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SOCRATIC WISDOM IN THE
APOLOGY AND CHARMIDES

By

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To my dog Maximus: you couldn't make it and I'm so sorry. I bought you when no PhD programs would take me, and you were with me until the end of it all. I wish you could have lived a thousand years, you prince among pooches.

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ABSTRACT

Vlastos presents a paradox of Socratic ignorance: if Socrates disavows all knowledge, great and small, then how is he confident he has lived a moral life? I propose Socrates is wise not because of what secrets of the gods he knows, or even what things he does not know, but because he has second-order knowledge of what he knows and that he does not know. I will examine the *Apology* for two kinds of second-order “negative content” knowledge—Socrates does not suppose what he does not know, and Socrates is aware of not being wise in things great or small. I will then examine the *Charmides* for another kind of positive content of second-order Socratic knowledge in the form of *sōphrosunē*—Socrates knows what he himself does know.

The question of what comprises Socratic wisdom is an extant problem in the literature. Reeve issued a challenge: if awareness of ignorance is the negative content of Socratic wisdom, what is the positive content? In *Apology*, what Reeve terms “negative content” of Socratic wisdom a conflation of both negative content of first-order knowledge—Socrates does not suppose he knows what he does not—and positive content of second-order knowledge—Socrates is aware he is not wise in things great or small. In *Charmides*, the virtue *sōphrosunē* is second-order knowledge of what Socrates does know. This self-knowledge of what he knows is another answer to Reeve’s search for “positive” content of Socratic wisdom. The intersection of “negative” and “positive” content is Socratic wisdom. This therefore solves for Vlastos’ paradox of Socratic ignorance as well, because Socrates’ second-order knowledge of his own knowledge and lack thereof is distinct from knowledge of the gods, either great or small. Therefore Socrates can disavow godly wisdom, while at the same time assured that he has lived a

virtuous life, as he is the exemplar of virtuous self-knowledge (of what he knows and does not).

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I was in the craft store Joann Fabrics picking up some embroidery floss for a project when the checkout girl saw one of my tattoos—the Meno square—and asked what it was. When I told her it was a “Plato thing” she said “Oh, that ‘I know nothing’ guy, right?” Distinction between Plato and Socrates aside, this innocent checkout girl had unwittingly stumbled into the central issue of this dissertation, misquoted in such a way as if to emphasize the reason it is the subject of much discussion among scholars. It is Vlastos’ version of the “Socratic paradox” of knowledge: how can Socrates claim to know he lived virtuously, while disavowing wisdom of “large or small things?”¹

Vlastos (1991) claims that there is a paradox in Socrates disavowing awareness of wisdom in things great or small, while at the same time seeming certain he has lived a virtuous life.² Virtue is required to live a virtuous life, and Socrates argues that virtue is knowledge.³ From this foundation, scholars have pursued one line of inquiry into what knowledge Socrates possesses that allows him to be certain he has lived a virtuous life, while at the same time allowing him to, without contradiction, disavow awareness of wisdom of things great and small. Reeve (1989) divides Socratic wisdom into “positive” and “negative” halves.⁴ The Socratic elenchus, Reeve argues, illustrates what Socrates is not wise in, or the “negative” half of Socratic wisdom.⁵ This includes the specific content

¹ *Apology*, 21b4-5

² Vlastos, 1991, p. 3

³ Vlastos, 1991, p. 4

⁴ Reeve, 1989, p. 46

⁵ Reeve, 1989, p. 46

Socrates is aware of not having wisdom of, great and small. Reeve then leaves open the question what the “positive” half of Socratic wisdom might be;⁶ if Vlastos is correct and Socrates is confident he lived a virtuous life, and Reeve is correct that Socratic wisdom has both “negative” and “positive” aspects, then the “positive” content of Socratic wisdom might offer an insight into what knowledge, wisdom, disposition, &c. offers Socrates the assurance that he lived a virtuous life.

My project will focus on two things. First, it will recontextualize the “negative” content of Socratic wisdom Reeve has already defined in terms of second-order knowledge. Second, I will propose my own answer to the positive content of Socrates’ “human” wisdom, through the same recontextualization in terms of second-order knowledge I apply to Reeve’s “negative” content of Socratic wisdom. In the matter of the former problem, many scholars have tried to define in what things Socrates is not wise. One candidate is what things “great and small” Socrates is aware of having no wisdom of. Some scholars argue Socrates means knowledge of morality, or a kind of craft-knowledge of ethics.⁷ Others have defended proposals of what human wisdom Socrates has, and if it contains any “positive” content that would allow a resolution to Vlastos’ paradox.⁸

1.1 Vlastos’ Socratic Paradox

According to Vlastos, Socrates claims to have no knowledge.⁹ Socrates professes his total ignorance.¹⁰ Vlastos claims Socrates asserts this because Socrates says he has

⁶ Reeve, 1989, p. 55

⁷ Brickhouse and Smith, 1994, p. 38

⁸ Taran, 1985, p. 88-89

⁹ Vlastos, 1991, p. 3

¹⁰ Vlastos, 1991, p. 3

no wisdom, great or small.¹¹ But, paradoxically, Socrates is self-assured that he has lived a virtuous life.¹² As Socrates at other times claims that virtue is knowledge, for Socrates to live virtuously he must also possess knowledge.¹³ Therein lies what Vlastos calls the Socratic paradox: the ability to know that he lived virtuously, while professing to have no such knowledge of virtue.¹⁴

To understand this disavowal of knowledge, Vlastos argues, we must first determine if Socrates means what he says. Vlastos argues that irony, by definition, must be done with the intention to *not* deceive.¹⁵ The force of irony as a literary device relies on the audience taking the meaning to be the opposite of the spoken words, thus understanding the irony. Therefore, Vlastos argues, where Socrates appears to be stating a paradox, such as his disavowal of knowledge and teaching, he must instead be intending himself to be taken ironically.¹⁶ Specifically, Vlastos argues for a “complex ironic” reading of Socrates, that includes both taking what he says literally at some times and at other times not.¹⁷

1.3 Chapter 2: Literature Review

The next chapter will be a review of the literature relevant to both presenting the problem in detail and also relevant to proposing a solution to it. First I will do a close review of Reeve’s *An Essay on Plato’s Apology of Socrates*.¹⁸ Reeve takes as given that there are different things which Socrates knows and does not know.¹⁹ Reeve raises the

¹¹ *Apology*, 21b4-5

¹² Vlastos, 1991, p. 3

¹³ Vlastos, 1991, p. 4

¹⁴ Vlastos, 1991, p. 3

¹⁵ Vlastos, 1991, p. 22

¹⁶ Vlastos, 1991, p. 32

¹⁷ Vlastos, 1991, p. 114

¹⁸ Reeve, 1989.

¹⁹ Reeve, 1989, p. x

dual questions: what does Socrates know, and what does he not?²⁰ More specifically, what is the positive content of Socratic wisdom? Socrates' human wisdom comes from recognizing that he does not possess expertise in *virtue*.²¹ The is the specific negative content of Socratic wisdom: not that Socrates is a general skeptic, supposing he does not know *anything*; nor that Socrates knows he does not have expertise in pottery, or legislating, or any other specific *technē*; but rather that Socrates recognizes that he does not have expert *moral* knowledge.²² Reeve argues that the Socratic elenchus contains both positive and negative sides, which then result in positive and negative sides of human wisdom.²³

In addition to a complete description of Socratic wisdom, Reeve also argues that finding this positive content of what Socrates knows would go at least part of the way towards solving Vlastos' Socratic paradox.²⁴ Socrates claims to have no knowledge of virtue, but at times in his dialogues does assert things which could be considered moral knowledge: that it is wicked and shameful to do wrong;²⁵ to do harm wrongfully is a greater evil than to be harmed;²⁶ one should never return an injustice or harm to another human;²⁷ &c. Reeve argues that understanding what exactly Socrates knows that he knows (and is relevant to wisdom and not just craft-knowledge) would help resolve Vlastos' seeming paradox.²⁸ This is what I term "Reeve's challenge." The content of what Socrates

²⁰ Reeve, 1989, p. x-xi

²¹ Reeve, 1989, p. 35

²² Reeve, 1989, p. 35

²³ Reeve, 1989, p. 36

²⁴ Reeve 1989, p. 53

²⁵ *Apology*, 29b6

²⁶ *Gorgias*, 509a5

²⁷ *Crito*, 49c10-11

²⁸ Reeve, 1989, p. 53

positively “knows that” is necessary to the Oracle declaring none wiser than him is key to understanding the complete picture of Socratic wisdom.

There are several ways to respond to Reeve’s challenge. The first is a percussor to Reeve’s challenge, one which Reeve responds to himself. Vlastos offers a complex-ironic reading: although Socrates does disavow knowledge, the disavowal is a puzzle left for the reader to figure out.²⁹ Socrates’ reaction to the Oracle at Delphi declaring him the wisest man in Athens, could be read as a literal disavowal of knowledge or through the lens of Vlastos’ complex irony.³⁰ Socrates claims that he recognized himself as not wise at all, and was at a loss as to the god’s meaning.³¹ But one question scholars debate is whether or not Socrates truly thought of himself as unwise and was confused by the god declaring no one wiser than him. Vlastos argues that a straight-literal reading of this disavowal that “I am conscious that I am not at all wise, either much or little,”³² results in a paradox for the reader to solve later when coupled with Socrates’ self-assurance that he has led a virtuous life.³³

The next category of response to Reeve’s challenge involves multiple authors arguing that how Socrates uses the word “know” throughout Socratic texts is subject to variation depending on a number of factors. Context, irony, listener, &c. may all change in what way Socrates means for his audience to understand how uses the word “know.” For instance, Rappe (1995) suggests that Socrates refers to different kinds of knowledge at different times.³⁴ The politicians, poets, and craftsmen Socrates interrogates all have

²⁹ Vlastos, 1991, p. 22

³⁰ Vlastos, 1991, p. 31-32

³¹ *Apology*, 21b3-5

³² *Apology*, 21b4-5

³³ Vlastos, 1991, p. 3

³⁴ Rappe, 1995, p. 7

different kinds of knowledge from each other, and at the same time possess—or fail to possess—another different kind of knowledge, self-knowledge.³⁵ This answers the Socratic paradox by separating what Socrates knows and does not know into two different kinds of knowledge. Socrates can know via self-knowledge what he does not know, which is a different sort of knowledge, such as ethical knowledge.³⁶ Other scholars have drawn different distinctions between types of knowledge that Socrates knows and does not towards the same ends.³⁷ Determining what Socrates does and does not know, and also examining how much awareness Socrates has of his own knowledge sets, could clarify the Socratic paradox and how much Socrates means to be taken ironically or not. I will present the views of five different scholars on this: Vlastos, Brickhouse and Smith, Rappe, and King.

