UTOPIAN HERMENEUTICS: PLATO'S DIALOGUES AND THE

LEGACY OF APORIA

by

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Introduction

In *Experiment in Autobiography*, Wells hails *A Modern Utopia* as "the most Platonic of my books".[1] What does this mean? Wells did not write that it was a 'modern *Republic'* though he borrowed ideas of government from *Republic* explicitly with no reference made to any of Plato's other dialogues. Instead he placed it beneath the more generalised banner; "Platonic". In this thesis I will seek to understand what implications "Platonic" bears for those authors who seek to appropriate it, what significances - perhaps unintended - this lends to aspects of the text. Once an understanding of the Platonic reading has been acquired, I hope to regard two modern texts which place themselves within the tradition of Plato's dialogues – Wells' *A Modern Utopia* and Huxley's *Brave New World*. It will be seen that these two texts experiment with certain utopian themes found in the philosophy of Plato's dialogues. By re-examining these texts in the light of what I will understand to be a Platonic reading, I hope to catch a glimpse of the Platonic reading 'in the wild'. I hope that by following the Platonic reading through the text I will arrive at a greater understanding, not only of the modern texts but also of the dialogues and Plato's ideals, his Forms, his Utopia.

This thesis represents a contribution to the philosophy of the perfect world. 'Utopia' is rooted in the Greek *outopia* or 'no place' but it also originates in *eutopia* or 'good place', hinting at the obstacle in the passage from ideal to physical *topos* or 'place'. A word-play conceived centuries ago by the English cleric Thomas More in his novel *Utopia*. As will be seen in the implicit condemnation of Classical Athenian government (Plato's dialogues), twentieth century world government (Wells' utopian texts) and the materialistic culture of 1920 America (Huxley's *Brave New World*), utopianism is versatile. To help reach an understanding of the 'Platonic' I will seek to use these modern texts to bring to the fore different characteristics of the 'Platonic'. I will also demonstrate that whilst Plato's dialogues can be used to inform modern utopian fiction so, retroactively, these modern utopian texts can illuminate our understanding of the dialogues too – their relationship being symbiotic.

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[1] Wells 1934:185.

This simultaneous commentary on the grand Utopian quest and contemporary trends is the reason for Utopian literature's continuing relevance.[2] To best understand success, failure must also be studied which in this case means Dystopia – the failed quest for the perfect society. A primary critic of Plato's vision, calling it a corrupted and failed Utopian, project was the twentieth century academic Karl Popper.[3] However, this thesis will argue that in this apparent failure the Utopia gains its greatest strength, that this failure is epitomised in the sometimes bafflingly inconclusive conclusion of many of Plato's dialogues.

The desire for a conclusion and so a final image of Utopia will be seen to be undermined in all the texts by the same tension; that between the rights of the individual and those of the collective. The tension between the individual and State is profoundly relevant to our own time but has its roots in the Romantic rebuttal of the Enlightenment.[4] The Romantic Movement opposed the State and its requirement for the subordination of the individual to 'the greater good'.[5] As well as the Wellsian utopias and Huxley's dystopia providing a laboratory for these tensions to react, reference will be made to Plato's *Republic* in how it negotiated this tension between individual and the collective. The beliefs of Socrates - as he is characterised in Plato's *Republic* and other dialogues - of what makes the perfect personality and how this individual is to relate to the community at large - will help uncover the significance of the self-conscious positioning of the modern texts within the Platonic tradition.

The foundation of this thesis is that Plato's individual dialogues are not self-sufficient. Instead, I will regard them as existing in an epistemological web. Hermeneutic readings of the dialogues will help reinforce the mutual reliance of Plato's dialogues. Hermeneutic emphasis on understanding the significance of the relationship between the single word and the wider language also provides a fitting analogy for the nature of a single Platonic dialogue and the Platonic corpus. Two instances in the dialogues hint at this Platonic meta-philosophy. In *Phaedrus*, Plato's Socrates refers to texts as 'track

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[2] Finley 1967: 5.
[3] Sargisson 2007: 28.
[4] Shklar 1969:68.
[5] Shklar 1969: 74.

aid' ('*ichnos*')[6] which arguably mean that each written dialogue represents a 'track aid'. No dialogue represents a complete argument or path but is instead a milestone along the same path. The physical scenes of many of the dialogues also help support this idea (the journey down to the Piraeus in *Republic*,[7] the journey to Pythodorus' lodgings "outside of the wall" to speak with Zeno[8] and the walk from the city of Athens to the river Ilissos in *Phaedrus*[9] provide some of examples). Chronological settings, featuring historical characters, locate the dialogues within the lifetime of Socrates. This binds the dialogues together. Socrates' ironic tone when speaking with his interlocutors can be understood as a deliberate component of Socrates' message. This irony effectively illustrates that we cannot take the superficial events of the text at face value but that there is a deeper argument which undermines it.[10] This will resonate with the hermeneutics explained later in this thesis as well as the final chapter.

As Socrates gestures towards Utopia we will look to see what similarities exist with Wells and Huxley's own utopian visions and what these differing accounts uncover in Socrates' utopian musings recorded in Plato's dialogues. This thesis' first milestone will be the hermeneutics of Gadamer and Derrida and their understanding of Socrates' own beliefs about the nature of communication as laid down in the dialogues *Gorgias*, *Cratylus* and *Phaedrus*. We will then move to the fictional motifs of the dialogues; the physical setting (alluded to above) and the characters which participate. Though I acknowledged above that the physical settings are identifiable geographical locations, and the characters themselves are historical, Plato himself is not recorded as being present during any of the dialogues. The dialogues can therefore be, at best, the imperfect recollections of interlocutors for whom - in some cases - the dialogue happened long ago. One case is found in *Parmenides* where the dialogue is acknowledged as a recollection from years before when Socrates was still "very young".[11] *Parmenides* is not even an account from one of those present but is actually the recital of an earlier

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[6] Plato *Phaedrus*: 276d.
[7] Plato *Republic*: 327a.
[8] Plato *Parmenides*: 127c.
[9] Plato *Phaedrus*: 229a.
[10] Booth's *Rhetoric of Irony* lucidly argues Socrates' irony to be indispensable to any understanding of Plato's dialogues.
[11] Plato *Parmenides*: 127c.

recital by one of those present when the dialogue took place.[12] Uncertainty of mooring in real world conversations or whether historic Socrates would have supported the arguments of Plato's Socrates will emerge as an important factor in the Platonic reading and the idea of his inconclusive ending.

When a new component of the Platonic reading is uncovered, the Wellsian utopian texts (*A Modern Utopia* and *Men Like Gods*) which claim Platonic heritage will be referred to as much as possible. These texts will be experimental environments where the effects of subscription to the Platonic tradition will be evaluated. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* similarly features ideas and concerns raised in Plato's dialogues. Tensions arising from the philosophical toll demanded for membership by the community presents itself when John (the outsider in *Brave New World*) is encouraged to escape his unease with the state of society by taking a state distributed drug and so leave his concerns unresolved.[13] Socrates anticipated a similar tension between the philosophic statesmen and an un-philosophic polis.[14] The tension of the individual versus society as well as the importance both Socrates and John place in failure as an event which tempers the human drive towards self-improvement will bring these two texts together and validate the comparison. Huxley's vision provides a singular spectacle of Socrates' self-appointed task to excite the thought of his fellow citizens out of their habitual ruts. These Platonic texts will provide an opportunity to observe the ideological landscape left by Plato's dialogues. Through this I hope to arrive at a greater understanding of the 'Platonic utopia', the Platonic text and the 'Platonic' in general.

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[12] Plato *Parmenides*: 126c.
[13] Huxley 1963:173.
[14] Plato *Republic*: 592a.

1. The Idea of Meaning

At the end of the dialogue *Lysis* Socrates dismisses his conclusions on friendship decrying "what a "friend" is, we have not yet discovered".[15] Here Socrates demonstrates his reticence in using a word before he has properly understood its meaning, dismissing the philosophy which it has inspired. Definition of the terminology used is shown to be one of Socrates' primary philosophic criteria (it is the singular focus in *Cratylus*).[16] The *Republic*'s Line Metaphor illustrates the incremental progression from belief to truth rooted in a comprehensive understanding of the language used to articulate a truth.[17] The metaphor shows that meaning cannot be wholly understood with a cursory glance but instead "every word causes the whole of the language to which it belongs to resonate" because "the word of language is both one and many".[18] This chapter will look at the different devices brought to bear by Socrates to understand how meaning attaches to a word and how this informs the reading of his dialogues and texts which claim to use his vocabulary. The chapter will introduce the idea of the system in which the written text operates (Hermeneutics) and what effect this has on the form of the 'Platonic'. The hermeneutic perspectives regarding the correct reading of Plato's dialogues will help reinforce the compelling arguments for the dialogues' own concern with the nature of the relationship between a word and its meaning. The approach to textual criticism which the dialogues may then be understood to offer will contribute to our aim of gaining a comprehensive understanding of the nature of Platonic text.

In *The City and Man* Leo Strauss argues that the dialogic format of the Platonic texts is as much a part of their philosophic lesson as the ideas Socrates elucidates.[19] Strauss regards the

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[15] Plato *Lysis*: 223b.
[16] Plato *Republic*: 331c.
[17] Plato *Republic*: 509e.
[18] Gadamer 2005:454.
[19] Strauss 1978: 52.

quest to understand meaning not only being a philosophy in itself but also containing the explanation of society's relationship with philosophy.[20] As will be seen, Socrates was similarly concerned with the semantic instability of language (by virtue of dialectic solely existing within the language of the interlocutors) and how this influenced the communication of one's views and ideas. Socrates confronts the ontology of the word more directly in few other places than in his notorious treatment of the poets.

Funerary Games and Poetic Truth

Socrates states in book ten of *Republic* that "there's an ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy"[21] as he advances from Philosophy's lines. The central unease Plato's Socrates has with the poets is most famously explained in *Republic* in which he voices a distrust of those who make their livelihoods out of imitation of historical figures or the telling of fictional stories.[22] But this attack is by no means restricted to *Republic*, additional volleys are loosed in *Phaedrus*[23], *Cratylus*[24] and *Ion*.[25]

Ion in particular shows Socrates trying to discern the nature of the knowledge the rhaspsodes (those who travelled throughout Greece reciting the epics) professed to understand. Socrates reveals Ion's belief in the superiority of Homer's poetry to be baseless by showing that he cannot know whether these poets describe *techne* (the art of doing something like carving or chariot racing) accurately. The technical inaccuracy of Homer's description of the chariot races at the funerary games of Patroclus provides the support for Socrates assertion that

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[20] Strauss 1978: 52.
[21] Plato *Republic*: 607b.
[22] Plato *Republic*: 605a.
[23] Plato *Phaedrus*: 276c.
[24] Plato *Cratylus*: 402b.
[25] Plato *Ion*: 530c.

Homer does not understand his own story.[26] Socrates accuses Ion of being unqualified to judge the quality of Homer since Ion cannot know the accuracy of Homer's descriptions – in this case – the *techne* of Chariot Racing but in the wider context, any art that is not poetry recital. This is because his expertise does not extend beyond his profession of oratory and so any opinion he holds on the overall quality of Homer's poetry can only ever be an opinion. In this instance Socrates provides an illustrative example of the flawed understanding which he is warning against.

Returning to the *Republic*, the concern of distinguishing between flawed understanding and accurate understanding is elaborated. The Greek word for artistic representation is *Mimesis* which has no precise English translation but may be equated with 'enactment'.[27] Socrates devoted considerable attention to the mimetic technique of Artists in the explanation of the metaphor of the 'Couch' in which he demarcates the different stages of removal from the original *Logos* – in this case a Couch. The initial stage of its existence is as an immaterial concept existing in the abstract realm of Forms. The next stage is the apprehension and understanding of this True Couch by a philosophical mind, at this stage the nature of the Couch is still essentially pure and abstract. The degradation of the concept only begins when the Carpenter takes the image and constructs a *physical* manifestation. Finally the lowest, most aesthetic– and therefore most dangerous - manifestation of the Couch is when it is represented in a painting. No matter how this is done it is only a single aspect of the object on the Artist's canvas. Socrates states that in this form it may most easily be misunderstood and lead one astray in their understanding of the "essential nature"[28] of the Couch[29] to imperfect Belief. Seeking to understand the stages of the scale stretching between Belief and Truth

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[26] Plato *Ion*: 538b.
[27] Farness 2003: 107.
[28] Plato *Phaedrus*: 237c.
[29] Plato *Republic*: 596e.

occupies much of Socrates' thought in *Republic* and contributes to the questions which produce the Cave[30], Line[31] and Sun[32] metaphors which have subsequently become some of the most famous extracts of *Republic*.[33] Whether these three metaphors can be taken together to explain Socrates' epistemology or are intended to be self-sufficient in their individual messages is not so easy to answer.[34] Their plotting of the positions of belief and knowledge in relation to each other is elaborate and unfortunately their explanation would be too expansive to provide in this essay. There is a broad and easily accessed scholarship which will provide such an analysis but for the time being we must be content with the conclusion that Socrates identified a marked distinction between knowledge and belief and that belief arose from an imperfect understanding of knowledge.

This deception leads to *Republic* producing the Artist as the most potent example of *Mimesis*. The aim of the Artist is antithetical to that of Socrates, seeking to indulge the emotional drive of his audience's mind without *reasoning* whether this enjoyment is morally beneficial. His objective is pleasure rather than truth, which should be the aim of all those who profess wisdom.[35] This concern for demarcating the different forms of understanding - truth and opinion - is a recurrent theme not only in *Republic* but also in many of the other dialogues. The ontology of language is dissected further in three other dialogues – *Gorgias¸ Phaedrus* and *Protagoras*.

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[30] Annas 1981:253
[31] Annas 1981:248.
[32] Annas 1981:247.
[33] Annas 1981:252.
[34] Annas 1981:254
[35] Plato *Republic*: 607a.

