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THE AUDIENCE'S RESPONSE TO PLATO'S ESCHATOLOGICAL MYTHS: AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE AT THE SERVICE OF MORALITY*

Abstract. This paper explores the audience's response to the eschatological myths in the *Gorgias*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Republic* by reconstructing a concept of aesthetic experience in the light of Plato's ideas on pleasure. I argue for a kind of pleasure that has emotional and intellectual components, which make it a combination of pure and mixed pleasures. This kind of pleasure, which these myths produce, is meant to strengthen virtue because feeling pleasure from listening to a story provides a model for our character and shapes it accordingly. These myths thus provide an incentive for choosing a virtuous life.

Key-words: pure and mixed pleasure, aesthetic experience, eschatological myths, moral education, virtue.

Aesthetics in ancient Greece, and especially in Plato, is primarily an aesthetics of reception. A work of art is, first and foremost, an object of experience that has a significant psychological impact on the audience. Since aesthetic experience is not conceived of as autonomous in the Kantian sense, it has both moral and psychological aspects¹. This is the case because on the one hand an aesthetic object shapes and modifies the audience's beliefs and values, and on the other hand an aesthetic experience consists of assessing the world and understanding it from a moral and psychological perspective, hence the role of poetry in providing moral education. Yet in some dialogues the poets are deemed poor moral educators. The critique of the poets and the lack of benefits to be derived from their works that we find in the dialogues partly arises from a conception of education that differs dramatically from that of

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¹ On the relevance of the concept of aesthetics in Ancient Greece, see A.-E. Peponi, *Frontiers of Pleasure*, J. Porter, *The Origins of Aesthetic Thought in Ancient Greece*, pp. 25–69, S. Halliwell, *The Importance of Plato and Aristotle for Aesthetics*, and more broadly the seminal article of J. O. Urmson, *What Makes a Situation Aesthetic*.

Plato's contemporaries¹. In the *Republic* and the *Philebus*, it is argued that the pleasure produced by poetry corrupts the soul. But what of Socrates' stories and in particular of the eschatological myths, one of which, the myth of Er, is explicitly introduced as being a story not like the Homeric stories? I shall argue that the eschatological myths distinguish themselves from poetry because of the type of response they elicit. My aim is thus to explore the audience's response to these myths by reconstructing a concept of aesthetic experience in the light of Plato's ideas on pleasure.

The *Philebus* and the *Republic*² suggest two kinds of aesthetic pleasure: the first is a formal aesthetic pleasure that belongs to the category of pure pleasure, the second is an aesthetic pleasure in which emotions are involved and which is consequently relegated to the category of mixed pleasure. I define the aesthetic experience as comprising the intellectual pleasure, which belong to the category of pure pleasure, and the emotional pleasure, which belongs to the category of mixed pleasure. I shall first clarify the nature of pure pleasure instantiated in sensory and intellectual pleasures, and second do the same in the case of mixed pleasures as Socrates presents them both in the *Republic* and in the *Philebus*. Next I shall demonstrate how his eschatological myths arouse the sort of aesthetic experience that I have described. Finally, I shall make plain that because it is concomitant to the anticipated pleasure of being just, aesthetic experience is thought to reinforce virtue.

1. Pure pleasures: sensory and intellectual pleasure

Pleasures of the body and the soul are thought of as sharing the same physiological schema according to which the ideal state of a living being is one of equilibrium and health, i.e. a state of harmony (see *Phil.* 31d–32b). This state is dissolved when a lack occurs, which consists of a privation or deficiency felt by the individual, who therefore strives for the opposite state: repletion. Moreover, the lack is felt as painful and the process of replenishing it is felt as pleasurable. Pain and pleasure are thus inextricably linked to each other: there is no pleasure without an antecedent pain, and pleasure turns out to be the necessary consequence of such a pain (see *Phaed.* 60c4). Pleasure and the restoration of harmony are thus two simultaneous processes³: the former is regarded as filling an emptiness, the latter as a resolution of disharmony. In fact, the restorative quality of pleasure makes it a sort of motion of the soul (see *Rep.* 583e10). As Plato argues in the *Philebus*, pleasure is necessarily *kinetic* (see 32b2) because it is restorative – in 53c–55a, pleasure

¹ See C. Janaway, *Images of Excellences*, H. J. M. Broos, *Plato and Art*, esp. p. 128.

² The two dialogues are, of course, different in their aims. However, as we shall see, the views on pleasure in these two dialogues are quite consistent.

³ Note that in the *Philebus*, where things are divided into four categories – the indeterminate, the determinate, the mixture of the two, and the cause of the mixture – pleasure is said to belong to the first category, that is, the *apeiron* (indeterminate). The destruction of the former harmony that necessitates replenishment and gives rise to pleasure amounts to a destruction of the *peras* (limit), which means that the *peras* no longer limits the *apeiron*. The mixture tilts toward excess or deficiency. Pleasure is an *apeiron* that has lost its determination, something which entails the destruction of a former harmony. See S. Delcomminette, *Le Philèbe de Platon*, p. 303.

is defined as *genesis*. However, the state of repletion, which corresponds to a state of restored harmony¹, is distinct from one without pain or pleasure, which is a neutral state that corresponds to a state of tranquility of the soul (see *Rep.* 583c7) although one that is mistakenly associated with that of pleasure.

