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Lies and Fabrications The Cognitive Potential of *Pseudos* in Plato's *Republic*

Kłamstwa i zmyślenia Epistemiczny potencjał *pseudos* w *Politei* Platona

Abstrakt: W artykule stawiam pytanie: jaką funkcję pełni wątek *pseudos* w całym wydzie *Politei*, motywowanym wyzwaniem Thrasyacha, który maksymalnie związł zdefiniował sprawiedliwość jako „korzyść silniejszego/rządzącego”. W jaki zatem sposób „piękna *polis*” (Kallipolis), oparta na „szlachetnym zmyśleniu” kierowanym zwłaszcza do rządzących, może stanowić dobry kontrargument dla realisty Thrasyacha? Wykazuję, że chcąc dowieść, iż teza Thrasyacha jest zbyt wąskim i pozornie realistycznym opisem rzeczywistości politycznej, Platon jawnie posługuje się tym samym narzędziem, które leży niejawnie u podstaw światopoglądu wyrażonego w tezie retora: ideologicznym fałszem. Szpetnej ideologii (korzyści silniejszego) przeciwstawia „szlachetny fałsz” (dogmat miłości), gdyż fałsz jako taki jest niezbywalnym elementem strukturalnym samej *polis*, wynikającym z właściwej ludzkiej kondycji słabości władzy rozumnej. Motyw *pseudos* pełni zatem w *Politei* podwójną funkcję, heurystyczną i strukturalną. Po pierwsze, poprzez jawnie proponowany przez siebie fałsz Platon obnaża niejawnie fałsz ideologiczny leżący u podstaw realistycznej tezy Thrasyacha. Po drugie, fałsz przedstawia jako komponent żywiołu politycznego, kompensujący ludzką niewiedzę i wykorzystujący podatność na wdrożenia normatywne i kulturowe.

Słowa kluczowe: *Politeia* Platona, teza Thrasyacha, „szlachetne kłamstwo”, ideologiczny fałsz

“[...] none, I say, of these will ever learn to the utmost possible extent the truth of virtue nor yet of vice. For in learning these objects it is necessary to learn at the same time both what is false and what is true of the whole of Existence, and that through the most diligent and prolonged investigation, as I said at the commencement” (*Ep. VII* 344a—b)

Introduction: Alethiological Bias

There are names that are more repulsive than the things and phenomena they designate, especially if you are unaware that these objects are referents of those names. These include the terms “falsehood,” “lie,” “deception,” “fabrication” — equivalents of the Greek *pseudos* — all more or less sinister-sounding at the level of both theory and practice. In the first case, they are negative correlates or antonyms of knowledge and truth, in the second — represented by Cephalus in Plato’s *Republic* — sins and injustices (*adikemata*), which are punished if not by people, then by gods (I 330e6, 331b1—4).

At the very beginning of the *Republic*, Socrates easily deals with a position that “so simply” (*haplos houtos*, 331c3)¹ identifies justice with telling the truth and giving back what has been taken. It is enough to ask “justice, shall we so simply assert that it is the truth and giving back what a man has taken from another, or is to do these very things sometimes just and sometimes unjust” (331c1—5), to immediately afterwards indicate a situation — for example, an enemy or a mentally-ill friend — in which you should not give him/her a sword and speak “the whole truth.” In response, “everyone would surely say” that “speaking the truth” does not define justice (331c5—d2). This example — sufficient for a short refutation of Cephalus’s morality, which is grounded in a long cultural tradition — is trivial and known for antilogicalagons.² But behind this banality lies the difficult and dangerous

¹ The translations of the *Republic* are by A. BLOOM; the *Seventh Letter* by R.G. BURY; the *Cratylus* and the *Symposium* by H.N. FOWLER; the *Laws* by T.L. PANGLE. Unless otherwise indicated, all cited pagination refers to the *Republic*.

² More analogous examples in *Dissoi Logoi* (DK 90, 3.2—9). Cf. PLATO, *Leges* XI 916d—e: most people speak of lies and falsehoods with some approval, “but by leaving unregulated and undefined the where and when of the opportune moment (*kairos*), they

thought that truth is not always an intrinsic value, and therefore is not absolute — at least in the field of morality;³ and since knowledge is part of virtue, neither is it absolute in the field of epistemology. Consequently, a falsehood/lie is not “so simply” a negative value vis-à-vis truth and does have some heuristic value. It is the negation of falsehood’s existence that limits cognitive ability and gives access to all falsehood.⁴

In this article, I want to show that the exploration of *pseudos*’s potential in its many meanings of “lie,” “fabrication,” and “misjudgment” — given below by the more general term “falsehood,” which implies that every lie is false, but not every falsehood is a lie — is fundamental to the power of the *Republic*’s message.⁵ Therefore, understanding the function that the *pseudos* theme performs in the whole argument helps in interpreting the intentions of the dialogue itself. This theme — initiated in the dialogue’s opening scene with Cephalus and emphatically and provocatively stressed at the end

inflict many penalties on themselves and others through this saying.” That is why Plato’s legislator clearly defines when one cannot lie and cheat (916e—922a). He does not specify, however, when one can, though he implicitly acknowledges the existence of such circumstances.

³ This Platonic thought is also extracted from the *Republic* by Robert Wardy: “Truth is no automatic good”; “encouragement of virtue trumps mere truthfulness,” with a reference to 378a2—3 (R. WARDY: *The Platonic Manufacture of Ideology, or How to Assemble Awkward Truth and Wholesome Falsehood*. In: *Politeia in Greek and Roman Philosophy*. Eds. V. HARTE, M. LANE. Cambridge 2013, pp. 119—138: at 225).

⁴ This is clearly shown by the heuristic pirouette in the *Sophist* 241a—e: proof of the existence of falsehood traps a sophist who, denying the existence of falsehood, negates precisely what he has been caught in: the art of cheating (*technē apatetike*, 240d2, 264d5).

⁵ Passages II 382a1—2, e6, VI 485c3—4, VII 535e1—5, where reference is made to all kinds of *pseudos*, allow us to state that for Plato the term *pseudos* has the general meaning of falsehood, specified by him through adjectives and context. The basic diairesis of *pseudos* is conducted in II 382a—b: *pseudos en psyche* (falsehood in the soul, identical to ignorance; for more, see V. HARTE: *Plato’s Politics of Ignorance*. In: *Politeia in Greek and Roman Philosophy*. Eds. V. HARTE, M. LANE, pp. 139—154: at 147, 152—154) and *pseudos en logois* (falsehood in speeches, with an admixture of truth, often translated as *lie*; for more, see M. SCHOFIELD: *The Noble Lie*. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Plato’s Republic*. Ed. G.R.F. FERRARI. Cambridge 2007, pp. 138—164); the same dichotomy returns, formulated differently, in VII 535e1—3: *akousion pseudos* (the unwilling lie) and *hekousion pseudos* (the willing lie). Throughout the dialogue, Plato uses the semantically-broad term *pseudos*, specifying its meaning through context. I retain this Platonic phraseology, because it clearly echoes not only the main theme of the dialogue — which is not only *lie*, but all the various types of *falsehood* (*pseudos*) — but also Plato’s message: with the weak faculty of reason (*logismos*) being proper to the human condition, what becomes essential is the question of what content could harmlessly (for the individual and its community) compensate for the ignorance resulting from this weakness and simultaneously protect that individual and community against harmful content — in a word: how can ignorance be controlled?

of Book III in the motif of the “noble lie” (*gennaion pseudos*, III 414b9—c1) — runs sometimes above, sometimes beneath the surface of the entire argument of the *Republic*, announced as a polemic with “Thrasymachus’s thesis” (“the just is nothing other than the advantage of the stronger,” 338c1—2; hereinafter abbreviated as TT).⁶ As a result, this theme, meandering through ten books, carries a coherent message that serves as a response to Thrasymachus’s challenge: the inability to see falsehood and recognize the conditions of its dual function — heuristic in the process of obtaining knowledge and therapeutic in the process of shaping moral and political order — can be an equally large threat to the moral and intellectual condition of man as are absolutizations of the truth.

This thesis requires two comments. The first to soften the possible impression of absurdity, caused by the connection of any falsehood (*pseudos*) to truth and knowledge (*episteme*); the second — to link the “noble falsehood” with TT from the outset, because although both issues attract the attention of many commentators, they are usually discussed independently of each other. However, according to the interpretative perspective presented in this article, the motif of the “noble falsehood” takes on its proper meaning when read within the context of the problem situation presented in the books immediately preceding it, especially in “Thrasymachian” Book I.

Concerning the first comment, it is necessary to cite later dialogues in which Plato proves the existence of falsehood. This evidence is the main weapon in polemics with sophists who deny the existence of falsehood and, consequently, recognize that everything is true.⁷ To prove that not everything is true, Plato in the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist* justifies the possibility of false judgments. In the *Philebus*, to prove that not every pleasure is good, he justifies the possibility of false pleasures. In the *Cratylus* (408c5—8), he indirectly states that the human world is an entanglement of falsehood and truth:

Well, the true part is smooth and divine and dwells aloft among the gods, but falsehood dwells below among common men, is rough and like the tragic goat; for tales and falsehoods (*hoi mythoi te kai pseude*) are most at home there, in the tragic life.

The hope that you can live outside of this tragic scene is dispelled in the myth/fairy tale of the *Statesman*: a god who is always the same and unchanging cyclically departs from the changing world (269d—270a, 272e), and then man has to take care of himself. The cycle without god is political life (274d—275a).

⁶ On its historical credibility, see fn. 18 below.

⁷ *Sophist* 241a; *Euthydemus* 286d (see fn. 4 above).

In this context of the late dialogues, less astonishment is elicited by the *Republic*'s exposure of the indispensable fact and functionality of falsehoods (lies and fabrications) used in the process of creating moral and political order, than by the logical course of Plato's investigations, where in the *Republic* he first exposes human susceptibility to *pseudos* and in subsequent dialogues proves its existence.

The second remark is to reject, by linking TT to the *pseudos* theme, the possible accusation of anachronism that may arise in the context of Malcolm Schofield's comment that, "it was Augustine, not Plato, who was the first notable champion of what we might call the absolutist position on the morality of lying: holding that all lying is wrong, and forbidden by God as sinful."⁸ Attributing the intention of warning against absolutizing the truth to Plato then seems unreasonable, especially because, "in treatments of lying by Greek and Roman authors before Augustine there is not much to suggest that it even occurred to people that absolutism was a serious option."⁹ The option that Plato opposes, therefore, needs to be specified in accordance with 5th/4th century reality, as Thrasymachus's attitude in Book I, which gives the polemical impulse to the entire further line of argument, fits into that framework. It is an attitude that is equally absolute in its claim to explain reality as is Augustine's, with the difference that the place of absolute truth is occupied by a description of factuality, pretending to a thesis adequate to reality, of the following content: "the just is *nothing other than* the advantage of the stronger" (emphasis D.Z.), where the stronger is whoever happens to be in power, regardless of the type of system (338e6—339a2). True or false? Over the course of the ten books of the *Republic*, Plato will emphasize several times that the answer to this question determines whether our life will pass well and happily, or badly and unhappily¹⁰; he will also recall Thrasymachus several times, as a reminder that he (Plato) has Thrasymachus's thesis in mind the whole time.¹¹

In opposing Thrasymachus's realism to Plato's idealism, it is implicitly recognized that Thrasymachus condensed a description of reality into his

⁸ M. SCHOFIELD: *The Noble Lie*, p. 146.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ I 344e5—6, I 352d6, I 354c1—3, VIII 545a6—8, IX 578c6—7.

¹¹ V 450a5, b3, VI 498c8, VIII 545a8, IX 590d2—3, with a clear allusion to Thrasymachus in VI 493a9—c8 (cf. the description of Thrasymachus in the *Phaedrus* 267c7—d4). Ralph Wedgwood (R. WEDGWOOD: *The Coherence of Thrasymachus*. "Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy" 2017, vol. 53, pp. 33—63: at 54—61) and Merrick Anderson (M. ANDERSON: *Socrates' Thrasymachus' Sophistic Account of Justice in Republic I*. "Ancient Philosophy" 2016, vol. 36, pp. 151—172: at 151) also emphasize that Thrasymachus plays the role of Socrates's main opponent in the *Republic*, with whom the latter polemicalizes throughout the dialogue.

thesis — an overwhelmingly realistic description, while Plato in his counter-proposal constructed a utopian model of political order based on a “noble falsehood,” subordinated to normative, eternal patterns — a sublimely ideal model. The reconciliation of the “noble falsehood” with the eternal truths referring to those ideal entities is a task involving many interpreters; one made all the more difficult the more epistemic prejudice against falsehood there is. It is undoubtedly grounded in all those dialogues in which epistemological themes appear that allow for the reconstruction of a relatively coherent concept of Plato’s epistemology. With the awareness that “nowhere in Plato’s writings does he articulate and unequivocally endorse a theory or definition of knowledge,”¹² in elaborations of this theory, the following aspects are generally emphasized: 1) knowledge (*episteme*) is expert knowledge, which allows one to give a rational explanation of a given thing, including knowledge of its causes, and maintain it after checking its logical consistency and explanatory power in crossfire questions (*elenchos*); 2) the objects of knowledge are extrasensory, unchanging entities (*ideai*), whereas the objects of sensual cognition are the domain of true opinion (*alethe doxa*); 3) the process of reaching knowledge is a kind of recall (*anamnesis*); 4) the method is a two-way dialectic, bringing the multiplicity of things up to a generic unity (*sunagoge*) and breaking this unity down into a multiplicity (*diairesis*). Undoubtedly, what constitutes each of these aspects is truth (*aletheia*), which is opposed to falsehood (*pseudos*) as a wrong judgment about what is and why it is. As an antonym of knowledge so understood, it does not belong to the set of epistemological terms; it is not an epistemic good.