A third approach scholars offer to Vlastos' Socratic paradox and Reeve's challenge is to shift the focus from the content of the knowledge Socrates avows or disavows and instead focus the self-reflexive aspect of Socrates' knowledge or ignorance.³⁸ Nightingale (2010) posits that it is possible to read Socrates' disavowal of knowledge so that it is not self-contradictory, without taking Socrates to be speaking ironically about his own knowledge.³⁹ The solution, she argues, is that Socrates could have self-referential awareness of his own epistemic state which is non-propositional, and thus separable from the ethical knowledge which he disavows.⁴⁰ This is similar to the second-order knowledge distinction I will make, but there are important ways it is distinct as well.

³⁵ Rappe, 1995, p. 7

³⁶ Rappe, 1995, p. 6-7

³⁷ Wolfsdorf, 2004, "Socrates' Avowals of Knowledge"

³⁸ Nightingale, 2010, p. 10

³⁹ Nightingale, 2010, p. 9

⁴⁰ Nightingale, 2010, p. 12-13

Finally, there is the category of response to Reeve's challenge which proposes there *is* not positive content to Socratic wisdom. Socrates is famous for his disavowal of knowledge, and that is why he is wise. Taran (1985) and others argue that Socrates does not possess any knowledge with what Reeve would term "positive content." Therefore, they argue, the answer to Reeve's challenge is that Socratic wisdom is wholly negative: he has a unique ignorance that other Athenians do not, but no positive knowledge. Socrates, in not knowing how to make a vase, does not think he can make a vase. By contrast, the Athenians who hold false beliefs about their ignorance, such that they could make a beautiful vase even though they have never thrown clay before, are in an inferior position to Socrates' ignorance. But both states of belief, Socrates' and the ignorant Athenian, fall under Reeve's "negative content" characterization.

With these four different categories of responses to Reeve's challenge—complex-ironic reading, different meanings of "know," reading, "awareness" positive content, and no positive content—I will then be able to argue for my response: that second-order knowledge, particularly knowledge of what one knows, is the positive content of Socratic wisdom.

1.4 Chapter 3: *Apology*

The third chapter of this dissertation will focus on Plato's *Apology* and the "negative content" of Socratic wisdom, as Reeve terms it. According to Reeve, this "negative content" of Socratic wisdom is Socrates' knowledge that he does not know. My argument relies on the recontextualization of this "negative content" as second-order knowledge that Socrates does not know. "Second-order" knowledge here refers to knowledge-of-knowledge, as opposed to "first-order" knowledge, which is knowledge of some thing or

skill. This is not to disagree with Reeve's analysis of Socratic wisdom including knowledge of Socrates' own lack of knowledge, but simply to place it in terms of first- and second-order knowledge so that later I will be able to use this framing to describe the "positive content" of Socratic wisdom. The chapter will begin with a definition of first- and second-order knowledge. I will then demonstrate exhaustively that Socrates recognizes this distinction between first- and second-order knowledge. In order to do this I will first look at secondary literature that argues this point. I then will look at the *Apology* in-depth, particularly those words Socrates uses to identify first-order knowledge such as *dokeo*, *oida*, and *oiomai*. I will then demonstrate that when Socrates speaks about second-order knowledge, he uses a pairing of *oiomai* and *oida*, or *sunoida*, rather than his traditional first-order construction. This, along with other scholars' arguments, should show that Socrates draws a distinction between first- and second-order knowledge.

The purpose of this is to recontextualize Reeve's "negative content" of Socratic wisdom as second-order knowledge that Socrates does not know. Moving forward, the next task will be to use this new context of second-order knowledge of what Socrates knows to locate the "positive content" of Socratic wisdom from Reeve's challenge. Once that is discovered, we will have a complete picture of Socratic wisdom and therefore can resolve Vlastos' version of the Socratic paradox.

1.5 Chapter 4: *Charmides*

The *Charmides* is where I will argue the "positive content" in answer to Reeve's challenge can be found. It is a dialogue examining the virtue *sōphrosunē*—often defined as modesty, shame, chastity, self-knowledge, and, in the case of this dialogue, knowledge-of... something. What exactly that "something" is is the subject of the second

half of the dialogue. To begin this chapter, I will give a brief history of the word, largely with the help of North (1966) and her unparalleled examination of the word in *Sophrosyne: Self-Knowledge and Self-Restraint in Greek Literature*. This etymological and cultural analysis of the history of the word will help to ground the discussion in the *Charmides* and the definitions suggested, and not, throughout the dialogue. Additionally, I will argue that North's historical analysis of *sōphrosunē* lends credence to my thesis that *sōphrosunē* should be understood as a type of knowledge, even as it is also partially a virtue of self-control.

I will then give a careful recapitulation of the major definitions of *sōphrosunē* proposed in the *Charmides*, as well as the arguments for and against them, and an analysis of how the dialogue ends. Then I will recapitulate some of the major theories of these definitions of *sōphrosunē* in the secondary literature. This will include first the argument that Socrates means for the true definition of *sōphrosunē* to be implicit to the dialogue, not explicit. Next, that *sōphrosunē* is mainly self-knowledge, and that the reflexive quality of the virtue is its core quality. Finally, I will examine the arguments for *sōphrosunē* as knowledge-of-knowledge in the *Charmides*.

From there, I will argue that the correct way to understand *sōphrosunē* is as one half of Socratic wisdom, particularly Reeve's missing "positive content." If *sōphrosunē* is self-knowledge, which I will prove by demonstrating how *sōphrosunē* understood as "chastity" is not the focus of the dialogue, but instead is reflexive self-knowledge. *Sōphrosunē* is a specific type of self-knowledge: the knowledge of what one knows. This is why it is important to recontextualize Reeve's "negative content" of Socratic wisdom as

second-order knowledge, because it allows us to understand *sōphrosunē* as the missing “positive content” half.

In conclusion, this will answer Reeve’s challenge. The “positive content” of Socratic wisdom is Socrates’ virtue of *sōphrosunē*: he has the self-knowledge of knowing what he knows. The two different types of knowledge, the knowledge that Socrates does not know and the knowledge of what he does know, combined together creates a complete picture of Socratic wisdom. This resolves Vlastos’ version of the Socratic paradox, as defining Socratic wisdom this way does not violate his disavowal of knowledge. Socrates disavows godly knowledge because he is wise in only second-order knowledge of his own knowledge. The subject of his wisdom, then, is himself, not anything divine.

1.6 Chapter 5: Application

The successful definition of both positive and negative content of Socratic wisdom in terms of first- and second-order knowledge grants Socratic wisdom more wide-ranging applications. Identifying a *sōphron* person is a key component in identifying expertise. The distinction Socrates draws between knowledge and wisdom is in some ways a similar difference between a subject-matter expert and an amateur: an expert knows what she knows, whereas an amateur does not have the same second-order knowledge. However, this is merely one component of Socratic wisdom. Socratic humility—the restraint not to presume to know what he does not—is the other key part to Socratic wisdom. This component may be lacking amongst subject-matter experts, though it would not be if those subject-matter experts were also *sōphron*. These distinctions and a more in-depth discussion of subject-matter expertise are all ways in which Socratic wisdom, both the positive and negative aspects of it, has critical applications even today.

1.7 Chapter 6: Conclusion

In my concluding remarks for this dissertation I will demonstrate that I have completed two tasks. The first is that I will have answered Reeve's challenge. The positive content of Socratic wisdom which Reeve left as an open problem is second-order self-knowledge. Socrates demonstrates this sort of wisdom in the *Charmides* as a *sōphron* man. My recontextualization of Socratic ignorance in the *Apology* as second-order knowledge that he does not know aids in the process of understanding that the positive content of Socratic wisdom would be the second-order knowledge of what Socrates does know.

The second task I will have completed is settling Vlastos' version of the paradox of Socratic ignorance. Vlastos describes his version of the paradox of Socratic ignorance as the incompatibility of two facts: that Socrates disavows knowledge of anything, great or small, and that Socrates is sure he has lived a virtuous life. With my new understanding of Socratic wisdom as a combination of second-order knowledge that one does not know and what one does know, Vlastos' paradox will be resolved. Socrates can disavow godly knowledge because he does not know what the gods know. But at the same time, Socrates lives a virtuous life by embodying the virtue *sōphrosunē* in knowing himself: he knows what he knows, does not suppose to know what he does not, and recognizes what he does not know.

1.8 Significance of *Apology* and *Charmides*

Both the *Charmides* and the *Apology* also deal with self-knowledge, in different ways. In the *Charmides* "knowing oneself"⁴¹ and "knowledge of itself and of the other

⁴¹ *Charmides*, 165b4, "gignōskein auton"

knowledges”⁴² are offered as two potential definitions of *sōphrosunē*. Although the *Apology* is not concerned with defining any word in particular, Socrates states that he does not suppose himself to know whatever he does not know.⁴³ Both dialogues mention the Delphic edict ‘Know thyself,’ both in relation to Socrates and to self-knowledge.⁴⁴ In the *Charmides* Socrates attempts to elicit self-knowledge from the titular character as to whether he possesses *sōphrosunē*.⁴⁵

Both the *Charmides* and the *Apology* are traditionally considered “early” Socratic works.⁴⁶ As the goal of this dissertation is to develop a consistent understanding of Socratic self-knowledge, earlier Platonic works are a better resource for understanding what Socrates thought than middle or late works, which are more mixed with Platonic philosophy. The *Apology* is considered an early text for many reasons, including that it is largely a description of a historical event, has other contemporaneous sources such as by Xenophon, and Socrates engages in his Socratic method. Through comparison to other contemporary sources, Plato’s *Apology* appears to give an insight into Socrates’ professed beliefs at the time of his trial. The *Charmides* is less a specific event in time than the *Apology* but still bears all the hallmarks of an early dialogue: the subject-matter is a single philosophical concept “*sōphrosunē*,” it ends aporetically without the characters agreeing on a definition of *sōphrosunē*, Socrates employs his Socratic method throughout, it utilizes historical characters like Plato’s uncle and cousin, Critias and Charmides, and it is one of the shorter Platonic dialogues.⁴⁷ Together these dialogues

⁴² *Charmides*, 166e5-6, “epistēmōn autē te autēs estin kai tōn allōn epistēmōn epistēmē”

⁴³ *Apology*, 21d5

⁴⁴ Rappe, 1995, p. 5-6

⁴⁵ Rappe, 1995, p. 5-6

⁴⁶ O’Meara, Annas, 1985; North, 1947; King 2008; Mackenzie, 1988; Vlastos, 1991; Nightingale, 2010; Reeve, 1989; &c. &c.

⁴⁷ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 178

should represent a consistent perspective on the philosophical character of Socrates, specifically on the topic of his own wisdom and what he professes to know or not.

