

Lexicon of the Charmides

Revised Entries, Block Two: Athens to Blessed

Diotimos Editions

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About these entries

These are the revised entries of the Lexicon of Plato's *Charmides* that accompanies the Diotimos Editions facing-page edition of the dialogue. Each entry gathers what a key word, person or theme means in the dialogue:

what the word meant, how the *Charmides* uses it, the passages to read, and, where the material allows, its echoes elsewhere in Plato and in later readers. Quotations of the dialogue are from the edition's English; references are to the Stephanus pages and sections printed in its margins. The entries are grouped by the category under which each is filed, and within each category in alphabetical order. This block holds ten entries: Athens; Athletics; Attention; Babbling and self-deprecation; Basile; Beauty; Being and substance; Belief and opinion; Benefit; Blessed.

Argument and inquiry

Attention

Attention and sense · Charmides

προσέχειν τὸν νοῦν, *prosechein ton noun*, “pay attention”, “watched”; *ἐννοεῖν*, *ennoein*, “consider”; *ἄνοια*, *anoia*, “folly”

At a Glance

The word. Νοῦς is mind, and in ordinary speech good sense. To hold the mind toward something, *προσέχειν τὸν νοῦν*, is to pay attention to it; *ἐννοεῖν*, to have in mind, is to consider; *ἄνοια*, the want of νοῦς, is folly.

In the *Charmides*. The idiom of attention comes three times, and each time its object changes. Socrates watches the boys who are gazing at Charmides (154c); when the first definition has failed he tells Charmides, “pay closer attention and look within yourself” (160d); and when Critias complains, “You are trying to refute me” (166c), Socrates tells him to “pay attention to the argument itself” (166e), the same practice by which he guards against thinking, without noticing, that he knows what he does not (166d). He asks each of them to consider, Charmides what temperance makes him (160d), Critias whether there is a sight of sight (167c). Ἀνοια comes once, in what good doctors say: to imagine treating the head apart from the whole body is “sheer folly” (156c).

In this edition. The idiom is “watched” (154c) and “pay attention” (160d, 166e); *ἐννοεῖν* is “consider”, *κατανοεῖν* “come across”, *ἄνοια* “folly”, and Critias’ *μέτρια λέγειν* “talking sense” (166e).

A place to read. 166c–e, where Socrates turns Critias’ attention from the question of who is being refuted to the argument.

Meaning

Νοῦς (*nous*) is the mind as what notices and understands, and in ordinary speech plain good sense. In the *Charmides* it occurs only in the idiom *προσέχειν τὸν νοῦν* (*prosechein ton noun*), “to hold the mind toward”, to pay attention, with the thing attended to in the dative: the boys (154c),

the argument (166e); at 160d no object is named, and the attention goes with Charmides' look into himself. Ἐννοεῖν (*ennoein*), "to have in mind", is to consider; κατανοεῖν (*katanoein*) is to observe, and so to come to know. Ἀνοία (*anoia*), the want of νοῦς, is folly. Good sense itself is never called νοῦς in the dialogue: when Critias tells Socrates that he is "talking sense" (166e), the Greek is μέτρια λέγειν (*metria legein*), from μέτριος, "in measure", to say reasonable things. Ἀποβλέπειν (*apoblepein*), to fix the eyes on one thing, is a glance at 153d and 162b, and attention to a point at 172e.

Use in the book

Attention in the *Charmides* is something Socrates first gives and then asks for, and its object moves. When Charmides comes in, Socrates turns from him to his watchers: "But I watched the boys too, and not one of them was looking anywhere else" (154c; see Age and maturity). Socrates attends to the boys' gazing, and a moment later proposes to strip Charmides' soul and look at it before his figure (154e).

The second time, attention is turned inward. The first definition, temperance as quietness, has failed (159b–160d), and Socrates says: "Then once more, Charmides ... pay closer attention and look within yourself. Consider what sort of person temperance makes you by being present ... then put all this together and tell me, properly and like a man, what it seems to you to be" (160d–e). In the Greek this is one sentence with one command, "tell me" (εἰπέ, *eipe*), and four participles leading up to it: paying attention, looking in, considering, putting together. It puts to work Socrates' assumption at 158e–159a, that temperance, if it is really in Charmides, "must give rise to some sense". He pauses, thinks it over to himself "very much like a man", and answers: temperance "makes a person feel shame and makes him bashful", and is modesty (160e; see Modesty and shame).

The third time the object is the argument. "You are trying to refute me, and letting go of what the argument is about," Critias complains (166c). Socrates answers that he refutes him for the reason he would scrutinize himself: "for fear that I might ever, without noticing, think I know something when I don't" (166d). Then he tells Critias, "say goodbye to whether it is Critias or Socrates who is being refuted. Just pay attention to the argument itself, and look to see what will become of it under refutation" (166d–e; see Refutation). "All right," Critias says, "I'll do that; you seem to me to be talking sense" (166e). His fear and his instruction are one practice: each man must watch the argument, not which of them is refuted. Critias can be read as failing it three pages later, when, "ashamed in front of the company", he keeps covering up his perplexity rather than concede what he cannot do (169c–d; see Reputation and ambition).

Next Socrates turns Critias' attention to experience. He asks him to consider whether there is a sight which sees itself and the other sights but

sees no colour (167c–d), and goes on through hearing, the senses, desire, wish and love to fear: “And have you ever yet come across a fear which fears itself and the other fears, but fears not one of the things that are dreadful?” “I haven’t come across one,” Critias answers (167e–168a; see Sight and colour). Only this last question asks what he has met with. Socrates also names his own attention. Doubting their agreement that it would be a great good if each man did what he knew and handed over what he did not know to others who knew it (172d), he says, “it was with my eye on this very point that I said just now that some strange things were coming to light for me” (172e).

Ἀνοια, the want of *νοῦς*, comes once, in the principle by which Socrates explains the charm: good doctors say that to imagine one could treat the head apart from the whole body is “sheer folly” (156b–c; see Acceptance and taking over). The Thracian doctor who taught Socrates the charm carries the principle, on the word of Zalmoxis, the Thracians’ god and king, from the body to the soul (156d–e; see Whole and part). Set beside the instructions on attention, the doctors’ rule can be read as saying what sense attends to: folly fixes on the part alone, and sense sees the part in its whole.

Places to read

The chief passages, in the order of the dialogue.

- 154c** Socrates watches the boys, who are all gazing at Charmides as if he were a statue.
- 156b–c** Good doctors say that to imagine one could treat the head apart from the whole body is sheer folly.
- 160d–e** Socrates bids Charmides pay closer attention, look within himself and consider what temperance makes him; Charmides thinks it over and answers that it is modesty.
- 166c–e** Accused of trying to refute Critias, Socrates says he refutes him as he would scrutinize himself, and bids him pay attention to the argument, not to who is refuted; Critias answers that Socrates is talking sense.
- 167c–168a** Asked to consider whether there is a sight of sight, Critias thinks not, and he has never come across a fear of fears.
- 172d–e** With his eye on their too-easy agreement, Socrates fears they have not been looking into temperance correctly.

Elsewhere in Plato

Two verbs of 160d recur in the passage on self-knowledge in the *Alcibiades I* (see Knowing oneself). Socrates and Alcibiades, the young Athenian aristocrat who was Pericles’ ward, are looking for something into which we might look and see at once both it and ourselves, and Socrates opens the search with *ἐννοεῖν*, “let us consider” (132d). Alcibiades names

mirrors. Socrates then asks whether he has noticed (ἐννενόηκας, *ennenoēkas*, the perfect of the same verb) that when someone looks into another's eye (ἐμβλέπειν, *emblepein*, the verb of "look within" at 160d), his face appears in it, in what we call the pupil, as in a mirror (132e–133a). An eye, then, sees itself by looking into an eye, at the part where its virtue, sight, comes to be; and a soul, if it is to know itself, must look into a soul, and above all into the region where its virtue, wisdom, comes to be (133a–b). Charmides is told to look within himself, with no second soul to look into, and at 167c–d Critias denies that there is a sight which sees itself and no colour; the *Alcibiades I*'s eye, which sees itself only by seeing something else, can be read as agreeing with him.

The doctors' rule at 156c has its counterpart in the *Phaedrus*. Socrates asks Phaedrus, his companion in that dialogue, whether one can understand (κατανοῆσαι, the verb of "come across" at 167e) the nature of the soul in a way worth speaking of without the nature of the whole. Phaedrus answers that if Hippocrates is to be trusted, not even the body can be understood without that method (270c). Hippocrates was the physician of Cos (so the *Protagoras* names him, 311b), and Phaedrus calls him one of the Asclepiads, the families of doctors who traced their descent from Asclepius, the god of healing.

Translation in this edition

The idiom προσέχειν τὸν νοῦν is "watched" in Socrates' narration (154c, προσέσχον), "pay closer attention" for μάλλον προσέχων (160d) and "pay attention" for Socrates' instruction to Critias (166e). Ἐννοεῖν is "consider" at both its places (160d, 167c), κατανοεῖν "come across" in question and answer (167e, 168a), and πολλὴν ἄνοιαν "sheer folly" (156c). Μέτρια λέγειν is "talking sense" (166e), as are εἰκότα λέγειν (158d) and ὀρθῶς λέγεις (161c), so that "talking sense" in the English does not always stand for the same Greek. Ἀποβλέπειν is "glanced toward" (153d), "looked across at" (162b) and "with my eye on" (172e); ἐμβλέπειν is "gave me a look" (155c), "look within" (160d) and "fixed his eyes on him" (162d). Other words of the family have other English: the simple νοεῖν (*noein*) is "mean", of the man who said that temperance is doing one's own business (161d, 162b, 162d; see Doing one's own business), διάνοια (*dianoia*) "mind" (157c–d), διανοεῖσθαι (*dianoieisthai*) "had in mind" (164e; see Advice and greeting), and ἀγχίνοια (*anchinoia*) "quick-wittedness", which Charmides agrees is "a kind of sharpness of the soul" (160a; see Quickness and slowness). "Sense" in the edition renders other words besides: αἴσθησις (*aisthēsis*), both the sense to which temperance, if present, "must give rise" (159a) and the senses of 167d (see Perception); and φρόνιμος (*phronimos*), in "anyone else of sense" (163c).

ἄνοια

Attested: ἄνοιαν (*anoian*; 156c). Want of sense, folly. Good doctors say that to imagine one could ever treat the head on its own, apart from the whole body, is “sheer folly” (156c). Lemma: ἄνοια.

ἀποβλέπω

Attested: ἀποβλέψας (*apoblepsas*; 153d, 172e), ἀπέβλεπεν (*apeblepen*; 162b). To look away from other things toward one, to fix one’s eyes on, and so to have regard to. Twice it is a glance: Critias “glanced toward the door” and saw the young men coming in (153d–154a), and Charmides, laughing slyly, “looked across at Critias” (162b). At 172e it is attention to a point in the argument: “it was with my eye on this very point,” Socrates says, “that I said just now that some strange things were coming to light for me.” Lemma: ἀποβλέπω.

ἐννοέω

Attested: ἐννοήσας (*ennoēsas*; 160d), ἐννόει (*ennoei*; 167c). To have in mind, to consider. Socrates bids Charmides, “Consider what sort of person temperance makes you by being present” (160d), and Critias, “Consider whether you think there is a kind of sight which is not sight of the things the other sights are of, but is sight of itself and of the other sights” (167c). Lemma: ἐννοέω.

κατανοέω

Attested: καταεννόηκας (*katanenoēkas*; 167e), καταεννόηκα (*katanenoēka*; 168a). To observe, to take note of, and so to come to know. “And have you ever yet come across a fear which fears itself and the other fears, but fears not one of the things that are dreadful?” Socrates asks; “I haven’t come across one,” Critias answers (167e–168a). Lemma: κατανοέω.

μέτριος

Attested: μέτρια (*metria*; 166e). In measure, moderate, reasonable; μέτρια λέγειν is to say reasonable things. Agreeing to attend to the argument and not to which of them is refuted, Critias says, “you seem to me to be talking sense” (166e). Lemma: μέτριος.

νοῦς

Attested: νοῦν (*noun*; 154c, 160d, 166e). Mind, sense; in the *Charmides* only in the idiom προσέχειν τὸν νοῦν, to pay attention. Socrates “watched” the boys (154c), and bids Charmides “pay closer attention” (160d) and Critias “pay attention to the argument itself” (166e). Lemma: νοῦς.

προσέχω

Attested: προσέσχον (*proseschon*; 154c), προσέχων (*prosechōn*; 160d, 166e). To hold toward, to apply; with τὸν νοῦν, to turn the mind to

something. Its objects change from place to place: the boys gazing at Charmides (154c) and the argument (166e); at 160d none is named, and the attention goes with Charmides' look into himself. Lemma: προσέχω.

See also

Knowing oneself; Perception; Refutation; Whole and part.

Babbling and self-deprecation

ληρεῖν, *lērein*, “talking nonsense”; *λήρος*, *lēros*, “a babbler”; *φαῦλος ζητητής*, *phaulos zētētēs*, “a poor inquirer”

At a Glance

The word. Ληρεῖν is to talk nonsense, and λήρος is nonsense or trash; φαῦλος is ordinary, and so poor, and a ζητητής is one who seeks.

In the *Charmides*. As the argument about temperance fails, Socrates runs himself down. “I think I’m talking nonsense,” he says before his dream, and goes on all the same (173a). At the end he blames himself, not temperance (175a–b), calls himself “a poor inquirer” (175e), and, if the young Charmides has temperance, would sooner advise him to count Socrates “a babbler” (176a).