Thus we return to the starting point: why Plato, accepting Thrasymachus’s challenge, which lays claim to a perfectly adequate explanation of reality through the phrase “is nothing other than” (*einai [...] ouk allo ti e*, I 338c1—2), constructs in response a moral-political model also not only the line between truth and falsehood is blurred, but also truth and falsehood coexist so harmoniously that they result in a just, “beautiful *polis*” (*Kallipolis*). For, in the beginning, he bluntly states that this model is founded on the “noble falsehood,” which he recommends instilling into, “in the best case, even the rulers” (III 414c1—2), only to emphasize the love of truth and aversion to all falsehoods harbored by philosopher-kings strongly and repeatedly later in the dialogue (from V 475e). In other words: how can falsehood, though placatingly specified and embedded into the argument with complete openness and honesty, be not only a convincing, but

¹² M. LEE: *Epistemology (Knowledge)*. In: *The Bloomsbury Companion to Plato*. Ed. G.A. PRESS. London—New York 2015, pp. 167—169: at 167.

also — without denying the aspects of epistemology distinguished above — a definitive counter-answer to Thrasymachus.

Let us track the subsequent stages at which Plato tactically incorporates the *pseudos* theme into the *Republic*'s line of argument, and — in uncovering the structure of this composition — let us specify the function that this motif plays in the polemic with TT. After all, functionality in the refutation of theses about reality does reveal some degree of epistemic potential of whatever it is that makes the refutation effective.

Pseudos as a structural element of the *polis*: painful truths

Speak and view differently (I 327a—339a)

In Socrates's and Cephalus's conversation on justice at the beginning of the dialogue, the value of truth is relativized and thus limited: one need not always give back others' possessions and tell the whole truth. The ease with which Socrates accomplishes this — it was enough to provide him with one example (I 331c6) — along with the complete omission of the question of truth in his further discussion with Polemarchus and Thrasymachus, and the introduction of the *pseudos* theme in his conversation with Plato's brothers, gives the impression that truth is both ethically and politically marginalized in the argument.¹³ This allows other values to come to the forefront. Thus, when Polemarchus, son of Cephalus and heir to his material and moral estate, defends the morals of his father with the support of Simonides's wisdom — since Cephalus also leaves his son continuing the discussion with Socrates as part of his inheritance — he completely bypasses the duty of telling the truth, and focuses only on the duty of giving everyone what he/she is due: harm to one's enemies, advantages to one's friends. Polemarchus's defense is ineffective, for a series of elenctic blows by Socrates also refutes this understanding of justice: justice cannot bring anyone harm (335d11—336a3). Although the reader of the dialogue may conclude that the category of advantages is more closely related to

¹³ Glaucon also omits the truth when he names three types of goods in II 357b5—d2.

justice than are telling the truth and giving back what is due to others,¹⁴ and therefore that falsehood and fraud can somehow be morally advantageous, for now he or she must deal with this alone. Plato ends Socrates's discussion with Polemarchus with a negative conclusion typical for elenctics: justice is not what the decent Cephalus thought in accordance with the tradition of wise poets; Cephalus — the current testator for Polemarchus and potential testator for Plato's generation, which — after the demoralizing Peloponnesian War that exposed the face of justice as advantages for the stronger party¹⁵ — wants to redefine it, with a look to its own moral and political advantages.

In this delicate situation of inheritance, negative conclusions are more desirable than assertions. They have the power to distance one from the convictions imperceptibly instilled with one's culture and thus reduce the pressure of the duty to accept one's inheritance. This potential makes sense of the remaining entirety of the dialogue in its logical and dramatic dimension. In this doubly-complementary sense, this power is expressed in Socrates's question ending his conversation with Polemarchus: "what else would one say they (i.e. justice and the just) are? (*ti an allo tis auto phaie einai;*)" (336a10). In the logical dimension, the critical significance of this question lies in the fact that it contains a twofold methodological hint, which conditions the achievement of the *Republic's* heuristic goal. Within the context of Polemarchus's inherited morality, based on someone else's wisdom (on the words of poets and sages, 331d5, 334b4, 335e8—9), it reads: to understand what justice is, one must *speak differently* than before; in the further part of the dialogue, allegedly motivated by Thrasymachus's adequate observation, it will take the form of an incentive to *look differently*, maintained in its notorious suggestions to broaden one's view (*skopein, skepsesthai, theasasthai*) through the end of the dialogue.¹⁶ But why should a difference in speaking/looking be advantageous and for what purpose? What could cause us to look at reality differently? Is falsehood an

¹⁴ The pseudo-Platonic *Clitophon* (409c2—3) confirms that Socrates's students defined justice in terms of advantage: *to sumpheron, to deon, to ophelimon, to lusiteloun*; Plato's Socrates does not reject this view (*Republic* I 337c9—10). Cf. I 336c6—d2, where, ridiculed by Plato, Thrasymachus forbids Socrates from using these concepts, although he himself soon describes justice as *to sumpheron*.

¹⁵ Thucydides provides evidence from various parts of the Greek *oikoumene*, especially in his Melian dialogue (V 89—107, 116); for more on this topic, see: W.K.C. GUTHRIE: *The Sophists*. Cambridge 1971, pp. 84—88, 92.

¹⁶ Beginning with I 337c9, through optical facilitation (II 368c—d), a view of the highest subjects of science (VI 504d7), encouragement to look at the image of *paideia* as a cave (VII 514a—b), to Er's story of what he saw "in the other world" (*ekei*, X 614b7—8).

acceptable and effective tool for widening one's field of vision and changing one's way of speaking and thinking?

The starting point for these questions is embedded in the dramatic aspect of the dialogue's overarching question — “what else would justice be?” — formulated in such a way as to elicit the anticipated reaction from Thrasymachus and, in a caricatured exaggeration of the features of this well-known figure, to emphasize the real problem that motivates Plato's further investigations.

After hearing the question “what else would one say they (i.e. justice and the just) are?,” Thrasymachus — an outstanding rhetor, whose ability to manipulate his listeners' feelings impressed Plato; a great explorer in the field of rhetoric whom Aristotle put on par with Teisias; master of agonic rhetoric admired by Dionysius of Halicarnassus for his composure and conciseness, precision and clarity of thought; teacher and orator praised by Cicero for his political wisdom¹⁷ — emotionally aroused as if viewed in a distorting mirror of Plato's humor, is no longer able to refrain from intruding in on the conversation. Roaring like a wild animal (336b5—8) and demanding from Socrates a clear and precise answer (*saphos kai akribos*, 336d2—3) — though he is well aware that Socrates will not give it to him per his custom — Thrasymachus gives “another” (*heteran*) and “better” (*beltio*) definition of justice on his own (337d1—2). Though the content of his thesis may be a slogan based on Thucydides's account, already reflected in or in the process of being grounded in the views of, among others, Antiphon, Critias, Polos, and the mysterious Callicles from the *Gorgias*, in the version Plato attributes to Thrasymachus, famous for his precision and brevity, it has such distinctive qualities that one can assume that Plato sharpens what is most intriguing to him personally in his caricatured distortion.¹⁸ In response to Socrates's open question containing the phrase “what else ...” (*ti allo ...*), the closed answer “nothing other than ...” (*ouk allo*

¹⁷ Respectively: PLATO: *Phaedrus* 267c (DK B6); ARISTOTLE: *Sophistic Refutations* 34 183b29—33 (DK A2); DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS: *Isaeus* 20 (DK A13), *Demosthenes* 3 (DK B1), *Lysias* 6 (DK A3); CICERO: *De Oratore* III 59.

¹⁸ There are no non-Platonic testimonies allowing us to attribute the views of Plato's Thrasymachus to the historical Thrasymachus. It is not known, therefore, whether Thrasymachus of Chalcedon preached and professed views falling under TT. There are nonetheless testimonies about the style of his rhetorical presentations, which — despite Plato's application of caricatured distortion and exaggeration — allow us to reconcile it with the style of Plato's Thrasymachus. I discuss this issue of the authenticity and coherence of Plato's Thrasymachus, which has been widely debated in the literature, and especially the way in which Plato ridicules the historical Thrasymachus by constructing his character on the stage of the *Republic*, in the article *Thrasymachus of Chalcedon on the Platonic Stage*. “Journal of Ancient Philosophy” 2019, vol. 13 (1), pp. 1—39.

ti e ...) is given, and the slogan resounding in the 5th/4th century in various versions is maximally concise: "... the advantage of the stronger." The rhetor Thrasymachus does not refer directly to the truth. He calls his categorical thesis "a very fine answer" (*apokrisis pankale*, 338a7), and with the limiting "nothing other than" assures readers of its perfect adequacy. The concise, but substantive description of political and moral reality that he gives to illustrate the accuracy of his thesis (338e—339a4) carries a strong suggestion that this is how one ought to look at reality. If you do not want to harbor naive illusions, there is no choice: either you will be in power and make decisions about law and justice that are advantageous for your rule,¹⁹ or under threat of punishment you will be obedient to justice so established.

But is this option the only real one, or only one that determines our way of looking and thinking, which — after such guidance — becomes the factuality condensed into the adequate TT? If reality can be viewed differently, Thrasymachus's alternative will become only one of many aspects whose omission would lead to a realistic description narrowing the field of vision and limiting the potential of understanding despite the value of its realism. If we recall now the thought summarizing the entire dialogue, that the art of skillfully choosing a way of life is man's most important skill (X 618b6—c6), then Socrates's need expressed at the beginning of the dialogue to find out whether Thrasymachus is telling the truth (I 339a5) can be understood as an expression of the necessity to expand our field of vision to allow for more options. This need is justified by the existential weight of the matter — it concerns our happiness or unhappiness (I 354c3). Only a multitude of options allows you to make a good and thoughtful choice.

The way in which Plato checks the availability of other points of view is gradually revealed throughout the course of the *Republic's* entire line of argument: it begins with Thrasymachus's *only* option and ends with the account of Er about souls who are faced with the choice of *numerous* options for a better life (X 618a2—3: "far more than" the number of the choosers). Between this mundane beginning and the eschatological ending lies the long instruction of looking and reasonable evaluation, during which the stimulus to look and think differently is caused by a peculiar tension between falsehood and advantage. It will cause a distinct spark in Book III in the form of the "noble falsehood"; however, identifying what it sheds new light on requires specifying the current *status quo*.

¹⁹ Plato directly states what is advantageous for those in power in the *Laws* IV 714c3—4: staying in power.

The determining power of realism and description (I 339b—II 366b)

At this stage, we have Thrasymachus's *only* option before us. Despite the fact that it is allegedly "different," Socrates verifies its truthfulness in the old way, the way he usually does (both in early dialogues and in conversation with Polemarchus) — he uses the elenctic method. However, it is of little avail in its clash with the descriptive power of the valiant Thrasymachus's thesis. Even if Socrates did win individual battles fought at the higher level of "precise speech" (*akribes logos*), which Thrasymachus — himself admired by Dionysius of Halicarnassus for *akribeia* — had referred to under threat of being knocked out (I 340e1—341b10), at a lower level of description the power of TT has not been reduced (see Thrasymachus's next display of "descriptive ability" in I 343b1—344c8). There can be no doubt about this — in a moment it will be demonstrated by Plato's brothers, who play the role of Thrasymachus's advocates; for in their opinion, Thrasymachus too quickly gave up on further discussion with Socrates (II 358b2—3). They have a reason to think so: Socratic elenctics are barren in this case, since Socrates not only does not know himself what justice is anymore (I 354b9—c1), but he also did not convince either Thrasymachus — who still harbors no naive illusions about what he sees and describes²⁰ — or even Plato's brothers of another option (II 357a5—b4, 358b3—4). This is a serious problem, because after distancing himself from Cephalus's heritage of the wise poets of old, the only remaining alternative to Socratic ignorance — ridiculed by Thrasymachus as "that habitual irony of Socrates" (*he eiothyia eironeia Sokratous*, I 337a4—5), which is nothing new — is "this" (*houtosi*, I 343d2) view, which Thrasymachus advertised as "different" and "better."