The Magic Word

Both Socrates' dialogues *Protagoras* and *Gorgias* look at the power of language's

manipulation for unscrupulous and morally harmful ends. In *Gorgias* this is seen in Socrates'

discomfort when the eponymous rhetorician Gorgias concedes that the rhetorician's sole aim

is the audience's acceptance of his opinion, regardless of the veracity of that opinion.[36] The

historical character of Gorgias conceded that the objective of each rhetorician is simply and

exclusively to win the debate.[37] Socrates understands the 'knack'[38] of Gorgias to be that of

defending oneself in court[39] regardless of the moral implications of the arguments used in the

defence. Socrates came to regard rhetoricians as dangerously selfish,[40] seeking to have the

audience adopt his own *Logos* rather than improving their understanding of the truth and

therefore unworthy of their power to influence.

By way of adding additional depth to Socrates' opinion of the rhetoricians and their

'knack',[41] the word Socrates uses to denote these wordsmiths ('*rhetorike*') has been argued

to be vocabulary of his own fashioning. Schiappa initially pointed to the word itself being

characteristic of much of the philosophic vocabulary which Plato coined to help articulate his

ideas.[42] Schiappa goes on to argue that Plato coined the term to help neutralise the possible

confusion in his use of 'Sophist', whether he is referring to the ancient wisemen (such as

Heraclitus, Parmenides etc.) or the sham performers of his day whose only object was to win

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[36] Plato *Gorgias*: 454.
[37] Consigny 2001: 89.
[38] Plato *Gorgias*: 463b.
[39] Schiappa 1990: 465.
[40] Murray 2004: 374.
[41] Plato *Gorgias*: 463b.
[42] Schiappa 1990: 464.

the argument rather than morally enrich their audience.[43] Schiappa's choice to accredit Plato with the invention of the word *rhetorike*, however, has proven controversial and provoked criticism from Poulakos who not only attacks Schiappa's research methodology but also cites his own research into the etymology of *rhetorike* which uncovered instances of the word in several Greek authors predating Plato.[44] Poulakos' explanation for Schiappa's lack of success in his search is his disregard for the Ancient Greek system of declensions which lends a single word several different forms.[45] Though Schiappa had no luck in finding the nominative singular of *rhetorik*- its other declensions are very common.[46] Poulakos' detailed description of his own research of *rhetorik*- is a devastating attack on Schiappa's argument. The relevance of Poulakos' conclusions on *rhetorik*- to this thesis is their demonstration that Plato's *Gorgias* functioned in contemporary debates about the nature of 'rhetoric' and that the dialogue was a contribution to a wider system of scholarship in the classical world rather than just the personal interest of Plato. This therefore justifies reading *Gorgias* whilst bearing the texts of the presocratic sophists (the philosophic context of the time) in mind but also reinforces the argument for a systemic arena in which the dialogues interacted and participated. It is very likely that Plato will have been familiar with the presocratic philosophers' discussions. The considerable distances which separated many of the Ionian presocratics (such as Heraclitus and Protagoras) presented an obstacle to their philosophic engagement. By producing their philosophy as texts, they were able reach a larger audience as well as their own presocratic peers and so catalyse the philosophic culture that went onto to flower throughout the region.[47]

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[43] Schiappa 1990: 467.
[44] Poulakos 1990: 222.
[45] Poulakos 1990: 223
[46] Poulakos 1990: 223
[47] Cole 1991: 80.

How the pre-existing philosophic landscape came to influence the arguments and conclusions which Plato's Socrates made will now be examined. One of the most blatant influences is in the very appearance of one of the leading Presocratic philosophers in their eponymous dialogue *Protagoras*. Continuing our consideration of Socrates' concern with the degradation of truth made possible by speech seen earlier in *Gorgias*, *Protagoras* is concerned with the possibility that an imperfect knowledge is communicated even when a more complete understanding is intended. At one point in the dialogue Protagoras cites an ode by Simonides describing how a man may become good after which the characters debate the meaning of the word "bad"[48] in the poem and perceived inconsistencies in Simonides' own opinion.[49] The possibility of unintended meanings being understood, highlighted in this scene by an intrigued but nervous young Socrates, is given additional and illuminating attention by two of the most influential modern thinkers on hermeneutics – Gadamer and Derrida.

The flexibility of the audience's interpretation and Plato's place within this debate is looked at in Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* in which he acknowledges the peculiar distinction of the "unique and continuing relevance of the Platonic Dialogues" due to their "art of strengthening".[50] In the chapter in which he looks at language as a medium of experience he identifies the Greeks as being among the first to believe that "human experience of the world is linguistic" and had its origins in the *logoi* of Plato.[51]. Gadamer views Plato's interest in this instability of language's very essence, that is, its (as the Greeks would have had it) 'being' as the catalyst for the innovative decision to place his ideas within the dialogue form. Gadamer further posits that this interest was not appreciated by the

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[48] Plato *Protagoras*: 341.
[49] Plato *Protagroas*: 340.
[50] Gadamer 2004: 361.
[51] Gadamer 2004: 453.

sophists which therefore led to Socrates' distrust of their art.[52] Gadamer argues that it was the didactic but dogmatic approach of the sophists which turned Plato to fiction as a vehicle for philosophy.[53]

The sophist's dogmatic understanding of the nature of knowledge acted to restrain dialectic, since if the answer is already known no truly open questioning can take place. This would be exacerbated if, as Socrates demonstrates in many cases (such as the speech on Love penned by Lysias and read aloud by Phaedrus in the dialogue which carries the latter's name), the answer is based on an imperfect knowledge of the given subject. Such vested and ultimately flawed questioning is the antithesis of the pure dialectic Socrates aspires to.[54] Rutherford writes that there "clearly was not" a Platonic orthodoxy of doctrine or dogma in the dialogues.[55]

Socrates' fear of the restraint of dialectic by dogmatism offers a compelling explanation of the confusing density in much of the presocratics' symbolism. The sometimes bewildering opacity of the presocratics is arguably epitomised in Heraclitus and earned him the nickname 'Dark One' in Antiquity.[56] Even if the continuation of philosophic debate was not the objective of Heraclitus' dense poetry, its effect in producing several antique commentaries referenced by ancient authors[57] could not have escaped Plato. It is therefore arguable that Plato saw in the hints and half explained ideas of Heraclitus' text which were then supplemented by subsequent discussion (the Stoic school being the most prominent Heraclitian interpretation pioneered by Zeno a generation later)[58] a means by which he could guarantee the continued vitality of his philosophy. Socrates' concern that his texts could

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[52] Gadamer 2004: 362.
[53] Gadamer 2004: 362.
[54] Gadamer 2004: 368.
[55] Rutherford 1995: 38.
[56] Baldry 1965: 26.
[57] Kahn 1979: 5.
[58] Kahn 1979: 4.

obstruct the philosophical methodology which he so prized is therefore a plausible explanation for the multiple bulwarks between the reader and the opinions of the author - "this protects words from all dogmatic abuse".[59] Heraclitus, though, is not the only presocratic whose influence can be detected in Plato's dialogues.

The Speech of Gorgias of Leontini

The concern of Plato's Socrates with the semantic instability of language and the resulting implications for effective philosophic discussion is not a spark which leapt forth solely for Plato. The Philosophers collectively dubbed the Presocratics also gave this idea consideration. The philosopher Parmenides, whose writings are the earliest extant philosophical works available to us, places at its centre the distinction between the 'Way of Appearance' and the 'Way of Truth'.[60] In a separate fragment containing a latter part of the same poem, (conventionally referred to as fragment DK 28 B 1) a Goddess identifies humanity's nomenclature of the physical world as the "decoration of a name".[61] The hermeneutics of Derrida argue that this concern persisted in *Republic* in Socrates' use of the Greek word *pharmakon* and its ancient connotations of cosmetic, similarly decorating the human form.[62] This will be explained more fully later in this chapter.

Gorgias was another Presocratic who was concerned with the power of the spoken word and a rhetorician who features in the eponymous dialogue written by Plato. Gorgias was from Leontini in Sicily and was interested in the interpretation of speech, be it verbal or text.[63] The

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[59] Gadamer 2004: 362.
[60] DK 28 B 1: 45-7.
[61] DK 28 B 19.
[62] Derrida 2008: 142.
[63] Waterfield 2000: 223.

arguments which may be garnered from the extant fragments of his writings suggest that he may have anticipated many of the ideas voiced by Plato's Socrates.

As with the dialogues themselves, the texts of Gorgias of Leontini were in a stylised prose through which he communicated his philosophy.[64] Gorgias pioneered prose as a medium of written philosophy at a time when the vast majority of models were composed in verse.[65] So we see that both Gorgias, and later Plato, departed from the convention of communicating wisdom literature in metre and poetry. This tradition is exemplified by Parmenides who chooses to convey his arguments within a poem that describes a metaphysical journey to the goddess of Knowledge led by two lesser deities.[66]

In Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen* he, like Plato after him,[67] recognised the weakness of poetry and metre in communicating logic. Gorgias seems to belittle poetry by writing that it is simply "Speech with metre"[68] so seeming to argue that speech or poetry are equally effective in conveying argument or *Logos*. I would argue that this actually supports Socrates' own uncertainty about oratorical possibilities accurately conveying a *Logos*. In the next sentence he cites poetry's unique ability to evoke emotions so that the mind of the listener "feels its own personal feelings".[69] This can be read as recognition of the unsuitability of verbal communication for rational discourse since both prose and poetry contaminate the meaning and distract the audience.

The recognition of the almost magical and traitorous power of the spoken word is also seen in the Homeric epics, in the fatal songs of the Sirens and the wit of Odysseus.[70] By linking

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[64] Waterfield 2000: 223.
[65] Wardy 1996: 40.
[66] D-K 28 B 1.
[67] Waterfield 1998: 605d.
[68] D-K 82 B 11.
[69] D-K 82 B 11.
[70] Constandinidou 2998: 167.

words to magic and catharsis, Gorgias evoked what would have been widely recognised as Orphic qualities.[71] This can be seen to have influenced Plato's characterisation of Socrates whose words, like those of Orpheus, wielded considerable cathartic power.[72] Continuing the possibility of rhetoric's very foreign and manipulative influence on meaning, Gorgias argues that language's possible effects on the soul are analogous to that of drugs on the body.[73]

Gorgias of Leontini's *Encomium of Helen* delineates these rhetorical drugs which can affect an audience's final understanding. Devoting the first half of his encomium to looking at the strength of the spoken word, Gorgias hails it as a "mighty lord" with "superhuman effects".[74] The *Encomium* has also been argued to be a demonstration of the elasticity of a word's interpretation, returning us to the opening idea of this chapter – the instability of meaning in text that leads to a broad freedom of interpretation. The language of the defences it raises against attacks on Helen's integrity have been interpreted as demonstrating the text to be a catalogue of defensive tactics that a defendant may use in court.[75] This demonstrates how the words for a very specific situation can have their meaning and interpretation extended into any number of situations. Here we see the uncertainty of the interpretive action, weighing each word as sincere or insincere is highlighted by the words Gorgias chooses to conclude his encomium with; "I wanted to write the speech as an encomium to Helen and as an amusement to myself".[76] This echoes the call at the end of *Phaedrus* where Plato has Socrates declare that all those who possessed a true knowledge would refrain from taking his thoughts and "sowing them through a pen with words which cannot defend themselves".[77] Principally, the *Encomium* exposes the fickle loyalty of language to the intentions of the speaker or

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[71] Gellrich 1994: 281.
[72] Gellrich 1994: 281.
[73] Karadimas 2008: 14.
[74] D-K 82 B 11.
[75] Cole, T. 1991: 76.
[76] Waterfield 2000: 231.
[77] Plato *Phaedrus*: 276D.

audience. The *Encomium* provides a contemporary's acknowledgement of the qualities of language which Plato's Socrates had identified as a threat to his search for truth. Both the quotes above from Socrates and Gorgias emphasize the unsuitability of text as a vehicle for serious argument. Gorgias (in belittling his previous argument as only an 'amusement') and Socrates (in warning against the inability of text to defend itself) are both concerned with the unsuitability of text as a forum for philosophic debate and argument.

Summary

The themes introduced in this chapter will recur and be taken further in the following chapters. What this chapter has served to do is provide a foundation on which the rest of the dissertation can be raised. This chapter has introduced the idea that the semantic reality of any word employed in explaining an idea is essentially unstable.

This chapter opened with a look at the treatment Socrates gives Ion in the eponymous dialogue and what concerns Socrates had with Ion's profession. In this instance the chapter showed that the meaning of one's words can ultimately betray when Ion was proven to be unable to defend his assertion that as a rhapsode he was best placed to assess the quality and worth of Homer's poetry. With the idea that one may only have a partial understanding of their own words thus introduced, the focus was moved to the Presocratic ideas of Protagoras as he is presented in the dialogue named after him. The premise that the dialogues function within a wider system taken with the conclusion of the debate between Schiappa and Poulakos, was given weight by demonstrating that Socrates' arguments were part of a wider philosophical debate taking place in the Greek world. The introduction of the dialogues existence within a wider contemporary debate allowed for another facet of the systemic existence of the dialogues to be introduced. This was done with the hermeneutics of Gadamer

who introduced the idea that the borders of the meaning attached to single word are permeable.

What we have seen here is that each word in a text must be weighed and consideration given to the semantic heritage from which it descends and which it invariably brings in tow. The following chapter will demonstrate the extent to which this semantic heritage can influence the meaning irrespective of the intended meaning of the author or speaker. When acknowledged, the broader field in which the interpretive action functions significantly effects how we regard Plato's dialogues in their relationship to each other as well as our understanding of Plato's ideal state. The next chapter aims to identify the features of the interpretive action which mould and sometimes change the apparent meaning of the given text.

2. Meaning and Interpretation

The previous chapter introduced Plato's Socrates understanding that 'meaning' is multi-faceted and plastic. This chapter delve deeper into this understanding by looking at how the varying significances of a chosen word can drastically affect the philosophy of a text and its interpretation by different readers. This will be seen in the dialogues' Orphic resonances which are identified both in Plato's dialogues and regarded in Huxley's *Brave New World*. These texts will help demonstrate the significance of the Orphic tradition to the understanding of Plato's Socrates' philosophy. The interplay of the reader's tradition with the text and the dialogues' circumspect language will focus more on Socrates' dialectic and its role as a key component of the Platonic text and ideal.