In this edition. Ληρεῖν is “talking nonsense”; λήρος, said of Socrates himself, becomes “a babbler”; φαῦλος ζητητής is “a poor inquirer”.

A place to read. 175e–176a, where Socrates takes the failure on himself and keeps temperance “a great good”.

Meaning

Ληρεῖν (*lērein*) is to talk nonsense; λήρος (*lēros*) is the nonsense itself, and said of a man, as Socrates says it of himself at 176a, a babbler. A ζητητής (*zētētēs*), from ζητεῖν (*zētein*), “to seek”, is an inquirer; φαῦλος (*phaulos*), “ordinary”, makes him a poor one. In the *Charmides*, self-deprecation is less a word than a habit: when the inquiry goes wrong, Socrates puts the fault down to himself.

Use in the book

The habit grows as the argument weakens. At 172c Socrates says, “perhaps our search has been to no useful purpose”, and at 172e–173a he doubts that temperance, even as they have defined it, does us any good. Asked by Critias, Charmides’ cousin and guardian, to explain, he answers, “I think I’m talking nonsense,” and goes straight on: “All the same, one must look into what comes to light and not let it go by at random, if one cares for oneself even a little” (173a). Then he tells his dream, “whether it has come through horn or through ivory”, not vouching even for whether it is one of Homer’s true dreams or one of the false (173a–d; see The dream

hypothesis).¹ Calling his talk nonsense does not let him off the inquiry: the reason to go on is care for oneself, and even a little of it obliges one to look.

At the end the self-blame is explicit. When temperance has proved “the craftsman of no benefit” (175a), Socrates takes up the words of his suspicion at 172c: “So you see, Critias, that my fear long ago was reasonable, and I was right to blame myself for looking into temperance to no useful purpose?” Then he draws the conclusion against himself: “For surely what is agreed to be the finest of all things would not have turned out to be of no use to us, if I were of any use at inquiring well” (175a–b). He will not believe that the charm was learned “for a thing worth nothing” (175d–e; see Anger): “Well, I don’t at all think it is so; rather, I am a poor inquirer. For I do think that temperance is a great good, and that if you have it you are blessed” (175e–176a). Between doubting temperance and doubting himself, he doubts himself.

The word “babblers” comes in the advice that follows, on the same condition: “For if you have it, I would sooner advise you to regard me as a babblers, unable to inquire into anything whatever by argument, and yourself to be happier just in proportion as you are more temperate” (176a). Charmides, who cannot say whether he has it, offers to be charmed every day and promises Critias, “I’ll follow him and not desert him” (176a–b; see Advice and greeting). This can be read as the dialogue’s verdict on Socrates’ verdict on himself: the inquirer who calls himself a babblers is the one the boy will not leave.

Places to read

The chief passages, in the order of the dialogue.

172c–173a Socrates suspects that their search has been to no useful purpose, says he thinks he is talking nonsense, and goes on, since one must look into what comes to light “if one cares for oneself even a little”.

175a–b Socrates blames himself: temperance would not have proved useless if he were “of any use at inquiring well”.

175d–176b Rather than think temperance worthless, Socrates calls himself “a poor inquirer”, and, if Charmides has temperance, would have the boy regard him as a babblers; Charmides offers to be charmed every day.

Elsewhere in Plato

The habit, and the words, return elsewhere. In the *Hippias Major*, a dialogue whose authorship has been doubted, the sophist Hippias of Elis tells Socrates to give up his hair-splitting, so as not to seem a fool for dealing in “nonsense and drivel” (λήρους καὶ φλυαρίας, *lērous kai phlyarias*, 304a–

¹ Homer, *Odyssey* 19.562–567, where Penelope says that dreams that pass through the gate of ivory deceive and those that pass through the gate of horn come true.

b). Socrates answers that Hippias is blessed, for he knows what a man should practise, while Socrates himself is held by some strange fortune: he always wanders and is at a loss, and when he shows his perplexity to the wise, they abuse him for it (304b–c). The pairing is that of *Charmides* 175e–176a, where Charmides, if he has temperance, is blessed, and Socrates is a poor inquirer. In the *Theaetetus* Socrates calls himself a babbler in another word, ἀδολέσχης (*adoleschēs*): vexed at his own slowness to learn, he asks what else to call a man who drags arguments up and down because he is too dull to be persuaded, and cannot let go of any of them (195b–c). In both dialogues, as in the *Charmides*, Socrates puts the trouble with an argument down to his own failings.

Translation in this edition

Ληρεῖν is “talking nonsense” (173a). Λῆρος, said of Socrates himself, is “a babbler” (176a): English cannot call a man “a nonsense”, so the edition renders the noun by the man who talks it. Φαῦλον ... ζητητήν is “a poor inquirer” (175e), and ζητεῖν on either side of it is “inquiring” and “inquire” (175b, 176a).

ληρέω

Attested: ληρεῖν (*lērein*; 173a). To talk nonsense, to babble. Asked why he doubts that temperance does us any good, Socrates says, “I think I’m talking nonsense,” and goes on all the same, to his dream (173a). Lemma: ληρέω.

λῆρος

Attested: λῆρον (*lēron*; 176a). Nonsense, trash, idle talk; of a person, a babbler. If Charmides has temperance, Socrates would sooner advise him to regard Socrates “as a babbler, unable to inquire into anything whatever by argument” (176a). Lemma: λῆρος.

See also

Advice and greeting; Care and neglect; The dream hypothesis; Inferiority and poor performance; Inquiry.

Authority politics and social relations

Athens

Ἀθῆναι, *Athēnai*, “Athens”

At a Glance

The word. Ἀθῆναι (*Athēnai*) is Athens; Ἀθήνησιν (*Athēnēsin*), its old locative, means “at Athens”.

In the *Charmides*. The conversation takes place in Athens on the day after Socrates comes home from the army at Potidaea, and begins with the news of the battle there (153a–d). The city is named once, in the praise of Charmides’ two houses (157e). When the argument speaks of a city (161e–162a, 171d–172a), it names none.

In this edition. “In Athens” renders Ἀθήνησιν; elsewhere the city is “here”.

A place to read. 153a–d, Socrates’ homecoming and the news from Potidaea.

Meaning

Ἀθῆναι is Athens, the chief city of Attica, where everyone in the dialogue lives; the name is plural in form, like Θῆβαι (*Thebai*), Thebes.

Use in the book

The dialogue opens with a homecoming. “We had got back from the army at Potidaea the evening before,” Socrates begins, “and after so long away I was glad to make for my old haunts” (153a). Potidaea lay in the Chalcidice, in the north Aegean. In the wrestling-school of Taureas, opposite the shrine of Basile (153a; see Basile), Socrates finds a great crowd, eager for news: there had been a battle shortly before they left Potidaea, he explains, “and the people here had only just heard the news” (153b). Chaerephon, his excitable friend, tells him, “The word here ... is that the fighting was very heavy, and that many people we know were killed in it”, and Socrates confirms it (153b–c). He gives “the news from the camp, whatever anyone asked”, then asks “about things here at home: how philosophy was doing these days, and about the young men” (153c–d).

Athens is named once, when Socrates praises Charmides’ birth: “I don’t suppose anyone else here could easily point to two houses in Athens whose union would be likely to produce finer and better offspring than the two you are sprung from” (157e). The two are his father’s house, celebrated by the poets, and his mother’s, the house of his uncle Pyrilampes, who, it is said, was thought the handsomest and biggest man on the continent, that is, in Asia, whenever he went as ambassador to the Great King of Persia or to anyone else there (157e–158a; see Anacreon; Great King and Asia). The city is the field in which the boy’s birth is measured.

The cities of the argument are not Athens: they are any city, and none is named. Charmides agrees that a city under a law that made each man weave his own cloak and cobble his own shoes would not be well managed (161e–162a; see Action). If the temperate man knew what he knew and what he did not, and could examine others in the same way, then “a household run

by temperance would be bound to be run well, and a city governed by it too” (171d–e); at 172d Socrates doubts that they were right to agree to this. The first city is an example, the second a supposition. In the dream that follows, temperance would rule not a city but “us” (173a–d; see Art and craft).

Places to read

The chief passages, in the order of the dialogue.

153a–d Back from the army at Potidaea, Socrates goes to the wrestling-school of Taureas, gives the news of the battle, and asks about philosophy and the young men “here at home”.

157e–158a Socrates doubts that anyone could easily point to two houses in Athens likely to produce finer and better offspring than the two Charmides is sprung from; his uncle Pyrilampes’ embassies to the Great King.

161e–162a Charmides agrees that a city would not be well managed under a law ordering each man to weave his own cloak, cobble his own shoes and make everything else for himself.

171d–172a A household and a city governed by temperance, if the temperate man knew what he knew and what he did not; the picture is recalled and doubted at 172d.

Other ancient sources

Thucydides, the Athenian historian of the war between Athens and Sparta, describes Potidaea as a colony of Corinth on the isthmus of Pallene, the westernmost of the three peninsulas of the Chalcidice, and a tribute-paying ally of Athens; it revolted in 432 BC. In the battle fought before the city that year the Athenians won, but “of the Athenians themselves a hundred and fifty died, and Callias the general”. Thucydides even dates the opening of the war by it: the Theban night attack on Plataea, Athens’ ally in Boeotia, came at the beginning of spring 431, “in the sixth month after the battle at Potidaea”. The siege went on until the city surrendered in the winter of 430/29.² Scholars differ over whether the homecoming of the *Charmides* is set in 432, soon after this battle, or in 429, after the surrender.

A quarter of a century later Charmides and his cousin and guardian Critias, son of Callaeschrus, were among the men who ruled Athens. Xenophon, the Athenian writer and companion of Socrates, reports in his *Hellenica* that after Athens’ defeat in the war the people voted in 404 to choose thirty men to draw up the ancestral laws by which they would govern, and Critias was among them. In 403 the democratic exiles under Thrasybulus came by night into the Piraeus, the port of Athens, and in the fighting on Munychia, the hill above the harbour, there died “of the Thirty,

² Thucydides, *History* 1.56.2 (Potidaea), 1.58.1 (the revolt), 1.62–63 (the battle; the dead, 1.63.3), 2.2.1 (the attack on Plataea), 2.70 (the surrender).

Critias and Hippomachus, and of the ten rulers in the Piraeus, Charmides son of Glaucon”.³ Read with this in mind, two passages take on an irony that the edition’s notes mark at 172a and 176c: the picture of “us” ruling a city without error, spoken to Critias (171d–172a), and the last lines, where Charmides, since his guardian “gives the orders”, tells Socrates, “Count on force” (176c). The praise of two houses “in Athens” can be read in the same light.

Translation in this edition

“In Athens” renders Ἀθήνησιν (157e). In the Greek it stands with the article, τῶν Ἀθήνησιν, “of those at Athens”: Socrates doubts that anyone could point to which two of the houses at Athens would be likely to produce finer offspring, and the English folds the phrase into “two houses in Athens”. Elsewhere the city is “here”: “the people here” (οἱ τῇδε, 153b), “the word here” (ἡγγελαί γε δεῦρο, literally “it has been reported hither”, 153b) and “things here at home” (τὰ τῇδε, 153d), where “at home” is the translator’s and keeps the homecoming in view. “City” renders πόλις (*polis*) at 161e, 171e and 172d; at 162a “a city that is temperately managed” renders a participle with no noun in the Greek.

Ἀθῆναι

Attested: Ἀθήνησιν (*Athēnēsîn*; 157e). Athens, in the old locative “at Athens”: Socrates doubts that anyone could easily point to two houses in Athens likely to produce finer and better offspring than the two Charmides comes from. Lemma: Ἀθῆναι.

See also

Charmides; Critias; Great King and Asia; House, lineage and nobility; Household and city; Palaestra.

Benefit happiness and practical judgement

Benefit

Beneficial and harmful · Charmides

ὠφέλιμος, *ōphelimos*, “beneficial”; ὠφελεῖν, *ōphelein*, “benefit”; ὠφελία, *ōphelia*, “benefit”; ὠφελίμως, *ōphelīmōs*, “beneficially”; ἀνωφελής, *anōphelēs*, “of no benefit”, “of no use”; ὀνινάναι, *oninanai*, “benefit”, “profit”; βλαβερός, *blaberos*, “harmful”; βλαβερῶς, *blabērōs*, “harmfully”

³ Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.3.1–2 (the Thirty chosen), 2.4.10–19 (Munychia; the dead, 2.4.19).

At a Glance

The word. ὠφελεῖν is to help or do good to someone, and ὠφέλιμος is whatever does so; the opposite is harming, and the harmful is βλαβερός.

In the *Charmides*. Critias makes benefit part of what counts as work (163c), and a doctor who may act beneficially without knowing it drives him to define temperance as knowing oneself (164a–d). Whether knowledge of knowledge would benefit us is then Socrates’ second question (167b), backed by his “prophetic hunch that temperance is something beneficial and good” (169b). The great benefit once hoped for falls away (171d–173d). Benefit proves to be the work of the knowledge of good and bad (174d), and temperance, as knowledge only of knowledge, proves to be “the craftsman of no benefit” (175a). Socrates keeps his hunch and blames his inquiring (175a–e).

In this edition. The ὀphel- family is “beneficial”, “benefit”, “beneficially” and “of no benefit” at every place but 175b, where “of no use” keeps Socrates’ play on ὄφελος, “use”; elsewhere “use” and “useful” render other words.

A place to read. 174c–175a, where benefit is given to the knowledge of good and bad and denied to temperance.