For those who need a clear and precise direction, this can be a tempting proposition. They are represented by a group of young people who are listening in to the conversation and who, as we know from elsewhere, did

²⁰ The historical Thrasymachus — most likely a patriot from Chalcedon, since his grave will be there (ATHENAEUS: *Deipnosophists* 10 454F = DK A8) — knows well the political morality of imperial Athens manifested towards weaker *poleis*, among them Chalcedon. As demonstrated by Stephen White, the longest extant fragment of Thrasymachus's writings, i.e. the "Proem for a Speech in a Political Crisis" relayed to us by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Dem.* 3 = DL B1), is a testimony to the Chalcedonian's political engagement on behalf of the political autonomy of his native *polis* (S.A. WHITE: *Thrasymachus the Diplomat*. "Classical Philology" 1995, vol. 90, pp. 307—327). In this context, Thrasymachus could not have been an advocate for the thesis Plato attributes to him, campaigning on behalf of its advantages; he would more readily resemble a disillusioned diagnostician who, knowing how things really are, supports the weaker side.

not choose Socrates as their teacher.²¹ The fact that these particular people were placed in a dialogue that took place somewhere near the end of the Peloponnesian War (before 404bc) is intriguing from the perspective of the knowledge of the first readers of the dialogue, which was published approximately 25 years later. They know what its characters could not know. As Lysias — another of Cephalus's sons, who is listening in to the conversation — will report, in 404 BC his family became the victim of a purge carried out in the name of law and justice by the authorities at the time, aristocratic oligarchs: Polemarchus is killed; Cephalus's great estate is confiscated²²; Niceratus, who for some reason is mentioned by Plato in the company of Polemarchus and Adeimantus, is also killed then (I 327c2); things are no better for Socrates: in the year 399, the democratic authorities in power condemn him — this time in the name of (their) justice — to death.

The ignorance of the dialogue's participants about these facts of the future — which demonstrates that although TT can be rebutted at the dialectic level, it will still work in reality — is compensated for by observations made by Plato's two older brothers, which are of a general-moral and general-cultural nature and transcend the level of historical events. The first is made by the younger, but “most courageous in everything” Glaucon (II 357a3), who conducts two thought experiments in the field of moral psychology: using the experiences with the Gyges ring and simulating the fate of a just man who is widely regarded as unjust, and an unjust man who is regarded as just. In both cases, the conclusions confirm TT. In the first experiment, making us invisible to others — “no one [...] would be so adamant as to stick by justice” (360b4—5); only “fear of suffering injustice” at the hands of the other (stronger) party forces the consensus that the law punish all unjust acts (360d5—7; with a reference to 358e2—359a4); in the second — “it's no longer hard [...] to complete the speech by a description of the kind of life that awaits each” (361d7—e1). Glaucon does not give the causes of this state of affairs: in supporting TT, which refers to political

²¹ Clitophon chose Thrasymachus, because the rhetor says concrete things, while Socrates either does not know or does not want to share his knowledge (*Clitophon* 410c—d); likewise Niceratus, who, having the opportunity to study with Socrates, prefers other teachers (*Laches* 200c—d); Charmantides II chose Isocrates — though it is debatable whether in *Republic* I 328b7 Plato is naming his contemporary Charmantides II (so S. WHITE: *Thrasymachus the Diplomat*, p. 326), or the latter's grandfather Charmantides I, a contemporary of Cephalus (so D. NAILS: *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics*. Indianapolis 2002, pp. 89—90), it is certain that Charmantides I's grandson belonged to the group of those who were looking for a teacher, but who did not see one in Socrates.

²² LYSIAS 12.5.

realities, he merely supplements it with behavioral facts that are simpler and more primal than those at work in the political reality. On their basis, he shows that injustices committed in secret are more beneficial to their perpetrators than justice is. The question of whether these facts result from nature or culture is not asked, but the answer will be given shortly along with a blurring of this dichotomy, which the sophists so strongly emphasize. It is the possibility of its blurring that gives potential to the *Republic's* entire line of argument, as it will reveal a critical point in TT, diagnosed later in the dialogue as the *pseudos* indispensable to political life and used in this indispensability as a tool that Socrates will ultimately employ against TT. Moreover, having undermined TT with its own strength, he will not put this tool aside, but will improve it and change its purpose. It is little wonder, since to this day, no one has yet confirmed that you can create a political order without an admixture of *pseudos*,²³ though many defenders of truth are likely outraged at *pseudos*. But what truth? — we should ask not just after Karl Mannheim,²⁴ but after Plato himself.

The answer given in the *Republic*, set within a context outlined by Plato's brothers, lies somewhere at the intersection of culture and nature, truth and falsehood — an intersection imperceptible in the concise TT. For now, no participant in the dialogue seems to show awareness of the fact that the main problem posed by the rebuttal of TT and conviction of the opposite option lies in the indispensability of *pseudos* in ethical and political life. One can doubt whether Thrasymachus himself is aware of this. Plato awakens it in the reader gradually, and the breakthrough comes in the blurring of the line between nature and culture that has just occurred.

It is done by Adeimantus, Plato's eldest brother, who — in accordance with the fashionable method of antilogic — wants to supplement Glaucon's argument with its opposite, the praise of justice (II 362e2). Thus, when Glaucon demonstrated injustice on the basis of behavioral facts, Adeimantus, to demonstrate justice, presents cultural facts. However, he is unable to create an antilogy. It turns out that the antitheses of culture—nature and justice—injustice are unsustainable, since Adeimantus, in describing cultural models that praise justice, uncovers the norms and beliefs motivating unjust behavior. He starts from the very beginning: from fathers' instructions to their children (from 362e4); then he mentions what shaped the fathers themselves and will further shape their children as participants

²³ By substituting the modern term "ideology" for *pseudos*, Wardy demonstrates this impossibility well (R. WARDY: *The Platonic Manufacture of Ideology*, pp. 120—124, 132—138), referring approvingly to Schofield's interpretation (M. SCHOFIELD: *The Noble Lie*).

²⁴ See K. MANNHEIM: *Ideologie und Utopie*. Frankfurt am Main 1929 (esp. chap. 2).

in public life, i.e. the opinions about the gods passed down from generation to generation by Hesiod and Homer (363a6—c2); he then pointedly describes the widespread Orphic beliefs about the afterlife and atonement to the gods (363c3—e4); he ends with the words of poets and non-poets alike, who all speak “with one tongue” (364a1): justice in itself is beautiful, but since the opinions others have of us are the measure of our value, injustices unseen by others (i.e. ones that do not lessen their opinion of us) are more advantageous, that is more effective in satisfying our desire for more (*pleonexia*). Thus, Adeimantus, in incorporating the contemporary norms that are forced upon everyone from childhood to old age into a synoptic outline — moreover, describing the real human behavior that results from them (365d1—366b2) — leaves no doubt as to why people think and behave as they do in Glaucon’s experiment.

He does not even have to say explicitly that TT results from a specific cultural reality — one that is total and determines human behavior; that as such it is an apt description of what is; that it is an abbreviation of content based on cultural and behavioral foundations, which has not been clarified by Thrasymachus with his famous concise style. He also lessens the surprise as to why Socrates’s elenchus only scratches the surface of this content, wanting but unable to grasp the reasoning that justifies it. There is no logical argument in descriptions; there is only a picture of variously motivated events and unavoidable mechanisms. Regardless of the sharpness and scope of the description, as well as Socrates’s elenctic efficiency, an image (*eidolon*) and an argument (*logos*) alone do not yet give an understanding of reality — as we read in a famous passage of the *Seventh Letter*, which reveals an awareness of Platonic methodology: “But it is the methodical study of all these stages [i.e. all disclosures of things], passing in turn from one to another, up and down, which with difficulty implants knowledge” (343e).

It is at this moment in the dialogue, when TT has gained a firm grounding in reality thanks to Plato’s brothers, that he suggests a way to confront it: one must come down to its level and identify those motivations and mechanisms. Thus, without questioning the fact of cultural norms, he diagnoses what these norms really are: “what is said” (*legomena*) about virtue and vice, people and gods (II 365a5; b5). We can draw the conclusion ourselves: since the beliefs implemented since childhood create a moral and political reality through words, TT’s realism is based on some kind of “idealism” (“idealism” is understood colloquially here as referring to a certain ideology dealing with hidden things).

If Plato’s Thrasymachus, in formulating the allegedly “different” and “better” definition of justice, was unaware of its ideological foundation, he is unlikely to be credible as a teacher, regardless of the extent of the

descriptive potential of his teaching. What is more, in accusing Socrates of being naïve for having contrary beliefs (I 343a2—9), Thrasymachus may be even more naïve if he thinks he can see things as they are without succumbing to any illusions. It now turns out that his “different” and “better” thesis is simply an expression of a ubiquitous ideology prevailing from ancient times — going all the way back to the poems of Homer and Hesiod — which during the Peloponnesian War found its full expression in the realities falling under Thrasymachus’s definition of justice. Interpreting the *Republic* from the perspective of an antinomy between “Thrasymachus’s realism” and “Socrates’s/Plato’s idealism” is therefore the wrong way to go.

Reset: Is morality without ideology possible? (II 366b3—378e)

When Adeimantus, summarizing his description of cultural reality and encouraging Socrates to meet the TT once again at this level of implemented standards, asks: “After all that has been said, by what device, Socrates, will a man who has some power — of soul, money, body or family — be made willing to honor justice and not laugh when he hears it praised” (II 366b7—c7) — he really expects Socrates to show that the ideology presented is “false” (*pseude*, c4), though with real results: it is due to them that most people are not “willingly just; but because of a lack of courage, or old age, or some other weakness” (366d1—2), for example the fear of punishment emphasized by Glaucon. He thus suggests that Thrasymachus grasped real human behavior with his thesis, but proceeded from false beliefs about the gods, people, and the afterlife. At the root of this suggestion lies the assumption that it is not only possible — though “there is not one who has ever” done it (366e3) — to talk about justice and injustice outside of a theological and utilitarian context (367e1—5), but also that these matters can be spoken of completely without falsehood. Is this not another instance of naïveté — this time on the part of Plato’s brothers, which is pointed out by Plato in the *Republic*?

It certainly was not the quality of their uncle Critias, whose shadow — that of Polemarchus’s and Nikias’s assassin standing at the head of the Thirty — darkens the setting of the entire dialogue.²⁵ Glaucon’s description of both people’s behavior under the influence of the Gyges ring making

²⁵ Friedrich Schleiermacher recognized the allusion to him in II 368a1—4, where a fragment of an elegy praising Plato’s brothers — probably authored by Critias — is quoted (as cited in: J. ADAM: *The Republic of Plato*. Cambridge 1902, p. 90).

them invisible, as well as the conventionality of law, is significantly convergent with the description of the human condition in Critias's *Sisyphus* (DK B25): although the people made punitive laws, they committed injustice secretly (v. 11). Then a wise man invented the immortal gods, so that by their omniscience they would elicit the fear of punishment. "With this story he presented the most seductive (*hediston*) of teachings, concealing the truth with lying words (*pseudei*)" (v. 24—26).²⁶

In this context, Critias's vision of reality, in which the motif of "the most seductive" falsehood about the gods is an indispensable element of political order, the task Plato bids his brothers to set before Socrates gains importance. He is to present a speech that is "different" and "better" not only than TT, but than all the previous speeches — including, we can assume, the writings of Critias. Adeimantus even threatens: if it does not replace the current cultural norms implemented "from the beginning" and "from youth" (367a1—2), he will say that Socrates agrees with Thrasymachus (367c2). However, the fact that on the stage of the *Republic* Plato's brothers believe in the possibility of speeches (moral and cultural content) free from falsehood and the dogma of punishing gods does not mean that Plato holds the same beliefs. What does he do with the faith of his brothers?

Because the task Socrates faces is to "defend" (*boetheia*, 368c1—5) justice against prevalent cultural norms and opinions instilled and continuing to be instilled since childhood — culminating in TT — Socrates, to check whether it is possible to inculcate alternative content in an entire community from childhood and, above all, whether and why any content should be inculcated at all, must first suspend the "bindingness" of the existing content — execute a sort of "worldview reset." It will succeed if one adopts a point-of-view that will free the mind from thinking in the categories of this content. It is possible to do so by looking at it as an element of a broader structure and in relation to other elements, i.e. in its political and social role. Socrates uses this method to respond to Thrasymachus's challenge for a second time, that is, after his unconvincing elenchus in Book I. In accordance with this method, he first logically disassembles the political structure and goes back to its *arche* (in the sense of both a logical beginning and the principle sustaining the political in its existence). To paraphrase Plato's illustrative language: he encourages us to look at how a *polis* is generated from the outset and gives us hope that by observing this process, we will glimpse what we are looking for; as Plato says: if we see "its justice coming into being, and its injustice" (369a5—b7), we will be

²⁶ Translated by W.K.C. GUTHRIE (*Sophists*, p. 243).

able to say, “what each in itself does to the man who has it — whether it is noticed by gods and human beings or not” (367e3—4). Therefore, tracking the process, i.e. analyzing what is happening at the gignetic level, has heuristic value. In line with the stated purpose of the dialogue, it is to reveal that the cultural content grounding TT is false (see 366c4).