In the *Republic*, a distinction based on pain is drawn between pure and mixed pleasures². Note that the two categories, pure and mixed, are equal to the categories of true and false³. A pleasure is pure and true if it does not originate from pain or give way to pain (see 584b), or in other words, if it is devoid of pain. The same criterion is preserved in the *Philebus*, although another one is added: measure. Pure pleasure is moderate and has no degree (see 53a)⁴. Yet, even though there is no feeling of pain, there is a lack, which, however, is not experienced as painful: it is imperceptible (see 51b5). Note that this pleasure, as Santas argues, *is not preceded by any deficiency in the body or the soul*⁵. This definition of pure pleasure rests on the rejection of the following two statements: (1) the cessation of pain is pure pleasure and (2) the cessation of pure pleasure is pain (see *Rep.* 584a, also *Phil.* 51a). The rejection of these statements allows Socrates to define a pleasure conceived of as the cessation of pain as mixed. I shall return to this point in due course. Two examples of pure pleasure are adduced: intellectual pleasure and sensory pleasure (see *Rep.* 584b, *Phil.* 51b–e) which is regarded as a formal aesthetic pleasure, as I shall demonstrate.

1.1. Sensory pleasure as a formal aesthetic pleasure

Sensory pleasure is aroused by the beauty of forms, colors, sounds, and perfumes perceived by three senses, sight, hearing, and smell, this last being considered less divine (see 51e) – a hierarchy of senses leads to a hierarchy of pleasures associated with them. This pleasure is purely affective, a replenishment that is perceived (see *Phil.* 51b6). Moreover, because this pleasure is an immediate one (see *Rep.* 584b7), it is not mediated by understanding. In poetry, for instance, pleasure is produced by a poem's *musical coloring* (601b1–2), which has an immediate impact on us, and over which we have no

¹ This is the common view of the hedonism based on a maximization of pleasure that is embodied by Callicles in the *Gorgias* (see 491e5–494d1). See J. C. B. Gosling & C. C. W. Taylor, *The Greeks on Pleasure* and G. Rudebush, *Socrates, Pleasure and Value*. For a distinction between replenishment and restoration, see D. Wolfsdorf, *Pleasure in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, p. 44.

² There is a primary distinction between necessary and true pleasures (see 581e1–3): the former are natural and bestial, the latter godlike. This distinction is not relevant to the issue I am addressing here.

³ To address this point fully would exceed the scope of my immediate concern. On this point and the difficulties it raises, see D. Gallop, *True and False Pleasure*, J. C. B. Gosling & C. C. W. Taylor, *The Greeks on Pleasure*, Appendix A: *False Pleasure*, J. Dybikowski, *False Pleasure and the 'Philebus'*, A. Kenny, *False Pleasure in the 'Philebus': A Reply to Mr. Gosling*.

⁴ To illustrate the idea that purity is devoid of degree, i.e. size and quantity, Socrates provides us with the example of whiteness. Whiteness is not more or less white but is absolutely separated from that which is not itself (see 53a: εἰλυκτινέχ). Purity, separation, stability, beauty, measure, and correctness are combined together to characterize the highest entities that exist in and of themselves (see 59c). In the *Philebus*, pleasure is conceived of as unlimited *per se*. It is limited when it is mixed with *phronesis*.

⁵ G. Santas, *Plato on Pleasure as the Human Good*, p. 319.

control, just like the pleasure we experience when smelling a perfume (see 584b7) or hearing sounds. Soft and clear sounds (see *Phil.* 51d6) produce a unique and pure song (*melos*), which arouses pleasure. They are considered here to be intrinsically fine without qualification¹.

Sounds successfully assembled and arranged produce a pure song. For a sound exists first and foremost in relation to other sounds – a sound in itself is indeterminate – hence its mathematical aspect. What matters is therefore to bring opposites like high and low pitches or fast and slow tempos into proportion and harmony by introducing number (see *Phil.* 25e). In the same way, Socrates argues that a shape is composed of mathematical relations: straight and circular lines are parts of surfaces and solids. The Beautiful appears in a composition that is more or less complex and harmonious, in which resides *symmetria*².

The Beautiful triggers an aesthetic pleasure that is purely formal in the sense that it arises from apprehending formal properties through perception. These formal properties consist of sensory properties (see *Phil.* 51b–d) like colour, rhythm, and harmony (see *Rep.* 601a–b)³. This pleasure, therefore, arises from perceiving the Beautiful through the senses without regard to the representation itself since its formal beauty does not reside in its likeness to a sensible thing. Although imitative, music is not figurative unlike painting. The appreciation of the Beautiful only requires one to perceive the formal properties in which resides the pleasurable. The pleasure involves a judgment based on perception that amounts to a formal aesthetic judgment. For these properties to be experienced therefore there needs to be a cognitive aspect, but not necessarily an intellectual one.

1.2. Intellectual pleasure

The aesthetic experience as I define it has intellectual and emotional components which make it a combination of pure pleasure (intellectual pleasure), and mixed pleasure (emotional pleasure). In the *Republic*, intellectual pleasure, which is the pleasure of the rational part of the soul, is defined as replenishing the soul with true opinions, knowledge, intelligence, and all the virtues (see 585b14–c1). As I mentioned above, intellectual pleasure is visualized according to a physiological schema which allows Socrates to draw an analogy between the body and the soul. Ignorance and a lack of sense are for the soul what hunger and thirst are for the body. Just as an emptiness of the body in the case of hunger is filled with nourishment, ignorance is filled with knowledge and a lack of sense with understanding. Yet this analogy has its limits for two reasons. The first is that the pleasure of learning is not

¹ See A.–E. Peponi, *Frontiers of Pleasure*, p. 126, S. Delcomminette, *Le Philèbe de Platon* and R. Hackforth, *Plato's Philebus*, p. 98.