Meaning

ὠφελεῖν (*ōphelein*) is to help, to do someone good. It belongs with the noun ὄφελος (*ophelos*), “use” or “help”, most at home in saying that something is no use: without the charm, Socrates recalls telling Charmides, the leaf “was no use at all” (155e). ὠφέλιμος (*ōphelimos*) is what helps, ὠφελία (*ōphelia*) the help itself, and ἀνωφελής (*anōphelēs*) what brings none; the opposite is harm, and βλαβερός (*blaberos*) is “harmful”. Ὀνινάναι (*oninanai*) is a second verb of benefit, in the middle “to profit”.

Benefit always has a beneficiary: the doctor and his patient at 164b, and from 165c on, “us”. A good thing, in Greek, was one that did good, and Socrates’ hunch joins the two: temperance is “something beneficial and good” (169b).

Use in the book

Benefit enters with Critias: Hesiod, the early epic poet, called works only “things made finely and beneficially”, he says, and regarded “everything harmful as belonging to others” (163b–c; see Action). A doctor, Critias grants, “in making someone healthy, makes something beneficial both for himself and for the patient he is treating”, and so does what he ought and is temperate. But must he “also know when his treatment is beneficial and when it is not”? “Perhaps not,” says Critias. Then, Socrates concludes, the doctor sometimes acts beneficially or harmfully without knowing how he has acted, and, having acted beneficially, has by Critias’ account acted temperately (164a–c). Rather than allow that a man who does not know

himself is temperate, Critias makes temperance knowing oneself (164c–d; see Agreement and concession).

If he were asked what use medicine is to us, Socrates says, he would answer, “No small benefit: it produces health, a fine work for us”; what, then, does temperance produce (165c–e)? Critias objects that calculation and geometry have no such work, and Socrates asks instead what temperance is knowledge of (165e–166b; see Art and craft), and Critias makes it knowledge of itself and of the other kinds of knowledge (166c). Socrates sets two questions: whether such a knowledge is possible, and “what benefit there would be for us in knowing it” (167b). He will not accept it as temperance until he has looked into whether it would benefit us: “For I have a prophetic hunch that temperance is something beneficial and good” (169b). Possibility is granted for now (169d), but even so the knowledge knows only that one knows, not what (170a–171c; see Knowledge of knowledge).

“Then what benefit, Critias,” Socrates asks, “would we still get from temperance, if it is like this?” (171d). Had the temperate man known, as first supposed, what he knew and what he did not, “it would be of enormous benefit to us to be temperate”: we would not attempt what we did not know, nor let those we ruled do anything but what they knew, households and cities would be run well, and “those who do well must be happy” (171d–172a). But no such knowledge has turned up (172a). Socrates offers a smaller good, as a question: perhaps whoever has it “will learn more easily whatever else he learns” and “will examine others better about the things he himself has learned”. “Is it some such things as these, my friend, that we shall get out of temperance, while we have been looking at something greater ...?” “Perhaps that is how it is,” Critias answers. “Perhaps,” says Socrates. “And perhaps our search has been to no useful purpose” (172b–c). The smaller good is not taken up again.

Instead Socrates grants everything, to see “whether, if it is of that kind, it will benefit us at all” (172c–d), and withdraws the agreement that it would be a great good if each did what he knew (172d–e; see Agreement and concession): “even if temperance is entirely of this kind,” he says, “it does not seem at all clear to me that it does us any good” (172e–173a). In his dream men would “act and live knowledgeably”, but “that by acting knowledgeably we would do well and be happy, this, my dear Critias, we cannot yet learn” (173a–d; see The dream hypothesis). The knowledge that makes a man happy, Critias says at last, is the one “by which he knows good ... and bad” (174b).

Without that knowledge, Critias grants, medicine and the pilot’s art would keep us no less healthy and safe at sea; but, Socrates replies, “each of these things being done well and beneficially: that will be gone from us, if this is absent” (174c–d; see Art and craft). That knowledge, then, not temperance, is “the knowledge whose work is to benefit us” (174d). Critias

would have temperance, presiding over the other kinds of knowledge, rule this one too, and so “it would benefit us” (174d–e). But as knowledge only of knowledge temperance is the craftsman neither of health nor of benefit, each of which belongs to another craft. “How then will temperance be beneficial,” Socrates asks, “when it is the craftsman of no benefit?” “It seems it can’t be, Socrates, in any way” (174e–175a).

The argument has found where benefit belongs and refused it to Critias’ temperance: if temperance is beneficial, as Socrates still holds, it cannot be knowledge only of knowledge, and what is refuted is the definition, not temperance. Socrates lays the failure on himself: “For surely what is agreed to be the finest of all things would not have turned out to be of no use to us, if I were of any use at inquiring well” (175a–b), a play on *ἀνωφελές*, “of no use”, and *ὄφελος*, “use”. Despite the concessions made beyond what the argument allowed (175b–c; see Agreement and concession), the inquiry has shown what they laid down as temperance “to be of no benefit” (175d). Grieved for Charmides if temperance is to be of no benefit to him in life, Socrates refuses the conclusion: “Well, I don’t at all think it is so; rather, I am a poor inquirer. For I do think that temperance is a great good” (175d–e). The ending can be read as pointing to a temperance that would include the knowledge of good and bad.

Places to read

The chief passages, in the order of the dialogue.

- 163c** Critias, after Hesiod: things made finely and beneficially are works, and everything harmful belongs to others.
- 164a–c** The doctor makes something beneficial for himself and his patient; on Critias’ “Perhaps not”, he may act beneficially, and so temperately, without knowing how he has acted.
- 165c–d** If he were asked what use medicine is, Socrates would answer that it brings no small benefit, health.
- 167b** The two questions: whether knowledge of knowledge is possible, and what benefit it would bring us.
- 169b–c** Socrates’ prophetic hunch that temperance is beneficial and good; Critias must show his knowledge both possible and beneficial.
- 171d–172a** Had temperance been as first supposed, it would have been of enormous benefit: a life without error, households and cities run well, doing well and happiness.
- 172b–c** Socrates asks whether the good of temperance is only a smaller one, easier learning and better examining; Critias: “Perhaps that is how it is.”

- 172c–173a** Socrates grants everything to ask whether it would benefit us at all, and withdraws the agreement that each doing what he knew would be a great good.
- 173a–d** The dream: a life lived knowledgeably, though it cannot yet be learned that this would make us do well and be happy.
- 174b–d** Only the knowledge of good and bad makes things come about well and beneficially; its work is to benefit us, and it is not temperance.
- 174d–175a** Critias sets temperance over that knowledge; Socrates answers that it is the craftsman neither of health nor of benefit.
- 175a–b** Socrates blames himself: the finest of things would not have proved of no use if he were of any use at inquiring.
- 175d–e** The inquiry has shown the definition of no benefit; Socrates will not believe that temperance is of no benefit to Charmides, and calls it a great good.

Elsewhere in Plato

The *Meno* turns the link between the good and the beneficial into an argument that virtue is knowledge. Socrates has Meno, the young Thessalian nobleman, agree that we are good by virtue, and “if good, beneficial; for all good things are beneficial”, so that virtue too is beneficial (87d–e). Health, strength, beauty and wealth sometimes benefit and sometimes harm, and they benefit when right use guides them (87e–88a). Of the qualities of the soul that are not knowledge, courage without sense harms the man who has it, and temperance and quickness at learning, learned and trained with intelligence, are beneficial, without it harmful (88b). So if virtue is something in the soul and must be beneficial, it must be wisdom, *φρόνησις* (*phronēsis*), which by this argument “would be the beneficial” (88c–89a). The *Meno* makes temperance, taken as something other than knowledge, need wisdom in order to benefit, which can be read beside the *Charmides*’ finding that the work of benefiting belongs to the knowledge of good and bad (174d).

In the *Euthydemus* Socrates tells his old friend Crito how he questioned the young Cleinias, a cousin of Alcibiades. The goods they had listed would make them happy only if they benefited them, and they would benefit only if used: a carpenter with all his tools and enough timber who never does any carpentry gets no benefit from owning them (280b–d). They must be used rightly, and what makes for right use is knowledge, as carpentry does in working wood (280e–281b). Is there any use, Socrates asks, in other possessions without good sense and wisdom, and would a man profit by having much and doing much without sense? The question is put in the *Charmides*’ own words: *ὄφελος*, the “use” of 155e and 175b, and *ὄναιτο*, “would profit”, from the verb of 164b, 172d and 175e (281b). A man

without sense errs less the less he does, and he does less if he is poor rather than rich, weak rather than strong, cowardly rather than brave and temperate (281b–c). So the things they first called goods are greater evils than their opposites when ignorance leads them, and greater goods when wisdom leads them, but in themselves they are worth nothing; and Cleinias agrees that wisdom alone is good and ignorance alone bad (281d–e). In the *Republic* Socrates tells Adeimantus, Plato’s brother, that the Form of the good is the greatest thing to learn, by which just things and everything else, when they make use of it as well, become useful and beneficial; without it, even if we knew everything else as well as could be, that knowledge would be no use to us, any more than there is use in possessing anything without the good (505a–b). Those who say the good is wisdom, he adds, cannot show which wisdom they mean, and in the end are forced to say that it is wisdom “of the good” (505b–c), which can be read beside Critias’ answer, when Socrates asks which knowledge makes a man happy, that it is the one “by which he knows good ... and bad” (*Charmides* 174b).

Later readings

The Stoics, named from the Painted Stoa at Athens where their founder Zeno of Citium taught, made benefit the definition of the good. Diogenes Laertius, the biographer of the Greek philosophers, reports that in the strict sense the good is “the same as benefit, or not other than benefit”. As heating, not chilling, is the property of the hot, so benefiting, not harming, is the property of the good; wealth and health benefit no more than they harm, and what can be used both well and badly is not good, so neither is a good (Posidonius, Diogenes adds, counted them among the goods). Only the fine is good, that is, virtue and what shares in it; the goods are the virtues, wisdom, justice, courage and temperance among them, while life, health, beauty, strength and wealth, which neither benefit nor harm, are indifferent.⁴ Their argument from use can be read as the *Meno*’s and the *Euthydemus*’ made into doctrine, and their counting of temperance among the goods, the things that benefit, as Socrates’ hunch at *Charmides* 169b made true by definition.

Translation in this edition

The edition keeps one English family for the ὀφελ- words, so that the verdict answers the question in its own terms. ὠφέλιμος is “beneficial” (164b, 169b–c, 175a), ὠφελεῖν “benefit” (169b, 174d–e, and “of no benefit to you” at 175e), ὠφελία “benefit” (165d, 167b, 171d, 175a), and ὠφελίμως “beneficially” (163c, 164b–c, 174d). Three times the English changes the part of speech and keeps the word: ὅταν ὠφελίμως ἰᾶται is “when his

⁴ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 7.5 (Zeno and the Painted Stoa), 7.94 (the definition of the good), 7.101–102 (only the fine is good; goods and indifferents) and 7.103 (the arguments from heating and from use), reporting the Stoics.

treatment is beneficial” (164b), μεγαλωστί ... ὠφέλιμον “of enormous benefit” (171d), and εἰ αὕτη ἐστὶν ὠφέλιμος “if this is what benefits us” (174d). Ἀνωφελής is “of no benefit” at 175d but “of no use” at 175b, where Socrates sets it against ὄφελος: “of no use to us, if I were of any use at inquiring well”. Except for “of no use” at 175b, “use” and “useful” render other words: chiefly ὄφελος (“no use at all”, 155e; “of any use”, 175b), χρήσιμος (“useful advice”, 165a; “what use is it to us”, 165c), χρηστός (“to no useful purpose”, 172c, 175a) and the verb χρῆσθαι, “use” (173c). At 165c–d the two families meet: if he were asked what use (χρησίμη) medicine is to us, Socrates says, he would answer “No small benefit” (ὠφελίαν). Ὀνινάναι is “profit” at 164b and 175e and “benefit” at 172d; ἀπολαύειν is “get out of” (172c); βλαβερός and βλαβερῶς are “harmful” and “harmfully” (163c, 164b).

ἀνωφελής

Attested: ἀνωφελές (*anōpheles*; 175b, 175d). Of no benefit, unavailing. Socrates says, “For surely what is agreed to be the finest of all things would not have turned out to be of no use to us, if I were of any use at inquiring well” (175a–b), where the word plays on ὄφελος, “use”; and the inquiry has shown what they laid down as temperance “to be of no benefit” (175d). Lemma: ἀνωφελής.

ἀπολαύω

Attested: ἀπολαυσόμεθα (*apolausometha*; 172c). To get the fruit or enjoyment of something, to get something out of it. Socrates asks whether easier learning and better examining are what “we shall get out of temperance, while we have been looking at something greater” (172b–c). Lemma: ἀπολαύω.

βλαβερός

Attested: βλαβερά (*blabera*; 163c). Harmful. Critias says that Hesiod regarded only things made finely and beneficially “as appropriate to one, and everything harmful as belonging to others” (163c). Lemma: βλαβερός.

βλαβερῶς

Attested: βλαβερῶς (*blaberōs*; 164b). Harmfully. On Critias’ “Perhaps not”, Socrates concludes that “sometimes ... the doctor, having acted beneficially or harmfully, does not know himself — how he has acted” (164b–c). Lemma: βλαβερῶς.

μεγαλωστί

Attested: μεγαλωστί (*megalōsti*; 171d). Greatly, on a grand scale; a rare epic and Ionic adverb, here a conjecture of Stephanus, the sixteenth-century printer whose Plato of 1578 gives the section numbers, for the manuscripts’ μεγάλως τι, “greatly, in a way”. Had the temperate man known what he

knew and what he did not, “it would be of enormous benefit to us to be temperate” (171d). Lemma: μεγαλωσί.