Socrates notices the principle/beginning (*arche*) of the *polis* immediately, in the first step (369b5). In the process of recreating the logical genesis, it must — since it is a logical beginning — clearly impose itself on thought as the basis of the political from the very outset. This principle is the insufficiency of each individual human being, i.e. the indispensable need that motivates our thinking and action. Observed in its necessary growth, beyond the categories of good/evil, “our need” (*he hemetera chreia*) creates the *polis* “from the beginning” (*ex arches*) (369c9—10). At this most fundamental level, this process is inevitable and automatic; the only thing that depends on us at our current level — that of observers — is either the willingness to see and discover the mechanisms of this process, or the lack of such willingness. Responding positively to Socrates’s renewed encouragement to look and seek (369a1—7, 372e2—8), we gradually notice that the *polis* “quite necessarily” exceeds the “boundary of the necessary” (373d10—e1) and requires, in addition to many other resources serving to satisfy its necessarily increasing unnecessary needs, poets and teachers (373b7, c2), i.e., according to the description given by Plato’s brothers, those who convey cultural norms to the community. Swollen and sick from its excessive needs, the *polis* also needs doctors (373d1); immediately afterwards we see the genesis of war — refraining, as Socrates suggests, from assessing whether war is good or bad (373e2—6), since it is part of an inevitable process. The first evaluation is carried out along with the need for a group of soldiers. Because they must defend what the *polis* possesses and acquire what it is still in need of (374a1—2) — it can be judged that this is the most important group for being or not being a *polis* (374d8), and therefore its members require unique, appropriate natures (374d8—e4) and a proper upbringing (376c7—8). At this logical stage in the development of political life, we see a moment of possible interference in this necessary process, at which moment this particular possibility becomes an expression of that necessity. Plato emphasizes it by switching the roles of Socrates and his interlocutors: from passive observers revealing their needs, they become interactive viewers, because they are responsible for the selection and education of soldiers/guards, carried out in accordance with the mechanisms of the political process discovered thus far (374e6). But this change of roles is simply the next stage in the necessary process of growing needs, played out on the stage of the *Republic*. If the *polis* is to continue to exist — and

the condition of its being or not being are guards who are good, i.e. adequate to its needs — then at this stage of its development it is *necessary* to interfere in these guards' condition — in their individual inclinations and needs — directing them towards preserving the *polis*'s existence. Paideia is such an interference. Therefore, someone else — a non-guard — must undertake the selection and education of guards appropriate to the needs of the *polis*. Without this, the observers will lose the object they are observing, i.e. the *polis*. This does not mean, however, that from the moment of this intervention into a necessary process Plato is already “designing an ideal state.”²⁷ He continues to guide the reader down the gignetic route — we are constantly observing the *polis*'s process of coming into existence — and the moment when he calls the *polis* emerging before our eyes “a pattern” in heaven “for the man who wants to see and found a city within himself on the basis of what he sees” (IX 592b2—3) constitutes *only* another structural stage in the emergence of the *polis*, preceded by the equally necessary phase of degeneration of the “just *polis*” (from VIII 545d1).²⁸

It is at this moment in the dialogue, after the basic structure of the political — which is in fact an inexorable logic of needs — has been revealed, generating, in turn, the need for involvement in the paideutic process, when Socrates reveals two phenomena, resulting from this structure and closely related to one another, that will determine the course of his commitment, consistent with the logic of the needs that fund political life. Using an interpretative abbreviation, but with Plato's phraseology preserved, let us call them the phenomena of “canine philosophy” and “noble falsehood.” Though both terms seem to be mysterious thought constructs or even bizarre hybrids, on closer inspection it turns out that the mechanisms they designate are just as indispensable and striking in their

²⁷ This phrase is borrowed from Giovanni Reale, who states in a peremptory tone: “The only correct perspective for interpreting the *Republic* that remains is the one indicated above: *Plato wants to know and form a perfect state in order to know and form a perfect man*” (English translation after the Polish edition of G. REALE: *Myśl starożytna*. Trans. E.I. ZIELIŃSKI. Lublin 2003, p. 201).

²⁸ If we think that in the *Republic* Plato has risen to the level of an “ideal,” or immutable state, which has achieved its goal, we lose sight of what Plato wants to show us when he broadens Thrasymachus's perspective. The heuresis of reality, provoked and initiated by the deterministic and categorical vision of reality condensed into TT, is still taking place. It also continues at the level of the necessary mechanisms of the political, with the difference that from here on in — after Plato has already introduced the reader to the paideutic and cultural level — these are mechanisms resulting from the plasticity and susceptibility of social tissue to necessary cultural and normative implementations. In other words: to tackle the possible “falsehoods” underlying TT, Plato shows the moment and scope of possible interference into the necessary process of the political.

reality as the basic needs mentioned thus far: from food and clothing to war (from II 369d1 to 373e2).

It cannot be denied that soldiers/guards should be dangerous towards their enemies and gentle towards their own, i.e. embody a basic feature confirmed in its reality by nature in thoroughbred, well-behaved dogs (375e2—4). And since it manifests itself in the dog's dislike of someone it does not know ("although it never had any bad experience with him") and gentleness towards one it knows ("even if it never had a good experience with him") — this is a "truly philosophic" quality (376b1). Such a dog "distinguishes friendly from hostile looks by nothing other than by having learned (*katamathein*) the one and being ignorant of the other [...]. And so, how can it be anything other than a lover of learning (*philomathes*) since it defines what's its own and what's alien by knowledge and ignorance? [...] but aren't love of learning (*philomathes*) and love of wisdom (*philosophon*) the same?" (376b3—b9). Regardless of why Plato emphasized the attribute of *philosophon* using an entertaining play on words under the guise of reasoning,²⁹ it is undeniable that even if he ascribed a noble attribute to a condition considered trivial and mentally limited from the point of view of Socratic philosophy — since from the former it follows that a "dog philosopher" does not love what he does not know and treats what he does not know as foreign and hostile³⁰ — the ability to be gentle with his own and

²⁹ The play on words refers to the fact that a dog likes (*philein*) what it has come to know well (*kata-mathein*, also meaning "to learn"), and is therefore a lover of what it knows (*philo-mathes*). The example of dogs, often highlighted later in the dialogue (see fn. 45 below), may be an allusion not so much to Cynic philosophy (see J. ADAM: *The Republic of Plato*, p. 108), as to the mental condition of the Spartiates recognized in the guards, famous for their hostility towards foreigners (*xenelasia*), which Plato ironically calls "canine" wisdom (cf. a critique of this attitude in the *Laws* 950b and in the *Protagoras* 342c). But it may also refer to the trivial circumstance that one or both of his brothers bred or liked dogs, in reference to which Plato constantly makes jibes, adding a vividness to the presence of the brothers on the *Republic's* stage, especially if the brothers could be the first readers of the first versions of the *Republic* (they were probably still alive in 382; for information on the dating, see: D. NAILS: *The People of Plato*, pp. 2—3, 154). This point does not contradict Jacob Howland (J. HOWLAND: *Glaucón's Fate: Plato's Republic and the Drama of the Soul*, "Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy" 2014, vol. 29.1, pp. 113—136; IDEM: *Glaucón's Fate: History, Myth, and Character in Plato's Republic*. Philadelphia 2018): following a conjecture by Mark Munn (M. MUNN: *The School of History: Athens in the Age of Socrates*. Berkeley—Los Angeles—London 2000, p. 239) that Glaucón died at the side of Critias "The Tyrant" in 403, he proposes to read the *Republic* as a memorializing of Plato's brother and "the tragedy of Socrates' unsuccessful struggle" to save him.

³⁰ Cf. the description of philosophers given by Diotima, the woman who taught Socrates philosophy: those who love "are prepared to have their own feet and hands cut off if they feel these belongings to be harmful. The fact is, I suppose, that each person does

fierce with his enemies is the primary condition for the survival of the *polis*. Maintaining this basic ability serves the process of selecting and educating guards: it is undeniable that a situation in which guards would become hostile to their fellow citizens would be destructive not only to the *polis*, but also to themselves (see 375c1—4: brave and strong by nature, they would kill one another). The urgent question, then, is how to develop and maintain this ability; what paideutic content can be so effective at the outset — because it is already clear that it is not TT, made manifest in the battles of the Peloponnesian War pitting Greeks against Greeks. The issue of the truth or falsehood of this content is irrelevant in the face of what is at stake at this level of the logical genesis of the political — the being or not being of the *polis*, which depends on the effectiveness of the guards'/soldiers' paideia.

At this point in the political process, in which — after revealing the logic of needs, initiated by Socrates's invitation: "Come, now [...] let's make a city in speech from the beginning. Our need, as it seems, will make it" (369c9—10) — Socrates has become an active participant, this invitation is reformulated: "Come, then, like men telling tales in a tale (*en mytho mythologountes*) and at their leisure, let's educate the men in speech" (376d9—10). But just as he directed the first — accenting what influences us, i.e. nature — at Glaucon, who proved himself to be an expert on behavioral mechanisms, he directs the second — accenting what we influence, i.e. culture — at Adeimantus, who presented the cultural basis of the content of TT, which describes these behaviors as *concisely* and categorically as possible. This change of interlocutors is as significant for understanding Plato's argument as is the earlier change in roles from passive to interactive viewers. It was Adeimantus who finally put Socrates on the task of defending justice against TT and prompted him on how to do so: it must be demonstrated that the cultural content upon which TT is built is false (see II 366c4 once again). Looking now at the origins of the *polis* from the *maximally broad* perspective outlined above, it is reasonable to doubt whether knowing that something is false is enough to deprive it of value and contrast it with the victorious truth.

Very quickly, since already at the very beginning of the demonstration of the paideutic process, Socrates dispels this noble veritative illusion of Adeimantus. He draws Adeimantus's attention to a phenomenon that he probably looked at often, but did not see in it what is now crucial for the defense of justice against TT. It is the nature of the paideia, which under the complexity of its layers and parts hides falsehood like a stone fruit — in

not cherish his belongings except where a man calls the good his own property and the bad another's; since what men love is simply and solely the good" (*Symposium* 205e5—206a1).

other words, precisely what Adeimantus suggested to consider a disqualifying attribute of TT. The *paideia* consists of two parts: “gymnastic for bodies and music for the soul” (376e3—4); music includes speeches (*logoi*), of which one kind is true and the other is false/fabricated (*pseudos*). In consequence: “Must they be educated in both, but first in the false (*en tois pseudesin*)” (377a1—2). Adeimantus, who had previously shown a great deal of knowledge of cultural norms and their impact on social morality, is — at this basic, elementary stage — probably shocked by this conclusion: “I don’t understand how you mean that” (377a3). The confusion passes quickly when Socrates replaces the term “falsehoods” — which is repulsive to Adeimantus, as it probably is to many of us — with the synonymous “myths/fairy tales”: “Don’t you understand [...] that first we tell tales (*muthous*) to children? And surely they are, as a whole, false (*pseudos*), though there are true things in them too” (377a4—7). Just as reason does not allow us to deny that a good guardian is dangerous to enemies and gentle to his own, we likewise do not deny that children’s first contact with culture is through fairy tales, which, speaking to a large extent about what does not exist, combine truth with falsehood in an attempt to get their intended message across. Thus, *pseudos* reveals its functional presence at the very base of social and political life that is raising children. Therefore, it turns out that from the perspective of the genesis of political life, the task that Adeimantus put before Socrates is wrongly formulated: it is not enough to prove the falsehood of beliefs underlying TT to refute this thesis, since it is highly probable that a political order based on the opposite thesis must also refer to some falsehood/fabrication at the *paideutic* starting point.

Plato leaves no doubt as to this question. The first step in taking on TT must be to perceive the ineradicable rootedness of falsehood in political life. The next question concerns the content of this falsehood. Since the souls of children are the most flexible and susceptible to any implementations that have “a tendency to become hard to eradicate and unchangeable” (378e1), the quality of these implementations subordinated to a specific *paideutic* goal is vital for *paideia*. If they are to be contrary to content resulting in TT’s “realities,” it is necessary to pass fairy tales and inventions (*pseude*) on to children other than those by Hesiod and Homer about the gods, resulting in a different “reality.” Hesiod and Homer, lying “not prettily” (*me kalos*, 377d9; 381d5, e1—e3), passed down “the biggest lie about the biggest things” (377e6) — i.e. about fights between the gods, patricide, castration, deceit, family hostilities, and many others, which make a great excuse or model of behavior for people, especially the strong, who, with an eye toward their own advantage, dictate the rights of the weaker. If “we are somehow going to persuade them that no citizen ever was angry with

another and that to be so is not holy” (378c6—8) — despite TT³¹ — then the guards should be educated with the help of other myths. Because if you cannot replace the “ugly myths” with beautiful myths, TT will retain its power and timeliness. Either we accept the ugly *pseude* underlying TT, or some alternative *gennaion pseudos* (noble falsehood).

Is there a third option? Is the category of truth — paradoxically — an apparent tool for overthrowing the *pseude* underlying TT? Why cannot falsehood be eliminated with truth? In the further part of the dialogue, Plato strips readers of the illusions contained in what is assumed by the question in regard to the purely veritative value of cultural content, thus revealing the ideological foundation of the supposedly realistic TT. By not arming himself with the weapon of truth to fight falsehood, he allows us to discover the truth about political reality.