² See S. Delcomminette, *Le Philèbe de Platon*, p. 461. See Pliny (HN 35.81–3), who recounts the story that Apelles left for Protogenes a painted panel with a single line brushed on it, which was meant to be a calling card.

³ See also the reference in the *Laws* 653d, to *the pleasurable perception of rhythm and harmony*. This perception in fact may blind people who thus are not able to judge poetry properly. They may also be blinded by emotions as in the case of tragedy.

associated with pain because intellectual emptiness – ignorance – is not painful, and the second is that intellectual nourishment does not vanish as in the case of food.

Intellectual pleasure should not, therefore, be considered as a relief from pain since it belongs to the category of pure pleasure, i.e. true pleasure, just like sensory pleasure, which involves a non-painful emptiness (see *Rep.* 585b3). This pleasure is balanced, always identical to itself, and consists of the satisfaction of the desire to learn. Moreover, the desire for knowledge is not pleonexic but includes moderation, hence its stability. The desires of the rational part are reasonable in nature, that is to say, moderate. The rational part aims at harmony and equilibrium among its parts. In fact, intellectual pleasure consists of being filled with what is appropriate to our true nature (see *Rep.* 585d11–e1), that is to say, with knowledge. The restoration of harmony stems thus from learning and understanding¹.

However, the pleasure produced by poetry does not replenish the soul with knowledge because there is no knowledge imparted in poetry, according to Socrates in the *Republic*. Because it lacks intellectual properties, poetry produces a pleasure without imparting the audience with knowledge. In contrast, when experiencing a work of art of the appropriate kind, the recipients should be able both to explain the reasons why the work of art pleases them and to give a rational account of it, something that they are able to do as a result of understanding its intellectual properties. In the *Laws* to assess a piece of art implies to give an account not only of its charm or *kharis*, i.e. its formal properties, but also of its correctness (see 667b5–c8). Correctness results not only in an accurate imitation with respect to proportions, but also in a harmony between rhythm, tune, and gestures (see 669c3–d1). It is defined as the result of *equality of both quality and quantity* (667d7–10, transl. Bury).

According to Socrates, two musical modes, Dorian (warlike) and Phrygian (pacific), should be used in poetry because they best imitate courage and self-control respectively (see *Rep.* 399a1–c4). The same principle applies to meter and rhythm: each one imitates a specific virtue or vice (see 399e–400d). Musical coloring thus turns out to possess moral qualities². Not only does the form reinforce the content, but it participates in it, since a mode possesses both formal and moral qualities, hence the inseparability of sensory pleasure (hearing) and virtues in the case of poetry as Socrates sees it. Indeed, the pleasure of good poetry consists of both the sensory pleasure aroused by formal beauty – the soul is filled with musical colors and sounds – and the intellectual pleasure aroused by moral beauty – the soul is filled with moral knowledge³. The two kinds of beauty are thus intermingled and can only be separated analytically. However, emotion plays an important role in the aesthetic experience upon which I shall now focus.

¹ See Z. Ritook, *Desire, Poetry, Cognition*.

² See I. Crombie, *An Examination of Plato's Doctrine*, p. 189, F. Pelosi, *Plato: On Music, Soul, and Body*, chap. 1. Note that in the *Philebus* the Beautiful is the threshold to the Good.

³ For an opposing view see J. Porter, *The Origins of Aesthetic Thought in Ancient Greece*, pp. 70–120 who regards Plato as a formalist.

2. A mixed and false pleasure: emotional pleasure

In the *Philebus*, mixed pleasures are presented as false pleasures on the grounds that they are mixed with pain. In other words, pain and pleasure are combined in a single mixture (see 47d3–4). This mixture is divided in three kinds. In the first, the combination is mainly due to the fact that soul and body are not in agreement, that is to say, the soul experiences a kind of pleasure while the body feels pain. This type of pleasure is an anticipated pleasure that is produced by the hope of getting rid of the bodily pain. Thus this pleasure is felt because of the union of the body with the soul. However, there are also mixed pleasures that only pertain to the body, and only to the soul. In the latter case, *the mixture is the product of emotions within the soul itself* (47d6, trans. Frede slightly modified). Emotions like anger, fear, longing, grief, love, jealousy, envy, etc. are deemed to be painful for the soul and are consequently defined as pains (see 47e1). This is the case because emotion is considered to be the disruption of a state of equilibrium, i.e. a disturbance of the harmony of the soul. All emotions are linked to a sense of deprivation, which is painful (see 47e). Releasing emotion is pleasing but feeling the emotion is not, hence the mixed quality of emotion in which we feel both pain and pleasure at the same time (see *Phil.* 47d–50c). Because emotion is part of our human nature, there is nothing amiss in experiencing emotions. Yet does it mean that arousing emotions for the purpose of feeling the pleasure of release is appropriate and good?

In tragedy, where we experience the pleasure of shedding tears, we feel pain, in this case sadness, and pleasure at the same time. Observe that in this instance, pleasure is understood as a release rather than as a repletion¹. This is why feeling sadness results in the pleasure of releasing, hence the strong link between this pleasure and the affects, which makes it the pleasure of the spirited part. Moreover, feeling pleasure in listening to poetry shapes our character. Indeed pleasure depends on our moral and intellectual predispositions that we have to develop. For we take pleasure in that to which we are accustomed (see e.g. *Laws* 802c–d), in that which is in accordance with our character (see e.g. *Laws* 655d–e & 656b)², and in that which allows us to express and fulfil our desires. As a result, a virtuous individual feels pleasure in performing virtuous actions and in seeing them performed both in fiction and in reality, as we shall see.

