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Premessa

Questo volume offre, per selezione suggerita dall’Executive Committee, 67 contributi, rivestiti dagli autori anche in base al sempre vivace dibattito, dei 120 proposti al X Simposio dell’International Plato Society. Dopo la decisione dell’Assemblea Generale nel 2007 presso il Trinity College di Dublino e dopo il IX Simposio del 2010 gestito con geometrico rigore da Shinro Kato e Noboru Notomi presso il Mita Campus dell’Università Keio di Tokyo, nel 2013 Pisa, fiera della ricca tradizione umanistica, con l’Alto Patronato del Presidente della Repubblica e con il sostegno dell’Università, fra il 15 e il 20 luglio ha salutato con l’immagine del Verziere, l’affresco monumentale nei colori di Buffalmacco, fra il Duomo e il Battistero, circa 200 studiosi giunti da ogni continente: un cammino già lungo e fertile, che ha origine lontana, in Messico, per loevole iniziativa nel 1986 di Conrado Eggers Lan, e che, con la fondazione in Italia per impresa diplomatica nel 1989 di Livio Rossetti dell’International Plato Society, ha favorito negli anni un confronto sui dialoghi di più grande rilievo, il Fedro e il Politico, il Timeo e il Crizia, la produzione aporetica, Carmide, Liside o Eutidemo, le Leggi, Gorgia e Menone, il Filebo, la Repubblica, nel generoso impegno di centri di ricerca non marginali per la storia della letteratura e della filosofia in Grecia. La nostra gratitudine va oggi ai protagonisti dell’International Plato Society, bravi tedofori, garanzia di successo fra Bristol e Granny, fra Toronto e Würzburg, con risultato felice che la ciecolta stampata sotto gli auspici dell’International Plato Society, presso l’Academia Verlag per militante cura della famiglia Richarz, rispecchia con palese continuità. Il futuro è già da tempo tracciato: Brasilia ci attende con il Fedone, per l’XI Simposio, e Parigi offre l’organizzazione per il Seista, con il XII Simposio, nel 2019. Così cresce la trama dell’International Plato Society, sempre più vasta e prestigiosa, in organico rapporto con la ricerca nel mondo e aperta, con dinamica mirabile, ai metodi più praticati o più innovativi per l’analisi del testo. La memoria purtroppo restituisce con dolore il profilo di Samuel Scollnicov, scomparso nel 2014, dopo le parole che ha donato qui: la cornice di Gerusalemme nella quale ha voluto con tenacia il VI Simposio del 2001 è fra le più nobili mai frequentate dall’International Plato Society. Ma le generazioni si alternano e Pisa, con matura convinzione, ha sollecitato la voce più giovane ricavandone 8 contributi da dissertazioni di dottorato, culmine di un entusiasmo radicato nel passato e terreno già solido per un sicuro sviluppo.

Tema per il X Simposio, con gioco di parole inevitabile quanto allusivo, è il Simposio, forse il più ammalante dei dialoghi nel corpus, enigmatico e sublime, senza dubbio scritto con l’ispirazione di un’abile Musa, capace di connettere letteratura e filosofia, con scarto vorticoso fra livelli espressivi per lo slancio più esplicito nella dimensione ideale. Pagine che guidano sulla scena le maschere della retorica e della medicina, della produzione comica e della produzione tragica, per trascenderle, con la definizione di eros, nel segno della filosofia: la doppia cornice, che richiama il passato in prospettiva critica e proietta nel testo le sfumature dell’eikos, apre un agone modulato con il rifiuto della fluitasia, con il ruolo di Erissimaco e il singhiozzo di Aristofane, scherzoso motivo per il ritardo nell’ordine annunciato, con la klimax nella riflessione su eros, da Fedro al racconto di Socrate, con la brusca irruzione di Alcibiade ubriaco per l’encumebro di Socrate, con il misterioso enclous, al termine, sulla produzione comica e sulla produzione tragica. Il panorama variegato della realtà intellettuale di un periodo ben preciso nasconde, per limpida trasfigurazione, un esame della letteratura gestito con la mimesis degli autori. Ma, fra l’assenza pensoso di Socrate nel prothyron e la
'Ερος προτρέπουν: Philosophy and Seduction in the Symposium