Taming *pseudos* (II 378e—III 388e)

Plato demonstrates the indispensability of falsehood in moral and political life within a theological context — in this respect in accordance with Critias’s *Sisyphus*. Listing the “biggest lies” and demonstrating their “ugliness” in existing theological myths (i.e. those concerning “the biggest things,” 377e6—7), and on the other hand by contrasting “beautiful” theological patterns (*hoi tupoi peri theologias*, 379a5—6), Plato — though he calls them laws (*nomoi*, 380c4—7, 383c7) — not only does not refer to truth, but disarming the repelling power of the word *pseudos* and assigning it the attribute of therapeutic utility, he does not exclude the *pseudos* component from those beautiful patterns/laws.

While Plato’s “beautiful patterns” can be reconciled with the dialectically uncovered “reality of ideas”³² — according to which combining the concept of god with the concept of evil (in all its various Homeric and Hesiodic exemplifications: mutual battles and hatred of the gods, lies and deceit, etc.) is a dialectical contradiction — and therefore given

³¹ Cf. I 343c1—344c8: a concrete illustration of the consequence of TT that justice, as the advantage of the stronger, is harmful and misfortunate for the weak, which as a result places happiness among the advantages of the stronger.

³² So Y.-J. SUN: *Lies in Plato’s Republic: Poems, Myth, and Noble Lie*. “*ΠΕΓΗ/ΦΩΝΕΣ* II” 2017, pp. 87—108: at 93—98 — what constitutes the criterion for rejecting the falsehoods of the gods is not utility, but “fixed relations between notions,” or truth as compatibility with intelligible reality.

a veritative value, the fact remains that in separating the concept of god from the concepts of evil and lie/falsehood, Plato joins both to our human reality: “the god is not the cause of all things, but of the good” (380c8—9); “the demonic and the divine are wholly free from lie (*apseudes*)” (382e6); and since “the things that are good for us are fewer than those that are bad,” therefore god is the cause of few things (379c2—7). Analogously, moving god away from falsehood — in the radical form of the myth in the *Statesman*: away from the political element in general — results in leaving rich layers of evil and falsehood at humans’ disposal, with the suggestion that in order to minimize the former, the latter should be reasonably used. That both layers are not synonymous, and can therefore be opposed to one another, becomes clear when freeing the god from all falsehood, leaving falsehood to human beings.

This process is accomplished through diairesis of *pseudos* in passage 382a1—e6, which constitutes part of the theological argument. In the initial, semantically-broad concept of *pseudesthai* (382a1) two meanings are distinguished and specified; these, in accordance with the correctness of the diairetic method, exhaust its denotation: 1) true falsehood (*to hos alethos pseudos*, 382a4; a synonym for *to onti pseudos* — “the real lie,” 382c3), which is “the ignorance in the soul” (*he ente psyche agnoia*), despised by “all gods and human beings” (382a5—b4); 2) mixed falsehood (*ou panu akratos pseudos*), which is to be found “in speeches,” is “a kind of imitation of the affection in the soul, a phantom of it that comes into being after it” (382b8—c1).³³ By repeating and categorically stating that “the real lie,” i.e. that “in the soul,” is hated by gods and human beings (382c3—4), Plato moves it out of the area of discussion, focusing solely on “the lie in speeches.” However hermetic the above description may sound, let us leave it this way — in accordance with Plato’s methodology — until it gains a clear meaning at the appropriate stage of the argument. For the order that the reader who follows Plato’s argument is working out is one of the vehicles for the argument’s heuristic and persuasive power. At the current stage, along with the question: “When and for whom is it [i.e. falsehood in speeches] also useful, so as not to deserve hatred?” (382c6—7) — this kind of *pseudos* is introduced into the center of political argument, which, motivated by the desire to learn “whether Thrasymachus is telling the truth,” goes on — for now — without any reference to truth. In other words, in

³³ Cf. V. HARTE: *Plato’s Politics of Ignorance*, pp. 146—7, n. 22, who interprets this passage not through the prism of the diairetic division, but through the different grammatical voices of the verb *pseudesthai* — in a fluid transition from the middle voice in 382a1 to the passive voice in 382b2.

order to know how things really are, Plato proceeds to study the utility of falsehood.

The banality that exposes the weakness of Cephalus's truth-referencing morality appears again: "the lie in speeches" is useful against enemies or crazy friends like a medicine (*pharmakon*, 382c10) that has the effect of averting or reversing (*apotrope*, 382c9) a destructive phenomenon. After talking to Thrasymachus and revealing the cultural (ideological) foundations of his thesis, Plato adds another function of *pseudos* that should not surprise or outrage the already prepared reader: "because we don't know where the truth about ancient things [i.e. the oldest gods] lies," we liken "the lie (*pseudos*) to the truth as best we can" (382d1—3). Thus, both needs — that of treating illnesses and of talking about things that we do not really know about (the gods) — are indispensable needs of the human condition, in contradiction to the concept of god. For god has neither enemies or crazy friends, nor ignorance. Thus, only he is "wholly free from lie[s]" (382e6), because he has no need for falsehood. Regardless of the protests of truth advocates, those who closely follow the process of the *polis's* emergence with Plato's Socrates must state that at a certain stage, for a certain purpose, a person needs "the lie in speech."

This need is clearly demonstrated in the passage on eschatological beliefs. People tend to believe that certain things exist, especially the house of Hades (III 386b). Without knowing anything about him, they think his house is terrible, and depict this judgment graphically in myths. These, in turn, by taking root in people's souls, influence human behavior and through it create reality.³⁴ In view of this state of affairs, Socrates the educator, who takes factuality into account, does not deny the *need* to talk about hidden and unknown things, but recommends filling these speeches with other, more useful content.³⁵ Beautiful content, on account of its usefulness, would sound as follows in the form of a basic *tupos*: Hades is not

³⁴ See III 377b, 391e: theology shapes people's character.

³⁵ In III 386b10—c1, Socrates calls popular judgments about the terrible Hades untrue and useless. This does not mean, however, that in speaking of Hades, Socrates is referring to truth. Hades falls into the category of "ancient" objects that man does not know about, but has a need to speak of (II 382d1—3). Since the word "truth" is used here in the context of an appeal to poets and myth makers, it may have a rhetorical meaning: to strengthen the compatibility of the myth's content with the basic *tupoi* (ideological norms), identified with the laws (383c7); similarly in III 391e1. Heroes, such as Achilles, are another example of things that people need to believe exist. In this case as well, Socrates the educator does not dismiss the need itself, because in its necessity it is a fact around which a myth emerges, but directs the response to this need using nicer — because less harmful — content than Homer's myths (III 390e—391e).

terrible. Unless — Socrates adds — someone will persuade us “with another and finer one” (III 388e3).³⁶

Pseudos as a heuristic factor: Therapeutic lies

How is *gennaion pseudos* implemented? (III 389a—415b)

In tracking the process of the *polis*'s emergence, one can perceive many necessary mechanisms, hidden on the surface of the finished, static construct. Thus, we see that it develops in time with the necessary answers to both necessary and unnecessary needs (see 373d10—e1); we also see that some common beliefs shaping the mentality of the entire community are actually false, and we learn about the functionality of falsehood. The falsehood indispensable in the phase of the *polis*'s disease³⁷ is an apotropaic drug (*pharmakon*) with a double function: it both prevents destructive behavior and replaces destructive theological *tupoi* with useful ones. The roots of this medicinal herb grow from a place where nature (an automatic response to necessary needs) intertwines with culture (the more or less thought-out creation of patterns, *tupoi*, in accordance with which this response is formulated) — like *apeiron* and *peras* at the level of ontology. On this maximally large scale of political history, the perspective focused in TT as the only correct one (cf. I 343d2: “this is the way you must look,”

³⁶ Ernst Cassirer's strongly emphasized view that Plato is fighting myth and excludes it “from his *Republic*, that is to say, from his system of education” (E. CASSIRER: *The Myth of State*. New Haven 1946, p. 77), seems to be the result of abstracting from a problem situation internal to the dialogue. According to it, Plato justifies the necessity of myths in social and political life to fight the ugly myth — i.e. the one that shapes the cultural mentality reflected in the factuality condensed in TT. He clearly states his goal in a paideutic and cultural recommendation: “We'll forbid them to say such things [i.e. like Thrasymachus, that “justice is someone else's good,” see fn. 38 below] and order them to sing and to tell tales (*mythologeîn*) about the opposites of these things” (III 392b4—6). This passage leaves no doubt that Plato treats the beliefs, whose advocate he made the political realist — Thrasymachus, as a mythology that maybe other myths can oppose. That the current conversation will also be a myth, is directly stated by Socrates in II 376d9.

³⁷ The education of the guards takes place during the stage of the diseased *polis*: 372e8, 399e6, 404e—408e, 410a.

skopeisthai houtosi hre) turns out to be not only a limited option, but also one that conceals previously unrecognized layers of falsehood contained in related theological and anthropological content under a façade of realism.³⁸ And just as during the short conversation with Cephalus the *pseudos* theme easily overthrew the traditional understanding of justice, so now, in a long response to Thrasymachus's challenge radicalized by Plato's brothers, this motif reveals itself as a tool that can deal with TT using its own potential. Socrates uses an overt falsehood to uncover the falsehood hidden at the base of TT's description. Thus, he puts us before a choice different from Thrasymachus's alternative of strength and happiness, or weakness and misfortune. The new form of the alternative is: since Thrasymachus's ugly falsehood can be opposed to a beautiful falsehood, which of these falsehoods would we prefer to harbor if harboring a falsehood was necessary; at the same time, the category of personal advantage that is key for Thrasymachus is retained in Socrates's new alternative: in III 392c1–4 he confronts us with the task of considering what is more profitable "by nature" (*phusei lusiteloun*).³⁹ The moment of decision is preceded by long instruction on looking and thinking, which covers such a broad perspective that the concise TT appears in it as a dependent aspect. But although the choice between ugliness and beauty may seem easy, the key question is whether beautiful falsehood can be implemented at all, because it is already obvious that the ugly falsehood easily filled human minds. The chances of overthrowing TT hinge on this possibility.

Before Socrates proposes the content of a beautiful, "noble" (*gennaion*) falsehood — and assesses the chances of its implementation — he commits a surprising act. As quickly as he revealed the necessity of falsehood in political life, he again hides it under the lining of political fabric: he declares that the guards must value the truth "above all else" (*peri pollou*, III 389b2). It is no wonder — because since falsehood is a *pharmakon*, which can heal as well as poison, it can be used only by doctors who know how to use it. In the sick *polis*, these "doctors" are those in power; "while all the rest must not put their hands to anything of the sort" (389b2–9). The sick patient cannot lie to the doctor. Thus, the *pseudos* in its useful function is now revealed as the hidden core of the *polis*, visible and accessible only to those in power. Thrasymachus noticed that the rulers tell the ruled to call their own advantage "justice" and use the power of law to punish

³⁸ So that there is no doubt that Plato has TT's ideological assumptions in mind the whole time, he directly recalls one of its versions: "justice is the other man's good" (III 392b3–4), literally quoting Thrasymachus (I 343c3), who had also been quoted by Adeimantus (II 367c2–3).

³⁹ Cf. fn. 14 above.

what is incompatible (cf. I 338e4—6); Socrates, in turn, recognizes that the rulers must order the ruled to call a lie a “sin,” and an even greater one than a sick person’s lie to the doctor (*meizon hamartema*, III 389c2) — and they must then, in consequence, punish liars (389d4).⁴⁰ But for us, engaged observers, this prohibition is a sign that under the threat of punishment lies something critical for the survival of the *polis*.

In addition to the false content,⁴¹ there is another political determinant — the form of this content (*lexis*, 392c6) — which also requires careful attention and assessment (*skepteon*, 394c8). Before Socrates the educator proposes an alternative falsehood to the falsehoods of his contemporary Thrasymachian culture, he takes preparatory steps in the face of the undoubtedly risky task of replacing existing falsehood with new falsehood. 1) First, he bans citizens from using false content. 2) Then he evaluates the forms of transferring cultural content in general (III 392c—402d), since not only “what must be said” (*ha lekton*), but also “how it must be said” (*hos/hopos lekton*, 392c7—8, 394c7—8, 398b7—8) shapes their mental condition and political reality.⁴² 3) He also reminds us⁴³ that the new form and content — the context allows us to add: an alternative falsehood to the falsehood contained in TT — must be tailored to the good and beautiful (*kalos kagathos*, 396b11—c1) guard who obeys the beautiful mythological standards established as law (see 398b) — let us add: *tupoi* opposed to the ugly *tupoi* from TT. 4) He also mentions that in a situation when reason (*logos*) would come with age to a guard obedient to the implemented *tupoi*, the latter “would take most delight in it” (402a3).⁴⁴ What he will then do with the falsehoods that have hitherto shaped him, we will find that out when the argument reveals another political need — the rule of the philosopher-kings. 5) For now, Socrates reveals the other qualities of the guard, corresponding

⁴⁰ The legislator in the *Laws* also prohibits citizens from any falsehood (counterfeiting, lying, fraud, 916d6—7), although he implicitly recognizes the circumstances in which it may be right (*orthos*, 916e1). See fn. 2 above.

⁴¹ Passages II 377a, 379a—b, 382d, III 386a—392c allow us to call that mythological and theological content “ideology.”

