69), which is about a decade after Plato's passing.<sup>133</sup> It may be objected here, that it is possible that Palaiphatos simply copied his rationalizing retelling from somewhere else, and that this is to what Plato referred. Possible, yes; substantiated, no. It may further be protested that Plato himself refers to such a practice of giving a “rational account” of all kinds of stories at *Phdr.* 229c-e, and so may very well have been aware of an euhemerism of the story of Glaukos of Anthedon. Again, there seems to be no reason why we should suppose this. It is one thing to say that the genre of euhemerism extends to the time of Plato, which is likely, and it is an entirely different thing to suppose that Plato was alluding to a particular euhemeristic version of the Glaukos story without giving us as much as a hint of the fact.

Third, if we take a closer look at the passage in the *Phaedrus*, it becomes readily apparent that it is actually evidence *against* Plato's use of  $\gamma$  being an allusion to Glaukos the diver. He has Socrates, with much of his characteristic irony, judge “such explanations as *very pretty* [χαρίεντα] in general” (229d).<sup>134</sup> “But these explanations are”, he continues, “the inventions of a very clever and laborious and not altogether enviable man”, because eventually “a whole flood of such creatures, Gorgons and Pegasuses, in large numbers and with strange, inconceivable, portentous forms, will overwhelm him” (229d-e).<sup>135</sup> What Socrates says is ironic.<sup>136</sup> He is being excessively laudatory – especially as *Phaedrus* did not ask his opinion about such explanations – and his depiction of the laboriousness is quite hyperbolic. So I interpret Plato to have c-meant

<sup>132</sup> Lionel Pigot Johnson, *Cadgwith* (1892) l. 30-2.

<sup>133</sup> Stern, *On Unbelievable Tales*, 1-3.

<sup>134</sup> It is perhaps significant that Socrates has just described a nearby streamlet which he calls “pure and clear and fit for girls to play by” with the same word, “*very pretty* [χαρίεντα]” (229b).

<sup>135</sup> “ἄλλως μὲν τὰ τοιαῦτα χαρίεντα ἡγοῦμαι, λίαν δὲ δεινοῦ καὶ ἐπιπόνου καὶ οὐ πάνυ εὐτυχοῦς ἀνδρός” & “καὶ ἐπιρρεῖ δὲ ὄχλος τοιούτων Γοργόνων καὶ Πηγάσων καὶ ἄλλων ἀμηχάνων πλήθη τε καὶ ἀτοπία τερατολόγων τινῶν φύσεων”

<sup>136</sup> It is “obviously inappropriate if taken literally, with the most natural way to interpret it is as meaning the opposite of its literal form.” John R. Searle, ‘Metaphor’, in: *Expression and Meaning* (Cambridge: CUP 1979) 76-116, there 113. This “very crude” characterization of irony is near Grice's, which has ‘contradictory’ rather than ‘opposite’, see: Robert J. Fogelin, *Figuratively Speaking* (Oxford: OUP 2011) 9-10 & ff.

that euhemeristic interpretations of myths and legends are in fact quite uninspired and rather reductive. We may infer from this that he had a low regard of them. If we do, it seems inconceivable that he himself would turn to a euhemerism in the *Phaedo*. It would in any case be a bathos to allude to it in such a dramatically significant place, right before the *Schlußmythos* of the *Phaedo*, Plato's eulogy of his dear teacher Socrates. So even if, first, Plato had no problem with referring to an entirely different version of the same story from that in the *Republic* without the least indication, and if, second, there indeed existed an Ur-version of Palaiphatos' rationalization that Plato was acquainted with, then still, third, Plato would not have approved of it and so would have never referred to it at *Phd.* 108d.

#### **4. Conclusion of the appendix**

I believe the above considerations render Dacier's claim that the alluded to "fable of Glaukos the sea-god was founded upon his being an excellent diver" incorrect, so his interpretation will not survive as it stands.

# Bibliography

## Abbreviations

References to ancient works are abbreviated almost entirely according to the guidelines of the Oxford Classical Dictionary (4<sup>th</sup> edition), to be found at (checked on 20 June 2019): <https://classics.oxfordre.com/staticfiles/images/ORECLA/OCD.ABBREVIATIONS.pdf>. I use ‘UP’ as shorthand for ‘University Press’, ‘J’ for ‘Journal’, ‘BNP’ for ‘Brill’s New Pauly’, and ‘TLG’ for ‘*Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*’. Any other such abbreviations should not pose a challenge to the reader. References to editions of the *Phaedo* or interpretations of the passage have been abbreviated by giving the author name in small capitals, as follows:

- ALTMAN1 = William H.F. Altman, *The Guardians on Trial. The Reading Order of Plato’s Dialogues from Euthyphro to Phaedo* (Lanham, MA: Lexington 2016).
- ALTMAN2 = William H.F. Altman, ‘Plato’s Phaedo and the “Art of Glaucus”: Transcending the Distortions of Developmentalism’, paper presented at the XI Symposium Platonicum of the International Plato Society, Universidade de Brasília, Brasília, July 2016, transcript retrieved from: [http://plato2016.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/paper\\_altman-1.pdf](http://plato2016.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/paper_altman-1.pdf).
- APELT = Otto Apelt, *Platons Dialog Phaidon, oder Über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele* (Leipzig: F. Meiner 1913).
- ARCHER-HIND = R.D. Archer-Hind, *The Phaedo of Plato* (London: Macmillan 1883).
- BLUCK = R. S. Bluck, *Plato’s Phaedo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1955).
- BONGHI = Ruggiero Bonghi, *Dialoghi di Platone. II: Fedone* (Turin/Rome/Florence: Bocca 1881).
- BURNET = John Burnet, *Plato’s Phaedo* (Oxford: Clarendon 1911).
- CLAY = Diskin Clay, ‘The Art of Glaukos (Plato Phaedo 108D4-9)’, *The American J of Philology* 106 (1985) 2, 230-6.
- DACIER = André Dacier, *Les Œuvres de Platon. Traduites en François avec des Remarques II* (Paris: l’Imprimerie Royale 1699).
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- LISI = Francisco Lisi, 'Das Schicksal der Seele nach Phaidon 107c1-115a8', in: Aleš Havlíček & Filip Karfík (eds.), *Plato's Phaedo. Proceedings of the Second Symposium Pragense* (Prague: OIKOYMENH 2001) 424-48.
- LONG = David Sedley (ed.) & Alex Long (trans.), *Plato. Meno and Phaedo* (Cambridge: CUP 2010).
- LORIAUX = Robert Loriaux, *Le Phédon de Platon II* (Namur: Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de Namur 1975).
- OLDEWELT = H. van Oldewelt, *Phaedo van Plato* (Groningen/Djakarta: J.B. Wolters 1953).
- REALE = Giovanni Reale, *Platone, Fedone, traduzione, introduzione e commento* (Brescia: La Scuola Editrice 1973 [1970]).
- ROBIN = Léon Robin, *Platon. Œuvres Complètes IV.1* (Paris: Société d'édition "les belles lettres" 1952).
- ROWE = C.J. Rowe, *Plato. Phaedo* (Cambridge: CUP 1993).
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- SEDLEY = David Sedley, 'Teleology and myth in the Phaedo', in: John J. Cleary & Daniel C. Shartin (eds.), *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy. Volume V* (Lanham, MA / London: UP of America 1983) 359-83.
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- WAGNER = Wilhelm Wagner *Plato's Phaedo* (Boston: John Allyn Publisher 1873).
- WOHLRAB = Martin Wohlrab, *Plato. Phaidon* (Leipzig: Teubner 1878).
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