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The scope of this paper is to provide some literary background for Pausanias’ speech in the Symposium and, against this background, to reconsider the notion of 'Ερος προτρέπουν in the dialogue. A comparison of Pausanias’ speech with Antisthenes’ ethikēi suggests that one of Plato’s purposes in this dialogue was to question the protractive function of Eros as understood in Antisthenes.1 If we then compare Pausanias’ speech with that of Lysias in the Phaedrus, we will note certain parallelism which can be explained by the fact that in both pieces Plato alludes to Antisthenes. This, in turn, enables us to shed some light on Plato’s attitude to literary protheses and to the problem of voluntary slavery for the sake of virtue (διάλογον ευτύχειας) related to them.

1. 'Ερος φρονήσεως

In 1944, F. Lasserre suggested that proasik lógos éρωτικος, as we find them in the Symposium and in the Phaedrus, originated among the sophists.2 In his seminal Protreptik und Paramele bei Plato, K. Gaiser adopted his thesis on the sophist lógos éρωτικος and claimed that Lysias’ speech had as a "precondition" (Voraussetzung) the existence of the genre.3 Yet as a matter of fact, we don’t have to go that far: the only "precondition" here is the common opinion of ἔρωτα καὶ ἀγάπη παρόδοξος. We do actually find this opinion in the anonymous Dissoi Logoi.4 A chapter of this writing entitled Περὶ καλοῦ καὶ αἰσχροῦ contains the following statement: αὐτό καὶ γὰρ ἀντίθετο ἐρωτεύτω μὲν [χρήσεως] ἀγαπηθείς καλών, μὴ ἐρωτεύτω δὲ [καλῶν] ἀγαπηθέων. Thereafter, a set of "comparative" examples follows, many of them concerning sexual comportment.5 The conclusion of the section is: “disgraceful and seemly are really the same thing” (2.21).6 or πάντα καὶ μὴ δὲν καλά ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ δὲ ἀγαπηθέων. In other words, under certain circumstances, μὴ ἐρωτεύτω ἀγαπηθείς may also be καλών. It is this thesis which is defended by Lysias, but we find here a feature unparalleled in the Dissoi Logoi: Lysias mentions moral perfection among the reasons to yield to the non-lover (Phaedr. 233a-4).

Still, we know that the technical σοφίζειν of the sophists was absolutely unconcerned with the erotic disposition of the person being converted. His χάρις is of no interest to the teacher.7 On the contrary, in the earliest testimonies on Socrates his σοφίζειν is so to say sexually connoted. Thus, in Aristophanes’ Clouds, Socrates is presented on the one hand as the leader of the sophistic movement,8 and on the other hand as a sexually licentious person.9 From being historically reliable, this image testifies to the effect that Sophistic education was understood “in terms of eros” as late as in 423 BC.10 Polykrates developed some of the motifs already present in Aristophanes. After Polykrates’ accusation,11 there were attempts to reconsider the Sophistic eros ("corruption") in a more positive way. It is at this point where eros and moral protractive become closely associated. That is why we assume that Pausanias’ speech, as well as that of Lysias, is not a specimen of some generalized sophistic reasoning,12 but a response to one particular “sophist”,13 Antisthenes.

II. Monopoly on Seduction

An accurate reading of Pausanias’ speech reveals an enormous significance attributed to the χαρίζειν by the speaker. He is particularly and even annoyingly insistent that a youth should yield to a lover in order to gain moral excellence. The verb χαρίζειν in different forms is used 11 times by Pausanias.14 Throughout the speech, χαρίζειν is qualified by adverbs καλῶς or αἰσχρῶς; alternatively, a neutral adjective καλὸν (ἀγαπηθέων) is used. One might get the impression that Pausanias’ aim is to distinguish between two “modes” of Eros, and that this distinction proceeds from a clear idea of what the noble and the base is. However, Pausanias remarks that (180b5-181a6, hereinafter Fowler’s translation):

every action [...] as acted by itself (ὁποῖον ἐρότικον ἀγαπηθέων) is neither noble nor base (οὐκ ἀνέπτυκτον ἀγαπηθέων): when the doing of it is noble and right, the thing itself becomes noble; when wrong, it becomes base. So [...] Eros is not in every case noble [...], but only when he impels us to love in a noble manner (οὐ καλῶς προτρέπουσιν ἀγαπηθέων).