1.9 Conclusion

My dissertation will answer Vlastos' Socratic paradox by proposing a new paradigm for understanding self-knowledge in *Apology* and *Charmides*. This will also result in a way of answering Reeve's Challenge and offering an additional candidate for the positive content of Socratic wisdom. I will argue first in Chapter 3, looking closely at the *Apology*, that Socrates has an understanding of first- versus second-order knowledge. Then I will argue that Reeve conflates one type of Socratic positive wisdom present in the *Apology* with the "negative" content of Socratic wisdom. Next I will closely examine the *Charmides* in Chapter 4, including a brief history of *sōphrosunē* in the Classical world and the argument for *sōphrosunē* as self-knowledge in the *Charmides*. I will then demonstrate how Socratic wisdom is the intersection of negative self-knowledge that we see demonstrated in the *Apology* and the positive self-knowledge of *sōphrosunē* that we see in the *Charmides*. The "negative content" of Socratic wisdom is both the refusal to "suppose" to know what one does not as well as the second-order knowledge that one does not know; the "positive content" of Socratic wisdom is the second-order self-knowledge of what one knows. I will argue the latter of these is *sōphrosunē*. Utilizing this understanding of Socratic knowledge, I will be able to answer Reeve's challenge as well as resolve Vlastos' version of the Socratic paradox.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature on Socratic second-order knowledge is extensive. When considering the full scope of the potential literature on the topic, it is important to find a way to narrow the focus. I will focus on answering Vlastos' paradox: how can Socrates both disavow ethical wisdom, yet seem assured that he has lived an ethical life?⁴⁸ Offering one solution, Reeve states that Socrates' declaration "I know myself to be wise in neither a great nor a small way" is negative.⁴⁹ I will argue in Chapter 3 that this is only a partial understanding of the declaration. Reeve is partly correct, that Socratic awareness that he does not know anything fine and good is negative. But this is distinct from Socrates "not supposing" himself to know something, which is a different sort of negative content of knowledge. This distinction will be clarified further in Chapter 3. The two dialogues that this dissertation focuses on to answer these problems are the *Apology* and *Charmides*. Therefore, this chapter focuses on literature which responds to a) Vlastos' Paradox, and b) uses the *Apology* or *Charmides* to do so.

2.2 Reeve's Challenge

Socrates' awareness of his knowledge and lack-of knowledge is central to Vlastos' Socratic paradox. Reeve isolates specific questions which, if answered, could aid in understanding Socratic wisdom. While Socrates disclaims wisdom of all things, great and

⁴⁸ Vlastos, 1991, p. 22

⁴⁹ Reeve, 1989, p. 46

small, there are many things Socrates does seem to know.⁵⁰ What remains of Socratic wisdom, then, is to discover what Socrates does know—and, more specifically, what he does know which makes no person wiser than he. First Reeve divides Socrates' elenctic exploration into three stages: examining himself and others before the Oracle proclaims no man wiser than Socrates, examining those with a reputation for wisdom to uncover the Oracle's meaning, and finally having deciphered the god's mission for him and attempting to purge his fellow citizens of their hubristic estimations of their own wisdom.⁵¹ It is through these three stages that Reeve defines the difference between "positive" and "negative" epistemic outcomes.⁵² The first stage is negative: Socrates ends it aware that he is wise in neither a great nor a small way.⁵³ The second and third stages are mixed. Negative epistemic outcomes include Socrates demonstrating to people who supposed themselves to be wise that they, in fact, are not; and attempting to "purge" Socrates' fellow Athenians of their epistemic hubris in supposing they have expertise in craft-knowledge of virtue.⁵⁴ The positive epistemic outcomes are also mixed through the second and third stages of elenctic inquiry. First Socrates believes himself to have deciphered the Oracle's meaning in proclaiming no man wiser than he, by becoming aware that he possesses "human wisdom."⁵⁵ Second, Socrates' aim of what Reeve dubs the third stage of his elenctic inquiries is to encourage his fellow citizens to "care about wisdom, truth and the best possible state of their psyche more than about money and honor."⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Reeve, 1989, p. x

⁵¹ Reeve, 1989, p. 45

⁵² Reeve, 1989, p. 46

⁵³ Reeve, 1989, p. 46

⁵⁴ Reeve, 1989, p. 46

⁵⁵ Reeve, 1989, p. 46

⁵⁶ Reeve, 1989, p. 46

The “human wisdom” that Socrates possesses Reeve defines, in one part, as recognizing a lack of knowledge. Specifically, the lack of expert knowledge in virtue.⁵⁷ But this part of human wisdom Reeve argues is only the negative aspect of it. An individual who is highly skeptical or of below-average intelligence could also have this awareness, that she lacks expert knowledge in virtue.⁵⁸ This would not make her as wise as Socrates. According to Reeve, what sets Socrates apart is that there must also be a “positive” aspect to his human wisdom. Not only is Socrates aware that he lacks expert knowledge in virtue, but he also holds some unique positive convictions that make no man wiser than he.⁵⁹

Reeve states that there are three stages to Socratic elenctic inquiry.⁶⁰ In the first stage, Socratic knowledge is primarily negative content: he examines himself and others and finds himself to have no knowledge of note.⁶¹ The next two stages, Reeve argues, contain both negative and positive content. In the second stage of elenctic inquiry, after the Oracle at Delphi has rendered her proclamation, Socrates undertakes to unravel the riddle of the prophecy. He finds wise people know nothing of note either; this is the negative content of this stage. The positive content, Reeve argues, is that Socrates discovers what the Oracle means and realizes he possesses human wisdom.⁶² In the third stage of enquiry, Socrates uses the elenchus to disabuse others of their most blameworthy ignorance; this is the negative content of this stage. For the positive, Reeve articulates two pieces of knowledge. The first is that Socrates is curing others of their

⁵⁷ Reeve, 1989, p. 35

⁵⁸ Reeve, 1989, p. 35

⁵⁹ Reeve, 1989, p. 35

⁶⁰ Reeve, 1989, p. 45

⁶¹ Reeve, 1989, p. 45

⁶² Reeve, 1989, p. 45

hubris. The second is Socrates' attempts to compel others to care about wisdom and truth.⁶³

Neither of the "knowledge" Reeve presents as positive content in stage three of Socratic inquiry is particularly persuasive as "positive" content. "Caring about" is not knowledge, nor is "no longer having hubris." The latter could be the *result* of positive knowledge, but it itself is not—a psychological humiliation can disabuse someone of hubris without teaching him anything new. As for the second stage of Socratic inquiry, where Reeve articulates the positive content that Socrates realizes he possesses "human wisdom," Reeve had previously articulated "human wisdom" itself as having two sides, positive and negative.⁶⁴ The negative content of human wisdom is the disabuse of the hubris of thinking one has ethical knowledge.⁶⁵ Reeve defining this as negative content here underscores why what he terms the positive content of stage three as controversial, at the least. The positive side of human wisdom Reeve defines as those ethical propositions which Socrates holds as a nonexpert and believes most normal humans to hold with him. But this too can only be considered "positive content" of knowledge by the most generous interpretation of the word "knowledge," as Reeve characterizes it not as knowledge but more on the level of a true belief.

2.3 Responses to Reeve's Challenge

Reeve's challenge arises from the long-standing issue of the Socratic paradox. If Socrates disavows wisdom of anything great and small, but yet finds himself forced to agree with the Oracle that there is no man wiser, then what does Socratic wisdom consist

⁶³ Reeve, 1989, p. 45

⁶⁴ Reeve, 1989, p. 36

⁶⁵ Reeve, 1989, p. 39

of? Reeve argues that the negative content of Socratic wisdom is his awareness of what he does not know.⁶⁶ But, Reeve contends, there must also be a positive side to the human wisdom that Socrates claims to possess.⁶⁷ Reeve challenges scholars to determine what Socrates knows, in contrast to determining what he does not.⁶⁸ He proposes that the Socratic paradox could be resolved by determining these two pieces of information.⁶⁹ Reeve takes the content of Socratic ignorance as well-established already.⁷⁰ The key component of the negative aspect of Socratic wisdom Reeve understands as Socrates recognizing that he is not an expert in virtue.⁷¹

There are four main ways to respond to Reeve's challenge. The first is a mixture of ironic and non-ironic readings: when Socrates states he is conscious of being wise about things neither great nor small,⁷² he speaks ironically in some ways and non-ironically in others.⁷³ This combination of ironic and non-ironic readings is also known as Vlastos' complex-ironic reading.⁷⁴ The second way to respond to Reeve's challenge is to understand Socrates as using the word "know" to mean different things depending on the surrounding context, but without an appeal to irony or sincerity. There is some variety in ways to understand different uses of the word "know." One is to understand Socratic knowledge as specifically "self-reflexive awareness."⁷⁵ Another is to argue that in proclaiming his ignorance, Socrates makes no claims to a knowledge set with "positive

⁶⁶ Reeve, 1989, p. 35

⁶⁷ Reeve, 1989, p. 37

⁶⁸ Reeve, 1989, p. x-xi

⁶⁹ Reeve, 1989, p. 53

⁷⁰ Reeve, 1989, p. 35

⁷¹ Reeve, 1989, p. 35

⁷² *Apology*, 21b5

⁷³ Vlastos, 1991, p. 31

⁷⁴ Vlastos, 1991, p. 21

⁷⁵ Nightingale, 2010, p. 10-11

content,” but instead only claims to have a different, superior type of ignorance from the other Athenians he questions.⁷⁶

2.3.1 Complex-Ironic Reading

Vlastos suggests a “complex ironic” reading of Socrates in order to make sense of the Socratic paradox. Irony, as typically understood, is simply saying the opposite of the intended meaning, such as commenting “nice weather today” on a rainy and overcast day.⁷⁷ It is clear from context and often tone that the speaker means the opposite of the stated words, and that the weather is not nice. “Complex irony” is what Vlastos terms a more complicated ironic statement, where the speaker is saying the opposite of her meaning, but that truthful meaning is perhaps yet obscured. This can be used for humor, mockery, or to present a “riddle” to the audience.⁷⁸ For instance, when Socrates calls Meletus a “good and patriotic” man shortly before accusing that same man of doing a grave injustice by bringing Socrates to trial, the audience is perhaps prompted to wonder in what ways Meletus is acting *unpatriotically* or *unvirtuously* by using the Athenian law courts to levy such spurious charges against Socrates, a man on a godly mission to improve Athens.⁷⁹ But even more than being a riddle, a complex ironic statement is often meant to be true in one sense and false in another—thus, creating an apparent paradox that requires attention to solve.⁸⁰ Meletus claims he is doing a service to the citizenry of Athens: silencing Socrates the gadfly. But Socrates, by stating Meletus is good and patriotic at a time when Socrates could hardly think these were true virtues of the man,

⁷⁶ Taran, 1985, p. 88

⁷⁷ Vlastos, 1991, p. 21

⁷⁸ Vlastos, 1991, p. 22

⁷⁹ *Apology*, 24b5

⁸⁰ Vlastos, 1991, p. 31

calls attention to them and prompts the audience to puzzle over Meletus' goodness and patriotism.