⁴² III 395d2—3: the content we repeat since childhood “become[s] established as habits and nature, in body and sound and in thought”; similarly in 400d11—e3. 401d—e: a participant in societal life does not even know that it is culture that shapes his attitude towards beauty and ugliness from an early age (this knowledge constitutes the basis of the *paideia* proposed in the *Laws* II 653a—c).

⁴³ In the meantime, Socrates cautiously states that he himself still does not know, “but wherever the argument, like a wind, tends, thither must we go” (394d7—9) — in contrast to Thrasymachus, who categorically declares that “this” (*houtosi*) is how the matter should be considered (I 343d2).

⁴⁴ This is repeated in the *Laws* II 653b.

to the current needs of the *polis* (from III 403b) — once again comparing him to a purebred dog (404a10)⁴⁵; among these qualities he lists a balance between passion (*thumoeides*) and a love of wisdom (*philosophon*), and crowns them with the ability to care for the *polis*, emphasizing that there is no care without love (411e4—412d2). He does not have to repeat that these are the qualities of a “dog philosopher” (cf. II 375a—376c). And though this term may still seem surprisingly paradoxical to us, Plato no longer leaves any doubt that this “dog philosopher” is an alternative to Thrasymachus’s stronger party, for whom justice is whatever is most advantageous to him (*sumpheron*). He rhetorically asks:

And wouldn’t he surely love something most when he believed that the same things are advantageous (*sumpherein*) to it and to himself, and when he supposed that if it did well, he too himself would do well along with it, and if it didn’t, neither would he? (412d4—7)

The Thrasymachian motif of advantages has not lost its relevance: since the principle (*arche*) of the *polis* is the need (*chreia*) of every human being, advantages are only the satisfaction of this need. This motif is only changed by one vector — Socrates’s stronger party, the “dog philosopher,” cares about what advantage will *also* be his advantage; “and if it didn’t — to the contrary” (*me de, tounantion*, 412d7), i.e. he does not care about it. This is how the dogma of love (*dogma*, 412e6) is formulated, which must be guarded by the *polis* guard if TT is not to be realized in it. But how to implement this dogma?

The demonstration of this primary process is preceded by an act already known to us from the ban on lying imposed on all non-rulers: the devaluation of falsehood (cf. 389b—d). Reflecting on how to protect the dogma of love (412e-413a), Socrates distinguishes two circumstances in which people reject beliefs: false ones — willingly, true ones — unwillingly, and calls the *second situation*, identical with “being deceived about the truth,” evil (*to men epseusthai tes aletheiaskakon*), and the *first*, identical with “hav[ing] the truth” — good (*to de aletheuein agathon*, 413a6—7). But after recalling, from the theoretical level, the category of truth (good) opposed to falsehood (evil), Socrates, returning quickly to the practical, gignetic level, uses a category in which this opposition is blurred — “dogma.” And so, having conducted this basic diairesis, he concentrates only on the second situation and

⁴⁵ The analogy of the dog and the guard appears strikingly often: in III 416a4, IV 422d5, IV 440d2—6, V 451d4, V 459a2, V 466d1, V 469e1 (cf. the milder description of this same behavior in II 376a5—8), VII 537a7. Other cynological references and analogies: III 397a7, VII 539b6, VIII 563c6, X 607b6; cf. fn. 29 above.

lists the circumstances in which people “are unwillingly deprived of true opinion” (413a9—b2). Though this classification is probably borrowed from Gorgias’s *Encomium of Helen* as an “anti-Gorgianic” reference — constituting, as Robert Wardy interprets it,⁴⁶ an expression of Plato’s belief that it is possible to bring up psychologically-strong individuals who, unlike Helen, will maintain an unchanging dogma — Plato, in the spirit of Gorgias, does not make the truth a constant reference point. Even if his Socrates wants to set the love of the unfaithful Helen in opposition to the love of faithful guards, he makes dogma, not truth, the object of their faithfulness. And we have no reason to believe that for Plato loyalty to dogma is synonymous with loyalty to truth and that both mental states are reached in the same way. If we accept, after Wardy, that Plato is convinced that it is possible to instill an unchanging dogma into individuals, this does not mean that it is possible to prevent them from inadvertently abandoning the truth. The effectiveness of the first act may be evidence of the ineffectiveness of the second. This thought will be expressed in the description of the process of the degeneration of the *polis* based on “noble falsehood”: the guards will still believe in their noble origin, even though they will lose their nobility and launch the process of destruction of “the best *polis*” with this belief (VIII 546a—547a). What exactly is Plato trying to raise awareness of in the *Republic*, when he so clearly exhibits the credibility of ideological falsehood, which at the current stage of the argument/emergence of the *polis* is therapeutic, but at a further stage — destructive? It becomes crucial to recognize the features that distinguish these stages.

The antithesis of truth/falsehood, which corresponds to the antithesis of good/evil, appears only for a moment, and Plato quickly — during the short passage 413a1—c6 — erases it and, almost imperceptibly in the rush, replaces it with dogma: the best guards are to guard the dogma of love (413c5—7); the perfect guard guards the dogma of love (414b1—6). Therefore, we can say that a guard is required to have the same attitude towards dogma as towards truth. The fulfillment of this requirement is easier the more faith the falsehoods supporting this dogma elicit. This diagnosis is evident in the connection — as rapid as the prior connection of falsehood to evil — of dogma with falsehood, which is presented as a tool to implement and consolidate this dogma:

Could we [...] somehow contrive (*mechane genoito*) one of those lies that come into being in case of need, of which we were just now speaking, some one noble (*gennaion*) lie to persuade, in the best case, even (*malista*) the rulers, but if not them, the rest of the city? (414b8—c2)

⁴⁶ R. WARDY: *The Platonic Manufacture of Ideology*, pp. 128—9.

Plato's striking honesty with his readers, a testimony to the fact that "much of his politics is realist rather than idealist,"⁴⁷ contrasts significantly with the smooth transition from truth to a falsehood that is hidden to those in whom it is instilled. It is precisely this contrast that reveals what Plato is showing us: the most effective way to combat a strong opponent is to use his/her own weapon. Thus, if we want to fight against ugly ideology — whose universal effectiveness attests to the susceptibility to ideology — we must use a different ideology. The weapon of truth is not always reliable against falsehood. The impression of this remedy's paradoxicality diminishes when we embed it within the context of the previous argument.⁴⁸

Recall that Socrates's task is to find a way (*mechane*) to get one "who has some power — of soul, money, body or family" to want "to honor justice" (II 366c1—3) — despite the stronger party from TT, who makes justice conditional on his own advantage. If we agreed, following the process of the genesis of political life, that in certain circumstances falsehood in speeches (*en logois*) is useful (*chresimon*, 382c6—7), then at the current stage of the argument, constantly motivated by the logic of needs, it is difficult not to admit that our current need for rulers loyal to the dogma of love is satisfied in using the kind of lie "of which we were just now speaking" (III 414b9, i.e. a useful lie in speeches). Because myths passed down from childhood most effectively shape the social mentality — which we also already know (cf. II 376e—382d) — this lie takes the form of a myth with a double content and function: on the one hand, it shapes the identity of the ruling guards, convincing them that they are the children of Mother Earth and other citizens are their brothers, thus obliging them to care for their mother and brothers (414d—e); on the other hand, it implants in them a sense of difference from the rest of the citizenry, telling them that god created people with admixtures of various metals and, giving them the most perfect admixture of gold, obliged them to protect the purity/perfection of their race. In order to make this content more credible, Socrates the educator uses typical religious motifs: he calls it a "commandment from god" (415b3—4) and creates an oracle (415c5). In this way, the abstract dogma of love is translated into concrete mythical content that can easily be internalized in the mentality of the rulers with the use of this illustration.

The ambiguous name of this lie — *gennaion* — reflects three basic features ensuring its usefulness: 1) good and beautiful (*gennaion*), it is

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 132, with the assessment that this is "a fact too often ignored."

⁴⁸ Cf. M. SCHOFIELD: *The Noble Lie*, p. 153: "It is of course a paradox that the one specific mechanism he proposes for generating a motivation that is supposed to be rooted in unshakable true conviction is a lie."

opposed to the ugly lies of Homer's and Hesiod's myths, which underlie TT; 2) directed primarily (*malista*) to "the strongers" (the rulers) to instill in them the conviction of a noble birth, it carries a message about their pedigree (*gennaion*); 3) due to the scope and power of its social impact, it is outstanding and great (*gennaion*).⁴⁹ But in these three meanings, there is one more thing: colloquially, *gennaion pseudos* is "a true-blue lie," i.e. a massive, no-doubt-about-it lie."⁵⁰ It is this rather trivial sense that gives proper weight to the entire dialogue. Who, like Glaucon, has been "talked deaf by Thrasymachus and countless others" (II 358c7—8) faces a choice: whether s/he prefers to live in a *polis* that bases political order on the realism of TT, which obscures its false mythical contents and ultimately praises injustice, or in one that is supported by an overt falsehood inculcating the dogma of love and ultimately promoting justice.

Plato does not leave him alone with this choice yet. He continues to teach him to look⁵¹: at the current stage at what is happening in the *polis* with noble falsehood, about which a thinking person at some stage of his *paideia* learns not only that it is a falsehood, but that it is noble falsehood because it is useful. Let us therefore extract and concisely present — from Plato's long instruction on viewing the dynamic nature of the political — those two moments of *anagnorisis* that allow us to glean the structure of Plato's argument concerning the potential of *pseudos*, which, as a *pharmakon*, may heal in some circumstances and poison in others.

Gennaion pseudos as *pseudos* (III 415b—VII 521c)

1. (III 415b—IV 424e) Even before presenting the content of the "noble falsehood," Plato emphasizes that hardly anyone will believe it (414c—d); shortly afterwards he mentions that with time, a lie may lose the features

⁴⁹ See K. CARMOLA: *Noble Lying: Justice and Intergenerational Tension in Plato's Republic*. "Political Theory" 2003, vol. XXXI 1, pp. 39—62: at 40 (with a cross-reference from Y.-J. SUN: *Lies in Plato's Republic*, p. 106, n. 49); C. ROWETT: *Why the Philosopher Kings Will Believe the Noble Lie*. "Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy" 2016, vol. L, pp. 67—100: at 67.

⁵⁰ G.R.F. FERRARI. Ed., T. GRIFFITH. Trans.: *Plato: The Republic*. Cambridge 2000, p. 107, n. 63 (as cited in M. SCHOFIELD: *The Noble Lie*, p. 138).

⁵¹ Through the frequent use of terminology connected with looking and discovering, the description of Plato's methodology in IV 420b—e emphasizes the heuristic function of the dialogue, which strives to expose rather than instruct.

of a lie and evoke faith in subsequent generations (415d1—2).⁵² Is this an expression of hope or a historiansopher's irony? Undoubtedly, it expresses a bitter truth: the easiest, if not the only way to arouse the love of rulers for the ruled is by way of a therapeutic, ideological falsehood relayed through an appropriate educational program.⁵³ If such a program is not created, the community — especially the rulers/stronger party — will *still* absorb some falsehood, but there is no guarantee that this falsehood will be noble.⁵⁴

The “noble falsehood’s” credibility can replace the power of fear of punishment — awakened by eschatological theology and constituting, in Critias’s view, a remedy for secret injustice — with the power of love.⁵⁵ Without fear or without love, strong and powerful rulers are a threat to the ruled: they embody TT, as Glaucon confirmed in the thought experiment with the Gyges ring. Socrates, of all people, proposes the option of love: guards must be forced to believe (*anankasteon poein*, 421c1) in the “noble falsehood.” Instilled during the stage of paideia, it shapes the nature of a guard who, in turn, promotes the cultural norms that have been passed on to him and perpetuates them throughout the *polis* as the only correct cultural norms (424a—b). Thus, in the interweaving of nature and culture, the *polis* will roll around the *gennaion pseudos* like a developing cycle (*kyklos*, 424a5). And this is not contrary to the nature of the individual, since this nature is flexible: changes in music⁵⁶ influence a change in habits; the latter influences relationships; these, in turn, influence the laws and political system; and the system influences private and public life (424d7—e2). Because an individual’s nature is not outside this chain, it abolishes the sophistic antithesis of nature and culture. Thus, it justifies, on the one hand, the *natural* absorbency with which the community assimilates ideologies,

⁵² In one version, it elicits faith in Plato’s contemporary Athenians, as evidenced by the toposes of *eugeneia* and “mother Earth” in the *epitaphios logos* in the *Menexenus* 237b—238a. Schofield perceives them as an expression of the strong need for ideology in the 4th century to justify the indigenous nature of the Athenians (M. SCHOFIELD: *The Noble Lie*, p. 161). On the strong need for reconciliation and brotherhood after the Peloponnesian war, see N. LORAU: *The Divided City. On Memory and Forgetting in Ancient Athens*. Trans. C. PACHE, J. FORT. New York 2002, pp. 197—213.

⁵³ Harte calls it a “medical lie” (V. HARTE: *Plato’s Politics of Ignorance*, p. 144).

⁵⁴ Cf. *Laws* 691c—d: in time, being in power fills ruler “with the greatest sickness, namely lack of intelligence.”