For Plato moral education partly consists of regulating the emotions, arousing virtuous ones, and producing the proper desires. I take it that the eschatological myths aims at moral education thus understood. This is why aesthetic experience, which corresponds to a particular affective state, can have a role in shaping moral character. Since a story does not consist of a body of moral propositions, it conveys a moral content (its intellectual properties) and imparts moral insights that are acquired through feeling and understanding emotions aroused in this way. Pleasure arises partly from experiencing

¹ Phaedo has the same experience in the *Phaedo* (59a). See D. Gallop, *Emotions in the Phaedo*. For a broader context see S. Feagin, *The Pleasures of Tragedy*.

² See also *Gorgias* 513c.

virtuous emotions which are released through understanding. More precisely, by arousing virtuous emotions, Plato's eschatological myths makes perceptible a lack, that is, a desire to be replenished and, as a consequence, to understand the type of replenishment needed. Now the lack is that of knowledge about virtue. Since ignorance is not a perceptible lack, by making the lack perceptible, the story raises the desire to know, I shall come back to this point in the next section. There is thus a heuristic aspect to these stories, which makes the audience look for the reasons for their being moved and leads them to understand the moral quality of an action, a character, or a situation that provokes their emotions. As Goodman puts it, *emotion in aesthetics experience is a means of discerning what properties a work has and expresses*¹. The understanding of the moral properties of an eschatological myth is thus partly a result of emotions aroused in the audience that they are encouraged to comprehend².

The aesthetic experience aroused in eschatological myths is thus distinct from that of epic, tragic, comic, and lyric poetry, first because devoid of any musical coloring (i.e. meter and rhythm: the myths are in prose³) it has no sensory component, but only an intellectual; second because it brings about an understanding of the moral content of the piece of art through moral emotions and their corresponding virtues, and finally because it does not consist of a pleasure produced by witnessing the suffering of others and thus necessitating an identification of the audience with a hero⁴. Unlike tragic and comic pleasures which address only the spirited part of the soul, aesthetic experience of eschatological myths addresses both the rational part and the spirited. As a result, this experience does not lead to corruption and is, moreover, morally instructive, chiefly because it accompanies a virtuous emotion⁵ that is worth arousing, as I shall demonstrate. Aesthetic experience does not constitute an end in itself, rather it is a powerful means to educate. Indeed, for Plato to rival the poet he needs to arouse a pleasure that is more powerful than that offered by the poet and is at the same time truly moral and one that does not pervert the soul but rather participates in moral education (see *Rep.* 401e). In this context, aesthetic experience should consist of the fulfilment of a desire for justice and ultimately for the Good (see 401d–402a). Thus this experience is not an end in itself, but a means to the moral education.

¹ N. Goodman, *The Language of Art*, p. 248. See also J. Robinson, *Deeper than Reason*.

² Listening to *die Verklärte Nacht* may give rise to a feeling of sadness for which we want to understand the reasons. In fact, by knowing how it is composed, that is, how Schönberg designed the whole piece, we feel more than the immediate reaction of sadness. We arrive at an understanding of how the piece expresses sadness and how it is structured, for instance by recognizing the theme based on three notes (E B Eb) with variations.

³ Note that there is no musical mode that imitates the virtue of justice. As we have seen, the Dorian and the Phrygian modes imitate the virtue of courage and moderation respectively.

⁴ See M. Miller, *The Pleasures of the Comic and the Socratic Inquiry*, P. Destrée, *Plato on Tragic and Comic Pleasures*.

⁵ See D. Frede, *Disintegration and Restoration*, p. 450.

3. Moral education through aesthetic experience

My contention is that the eschatological myths have an impact on the souls of the audience in such a way as to arouse the desire to be just and to feel pleasure in being just. For aesthetic experience to be morally instructive, emotions must first be virtuous, as we have seen, and second aroused with no mediation, that is, felt for the sake of the audience's well-being and not of a hero's. However for the narrative to have an impact on the audience's behaviour, the gap between fiction and reality must be bridged. An essential aspect of the aesthetic experience caused by the three eschatological myths of the *Gorgias*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Republic* is making the audience contemplate justice, something they do by depicting a rewarding afterlife for the just man and punishment for the unjust man. Indeed, I take it that the main thesis put forward by the stories is one that Socrates proclaims in the *Republic*: *Haven't we found that justice itself is the best thing for the soul itself, and that the soul – whether it has the ring of Gyges or even it together with the cap of Hades – should do just things* (612b2–5, transl. Grube). Let us note that the stories are not to be taken literally because the events recounted are fictional. They are, nevertheless, true because they convey an underlying moral truth. In both the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*, Socrates introduces his storytelling as being true, although in a distinctive way¹. Indeed the narrator uses techniques to prevent us from taking the story literally; when he has finished recounting his story, for example, Socrates advises us: *No sensible man would insist that these things are as I have described them* (*Phaed.* 114d2, transl. Grube). We may thus interpret the picture of the afterlife as a metaphor for life in the here and now as Halliwell does, that is, as *an allegory of the life of the soul in this world*².