At first glance, this text is highly reminiscent of the Dissoi Logoi. In both cases, the focus is on noble and base actions; in both cases a “comparative cultural study” (cf. Symp. 182b1-3).

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1 This study (research grant No 15-01-0005) was supported by The National Research University–Higher School of Economics’ Academic Fund Program in 2015-2016. The financial support from the Government of the Russian Federation within the framework of the implementation of the 5-100 Programme Roadmap of the National Research University – Higher School of Economics is acknowledged.
2 In this paper, I cannot linger on parallels with Aeschines in the Symposium. On his notion of eros see Dittmar (1912); Ettlers (1966); Gaiser (1959); Kahn (1994); Kahn (1996).
3 Lasserre (1944).
4 Gaiser (1959), 66.
5 The unknown author of this writing adopted Protagoras’ methods; see Guthrie (1971), 316.
6 See, e.g., Diss. log. 2, 16 and 2, 12.
7 Tranl. by Sprague (1972).
is carried out in order to blur the difference between the two; finally, both texts deal with ἀρετής as a metaphor and are fallaciously reasoned. But Pausanias’ speech has one important novelty as compared to the Diasso logoi, namely the proreptic element.

Pausanias is not interested in defending the paradoxical thesis μὴ ἔρωτα ἐχει Σωκράτης καλόν; he aims at more: it is only noble to gratify a lover for the sake of wisdom and moral perfection (184a7-8, 185a5-8). The pursuit of virtue justifies, in his opinion, δοξάζειν ἔρωτας (184e2, 184e2-7: δοξάζονται). In full compliance with this view, Alcibiades wants to gratify (181d4: χαρίζεσθαι) Socrates in order to become better (181d2: βλέποντον [...] γενέσθαι).

In the Euthydemus, where Socrates invents his own proreptic, the interlocutors are also driven to the conclusion that there’s no disgrace in being a slave for the sake of wisdom (282b).17 M. Narey justly observes that in both dialogues the use of the verb προτρέπει recurs in a context where the point in question is the exceptional value of wisdom. Philosophical proreptic therefore involves what Narey labels as “monopoly on seduction”. In what follows, it will be shown that this conception stems from Antisthenes, to whom Plato playfully alludes in the Symposium.

III. Antisthenes: ἐξίστρατος ὁ σοφός

The extant fragments of Antisthenes abound in scornful remarks concerning “worldly” love and pleasure (SSR V A 122-123), and so on:

I would rather go mad than enjoy pleasure.

If I could catch Aphrodite I would shoot her with my bow, because she has corrupted so many excellent and beautiful women among us.18

At the same time, Antisthenes, as Kuhn puts it, has a much more positive conception of philosophical eros in the sense of intimate friendship among intellectuals in pursuit of virtue.19

According to Diogenes Laertius, Antisthenes maintained that “the wise man will be in love (ἔρωσθησθαι) for he is the only one who knows whom one should love (ὄραυτον)” (SSR V A 58 = Diog. Laer. VI 11) and that “it is the sage who is worthy of love (ἐξίστρατον τε τὸν σοφόν) and friend to one like himself” (SSR V A 99 = Diog. Laer. VI 105).

It is difficult to account for this inconsistency unless we assume that Antisthenes distinguished between the two Erotes: a vulgar one and a philosophical one, just like Pausanias does. This assumption is indirectly corroborated by a passage from Xenophon’s Symposium where Socrates draws a distinction between the vulgar and the heavenly Aphrodite (VIII 10).20

In the above cited fragment (ἐξίστρατος ὁ σοφός), Diogenes Laertius refers to the writing Herakles where Antisthenes showed ἡμῖν τὴν ἐρωτήματα ἄνωθεν. There, Antisthenes was depicted as one of Chiron’s students, along with Achilles. A passage from Ps.-Eratostenes says that Antisthenes’ Herakles came to the centaur Chiron ὁ ἐρωτής (SSR V A 92 = Ps.-Erat.