The Orphics

The basis of this thesis thus far has been that the dialogues and, the texts which seek to participate in their legacy, cannot be read simply as a script between characters. The participation of a text within a wider tradition was briefly alluded to above, as well as the Orphic resonances of Socrates' characterisation by Plato. Socrates' discussion of the Orphic cult consists of little more than small paragraphs in a handful of his dialogues. But his very deliberate references and the supplementation of this with our own knowledge of the cult adds weight to Gadamer's argument that "Plato realized that the word of language is both one and many".[78]

The Orphic influence on Plato's philosophy can be seen to go far deeper than their effect on his characterisation of Socrates. Aldous Huxley will be used to introduce the Orphics to this

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[78] Gadamer 2004: 454.

discussion with his decision to name his hallucinogenic drug *Soma*. The authorities of the World State Utopia present this drug as a release from the more taxing cares of life ('a gram is better than a damn'[79], 'one cubic centimetre cures ten gloomy sentiments')[80] Significantly the name 'Soma' is taken from ancient Greek and is semantically deconstructed by Socrates in *Cratylus* where he describes its most basic meaning as "the tomb of the soul".[81] The afterlife, and so Soma, was a central concern of the Orphics.

We know from sources such as the inscribed bone plaques excavated at Olbia in southern Russia,[82] and the Orphic Gold Leaves, that the Orphic cult was concerned with the soul and its fate after death.[83] The Orphic Gold Leaves in particular were buried with a woman in Italy[84] and contained instructions for the soul upon reaching Hades.[85] Additionally, the belief that the body is a 'tomb' for the soul (*sema*)[86] was also a word play used by the Orphics; *soma - sema*.[87] The emphasis on the soul meant that the Orphic initiate believed that salvation had to begin in the individual rather than being imposed from without,[88] that the ideal Orphic lifestyle was at the margins of the institutional Polis or even outside of it.[89] This too can be seen to have had an influence on Plato's Socrates' personal philosophical approach which lacked any institutions and instead rested on direct contact with an interlocutor.

It would be premature to conclude that Socrates sympathised with the explanation of *soma – sema* as stated in Cratylus as well as references to it in *Gorgias*[90] and *Phaedo*[91]. Such a

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[79] Huxley 1963: 53.
[80] Huxley 1963: 77.
[81] Plato *Cratylus*: 400b.
[82] Price 1999: 119-20.
[83] Price 1999: 120.
[84] Fowler 2000: 320.
[85] Price 1999: 120
[86] Plato *Cratylus*: 400c.
[87] Brill's New Pauly. 2007: 254.
[88] Guthrie 1935: 156.
[89] Brill's New Pauly. 2007: 254.
[90] Plato *Gorgias*: 493a.
[91] Plato *Phaedo*: 62b.

reading would be tempting for its seeming reconciliation of the tension in Socrates' belief that though the ideal community is one ruled by philosophers, the philosophers will be ambivalent towards Politics until the philosophical community is realised.[92] Ferwerda declares that "most modern scholars agree that Plato presents them [Orphic aetiologies] in tongue in cheek".[93] Ferwerda continues, stating that the pessimism of equating the body and the "tomb"[94] suggests it incarcerating the soul – a belief which figures in the Orphic tradition.

Sema, Ferwerda argues, may also be interpreted as 'enclosure', a place where the soul is preserved and protected in preparation for the holy joy of the earthly religious festivals.[95] Ferwerda argues that Plato chose to emphasize the alternate deathly interpretation to criticise what he believed to be their esoteric emphasis on the soul to the exclusion of the Polis.[96] The Cave Metaphor of the *Republic* stresses the importance of the enlightened philosophers returning to the communities and benevolently guiding them, through their laws, to enlightenment.[97] Earlier in the dialogue, Socrates even stresses the importance of *every* citizen positively contributing to the community's welfare regardless of whether they are in a position of government.[98] Furthermore, Plato has his Athenian character state in *Laws* that "legislation and the settlement of States are tasks that require men perfect above all other men in goodness"[99] implying that good government is the most noble undertaking anyone can perform. Here Socrates is emphasizing the insufficiencies of isolated philosophising. Instead, the Truth of the Forms can only be approached through human political society.

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[92] Plato *Republic*: 592a-b.
[93] Ferwerda 1985: 268.
[94] Plato *Gorgias*: 493.
[95] Ferwerda 1985:274.
[96] Ferwerda 1985: 279.
[97] Plato *Republic*: 540b.
[98] Plato *Republic*: 520a.
[99] Plato *Laws*: 708d.

At this point I must warn that though there was a set of religious beliefs that grouped under the 'Orphic' brand, these beliefs were not homogenous. It has been suggested that because there is no collection of stories exclusive to the Orphic cult it cannot be regarded as a separate religion.[100] Furthermore, the term 'Orphic', which has classical precedent, only designates a loose grouping of ideas which diverged from religious orthodoxy in a similar way to our contemporary 'new age'.[101] However, the existence of the philosophy which contemporaries referred to as 'Orphic' is testified by Plato's own references to it in his dialogues and it is fragments of this religious assortment which is being considered here.

We may therefore understand that it would be incorrect to label Socrates an ascetic, looking upon the material world with despair and wishing only to be released from the 'prison' of his body so that he may gain proximity to the realm of Forms. Supporting this, in *Timaeus* he says that unnatural and early death is "painful" for the soul.[102] What Socrates' Orphic references arguably reveal is not a lament of the soul's imposed exile from the realm of the Forms, imprisoned in the body. Instead, Socrates' dichotomy of the divine soul and chthonic body which comprise human nature illustrated through references to Orphic aetiology is a reaffirmation of dialogue and dialectic. Rather than seeking to escape humanity, Socrates seeks it out[103] and it is telling that despite his plans to return to Athens at the beginning of *Republic*,[104] he welcomes the opportunity to speak at Cephalus' party.[105]

We may argue then that Socrates' understanding of *soma-sema* and the duality of soul and body is related to the Charioteer metaphor in *Phaedrus*,[106] in which one horse is "tempered

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[100] Edmonds III 1999: 73.
[101] Edmonds III 1999: 74.
[102] Plato *Timaeus*: 81e.
[103] Plato *Phaedrus*: 230d.
[104] Plato *Republic*: 327c.
[105] Plato *Republic*: 329e.
[106] Plato *Phaedrus*: 255e.

by restraint and modesty"[107] whilst the other is characterised by "wantonness and boastfulness".[108] As with the good charioteer who successfully manages to get his team cooperating, the balance of body and soul will produce the necessary equanimity required to effectively pursue self-improvement. Socrates beckons us towards towards dialectic, the sole path to understanding Goodness. If dialectic was entirely an intellectual endeavour, at the least excluding the body and at the most being inhibited by it, then why does Plato's Socrates emphasize his place as being in the City? Why do all the dialogues available to us begin with a very physical description of movement and setting (the journey to the Piraeus in *Republic*, or the journey to the banks of the river Illisos in *Phaedrus*, the journey to the Lyceum "by the road outside the town wall"[109] at the beginning of *Lysis* etc)?

In answer, the dialogues may be understood to insist the material setting is as important as the dialectic. The *soma – sema* dichotomy has thus far been asserted to have influenced Socrates' understanding of the realm of Forms.[110] More pertinently to this section's emphasis on hermeneutics, the Orphic significances of an arguably carefully chosen word by Socrates have also demonstrated the baggage a single word can bring to a text. '*Soma*' has shown how a single word can colour and comment on the philosophy and ultimate meaning of a text and that the text as a whole functions within a pre-existing epistemology. But *soma* has also provided an example to lend gravity to the warning that the articulation of an idea can haul in its wake ideas possibly unintended by the speaker; after all, the Orphic link can only ever be an argument and cannot be stated unequivocally to be the intention of Plato or that of his Socrates.

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[107] Plato *Phaedrus*: 253d.
[108] Plato *Phaedrus*: 253e.
[109] Plato *Lysis*: 203a.
[110] Guthrie 1935: 157.

Concern with the communication of unintended meaning is discussed at by Desjardis in her reading of *Phaedrus*. She argues that Socrates' concern that the only meaning which may be communicated is the subjective interpretation of the listener is what leads to his declaration against the written word.[111] By citing Parmenides in her argument, Desjardis helps reemphasize the dialogues of Plato's participation in the wider contemporary philosophical debate.[112] By urging the reader to acknowledge the flexible relationship between meaning and language, Desjardis argues that Plato intentionally provokes the reader to question not only their interpretation of the *written* dialogue but also their understanding of the Socratic dialogue which the text records.[113] The concern is with miscommunication or correct communication but with the result that the interlocutor does not *understand* why it is correct led the author of the seventh letter allegedly written by Plato to denounce Dionysius of Syracuse and his explanation of Plato's philosophy.[114] By publishing such a text, Dionysius was ignoring the central importance of dialectic to the philosophy he alleged to understand.

What has been demonstrated, particularly in the discussion above of the wider Orphic significances of Socrates' words, is the relevance of Gadamer's call to take "what is said with an infinity of what is not said".[115] The "infinity of what is not said" may be understood as the dialectic *within* language which would further reinforce the importance of appreciating the dialogue's dialectical emphasis. This is where the hermeneutics, which is the focus of this chapter, comes into play. As has been seen, the philosophy of Plato's Socrates and our subsequent understanding of his text cannot be gleaned only from the script of his characters and will be further illustrated. The two modern texts which accompany and complement this consideration of Plato will emphasize the importance of discussion as reading the text.

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[111] Desjardis 1988: 112.
[112] Waterfield 2000: 58.
[113] Desjardis 1988: 111.
[114] Desjardis 1988: 116.
[115] Gadamer 2004: 464.

Semantic Conflict in Utopia

Language as a confluence of the author's and audience's understanding is revisited by the sudden end to Utopia in *A Modern Utopia* as well as in the arguments brought to bear by the John, the 'Savage', in *Brave New World.* In both these utopian visions it is the natural human variety of character that introduces doubt into the utopian State. This contamination may be introduced by the author in an effort to avoid the conclusion that the views expressed will be assigned as personal to them and so come to be identified as their doctrine.

The failure of meaning in the chapter 'The Bubble Bursts' of *A Modern Utopia* can be seen where the Botanist's frustration causes him to attack the Voice for constructing a Utopia which was firmly, exclusively his own.[116] Similar protests are made by the Savage in his conversation with the World Controller in *Brave New World* about the hordes of human clones which perform the Services that allow the Utopian society to function.[117] What takes place here is the final fall of the utopia on the introduction of a foreign personality who has the self-consciousness to interpret the Utopia independently. The danger of placing one's ideas within such an uncompromising setting as writing is raised and given expression in *Phaedrus* where Socrates argues against putting one's thoughts in writing which is a "discourse which cannot defend itself" and brands it "a kind of shadow" of real understanding.[118] He goes on to say that written discourse should only be used as "aids to recollection" to assist with the finer process of dialectic which is the most effective in gaining understanding of truth.[119]

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[116] Wells 2005: 238.
[117] Huxley 1963: 175.
[118] Plato *Phaedrus*: 276.
[119] Plato *Phaedrus*: 276.

This has hermeneutical implications, as well as implications for the understanding of the role of the utopian novel. Plato's Socrates' central concern is the need for objectivity – it was this idea which underpinned the system of education he laid out for his Guardian citizens.[120] In setting out the best education for the pursuit of his Forms, Socrates concludes that certain kinds of poetry and painting (or as he calls it 'representation') nurture the more basic emotional drive which is "greedy for tears" and so "it's incapable of listening to reason".[121] The priority here is to safeguard the objectivity, allowing reason to thrive in daily decision making. Such a role is obstructed by the painters, the poets, the rhetoricians and sophists whose concern with entertainment and demagoguery temper language to this softer edge. Their use of language is deprived of the incisive dynamism which lets it cut through opinion and expose truth, instead seeking the audience's investment in an idea which is morally ambivalent.

That said, it would be wrong to believe that Plato's Socrates saw no value at all in poetry or rhetoric. We only need look at the form of Socrates' speeches or the Myth of Er at the end of *Republic* to see that the Socrates of the dialogues was not utterly ambivalent as to the value of either poetry or rhetoric to philosophy. Socrates understood poetry could work for - as well as against - philosophising, that poetry not only has the ability to make lies seem like truth but to also make *truth* seem like truth.[122] Poetry's obstruction, however, of Socrates' dialectic seems to be epitomised by the use of poetic language in the lessons of the sophists which allege their own self-sufficiency and accuracy. After all, without such self-containment the sophist's fees would have little justification. But meaning can never be self-sufficient since it requires the audience's interpretation, which Socrates uncovers by exposing the dynamism of his interlocutor's interpretive action. Offering a packaged truth in such a way disregards the

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[120] Plato *Republic*: 604-5.
[121] Plato *Republic*: 604d.
[122] Cole 1991: 140.

possibilities of misunderstanding and could leave the customer more ignorant than when they started. The characteristic which the Sophists ignore is that a word has plastic loyalties and so has no intrinsic preference to be the conveyor of either truth or belief. One may therefore propose that Socrates' exile of the poets he judges to be detrimental to the morality of his citizens is an *artificial* attempt to tame language's indiscriminate behaviour. This acts to break it in for service to truth since without the exile it would remain dangerously promiscuous, involving itself with fiction, belief and truth.