3.1. Aesthetic experience and the fear of moral error

There are two ways of producing an emotion: by causing it to be imitated or by arousing it. The former involves portraying a character who experiences an emotion such as fear. The audience is in a sense compelled by poetic techniques to imitate the experience of fear and thus feel it. The latter involves presenting a character whose situation is pitiful and as a result produces pity in the audience. Both methods involve a form of identification of the audience with the character. Indeed, Socrates' criticism of tragedy is based on the idea that depicting immoral people or undeserved misfortune is not the best way to educate people about virtue. The tragic quality of a hero is partly a product of the mistake he makes which changes his life dramatically. The change he undergoes is not caused, however, by his moral weakness. He makes moral decisions, something which makes him *morally characterized*³. The hero's tragic error, which is followed by his downfall, contributes to the sense of the

¹ In narratological terms, the truth of the *récit* (narrative) is distinct from the truth of the *histoire* (story). For the distinction, see G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*.

² S. Halliwell, *The Life-and-Death Journey of the Soul*, p. 469.

³ I borrow the expression from S. Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics*, p. 151. See E. Belfiore, *Tragic Pleasures*.

tragic. Indeed, the downfall is caused by a fundamental ignorance on the part of the hero that is coupled with his lack of responsibility for his misfortune. His error is tragic on account of its necessary and inexorable consequences, and is situated somewhere between guilt, vulnerability, and arbitrary misfortune. The tragic error is thus a sign of human fallibility. Tragedy demonstrates that vulnerability and fragility, features of our humanity, often lead to a fall¹. What, however, is the point of depicting the human fallibility? We should rather, according to Socrates, try not to be fallible. The depiction of human fallibility leads to fatalism and despondency, and sometimes even to cowardice.

In Plato's stories, the audience's concern is not focused on a tragic error committed by the character which leads him to suffering and disaster. Rather, it is focused on the error we, as audience, may make in the here and now, which consists in choosing a life of injustice that leads to our own suffering. This is the possibility of committing a moral error that produces fear in the audience. Indeed, the eschatological myths urge the audience to consider fear from a different perspective, one which is neither that of tragic fear nor of the popular fear like that of Cephalus which is produced by listening to traditional stories. The eschatological myths not only redirect our fear toward the present and ourselves, but also toward a different object. The true object of fear is no longer future suffering in Hades but moral error.

As a result of ignorance, moral error leads to injustice and, therefore, to suffering. For choosing immorality is choosing a terrible life, which no one would wish to live, not even the immoralist. What we should fear first and foremost is deluding ourselves concerning our lives, something that is a cause of misfortune and suffering, as the life of the tyrant demonstrates in the myth of Er. This fear is thus ultimately one of being mistaken about the consequences of our choice, that is, of making a wrong choice of life. Arousing this fear leads to an awareness of the need for choosing a specific life. A decision is made that has significant consequences, often out of ignorance or without a full understanding of them. As a result, an eschatological myth not only arouses the fear of moral error, which leads to a terrible life, but also of ignorance, out of which we live sometimes unaware of the morality and immorality of our behaviour, as the life of Cephalus exemplifies.

The story makes us aware not only of the possibility of moral error but also of having a crucial choice to make, which it is necessary to make now rather than at the end of life. This is made explicit in the myth of Er, first by the existence of a cycle of reincarnation, and second by an absence of an immortal self. In other words, the immortality of the soul is not the same as the immortality of the self, which is transient (see 617d10). In this respect there is no continuity between the numerous lives of the soul. The immortality of the soul has no bearing on moral choice, which is thus crucial because the individual does not have a second chance². Moreover, it is rewarding to be just

¹ As S. Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics*, p. 147 notes, a hero is not a *passive* victim.

² See J. Annas, *The Myths of Judgment*, H. S. Thayer, *The Myth of Er*.

not because of any external benefits that we might obtain from being just, but because of an internal benefit, that is, happiness in the here and now. We should live a life that allows us to be virtuous, which turns out to be happy – the latter being the consequence of the former. Choosing to live justly is, therefore, the same thing as choosing to live happily.

Thus Plato's eschatological myths present the idea that we are not condemned to misfortune: unlike the tragic hero, we have the ability to master our own destiny. It is our responsibility not to be mistaken because the moral quality of our lives remains in our control, as the hierophant in the myth states (see 617e2 & 619b2–5). Otherwise practising philosophy would be useless since it is tantamount to striving to possess a harmonious soul, that is, to be just. In this respect, in the reality of the here and now, the only thing philosophy can guarantee is to be virtuous or to strive to be virtuous given the circumstances. However there is a risk of having so wretched a life that one would not even be able to practise philosophy (see 619e2). In his interpretation of the story, Socrates emends to some extent what the hierophant previously said. The life that the soul chooses is not morally good or bad in itself. Rather, a good life is a life which enables us to become virtuous. However justice cannot be fully embodied in human life. The most common life, that is, the mixed life, is made up of various external things, some of which can impede our being virtuous. This is why Socrates enjoins us to practise philosophy in order to overcome these impediments (see 618c1–3 & d1–7).

Let us recall first that the issue of justice in the *Republic* is raised in response to Cephalus' worries and fears about Hades at the beginning of Book I (330d–331a), and second, that the picture of the afterlife has a profound impact on the audience because it is a moving one. It is, in fact, this quality that is acknowledged by Socrates in his criticism of Homer's depiction of Hades (see 386b–387b). However, contrary to popular belief embodied by Cephalus, the virtuous life does not entail bargaining with the gods. Plato thus plays in various ways in his eschatological myths with the popular belief that reward and punishment await people in the afterlife and with the fact that we usually feel pleasure in listening to a moral story in which good people are rewarded and bad people punished. In fact, when we feel pleasure at the sight of evil people being punished and thus acknowledge our sense that justice is being done, we feel good, and feeling good is enjoyable.