21 Rankin (1986)), 104-105, rejects Mullach’s conjecture ἐρωτής τοῦ χαρακτῆρος. He thinks that “eros” is used here with an ironical layer of intention to refer to its sexual meaning in addition to its “Socratic” and metaphorical sense of spiritual and intellectual frenzy for knowledge.

22 Preserved only in Sicn., Giamantoni cites the Latin translation of R. Mach (SSR V A 96). For different interpretations of this passage see Höstät (1948), 57 ff.; Luz (1996); Moles (2005). It would be tempting to assume, together with Dümmler (1891), 291, that with the image of the “sophist” Prometheus “die anspruchsvolle platoni sche Weisheit verspottet wurde” and that Antisthenes did not sympathize with Prometheus’ words. Cf. Giannantoni (1985), 285 ff. and Dedoza Cazza (1966), 96. However, Themistius is rather explicit in highlighting the positive meaning of Prometheus’ image in Antisthenes.

23 Rankin (1986), 105.

24 Dümmler (1891), 293.


26 Dümmler (1891), 293, also cites several passages from Xenophon’s Symmecicicus (12, 18-20) where the love for ἔρωτα is mentioned along with Chiron’s name. Cf. esp. Xenoph. Symm. 12. 20: ὅταν μὴ γάρ τοι ἔρωτα ἐν τῷ ἔρωτα νὰ ἐκείνου, ὅπως ἐκείνος ἐστι καλόν. It seems, however, that the passage in question may as well be influenced by the Phaedrus, but I leave this issue for another day.

27 Dümmler (1912), 90.

28 Dümmler (1891), 291.
and are going to remain faithful to him (Phaedr. 233c5-6, 234a6-7; διὰ παντὸς τοῦ βίου; Symp. 181d4-5: τὸν βίον ὑπάκουσαν συνενόμουν, 183e5-6: διὰ βίου) even when he is older (Phaedr. 234a1-3; Symp. 183c1-5), because they are attracted not to his body, but to his soul (Phaedr. 232e3-233a4; Symp. 181b1-6).

The ἐρωτικός in the two speeches also have much in common: they should yield (Phaedr. 233d5, 233e6: χαρίσσετοι) – one to the non-lover, the other to the lover – in order to gain moral excellence (Phaedr. 233e4-5: βελτιστοὶ ποιεῖται γενέσθαι; Symp. 185b2-3: ἀρετὴς γυγί ζοικε τοῦ βελτίων γενέσθαι, 184c4-7: ἀμέναν εὐδαιμονίαν). Both speakers try to convey a youth that is not in danger in gratifying a (non-)lover (Phaedr. 232a6-b3, 231e3-4; Symp. 182a1-2, 183a2, 183b1, 183b4, 183c7, 184e1, 184e1) and hold those possessed with “worldly” passion in contempt (Phaedr. 232e3-6, 233b1-6, 231d2-4: αὐτοῖς ὑποκλιότοι νοεῖν μαλάκας ἢ σαφρονεῖν).

Pausanias’ speech turns out to be a sort of sophistic “palinode” promised to Socrates in the Phaedrus. However, it makes little difference for Socrates in these dialogues whether a sophist praises or rebukes Eros. To take an image from the Phaedrus itself, Lysias and Pausanias think they are urging “to buy a horse and fight against the invaders”, but none of them has a slightest idea of what a horse is (260b). Their sophistic tendency to gratify the listeners makes them commit the same blunder that a youth, in their opinion, commits by choosing an improper object for his χάρις.