ὀνίνημι

Attested: ὀνήσεσθαι (*onēsesthai*; 164b), ὀνήσει (*onēsei*; 172d), ὀνήση (*onēsei*; 175e). To benefit someone, and in the middle to get benefit, to profit. Socrates asks whether each craftsman must know “when he is going to profit from the work he is doing” (164b); granting the definition, he proposes to look into “whether, if it is of that kind, it will benefit us at all” (172d); and he is aggrieved if Charmides is “to get no profit from this temperance” (175e). Lemma: ὀνίνημι.

ὠφελέω

Attested: ὠφελοῖ (*ōpheloi*; 169b, 174d, 174e), ὠφελεῖν (*ōphelain*; 174d), ὠφελήσει (*ōphelēsei*; 175e). To benefit, to do good to. Socrates will not accept knowledge of knowledge as temperance until he has looked into “whether a thing of that kind would benefit us or not” (169b); the knowledge of good and bad is “the knowledge whose work is to benefit us” (174d); Critias asks of temperance, “Why couldn’t it benefit us?”, since, ruling over that knowledge too, it “would benefit us” (174d–e); Socrates is aggrieved if temperance is to be of no benefit to Charmides in life (175e). Lemma: ὠφελέω.

ὠφελία

Attested: ὠφελίαν (*ōphelian*; 165d), ὠφελία (*ōphelia*; 167b, 171d), ὠφελίας (*ōphelias*; 175a twice). Benefit, help. Medicine brings “No small benefit”, health (165d); the second question is “what benefit there would be for us in knowing it” (167b); “Then what benefit, Critias, ... would we still get from temperance, if it is like this?” (171d); temperance is not the craftsman of health, “Nor of benefit either”, and so is “the craftsman of no benefit” (175a). Lemma: ὠφελία.

ὠφέλιμος

Attested: ὠφέλιμα (*ōphelima*; 164b), ὠφέλιμον (*ōphelimon*; 169b, 169c, 171d), ὠφέλιμος (*ōphelimos*; 174d, 175a). Beneficial, doing good. The doctor makes “something beneficial both for himself and for the patient he is treating” (164b); Socrates’ hunch is that temperance is “something beneficial and good”, and Critias must show his knowledge beneficial as well as possible (169b–c); had temperance been as first supposed, it would have been “of enormous benefit” (171d); if the knowledge of good and bad is “what benefits us”, temperance would be something else (174d); and Socrates asks, “How then will temperance be beneficial, when it is the craftsman of no benefit?” (175a). At 174d Burnet, following the Danish scholar Madvig, deletes the words ἡ ὠφελίμη, “the beneficial one”, which stand after “something else” in the manuscript B (T has ὠφελίμη without

the article); they are not part of his text, and the edition does not translate them. Lemma: ὠφελίμως.

ὠφελίμως

Attested: ὠφελίμως (*ōphelimōs*; 163c, 164b twice, 164c twice, 174d). Beneficially, so as to do good. Critias’ “things made finely and beneficially” (163c); the doctor who need not, perhaps, know “when his treatment is beneficial”, and who, “having acted beneficially”, acts temperately by Critias’ account without knowing himself (164b–c); and the crafts without the knowledge of good and bad, which still make us healthy, but without “each of these things being done well and beneficially” (174c–d). Lemma: ὠφελίμως.

See also

Correctness and error; Good and bad; Happiness and doing well; Ruling and supervision; Use and profit; Work and working.

Blessed

Blessedness · Charmides

μακάριος, *makarios*, “blessed”; ὦ μακάριε, *ō makarie*, “my dear fellow”

At a Glance

The word. Μακάριος congratulates someone on an enviable lot; μάκαρ, the word it is formed from, is in Homer a standing epithet of the gods. The vocative ὦ μακάριε is a friendly address, “my dear fellow”.

In the *Charmides*. Socrates calls Charmides blessed twice, each time on a condition: if, as Critias says, the boy is also well enough endowed for temperance and the rest (158b), and, after the argument has failed, if he has temperance (175e–176a). Twice the vocative is an address and nothing more, to Charmides at 157a and to Critias at 166d.

In this edition. The adjective is “blessed” and the vocative “my dear fellow”; εὐδαίμων, beside it, is “happy”.

A place to read. 175e–176a, where, after the inquiry has failed, Socrates still calls Charmides blessed if he has temperance.

Meaning

Μακάριος (*makarios*) is formed from μάκαρ (*makar*), “blessed”, in Homer a standing epithet of the gods, the μάκαρες θεοί (*makares theoi*), “blessed gods”.⁵ Said of men, μάκαρ congratulates them on an enviable lot, and μακάριος keeps that sense: Odysseus, cast up naked on the shore of the Phaeacians, calls the parents and brothers of the princess Nausicaa “thrice

⁵ Homer, *Odyssey* 5.7, in Athena’s address to Zeus and the other gods.

blessed” for such a child.⁶ In address, ὦ μακάριε is friendly and says nothing of the hearer’s fortune. Beside μακάριος stands εὐδαιμων (eudaimōn), “happy”, the word for a life that goes well as a whole.

Use in the book

Said of a person, “blessed” comes twice, both times to Charmides and both times on a condition. Socrates first praises the boy’s family, his father’s house celebrated by the poets for its beauty and virtue “and everything else that goes by the name of happiness”, and then his looks (157e–158b). The blessing follows: “And if, as Critias here says, you are also well enough endowed for temperance and the rest, then blessed is the child, my dear Charmides, ... your mother bore” (158b). The words are the old formula of blessing, and, as the edition’s note says, “Socrates is laying it on”. But the condition is real: Socrates at once puts the claim of Critias, Charmides’ cousin and guardian, to the boy as a question (158b–c; see Adequacy and deficiency). Happiness is what the family is celebrated for; whether the child is blessed can be read as waiting on his soul.

The vocative is a different thing. At 157a it falls in Socrates’ report to Charmides of what a Thracian doctor, met on campaign, taught him: “And the soul, my dear fellow, he said, is treated with certain charms” (157a). The Greek gives the doctor’s teaching in indirect speech, so the address is Socrates’ own, to Charmides. At 166d it is said to Critias, after his charge that Socrates is trying to refute him (166c): “Then take heart, my dear fellow, ... answer the question as it seems to you” (166d). Neither address judges anyone’s lot.

At the end “blessed” returns. When the argument has left temperance of no benefit (175a–d), Socrates lays the fault on himself, “a poor inquirer”, and goes on: “For I do think that temperance is a great good, and that if you have it you are blessed” (175e–176a). A moment later, on the same condition, he joins “happier” to it (176a; see Babbling and self-deprecation). The argument about what would make us “do well and be happy” (172a–174c) speaks only of being happy, never of being blessed. “Blessed” is Socrates’ own word to Charmides, and it frames the inquiry: given before any definition was tried, it is given again on the same condition after every definition has failed. The argument found no account of temperance, but did not shake his belief in its worth; and Charmides, who cannot say whether he has it (176a), cannot tell whether the blessing is his.

Places to read

The chief passages, in the order of the dialogue.

157a In his report of the Thracian’s teaching, Socrates addresses Charmides as “my dear fellow”.

⁶ Homer, *Odyssey* 6.149–157; the blessing is at 154–155.

157e–158b After praising Charmides’ houses and his looks, Socrates calls him blessed if, as Critias says, he is also well enough endowed for temperance and the rest.

166d Socrates encourages Critias, “my dear fellow”, to answer as it seems to him.

175e–176a Socrates holds temperance a great good and Charmides blessed if he has it, and, if he has it, would have him count himself the happier the more temperate he is.

Elsewhere in Plato

In the *Gorgias* Socrates argues what in the *Charmides* he only holds: the temperate man, being just, brave and pious, is perfectly good; the good man does well and finely whatever he does; and “the one who does well is blessed and happy”, while the wicked man who does badly is wretched (507a–c). Near the end of the first book of the *Republic*, arguing against the sophist Thrasymachus of Chalcedon, Socrates has him grant that the just man lives well and the unjust badly, that the man who lives well is blessed and happy, and that being wretched does not profit while being happy does; and he concludes, “Never, then, my blessed Thrasymachus, is injustice more profitable than justice” (353e–354a). There the adjective and the address stand a few lines apart.

Translation in this edition

The adjective is “blessed” at both its places (158b, 176a), and the vocative ὦ μακάριε “my dear fellow” at both of its (157a, 166d); the phrase “my dear fellow” renders nothing else in the dialogue. At 158b the Greek, μακάριόν σε ... ἢ μήτηρ ἔτικτεν, says literally “your mother bore you blessed”, which the edition gives as “blessed is the child ... your mother bore”. The εὐδαιμ- family is kept apart: the adjective εὐδαίμων is “happy” (172a, 173e, 174a), the verb εὐδαιμονεῖν “be happy” (173d, 174c), the noun εὐδαιμονία “happiness” (158a), and the comparative at 176a “happier”.

μακάριος

Attested: μακάριε (*makarie*; 157a, 166d), μακάριον (*makarion*; 158b, 176a). Blessed, to be congratulated on an enviable lot. Twice it is said of Charmides, on condition that he has temperance (158b, 176a). In the vocative, “my dear fellow”, it is a friendly address: to Charmides in Socrates’ report of the Thracian’s teaching (157a), and to Critias in the argument (166d). Lemma: μακάριος.

See also

Good and bad; Happiness and doing well; Praise and blame; Temperance.

Conduct character and emotion

Beauty

Fine and beautiful · Charmides

καλός, *kalos*, “beautiful”, “fine”; κάλλος, *kallos*, “beauty”; καλῶς, *kalōs*, “finely”, “well”, “right”; καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθός, *kalos kai agathos*, “beautiful and good”; αἰσχρός, *aischros*, “ugly”, “improper”

At a Glance

The word. Καλός is beautiful of a body and fine of an act, work or thing; κάλλος is beauty, καλῶς “finely” or “well”, and the opposite, αἰσχρός, “ugly” and “shameful”.

In the *Charmides*. Charmides is “the one who is thought the most beautiful” (154a), and Socrates proposes to strip his soul before his body (154e); the charm for the soul is “beautiful words” (157a). Then the word turns to the fine: the first definition falls on the premise that temperance is “one of the fine things” (159c–160d), Critias joins what is made “finely” to what is made “beneficially” (163c), and at the end Socrates blames his own inquiring because “the finest of all things” has turned out “of no use to us” (175a–b).

In this edition. Καλός is “beautiful” of persons, of the object of love and of the charm’s words, and “fine” of acts, works and things; καλῶς is “finely”, “well” or “right”.

A place to read. 154d–e, where Socrates proposes to strip the boy’s soul before his figure.

Meaning

Καλός (*kalos*) is one word where English needs two: the ordinary word for a beautiful body, face or thing, and equally for a fine act or a work well done. Athenian lovers wrote καλός after a boy’s name: in Aristophanes’ *Wasps* the slave Xanthias says that his master, an old man mad for jury service, finding “Demos son of Pyrilampes, beautiful” written on a door, goes and writes beside it “Voting-funnel, beautiful”, the funnel of the urn into which jurors dropped their votes (97–99).⁷ This Pyrilampes is the uncle of Charmides whom Socrates praises at 158a. Κάλλος (*kallos*) is beauty. The adverb καλῶς (*kalōs*) is “finely” or “well”, and in conversation “right” or “well said”. The opposite, αἰσχρός (*aischros*), is “ugly” of looks and “shameful” of conduct. With ἀγαθός (*agathos*), “good”, the adjective made καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθός, contracted from καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθός, “beautiful and good”, the stock phrase for a gentleman.

⁷ Aristophanes, *Wasps* 97–99.

Use in the book

Back from the siege of Potidaea, the rebel city in the north Aegean, Socrates asks how philosophy is doing and whether any of the young men “had turned out to be outstanding in wisdom, or in beauty, or in both” (153d). Critias, Charmides’ cousin and guardian, answers that the young men coming in are the lovers “of the one who is thought the most beautiful — at the moment, anyway” (154a). Socrates, telling the story to an unnamed friend, confesses that he is “no measure of anything”: “nearly everyone of that age looks beautiful to me.” All the same, Charmides, son of Glaucon, struck him as “a marvel of stature and beauty” (154b–c; see Age and maturity). Chaerephon, Socrates’ friend, asks, “Hasn’t he a lovely face?”, and says that stripped the boy would seem to have no face at all, “his figure is so perfectly beautiful” (154d).

Socrates turns the praise. “What an invincible man you are describing,” he says, “if he has just one little thing more”; and when Critias asks what, he answers, “If where his soul is concerned ... he is in fact well made.” Critias replies with the gentleman’s phrase, “Oh, he’s thoroughly beautiful and good ... in that respect too”, and Socrates asks, “Then why don’t we strip that very part of him ... and take a look at it before we look at his figure?” (154d–e). Chaerephon’s verb for undressing is turned on the soul, and visible beauty becomes the reason for looking at what cannot be seen.

Beauty then acts on Socrates himself: seeing inside the boy’s cloak, he is “on fire”, and thinks the lyric poet Cydias wise in his warning about “a beautiful boy” (155d–e; see Advice and greeting). The cure he offers moves beauty from the body to speech. A doctor of Zalmoxis, god-king of the Thracians to the north of the Aegean, taught him that the soul “is treated with certain charms, and these charms are beautiful words. From words like these, temperance comes to be in souls” (157a). *Καλοί* is the word used of the boy, and the charm can be read as the conversation that follows (see Charm). No one, the doctor said, was to be “so rich, or so wellborn, or so beautiful” as to persuade Socrates to treat a patient’s head before his soul (157b–c). After praising the beauty and virtue of the boy’s two houses and his looks (157e–158b; see Anacreon), Socrates adds: “And if, as Critias here says, you are also well enough endowed for temperance and the rest, then blessed is the child, my dear Charmides ... your mother bore” (158b). The boy blushes, and to Socrates the narrator “he looked even more beautiful” (158c; see Age and maturity).