Demonstrated above is the imperative that one must look not only in *Republic* for Socrates' thoughts about the written word but also in the other dialogues because they are all a part of the same epistemology. This widening of the focus when looking at Plato's hermeneutics must also be continued to take into account the work of the Presocratics. The contribution by Parmenides and other philosophers predating Plato meant that by the time he came to write his Socratic dialogues deductive techniques and the methodology of semantic analysis were in development.[123] Furthermore, the argument of Plato's Socrates that understanding existence lay in understanding the symbiotic relationship of the tangible and theoretic was itself not innovative because even in Plato's day, such a technique would have been appreciated by many of his readers as distinctly Pythagorean.[124]

This problem of interpretation defines the problems encountered in accommodating the individual which plague the modern utopian novels and also be seen in the degradation described by Socrates in *Republic*.[125] In *Truth and Method* Gadamer articulates the central unsuitability of the written word: "What is true of every word in which thought is expressed,

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[123] Cohen 1962: 163.
[124] Cropsey 1986: 6.
[125] Plato *Republic*: 546a.

is true also of the interpreting word, namely that it is not, as such, objective".[126] The point is further clarified when Gadamer writes "that all the meaning of what is handed down to us finds its concretion (i.e. is understood) in its relation to the understanding I – and not in reconstructing the originally intended I".[127] What he is saying is that the meaning of a text arises from within the reader or "understanding I" rather than the author. The identification of textual meaning with either the author or the reader made text unsuitable as a medium of communicating Platonic Socrates' Realm of Forms, which relied heavily upon objectivity. On the other hand, dialectic produces a meaning which arises between the interlocutors, a "spark of understanding" when the beliefs of the interlocutors are rubbed together.[128]

Derrida takes a more rigorous approach to Socrates' treatment of meaning. In his *Dissemination* he looks at the treatment of the art of writing (referred to by Socrates as '*pharmakon*') in the dialogues and forms the conclusion that Socrates regarded it as having "no real identity", that it was in fact "aneidetic" (derived from the Ancient Greek *an* meaning "without" and *eidos* "form").[129] He moves onto the notorious treatment of the painters in the Couch Analogy of the *Republic*, arguing that the choice of referring to the paintings of these artists as '*pharmaka*' is significant. Highlighting the similar cosmetic regard for both painting and writing (even equating the two) Derrida argues that Socrates sees them both as "a cosmetic concealing the dead under the appearance of the living".[130] Such implicit warnings in the dialogues against placing too much store by any single declaration of 'truth' demonstrates Plato's awareness that a text, with its finite and monologic discussion, may be skewed by its interpretation.[131]

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[126] Gadamer 2004: 469.
[127] Gadamer 2004: 468.
[128] Plato *Seventh Letter*: 344b.
[129] Derrida 1981: 129.
[130] Derrida 1981: 142.
[131] Erler 2003:155.

Dialectic was therefore arguably conceived to help overcome a possibly misleading ending of a philosophical dialogue, be it written or oral. It was then hoped that the resulting dance of *logoi* would produce an understanding which was independent of the imperfect and complacent beliefs of either interlocutor like a spark from the friction of two sticks.[132] Complacency in ones beliefs or *logos* is repeatedly shown to be anti-philosophical when an interlocutor voices an accepted truth which they overheard but are then unable to defend when pressed.[133] To illustrate this point, Plato's Socrates in *Charmides* demonstrates that one of the protagonists, after putting forward an explanation which he heard from another, is shown not to understand the meaning of it.[134] In these situations we are shown the crucial function of dialectic to goad us on and prevent such an anti-philosophical complacency unwittingly based on falsehood.

The implications this has for the understanding of the textual utopian vision are that the vision contained within it is not to be regarded as the final stage but as – in the words of *Phaedrus'* Socrates – "track aids"[135] to a greater understanding of the Ideal, positions from which to begin one's own investigation into the best of all possible states. One may therefore see that the very form of the Platonic dialogue, in its debate between two characters over the suitability of an ideal, forms one of the fundamental mediums by which the modern utopian or dystopian vision is communicated.

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[132] Plato *Republic*: 435a.
[133] Erler 2003: 158.
[134] Plato *Charmides*: 161a-162b.
[135] Plato *Phaedrus*: 276.

Dilution of Meaning

Derrida further illuminates the dialectics of Plato's dialogues in his dissection of the myth of Egyptian gods Theuth and Thamus recorded in Plato's *Phaedrus*.[136] Derrida explores this myth in the context of the problematically tenuous connection between the author's intentions in using a word and its interpretation by those listening. Derrida identifies one of the roots of this problem of interpretation as lying in the nature of the written word as a third-order signifier. The 'original understanding' begins in the mind of the individual (first order) which they then communicate verbally to another (second order) who in turn records the verbal communication using signs written in ink (third order). By this point the grip of the 'original meaning' has become significantly weakened since these "signs of voice" are themselves only signifiers of another level - 'signs of thought'.[137] The division of understanding into different orders of signifiers helps articulate the danger of misunderstanding. Awareness of the extent to which writing muddied the waters of the author's meaning is the concern behind Socrates' denouncement of text to defend and so clarify meaning.[138]

By distilling communication into an order of signifiers, Derrida ultimately concludes that writing is only concerned with "resemblance itself".[139] The implication of this statement is that no form of writing can contain the author's original *Logos*. Now, we may find it easier to understand the attention Socrates devotes to the *mimesis* of the artists looked at above. They only produce a semblance of reality rather than reality itself and this is of no use to the philosopher. In this way, Derrida demonstrates the extent of, and reasoning behind, Socrates' mitigation of arriving at any final lesson in the dialogues.

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[136] Plato *Phaedrus*: 274e.
[137] Derrida 1981: 138.
[138] Plato *Protagoras*: 329a.
[139] Derrida 1981: 138.

With Derrida's analysis explained, it is now possible to recognise Socrates' belief in the impotence of the instructive word. In Plato's *Lysis*, Socrates prefers to demonstrate the kind of conversation Hippothales should produce to ensnare the object of his affections - who bears the name of the dialogue - rather than dictate precisely how it is to be done.[140] A little earlier in the dialogue, when Socrates asks for a sample of the kind of odes which Hippothales has been composing for Lysis, Hippothales declines but instead insists that one of his friends reproduce it for Socrates.[141] Again, the dialogues are emphasizing text's unsuitability for instruction (after all we should remember that though the dialogues are records of verbal conversations they are first and foremost *written* texts) because of the deathly hue of its meaning. Writing, Derrida argues, only "repeats repetition"[142] but this "is not the repetition of the living"[143] but the "repetition of death"[144] and concludes "then bam! They are good for nothing. They are mere figurines, masks, simulcra".[145] What Derrida is arguing and which is also supported by the consistent absence of the author throughout the dialogues as well as the extreme removal of the author seen in *Lysis* above, is that any order of signifier dilutes the original *Logos* as it moves beyond the person who conceived it. This implies a troubling conclusion that no *Logos* may be faithfully communicated.

What, then, can the dialogues written by Plato communicate to us? What is their value if all its text can communicate is "repetition of death"[146] devoid of vitality? After all, many of the dialogues including *Republic*, *Lysis, Protagoras* and *Phaedrus* are all explicit and self-acknowledged recollections of Socrates' conversations which further emphasize their removal from the context of the original dialogue (not only are we reading it thousands of

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[140] Plato *Lysis*: 206c.
[141] Plato *Lysis*: 205b.
[142] Derrida 1981: 136.
[143] Derrida 1981: 137.
[144] Derrida 1981: 137.
[145] Derrida 1981: 137.
[146] Derrida 1981: 137.

years after it took place but we are relying on the verbal recollection of an additional fictional character). It is to the scenes in *Lysis* cited above to which we must return.

When Socrates decides instead to demonstrate a conversation rather than describe in didactic monologue the *Logos* of erotic conversation the resulting lesson is one Hippothales must make his own, contemplating Socrates' demonstration. More generally, it is the dialectic of the dialogues which must ultimately be taken away from our reading. The concealment of the author and the dilution of the text's meaning, undermined and fraught with uncertainty is therefore a legitimate function of the dialogue. Such forced involvement of the reader's own interpretive action resuscitates the dialogue after the last ghoulish printed word has been read.

Wells himself underwent a trial by fire when he disregarded the premature finality of the written word. *Anticipations* (1901), which preceded his utopian novels, was heavily criticised for the lack of compassion in the scientific society he foresaw and advocated, and particularly in the program of eugenics which was to carve humanity into its optimal form. This may be seen in the responses of two prominent friends of Wells: Joseph Conrad and Winston Churchill. In a personal letter to Wells, Joseph Conrad asks why his Utopia must be so exclusive and why everyone may not be "welcome, appreciated and made use of".[147] Conrad goes on to point out that the exclusivity and "clique-ism"[148] could harm the case and actually lead to a "fatal limiting of influence".[149]

Churchill, in one of his own personal letters to Wells, pointed out that the specialised knowledge in which Wells placed so much faith was by its nature limited and so the "unlimited ignorance of the plain man who knows where it hurts is a safer guide than any

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[147] Conrad 1903 in Jean Aubry 1927: 328.
[148] Conrad 1903 in Jean Aubry 1927: 328.
[149] Conrad 1903 in Jean Aubry 1927: 328.

vigorous direction of a specialised character".[150] It was further reviewed in the *Bookman* in December of 1901, denounced as "vulgar" and the reviewer stated that "it irritates, it exasperates, it offends".[151] The reviewer goes on to conclude "We content ourselves with saying that this new man of Mr Wells' imagination appears to us nothing more than a machine, with steel springs for a heart".[152] The desire to redress and explain more fully the reasoning behind the conclusions in *Anticipations* was what led him to begin writing *A Modern Utopia*.[153]

Significantly, any extensive and detailed foray into Wells' utopianism and his beliefs in how it should be built and maintained would from now on be in the form of the conversational novel, closely and self-consciously miming the Platonic dialogues. Such reluctance to lecture, preferring to demonstrate (a form, incidentally, which would be more difficult to label canonical since it self-consciously is not a blanket ruling but an example tailored to current situation) is articulated in no uncertain terms in the scene in Plato's *Lysis* cited above.[154]

When asked to demonstrate the kind of conversation which will best capture Hippothales' love, Socrates says "That is not an easy thing to tell" preferring instead to "show" him "an example of the conversation you should hold with him".[155] This is axiomatic of the chosen format with which he constructs all of his dialogues. A pronouncement on the way this conversation should be conducted – or on the best way to explore any of the subjects of Plato's other dialogues – would have been more likely to stunt the dialectic rather than nurture it. As will be seen below, this reluctance to state the definitive rule for the subject in hand, which in this case is the ideal State, is what allows Wells to form his belief in the

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[150] Quoted in Parkin 2002: 169 from the collection of letters at the University of Illinois, Urbana Champagne, US.
[151] Hodder-Williams 1901: 91.
[152] Hodder-Williams 1901: 92.
[153] Wells 2005: xxxi.
[154] Plato *Lysis*: 206c.
[155] Plato *Lysis*: 206c.

'dynamic utopia'.[156] Emphasis on dynamism accommodates the possibility of later dialogue between readers in how best to set up the World State whose concept Wells is dedicated to but whose precise form is left open to interpretation.

Levels of Meaning in Wells' Utopian Text

The focus will now be brought to bear directly on the dialogues within Wells' 'conversational novels' and to what degree Wells' dialogue emulates the success of its Platonic archetype. Wells looks at the nature of the truly 'conversational novel'[157] in *Boon, The Mind of the Race, The Wild Asses of the Devil, and the Last Trump* (from this point on to be referred to simply as '*Boon*') in 1915.[158] In this novel concerns with the Form appear. We see in *Boon* the flexibility of the conversational form in allowing different approaches to be brought in (seen in constant reference to approaches by different authors and reference by one of the characters to the Encyclopaedia being personified so that it may explain and defend itself).[159] This leads to another debt of Wells' to Plato since Plato provides precedent by appropriating a variety of approaches for his dialogue.

One example of appropriation is the *elenchus* (rigorous cross-examination) Socrates placed at the centre of his philosophy's methodology.[160] Once *elenchus* was introduced, he adapted it to his own philosophical ends. Socrates did not use *elenchus* like Gorgias (to simply win the game at hand)[161] but instead to have his interlocutor recognise a vacuum of true knowledge and how best to obtain the truth. The dialogue of *Meno* affords an opportunity for Plato's

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[156] Wells 2005: 11.
[157] Wells 1920: 53.
[158] Hammond 2008: 86.
[159] Wells 1920: 54.
[160] Goldhill 2002: 91.
[161] Consigny 2001: 89.

Socrates to broaden the methodological armoury of his philosophy by appropriating the scientific rigour of mathematics to clarify his principle of Recollection.[162]

This demonstrates that there is no single way to practise philosophy. As long as there are at least two people in conversation then any *techne* ('art') may be used for philosophy. Returning to Wells, the section of *A Modern Utopia* where the Voice meets his double (who is a member of the ruling caste of Utopia known as the 'Samurai'), Wells makes a similar attempt to acquire the same rigorous, scientific reasoning to prove the virtue of the World State's institutions. To help understand this more fully, reference must be made to the scene in Plato's *Ion* referred to in the opening passage of this chapter. In the passage I explained Socrates' argument that the rhapsode's judgement of poetry is of little worth since he cannot know if the poet he is reciting speaks truly about the techniques the poet describes, such as chariot racing.[163] In the scene from *A Modern Utopia* cited above we are provided with a modern analogue of this baseless presumption by the rhapsode in Wells' praise of Plato's Guardian caste. One might respond that, unlike Ion who recites scenes conceived by Homer, *A Modern Utopia* is Wells' unique and novel envisioning of utopia. This would mean that earlier utopias become irrelevant and so the credibility of Wells' own novel vision is maintained. But this is not true; Lewis Mumford hailed *A Modern Utopia* as the "quintessential utopia" since it "sums up and clarifies the Utopias of the past"[164] - it looks at issues "which all the other utopias have raised".[165] This demonstrates that it would be a mistake to believe Wells' utopia to be a unique addition to the utopian tradition when in it is a continuation of that tradition. Wells is reciting past utopias as Ion recites the poems of

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[162] Goldhill 2002: 95.
[163] Plato *Ion*: 538b.
[164] Mumford 1966: 184.
[165] Mumford 1966: 189.

Homer, only Wells gives it a personalised cosmetic - his 'Samurai' which are intended to be Plato's Guardians in all but name.