Vlastos gives the example of Socrates praising his own, objectively ugly, features as "beautiful" in Xenophon's *Symposium*. Socrates' snub nose with oversized nostrils is known to his friends and all of history to be aesthetically "ugly."⁸¹ Yet, when Socrates praises its beauty, he is not being simply ironic or sarcastic: instead, he means for his fellow dinner party guests to understand that there is a secondary, complex-ironic meaning behind this. His nose, though aesthetically ugly, performs its function as a nose exceptionally well. Its utility is what makes it beautiful.⁸²

It is with the same understanding of complex irony that one should read Socrates' disavowal of knowledge, argues Vlastos.⁸³ When Socrates claims that he has no knowledge of either things great or small, Vlastos urges us to take him seriously and believe what he says.⁸⁴ At the same time, Socrates must be speaking ironically: the paradoxical nature of his ability to live a virtuous life becomes incomprehensible otherwise.⁸⁵ In particular Vlastos argues that this complex ironic reading hinges on the way the reader understands the word "knowledge": Socrates can foreswear knowledge in the moral domain; but at the same time hold true beliefs about morality justified via his elenctic method.⁸⁶

Vlastos' complex-ironic reading of Socrates can be reframed in the context of Reeve's challenge. Vlastos proposes a resolution to the Socratic paradox brought on by

⁸¹ Vlastos, 1991, p. 31

⁸² Vlastos, 1991, p. 31

⁸³ Vlastos, 1991, p. 32

⁸⁴ Vlastos, 1991, p. 32

⁸⁵ Vlastos, 1991, p. 32

⁸⁶ Vlastos, 1991, p. 32

his disavowal of knowledge: when Socrates is aware he is not wise in anything, great or small,⁸⁷ Socrates is speaking with complex irony. A straight irony would be that Socrates *is* wise in things, great and small, but Vlastos does not believe Socrates speaks with false humility or plain irony here.⁸⁸ Instead, Socrates is presenting his audience with a riddle: there is no man wiser than him, yet he is not wise in anything, great or small.⁸⁹

Vlastos proposes an answer to this riddle: that Socrates makes dual use of his knowledge words.⁹⁰ In this way, Socrates is able to truthfully claim on the one hand that he knows absolutely nothing, and on the other that he does have moral knowledge—enough to rest assured that he has lived a virtuous life.⁹¹ Vlastos becomes the first philosopher of many to propose at least a dual reading of knowledge-words in the Socratic dialogues as a solution to the Socratic paradox, guided specifically by the criterion of ironic versus sincere Socratic intention. When Socrates states that he “knows” nothing, he means it in the sense of strong epistemic certainty. Socrates lacks a certain justified true belief about anything. But on the other hand, when Socrates states that he “knows” himself to be acting ethically, he means this in a weaker sense, justified not infallibly, but instead via the elenctic method.⁹² Rather than infallibly proven, what Vlastos calls “elenctic knowledge” is proven consistent within the elenchus, but only if the starting premises hold true as well. Vlastos’ answer also serves as a precursor answer to Reeve’s challenge. Socrates does have positive “knowledge,” it is just of a different sort from the “knowledge” which he disavows having. This strategy of understanding Socrates’ “know”

⁸⁷ *Apology*, 21b5

⁸⁸ Vlastos, 1991, p. 32

⁸⁹ Vlastos, 1991, p. 32

⁹⁰ Vlastos, 1985, p. 12

⁹¹ Vlastos, 1985, p. 12

⁹² Vlastos, 1985, p. 18

in two different ways is a common one. But it is not a direct answer to Reeve's challenge, because it still leaves obfuscated exactly what that positive content of Socratic knowledge might be—what true beliefs does Socrates justify via elenchus? For this, several other scholars propose to interpret the word “know” in different ways in the early Socratic dialogues, rather than merely relying on Socratic irony or sincerity as the criterion for when to switch meanings of “know.”

2.3.2 Different meanings of “know” reading

In addition to Vlastos, other scholars have tried to answer Reeve's challenge by focusing on *epistēme* and the different ways Socrates uses it throughout the early dialogues.⁹³⁹⁴ I will discuss two notable methodologies which scholars use for this: first from Brickhouse and Smith, then Rappe. Both serve as different ways of solving the Socratic paradox and answering Reeve's challenge: if there are multiple ways to use the word “know”, perhaps Socrates is disavowing some ways but not others, and perhaps some of the others could be contenders for the “positive content” of Socratic knowledge Reeve seeks.

Similarly to Vlastos, Brickhouse and Smith propose two ways of understanding “knowledge” in the Socratic dialogues as a means to resolve the Socratic paradox. They argue that Socrates disavows godly wisdom, in particular the craft-skill of making moral judgements.⁹⁵ While Socrates at times claims to know some moral truths, such as suffering evil is better than doing evil, he disavows knowing *how* that is true.⁹⁶ This distinction between the ability to give an account of moral wisdom and merely know

⁹³ Vlastos, 1991; Rappe, 1995; Brickhouse and Smith, 2004; et al.

⁹⁴ Vlastos, 1991, p. 32

⁹⁵ Brickhouse and Smith, 2004, p. 101

⁹⁶ Brickhouse and Smith, 1994, p. 40

propositional moral facts is what Brickhouse and Smith argue is the source of Socrates' disavowal of wisdom, and their resolution to the Socratic paradox.⁹⁷

The elenchus, according to Brickhouse and Smith, is not a craft-skill like the artisans Socrates examines possess.⁹⁸ The craftsmen have unique wisdom in that they are able to not only create a beautiful vase, but have the accounting of how they created the beautiful vase and are able to consistently produce the desired result.⁹⁹ Having expertise in any area of knowledge is to have this accounting-of one's craft knowledge.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, moral knowledge to Socrates is also a craft-knowledge, but on the subject of virtue.¹⁰¹ Someone with expertise in moral knowledge would be able to live perfectly virtuously, confident that she would make the correct moral decision in all cases.¹⁰² Socrates has never met another human with this moral expertise, and relegates it to "godly knowledge."¹⁰³ This does not preclude Socrates from having some moral knowledge of a *different* sort, which is how Brickhouse and Smith argue that Socrates avoids committing a contradiction in his disavowal.

What the elenchus grants Socrates then is not craft-knowledge of virtue but instead scattered moral propositional knowledge, which Socrates deems only a small thing.¹⁰⁴ The process by which Socrates achieves these small moral facts follows these steps: Socrates examines interlocutors on various moral stances, such as "it is better to do evil than suffer it."¹⁰⁵ Then, Socrates repeatedly finds that interlocutors which hold this

⁹⁷ Brickhouse and Smith, 1994, p. 37, 40

⁹⁸ Brickhouse and Smith, 1994, p. 10

⁹⁹ Brickhouse and Smith, 1994, p. 38

¹⁰⁰ Brickhouse and Smith, 1994, p. 38

¹⁰¹ Brickhouse and Smith, 1994, p. 37

¹⁰² Brickhouse and Smith, 1994, p. 36

¹⁰³ Brickhouse and Smith, 2004, p. 102

¹⁰⁴ Brickhouse and Smith, 1994, p. 37

¹⁰⁵ *Gorgias*, 474c6-7

position wind up in contradictions or aporetic states. Since this proposition “it is better to do evil than suffer it” repeatedly proves to be indefensible, Socrates reasons that the contrary, “it is better to suffer evil than to do it,” is likely true.¹⁰⁶ As his elenctic examinations always conclude this, and Socrates’ elenctic examinations are willed by the gods (and the gods only will good things for humans), then Socrates can conclude he has good reason to trust those such propositions that his examinations always conclude are true.¹⁰⁷ This seems like a large assumption to make. Socrates himself agrees that the gods hold opposing ethical positions to each other,¹⁰⁸ which would mean some gods sometimes will good things for humans, but at the same time some other gods may be willing *bad* things for humans. Socrates may believe his personal daemon holds him back from doing ill,¹⁰⁹ but there is no indication that this applies to elenctic inquiry. All the same, Socrates has no *accounting* as to *why* this moral fact is true. He merely knows *that* it is.¹¹⁰

Therefore Brickhouse and Smith resolve the Socratic paradox using this distinction between two types of knowledge: Socrates disavows having access to the gods’ wisdom of good and evil (the most important wisdom), while at the same time affirming the moral facts he does claim to have knowledge of via the elenchus.¹¹¹ This would also go some way towards answering Reeve’s challenge: the “positive content” of Socratic wisdom would be the knowledge Socrates has confirmed through the elenchus. It is strongly confirmed enough for Socrates to consider it knowledge. Interestingly, this knowledge is moral knowledge, the main subject of knowledge Aristotle tells us Socrates was

¹⁰⁶ Brickhouse and Smith, 1994, p. 40

¹⁰⁷ Brickhouse and Smith, 1994, p. 40

¹⁰⁸ *Euthyphro*, 6c

¹⁰⁹ *Apology*, 31d5

¹¹⁰ Brickhouse and Smith, 1994, p. 40

¹¹¹ Brickhouse and Smith, 2004, p. 102

concerned with.¹¹² But possessing it is still “worth nothing in regard to wisdom,”¹¹³ to Socrates because it is a kind of propositional moral knowledge, incapable of providing an account for how the correct judgment was arrived at. Thus Socrates is not dissembling when he states he is not conscious of being wise in great or small things: as Socrates remains a neophyte in most things, and especially moral judgements, then he is not wise in great or small things. He merely has some sporadic knowledge of true moral propositions.

Where Vlastos and Brickhouse and Smith all propose understanding Socrates as utilizing “knowledge” to refer to at least two different classes of thing, Rappe also proposes understanding “knowledge” in the early Socratic dialogues in multiple ways. Instead of two kinds of knowledge, Rappe differentiates between at least four kinds of knowledge in the early Socratic dialogues. Of the kinds of knowledge Socrates seeks out and examines, there are three. The first is *phronēsis*, or moral wisdom.¹¹⁴ When searching for citizens who might have an answer to the Oracle’s riddle, Socrates questions the politicians first on *phronēsis*.¹¹⁵ This type of knowledge is not what Socrates believes to comprise *sophia*.¹¹⁶ Next Socrates moves onto the poets, who should possess *poiēsis*, or “mimetic artistry.”¹¹⁷ When this too proves not to be *sophia*, Socrates examines the craftsmen, who possess *technē*, or technical expertise.¹¹⁸ Socrates discovers this, too, is not *sophia*.