However, the challenge is not only to arouse pleasure in the listener by telling her a moral story, but also to make her realize that she will feel pleasure from performing just actions (see *Rep.* 586e). In the *Philebus*, there is the mention of the pleasure of temperance *and all those that commit themselves to virtue* (63e5, transl. Frede). Yet the transition from fiction to reality may be a difficult one. It is well known that a fictional situation may arouse compassion in someone who may not feel compassion at the sight of an actual situation. This leads me to examine the anticipated pleasure, which belongs to the category of mixed pleasure.

3.2. Aesthetic experience and anticipated pleasure

In my view, for an eschatological myth to achieve its goal of educating a

person morally, and in consequence of urging her to act virtuously it has to arouse two correlative pleasures: pleasure as replenishment of the soul with moral insights, and anticipated pleasure, that is, an anticipated replenishment with moral actions on the part of the listener as a doer. This means that the story arouses the hope for a future pleasure from behaving virtuously. Indeed, since pleasure constitutes at the same time a strong incentive to perform an activity and a reward for doing it, if a story makes people aware of and arouses their desire for justice and knowledge, they are willing to seek out again the pleasure obtained in this way. In other words, because of its association with an anticipated pleasure, the aesthetic experience is an incentive to feel the pleasure of actual virtuous behaviour. Note that such a pleasure is not within the immoral person's reach. This is the case because the fictional sight of virtue rewarded is not probable and credible to him. According to him, justice does not lead to happiness and does not equate to it; the two are in fact considered to be unrelated. This is why Plato has Socrates say to Callicles in the *Gorgias* that he will not think the story – i.e. the eschatological myth – to be true. Callicles is not convinced either by Socrates's arguments or by the eschatological myth. These fail to convince the immoralist of the irrelevance of his position because of the excessive corruption of his soul. From Socrates' point of view, Callicles belongs to the incurable. In this sense, Plato's stories may be unable to touch the soul of the immoralist.

We have to experience the fear of moral error, i.e. of injustice in order to make us strive to relieve it by accomplishing just actions. Striving for this relief amounts to feeling an anticipated pleasure, as Socrates defines it in the *Philebus*. The soul has a capacity for anticipation independent of the body and through which the soul imagines a future pleasure that arouses hope, which is pleasing and comforting, and a future pain, which produces fear and suffering. This capacity is made possible by memory, which acts as a kind of reservoir of memories available and ready to be reactivated (see 21c). What is remembered is the consciousness of a movement, which constitutes a mental image, i.e. a representation of a perception independent of the body.

The body has no memory because it has no consciousness and therefore no sensation. Memory possesses a cognitive component, and thus plays a crucial role in the satisfaction of a desire and in the consequent state of repletion (see 35e), since it makes it possible to identify the appropriate way to satisfy the desire (see 33c). Indeed, the act of remembering pleasures allows us to replenish a lack by recalling how to do it. Moreover, an anticipated pleasure consists in rejoicing in advance over that in which we shall take pleasure. We thus experience by anticipation a future pleasure. More precisely, as an image of a future pleasure, an anticipated pleasure consists of pleasure at the prospect of a future pleasure. This is so because having an image of a future pleasure necessarily entails the absence of that which is pleasant. In other words, one does not have the sensation but imagines it. Imagination compensates for the missing sensation. The anticipated pleasure is experienced through an image of the future pleasure (*Phil.* 40a10–12)¹. While

¹ See S. Delcomminette, *Le Philèbe de Platon*, pp. 384–385.

anticipating a pleasure, we picture ourselves experiencing pleasure by means of our imagination – the producer of pictures – thanks to a picture (40b3). The anticipated pleasure is thus an imagined pleasure, which may, however, be false¹.

An anticipated pleasure is false if it turns out to be falsely pleasant: the falsity of the picture derives from the falsity of the object, as in the example of pleasure produced by licentious actions². This is the intentional object of pleasure that is targeted in Socrates' argument (at the beginning of 12c–d and further in 37a9). This is why it is crucial for Socrates to establish a distinction between the object of pleasure and the feeling of pleasure (see 37b). What is pleasant, the pleasurable, should be assessed; otherwise, one may indulge in any kind of activity for the sake of feeling pleasure. Indeed, Socrates must demonstrate the falsity of the hedonist and relativist claims that, respectively, (1) feeling pleasure is good, whatever one takes pleasure in, and (2) the feeling of pleasure is the yardstick of the pleasurable. Even though it is not possible to deny an experience of pleasure, as Protarchus claims, pleasure is more than a mere sensation, something which cannot be evaluated³. Socrates argues that an appropriate feeling of pleasure originates in the pleasure's having the right object, which makes, therefore, pleasure dependent upon the object, hence the possibility of true and false pleasure. This is why the good man has true pictures of pleasure, i.e. anticipatory pleasures, unlike the bad man (see 40b2–c) who has pictures that are caricatures of the former; therefore, the possibility of confusing the two types⁴.