Bearing this observation in mind and the explicit statement of inspiration by the Guardians of Plato's *Republic*,[166] Wells is caught in the same trap as Ion; Wells recites the idea of the Guardian as laid out by Socrates in *Republic* without truly understanding the philosophy which constructed this governing class and so departs from the role the Guardians are intended to undertake in the dialogues. As with Ion's understanding of Homer's poetry, Wells asserts the virtue, suitability and pre-eminence of the Guardian caste of Plato's *Republic* without remaining faithful to their vision. Where his understanding stumbles is in the dogmatic, even religious fervour he describes this caste as possessing.[167] To his credit, Wells seems to recognise this dogmatism and so tries to describe the evolutionary existence it has undergone. This falls a little flat when he describes how "every year it becomes a little better adapted... We have now a whole literature, with many very fine things in it, written about the Rule".[168] What must be highlighted is that the Rule is "adapted" and has many fine things written "about" it. It seems that this deliberative process is only superficial since it is adapted and talked about but there is no hint that its fundamental presumptions are ever questioned. As has been emphasized from the beginning, the sole aim of Socrates' dialectic is to oppose and attack the unquestioning and thoughtless obedience which Wells describes in his Samurai. The acquiescence and explanations of the institutions with nothing like the same meticulous detail and natural feel which is so characteristic of the conversations between Socrates and his interlocutors ultimately brands this a failure and a superficial attempt at the reproduction of Socratic dialectic. It exemplifies what has been argued to be a common tendency of modern attempts to reproduce the natural conversational tones of the Platonic

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[166] Wells 2005: 175.
[167] Wells 2005: 200.
[168] Wells 2005: 200.

dialogues. It all too often descends into a dynamic of the teacher and the student.[169] This dynamic lends the conversation a methodical feel which reduces its organic basis and gives it a didactic tone, so stunting the sought after dialectic.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that it can be difficult to interpret a text which is part of a tradition as varied and extensive as that of the utopian text independent of reference to that tradition. We have consistently been shown that the texts looked at in this chapter at least exist within a literary tradition which influences and is influenced by the text and the interpretive actions of its reader. The emphasis of Gadamer on approaching a text in light of its wider tradition has proven to be pertinent again and again. The texts penned by Plato have also been seen to partially rely on the pre-existing tradition of semantic analysis exemplified by Heraclitus and Gorgias. Possible misinterpretation by the author of such a pre-existing tradition must also be a consideration in the reader's interpretation, seen most clearly in the passage cited from *Ion* and to a lesser certain extent in the appropriation by Wells' World State of Plato's Guardians.

Wells' Samurai reveal how a concept may be robbed of its originally intended meaning but still continue to exist. This is also seen in post-Platonic attempts to reproduce the dialectic and rigorous cross-examination ('*elenchus*') which Plato's Socrates made his own. Both of these philosophic methods seek the most accurate definition of their subject which is why Socrates devotes such extensive time to issues of meaning. To anachronistically borrow one of Wells' terms, the resulting understanding of the nature of meaning lends deeper and increased significance to our understanding of the 'dynamic Utopia'. The arguments

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[169] Levi 1976: 11.

deployed by Gadamer, which also appeared in the dialogues of Plato, have demonstrated the pitfalls and difficulties in communicating a Utopia whilst still preserving it as one's own 'Good Place'. The above demonstrates that the choice of vocabulary in explaining utopian institutions are as central to the final understanding of the utopian state as the institutions themselves.

We also saw that, in hiding the location of the ultimate authority within a text, the author is able to preserve the natural feel of the action and so prevent it seeming didactic. As well as maintaining the genuine dialogue, this removal of obvious authority helps draw in and involve the reader in the utopian project through the resulting imperative of interpretation and so expands the dialogue beyond the confines of the text. By this small act of reader-recruitment, the utopian dialogue accomplishes the most basic objective of any utopian project: provoking a wider dialogue looking at how to improve the current circumstances. The dialogue creates a debate within the novel and, through its ambiguities, outside of the novel, opening a forum through which the author may present his vision and instigate the continuation of the dialogue. This chapter has sought to show how the significances of meaning to the individual which arise in any reading or interpretation of a text make the reader as much of a consideration in the understanding of a text as the author. What this chapter has shown is that the form of the dialogue and the language used defines Socrates' philosophy equally if not more so, than the conversations themselves.

3. The Author's Bodyguard

The focus of the last chapter was the nature of meaning and the how this affects the significances of the given text. This was identified as one of a number of ways a text might be judged other than by its narrative. As well as the hermeneutics of the text, this chapter will introduce the idea that the personality of the character can similarly provide a commentary on the philosophy contained in a text. This subtext will be shown to enrich not only the novel itself but the cosmos of Socrates' philosophy as it is represented in the dialogues of Plato and further expand the definition of the 'Platonic'.

One of Wells' most self-conscious experiments with the potential use of character was in *Boon* and the influence of the Platonic dialogues on the literary form in which he presents this story can be seen from the very first paragraph of the book's introduction. Here Wells writes as himself, telling the reader about the eulogy which he has supposedly received from a writer (who is a fictional character) about an author (who is, again, fictional) who recently passed away. The introduction has a light-hearted tone in which Wells talks of his "inseparable intimacy" with the author and the first-hand knowledge of its contents without having even read the book.[170] However, he also describes the book as "indiscreet", "ill-advised" and voices a "strong suspicion that this Introduction is designed to entangle me in the responsibility of this [the fictional author's which was sent along with the eulogy] book".[171] This layering of the scene with fiction over nonfiction so closely that the reader is confused to which the story actually belongs is significant. This form is ideal for what Wells and Socrates (and perhaps Plato) intend their texts to do – bringing the fiction close enough to reality to make it a serious consideration and so unbalance the reader. The reader is

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[170] Wells 2005: 5.
[171] Wells 2005: 5.

challenged to consider the place of the text and its message in *their* reality. Davis explains

aptly "we need fiction to see reality afresh".[172] This effort to distance from the reader and

assume the mask of a fictional character gives an author the intellectual freedom to articulate

ideas which might otherwise have been dismissed as distasteful or nonsense. The public

backlash at the coldly scientific view of society in his *Anticipations of the Reaction of*

Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life and Thought (1901) described in the

previous chapter would have given Wells first-hand experience of the danger of thrusting

new-born ideas straight into the light without first packaging and experimenting with them in

the literary laboratory of utopian fiction. As will be seen, looking at these ideas from behind a

fictional failsafe means that these ideas can be voiced with relative freedom may also be

explored in greater detail. When Davis writes the words quoted above he is talking about the

seminal utopian text *Utopia* by Thomas More.[173] In his text Thomas More uses the fictional

character of Hythloday to mount a scathing attack on the justice of sixteenth century English

society[174]. Similar removed criticism features in virtually all of Plato's dialogues, most

obviously in *Republic* and the section of the dialogue between Socrates and Thrasymachus in

which the former criticises the oligarchic opinion of justice and right government.[175] Plato

utilised feature of the dialogues so effectively that the debate about which are his sincere

thoughts and which are inserted for the sake of drama is still on-going.[176]

Returning to the use of character in *Boon*, the eponymous character sets out his intentions for

the form of the prospective novel and declares that they will need a character that will

"embody our Idea".[177] This may be used to illuminate Plato's thoughts when choosing

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[172] Davis 2010: 46.
[173] Davis 2010: 46.
[174] More 1999: 19-24 where criticisms of sixteenth century English justice are made.
[175] Plato *Republic:* 336b.
[176] Corlette 1997: 423.
[177] Wells 1920: 53.

Socrates as a protagonist or else why choose such a significant character as Socrates to be the leading voice in most of the dialogues? Plato's dramatic use of Socrates as a two dimensional idea is also replicated in the Voice and the Botanist of *A Modern Utopia* whose only roles are to represent the scientific and romantic personalities with which any Utopia must contend. This is evident not only in what they say but also in their characteristics.

Alternatively, the use of the dialogic medium for a utopian vision, rather than being a defence of one's views against *external* criticism, may instead be understood as an *internal* dialogue which seeks resolution of the author's psychological tensions. Beginning with Wells *A Modern Utopia,* this dialogue is represented most prominently in the two characters of the Botanist and the Voice. It has been argued that for Wells, the Botanist may have represented all the "possessive jealousies and amorous fixations"[178] the contemporary world must transcend in order to approach Utopia and that Wells recognised this to be a personal as well as a collective challenge.[179]

The Voice and the Botanist have been regarded as Wells' own scientific and romantic inclinations in tense conflict which revolved around the discrepancy between what he *knew* Utopia to be and whether it was a place in which he would wish to live and whether it could even accept him in the first place.[180] A similar concern with the reconciliation of two opposing human natures (the chthonic versus divine) launches Socrates into state-building in *Republic* in which the offered solution sets its store by Guardian class.[181] This is seen in the dual function of a Guardian as a philosopher as well as a "well-bred hound" that will defend the community ferociously against any external threat.[182] The tension between such esoteric intellectualism on the one hand and the visceral nature of warfare on the other, along with the

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[178] Huntington 1990: 171.
[179] Huntington 1990: 174.
[180] Huntington 1990: 175.
[181] Gadamer 1980: 54. Also see Levi 1976: 3.
[182] Plato *Republic*: 375a.

tripartite psychology[183] and degeneration of the ideal community,[184] illustrate Socrates'
recognition that these opposing human natures are inseparable and in conflict.

The tension between aspiration and the realities of human nature confronting and obstructing
those aspirations has been observed in Plato's *Parmenides*. *Parmenides* has been argued to
afford the reader a rare proximity to the author for where we can witness remarkable self-
criticism of the doctrine of Forms. The interpretation of the philosophy of the dialogue is that
Plato – through his character of Socrates – is confronting the legitimate arguments which may
be brought to bear on his doctrine of Ideas.[185] The ideological conflict taking place in this
dialogue is between Socrates' wish to uphold his theory of the doctrine of Ideas and the belief
in universalistic knowledge and to hold true to the pursuit of truth at any price.[186] Whether
the decision to split the philosophical process between two individuals to form a dialogue is
to bring peace of mind to a psychological tension (as with the Wellsian characters) or
whether it is to dramatically scrutinise one's own doctrine in light of conceivable critique, we
nevertheless arrive at the same conclusion. The decision to divide one's text into a bi-polar
discussion, a dialogue, is not trivial but can play an important role in comprehensively
understanding the text.

The purification of the ideal around which the text is built has also been identified as an
effect of the deployment of the dialogue format. This purification takes place in the repeated
division of the definitions of the ideal which helps reduce it to its most basic and indisputable
form.[187] An clear example of such process of purification can be found in Plato's *Statesman*
in which the art ('*techne*') of the Statesman is subdivided into to its constituent properties of a
'physical' art and an 'intellectual' one which in turn is divided into the properties of the

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[183] Plato *Republic*: 436a.
[184] Plato *Republic*: 547c.
[185] Bambrough 1972: 295.
[186] Bambrough 1972: 298.
[187] Blandell 2002: 52.

ability to judge and the ability to command and the process of division continues until the exact nature of the art of the Statesman is uncovered. This semantic investigation of one word which leads to another equally unsatisfactory word is evocative of the imagery in one of Plato's most famous metaphors, that of the Cave. When the newly released prisoner emerges into the daylight Socrates describes how he is unable to look directly at the Sun but instead can only examine its reflection in a nearby pool of water.[188] This metaphore aptly illustrates the nature of meaning in the Platonic dialogues; that each word has the reflection of another within it. The duality of perspective and character is thus shown to help clarify and define the utopia. This has the effect of purifying the idea so that it may be understood and followed by another. Such apparently endless movement with no clear statement as to how or when the *logos* might be uncovered also hints at the open-ended confusion in which many of the characters of the dialogues are described at the dialogues' end. We will return to this final point to later in the chapter though, for now the focus will be drawn back to the use of character in the utopian literature under scrutiny.

It is significant to note that Socrates is not always placed in the senior position as leader of the dialectic in the dialogues and is presented as the student in some cases, such as in the dialogue *Parmenides* where the eponymous sophist is the one educating a Young Socrates. This is not so in Wells' novels where the protagonist (who is often described with an appearance and attitude evocative of Wells himself) frequently occupies a notional role as the student learning about the utopian system from one of its residents or statesmen. This apparently subordinate role is deceptive, since Wells' avatar does not receive his lessons with a critical mind but instead finds himself agreeing with the sense and order which the utopian describes. Since there does not seem to be any serious attempt to sympathise with the opposing arguments, the reader is left with an artificial impression of consensus regarding the

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[188] Cohen 1962: 167.

virtue of the system advocated. When characters representing alternative schools of thought of the ideal existence are presented, they are ridiculed and dismissed for their naivety and ignorance; the Romantic from the chapter entitled the 'Voice of Nature' in *A Modern Utopia* provides a pertinent example.