¹¹² Metaphysics A, 987b1-4

¹¹³ Brickhouse and Smith, 1994, p. 38

¹¹⁴ Rappe, 1995, p. 7

¹¹⁵ Rappe, 1995, p. 7

¹¹⁶ Rappe, 1995, p. 7

¹¹⁷ Rappe, 1995, p. 7

¹¹⁸ Rappe, 1995, p. 7

Instead, Rappe proposes a fourth kind of knowledge: self-knowledge, which she argues is the only legitimate type of knowledge to comprise *sophia*.¹¹⁹ Like Vlastos, Rappe argues that this type of knowledge which Socrates does possess is the goal of elenctic conversation. In the sense of methodology they are united—self-knowledge, whatever that might be, is the result and aim of elenctic conversation.¹²⁰ Diverging from Vlastos, Rappe goes on to argue this elenctic knowledge is self-knowledge, whereas Vlastos believes at most Socrates possesses true beliefs about himself and his moral life.¹²¹ Self-knowledge for Rappe is both knowledge of *what* you know as well as knowledge *that* you know.¹²² There is no one wiser than Socrates because he possesses the self-knowledge “that he knows he has no wisdom.”¹²³ It is not contradictory for Socrates to possess the knowledge that he does not have knowledge, because the only thing that changed for Socrates after the Oracle’s declaration was not what knowledge he possessed but the recognition of the value of the self-knowledge he already had.¹²⁴ Socrates’ examination of others is thus focused on engendering that same self-knowledge from them that he already has—specifically self-knowledge of “the cognitive level of identity,” or knowledge that they know or do not know.¹²⁵ By “cognitive level of identity,” Rappe means the aspect of self-identity that is intellectual in contrast to aspects such as appetites or dispositions.¹²⁶

¹¹⁹ Rappe, 1995, p. 7

¹²⁰ Rappe, 1995, p. 2

¹²¹ Rappe, 1995, p. 2

¹²² Rappe, 1995, p. 3

¹²³ Rappe, 1995, p. 6

¹²⁴ Rappe, 1995, p. 6

¹²⁵ Rappe, 1995, p. 7

¹²⁶ Rappe, 1995, p. 7

Rappe focuses on a particular type of knowledge which she terms “epistemic self-knowledge”¹²⁷ in order to argue that *sōphrosunē* in the *Charmides* is exactly the type of knowledge which Socrates has and others lack. By “epistemic self-knowledge,” Rappe means the knowledge the interlocutor’s have of their own expertise—or lack thereof.¹²⁸ In a traditional Socratic dialogue, and by Socrates’ own admission in the *Apology*, Socrates finds an interlocutor who already has a concept of themselves as an expert in something. In Rappe’s terms, they have an “epistemic” self-belief, or a belief about their own knowledge. When the interlocutor invariably proves to possess a false belief about their own knowledge, Socrates has successfully demonstrated they have little or no “epistemic self-knowledge.”¹²⁹ *Sōphrosunē* is self-knowledge, as *Charmides* suggests,¹³⁰ and Socrates knows this. The reason Socrates does not end the inquiry there is because self-knowledge is uniquely not a definitional type of knowledge but rather is knowledge of the first-personal self.¹³¹ In this way, Socrates must continue to press Charmides towards an aporetic state using the elenchus, because without that Charmides will not understand himself as a “knower,” and thus lack the “epistemic self-knowledge” that Socrates possesses.¹³²

Rappe therefore has a way to resolve the Socratic paradox and an answer to Reeve’s challenge. Socrates can confidently know that he lives his life virtuously while at the same time speaking factually when he recognizes that he has knowledge of neither great nor small things. This is because Socrates does not have *phronēsis*, moral wisdom,

¹²⁷ Rappe, 1995, p. 12

¹²⁸ Rappe, 1995, p. 12

¹²⁹ Rappe, 1995, p. 12

¹³⁰ *Charmides*, 166c5

¹³¹ Rappe, 1995, p. 14

¹³² Rappe, 1995, p. 14-15

nor does he possess mimetic or technical knowledge. Instead, Socrates' wisdom that makes no one wiser than he is his self-knowledge, specifically, his epistemic self-knowledge. Socrates is aware of his own identity as a "knower," and identifies himself with that part of his person, rather than bodily or emotional parts of his being.¹³³ It is no contradiction, then, for Socrates to say he has no knowledge of "great or small things," which cover phronetic, mimetic, and technical knowledge; while at the same time confident he is living well, because he possesses epistemic self-knowledge.¹³⁴ Ethical benefits, for Socrates, are the result of this epistemic self-identification.¹³⁵ At the same time, this epistemic self-knowledge is not merely negative content: through this identification of the self with its epistemic parts, Socrates knows a great many positive things. Socrates knows his place in the community,¹³⁶ that the good for the community is always prior to the good for an individual,¹³⁷ and that we must always choose a "greater good" over a lesser one.¹³⁸ This then is the positive content of Socratic wisdom. Like Vlastos, Rappe argues that Socrates uses knowledge-words to indicate multiple kinds of knowledge; unlike Vlastos, Rappe argues for a specific positive content of Socratic wisdom.

Unlike Rappe, Nightingale's self-reflexive awareness is more limited in focus to his epistemic states rather than his greater identity as a moral actor. Nightingale argues that the solution to the Socratic paradox and Reeves' challenge is to understand Socrates as possessing a third kind of knowledge, neither expert nor non-expert (or "elenctic"), but

¹³³ Rappe, 1995, p. 15

¹³⁴ Rappe, 1995, p. 14-15

¹³⁵ Rappe, 1995, p. 15

¹³⁶ Rappe, 1995, p. 18

¹³⁷ Rappe, 1995, p. 19

¹³⁸ Rappe, 1995, p. 20

which she terms “self-reflexive awareness.”¹³⁹ Expert knowledge can be of many different kinds, because there is expertise of many different fields. The shipbuilder is an expert of shipbuilding, the doctor is an expert of health, &c. “Elenctic” knowledge, as Nightingale terms it, is the sort of knowledge Socrates has gleaned for his repeated dialogues with various interlocutors around the city.¹⁴⁰ This is the sort of knowledge Vlastos proposes makes up Socratic wisdom: true beliefs which Socrates has justified via the elenchus.¹⁴¹ But Nightingale does not find Vlastos’ “elenctic” knowledge to be a sufficient solution for the “positive” content of Socratic wisdom.¹⁴² Instead, she identifies a third type of knowledge: “self-knowledge,” understood as self-reflexive awareness of one’s own epistemic condition.¹⁴³ Nightingale argues this knowledge is a first-personal recognition of one’s epistemic state, such as: one’s lack of knowledge on a matter, one’s intellectual capacities, or the extent of one’s knowledge on a matter.¹⁴⁴ This self-reflexive awareness also encompasses positive knowledge, such as recognition of knowledge that one does positively possess.¹⁴⁵ Nightingale goes on to argue that this positive knowledge of one’s own epistemic state is sufficient to fulfill Reeve’s challenge for the positive content of Socratic wisdom, even though it is not necessarily propositional knowledge.¹⁴⁶

2.3.3 Real Ignorance versus “False Conceit of Knowledge”

Finally, Socratic ignorance, according to both Taran and King, is Socrates’ profession of ignorance, that “he only knows that he does not know.”¹⁴⁷ In another way to

¹³⁹ Nightingale, 2010, p. 10-11

¹⁴⁰ Nightingale, 2010, p. 9

¹⁴¹ Vlastos, 1991, p. 32

¹⁴² Nightingale, 2010, p. 10

¹⁴³ Nightingale, 2010, p. 10

¹⁴⁴ Nightingale, 2010, p. 11

¹⁴⁵ Nightingale, 2010, p. 11

¹⁴⁶ Nightingale, 2010, p. 12

¹⁴⁷ Taran, 1985, p. 85; King, 2008,

answer Reeve's challenge, Taran argues that Socratic knowledge contains positive content in addition to its *prima facie* negative content.¹⁴⁸ First, Socratic knowledge is not entirely negative because Socrates clearly professes a belief in the difference between opinion and knowledge.¹⁴⁹ Taran does not argue one way or another if this belief of Socrates' rises to the level of knowledge. The "knowledge" that one knows that they do not know is something Socrates distinguishes from "real ignorance," which Taran defines as the "false conceit of knowledge."¹⁵⁰ Therefore Socratic ignorance does not contain this real ignorance, but instead is a drive to eliminate such false conceits and replace them with the knowledge that one does not know.¹⁵¹ This is the function of the elenchus: to lead interlocutors in a state of real ignorance into an aporetic state where at the least the real ignorance is disposed of, and more optimistically they now achieve Socratic ignorance, or the knowledge that they do not know.¹⁵² Ideally this aporetic state also comes with the knowledge that there is an "essential difference between opinion and knowledge."¹⁵³

Taran stops short of claiming an established positive Socratic doctrine. Taran argues that any attempt to glean a positive doctrine from cobbled together pieces of Socrates' positive argumentation throughout the aporetic dialogues is futile.¹⁵⁴ The negative aspect of Socratic ignorance is forefront to Taran's argument that the purpose of the elenchus is to "eliminate the false conceit of knowledge."¹⁵⁵ This is essential to the Socratic project of living a moral life—it is impossible to live morally while also presuming

¹⁴⁸ Taran, 1985, p. 86-87

¹⁴⁹ Taran, 1985, p. 88

¹⁵⁰ Taran, 1985, p. 88

¹⁵¹ Taran, 1985, p. 89

¹⁵² Taran, 1985, p. 90-91

¹⁵³ Taran, 1985, p. 91

¹⁵⁴ Taran, 1985, p. 93

¹⁵⁵ Taran, 1985, p. 97

to know what one does not.¹⁵⁶ Worse than Socratic ignorance will always be this “most ” ignorance of thinking one knows when one does not.¹⁵⁷ Although the elenchus is essential to leading the interlocutor to an aporetic state, and that aporetic state is an essential purifying purgatory on the road to knowledge, for Plato its utility ends there, with its negative results of knowing that one does not know.¹⁵⁸ At most, Taran can only offer the belief that there is a difference between opinion and knowledge as positive content of Socratic wisdom.¹⁵⁹ But Taran’s focus is Socratic ignorance, not Socratic wisdom, and so does not offer a robust answer to Reeve’s challenge of where to find the positive content of Socratic wisdom.

Both King and Taran emphasize the role of the elenchus as a practice of *sōphrosunē*. For King, the Socratic disavowal is not about the specifics of what he does or does not know so much as it is a claim about the elenchus as a moderating practice. King proposes that Socrates disavows knowledge (*epistēme*), but avows having wisdom, which we should understand as *sōphrosunē*.¹⁶⁰ Rather than interpreting Socrates as disavowing one type of knowledge but avowing another, King argues that Socrates is disavowing all knowledge as denoted by the word “*epistēme*.”¹⁶¹ Further, no Athenian has any amount of “*epistēme*,” which King argues we are meant to understand due to the tendency of the Socratic dialogues to end aporetically.¹⁶² Since Socrates maintains that

¹⁵⁶ Taran, 1985, p. 97

¹⁵⁷ Taran, 1985, p. 98

¹⁵⁸ Taran, 1985, p. 98

¹⁵⁹ Taran, 1985, p. 109

¹⁶⁰ King, 2008, p. 346

¹⁶¹ King, 2008, p. 346

¹⁶² King, 2008, p. 349

he has some kind of wisdom, he must mean that whatever kind of wisdom he has is not contingent upon him possessing *epistēme*.¹⁶³

Socrates' examination of his fellow citizens reveals to King what kind of wisdom Socrates possesses, divorced from traditional "knowledge" as denoted by *epistēme*.¹⁶⁴ According to King, Socrates learns that the citizens of Athens practice epistemic hubris in thinking they know more than they do.¹⁶⁵ Socrates himself practices epistemic temperance, or is *sōphron* with regards to his own knowledge.¹⁶⁶ King then argues that the elenchus must be essential to the unique kind of wisdom Socrates possesses, as Socrates links his mission to question all those supposed wise men in Athens with the god's proclamation that none was wiser than Socrates. In King's understanding, the elenchus is an activity of tempering Socrates' knowledge claims, and therefore Socrates' wisdom lies not in any traditional "knowledge" set but instead in the virtue of epistemic *sōphrosunē*.¹⁶⁷

This in theory solves the Socratic paradox by proposing that when Socrates disavows knowledge he disavows "*epistēme*," while at the same time avowing his own wisdom as "*sōphrosunē*."¹⁶⁸ As an answer to Reeve's challenge, King's solution to the Socratic paradox offers little in the form of positive content. There is no knowledge-set that Socrates possesses, neither propositional nor expertise. Instead Socrates' wisdom is his virtue of *sōphrosunē* with regards to his own knowledge. Like Taran, King's solution to the Socratic paradox thus offers little in response to Reeve's challenge, or at most is a

¹⁶³ King, 2008, p. 350

¹⁶⁴ King, 2008, p. 352

¹⁶⁵ King, 2008, p. 352

¹⁶⁶ King, 2008, p. 352

¹⁶⁷ King, 2008, p. 353

¹⁶⁸ King, 2008, p. 346

deflationary response in that it argues Socrates to have *no* knowledge, while Reeve contends that Socrates at the very least has some “negative content” knowledge.