Then the word changes sense. To Charmides’ first answer, that temperance is “a kind of quietness” (159b; see Quietness), Socrates replies, “Tell me: temperance is one of the fine things, isn’t it?” “Certainly,” says the boy (159c). Socrates runs through a schoolboy’s lessons and then the other actions of body and soul, asking for instance whether “the ones done nimbly and quickly” are not “the fine ones, and the ones done laboriously and quietly the ugly ones” (159c–160b; see Quickness and slowness). On

this argument, then, temperance would not be a kind of quietness; and even if as many quiet actions as quick ones proved finer, temperance would be no more acting quietly than acting quickly: “For in our argument we laid it down that temperance is one of the fine things, and quick things have turned out to be no less fine than quiet ones” (160b–d). The premise is never examined. Against the second definition, modesty, Socrates uses it again with a companion: temperance is “not only fine, but good as well” (160e; see Modesty and shame).

Critias joins the fine to benefit: Hesiod, the poet of the *Works and Days*, he says, called “things made finely and beneficially” works (163c; see Action). Socrates keeps the pair: asked what medicine does for us, he would answer, “No small benefit: it produces health, a fine work for us”; so he asks what “fine work” temperance produces (165c–e; see Art and craft). Twice in the argument about knowledge of knowledge the word keeps its first sense. Among his parallels to a knowledge of itself Socrates asks about “a love of such a kind that it turns out to be love of nothing beautiful, but of itself and of the other loves”, and Critias denies that there is such a love (167e). After a prologue in which the whole company seemed in love with Charmides, the example can be read as a joke on them. Critias’ own analogy then sets beauty beside speed: “when someone has speed he is fast, and when he has beauty, beautiful” (169e).

As first imagined, temperance would have had households and cities “run well”, and men “do finely and well in every action” (171e–172a; see Happiness and doing well); but the knowledge by which each thing is done “well and beneficially” proves to be the knowledge of good and bad, and that, it seems, is not temperance (174b–d; see Art and craft). Socrates turns the conclusion on himself: “For surely what is agreed to be the finest of all things would not have turned out to be of no use to us, if I were of any use at inquiring well” (175a–b). The argument had laid down only that temperance is “one of the fine things” (159c, 160d); now it is the finest, and when it seems useless Socrates blames his inquiry, assuming that what is finest cannot in truth be useless, an assumption that can be read as resting on the pairing of fine and beneficial that Critias took from Hesiod (163c). Socrates grieves for the boy, such as he is in his looks and most temperate in soul, if temperance brings him no profit (175d–e): looks and soul stand together again, as at 154d–e. The dialogue never asks what the fine is, but it rests on the fine twice: as the premise that refutes the first definition, and, at the end, as the ground on which Socrates will not accept that the finest of all things is of no use.

Places to read

The chief passages, in the order of the dialogue.

153d Socrates asks whether any of the young men has turned out outstanding in wisdom, or in beauty, or in both.

- 154a–c** The lovers come in ahead of the boy thought most beautiful; Socrates, to whom nearly everyone of that age looks beautiful, finds Charmides a marvel of stature and beauty.
- 154d–e** Chaerephon praises the boy's face and figure; Socrates names one thing more, a well-made soul; Critias calls him beautiful and good in that respect too, and Socrates proposes to strip his soul first.
- 155d–e** Socrates, on fire at the sight inside the boy's cloak, thinks Cydias wisest in love, who spoke of a beautiful boy as a lion.
- 157a–c** The Thracian's teaching: the soul is treated with charms, which are beautiful words, and no one rich, wellborn or beautiful is to persuade the healer to treat the head before the soul.
- 157e–158c** Socrates praises the beauty and virtue of the boy's two houses and his looks, makes his blessedness depend on temperance, and finds him more beautiful still when he blushes.
- 159c–160d** Temperance is one of the fine things; quick actions prove no less fine than quiet ones, in body and soul; so temperance is not quietness.
- 160e** Temperance is not only fine, but good as well.
- 163b–c** Critias' Hesiod: a thing made may be a disgrace when it does not come about with what is fine; things made finely and beneficially are works.
- 165c–e** Medicine produces health, a fine work; what fine work does temperance produce?
- 167e** Critias denies that there is a love which loves nothing beautiful, but only itself and the other loves.
- 169e** Critias' analogy: as whoever has beauty is beautiful, so whoever has a knowledge that knows itself will know himself.
- 171e–172a** Under temperance households would be run well, and men would do finely and well in every action.
- 175a–b** What is agreed to be the finest of all things has turned out to be of no use; Socrates blames his inquiring.
- 175d–e** Socrates is aggrieved for the boy, such as he is in his looks and temperate in soul, if temperance should bring him no profit.

Elsewhere in Plato

In the *Symposium* Socrates reports what he learned about love from Diotima, a wise woman of Mantinea in Arcadia, and her teaching can be read as the road the *Charmides* points to without taking. The lover begins with one beautiful body and there begets "beautiful words" (210a), the

words of the Thracian's charm. He comes to count the beauty in souls more precious than that in bodies, so that a decent soul with only a slight bloom is enough for him to love and care for, and to bring forth words that make the young better (210b–c); then he passes to practices and laws, to the kinds of knowledge, and at last to the one study whose object is the beautiful itself, which is not beautiful in one respect and ugly in another, and will not appear to him as a face or hands (210c–211c), though the praise of Charmides began with his “lovely face” (154d). Should Socrates ever see it, Diotima tells him, it will not seem to him to be like gold or clothing or the beautiful boys and young men whose sight now astounds him (211d), in the verb used of Charmides' admirers (154c). Critias' knowledge of itself, likened at 167e to a love of nothing beautiful, can be read as the reverse of Diotima's study, which is of nothing but the beautiful.

Two dialogues ask what makes fine things fine, and both tie the fine to benefit, as Critias does at 163c. In the *Gorgias* Polus, a follower of the rhetorician Gorgias, agrees with Socrates that bodies, colours, shapes, sounds, laws, practices and studies are called fine for their use, for the pleasure they give, or for both, and approves the definition of the fine “by pleasure and good” (474d–475a). In the *Hippias Major*, whose authorship has been doubted, Socrates and the sophist Hippias of Elis, in the western Peloponnese, try the useful, as eyes are fine that can see and a body fine for running or wrestling (295c), and then the beneficial, the useful for good (296c–e). But the beneficial is the cause of good, and a cause is other than what it causes, as a father is not his son; so the fine would not be good, nor the good fine, and neither man will accept it (296e–297d). The dialogue ends on the proverb “fine things are difficult” (304e). The *Charmides* holds the two together without defining either: temperance is “not only fine, but good as well” (160e), and Socrates will not let the finest of all things turn out to be of no use (175a–b).

The Platonists

Plotinus, the Platonist philosopher who taught at Rome in the third century AD, wrote a treatise “On Beauty” that climbs by the steps of Diotima's ascent. Beauty is chiefly in what is seen, and also in what is heard; above the senses there are beautiful practices, actions, states and kinds of knowledge, and the beauty of the virtues (I.6.1). He asks those who love what lies beyond the senses what they feel before the beauty of souls. What they love there, he answers, is no shape, colour or size but the soul, itself colourless and with a colourless temperance, when they see in themselves or in another “greatness of soul, a just character, pure temperance, courage with its fierce face, and gravity and modesty flowering on a steady, calm and untroubled disposition” (I.6.5). This can be read as the look at a soul stripped that Socrates proposed at 154e, finding beautiful the very temperance and modesty that Charmides tried to define. For Plotinus the

purified soul becomes beautiful, the good and the beautiful are at the summit the same (I.6.6), and an eye that had not become like the sun would never have seen the sun, nor would a soul see the beautiful unless it had become beautiful (I.6.9).⁸

Translation in this edition

The edition renders *καλός* by what it is said of. It is “beautiful” of persons (154a–b, 154d, 155d, 157b, 158c), of the object of love (167e), of the charm’s words (157a) and in Critias’ analogy (169e), and “fine” of acts, works and things: the gift for poetry, “That fine gift” (155a), the premise and the comparisons of 159c–160e, Hesiod’s “what is fine” (163c), the “fine work” of medicine and the one asked of temperance (165d–e), and “the finest of all things” (175a). Of persons the comparative is “more beautiful” of the blushing boy (158c), “finer” of offspring (157e) and “handsomer” of Pylampes (158a); *πάγκαλος* is “so perfectly beautiful” (154d). The stock phrase keeps its literal words, “beautiful and good” (154e), so that Critias’ compliment still speaks of beauty. *Κάλλος* is “beauty” at all four of its places. The adverb *καλῶς* is “finely” (163c, 172a), “well” (156c, 171e, 175b), “in good condition” in the phrase *καλῶς ἔχειν*, literally “to be in a fine state” (156e, 157a), “right” in assent and judgement (155a, 156d, 161a, 172d, 172e, 173a), and “Good for you” in *καλῶς ποιῶν* (156a, 162e); its comparative *κάλλιον* is “better” (172b). *Αἰσχρός* is “ugly” of laboured movements (159d) and “improper” once (155a); “disgrace” in Critias’ Hesiod renders another word, *ὄνειδος* (*oneidos*), “reproach” (163b–c). Chaerephon’s “lovely face” renders *εὐπρόσωπος* (*euprosōpos*), “fair-faced” (154d), and “looks” renders *ἰδέα* (*idea*), “appearance” (157d, 158b, 175d).

ἄμαχος

Attested: *ἄμαχον* (*amachon*; 154d). Not to be fought, invincible. Hearing the praise of the boy’s face and figure, Socrates exclaims, “Heracles! What an invincible man you are describing, if he has just one little thing more”, the one thing being a well-made soul (154d–e). Lemma: *ἄμαχος*.

ἐκπλήσσω

Attested: *ἐκπεπληγμένοι* (*ekpeplēgmenoi*; 154c). To strike out of one’s wits, to astound. All the rest seemed to Socrates to be in love with Charmides, “so astounded and flustered were they when he came in” (154c). Diotima uses the same verb of Socrates himself before beautiful boys (*Symposium* 211d). Lemma: *ἐκπλήσσω*.

θαυμαστός

Attested: *θαυμαστός* (*thaumastos*; 154c), *θαυμαστόν* (*thaumaston*; 154c, 162e). Wonderful, to be wondered at. Charmides struck Socrates “as a

⁸ Plotinus, *Ennead* I.6 (“On Beauty”) 1, 5, 6 and 9.

marvel of stature and beauty”, and of the crowd’s passion Socrates the narrator remarks, “With us grown men that was less surprising” (154c); at 162d–e he tells Critias that it is “no wonder that he doesn’t know, at his age”. The verb θαυμάζω, “be surprised” at 161c and “wonder at” at 164a, is not listed. Lemma: θαυμαστός.

θορυβέω

Attested: τεθορυβημένοι (*tethorybēmenoi*; 154c). To make a din, and in the passive to be thrown into confusion; θόρυβος is the uproar of a crowd. The admirers were “so astounded and flustered ... when he came in” (154c). Lemma: θορυβέω.

κάλλος

Attested: κάλλει (*kallei*; 153d, 157e), κάλλος (*kallos*; 154c, 169e). Beauty. Socrates asks whether any young man is outstanding “in wisdom, or in beauty, or in both” (153d); Charmides is “a marvel of stature and beauty” (154c); his father’s house is celebrated “for its outstanding beauty and virtue” (157e–158a); and in Critias’ analogy whoever has beauty is beautiful (169e). Lemma: κάλλος.

καλός

Attested: καλῶν (*kalōn*; 154a, 159c, 160d), καλλίστου (*kallistou*; 154a), καλοῦς (*kalous*; 154b, 157a), καλοί (*kaloī*; 154b), καλός (*kalos*; 154e, 169e), καλόν (*kalon*; 155a, 157b, 159d twice, 160b, 160e twice, 165d, 165e), καλοῦ (*kalou*; 155d, 159d, 163c, 167e), καλλίῳ (*kalliō*; 157e, 160b), καλλίων (*kalliōn*; 158a, 158c), κάλλιστον (*kalliston*; 159c, 159d, 175a), κάλλιον (*kallion*; 159c, 159e three times), κάλλιστα (*kallista*; 160a), καλλίους (*kallious*; 160c twice), καλά (*kala*; 160d); the compound πάγκαλος (*pankalos*; 154d); the adverb καλῶς (*kalōs*; 155a, 156a, 156c, 156d, 156e, 157a, 161a, 162e, 163c, 171e, 172a, 172d, 172e, 173a, 175b) and its comparative κάλλιον (*kallion*; 172b). Beautiful, fine: in the prologue the beauty of persons and of the charm’s “beautiful words” (157a), in the argument the fine, from the premise that temperance is “one of the fine things” (159c) to “the finest of all things” (175a). The adverb is “finely” or “well”, and in assent “right”. Lemma: καλός.

καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθός

Attested: καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθός (*kalos kai agathos*; 154e). Beautiful and good: the stock phrase for a gentleman, usually contracted to καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθός, here in its full form. When Socrates asks for a well-made soul as well, Critias answers, “Oh, he’s thoroughly beautiful and good ... in that respect too” (154e), and so claims for the soul the word everyone has been using of the boy’s looks. Lemma: καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθός.

σύμφημι

Attested: συνέφασαν (*synephasan*; 154d). To say the same, to agree. After Chaerephon's praise of the boy's figure, "The others all said the same as Chaerephon" (154d). Lemma: σύμφημι.