Anticipating the satisfaction of the desire for wealth, i.e. the anticipated pleasure in wealth, is false on the grounds that the satisfaction itself is false. This is the case because no satisfaction can be derived from wealth; in other words, the satisfaction is illusory or specious because it is based on a false belief *wealth makes people happy*. The ultimate desire is happiness, i.e. the Good, to which all the desires are subordinated. From this perspective, the hope of having money is vain since the object of pleasure does not correspond to the satisfaction of the desire for happiness. A false belief rests ultimately on a lack of self-knowledge, *which includes not knowing what one really enjoys*,

¹ The falsity of pleasure in the *Philebus* is a contentious issue on which I do not need to dwell in the context of this paper.

² Note that the anticipated pleasure is different from the pleasure of anticipation or anticipatory pleasure. It is possible for an anticipated pleasure to be false (*Phil.* 40b7–8) but not, strictly speaking, for an anticipatory pleasure to be so because what is false is the content of the pleasure, as in the case of pleasure in wealth. However, the falsity of the anticipated pleasure makes the anticipatory pleasure false as well. As V. Harte, *The Philebus on Pleasure*, p. 127 argues, the root of *the falsity of an anticipated pleasure (and hence of its anticipatory instalment) is in a failed conception of what will be pleasant*. However the anticipated and anticipatory pleasures somehow merge together in the experience of pleasure. See S. Delcomminette, *Le Philèbe de Platon*, p. 384, F. Teisserenc, *L'empire du faux ou le plaisir de l'image*, p. 295 and D. Wolfsdorf, *Pleasure in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, chap. 5.

³ On Protarchus's position, see N. Mooradian, *Converting Protarchus* and V. Harte, *The Philebus on Pleasure*, pp. 114–120.

⁴ This is not to say, however, that the pleasures of bad men are bad, as it is observed by J. Dybikowski, *False Pleasure and the 'Philebus'*, pp. 160–161.

as Kenny puts it¹. False pleasure is based on a misconception about what is right and wrong, which makes it equal to a morally wrong pleasure, as Socrates claims (see 40e9–10)².

This is not to say that pleasure is simply a belief, but rather that it implies or accompanies a belief (see 37e9–10)³. Belief plays a role first in appraising pleasure (we take pleasure in behaving virtuously and taking pleasure in behaving virtuously is good), and second, and in consequence, in arousing it. I take pleasure in *X* because of my belief that *X* is pleasurable. However suppose my belief is wrong: *X* is not pleasurable. I thus take pleasure in something that is not pleasurable; consequently, my pleasure is false or specious. This conclusion is sound on the grounds that a pleasure worth experiencing is tantamount to the satisfaction of an appropriate desire: not all desire deserves to be satisfied. A desire is appropriate only if its object is appropriate; in other words, an appropriate desire is a desire whose object is worth pursuing. It follows that a pleasure worth experiencing amounts to the satisfaction of an appropriate desire, which amounts ultimately to the desire to live a virtuous life, and the desire for the Good⁴. The Good turns out to be the condition for a pleasure to be true, hence the assimilation of the idea (*idea* in 65a1) of truth to the Good (see 65a)⁵.

The satisfaction of the desire for power has disastrous consequences, as is exemplified by the life of a tyrant in the myth of Er. In this case, the choice is motivated by the anticipated pleasure of enjoying power and wealth. The pleasure is, however, false, first, because power and wealth do not contribute to happiness, as we have seen, second, because not pleasure but rather suffering will ensue⁶. This is why it is possible to avoid false anticipated pleasures by training the soul to experience true anticipated pleasures. This is this experience that an eschatological myth produces by eliciting the anticipated pleasure of behaving justly, which amounts to the anticipated release from our own fear, and not the fear for the hero as in the case of tragedy, as we have seen. We are thus directly concerned about what is unfolding in the story. For the fear of suffering, the fear of moral error, and the fear of ignorance all turn out to have the same cure, that is, the anticipated satisfaction of the desire for virtue and knowledge, which an eschatological story arouses. The two desires are in fact inseparable because the satisfaction of the former demands that of the latter. In order to arouse these desires, the

¹ A. Kenny, *False Pleasure in the 'Philebus': A Reply to Mr. Gosling*, p. 52.

² This is rejected by Protarchus (in 40e9–41a). Note that before the move from false to bad, there is another one from false to incorrect (see 37b2: $\mu\eta\ \delta\acute{o}\theta\omega\varsigma$), a term that has a moral connotation in many contexts.

³ As J. Dybikowski, *False Pleasure and the 'Philebus'*, p. 159 argues, *the relation between pleasure and its objects is mediated by belief*. See also Mooradian, *Converting Protarchus*.

⁴ In the *Republic*, the tripartition of the soul turns out to be a tripartition of desires. See T. Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory*, C. Kahn, *Plato's Theory of Desire*, esp. p. 80.

⁵ S. Lovibond, *True and False Pleasure* defends in a new way the connection of false pleasure with moral experience. She supports Socrates' view on false pleasure in the context of *Bildung*.

⁶ As V. Harte, *The Philebus on Pleasure*, p. 127 argues *a failed prediction that something will be pleasant becomes a failed description of something as being or having been pleasant*.

story first produces fear and then gives the remedy for it by providing the audience with clues to understanding the fear. Indeed, the remedy lies in understanding that for the fear, i.e. the pain to be relieved, the audience must behave justly. The understanding gives rise to the anticipation of the satisfaction of these two desires, that is, the anticipated pleasure of being just and knowledgeable (see *Phil.* 36a–42d). This is why the pleasure from listening to an eschatological myth accompanies the anticipated pleasure of behaving justly, and consequently of being happy. The former is experienced together with the latter up to the point of merging with it into a common feeling. This means that these two pleasures are inseparable in the context of the aesthetic experience. By making explicit that being unjust is the reason for being deprived of the ultimate good – happiness – an eschatological myth urges the audience to renounce injustice, and consequently ignorance which is tantamount to being released from fear and suffering since they are the price to pay for injustice.