2.4 Limitations

There are many places throughout the Platonic corpus where Socrates discusses *sōphrosunē* which are not addressed in this dissertation. The reasons for this are two-fold. First, the focus of this dissertation is on *Socratic* wisdom, not Platonic. *Sōphrosunē* in the *Charmides* reflects that, as it is an early dialogue with a historical Socrates. In later dialogues it is less certain that the views Socrates espouses of *sōphrosunē* are his or Plato’s. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates defines *sōphrosunē* as “ruling the pleasures and appetites in oneself.”¹⁶⁹ Already this is a different definition from any of the ones presented in the *Charmides*. *Sōphrosunē* by the time of the *Gorgias* carries implicit within it the concept of a partite soul—one which has parts which can rule over other parts. This notion, of a partite soul, is one Plato will espouse in his later writings,¹⁷⁰ but which is less present in early writings. It is not a concept typically associated with Socrates.¹⁷¹ The second reason this dissertation does not address definitions of *sōphrosunē* found in texts such as the *Gorgias* or *Republic* is that the focus of the dissertation is on *Socratic wisdom*. Later definitions of *sōphrosunē* in the Platonic corpus shift more towards self-control and self-ruling, rather than self-knowledge.¹⁷² The definition in the *Charmides* is most focused on self-knowledge, and therefore most relevant to discovering what Socrates knows and what he does not presume to know.

¹⁶⁹ *Gorgias*, 491d9

¹⁷⁰ *Republic*, *Timaeus*, *Phaedrus*

¹⁷¹ North, 1928, p. 191

¹⁷² North, 1928, p. 189-190

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS: *APOLOGY*

3.1 Introduction

As Vlastos notes, Socrates is concerned mainly with moral knowledge. The positive content of Socratic wisdom that Reeve seeks cannot be simple propositional facts like “which road do I take to Larissa?” or that “Exile would be an evil for me.”¹⁶³ The positive content also cannot be so broad as simple propositional moral facts, such as “it is wicked and shameful to do wrong,”¹⁶⁴ because even as Socrates avows he knows those moral facts, he disavows having any awareness of wisdom, great or small. However, there must be some positive content of Socratic wisdom, otherwise he cannot profess confidence that he has lived a virtuous life.

Reeve utilizes the *Apology* to argue for the negative content of Socratic wisdom—that he knows that he does not know. In this chapter I will recontextualize this negative content of Socratic wisdom as second-order knowledge, specifically of this “negative content” type. I do not disagree with Reeve that “not supposing to know what one does not” is the negative content of Socratic wisdom, but I do disagree that “awareness of being wise in nothing,” is negative content. Instead, I will reframe these in terms of first- and second-order knowledge, or “knowledge of knowledge” (or lack thereof) to demonstrate how the latter is knowledge with positive content.

First I will define first- and second-order knowledge as I will be utilizing the terms. Then I will demonstrate that Socrates draws a distinction between these two types of knowledge throughout the *Apology*. In order to do this I will show where Socrates uses

specific vocabulary for first-order knowledge, and contrast this with the way he pairs certain knowledge-words when discussing second-order knowledge, specifically *oionai* and *oida*. Finally I will recontextualize Reeve's negative content of Socratic wisdom in terms of the instances of second-order knowledge Socrates demonstrates throughout the *Apology*, and show how there are two types of knowledge Reeve conflates: Socratic resistance to suppose what he does not know (negative content), and Socratic awareness that he does not know (positive content).

3.2 Definition of first- and second-order knowledge

First-order knowledge includes knowledge of skillsets such as how to throw clay to make a vase, as well as knowledge of simple facts such as the constitution of Athens. Second-order knowledge is knowledge of first order knowledge, e.g., the knowledge that you know something. To have first-order knowledge is often a necessary condition to have second-order knowledge, but the reverse is not always true: it is possible to have first-order knowledge without any second-order knowledge. A potter's apprentice may know how to throw clay, but might not have developed second-order knowledge about it. The development of second-order knowledge is, therefore, often used as a marker of the development from amateur to expert.¹⁷³ There exists strong evidence throughout the Socratic corpus that Socrates articulates a concept—perhaps multiple conceptions—of second-order knowledge (what I will argue Socrates calls “knowledge-of-knowledge”¹⁷⁴).

¹⁷³ Nightingale, 2010, p. 12-13

¹⁷⁴ *Charmides*, 170a

3.3 Socrates has this Distinction

3.3.1 Secondary literature

As the language around first- and second-order knowledge is recent and did not exist in ancient Athens, it is important to identify these metacognitive concepts, if not the exact verbiage, as present in the Socratic works. Several scholars either argue or take it as understood that a distinction between first- and second-order knowledge is present in the Socratic works. Annas (1985) describes the *Charmides* as undertaking a transition from self-knowledge to “the question of first- and second-order knowledge in general,” as the interlocutors and Socrates shift their definition of *epistemē* from the singular to the plural two-thirds of the way through the work.¹⁷⁵ Annas takes it as understood that Socrates distinguishes between first- and second-order knowledge in this work; the debate that is left for modern scholars is whether or not these metacognitive concepts are relevant to the idea of *sōphrosunē* that is the subject under discussion in the *Charmides*.¹⁷⁶

In the process of arguing that Socratic wisdom is the practice of moderation, rather than any particular knowledge-set, King (2008) understands Socrates as drawing the distinction between first- and second-order knowledge in his works, particularly the *Apology* and *Charmides*. King states that *sōphrosunē* in the *Charmides* is a “second-order science.”¹⁷⁷ Moreover, this “second-order science” may produce no specific “first-order product,” but yet remain useful, according to King.¹⁷⁸ Therefore King also understands Socrates as drawing this first- and second-order distinction in his works.

¹⁷⁵ Annas, 1985, p. 134

¹⁷⁶ Annas, 1985, p. 134

¹⁷⁷ King, 2008, p. 355

¹⁷⁸ King, 2008, p. 355

Politis (2008) describes reflexive knowledge as it is found in Socratic corpus as “essentially second-order,” because such knowledge is of both of some thing as well as being knowledge of one’s knowledge or lack of knowledge of that thing.¹⁷⁹ In particular, Politis argues that this second-order reflexive knowledge is distinct from and non-reducible to first-order knowledge in the Socratic corpus for several reasons, including that they benefit the individual in different ways and are achieved via different dialectical methods.¹⁸⁰

Finally, Sprague (1973) in her translation of the *Charmides* argues that Socrates draws a distinction between first- and second-order arts in his different examples of what the object of *sōphrosunē* might be in the *Charmides*.¹⁸¹ In the discussion Socrates and Critias determine that the object of a doctor’s craft, medicine, is health,¹⁸² the object of architecture or house-building is houses,¹⁸³ and the object of weaving is clothing.¹⁸⁴ But then Socrates criticizes this line of discussion stating that these arts are not the same as *sōphrosunē*, and uses arithmetic and geometry as a counter-example of crafts which have no products.¹⁸⁵ Although geometry and mathematics have no products, they are still knowledge “of” something; for instance, knowledge of arithmetic is knowledge of the even and the odd.¹⁸⁶ Therefore, first-order arts are *technai* that either have a product or specific scope, ranging from weaving to medicine to arithmetic.¹⁸⁷ Second-order arts, by contrast, are *technai* of the *technai* from the first order, such as statesmanship or

¹⁷⁹ Politis, 2008, p. 27

¹⁸⁰ Politis, 2008, p.

¹⁸¹ Sprague, 1973, p. 53

¹⁸² *Charmides*, 165d1

¹⁸³ *Charmides*, 165d4-5

¹⁸⁴ *Charmides*, 166a1

¹⁸⁵ *Charmides*, 165e5

¹⁸⁶ *Charmides*, 166a5-6

¹⁸⁷ Sprague, 1973, p. viii

rhetoric.¹⁸⁸ Sprague argues that the difference between *sōphrosunē* and other types of knowledges (even types of knowledges that produce no product, such as arithmetic and geometry) is that the latter all are first-order arts, while *sōphrosunē* is a second-order art.¹⁸⁹

Sprague makes a slightly different argument from other scholars in stating that Socrates draws a distinction between first- and second-order *craft* in the *Charmides*, rather than thought or knowledge.¹⁹⁰ This is because the examples Sprague points to—medicine, architecture, weaving—are all *technai* to Socrates and the interlocutors.¹⁹¹ However, the argument moves from *technai* to *epistemē* as Socrates uses geometry and arithmetic as examples of knowledges with no products. Sprague does not draw a distinction between the two, stating that the “art of temperance” is “the knowledge of good and evil,” and so when Sprague argues that Socrates here draws a distinction between first- and second-order “arts,” it is fair to understand this as Socrates drawing a distinction between first- and second-order “knowledges.”¹⁹²

3.3.2 Primary Literature

There is a logic to Socrates’s choice of language throughout the Socratic corpus. There are times when Socrates is speaking about first-order knowledge and others where he is speaking about second-order knowledge. It is possible to understand which type of knowledge Socrates is speaking about by looking carefully at the language he uses. There are four aspects of language he deploys to this effect: the vocabulary chosen in

¹⁸⁸ Sprague, 1973, p. viii

¹⁸⁹ Sprague, 1973, p. 53-54

¹⁹⁰ Sprague, 1973, p. 53

¹⁹¹ Sprague, 1973, p. 77; *Charmides* 165d5

¹⁹² Sprague, 1973, p. 53-54

the two works, the way in which the vocabulary is deployed, the words which are frequently paired together, and the context in which they are paired. Pairing words like *oiomai/oimai* (“supposes”) with other thinking words such as *oida/eidenai* (“knows”) indicates second-order knowledge, and this usage stands in stark contrast with how Plato uses words like *dokeo* (“seems”) in similar contexts to indicate first-order knowledge.