⁵⁵ Not yet having the tool of “noble falsehood” at his disposal, Socrates also stated at the beginning of the debate with TT that those who, according to his criteria, are true rulers, undertake just rule not for the sake of some good (*ep’ agathon*, 347c7), but only for fear (*deisantes*, 347c5) of those who would otherwise rule them.

⁵⁶ Cf. II 376e—377a: in music, understood as the education of the soul, there are the most falsehoods.

and on the other, the need and possibility to control the content of these ideologies *within the framework of culture/paideia*.

2. (IV 424e—434e) In the middle of Book IV, structural elements and political mechanisms are spread before us, whose *arche* (principle and beginning) is *chreia* (a need arising from the individual's lack of self-sufficiency). Along with the increase in needs, a just *polis* was established (427d): the guards it needs are faithful to the dogma they need, instilled in them as color is applied to well-prepared wool, whose colors will not fade (429c—430b). One could trust that the ugly TT will not find confirmation in them. But we must be cautious with that trust — the *Republic* itself is a gradual widening of the field of view, and we still see too little; we have not yet discovered all that Plato has to show us, ever expanding upon Thrasymachus's perspective.

Again, aided by phraseology associated with looking (*skopein, idein*), discovery (*heurein*), and inquiry (*zetein*), Plato leads us to what was “in our hands” the whole time and which we did not see. And this is no longer about ideological falsehoods that we can have rationalized in our heads, unconsciously harboring them in a sense of truth, but about the principle of justice itself: “to do one's own” (*ta hautou prattein*, 432d—433a), at work since the beginning of the *polis*'s emergence (cf. II 370a4), however unnoticed. This is the second Critias theme, next to “the most seductive” falsehood (*hediston pseudos*, DK B25, v. 24—26).⁵⁷ The dramatic circumstances of the dialogue — especially the misfortune Cephalus's family, who hosted Socrates and his interlocutors in Piraeus, suffered at the hands of the tyrant Critias, whose bloody terror made the rule of the stronger/better a reality in the name of justice — cause readers to remain vigilant when following what Plato is really showing us.⁵⁸ Undoubtedly, there is a close relationship between the noble falsehood that imbues guards with a sense of racial distinctness, and Critias's principle of *oikeiopragia*: the noble falsehood helps to make the principle of justice a reality in the *polis* (434a—c). If this is not to be the justice of the tyrant Critias — a bloody exemplification of TT — this rule must contain content that was misunderstood not only by the interlocutors at the beginning of the dialogue, but also by Critias. In that case, Plato would have made a double modification of Critias's “political wisdom”: changing “the most seductive” falsehood to a “noble falsehood,” and giving the *oikeiopragia* principle a different meaning than the one motivating the actions of this tyrant. The preserved source material does not allow us to know how Critias understood it — we know how he carried

⁵⁷ Critias, the tyrant, defined *sophrosyne* as “doing one's own,” cf. *Charmides*, especially 161b—d (DK B41a).

⁵⁸ See fn. 29 above, for the interpretation proposed by Howland.

it out. Books IV—X of the *Republic*, on the other hand, attest to how this principle was used by Plato to understand the nature of politics, of which one of the aspects/options is also Critias's TT-confirming reality.

3. (IV 435a—449a) After discovering Critias's principle of justice on the large scale of the *polis*, Plato brings us down to the level of the soul (435c—445e). In accordance with the methodology of optical facilitation outlined in II 368c—369a, after seeing justice on a larger scale (that of the *polis*), we now look at a smaller object (one man's *psyche*) in the hope that what we have seen on a larger scale will make it easier to recognize on a smaller scale. The *pseudos* that was so clear on a large scale now, on the small scale of the soul is all but imperceptible. This comes as no surprise, as in the educational process it has been rationalized and internalized, and the effectiveness of this process is a result of the nature of the soul. But we already know, thanks to our learning of looking, that the fact that it is imperceptible does not mean that it is not there. And it is at this stage of looking, in which the word *pseudos* does not appear for a long time, that the term *pseudos en logois*, thrown without explanation in 382b10—c2, becomes clear:

[...] the lie in speeches is a kind of imitation of the affection (*pathematos*) in the soul, a phantom (*eidolon*) of it that comes into being after it, and not quite an unadulterated lie.

In a tone of certainty and obviousness uncharacteristic of Socrates, he now states that in each of us lie the same types (*eide*) and affections (*pathe*) that are present in the *polis* (435c—e), because “they didn't get there [i.e. to the *polis*] from any other place” (435e3). This is confirmed by the expert on behavioral mechanisms, Glaucon: “[q]uite necessarily.”⁵⁹ Because of this correspondence with the state of the soul, *pseudo sen logois* has an admixture of truth — it is not pure falsehood. So what content does this admixture of truth contain, that instead of invalidating the remaining falsehood, they create together a beautiful, noble falsehood?

Seeing three different powers of one soul analogous to the three social states of one *polis* (436a—441a), we perceive something else, imperceptible in the *polis* molded on the noble falsehood. Namely, at the level of the soul there is a weakness, a crack: not every soul has a developed logical

⁵⁹ Cassirer also confirms this more than two thousand years later, treating myths as psychic affections, which in symbolic expression become narratives and images, or *eidolon* (E. CASSIRER: *The Myth of State*, pp. 37—49).

faculty (*logismos*), and most will develop it “quite late” (441b1).⁶⁰ Thus, we see a fissure into which falsehood is by nature easily poured. At this point in the dialogue, Plato approvingly quotes Homer, previously reprimanded for ugly lies about the gods, presenting him as a creator of myths aware of this mental weakness (441b—c). From the perspective of the *polis* presented earlier, it is clear that this weakness concerns the most important group in the *polis* — its rulers, because at the level of the soul, it is this group that corresponds to the faculty of *logismos*. If the power of *logismos* is weak, the authority of the guards/rulers is the greatest threat to both themselves and the rest of the *polis*. The remedy — functioning like an artificial implant — is the “noble falsehood,” which instills in the guards a dogma of love and a sense of harmony between the classes in the *polis* in the name of the principle of “to do one’s own.” In the light of this interpretation of Critias’s principle, he appears as a man whose *logismos* does not “do its own,” that is, it does not rule over his lustful and passionate faculty, which therefore disqualifies him as a ruler and marks him as unjust and thoughtless (443e7—444a1). The dogma of fear of the gods certainly does not work on Critias, since — being so wise — he knows it is false. So, what remains for him, since in his case and in that of many others like him it is too late to instill the dogma of love by way of the “noble falsehood”? Undoubtedly — belief in the reality of TT. But what happens to the “noble falsehood” of those few whose souls have properly developed the faculty of *logismos*?

Gennaion pseudos as gennaion (V 449a—VII 541b)

1. (V 449a—473e) At the beginning of the dialogue, Thrasymachus demonstrated the proper way to “look.” Since Socrates was not convinced and he, in turn, did not succeed in convincing Thrasymachus, both Thrasymachus (I 344d1) and Socrates (II 357a1) expressed a desire to leave. Fortunately, others stopped them. Now, Thrasymachus speaks after a long silence (he fell silent in I 354a11), and in his characteristic rough tone, he makes it clear — however indirectly — that he wants to hear more about

⁶⁰ This is repeated in the *Laws* II 653a: “he is a fortunate person to whom it [i.e. prudence and true opinions] comes even in old age.” Both passages weaken the oft-expressed view that Plato “displays unbounded confidence in the powers of human reason, which for Plato is based on the essential identity of reason in man and God” (representatively W.K.C. GUTHRIE: *The Sophists*, p. 6).

the *polis* based on noble falsehood: about the golden guards' women and children; he came to listen to arguments, not merely "to look for fool's gold" (450b3—4). Glaucon, in the tone of a sage, even adds that "for intelligent men [...] the proper measure of listening to such argument is a whole life" (450b6—7). And in response to Socrates's characteristic hesitation, Glaucon outlines the profile of Socrates's current listeners — Plato's "ideal readers": "your audience won't be without judgment, or distrustful, or ill-willed" (450d3—4).

Bearing in mind such listeners in particular, Socrates, additionally safeguarding himself by taking on the attitude of an unbeliever and inquirer (*apistounta de kai zetounta*, 450e1—2), raises the question of why the community of women and children makes them laugh, and this "even more than what we went through before" (450c7) — meaning the "noble falsehood."⁶¹ By suggesting that laughter is evoked by what is contrary to our habits (452a), which we mistakenly identify with our nature (456c), he raises the problem of what ideologies (falsehoods) our flexible human nature can accommodate. Because "the way things are nowadays proves to be, as it seems, against nature" (456c2), it is likely that what seems false today will become consistent with nature (i.e. true) tomorrow, after a change (*metabole*, 452b8) in habits. Once again, the antithesis of nature—culture is blurred, and with it that of truth—falsehood. But this moment of confusion has a heuristic value: the *pseudos* motif has revealed to us not only the illusory nature of the nature—culture dichotomy, but also a situation in which what is considered a natural state is merely the result of the implementation of a certain ideology. Since this is how things are with the *nature of the political*, the question of the consequences and advantages of ideology becomes crucial. The great significance that Plato attaches to this question justifies assigning him the title of an ideologist. On the other hand, the awareness awakened in the reader of current crypto-ideologies and the need to assess them according to the criterion of what benefits the entire social structure (cf. II 382c6—7) — which results from the knowledge that ideology as such is an indispensable element of the political — simultaneously compels us to call him a realist. His honesty, a testament to this realism, is striking: since current customs regarding the attitude towards women — depriving them of participation in ruling the *polis* — are only seemingly in accordance with nature, let us replace them with customs that are "possible and best" (456c4, 457a3), in the belief that beauty is not only more valuable than the possibility of realization (because it is always useful and never causes harm), but also has a greater relationship with the truth (457b4, 473a3). Thus,

⁶¹ See fn. 52 above.

there was a flash of truth not in the context of the dark realism of TT, but in that of “noble falsehood.” It is only from this moment in the argument that the term *aletheia* resounds, reflecting that value which implicitly motivated the inquiry thus far and explicitly motivates further inquiry, which is still set within the context of the “usefulness of falsehood” (see II 382c6).

The further context is again a demonstration, bluntly, of how to implement a new custom — a community of women and children. This is a method we are already familiar with — imperceptibly shaping Plato’s first readers within the reality of 4th century Athens, partially disclosed to them in the description of the guards’ upbringing,⁶² i.e. by way of “falsehoods in speeches” (*pseude en logois*), dosed like medicine for the good — this time — of the governed (459d1, cf. III 414c2). It is based on the manipulation of religious rituals and beliefs, even the oracle of Pythia (461e, 469a) — which is not only of the greatest sanctity for the Greeks, but also a factor controlling the internal and external policies of the Greek *poleis*: its military customs (469b) — and in addition to all this, throwing around the attributes of “just,” “pious,” “sin” (461a4—5), and even “in harmony with nature” (470c8). For words (*onomata*) determine judgment (*nomizein*), and judgment determines conduct (*praxis*, 463c—d; similarly in 471d2, 479b7). Again, Homer and Hesiod are useful with their falsehoods (468d—469a).⁶³ This mechanism that determines social mentality will be visualized in the image of the cave, which is soon evoked: prisoners name what is shown to them on the wall of the cave, and what they name, they acknowledge as real and true (VII 515b—c). If we still have doubts as to whether Plato is “designing the perfect regime”⁶⁴ or simply exposing the mechanisms of every system, then the image of the cave — with its repeated recommendation: “see”⁶⁵ “our nature in its education and want of education” as a certain “affection” (*pathos*, 514a1—2) — eliminates those doubts. The cave is only a graphic elaboration of those necessary political mechanisms that Plato reveals from the very beginning of the dialogue — provoked by the “perspective-narrowing” vision condensed in TT.⁶⁶ Plato uses the “noble falsehood”— an alternative way of thinking — to release us from this determinism. At the current stage of the dialogue, he calls it paradoxical logos (V 472a6), or one that is contrary to (*para*) the existing mental condition, which is really just an opinion (*doxa*). However, this opinion results in “what is badly done in cities today” (473b5).

⁶² Cf. III 414c: a manipulation of the content of the oracle.

⁶³ Cf. above, p. 81 ad 441b—c.

⁶⁴ See fn. 27 above.

⁶⁵ VII 514a2, b4, b8, 515c4.

⁶⁶ The *polis* is called a cave (*spelaiion*) directly in VII 539e3.

The sophisticated ingenuity with which Plato knocks readers out of their rut, directing them using *pseudos* to the path of truth — first mentioned in the dialogue as a supreme value just after the demonstration of the implementation of *pseudos* (473a2) — finds a clear expression in the hint concerning which “smallest trifle” would have to be changed to do away with today’s evil (473b). Although so far, the teaching of looking has produced results — in accordance with Socrates’s method of optical facilitation, we saw justice on a large scale (the *polis*), then on a small scale (the soul) — the current object “is hard to see” (*chalepon gar idein*, 473e4). It is concealed by a paradox (473e4) — thus signaling its heuristic value — and a double paradox, at that: this object stands not only *against* (*para*) Thrasymachus’s *doxa*, common in the realities of V/VI century Athens, but also *against* (*para*) the current course of dialogue, alternative to the latter, which — by instilling “noble falsehood” — also eventually forms *doxa*, though in the form of “noble” dogma.