ὑπερφυῶς

Attested: ὑπερφυῶς (*hyperphyōs*; 154d). Beyond nature, extraordinarily. It is Socrates' one-word answer to Chaerephon's "Hasn't he a lovely face?": "Extraordinarily" (154d). Lemma: ὑπερφυῶς.

ὑποβαίνω

Attested: ὑποβεβηκέναι (*hypobebēkenai*; 158b). To step down, to fall below. Socrates tells Charmides, "As for what can be seen of your looks, dear son of Glaucon, you seem to me to fall short of none of your forebears in any respect" (158a–b). Lemma: ὑποβαίνω.

See also

Charm; Good and bad; Modesty and shame; Temperance; Ugly and shameful; Work and working.

Crafts expertise and products

Athletics

παλαίειν, *palaiein*, "wrestling"; πυκτεύειν, *pykteuein*, "boxing"; παγκρατιάζειν, *pankratiazein*, "the pancration"; θεῖν, *thein*, "running"; ἄλλεσθαι, *hallesthai*, "jumping"

At a Glance

The word. Παλαίειν is to wrestle, πυκτεύειν to box, παγκρατιάζειν to fight in the pancration (a contest that combined boxing and wrestling), θεῖν to run and ἄλλεσθαι to jump: the exercises an Athenian boy learned from his trainer.

In the *Charmides*. The dialogue is set in a wrestling-school (153a), and Chaerephon welcomes Socrates by jumping up and running to him (153b). The five verbs come together at 159c, when Socrates tests Charmides' answer that temperance is a kind of quietness. After copying letters and reading, he asks about the lyre and wrestling, boxing and the pancration, running and jumping, and each time Charmides grants that the quick is finer than the quiet; so, as far as the body goes, quickness would be the more temperate (159c–d). In a contest "quietly" can only mean slowly, a word Charmides never used. The argument then passes to the soul (159e–160b), where the wrestler's nimbleness returns as "sharpness" (160a).

In this edition. The infinitives are “wrestling”, “boxing”, “the pancration”, “running” and “jumping”, and a note explains the pancration. Ὀξέως is “nimble” of the body (159c–d), and ὀξύτης, from the same adjective, “sharpness”, first of the soul (160a), then of soul and body together (160b).

A place to read. 159c–d, where wrestling, boxing, running and jumping are made to tell against quietness.

Meaning

Παλαίειν (*palaiein*) is to wrestle, from πάλη (*palē*), “wrestling”, which also gives παλαίστρα (*palaistra*), the “wrestling-school”. Πυκτεύειν (*pykteuein*) is to box, from πύκτης (*pyktēs*), “boxer”. Παγκρατιάζειν (*pankratiazerein*) is to compete in the παγκράτιον (*pankration*), “all-strength”, which, as the edition’s note explains, combined boxing and wrestling, with almost anything allowed except biting and gouging. Θεῖν (*thein*) is to run, and ἅλλεσθαι (*hallesthai*) to leap or jump. These were the exercises taught by the trainer, who with the writing-master and the lyre-master gave an Athenian boy his schooling (*Protagoras* 325d–326c); the *Charmides* mentions the writing-master and the lyre-master (159c, 160a), but never the trainer. At 159c each verb is an infinitive used as a noun, and Socrates asks not what the exercise is but how it is best done, quickly or quietly. His questions are put in adverbs, as Charmides, Critias’ young cousin and ward, had put his answer: temperance was “doing everything in an orderly way and quietly” (159b).

Use in the book

Socrates, back from the army besieging Potidaea, the rebel city in the north Aegean, goes into “the wrestling-school of Taureas” (153a; see *Palaestra*). The welcome of Chaerephon, his devoted friend, is athletic: “Chaerephon, madman that he is, jumped up from the middle of them all, came running over to me, and seized me by the hand,” Socrates narrates (153b), and “came running” renders ἔθει (*ethei*), the verb of “running” at 159c. Chaerephon’s “if he were willing to strip” (154d) belongs to a ground where athletes exercised naked; when Charmides has sat down and is about to question Socrates, “everyone in the wrestling-school came swirling round us in a ring,” as Socrates tells it (155d); and the oil-flask and strigil (the scraper for oil and dust) that each man must make for himself under the law Socrates imagines (161e) are the exercise ground’s kit.

Charmides’ first answer, as Socrates reports it, was that temperance “was doing everything in an orderly way and quietly: walking in the streets and talking, and doing everything else, in the same manner”, and in short “a kind of quietness” (159b; see *Quietness*). Socrates first has him grant that “temperance is one of the fine things”, and then walks him back through his own lessons (159c). At the writing-master’s, which is finest: “to copy out

the letters quickly, or quietly?” “Quickly.” “And reading? Quickly, or slowly?” “Quickly.” Then, in a single question, “playing the lyre quickly and wrestling nimbly are far finer than doing them quietly and slowly?” “Yes.” “And boxing and the pancration? Isn’t it the same?” “Certainly.” “And running and jumping, and all the actions of the body: aren’t the ones done nimbly and quickly the fine ones, and the ones done laboriously and quietly the ugly ones?” “So it appears” (159c–d). Socrates draws the conclusion: “in the body, at any rate, it is not the quiet that is finest, but the quickest and the nimblest”, and, since temperance is fine, “as far as the body goes, at any rate, it would not be quietness but quickness that was the more temperate.” “It seems so,” Charmides says (159d).

From the body the argument passes to the soul, carried at first by “quickly” (*ταχέως*, *tachēōs*), the word of the writing-master’s lessons: learning, teaching, recollecting and remembering are finer done quickly (159e). Socrates asks, “And isn’t quick-wittedness a kind of sharpness of the soul, and not a quietness?” (160a). “Sharpness” is *δξύτης* (*oxytēs*), from the same adjective, *δξύς* (*oxys*), as the *δξέως* (*oxeōs*) that was “nimble” in wrestling and running (159c–d). *Ὀξύς* is first sharp as a blade is sharp, and then quick; it serves for the wrestler and for the quick mind alike, and paired with quickness it frames Socrates’ summary: “So in everything, Charmides ... in the soul and in the body alike, what belongs to quickness and sharpness appears finer to us than what belongs to slowness and quietness?” he asks, and Charmides answers, “It looks that way” (160b; see Quickness and slowness). Temperance, then, “would not be a kind of quietness, nor would the temperate life be quiet, on this argument at any rate” (160b), and even on the most generous supposition it would be no more quietness than quickness (160c; see Quietness).

The exercises do the argument’s work, and they can be read as the point where it stops answering what Charmides meant. In a race or a bout, to be quick and nimble is to do the thing well, so that “quietly” there can only mean slowly; and “slowly” is Socrates’ word, which Charmides never used, as the edition’s note observes. Charmides had described a bearing, “walking in the streets and talking” (159b), and walking and talking come back only in Socrates’ conclusion (160c). Socrates himself limits the result: temperance is not quietness “on this argument at any rate” (160b).

Places to read

The chief passages, in the order of the dialogue.

153a–b Socrates goes into the wrestling-school of Taureas, and Chaerephon jumps up and comes running to meet him.

159b–d Charmides calls temperance a kind of quietness; in writing, reading, the lyre, wrestling, boxing and the pancration, running and jumping he grants that the quick is finer than the quiet, and so that in the body quickness would be the more temperate.

159e–160b Learning, teaching and remembering are finer done quickly; quick-wittedness is a sharpness of the soul; in soul and body alike quickness and sharpness prove finer than slowness and quietness.

160b–d Temperance would not be a kind of quietness; and even if the quiet actions that prove finer were no fewer than the quick ones, it would be no more acting quietly than acting vigorously and quickly.

Elsewhere in Plato

In the dialogue named after him, Protagoras of Abdera, the sophist, describes how the Athenians bring up their sons. Parents bid the teachers care far more for the boys' good conduct, *εὐκοσμία* (*eukosmia*), than for their letters and lyre-playing; the lyre-masters see to their temperance; and the trainer is to put their bodies in condition to serve a mind that is good, so that bodily weakness does not drive them to cowardice in war (325d–326c). The lessons with which Socrates begins at 159c were thus meant above all to make a boy orderly, the word of Charmides' answer (*κοσμίως*, *kosmiōs*, "in an orderly way", 159b), and Socrates' questions can be read as turning that schooling against the answer it was meant to produce.

The *Statesman* makes the contrast of 159c–160b a difference of natures. The visitor from Elea who leads the conversation says that quickness, vigour and sharpness, of thought, body or voice, we praise under one name, courage, while the calm kind, quiet thought, slow and soft action, an even and low voice, we call orderliness; out of season the first are blamed as insolent and frantic, the second as cowardly and slack, and the two natures are at odds (306c–307d). The kingly art must weave them together, since temperate rulers lack bite and a sharp, practical daring, and the courageous have it (309b–311c). Where the *Charmides* finds quietness no finer than quickness, the *Statesman* makes each the mark of a nature the city needs.

The *Republic* ties the two natures to the exercise ground. Socrates tells Glaucon, Plato's brother, that gymnastics and music were both established chiefly for the soul's sake, and Glaucon has noticed that those who practise gymnastics unmixed turn out wilder than they ought, and those who practise only music softer (410c–d). Rightly reared, the spirited part would be courageous, and the gentle, philosophic nature tame and orderly, *κόσμιον* (*kosmion*), the adjective of Charmides' "in an orderly way"; the guardians need both, tuned to each other (410d–411a). On this account the exercises of 159c can be read as training one half of a nature whose other half is the orderly one Charmides named.

Translation in this edition

The infinitives of 159c become English verbal nouns: τὸ παλαίειν is "wrestling", πυκτεύειν "boxing", θεῖν "running" and ἄλλεσθαι "jumping";

παγκρατιάζειν, which has no English verb, is “the pancration”, with a note. The imperfect ἔθει is “came running” (153b), and παλαιστρα is “wrestling-school” at both its places (153a, 155d). The ὀξύς family has “nimble” and “nimblest” while the talk is of the body, and “sharpness” once the soul comes in: ὀξέως is “nimble” (159c, 159d) and ὀξύτατον “nimblest” (159d); ὀξύτης is “sharpness”, of the soul (160a) and then of soul and body together (160b). The rest of the argument’s words keep one English each: ταχύ “quickly”, ταχυτής and τάχος “quickness”, βραδέως “slowly”, ἡσυχῇ “quietly”, σφόδρα “vigorously” (159c–160c). At 159d Burnet deletes βραδέα, “slow”, before μόγις, and the English follows him: the ugly actions are those “done laboriously and quietly”. Μόγις is “laboriously” there and “with difficulty” at 160a.

ἄλλομαι

Attested: ἄλλεσθαι (*hallesthai*; 159c). To leap, to jump. With running it closes Socrates’ list of exercises: “And running and jumping, and all the actions of the body: aren’t the ones done nimble and quickly the fine ones, and the ones done laboriously and quietly the ugly ones?” (159c–d). Lemma: ἄλλομαι.

θέω

Attested: ἔθει (*ethei*; 153b), θεῖν (*thein*; 159c). To run. Chaerephon “came running” to Socrates as he entered the wrestling-school (153b); at 159c–d running is one of the actions of the body that are fine when done nimble and quickly. Lemma: θέω.

παγκρατιάζω

Attested: παγκρατιάζειν (*pankratiazerein*; 159c). To compete in the pancration, which combined boxing and wrestling. It is paired with boxing in a single question: “And boxing and the pancration? Isn’t it the same?” “Certainly” (159c); that is, each is finer done quickly than quietly and slowly. Lemma: παγκρατιάζω.

παλαίω

Attested: παλαίειν (*palaiein*; 159c). To wrestle. It is asked about together with lyre-playing: “playing the lyre quickly and wrestling nimble are far finer than doing them quietly and slowly?” “Yes” (159c). The παλαιστρα, the “wrestling-school” where the dialogue is set, takes its name from the same root (153a, 155d). Lemma: παλαίω.

πυκτεύω

Attested: πυκτεύειν (*pykteuein*; 159c). To box. It comes after wrestling, paired with the pancration: “And boxing and the pancration? Isn’t it the same?” (159c). Lemma: πυκτεύω.

See also

Body; Palaestra; Quickness and slowness; Quietness; Schooling and the letter-master.

Knowledge ignorance and self-knowledge

Belief and opinion

δόξα, *doxa*, “opinion”; *δοξάζειν*, *doxazein*, “have ... opinion”; *οἶσθαι*, *oiesthai*, “think”; *δοκεῖν*, *dokein*, “be thought”, “think”, “seem”

At a Glance

The word. *Δόξα*, from *δοκεῖν*, “to seem”, is what seems so to someone, his opinion; *δοξάζειν* is to have an opinion, and *οἶσθαι* to think or suppose.

In the *Charmides*. Charmides is thought the most temperate of anyone (157d) and cannot say whether he is (158c–d); Socrates asks for his opinion instead (158e–159a). The danger is to think one knows when one does not (166d, 167a, 171c); and Critias denies that any opinion is only of opinions, though such is the knowledge under examination (168a). At the end two opinions outlast the failed argument: Socrates thinks temperance a great good, and Charmides thinks he needs the charm (175e–176b).

In this edition. *Δόξα* is “opinion” and *δοξάζειν* “have ... opinion”; *δοκεῖν* is mostly “is thought” of reputation and “think” of a speaker’s view; *οἶσθαι* is mostly “think”, and at 159a “this opinion of yours”.

A place to read. 158e–159a, Socrates’ request for Charmides’ opinion.

Meaning

Δόξα (*doxa*) is the noun of *δοκεῖν* (*dokein*), which is both “to seem” and “to think”: what seems so to me is what I think. The same verb says what a man is thought to be, so that one family of words covers opinion and reputation. *Οἶσθαι* (*oiesthai*), “to think, suppose”, is the verb of the error Socrates fears in himself, “to think one knows”, *οἶσθαι εἰδέναι* (*oiesthai eidenai*; 166d). What the *Charmides* sets against knowledge is not opinion but thinking one knows when one does not.