The eschatological myths not only elicit pleasure as a means of teaching about virtue, but by arousing the emotion of fear of moral error and the concomitant desires for justice and knowledge, they also have a role in teaching about pleasure. Thus not only is the desire for justice ingrained in the soul through fiction, but also the need for the satisfaction of this desire. The stories accustom the listener to experiencing a pleasure imbued with the idea of justice, and the anticipated pleasure of being virtuous, both of which lead in the end to the exclusion of false pleasures like obtaining honours and satisfying appetites (see *Rep.* 581c–d, *Phil.* 40b). A training in virtue consists thus of a training in pleasure (see *Laws* 653c) in the sense that being virtuous consists in part of not indulging in certain types of pleasure. In this regard, arousing in listening to a story pleasure amounts to arousing pleasure at the sight of justice, that is, of seeing the benefits of virtuous behaviour, and the evil consequences of bad behaviour. This leads in the end thanks to the anticipated pleasure of being just to an actual virtuous behaviour. Indeed aesthetic experience involves a crucial psychic change since the soul is filled with knowledge about virtue and with a proper emotional content.

Furthermore, within the dialogues the eschatological myths are addressed to different audiences; in the *Gorgias* and the *Republic* they are intended to educate non-philosophers, in the *Phaedo* to persuade two philosophers¹. However, both the non-philosopher and the philosopher alike have an aesthetic experience in a qualified way. They are both aware of the fictionality of the Underworld as depicted by the storyteller, who warns his listener not to take it literally, as we have seen. Recall that intellectual pleasure consists not only of understanding the intellectual properties of an eschatological myth, which are the equivalent of its moral properties, but also of understanding the correctness of a work of art as an imitation. For a work of art consists of a correct imitation that only a philosopher can judge. In fact, feeling pleasure in

¹ For the types of audience Plato aims to address, see G. W. Most, *Plato's Exoteric Myths*, pp. 21–24, G. R. F. Ferrari, *Glaucon's Reward, Philosophy's debt*, N. Charaboboulos, *Platonic Drama, and its Ancient Reception*.

listening to a moral story does not require access to knowledge about justice, that is, to know the Form of justice. The intellectual pleasure of a naïve listener, unlike that of a philosopher, does not include the knowledge of the Forms. This is the specific difference between the aesthetic experience of a naïve listener and that of a philosopher: *Hence the pleasure they [sounds] bring to the unintelligent, and the delight they afford – by their imitation of divine harmony in mortal movement – to the wise (Tim. 80b, transl. Zeyl, slightly modified).*

Yet in the *Phaedo*, where the audience of Socrates is composed of philosophers, the fear of injustice is roused with the same purpose, i.e. to stimulate a desire for justice, and with the threat of the same consequence, suffering. Even though the philosopher has already been convinced to be virtuous and is, in fact, virtuous, his desire for justice and knowledge need to be sustained. In this sense, the impact of the eschatological myths on the soul of a philosophical audience acts as a kind of positive reinforcement, hence the incantatory function that the story is said to possess (see 114d1–7) in addition to its *protreptic* and *parainetic* functions.

The eschatological myths raise pleasant expectations in the readers, be they philosophers or not; that is to say, they promise the enjoyment that proceeds from justice, i.e. happiness¹. As Socrates advises Callicles, [s]o, *listen to me and follow me to where I am, and when you've come here you'll be happy both during life and at its end, as the account indicates (Gorg. 527c, transl. Zeyl).* Aesthetic experience is the most efficient way not only to educate people about virtue and to persuade them of the necessity of it, but also to cultivate and intensify the desire to be virtuous. As Socrates puts it in the *Phaedo* (107d1), we should become *as good and wise as possible*. As Maguire argues, [a] *proper function par excellence is to represent moral Ideas for a pedagogical purpose – something it can do because it always produces pleasure in percipients, and percipients tend to become like what they like*².

Conclusion

The eschatological myths are stories that cultivate the desire to be virtuous and knowledgeable as well as the anticipated pleasure of being this way. Although Plato's eschatological myths arouse pleasure, the replenishment that these myths provide creates a need for a deeper replenishment. When we come to understand our fear of being unjust and ignorant, we become aware of our neglect of the self and of the necessity of redirecting our gaze towards ourselves, and we thus acquire a new vision of the world. From listening to traditional stories, naïve listeners might envisage their future lives in the Underworld as ones of terrible suffering because of their not having behaved virtuously during their earthly lives, which is, in fact, what Cephalus fears (see *Rep.* 330d–331a). However, as we gather from Cephalus' attitude, this type of fear is not conducive to understanding what justice is. Rather, he takes refuge

¹ The life of the philosopher, which is a life of justice, is the life that is the most enjoyable (see *Rep.* 583a). See C. Janaway, *Plato and the Arts*, esp. p. 388.

² J. Maguire, *The Differentiation of Art in Plato's Aesthetics*, p. 395.

in religious practices like sacrifice (see 331d6–7), which is not liberating, and leaves others to inquire about the nature of justice. Indeed, it is only from living a virtuous life that we can liberate ourselves from fear and suffering, and that we can thus obtain complete replenishment, i.e. happiness. The eschatological myths provide us with no more than a glimpse of such replenishment and act as an incentive for choosing a virtuous life.

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