There are many Greek words associated with knowledge, knowing, thinking, believing, supposing, finding, recognizing, seeming, deeming, &c. It is not the case that all thinking words are exclusively first- or second-order, because it is not the word which determines if Socrates is deploying it to indicate first- or second-order meaning. At times, Socrates pairs certain words together to indicate a difference between first- and second-order knowledge. There are also single words used more often by Socrates as first-order thinking words and others as second-order. In the *Apology*, some of the words used for first-order mental tasks include¹⁹³: *oida*¹⁹⁴ (know), *oiomai*¹⁹⁵ or its shortened version, *oimai*¹⁹⁶ (suppose); *apistos*¹⁹⁷ (disbelieve/distrust), *amathesteron*¹⁹⁸ (being ignorant), *manthanoimi*¹⁹⁹ (learn), *egnōn*,²⁰⁰ the aorist form of *gignōskō*²⁰¹ (recognize), *dokeō*²⁰² (seem), *phrontistēs*²⁰³ (deep thinker), and *epistēmē*²⁰⁴ (knowledge). In the *Apology*, some of the words Socrates uses for second-order mental tasks include: *oiomai* (in its 1st person

¹⁹³ I will only include the first instance of each word in the *Apology* to cite that they are used

¹⁹⁴ *Apology*, 17a2

¹⁹⁵ *Apology*, 21d6

¹⁹⁶ *Apology*, 19a4

¹⁹⁷ *Apology*, 26e6

¹⁹⁸ *Apology*, 22b2

¹⁹⁹ *Apology*, 22b5

²⁰⁰ *Apology*, 22b8

²⁰¹ *Apology*, 24a4

²⁰² *Apology*, 21b9

²⁰³ *Apology*, 18b9

²⁰⁴ *Apology*, 19c6

singular form) or *oietai* (in its 3rd person singular form) (suppose), *gignōskō* (recognize), *axion*²⁰⁵ (sometimes translated in the sense of “consider worthy” which sometimes gets smoothed out to just “consider”), *oida* (know), *sunoida*.²⁰⁶ *Sunoida*²⁰⁷, *axion*, and the third-personal form of *oiomai*, *oietai*, are unique in being the only words in the *Apology* which are used exclusively as second-order thinking words.

Previous scholars follow different methods for translating these mental process words. West and West²⁰⁸ assign one English word to pair with each Greek word and remain consistent through the text. This is helpful because as the Wests note this allows the reader to track the Greek words which are used to the English; the drawback of this method is that the English does not change according to context.²⁰⁹ Other translators do allow for variations in vocabulary choice according to context.²¹⁰ This method is no more “correct” or “incorrect” than the Wests’ choice, as the meanings of words in Greek vary with context just as words do in English.²¹¹ However, an important aspect of the original text that could be lost no matter which translation strategy is used is how the pairing of certain knowledge words together consistently throughout the text indicate what order of knowledge Socrates is indicating: second or first. It is possible through careful

²⁰⁵ *Apology*, 22d7

²⁰⁶ *Apology*, 21b4

²⁰⁷ *Sunoida* is a subcategory of *oida*, as a conjunction of *sun-oida*.²⁰⁷ There are different ways to understand this compound word: when it is paired with the dative, Helm suggests translating it as “share in knowledge with;” when it is paired with “*emautoi*” he suggests translating it “be conscious of;” the prefix *sun* can act as the preposition “with” so combined with *oida* it can be understood as having knowledge about something specifically as a witness.

²⁰⁸ West and West, 1984. Footnote 14 p. 66

²⁰⁹ West and West, 1984. “We have consistently used ‘knowledge’ to translate *epistēmē*, a word whose original meaning is skill or know-how in doing or making. *Epistēmē* is derived from *epistasthai*, always translated ‘to have knowledge.’ Other ‘know’ verbs are *eidenai* (whose root sense is ‘to have seen’), always translated ‘to know,’ and *gignōskein*, translated ‘recognize’ or ‘be cognizant.’” Footnote 14 p. 66

²¹⁰ Sprague, 1973

²¹¹ West and West, 1984, p. 66

examination of the Greek to determine when Socrates is speaking about first-order knowledge and when he is speaking about second-order knowledge.

One word which Socrates utilizes sparingly in the *Apology* and *Charmides* and which will remain absent from this analysis is *technē*. A specific subset of knowledge, oftentimes the kind involved in the production of something,²¹² *technē* is not a word Socrates uses distinct from *epistēmē* in any notable way throughout these early works. *Technē* is a sort of knowledge Socrates could have or lack; *technē* is a sort of knowledge experts can have or lack, and *technē* is a sort of knowledge experts can have and then cause them to overextend and believe themselves to have other knowledge which they then lack. Socrates presents this no differently from the knowledge of politics of which the politicians possess some but also largely lack and causes them to overextend and believe themselves to have other knowledges which they then lack.

The two notable times Socrates uses *technē* in the *Apology* is first in a discussion about what notable sophists claim to teach, as a way of distinguishing himself from them. Evenus supposedly has knowledge of the virtue of being a human and citizen.²¹³ Socrates remarks that he regards “Evenus as blessed if he should truly have this art [*technē*] and teaches it at such a modest rate.”²¹⁴ The word “*epistatēn*” is used to describe the knowledge of the virtue of being a human and citizen,²¹⁵ and then Socrates describes the possession and ability to teach this knowledge as a “*technēn*.”²¹⁶

²¹² West and West, 1998 p. 68, footnote 23

²¹³ *Apology*, 20b

²¹⁴ *Apology*, 20b8-20c1

²¹⁵ *Apology*, 20b3

²¹⁶ *Apology*, 20c1

The other time Socrates uses *technē* in the *Apology* is when discussing the knowledge of the craftsmen, in the context of giving a history of his search for wisdom amongst his fellow citizens. Socrates first uses *epistēmē* to describe his own ignorance of what the craftsmen know, and then to affirmatively state that the craftsmen possess knowledge “of many fine things.”²¹⁷ This establishes that Socrates believes craft-knowledge to be a kind of knowledge. He calls the craftsmen wise.²¹⁸ Then, the one time he uses *technē* in the context of the craftsmen, he states that “because he performed his art [*technē*] nobly each one deemed himself wisest also in the other things, the great things...”²¹⁹ Much like the politicians, the knowledge that the craftsmen affirmatively possess causes them to overextend their assessment of their knowledge. Socrates uses *technē* to describe a specific subset of *epistēmē*, but both *technē* and other kinds of knowledge are things which their possessors can be aware they possess and also things which can cause their possessors to presume to know more than they do. Therefore, the differences between *technē* and other kinds of knowledge—such as the former producing a craft and the latter not—are not relevant at this time.

To demonstrate this, first I will examine first-order mental processes in the *Apology*. I will focus on *dokeō* (“seems”), and the many different way it is used, including: to refer to quality and property of things, to refer to other people’s knowledge from Socrates’s point of view, to describe other’s virtues and reputations, and the divine. After this, I will examine second-order mental processes in the *Apology*, focusing first on *oionai* (“suppose”), then borderline cases, then the second-order mental processes of others,

²¹⁷ *Apology*, 22d2

²¹⁸ *Apology*, 22d4

²¹⁹ *Apology*, 22d6-7

which Socrates describes by use of the word *oietai*, the third-personal form of *oiomai*. Then I will examine several cases where there is a switch in text from *dokeō* (“seems”) to *oiomai* (“suppose”), which I will argue demonstrates a change from first-order mental processes to second-order mental processes. Finally, where *oiomai* refers to second-order belief, *sunoida* (“recognize”) refers to second-order knowledge. I will examine the few uses of *sunoida* in the *Apology*.

3.3.2.1 *Dokeō*

In the *Apology*, one way Socrates uses “*dokeō*” is when referring to third-person beliefs, both correct and incorrect—an individual “seems” to be wise or “seems” to know. By contrast he uses “*oimai/oiomai*” to refer to first-personal correct second-order belief. There is also a distinction between first-personal second-order belief and second-order knowledge: the former he indicates with *sunoida* or *oida*, whereas the latter he indicates with *oiomai*. The context of the *Apology* focuses on a negative conception of self-knowledge, and therefore the weak version of first-personal second-order thinking words occur more frequently than the strong version. I will begin by examining Socrates usage of *dokeō* in first-order thinking.

First, there are beliefs about properties and qualities:

- “This man [Meletus] seems to me [Socrates], men of Athens, to be very hubristic and unrestrained...”²²⁰
- “Does it seem to you [Meletus] to be also so [unlikely to be corrupted by a single person] concerning horses?”²²¹

²²⁰ “emoi gar dokei houtosi, ō andres Athēnaioi, panu einai hubristēs kai akola stos,” *Apology*, 26e6-7

²²¹ “ē kai peri hippous houtō soi dokei echein,” *Apology*, 25a12-13

- “But before Zeus, is this [atheistic] how I [Socrates] seem to you [Meletus]?”²²²
- “Perhaps, then, it might seem to be strange that I [Socrates] do go around counseling these things and being a busybody in private...”²²³
- “...and its [Socrates’ personal daemon’s] opposition [to Socrates’ political career] seems to be altogether noble.”²²⁴
- “Unlawfully [the judging of the generals during the Tyranny of the Thirty], as it seemed to all of you [jurymen] in the time afterwards.”²²⁵
- “To me [Socrates] it does not seem to be noble for me to do any of these things [plead for his life or bring his family forth as witnesses to his defense].”²²⁶
- “If, then, those of you [jurymen] who seem to be distinguished, whether in wisdom or courage or any other virtue at all, will act this way, it would be shameful.”²²⁷
- “So as it seems to be, I [Socrates] have even now been acquitted as far as Meletus is concerned.”²²⁸
- “...if they [Socrates’ sons] seem to you [Socrates’ friends] to care for money or anything else before virtue.”²²⁹

Often Socrates uses *dokeō* to describe his grasp of a property or quality of some thing— it is not a word he uses to express certainty, so it is not a matter of existence conditions like “I know Meletus is accusing me” but rather “Meletus’ accusation seems noble.”