Use in the book

Charmides arrives with a reputation. Critias calls him “the one who is thought the most beautiful” (154a) and, “in other people’s opinion as well as his own, quite the poet” (155a), and says that “he is thought far and away the most temperate of anyone nowadays” (157d). Asked whether he agrees, Charmides can answer neither way (158c–d; see Adequacy and deficiency). A denial would be an odd thing to say against oneself, and would show up

as liars Critias and the many others who, by Critias' account, think he is temperate; to affirm it "will probably seem obnoxious" (158d).

Socrates turns from what others think to what Charmides thinks: "For surely, if it really is in you, it must give rise to some sense, from which you would have some opinion about it: what it is, and what sort of thing temperance is" (158e–159a). He goes on: "Then, so that we can make a guess whether it is in you or not, tell me, ... what you say temperance is, in your opinion" (159a). His answers come as opinions: "in his view" temperance was doing everything in an orderly way and quietly (159b), and at the second attempt he thinks it "makes a person feel shame" (160e). Asked by Critias for his own view, Socrates sets it aside: "Let's not look yet at what I think, but at what you are saying now" (163e).

The danger is the conceit of knowledge. Socrates says he refutes Critias for the reason for which he would scrutinize even himself: "for fear that I might ever, without noticing, think I know something when I don't" (166c–d). The temperate man of Critias' account would alone see what a person knows, and "what he thinks he knows but does not" (167a); but a knowledge only of knowledge could not tell "a doctor who knows the things of his craft from one who does not know them but pretends or thinks he does" (171c; see Art and craft).

Opinion also serves Socrates as a parallel to knowledge of knowledge. Asked about "an opinion which is an opinion of opinions and of itself, but has no opinion about any of the things the other opinions are opinions about", Critias answers, "Not at all" (168a). Yet such, it seems, is the knowledge Socrates and Critias are positing, and Socrates will not "yet insist that there isn't" (168a). Hearing that hears itself, or heat that burns itself, "would raise disbelief in some people, though perhaps not in others"; Socrates does not trust himself to decide, and so cannot say with confidence whether there can be knowledge of knowledge (168e–169b; see Being and substance; Adequacy and deficiency).

When the argument has made temperance of no benefit, Socrates blames himself, not temperance: "Well, I don't at all think it is so; rather, I am a poor inquirer. For I do think that temperance is a great good" (175e; see Babbling and self-deprecation). Charmides says, "I don't know whether I have it or whether I don't" (176a), and yet "I think I very much need the charm" (176b). The dialogue that asked the boy for his opinion ends with two opinions the argument could not turn into knowledge, held by speakers who do not claim to know: what can be read as the opposite of the conceit Socrates feared at 166d.

Places to read

The chief passages, in the order of the dialogue.

157d–158d Charmides is thought the most temperate of anyone nowadays; he can neither affirm it nor deny it: denial would be

odd and would show up those who think so, and affirmation would seem obnoxious.

158e–159b If temperance is present, it gives rise to a sense and so to an opinion; Socrates asks for Charmides' opinion in order to make a guess from it, and Charmides gives his view.

163e Socrates sets aside what he thinks, to look at what Critias says.

166c–167a Socrates examines arguments for fear of thinking he knows what he does not; the temperate man would see what others know and what they only think they know.

168a Critias denies that there is an opinion of opinions and of itself with no opinion about anything else; yet knowledge is said to be of that kind.

168e–169b Some powers turned on themselves raise disbelief; Socrates does not trust himself to decide, and so cannot say with confidence whether knowledge of knowledge is possible.

171c A temperance that is only knowledge of knowledge could not tell a doctor who knows from one who pretends or thinks he knows.

175e–176b Socrates thinks temperance a great good though the argument has failed; Charmides does not know whether he has it, but thinks he needs the charm.

Elsewhere in Plato

In the *Apology* Socrates, having questioned a politician reputed wise, reckons with himself that very likely neither of them knows anything fine and good; but where the politician, without knowing, supposes he knows something, Socrates, just as he does not know, does not suppose so either, and by this one small thing he seems to be the wiser: what he does not know he does not suppose he knows (21d). It is the distinction that the temperate man of *Charmides* 167a would draw in others, between what a man knows and what he only thinks he knows.

In the *Meno* Socrates argues that a man with right opinion about the road to Larisa, a city in Thessaly, who has neither travelled it nor knows it, will lead others there no worse than one who knows, for as long as his opinion is right, supposing what is true without understanding it (97a–c). Asked why knowledge is then prized above right opinion, he points to the statues of Daedalus, the legendary craftsman, which run off unless they are tied. True opinions are a fine thing while they stay, but they will not stay long; they slip away out of a man's soul until he binds them by reckoning out the cause, and once bound they become knowledge and stay put (97d–98a). He says this not as one who knows but as one who guesses, though he would count among the few things he knows that right opinion and

knowledge are different (98b). The two opinions that close the *Charmides* (175e–176b) can be read as opinions of this kind, not yet tied down.

In the *Republic* Socrates, talking with Plato's brother Glaucon, makes knowledge and opinion two powers, and tells one power from another by what it is concerned with and what it brings about (477c–d): knowledge has to do with what is, ignorance with what is not, and opinion, which unlike knowledge can go wrong, lies between them (477a–478d). One step of the argument can be read beside *Charmides* 168a. Socrates asks whether a man who holds an opinion does not direct it at something, or whether one can have an opinion that is an opinion of nothing; Glaucon says one cannot (478b).

Translation in this edition

At 159a “opinion” renders three Greek words: *δόξα*, *δοξάζειν* (“you have some opinion”) and *οἶεσθαι*, in Socrates’ *ὃ οἶει*, “what you think”, which is “this opinion of yours”; Charmides’ *οἶμαι* there is “I do”. *Δόξα* is “opinion” also at 168a, where *δοξάζειν* is “has no opinion about” and “are opinions about”. Of reputation *δοκεῖν* is “is thought” (154a, 157d twice, 158a, 160a, 162b), “in other people’s opinion” (155a) and, with the thinkers as subject, “who think I am temperate” (158d); of a speaker’s view it is mostly “think” (159b, 160e, 161b, 163e), once “in his view” (159b) and, with *παντὸς μάλλον*, “I am quite certain” (162b); and it is “seem” when Charmides may seem to lack temperance (158c). *Οἶεσθαι* is “think” at the places listed under its lemma below, except at 159a and in “to imagine” (156c) and “we must suppose” (163c); elsewhere it is also “suppose” (157e, 163b), “imagine” (160a, 167e) and “I should think” (154b). The edition does not use “belief” for any of these words; its one “believe” among them is *πιστεύειν* (161a). The neighbouring verbs keep their ordinary English, given under each lemma below.

δοκέω

Attested: *δοκοῦντος* (*dokountos*; 154a), *δοκεῖ* (*dokei*; 155a, 157d twice, 159b, 160a, 160e, 161b twice, 163e), *δόξαι* (*doxai*; 158a), *δοκεῖς* (*dokeis*; 158c), *δοκῶ* (*dokō*; 158d), *δοκοῖ* (*dokoi*; 159b), *ἐδόκει* (*edokei*; 162b), *δοκοῦν* (*dokoun*; 163e). To seem, to be thought; to think. The verb occurs in forty sections, most often in asides and in assent; listed are the places where it says what someone is thought to be by people generally (154a, 155a, 157d, 158a, 158d, 160a, 162b) or whether Charmides seems to lack temperance (158c), and where Charmides gives his definitions as what he thinks or one speaker asks another’s view of a definition (159b, 160e, 161b, 163e). Charmides is thought the most beautiful and the most temperate (154a, 157d); it is said that no man on the continent was ever thought handsomer or bigger than his uncle Pyrilampes (158a); and many, by Critias’ account, think Charmides temperate (158d). His first two answers are what he thinks

doubted”, and ἀπιστίαν (*apistian*; 169a), “disbelief”. To trust, to believe. Charmides believes Homer right that modesty is no good thing for a man in need (161a); Socrates says, “I, for my part, don’t trust myself to be capable of making these distinctions” (169a), just after saying that some cases “are very strongly doubted ever to have their own power in relation to themselves” and would “raise disbelief in some people, though perhaps not in others” (168e–169a). Lemma: πιστεύω.

τοπάζω

Attested: τοπάσσωμεν (*topasōmen*; 159a). To guess. Socrates asks for Charmides’ opinion of temperance so that they can make a guess whether it is in him (159a): whether he has temperance is to be guessed from what he thinks it is. Lemma: τοπάζω.

ὑπολαμβάνω

Attested: ὑπέλαβον (*hypelabon*; 162c). To take up, and so to suppose or suspect. Socrates, narrating, says, “For I think it was entirely true, as I had suspected, that Charmides had heard this answer about temperance from Critias” (162c), though Critias had denied it (161c). Lemma: ὑπολαμβάνω.

φαίνομαι

Attested: φανέται (*phaneitai*; 158d), φαίνῃ (*phainēi*; 158d), φαίνεται (*phainetai*; 159a, 160e, 166d). To appear, to seem. The verb occurs in twenty-five sections, most often in the answer “So it appears”; listed are the places where an answer is to be given as it seems to the answerer, or weighed by how it seems to others. Charmides fears that calling himself temperate “will probably seem obnoxious”, and Socrates answers, “You seem to me to be talking sense” (158d); Socrates asks Charmides what temperance seems to him to be (159a, 160e), and tells Critias to answer the question as it seems to him (166d). Lemma: φαίνομαι.

νομίζω

Attested: ἐνόμισα (*enomisa*; 155d), ἐνόμιζεν (*enomizen*; 163b). To hold, to think. Socrates, narrating, “thought Cydias the wisest of men in the ways of love” (155d; see Advice and greeting), Cydias being a lyric poet otherwise almost unknown; and Critias says that the poet Hesiod “held making to be something other than doing and working” (163b). Lemma: νομίζω.

ἡγέομαι

Attested: ἡγῆ (*hēgēi*; 161d, 164a), ἡγοῦμαι (*hēgoumai*; 161d, 164a), ἡγεῖσθαι (*hēgeisthai*; 163c, 176a), ἡγούμενος (*hēgoumenos*; 166c), ἡγουμένης (*hēgoumenēs*; 172a), ἡγουμένη (*hēgoumenē*; 172d). To lead, and so to hold or think. As “think”: “Or do you think the writing-master does nothing when he writes or reads?” (161d); Critias’ claim that Hesiod “regarded only such things as appropriate to one” (163c); Socrates’ question whether Critias

thinks that the temperate do not know that they are temperate, which Critias denies (164a); Critias' supposing that Socrates refutes him for some other reason (166c); Socrates' advice, if Charmides has temperance, to regard him as a babbler (176a). As "lead": "rightness leading" (172a) and temperance "as the guide of the management of household and of city" (172d). Lemma: ἡγέομαι.

See also

Inquiry; Knowledge; Perception; Pretence and imposture; Same and different.

Language definition and interpretation

Being and substance

Being and nature · Charmides

οὐσία, *ousia*, "character"; πεφυκέναι, *pephykenai*, "made", "endowed", "by nature"; τὰ ὄντα, *ta onta*, "the things that are"

At a Glance

The word. Οὐσία is a thing's being, what it is; the perfect πεφυκέναι, "to have grown", from φύω, "make grow", is to be by nature; τὰ ὄντα are "the things that are".

In the *Charmides*. Socrates would call Charmides invincible if he were also well made in soul (154d–e); Critias claims that the knowledge he calls temperance is not by nature like the others (165e). Testing the claim, Socrates argues that whatever has its own power in relation to itself must have the character its power is directed toward, as a hearing that heard itself would have a sound (168d), and leaves to "a great man" whether any of the things that are can do so, and whether knowledge is among them (169a). At the end they cannot discover to which of the things that are the lawgiver gave the name temperance (175b).

In this edition. Οὐσία is "character" (168d); πεφυκέναι is "made" in "well made" (154e), "endowed" (158b) and "by nature" (165e, 169a); τὰ ὄντα are "the things that are".

A place to read. 168b–169a, where self-relation is tested by hearing and sight.

Meaning

Οὐσία (*ousia*) is formed on οὔσα, the feminine participle of εἶναι, "to be". In ordinary Greek it was a man's property,⁹ and Plato still uses it so

⁹ For example Herodotus, *Histories* 1.92.2–4, of the property of an enemy of Croesus, king of Lydia, and 7.28.1, where Pythius, a rich Lydian, tells Xerxes the size of his own.

(*Republic* 551b); in his inquiries it is what a thing is, as against what happens to it (*Euthyphro* 11a). Φύω (*phyō*) is “make grow”, and in its intransitive forms “grow”; its perfect πέφυκα (*pephyka*), “I have grown”, says what one is by nature and, with an infinitive, what one is by nature able to do. Τὰ ὄντα (*ta onta*) are whatever there is. At 168d οὐσία is the character of what a power is directed toward: sound for hearing, colour for sight.

Use in the book

When the company praises Charmides’ figure, Socrates calls him invincible on one condition, that “where his soul is concerned” he be “in fact well made” (154d–e). The same verb is “endowed” when Socrates makes the boy’s blessedness hang on his being “well enough endowed for temperance and the rest” (158b; see Adequacy and deficiency).

Critias leans on the same verb to defend his definition. Asked for temperance’s work, he objects: “This knowledge is not by nature like the other kinds of knowledge, any more than they are like each other” (165e). Pressed for its object, he says that it alone is knowledge of the other kinds of knowledge and of itself (166c; see Art and craft). Socrates then states the aim of the examination: “Or is it not a common good, do you think, for practically all men, that each of the things that are should become plain, as it really is?” Critias agrees (166d).