Socrates defends a radically different sort of rhetoric: one aimed at pleasing not the listeners, but gods themselves. At this point, the problem of χαρίσσετοι gains a broader meaning. As Socrates himself claims in the Phaedrus, a wise man will study rhetoric not (273c5-9):

for the sake of speaking and acting before men, but that he may be able to speak and to do everything, so far as possible, in a manner pleasing to the gods (θεοῖς κεφαλαμένη). For those who are wiser than we, Tisias, say that a man of sense should surely practice to please his fellow slaves (οἱ [...] ὑμοῦσας δὲς χαρίσσετοι μελέτην τὸν νοῦν ἔχουσαν), except as a secondary consideration, his good and noble masters.

This entails that both rhetorical and erotic χάρις must be turned (“converted”) not to the “fellow slaves”, however wise they might be, but to gods alone.36 Thus, dealing with ἔρως προτεραῖον, Plato offers his solution to the problem of ἑυσελεία ἐκοινόσιος and to the combination of eros and exhortation in speeches. The protreptic power of Socrates’ speeches, described by Alcibiades at the end of the dialogue (216a6, 222a), originates in gods themselves, is addressed to the gods and – eventually – converts his listeners to the divine.

P.S.: A Question of Chronology

Though Phaedrus is now believed to be a later dialogue,37 it has also been observed that certain motifs would be more appropriate in an earlier writing. Thus, Hackforth notes that some reminiscences of Isocrates’ speeches could hardly be detected by Plato’s readers some

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29 Rankin (1986), 127.
30 More parallels Pausanias – Antisthenes: 1) κολασεία (Symp. 183b1, 184c1-3; cf. Stob. Anthol. III 14, 19 = SSR V A 132; Plut. De vit. pud. 536b = SSR V A 94: “the youth should not yield – μὴ δεινὸν χήραν ἐγείρει – to the adulators”); 2) “vulgar” lovers and adulators keep the youth from χαρισματικὸς φίλος (Symp. 181b1-6, 181c4-6; cf. SSR V A 94, 152); 3) lovers have “indulgence from the gods” when they forsake vows, ὑποκλιότοι (Symp. 183b5-8, 183c1-5; cf. Porphyry. Schol. ad Od. VII 257 = SSR V A 188).
31 On the Protrepticus of Antisthenes, see Alleva (2013).
32 Bury (1909), xvi.
33 Inwood (1997); Lauand (2007).
34 Phaedr. 230c7, 233b6-2c, 234a3-4. On Antisthenes’ pragmatic attitude to love see Shichalin (1989), xvii.
35 Shichalin (1989) observes that Lysias’ speech bears many traits of Antisthenes’ teaching on eros. Thus, Lysias thinks that those in love suffer from an illness that makes them mad (cf. SSR V A 123: θεοὶ τὸν νοῦν κολασοῦν) and stresses that one should yield to those who would be grateful for that (Phaedr. 233d5-8: χάρις [...] εἰσόησιν, cf. Diog. Laert. VI 3 = SSR V A 56: καὶ χρῆ τοιοῦτον κληρονόμον γνωσαίναι τὰ χάριν ἐσοφαίναι).
36 This theoretical consideration is manifested at the practical level: Socrates’ speech in the Phaedrus is marked by the ostensible change of addressee.
37 Erler (2007), 216; Hackforth (1952), 7; Robin (1985), ix; De Vries (1969), 7. For an earlier date, see Moore (1973), Bury (1909), xvi.
15-20 years after these speeches were published. The so-called "theory of revision," suggested by H. Thesleff, enables us to assume that some parts of the dialogue (Lyssias' speech among them) were written before the Symposium. This fits in with the upshot of the present paper, but the question should be left open so far.

* 


Hölsä, R., Cynic Hero and Cynic King: Studies in the Cynic Conception of Man, Uppsala 1948 = Hölsä (1948).


38 Hackforth (1952), 34. De Vries (1969), 16, notes that "before arriving at the end of Phdr., the reader will have been struck by many allusions to Isocrates".

39 Thesleff (1981), 172. The theory of revision was endorsed by Shchikina (1989), Shchikina (2010), 20, and Usacheva (2010). Commenting on the latter paper, Tarrant (2010), 98, singles out several "stylistic clusters" in the Phaedrus and remarks: "This may owe something to Plato’s conscious changes in linguistic register, but is better explained in terms of chronology."