2. (V 474a—VII 543a) This “trifle” is those who hate all falsehood (both ugly and noble) — philosophers. The need to determine who they are (474b5) suggests that we have not seen them yet, and therefore they cannot be the guards-“dog philosophers.” The qualities Socrates attributes to these philosophers clearly distinguish them from the guardians of dogma: they love all (*pases*) wisdom (475b9; c6) — not only what they already know (cf. II 375e—376b); they love viewing the truth (475e4) — “unconditionally” (*pantos kai pante*, 490a1—2; 485b); they are able to see (*idein*) the nature of beauty as such (476b7); they are awake (476c, 534c7) — and therefore do not suffer from the confused sense of waking and sleeping that afflicts the golden guards (cf. III 414d); they learn by reasoning — not guided by instilled dogma (476d5—6); from childhood on they love and strive for all truth (485d2—3; also 501d1) — not clinging to the dogma that has been instilled in them (cf. 414c—d). Thus, following the logic of needs, we see that the need for ideological falsehoods generates a need for those in the *polis* who hate all falsehoods. The latter are ultimately called hegemon (VI 484b6). This is a relational term: they are hegemon for the rest of the citizens of a just *polis*, which is supervised by guardians of dogma. So, though truth-loving, the hegemon must somehow tolerate other citizens’ falsehood-supported dogma.

The coexistence of both types of lovers, each of which also has its object of dislike — guardians of dogma (*philodoxoi*), who hate the unknown, and hegemon, who hate all falsehood (*apseudia*, 485c3) — assumes that “noble falsehood” and truth somehow coexist in a just *polis*.⁶⁷ Is this assumption

⁶⁷ Passage V 484cd—485a allows us to state that hegemon (“truth lovers”) can have all the advantages of “dog philosophers”, but not vice versa.

a Platonic utopia or an expression of political realism? Which group has more utopian traits: are dogma guardians, or lovers of all truth more real? How can we reconcile the latter's aversion to "all falsehoods" with the tolerance of "noble falsehood" harbored by the former? The sharper the dichotomy Plato creates between lovers of truth and lovers of dogma — stating that it is not possible for "the same nature [to] be both a lover of wisdom (*philosophon*) and a lover of falsehood (*philopseude*)" (485c12—d2) and even that philosophers will "hate" (*misein*) falsehood (490b11)⁶⁸ — the more fragile the just *polis* based on "noble falsehood" becomes. The philosopher, a lover of truth, is then as great a threat to the just *polis* as is the TT's "stronger" to an existing *polis*. There is the risk of a situation in which the philosopher, in the role of hegemon, will hate the very foundations upon which the *polis* he rules is built.

Thus, another political need arises — the philosopher's proper mental condition. It is now as essential to preserving the *polis* as was the earlier need to create a guardian of the dogma of love. This is because *love* for the *polis* was already instilled in him through noble falsehood, thus protecting the *polis* from him, that is, from the reality of TT⁶⁹; the philosopher, however, must channel the force of *hatred* for falsehood⁷⁰ in such a way that he not only does not withdraw from participating in the life of the *polis* and does not become destructive to the guardians of dogma, but so that he may become a "savior" (*soter*) of the political system (502d1).⁷¹ This means accepting *pseudos* not as a good (a desirable condition), but as a necessary and effective medicine in a state of disease. An expression of this acceptance is the ambiguous attribute assigned to *pseudos* — *gennaion* (noble). It expresses the realistic thought that 1) in the situation of the weakness of the human *logismos*, falsehood may be useful in a healing, apotropaic function; 2) the most susceptible part of the *polis* to disease are its best (noblest

⁶⁸ Analogical dichotomies: *homoioi philosophois—alethinoi philosophoi* (V 475e2—4); *philodoxoi — philosophoi* (480a6—7); *houtoi — ekeinoi* (485d5—6); *peplasmenos philosophos — alethos philosophos* (485d12—e1).

⁶⁹ See III 417a5.

⁷⁰ See VI 485d—e: a true philosopher has open spiritual channels.

⁷¹ The question of whether the philosopher was subject to the *paideia* that instills the "noble falsehood" and remains faithful to it finds an affirmative answer in Wardy's interpretation (R. WARDY: *The Platonic Manufacture of Ideology*, pp. 127—8, 133). However, Plato does not make the appearance of philosophers dependent on their having received the guards' dogmatic *paideia*, since the "nature of the philosopher" can appear and endure everywhere, despite a bad *paideia* prevailing in the *polis* (VI 502a—b). Conversely, it is the existence of the *polis* — based on the "noble falsehood" instilled in its guards — that depends on the presence of philosophers (V 473b—d).

parts); 3) as far as it appears to someone as “a true-blue lie,”⁷² he/she reveals the philosophical potential⁷³ — however, if not properly directed, this potential can become as destructive to the *polis* and the individual as an ugly falsehood.⁷⁴

The description of the philosopher’s *paideia* program — that is, of a philosopher who responds to the compulsion to take on the role of a hegemon (521d—541b) — does not contain even a trace of the dogma of love for the *polis* instilled in the guards, but it does not contradict it, either. The philosopher has a different love, which he needs only to expand to include the truth about the nature of the political, seeing in its light the deeper meaning of “noble falsehood” — like a moral in a fairy tale, which one grows up believing. In the argument that is in progress “under pressure of truth” (from VI 499b), the motif of dislike, coercion, and necessity (with its culmination in 520e2, 521b7) dominates. However, nothing in this program conflicts with these three aspects of the “noble falsehood.” The greatest object in the teaching of philosophical viewing, the “*idea* [view] of the Good,” does not eliminate the cave, with its chains and shadows — spanning the full scale of beautiful and ugly falsehoods — but deprives it of illusions as to the nature of the political as such. Both the “noble fabrication” and the “realism” of TT are now situated at the same level of existence: they are shadows appearing in accordance with the law of nature on the wall of the cave, watched by prisoners/pupils who are unable to move their heads (514b1—2). How many shadows, but also — what else they will see, depends on their ability to move their heads, and ultimately turn their whole body and soul away from the wall (518c).

⁷² See fn. 50 above.

⁷³ VI 503c—d: natures that are strong and resistant to change, whose loyalty and courage in war can be relied upon (cf. similar traits in the guardians of dogma, III 413d—414b), are resistant to learning.

⁷⁴ See VI 491d—e: the more noble the nature, the more susceptible it is to corruption; VII 538d—539d: a description of the destructive effects of dialectic efficiency, especially 538e—539a: in a situation where a young, potential philosopher does not treat dogma/the laws of the *polis* as “honorable or akin to him, and doesn’t find the true ones,” he succumbs to other, ugly dogmas.

Conclusion: The scattered mandala (VIII 543a—end)

The *Republic* is a demonstration of the gradual widening of a field of view and through this, the channeling of philosophers' hatred of falsehood so that it does not spill over onto the *polis* and its citizens. Its starting point is to expose the ugly falsehood under the surface of the realistic description condensed into Thrasymachus's thesis. Since falsehood is a necessary structural element of the *polis*, the ability to challenge TT depends on the attractiveness and effectiveness of implementing an alternative falsehood, which would act as an antidote.

During the process of paradoxical thinking, by which Plato knocks his readers out of their mental habits and encourages them to see (*idein*) more than what is shown to them — ultimately: the idea of Good, which gives power to thinking (see: VI 508b—c) — he reveals the political mechanisms that allow ideological falsehood to be easily implemented and shape the moral condition of the community. Though Thrasymachus did manage to show something in his description, it is not enough to comprehensively grasp the nature of this phenomenon. It is no wonder, then, that Socrates protests against being treated as Thrasymachus's enemy (VI 498d1). He only wants to convince Thrasymachus and “the others” (498d3) who view reality similarly that their field of vision is not only narrow, but also ideologically determined. In short, he wants to show them more — things “they never saw” (498d8)⁷⁵ — to enable them to think differently when it is possible (cf. 493c).

Once he had shown them a different structure of the *polis* — also focused on indispensable falsehood, but this time a “noble falsehood,” hence making it beautiful (*kale*) — and then compared it to a cave and forced appropriately prepared (from VII 521b to 541b) philosophers to go down into it, despite their hatred for all falsehood (535d—e), Plato destroys this *kallipolis* (527c2) like a mandala. Beginning with Book VIII, he presents the mechanism of degeneration of each regime, put into motion at the stage of the “best *polis*” — not ideal, as many interpreters have typically described it,⁷⁶ but at the “height of good government” (*akros oikein*, 543a2). Everything that emerges later disappears in the eternal cycle of birth and

⁷⁵ Cf. VI 504b1—2: “in order to get the finest possible look at these things another and longer road around would be required” (with a reference to IV 435d3).

⁷⁶ Cf. VIII 543d1: Glaucon was under the impression that Socrates could have presented an “even more beautiful” (*kallio eti*) *polis*. Consequently, it would need to be called “more ideal.”

death (546a), and the process of this degeneration begins after the peak of growth is reached. Aristocrats/rulers who are loyal/subject to the “noble falsehood” degenerate as a result of this passive fidelity (546d—547a). They are at a stage in the life of the *polis* in which the *gennaion pseudos* loses its usefulness, that is, the attribute of *gennaion*, and its guards are unable to see this. Over time, the reality condensed in TT becomes a necessary phase of this necessary process.⁷⁷

The only thing that remains after destroying the beautiful mandala is the memory of what we were able to see: the image that becomes the content of our thought, able to go beyond the immediate stages of the political process, recognized by it in their spontaneous dynamics as merely aspects — the effects of a necessary entanglement of customs, characters, and regimes. For regimes do not emerge “from an oak or rocks,” but “from the dispositions (*ethon*) of the men in the cities” (544d7—e2). Plato’s Socrates is not sure whether this picture will reveal “the very truth” (533a3). He is certain, however, that “that there is some such thing to see must be insisted on. Isn’t it so?” (533a5—6). He also specifies the purpose of this viewing: that he “who wants to see [...] found a city within himself on the basis of what he sees” (592b3); and then, in a long passage criticizing imitative poetry (X 595a—608a) — beginning with the Homeric domain of falsehoods, lies, and fabrications — he contrasts imitation without understanding with the knowledge of how to use imitated things/deeds/dogma (600e—601c): “Aren’t the virtue, beauty, and rightness of each implement, animal, and action related to nothing but the use for which each was made, or grew naturally? — That’s so” (601d4—7).

Plato ends the dialogue with a myth, i.e. the kind of logos in which he diagnosed the most falsehoods (see: II 377a). Er describes what he *saw* in the afterlife: human souls are faced with the choice of a better life from among many possible lives. The ability to recognize a good and bad life in order to make a better choice is the greatest skill a person can have (X 618c—e). The tool Plato uses in the *Republic* to bring man out of the deep and narrow rut of Thrasymachus’s *aspect*/thesis is the starting option: since only god is free of falsehood (*pante apseudes*, II 382e6), man — in many cases not knowing what the reality is⁷⁸ — can only have a choice

⁷⁷ Thrasymachus’s perspective is directly recalled just prior to the description of this process, reminding us that Plato always has Thrasymachus’s option in mind. On the subject of the reality of TT in the degenerating political systems of Kallipolis, see Z. HITZ: *Degenerate Regimes in Plato’s Republic*. In: M.L. MCPHERRAN: *Plato’s Republic. A Critical Guide*. Cambridge 2013, pp. 103—131: at 107—118.

⁷⁸ This diagnosis, presented in a single sentence in II 382d2 (we do not know the “truth about old things”), is elaborated on in the *Laws* II 663c—664a (it is easier for

between noble or ugly falsehood.⁷⁹ In this situation, truth is the criterion of a right — i.e. conscious and beneficial — decision that is compatible with human nature and results from *multi-faceted* knowledge of how “all such things” (i.e. culturally-acquired and innate traits) “are connected” (618d5). In this entanglement, the *gennaion pseudos*, although always “sententially false,” reveals “an evaluative truth” under certain circumstances.⁸⁰

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a lawmaker and more advantageous for the whole community to persuade it of falsehoods than to convince it of difficult truths). Since the ease with which *pseudos* elicits group faith is a consequence of human ignorance, not only in hidden matters and in those concerning “old things,” but also in matters concerning our values — and these are the matters that most strongly shape the mental and moral condition of the community — awareness of *pseudos* is awareness of our ignorance (cf. *Laws* IX 864b6: humans’ inborn “striving for expectations and true opinion concerning what is best” is one of the main causes of human error; *Theaetetus* 173a: not every young soul can withstand truth and justice; such a soul latches on to lies).

⁷⁹ Cf. the implementation of an alternative dogma to the “to do one’s own” principle based on *gennaion pseudos*: those who do their part are fools, while those who reach for more and for what belongs to others are admired (VIII 550a, 552a).

⁸⁰ These descriptions are taken from: T.C. BRICKHOUSE, N.D. SMITH: *The Trial of Socrates*. Oxford 1983, approvingly cited by V. HARTE: *Plato's Politics of Ignorance*, p. 153.

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