Critias then grants that this knowledge “has a certain power such that it is of something”, as the greater is greater than something smaller (168b). Socrates generalizes: “Whatever has its own power in relation to itself, will it not also have the character toward which its power was directed?” If hearing is to hear itself, it “will hear itself as having a sound”, and sight, to see itself, “must have some color” (168d). Hearing and sight, and indeed “motion moving itself and heat burning itself”, “would raise disbelief in some people, though perhaps not in others” (168e–169a). It needs a great man, Socrates says, to determine “whether none of the things that are is by nature able to have its own power in relation to itself, but only in relation to something else; or whether some are and some are not”, and whether knowledge is among them (169a; see Adequacy and deficiency).

At the end the things that are return twice. Of the man who knows everything, Socrates asks which knowledge makes him happy: “The one by which he knows what, of the things that are and have been and are going to be?” Critias names the knowledge of good and bad (174a–b; see Art and craft). And Socrates admits that they “cannot discover to which of the things that are the lawgiver gave this name, temperance” (175b): the name is known, the thing it names is not.

These words name what the inquiry seeks: each of the things that are, made plain as it is; what a thing is, and can do, by nature; and the character a power is directed toward, which the power would have to have if turned on itself. Applied to the knowledge Critias calls temperance, the principle of

168d can be read as requiring that a knowledge which knows itself be itself a thing known, as a hearing that heard itself would be a thing heard. Socrates does not draw that inference; to keep the argument moving, he grants for now that there can be knowledge of knowledge (169d; see Agreement and concession).

Places to read

The chief passages, in the order of the dialogue.

154d–e Charmides would be invincible if, where his soul is concerned, he were also well made.

158b If Charmides is also well enough endowed for temperance, Socrates says, blessed is the child his mother bore.

165e–166c Critias: this knowledge is not by nature like the other kinds of knowledge, but is knowledge of the others and of itself.

166c–d Socrates examines arguments, his own included, and calls it a common good that each of the things that are should become plain, as it is.

168b–e Whatever has its power in relation to itself must have the character its power is directed toward: a hearing that heard itself would have a sound, a sight that saw itself a colour.

168e–169a Whether any of the things that are is by nature able to have its power in relation to itself, and whether knowledge is among them, needs a great man to determine.

174a–b The man who knows everything that has been and is and will be: which knowledge makes him happy?

175b They cannot discover to which of the things that are the lawgiver gave the name temperance.

Elsewhere in Plato

In the *Phaedrus* Socrates makes “motion moving itself”, one of the doubted cases of *Charmides* 168e–169a, the mark of soul, and introduces the proof as one the clever will not believe and the wise will (245c). Only what moves itself, since it never abandons itself, never stops moving, and it is the fountain and origin of motion for everything else that is moved; whoever says that this very thing is the being (οὐσία) and the account of soul need not be ashamed (245c–e). In the *Laus* the unnamed Athenian visitor asks Clinias of Crete to think of three things about each thing: its being, the account of its being, and its name. “Even” is a name, and “a number divided into two equal parts” its account; and for the thing whose name is “soul” the account is “the motion that is able to move itself” (895d–896a).

The same three can be read in the *Charmides*’ last failure, where Socrates and Critias have the name, temperance, but neither its account nor the thing itself (175b). The lawgiver who gave the name is the figure the

Cratylus makes the maker of names, “the rarest of craftsmen among men” (388e–389a).

Later readings

Aristotle, Plato’s pupil, made *οὐσία* the first of his categories, the word his English translators render “substance”: in its strictest sense it is what is neither said of a subject nor present in one, this man or this horse.¹⁰ Seneca, the Roman Stoic of the first century AD, wanting a Latin word for *οὐσία*, “a thing we cannot do without, a nature that holds the foundation of all things”, asked leave to use *essentia*, for which he names Cicero as his authority.¹¹

Aristotle also faced the same difficulty as *Charmides* 168d, without naming the dialogue. We perceive that we see, he argues, and must do so by sight or by some other sense; but if by another sense, either the senses run on without end or some sense perceives itself, and we may as well grant that to sight itself. The difficulty is that if perceiving by sight is seeing, and what is seen is colour, or what has colour, then if anyone is to see the seeing, the seeing will itself have to have colour. Aristotle’s answer is that perceiving by sight is not one thing, since by sight we also judge darkness and light when we are not seeing, and that what sees is in a way coloured, since each sense-organ receives what it perceives without the matter.¹² The answer can be read as granting the *Charmides*’ principle and meeting it: in perceiving, sight takes on the character of its object.

Translation in this edition

Οὐσία is “character” at its one place (168d), and the edition’s note there glosses it as “being or nature”. The perfect of *φύω* is “well made” (*εὖ πεφυκώς*, 154e) and “well enough endowed” (*ικανῶς πέφυκας*, 158b) when it is said of Charmides, and “by nature” when it is said of the knowledge Critias calls temperance (165e) and of the things that are, “is by nature able” (169a). *Τῶν ὄντων* is “the things that are” at each of its places (166d, 169a, 174b, 175b), and *τὰ νῦν ὄντα* “everything that is now” (174a). At 166d “as it really is” renders *ὅπῃ ἔχει*, literally “how it stands”.

οὐσία

Attested: *οὐσίαν* (*ousian*; 168d). Being, nature; here, character. Socrates asks, “Whatever has its own power in relation to itself, will it not also have the character toward which its power was directed?” (168d): a hearing that heard itself would have a sound, a sight that saw itself a colour. Lemma: *οὐσία*.

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Categories* 4, 1b25–27 (the list of categories); 5, 2a11–14.

¹¹ Seneca, *Letters* 58.6.

¹² Aristotle, *On the Soul* 3.2, 425b12–25.

φύω

Attested: πεφυκώς (*pephykōs*; 154e), πέφυκας (*pephykas*; 158b), πέφυκεν (*pephyken*; 165e, 169a). Only the perfect occurs, “be by nature”. Twice it is said of Charmides, whether he is “well made” where his soul is concerned (154e) and “well enough endowed for temperance” (158b); then of the knowledge Critias calls temperance, which “is not by nature like the other kinds of knowledge” (165e); and in Socrates’ question whether any of the things that are “is by nature able to have its own power in relation to itself” (169a). Socrates’ “Extraordinarily” (ὑπερφυῶς, 154d), of Charmides’ face, is from the same root and is not listed; the noun φύσις, “nature”, does not occur in the dialogue. Lemma: φύω.

εἶμί

Attested: ὄντων (*ontōn*; 166d, 169a, 174b, 175b), ὄντα (*onta*; 174a), εἶναι (*einai*; 176a). To be. With the article the participle is “the things that are” (166d, 169a, 174b, 175b), and at 174a, in τὰ νῦν ὄντα, “everything that is now”. Elsewhere the verb is the everyday copula and is not listed, except at 176a, where it carries Socrates’ closing judgement on temperance, which takes the conditional blessing of 158b as his own: “For I do think that temperance is a great good, and that if you have it you are blessed” (175e–176a; see Blessed). Lemma: εἶμί.

See also

Language and naming; Power and capacity; Self-relation; Sight and colour.

Places and historical context

Basile

Βασίλη, *Basilē*, “Basile”

At a Glance

The word. Basile was a local Athenian goddess, worshipped together with two figures of Athens’ royal legend, King Codrus and Neleus; her name is a rare word for “queen”.

In the *Charmides*. Her shrine is named once, in the first sentences, to say which wrestling-school Socrates went into on the day after his return from the campaign against Potidaea, the rebel city in the north Aegean: “the wrestling-school of Taureas, the one opposite the shrine of Basile” (153a).

In this edition. Burnet prints the name as the Bodleian manuscript writes it, though letters written above it there, and the Venice manuscript, make it βασιλικῆς, “royal”; an Athenian decree of 418/17 BC naming her

sanctuary bears him out. The English keeps the name untranslated: “the shrine of Basile”.

A place to read. 153a, the opening of the dialogue.

Meaning

Βασίλης (*Basilēs*) is the genitive of Βασίλη (*Basilē*), the name of a goddess. As a common noun the word is a rare form of βασίλεια (*basileia*), “queen” or “princess”.¹³ Her shrine is an ἱερόν (*hieron*), a holy place.

Use in the book

Socrates begins his story with his return: “We had got back from the army at Potidaea the evening before, and after so long away I was glad to make for my old haunts. In particular I went into the wrestling-school of Taureas, the one opposite the shrine of Basile, and there I found a great crowd” (153a; see Taureas). The shrine is a landmark and nothing more. Socrates names it to say which wrestling-school he means, and he describes it no further; no one sacrifices or prays there, and the goddess is not mentioned again. The dialogue’s one other holy place is treated quite differently: Critias reads the inscription at the temple of Apollo at Delphi as the god’s greeting to those who enter, and makes it part of his argument that temperance is knowing oneself (164d–e; see Advice and greeting).

The name hangs by a thread in the manuscripts. In the Bodleian manuscript (B), the Plato written in 895 and now in Oxford, the line has the name, but the letters ικ are written above it, which turn it into βασιλικής, “royal”; the Venice manuscript (T) has βασιλικής outright. With βασιλικής the feminine adjective has no noun expressed, and the goddess disappears. The English of Benjamin Jowett, the Victorian translator of Plato, reflects that reading: it sets the wrestling-school “over against the temple adjoining the porch of the King Archon”, the royal portico in the Agora. Burnet prints the name as it is written in B’s line, and the decree of 418/17 BC that names a sanctuary of Basile bears him out.

Places to read

The one passage.

153a Socrates goes into the wrestling-school of Taureas, opposite the shrine of Basile.

Other ancient sources

A decree of the Athenian Council and People, passed in 418/17 BC, the year of the archon Antiphon, orders the fencing of “the sanctuary of Codrus and Neleus and Basile”, which it calls an ἱερόν, as Plato does, and has the king archon, the magistrate in charge of the city’s ancestral

¹³ Liddell, Scott and Jones, *Greek–English Lexicon*, s.v. βασίλη.

sacrifices,¹⁴ lease the precinct. An amendment by the same proposer, Adosios, sets the lease of “the precinct of Neleus and Basile” at twenty years and puts the fencing on the lessee, at his own expense; he is also to plant no fewer than two hundred olive shoots, and the decree is to be set up in the Neleion, the shrine of Neleus.¹⁵ Codrus was remembered as the king who, in the story the orator Lysurgus tells, went out of the city in disguise to be killed by the invading Peloponnesians, because Delphi had promised them Athens unless they killed its king; and Herodotus, the historian of the Persian Wars, tells of a Neleus son of Codrus who led the settlers of Miletus, the Ionian city on the coast of Asia Minor.¹⁶

The decree also shows where the precinct lay. The lessee is to have the ditch and the rainwater, “the water from Zeus”, that runs between the Dionysion, a sanctuary of Dionysus, and the gate by which the initiates of the Eleusinian Mysteries go down to the sea, and between a public building and the gate that leads out to the bath of Isthmionicus. The two gates are identified as the Phaleric and the Itonian, south of the Acropolis, and the precinct lay between them. Whether it lay just inside the city wall or just outside is disputed; a precinct large enough for two hundred olive trees, and the wrestling-school that Plato sets opposite the shrine, are the arguments for outside.¹⁷

Basile was worshipped in the Attic countryside as well. The sacrificial calendar of Erchia, a village of Attica east of Mount Hymettus, inscribed in the fourth century BC, prescribes for her a white ewe-lamb on the fourth of Boedromion, a month of early autumn, to be burnt whole and offered without wine, at a cost of seven drachmas. The epigraphist Stephen Lambert has connected the offering with the Genesia, the Athenian festival of the dead.¹⁸

Translation in this edition

“The shrine of Basile” renders τοῦ τῆς Βασίλης ἱεροῦ. Ἱερόν is “shrine” here and “temple” at Delphi (164e), the one other place where the dialogue uses the word. The goddess’s name is kept as a name, not translated as “the

¹⁴ [Aristotle], *Constitution of the Athenians* 57.1; at 47.4 the king archon brings the leases of sacred precincts before the Council, in the fourth century for terms of ten years.

¹⁵ IG I³ 84 (Greek text in the Packard Humanities Institute’s *Searchable Greek Inscriptions*: the decree, lines 1–11; Adosios’ amendment, from line 11; translation and commentary by S. D. Lambert, N. Papazarkadas and R. Osborne in *Attic Inscriptions Online*).

¹⁶ Lysurgus, *Against Leocrates* 84–87; Herodotus, *Histories* 9.97.

¹⁷ *Attic Inscriptions Online*, commentary on IG I³ 84. The stele was found, not in place, just inside the walls at the corner of Makrigianni and Chatzichristou streets; a fifth-century boundary stone of a sanctuary (IG I³ 1076), found in place nearby, may or may not belong to this one.

¹⁸ SEG 21.541, column B 14–20 (the calendar of the deme Erchia, c. 375–350 BC), in *Attic Inscriptions Online* 593; S. D. Lambert, “Parerga III: The Genesia, Basile and Epops Again”, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 139 (2002), 75–82.

Queen”. “Wrestling-school” renders *παλαίστρα* (*palaistra*), here and at 155d.

Βασίλη

Attested: *Βασίλης* (*Basilēs*; 153a). Basile, the local Athenian goddess whose shrine stands opposite the wrestling-school of Taureas; the Venice manuscript, and letters written above the line in the Bodleian, make the name βασιλικῆς, “royal”. Lemma: *Βασίλη*.

See also

Delphi and Apollo; Palaestra; Taureas.