The treatment of the 'Voice of Nature' by the earthling Voice may be argued to be filled with irony and hypocrisy when one remembers that it is such intolerance of different points of view which will eject the Voice and Botanist from the Voice's utopia in the end. Upon initially coming across this romantic Voice of Nature (to be hereon in referred to as the 'Romantic' to avoid confusion with the protagonist The Voice) The Voice complains that the Romantic is not interested in the earthlings but instead runs roughshod over their introductions with his own selfish thoughts.[189] Later on he further complains that it was obvious that the Romantic "had an inordinate impulse to lecture"[190] and finally, when the Romantic asks whether he was listening "'No,' I said bluntly".[191] Once the utopian bubble has burst the Botanist accuses the Voice of seeming "harsh and dogmatic"[192] and not allowing for his – the Botanist's - position.[193]

This is in stark contrast with the arguments put forward by Gadamer and Derrida described at the beginning of this dissertation which point to the extraordinary lengths to which Plato seems to have gone to prevent any interpretation of his texts as dogmatic and canonical. Instead, Plato seems to have his character of Socrates undermine his own teachings through his tentativeness, uncertainty and withdrawal of arguments.[194] A stark example of this can be found in *Phaedrus* where, after making a speech heralded as a more effective argument for

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[189] Wells 2005: 81.
[190] Wells 2005: 84.
[191] Wells 2005: 91.
[192] Wells 2005: 238.
[193] Wells 2005: 239.
[194] Rutherford 1995: 223.

the conclusion of Lysias' speech, Socrates then withdraws it for fear and shame of impiety to *eros* (the Love deity).[195] Though this interpretation may be offset by the fact that he replaces it with a speech he judges more pious and "sound doctrine"[196] the argument remains that by declaring his initial conclusion flawed, Socrates has bought into question all his argument. If the first is wrong how is the reader to know that he did not walk away from this dialogue – a self-proclaimed simpleton[197] - and decide that this second conclusion was wrong too? Elsewhere, At the end of *Lysis* the reader finds Socrates self-deprecating for his having made himself "ridiculous (*katagelastoi)*".[198] Similarly, in *Ion* he calls himself a "simple layman (*idioten anthropon*)".[199] To further strengthen this point, Socrates' confusing self-doubt also appears in *Meno* in which Socrates and his interlocutor come to an apparent conclusion only for Socrates to question its truth on what would seem to be the most pedantic to the point of eristic reason. [200] This all works to maintain the 'Socratic Irony'[201] which enables Plato's Socrates to keep enough of a distance from argument to judge it objectively and to keep the dialectic as open and natural as possible. This irony removes the reverence for the traditions passed down which result in our embracing of these traditions unquestioningly. This illustrates the ability to simultaneously revere and scrutinise to the point of criticism one's own traditions.[202] The use of characters in a utopian hypothesis can provide further contribution s to the text. In both *A Modern Utopia* and the Platonic dialogues the presence of characters other than the protagonist may be argued to play a similar role to that of the Greek Chorus in the tragedies, where they provide the voice of social convention, the reaction of the audience and a means through which the division between the audience and the dramatic

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[195] Plato *Phaedrus*: 243c.
[196] Plato *Phaedrus*: 243d.
[197] Plato *Ion*: 532e.
[198] Plato *Lysis*: 223b.
[199] Plato *Ion*: 532e.
[200] Plato *Meno*: 89C.
[201] Villa 2001: 302.
[202] Villa 2001: 308.

events are blurred.[203] Venturing into the field which looks at Greek drama and tragedy would require more resources than are available for this exploration. For the time being we must be content with ideas gleaned from its borders. The emphasis throughout this thesis is that the boundaries of meaning are porous and plastic, these samples will hint at the multiple perspectives from which the dialogues may be considered and how their meaning would be hard, if not impossible, to enclose with the rigid finality of a single text. It is left to the reader to decide whether to pursue further.

There is anecdotal evidence that draws together Socrates and tragedy; that it was the tragedian Euripides who lent Socrates a copy of Heraclitus' philosophical text and asked for his opinion on the ideas it recorded.[204] Additionally, a more technical illustration is in the tension between emotional and rational imperatives[205] in many of Euripides' plays which are evocative of the charioteer analogy in *Phaedrus*.[206] The most relevant dramatic device for broadening our understanding of the dialogues in the context of uses of character in Euripides' tragedies is the relationship between the protagonist and the chorus.

Goldhill argues that *agon* ('contest') which takes place between the protagonist and chorus helps the audience form a social identity.[207] In this guise the Chorus helps present the very specific narrative within a wider system of tradition and social values.[208] As we see in *Phaedrus* and *Republic*, Plato's Socrates' ideal society is one where citizens identify themselves with the quest for the good[209] and the fear of this quest being inhibited forces Socrates to admit that no philosopher will risk participation in any society which does not

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[203] Goldhill 1992: 267.
[204] Kahn 1979: 4.
[205] Gregory 2005: 261.
[206] Plato *Phaedrus*: 254a.
[207] Goldhill 1992: 271.
[208] Goldhill 1992: 271.
[209] Plato *Phaedrus*: 278b.

hold such values.[210] Understanding the specific circumstances of the dialogues within the wider 'Platonic' and philosophic tradition as it existed was emphasized in the preceding two chapters. Indeed, the spheres within which Socrates wishes his philosophy to function may be thought of as concentric. Each dialogue can be understood as being created to interact with and against the other dialogues (such inter-textual hostility can be seen between *Republic* and *Protagoras* where the latter criticises the doctrine of Forms laid out in the former), this being the initial sphere. The second sphere, as was seen in Gadamer and Derrida's readings, is the interaction of the dialogues as a whole within the sphere of traditions of the reader. It is conceivable, and in some places supported, that Plato would have looked to dramatic examples in order to understand and emulate their ability to function within a wider environment than the one they immediately describe.

In *Gorgias* Socrates explains that harmony is not the ultimate objective but, where needed, his philosophy is aiming to raise conflict when good is not the priority and "striving with it as hard as we can".[211] As we see with the frustration of Thrasymachus in *Republic*[212] and the indignation of Polus in *Gorgias*,[213] Socrates had the reputation of raising contentious arguments and leaving them unanswered. This too has Euripidean precedent such as in *Heraklidae* where Euripides presents one judgement of Eurystheus as the villain of the piece but then undermines this by making the audience extend their sympathy towards him on his death bed.[214] By provoking such a pronounced reaction from the audience, the dialectic between the protagonist and chorus blurred the division between drama and reality, placing the audience within the action.[215] If not precedents, then scenes such as these clearly

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[210] Plato *Republic*: 592a.
[211] Plato *Gorgias*: 513d.
[212] Plato *Republic*: 336d.
[213] Plato *Gorgias:* 461c.
[214] Buxton 1982: 151.
[215] Godlhill 1992: 279.

demonstrate Plato's dialogues functioning within a wider cultural context and so emphasizing the dialogues as a fragment of a whole. Bearing this function in mind we might understand why Plato would choose to look at the tragic plays when he decided to write his dialogues since the corner stone of the philosophy advocated by Plato's Socrates is the active participation (and to some extent, leadership) and subversion of the audience's expectations.[216]

Unfortunately a more detailed and technical consideration of what influence dramatic writers such as Euripides had on the creation of the dialogues and their philosophy must be left to others. What this brief foray has demonstrated and emphasized is that Plato appreciated the virtues of the techniques of the artist and playwright despite the unfavourable treatment he has his characters give them in many of the dialogues. Additionally, the dramatic use of character in Plato's dialogues, arguably partially inspired by the use of the Chorus by tragedians such as Euripides, provides for Plato a means by which to convey the philosophy other than through the speech of Socrates.. We have thus seen here the depth of the dialogic medium which makes it so appropriate a platform for philosophy as intricate and complex as Socrates' answer to of to what is the best way to live.

Despite Wells attempts to emulate the philosophic rigour of the Platonic dialogues and the vitality of the characters that populate them,[217] he nevertheless fails to reproduce the spirit of the rhetoric. Instead of using the opportunity afforded the format by Plato to scrutinise objectively, Wells only offers a veneer of dialectic rigour. This is seen most clearly in his choice, as author of the Utopia, to place his own double in the ruling caste of Samurai who govern and immerse themselves in the ideology of Utopia.[218] By identifying himself so

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[216] Griswold 1988: 161.
[217] Earle 1950: 184.
[218] Wells 2005: 167.

closely with the most central machinations of government in his Utopia he introduces a glaring conflict of interest. This removes any possibility of objectively stepping outside of the Utopia in order to assess its worth, as Socrates managed to do through his ironic approach.[219]

Huxley too affords us an opportunity to observe an attempt to similarly use characters manifesting different ideas to refine and reinforce the virtue of an argument. However, unlike Plato but like Wells, this acts to weaken the philosophy of the text by robbing it of its vitality; the dialogue ceases to seem natural but rather take the form of a careful manipulation of the reader into sympathy with the author. Huxley's rigid grip on the tiller of *Brave New World* is felt in the extreme polarities which arise in his World State.[220] The author's agenda is clear in the blissful ignorance, where anything unpleasant is simply ignored, or escaped through the hallucinogenic *soma,* or where the world is tolerated with an attitude of Christian stoicism, where happiness comes from the nobility of a spirit tempered by adversity. At the hospital the insensitivity of the Utopians around the bed of the Savage's dead mother ("Like maggots they had swarmed defilingly over the mystery of Linda's death")[221] is another such example as well as the dialogue between the Savage and the Controller.[222] In both these instances it is made clear which belief the author wishes the reader to sympathise with. Through such an action the utopian vision is robbed of its objectivity and natural feel and brings it closer to a dogmatic preach rather than a philosophic effort to understand a problem. One may even read the use of the character of the Savage in a particular scene by Huxley as a covert tactic to enlist the sympathy and support of the reader even if a reader consciously seeks a neutral reading. Adorno argues that, despite the official policy of Huxley's utopia to desensitise its

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[219] Villa 2001: 308.
[220] Huntington 1982: 164-5.
[221] Huxley 1963: 165.
[222] Huxley 1963: 186.

citizens against sexual morality, in the scene when Lenina attempts to seduce the Savage[223] (who here represents traditional Christian morality), the description of the scene as she undresses is still erotic.[224] What Adorno does not note is that the erotic overtones of this scene can only be understood as such by interacting with the reader's own sensibilities. By provoking such a reaction in the reader, Huxley further erodes the ability of the reader to assess, form their own conclusion and so engage in a true dialectic. Instead the reader is enlisted into Huxley's disapproval of the scene at least, if not the entire Utopia. In such scenes as well as the finality of the ending to the book in which the Savage commits suicide in despair at the society that has entrapped him, the text adopts Gorgiatic rhetoric which seeks only to convince the audience of a final opinion rather than prolong the philosophic action.

What we see above is robbery of the natural feel of Huxley's utopian dialogue and vision. The Savage's own extreme (in the sense of intensity and self-imposed alienation) revulsion at this vision of 'civilisation' renders this vision static and so beyond recall. Its rigidity is illustrated physically in the Savage's choice to retreat into isolation towards the end of the book.[225] Socrates' calls for the continuation of dialectic after the end of the written dialogue as well as his belief in the fluidity of meaning and how it may change from one moment to the next,[226] reveals an opposing belief that human understanding is not so rigid and is not served by retreating from dialectical scrutiny (*'agon'*). The prologues of many of the dialogues show Socrates welcoming the chance to analyse another's perspective and have his own similarly analysed, as he says in *Phaedrus* it is the "people in the city have something to teach me".[227] What is seen in the dialogues - as opposed to the novels of either Wells or Huxley - is that the characters demonstrate the dynamism of utopian philosophy and the only

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[223] Huxley 1963: 153.
[224] Adorno 1994: 105.
[225] Huxley 1963: 182.
[226] Plato *Meno*: 89c.
[227] Plato *Phaedrus*: 230d.

way by which some utopian understanding may be reached. A more general conclusion to what we have seen here is that the personalities and silent actions (withdrawal and isolation) of the characters can, in themselves, function as a vehicle for the author's philosophy.

One might argue that by providing two personas of the same character in different contexts (one foreign and from earth the other Utopian and immersed in its processes) Wells was trying to provide another route to criticism by providing a dichotomy with which to assess which character would be most desirable. This would be true if the earthly persona did not come to endorse and empathise so strongly with the arguments of the Samurai twin for the virtue of Utopia. This lack of sincere criticism represents the greatest betrayal of *A Modern Utopia*'s Platonic (or 'Socratic') pretensions. Instead, Wells can be accused of committing a crime Plato's Socrates associates with the Sophists and which he articulates in *Gorgias* as a trait of Rhetoric, namely that it "is a producer of persuasion for belief, not for instruction in the matter of Right or Wrong".[228] This means that the dialogic premise of the 'conversational novel', in the end, resembles more the diatribe than dialogue.[229] The term for this rigorous cross-examination which the characters in Wells' *A Modern Utopia* attempt but ultimately fails to reproduce is '*elenchus*'.

The conclusion which may be drawn from the above is that despite Wells' attempted emulation of the elenchus and dialogue of Plato's texts, they can never truly be a reproduction of the reasoned argument they contained since for Socrates they rest on the guarantee that the argument is open and blind. The ad hoc and natural progression of the conversation in the dialogues is seen in several places such as *Cratylus*[230]or in a more jarring

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[228] Plato *Gorgias*: 455a.
[229] Kemp 1982: 209.
[230] Plato *Cratylus*: 396c.

turnaround in *Phaedrus*[231] where Socrates is made to reconsider his position after critical introspection or a sudden insight into the problem. The lack of agenda or dogma help reinforce his assertion that rather than a teacher he is a *facilitator*, not imparting any truths but seeking simply to bequeath the tools for us to arrive at our own wisdom.[232] This is in contrast to the didactic tone struck by Wells' Utopians when they explain their system of government.[233] Socrates' most clear renouncement of wisdom comes in *Theaetetus* where Socrates declares that he does not contain within him any wisdom but only seeks to help bring it forth from others in the same way as midwives help expectant mothers to deliver.[234]

We saw above the way Voice of Wells' utopian text and Villa's understanding of Socratic Irony help convey the lengths to which Socrates went to preserve the organic feel of his dialogues. But we can also argue that he is not completely successful in this regard and point to instances where he falls short of his own strict criteria for successful dialectic. Rocco cites the dialogue *Gorgias* as an interestingly stark example of Socrates clearly directing the dialogue, preventing the natural ebb and flow which he cherishes. From the beginning of the dialogue,[235] Rocco argues, Socrates pulls on the reigns of the steeds which drive this dialogue, preventing it from going where it will by imposing his own preferred quick fire format on the conversation.[236] Additionally, Socrates' use of everyday examples such as cobblers[237] or physicians[238] and gymnasts[239] to illustrate the points he makes results in an additional weight placed on Gorgias' responses[240] though his speech was famed for its

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[231] Plato *Phaedrus:* 244.
[232] Blondell 2002: 373.
[233] Wells 2005: 178-200 and Wells 1933: 53-55.
[234] Plato *Theaetetus*. 150d.
[235] Plato *Gorgias*. 449b.
[236] Rocco 1997: 75.
[237] Plato *Gorgias:* 447d.
[238] Plato *Gorgias*: 450a.
[239] Plato *Gorgias*: 450a.
[240] Rocco 1997: 78.

elaborate form (Socrates himself references this in *Symposium*.[241] Rocco concludes that by setting such parameters Socrates demonstrates that genuine truly open search for truth is impossible through his methodology. As seen above in *Phaedrus*, Socrates does not leave his own conclusions unchallenged and instead is willing to modify his initial conclusions and refine his method.

Wells' characters may be accused of similar manipulation of the discussion though without any of the same willingness to accept their own mistakes. As was seen in *Gorgias*, though Socrates is the sole creator of the landscape (his dialectic), both Gorgias and he negotiate their path. On the other hand, in Wells' utopian visions, the companions must either accept the unilateral, rigid system presented or be excluded. The system cannot be changed; Wells' protagonist must be <u>followed</u> rather than accompanied into Utopia. This has the effect that - rather than an education in how things *may* be improved, the call seems instead to be for indoctrination.[242] An instance where a character other than the protagonist offers a suggestion for improvement is found in the speech by Mr Catskill in *Men Like Gods* in which he decries the stiflingly safe life the Utopians have created for themselves ('what do you know here of the sweet early days of convalescence?').[243] The *aporia* at the end of *A Modern Utopia* results from the stubborn refusal to review one's arguments and seriously entertain the suggested improvements of others (rather than the outright removal of faith in one's own argument which is the usual *aporia* formula at the end of the Platonic Dialogues) but may still be argued to be fundamentally Socratic. After all, both these *aporiai* follow the revelation that one's own arguments are inadequate.

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[241] Plato *Symposium*: 198c.
[242] Kemp 1982: 209.
[243] Wells 1933: 84.

Where these *aporiai* differ is in the reactions they provoke. Socrates intends his confused interlocutors to realise that they must put all their beliefs through the rigours of dialectic to understand whether they are true. On the other hand, the Wellsian texts as illustrated by *A Modern Utopia* and *Men Like Gods* end with the protagonists being rejected from utopia and sent back to Earth. Wells' novels do not end with an optimistic note looking forward to the possibility of improvement. Instead, there is a note of resignation and exasperation at a world which seems to precipitate the Socratic *aporia*; a world in which the population heedlessly runs along the well-worn tracks of belief without conceiving the possibility that their habits inhibit social progress. Socrates' dialectic seems to anticipate and share the same conclusion implied by the destruction of Wells Utopia after the complete personalities of both the Botanist and Voice were inserted. This being that an ideal cannot be accurately understood by a single mind but, only through the presentation of one's own understanding for the scrutiny of, and supplementation by the suggestions of, another mind can it be approached. One might read the Wellsian utopias as a warning of the problem that by fanatically holding to a certain idea, one is actually destroying it. Socrates' dialectic demonstrates that an idea cannot be held in stasis but is dynamic and that concession does not necessitate its abandonment but instead its preservation and evolution. This is a fundamental difference between Plato's dialogues and the Wellsian novels looked at here.

The concluding stalemate is a result of conflict rather than for example, the mutual defeat which ends *Lysis*. As has been seen, Plato's use of character allows a fuller debate than the one which takes place in *A Modern Utopia*. In the latter the conclusion is merely a rebuke of the vision put forward by the main protagonist, a fact which also stands true in *Men Like Gods*.

In contrast, the dialogue of Plato's characters and the ironic steering of Socrates means that the companion of Socrates may be introduced to the debate and contribute without being

berated by a protagonist indignant at having their beliefs questioned. This gives the dialogue a motion which allows it to possibly continue after the text. On the other hand, it is significant that the dialogue of *A Modern Utopia* ends "No! I can't endure him. With a passionate rapidity of movement I leave his side".[244] To borrow the words of another "The Knowledge that philosophical dialogue imparts is that undisputed agreement is based on an illusion".[245] So whilst Plato's dialogue sets the stage for continued debate, Wells' blind and passionate dogmatism sets up the interlocutors as opponents rather than of companions in philosophy. By taking such an rigid position The Voice has ended all chance of continued philosophising once the narrative of the dialogue has left the interlocutors. This stunts the dialogue and removes it of its Platonic vitality ensuring that the Utopia will never arise from the rubble.

On the other hand, one could argue the Wellsian aporia is actually more effective at stimulating further philosophising on utopianism than the endings of Plato's dialogues. Whereas Socrates ends many of his dialogues with a light-hearted dismissal of their efforts (*Lysis*), a prayer (*Phaedrus*) or a mythical story (*Republic*) the acrimonious parting of the characters at the end of *A Modern Utopia* and *Men Like Gods* seems more desperate. In both of Wells' utopian texts here mentioned the protagonists are forcefully ejected from utopia amid senseless conflict. Unlike the light-heartedness of Plato's conclusions, Wells' endings point to the shortfalls of the modern status quo with a passionate cry which leaves no doubt that the author believes that the current situation as it is cannot continue and must be changed for the better. We might argue that such violent frustration would be more effective in galvanising readers into continuing the philosophy than Socrates', sometimes facetious but rarely desperate, endings.

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[244] Wells 2005: 242.
[245] Mittelstrass 1988: 128.

Deciding whether dialogues subsequent to Plato's which lay claim to his philosophic legacy are actually faithful is not the aim of this chapter. As with the ontology of the 'text' looked at in the chapters preceding this one, the argument is that no part of the dialogues may be understood in isolation. What is gestured above is that Plato's legacy as it appears in Wells' visions, can help round off an understanding of the virtues of Plato's Socrates' choice to end in *aporia* and the form of the *aporia* he chooses. Thus the reader is warned against regarding the dialogues as separate from other contemporary philosophies, a single dialogue from the other dialogues within Plato's corpus and, as has been seen in this chapter, a single character from the other characters – this applies both to interaction between Plato's dialogues and the interaction between Plato's dialogues and Plato's literary legacy. This chapter has sought to demonstrate that splicing Plato's dialogues to filter all speech other than the explicitly philosophic utterances of Socrates would fragment his philosophy. It has been shown that even dramatic interaction of the characters (such as Phaedrus' light hearted and seemingly irrelevant mocking that Socrates is "like a visitor being shown the sights by a guide" when they walk in the Attic countryside)[246] are equally relevant.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to explain how the use of the characters encountered in Plato's dialogues assists to exemplify and temper the philosophy which their interaction produces. It has also been seen that simply producing two characters conversing about the given ideas is not sufficient and that an effort must also be made to preserve the natural flow of the conversation. This natural conversation incubates the insight into the truth of a concept and produces an idea which exists *between* the interlocutors rather than *of* either of them. By

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[246] Plato *Phaedrus*: 230c.

preserving the independence of the conclusion, Plato ensures its existence beyond the reading of the text. Huxley and Wells have helped further the understanding of the 'Platonic' as it relates to the characters of a text by providing a negative definition, demonstrating what it is not and so complimenting the dialogues, making their achievement all the more remarkable by evidencing how every facet which the their dialogic format affords is delicately tuned to ensure the vitality and persistence of the dialectic they revere.

4. *Aporia* and the Conclusion of Utopia

The aim of this dissertation has been to draw attention to the action which occurs around Socrates and how it compliments and expands the philosophy he explains and in this way provide a sharper understanding of the meaning of the 'Platonic'. In the first chapter of this dissertation we saw how Plato's significant choice of the sophist Gorgias for one of his dialogues and Gorgias' own perspective of the nature of language (in speech and text) as well as the way it should be used hint at the meta-philosophy in which all the dialogues must be seen to participate. By acknowledging the role played by the writings of the historical person Gorgias, in the eponymous dialogue and in the arguments Socrates makes in *Phaedrus*, our understanding of the written word is expanded. The character of Gorgias utilises the mystical regard for language for its effect upon the souls of those nearby. In addition, the relevance of philosophies developed by other sophists pre-dating Plato such as Heraclitus and Parmenides was also detected. This all lends support to Gadamer's own calls for the reader to always retain awareness that as a word functions as part of a sentence, so a single text functions within the author's corpus as well as the wider tradition in which the author himself participates.

A similar illumination of Socratic philosophy was also seen when we looked at *Cratylus* and the pregnant etymology of the word *soma* with its Orphic resonances. The eschatology which 's*oma*' unlocks augments our understanding of the lifestyle of the Guardian class and their independent asceticism. The accompanying metaphysical individuality, by emphasizing that the route to a happy afterlife lies in a virtuous internal spiritual constitution outside of how the initiate participated in the rituals of State, helps further explain the possible role of the *aporia*. The *aporia* acts to dislodge the interlocutor from the unquestioning routine which they enacted and so offers them the opportunity to self-consciously assess the virtue of their

chosen course. Consciousness of the impermanence of the pervading system seen in the criticism of leading characters in modern utopian texts by Wells and Huxley have been chosen to help explain key ideas of the dialogues and their continued relevance.

The frequent withholding of a constructive conclusion at the end of many of Wells' utopian texts has been cited in support of the argument that through such endings Wells, as Socrates before him, was seeking to demonstrate that explanation should only be offered in a provisional and tentative manner flexible enough for embellishment and even opposition. Following on from this it has therefore been inferred that Wells understood the novel to be "an artefact to be perpetually renewed and reshaped".[247] This is where the *aporia* which evolves from such a dynamic understanding of the nature of the novel becomes Socratic. In both *Phaedrus*[248] and *Cratylus*[249] Socrates argues, as was seen above, that language is semantically fluid and the written word is unsuited to philosophy because of its inability to defend itself in the rigid form text lends to it. The solution Socrates identifies is endless philosophical endeavour or the perpetual renewal of understanding by means of dialectic with another philosophic mind.[250]

The introduction of Heraclitus into the analysis of *A Modern Utopia* raises another interesting front on which Wells' utopianism fails and is also indicative of one of the many unresolved conflicts which play themselves out through the text. In the opening lines of the first chapter on the Topography of his Utopia, Wells writes that it must not be static but must embrace change and be as a "hopeful stage leading to a long ascent of stages".[251] Despite this noble aim it is in this respect that the utopian bubble is burst. The tension in the fabric of the utopia which leads to its fracture may be argued to have arisen from the Voice's refusal to

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[247] Hammond 1990: 80.
[248] Plato *Phaedrus:* 276.
[249] Plato *Cratylus:* 412c.
[250] Plato *Phaedrus:* 277.
[251] Wells 2005: 11.

compromise on his vision of the utopia, thus instilling in its nature the kind of rigidity that Wells appears to be hoping to avoid. Waterfield sums up Heraclitus' ideology saying that "it seems to be that there is harmonious give and take between the major stuffs of the world".[252] This tandem of opposing forces is also mirrored in the dialectic of Socrates in Plato's dialogues whose 'give and take' was the best way of gaining insights into the subjects under discussion. However, as we saw, sometimes Plato's Socrates falls into didactic and subverts his own stated aims.

Throughout this dissertation it has been emphasised that the closest certainty allowed to us is the beliefs of the characters who populate the dialogues; the Author himself remains hidden and this is because he never explicitly identifies with any of the characters. Another position presents itself despite arguments that Socratic irony and the repeated *aporiai* which conclude most of the dialogues demonstrate Socrates' notorious assertion of ignorance, subverting any attempt to point to a 'Socratic Doctrine'. Some have asserted that Socrates' emphasis on Reason and the central objectivity of his realm of Forms means that Socrates believed there was a single Idea of Humanity.[253] This makes understanding the mechanism of dialectic problematic because, if a life emulating the realm of Forms meant that every individual would think alike, how could the interchange of ideas which defines the dialogues and facilitates the philosopher's life occur? Socrates raised the variety of human nature and interpretation as the impetus for his dialectic which would then lead to the epiphany described in the Cave metaphor. Plato's possible belief in the dynamism of human interpretation is reinforced by two instances in the *Republic*; the first being the degradation of the Ideal Polis due to the irrepressible variety in human nature.[254] The second comes slightly

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[252] Waterfield 2000: 35.
[253] Baldry 1965: 76.
[254] Plato *Republic*: 546a.

earlier in the same text where Socrates explicitly acknowledges that there are actually "five types" of society corresponding to "five types of mental trait".[255] This reiterates the inconsistency of the dialogues and the Heraclitan belief of Plato's Socrates that division is necessary for unity in human psychology as well as society. Anecdotally, this can be illustrated in a story that tells how, upon Plato's death, several different versions of the opening sentences of the *Republic* dialogue were found beneath his pillow.[256] Whether true or not, this story illustrates the open, dynamic *aporia* of that dialogue and how it was intended to stimulate philosophising rather than stifle it with dogma. Here, again, the *aporia* provides the vitality and rigour at the centre of *Republic*'s philosophy.

In the second chapter of this thesis[257] the earthly companions of *A Modern Utopia* were interpreted as a manifestation of Wells' psychological tension. This tension between what we believe to be good for humanity and the drivew to satisfy our own unique desires ultimately destroys many of Wells' Utopian visions. But what has also been recognised is that, when the pristine towers began to topple it was Wells' pen dealt the final blow because of his own dissatisfaction with his Utopia.[258] As seen in *A Modern Utopia* the blow is dealt when Voice realises that the objective judgement of who would be appropriate as a member of the managerial class of Samurai and the consideration for the feelings of his friend the Botanist are incompatible. That said, in its ideas as well as the physical movement of the characters, the Utopia was an opportunity for Wells (through the persona of the Voice) to explore the nascent ideas he had about Utopia and judge the extent to which they belong in Utopia. It is this interplay of dialectic which afforded Wells the insight that his utopian vision was unfit for purpose.

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[255] Plato *Republic*: 544e.
[256] Cole 1991: 121-2.
[258] Morton 1978: 238.

Huxley conceded a similar, informal approach to his utopian and dystopian novels, stating that they were provisional and merely a safe environment in which he could release and observe the ideas he had.[259] A similar interpretation of Plato's dialogues has been maintained throughout this much larger exploration of Plato's Socrates' textual utopianism. This interpretation emphasizes that each dialogue is not self-sufficient in its teaching and that when taken together, the dialogues are not the finished article. This was demonstrated in Gadamer's hermeneutics when he wrote that anything said "must be taken with an infinity of what is not said".[260] By this Gadamer meant that in addition to the words of the author, the implications of the effect on the reader and their subsequent interpretation should also be born in mind when interpreting a text.[261] It may therefore be understood that any text is provisional until it has been synchronised with the reader and the reader's context though it would be premature to say that this is where the interpretive action ends. Gadamer goes on to suggest that because the audience is a condition of the text's meaning, as the audience may evolve so the meaning of the text may evolve.[262] Plato's Socrates seems to acknowledge this state of perpetual flux when he argues against the perfect communicability of a single text[263] or his own self-deprecation at the end of many of the dialogues.[264] We also saw that the conflict between the characters and the changes they undergo as the dialogues advance add an additional crucial perspective.

It is debatable whether the dialogue between the Voice and the Botanist post-utopia at the end of *A Modern Utopia* may be branded 'Socratic'. Though the competitive interplay of two

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[259] Woik 2007: 129.
[260] Gadamer 2004: 464.
[261] Gadamer 2004: 291.
[262] Warnke, G. 1994:62.
[263] Plato *Republic*: 621d.
[264] See the endings of *Cratylus* and *Theaetetus* where continuation of the dialogue is hinted at once the daily business is finished.

opposing ideologies does take place, it is not the Socratic dialogue which is reproduced but what one might call the Gorgiatic dialogue. Like Plato's Socrates, Gorgias of Leontini also regarded the competition in the dialogue or '*agon*' as the deliverer of truth.[265] But unlike Plato's Socrates, Gorgias did not place truth on an abstract plain separated from our own existence. For Gorgias (the historical person as opposed to the Platonic character), truth lay in the consensus of an expert audience's support for the speaker's argument.[266] This is not to say that Gorgias was indifferent to truth but that, rather than being an autonomous entity independent of human cognition, truth actually lay in the ability of the experts in the field to convince and create consensus in the audience as to the virtue and truth of their argument.[267] In light of the polarity of argument in Wells' conversational novels and the stubborn commitment each interlocutor has to their own vision it may be said that it is the conviction of the interlocutor's audience which they seek rather than any personal open understanding of an esoteric truth. When held next to its Gorgiatic relative, the defining quality of the Socratic dialogue is that whereas for Gorgias two *logoi* are formulated and compellingly and competitively presented to the judges, the Socratic form instead seeks just one *logos* (since neither interlocutor offers the *logos* itself, only their notion of how to approach an understanding of it) and has no judge but the scrutiny of the dialectic. The Socratic dialogue seeks to dismantle the single *Logos* of Socrates' interlocutor to approach what is understood to be the eternal abstract ideal of truth distilled of any temporal human understanding. It was this effect which the mechanism of the *aporia* sought to assist. The confusion and self-doubt incubated in the interlocutor's confidence by the *aporia* in their interpretation of the given *logos* acted to subvert any ethical or intellectual complacency and so imparted a Socratically ironic perspective of all the assumed truths of society in the interlocutor. This form of irony

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[265] Consigny 2001: 74.
[266] Consigny 2001: 90.
[267] Consigny 2001: 89.

produced a keenly self-conscious perspective of the conditions of their social and ethical situation and in so doing, guided the mind to the abstract constancies in the Realm of Forms and its central tenet that Truth is only accessible through philosophising. Such a recalibration in the wider community seems to have been the aim of Socrates' philosophising, it would have been very difficult to accomplish its objective without the use of *aporia*.

The irony of the Socratic *aporia* is that it demonstrates the incompatibility of an ideal vision of *society* with any more people than the *single* individual who envisioned it. This is seen in *A Modern Utopia* when the second individual is introduced and the subsequent clash and re-emergence of the *aporia*. An apparent solution would be to maximise the participation and so the variance in the dialectic of the utopian visions in order that a great consensus might be reached. Again, the dynamics of character in *A Modern Utopia* prove this to be insufficient since the will of the mass of society may be painful to the individual, as seen in the effect on the Botanist of the decision to pair the Botanist's lover with the Botanist's rival in the governing class of Samurai.[268] This tension between the will of the masses and that of the individual also forms the foundational focus of *A Brave New World* in which the Savage's Christian ethics and Shakespearian romanticism are consistently brought into conflict with the morality of the World State.[269] Socrates also considers the tension between the will of society versus that of the individual when he concedes the paradox that no philosopher would wish to forego their inquiries in order to set up the Ideal State because of the possible price it would exact on their philosophic or 'Socratic' morality.[270]

In the light of these considerations, the interpretation of the State of *Republic* as a State of Mind is the most compelling interpretation of what might be understood to be Socrates'

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[269] Huxley, A. 1963: 154 where Lenina tries to seduce John the Savage and the subsequent clash between the very different cultures which they are both a part of.
[270] Plato *Republic*: 592a.

utopia. This interpretation would invest a different but altogether more contemporary relevance in the *aporia*. From this interpretation the *aporia* is argued to be the device Socrates uses to open the gates of the 'Good Place' to his interlocutors and guide them through. Rather than the Sun in the Cave Metaphor,[271] or the Guardians who govern his Polis - who are doomed to failure due to their inevitable moral degeneration[272] - it is the *aporia* which may be understood to be Socrates' 'Good Place', his *Eu*topia. With its associated self-doubt and the prospect of endless philosophic inquiry the State of Mind is prevented from reaching the levels of complacency which precipitate the fall of the Ideal Polis of *Republic*. From this personalised interpretation it would seem that subsequent 'institutionalised' Utopias have missed the *intro*spective emphasis entirely. As noted by Gadamer, the Greeks were the first to understand that "human experience of the world is linguistic".[273] By inducing *aporia* in his interlocutors and, by extension, in his readers, Plato's Socrates built the Utopia in this world without having to set a single brick. Taken in the context of Plato's Socrates, the quotation above may be argued to say that the Greeks defined themselves or their 'human experience' not by the physical world or monuments but how they *perceived* it. External experience is determined by psychological understanding; the pretensions of a 'Utopia' are destroyed if, as with Huxley's world citizens' singularly materialistic world-view, it is not understood as such. Thus the human physical experience is made redundant.

Aporia at once builds utopia within our mind and so simultaneously raises its facade everywhere the interlocutor chooses to look. Human experience of the 'real world' filtered through *aporia* becomes utopia. The *aporia* of Plato's dialogues may be argued to be the original and complete utopia whose fundamental success subsequently has been misinterpreted by later utopias. The reliance of Socrates' State of Mind on the idiosyncrasies

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[271] Plato *Republic*: 516a.
[272] Plato *Republic*: 545d.
[273] Gadamer 2004: 453.

of the Individual to fuel their *aporia* and the dialogue which takes place within it, carrying them to the next stage in its lifelong philosophising route is what has maintained the relevance of Plato's dialogues and lent them their "art of strengthening".[274] The ultimate degradation of Socrates' Ideal Polis[275] is due to the complacence and disregard of the rules originally set down by Socrates and his interlocutors. This disregard is precisely what the irony and confusion raised by the *aporia* neutralise. The effects of the *aproia* urge us to constantly scrutinise the reasons for our actions. It was in opposition to the thoughtlessness which might otherwise arise that Socrates formed his dialectic method.

Associating Utopia with the confusion of the *aporia* also associates it with the acknowledgement of personal ignorance which this reveals. The next logical step is that the association of Utopia with the ignorance exposed by the *aporia* is to associate it with, fundamentally, incompleteness. This evokes one of the acknowledged paradoxes (also discussed above) of Socrates' simultaneous emphasis on both harmony and discord. His *Apology* is, after all, a warning of the stagnant harmony which would follow Athens' swatting of its gadfly.[276] A harmony which would lead to complacency and so abandonment of the pursuit of philosophic attitude embodied in *Republic*'s Guardians. *Aporia* is Socrates' solution to the need to recognise the limits of one's own knowledge and the need to constantly philosophise, a drug to maintain happiness or an efficient centralised record of all citizens completely misses the point. *Aporia* teaches that it is the *way of thinking* and self-knowledge rather than laws and institutions that define the utopia.

Therefore *Aporia* as understood above is the very act of philosophising. Defining Philosophy as either problem *solving* or the intellectual effort made to *understand* a problem means that

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[274]Gadamer 2004: 361.
[275] Plato *Republic*: 545d.
[276] Plato *Apology*: 30e.

whichever way one turns, the existence of Philosophy rests on that of the problem. If the problem was ever removed then philosophy would cease. The possible model of complacency which could lead to its corruption is seen in the single minded pursuit of a very personal (read 'Wellsian') definition of pleasure without considering the possibility that the chosen course is incorrect and harmful. This removes the founding question of much of philosophy: how to live a good life? It is also reminiscent of the proto-community found at the beginning of *Republic* which Glaucon brands a "community of pigs".[277] Huxley's *Brave New World* is a caricature of this call for universal provision and concerns itself with the question of what form humanity would take once all its needs could be satisfied.[278] This sting of the gadfly which Socrates describes[279] is arguably the sensation of the *aporia,* the confusion and sudden uncertainty bought on by Socrates' questioning. This questioning and second guessing is intended to prevent us from passing the rest of our lives "in slumber".[280] Huxley paints a pitiful consequence in the character of Linda who spends the last of her days in drug induced euphoria, taking refuge from the utopia and utopians which she once considered herself a part of. In her closing hours Huxley describes her "vaguely and uncomprehendingly smiling. Her pale bloated face bore an expression of imbecile happiness".[281] It could be easily argued that Socrates anticipated the Athenian citizens succumbing to such a state should they choose to execute him.

These cannot have been the circumstances which Socrates (or Plato) aspired to. This therefore presents the understanding of the *Republic* and the philosophy of the dialogues as a whole as being one that promotes serenity of thought, clear of the distractions of competing passions. This in turn allows the person to view and consider the problems of the *Kosmos*

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[277] Plato *Republic*: 372d.
[278] Adorno 1994: 99.
[279] Plato *Apology*: 30e.
[280] Plato *Apology*: 31a.
[281] Huxely 1963: 158.

and to challenge and oppose others' understanding in the arena of dialectic. If the dialogues are thus interpreted then the conclusion is left that the 'Utopia' which arises from the dialogues is not a 'perfect' place (in the sense of complete and self-sufficient) but one where there is still more work to be done.

This dissertation brings together readings of the dialogues including perspectives of the presocratics, the school of hermeneutics, modern utopian texts and their corresponding perspectives of Socratic concepts. The aim has not been to isolate the most appropriate and effective of these readings but, rather, to emphasize the wider, synoptic context in which the dialogues must be read in order to understand what is meant by 'Platonic'. We have seen that 'Platonic' denotes not a single definitive dialogue, or all the dialogues, but the tradition which inspired them and the texts which hold them as precedent. However, by narrowing the focus to look at Socrates' metaphors, his class system, his myths, ideal statesmen and realm of the ideas we risk forgetting the dependence all this places on dramatic, philosophic and religious precedents. This dissertation has sought to establish the wider country in which Plato's dialogues may be understood to represent a single city with each of his subjects (text, statesmanship, love etc.) as single boroughs. Wells and Huxley helped to illustrate how, to continue the metaphor, the 'city plan' of Plato's dialogues still informs other cities with its dramatic use of character, its dialogic speech and its fundamental dialectic. Additionally, and importantly, these texts also demonstrate how subsequent experimentation with ideas Socrates raises in the dialogues can help inform and improve our understanding of the dialogues. The use of character and a form of dialectic in both these texts illustrate to the reader that even the dialectic itself must be subject to a dialectic to ensure it is sound.

Phaedrus mocks Socrates for being a "stranger"[282] in his own city, continuing "you don't go outside the walls at all".[283] By taking such a specialised interest as described above without acknowledging the wider system, boundaries are being drawn around our understanding of Socrates. Instead, it is philosophy's country in which he wanders, observing how virtuously the constitutions of other communities work, always with a glance over his shoulder at his own community. These wanderings would eventually lead him to the lawsuit brought by Meletus. By drawing boundaries around Socrates each time he describes a new idea the source of *aporia* is cut off and the reader is encouraged to believe that they understand what Socrates is saying. Gadamer states that to express meaning we "do not reflect beings but express a relation to the whole of being"[284] and this "whole of being" is the blow with which Socrates stuns his interlocutors, forcing them to confront their own partial understanding in the light of the magnitude of this whole. This dissertation has sought to reemphasize the nature of the *aporia* and restore what can be lost in reading Platonic scholarship.

 The *aporia* also holds the key to understanding the particular facet of Utopia in its ability to reinvent itself and endure. The passage of Philosophy is not a quest for the resolution of a problem but for a greater understanding of the problem and so a greater understanding of one's situation.[285] No matter what epoch a vision of Utopia is created in, it is fundamentally an effort by the individual to understand themselves in the contemporary society and how this understanding of the society will successfully communicate itself to posterity. These concerns are as immediate and common to each person in every generation and though asked uncountable times since two and a half millennia ago when Plato devoted his own thought to the utopian question, it has yielded different lessons and different conclusions. It is thanks to

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[282] Plato *Phaedrus*: 230c.
[283] Plato *Phaedrus*: 230d.
[284] Gadamer 2004: 465.
[285] Mittelstrass 1988:128.

Socrates' legacy of *aporia* that Utopia has been able to reinvent itself and it is only through a continued *aporia* that Utopia can continue to reinvent itself and stay with us. In summary, when reading a detailed dissection of a single dialogue or feature within a dialogue (e.g. the etymological arguments of *Cratylus* or the Couch metaphor in *Republic*) we must not forget that it functions as part of a whole. As it affects the other ideas in the corpus, so the other ideas affect it. For example, we cannot completely understand Socrates' treatment of the poets in *Republic* without reading *Phaedrus* and extracts from other dialogues. By leaving such an ideological ecosystem unacknowledged and by narrowing our vision to a single factor we run the risk of removing the *aporia* from its impetus. Without the *aporia*, the dialogues become static, we cease to question and Utopia decays.

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