²²² “alla, ō pros Dios, houtōsi soi dokō,” *Apology*, 26e3

²²³ “isōs an oun dokeien atapon einai, hoti dē ego idia men tauta sumbouleuō periiōn kai polupragmonō,” *Apology*, 31c4-5

²²⁴ “kai pagkalos ge moi dokei enantiousthai,” *Apology*, 31d5-6

²²⁵ “ōs en tō husterō chronō pasin humin edoxen,” *Apology*, 32b4-5

²²⁶ “moi dokei kalon einai eme toutōn ouden poiein kai tēlikonde ontā kai touto tounoma echonta,” *Apology*, 34e3-4

²²⁷ “ei oun humōn oi dokountes diapherein eite sophia eite andreia eite allē hētini oun aretē toioutoi esontai, aischron an eiē?” *Apology*, 35a1-3

²²⁸ “Melēton men oun, ōs emoi dokō, kai nun apo pepheuga,” *Apology*, 36a6-7

²²⁹ “ean humin dokōsin ē chrēmātōn ē allou tou proteron epimeleisthai ē aretēs,” *Apology*, 41e3-5

A different but similar instance of *dokeō* throughout the *Apology* is when Socrates thinks about other people's knowledge or wisdom. This is not a case of second-order belief, because Socrates is not thinking about his own thinking. Rather, he is thinking about a quality of another person: Meletus may be tall, and Meletus may be wise. Both these are statements of first-order belief, when Socrates is the one doing the thinking. If Meletus were to state "I suppose I am wise," that would be an instance of second-order belief, and as we will see, Socrates shifts the verb from "*dokeō*" to "*oionai*" in those cases. But for Socrates to state "Meletus seems to be wise (to me)," Socrates instead uses the verb *dokeō* and its variants as an expression of first-order thinking: the belief of a quality Meletus possesses.²³⁰

Socrates also uses this verb *dokeō* in cases of thinking about other people's beliefs and wisdom. If someone were to fear death, to Socrates that man appears to be wise but is not;²³¹ he follows this immediately with the observation that the man who fears death is not wise because he appears to know something he does not.²³² The former sentence is Socrates making a judgement about the belief of men who fear death. These men believe themselves to have this specific knowledge—what happens after death—which would make someone wise, surely. However Socrates observes they merely seem to be wise, because, as he details in the next sentence, these other men do not know anything about death, they just seem to know it. Not to Socrates, but to other men to whom they seem wise. The use of *dokeō* in both sentences refers to another person's belief, of which

²³⁰ *Apology*, 23b8

²³¹ "to gar toi thanaton dedienai, ō andres, ouden allo estin ē dokein sophon ei nai mē onta: dokein gar eidenai estin ha ouk oiden," "For to fear death, men, is in fact nothing other than to seem to be wise, but not to be so." *Apology*, 29a4-6

²³² "dokein gar eidēnai estin ha ouk oiden." "For it is to seem to know what one does not know." *Apology*, 29a6

Socrates or the other men of Athens can only have first-order belief (second-order belief being a necessarily first-personal belief set).

Another instance between other people's beliefs versus their qualities or properties would be other people's virtues. Socrates states that Meletus does not *seem* to have virtue.²³³ In some works such as the *Meno* Socrates considers the possibility that virtue is a kind of knowledge.²³⁴ Knowing someone possess virtue is the same as knowing someone has some specific ethical knowledge. But it could also be taken as describing a quality of a person, same as someone seeming to be tall or someone seeming to be tired. Socrates here is describing his uncertain knowledge of the quality of this person: he seems not to be virtuous, but of course, he could be. Others may have the quality of courage or other virtues, but Socrates is unable to make a definite judgement on that and therefore does not *know* whether these men possess these qualities, but they *seem* to.²³⁵

Socrates utilizes *dokeō* several times in association with the reputations of other men when referring to how they “seem” to Socrates or to others. This is common enough that *doxa* is at times translated as “reputation” or “reputed to be.”²³⁶ He interrogates the men who have the best reputations,²³⁷ implores men of the jury who have any reputation worth something,²³⁸ and talks about his own reputation precluding him from begging the

²³³ “kai ean moi mē dokē kektēsthai aretēn,” “...and if he does not seem to me to possess virtue...” *Apology*, 29e5

²³⁴ *Meno*, 86e

²³⁵ “ei oun humōn hoi dokountes diapherein eite sophia eite andreia eite allē hētinious aretē toioutoi esontai, aischron an eiē,” “...If, then, those of you who seem to be distinguished, whether in wisdom or courage or any other virtue at all, will act this way, it would be shameful.” *Apology*, 35a2-3

²³⁶ West and West, 1984, p. 69 Footnote 29

²³⁷ “oi men malista eudokimountes edoxan moi,” “Those with the best reputations” or “best seeming/seemed to me to be the best” *Apology*, 22a3-4

²³⁸ “oute humas chrē poiein tous dokountas kai hopēoun ti einai” “...who are reputed [seem] to be something in any way at all...” *Apology*, 35b4-5

judge for any particular outcome.²³⁹ These are all instances of *dokeō* that might read smoother in English translated as “who are reputed to be” or “apart from reputation,” rather than translated as a form of “seem” or “seeming.” One more is “*kai ean dokōsi ti einai mēden ontēs*,”²⁴⁰ where “reputed to be” or “seeming to be” could both be valid translations for this.

Socrates also refers to others’ reputations as seemingly wise men, which combines both the “reputational” aspect of *dokeō* and also the third-personal assessment of someone’s knowledge, which is first-order thinking. When searching for citizens wiser than him in the city Socrates seeks those reputed to be wise.²⁴¹ In this case *dokeō* is used first as *dokoūnton* to refer to the citizen’s reputations as wise, and then as *edoxe* to refer to how Socrates found their wisdom to be lacking once he interrogated them.

Socrates also uses *dokeō* for any uncertain first-order knowledge he has, such as the divine. “*oion dē moi dokei o theos eme tē polei prostethēkenai toiouton tina*,”²⁴² Socrates cannot be certain he knows the intention of the god unleashing a man such as himself on Athens, but he can guess at the divine motivation. “*ōs en tō husterō chronō pasin humin edoxen*.”²⁴³ Here he states others thought they had knowledge as to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of an action taken during the year of Thirty Tyrants. Socrates believes that trying the generals as a group was unlawful which we know because he opposed doing so at the time. The men of the jury changed their minds—at the time they

²³⁹ “choris de tes doxes, ho andres, oude dikaion moi dokei einai,” “Apart from reputation [seeming], gentlemen, to me it also does not seem to be just to beg the judge...” *Apology*, 35b9

²⁴⁰ “...and if they are reputed [seeming] to be and yet are nothing...” *Apology*, 41e5

²⁴¹ “enteuthen ep’ allon ēa tōn ekeinou dokountōn sophōterōn einai kai moi tauta tauta edoxe,” “From there I went to someone else, to one of those reputed to be wiser than he, and these things seemed to be the same.” *Apology*, 21d7-21e2

²⁴² “Just so, in fact, the god seems to me to have set me upon the city as someone of those sort,” *Apology*, 30e5-6

²⁴³ “Unlawfully, as it seemed to all of you in the time afterwards,” *Apology*, 32b4-5

thought it lawful, now, unlawful. The word *edoxen* is used here to indicate that uncertain level of knowledge. They did not *know* if it is lawful or unlawful, it *seems* unlawful afterwards.

3.3.2.2 *Oida*

Socrates uses *oida* only as a first-order thinking word in the *Apology*. When *oida* is a second-order verb it is *sun-oida*, with the prefix “*sun*” added in front. As the *Apology* is largely a negative conception of knowledge—what Socrates does not know, he does not suppose to know—there are few instances of second-order knowledge in the work, and more often expressions of second-order belief.

Oida as a first-order knowledge verb is often used in the *Apology* in instances of Socrates *not* knowing something, as the work is largely concerned with Socrates disavowing knowledge. At the same time, there are a few instances of Socrates avowing knowing or someone else knowing something (there are a handful of things Socrates does avow to know in other works, like what Love is²⁴⁴ and “what is fine is hard”²⁴⁵). Some examples in the *Apology* include:

- “I [Socrates] do not know,”²⁴⁶
- “Neither of us [Socrates nor the man he is interrogating] really knows anything fine and good...”²⁴⁷
- “For these [oracles and prophets] also say many fine things but know none of the things they say,”²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ *Symposium*, 177e1

²⁴⁵ *Hippias Major*, 304e3-9

²⁴⁶ “*oti men humeis, o andres Athēnaioi, peponthate hupo tōn emōn katēgorōn, ouk oida*” *Apology*, 17a1

²⁴⁷ “*kinduneuei men gar hēmōn oudeteros ouden kalon kagathon eidenai...*” *Apology*, 21d3-4

²⁴⁸ “*kai gar houtoi legousi men polla kai kala isasin de ouden hōn legousi,*” *Apology*, 22c2-3

- “You [jurymen] all know Chaerephon, doubtless.”²⁴⁹
- “I [Socrates] know well that I incur hatred by these very things [inquiries],”²⁵⁰
- “What person is it who knows first of all this very thing [the laws],”²⁵¹
- “But I [Socrates] do know that it is bad and shameful to do injustice and to disobey one’s betters, whether god or human.”²⁵²
- “So compared to the bad things which I [Socrates] know are bad, I will never fear or flee the things about which I do not know whether they even happened to be good,”²⁵³
- “No one knows whether death does not even happen to be the greatest of all goods for the human,”²⁵⁴
- “...about which I [Socrates] say that I do not know whether it [death] is good or bad?”²⁵⁵
- “Listen to what happened to me [Socrates], that you [jurymen] may know that I will not yield to any man contrary to what is right,”²⁵⁶

Socrates also has a habit of using “know” in the imperative (*oide*), telling the jurors to “know well”—often before he says some declarative statement which he believes to be

²⁴⁹ “Chairephōnta gar iste pou,” *Apology*, 20e7

²⁵⁰ “kaitoi oida schedon hoti autois toutois apechthanomai,” *Apology*, 24a6-7

²⁵¹ “‘ostis prōton kai auto touto oide,” *Apology*, 24e1

²⁵² “to de adikein kai apeithein tō beltioni kai theō kai anthrōpō, hoti kakon kai aischron estin oida,” *Apology*, 29b6-7

²⁵³ “pro oun tōn kakōn hōn oida hoti kaka estin, ha mē oida ei kai agatha onta tugchanei oudepote phobēsomai oude pheuksomai,” *Apology*, 29b7-9

²⁵⁴ “oide men gar oudeis ton phanton oud ei tugchanei tō anthrōpō pantōn megiston on tōn agathōn, dediasi d hōs eu eidotes oti megiston tōn kakōn esti,” *Apology*, 29a6-29b1

²⁵⁵ “o phēmi ouk eidenai out ei agathon out ei kakon estin?” *Apology*, 37b6

²⁵⁶ “akousate dē moi ta sumbebēkota, hina eidēte hoti oud an heni hupeikathoimi para to dikaion deisas thanaton,” *Apology*, 32a5-7

true.²⁵⁷ There is one instance of *oida* where Socrates makes a judgement about Meletus' knowledge, stating that it is clear that Meletus knows who improves the youth.²⁵⁸

3.3.2.3 *Oiimai*

Although *oiimai* when paired with another knowledge word such as *oida* is used to indicate second-order thinking, this does not preclude it from being used as a first-order thinking word when it is not paired with another knowledge-word. Some examples of this include:

- “But I [Socrates] suppose this is difficult,”²⁵⁹
- “For I [Socrates] suppose you have examined it [who has the expertise to raise children best],”²⁶⁰
- “For those present on each occasion suppose [wrongly] that I [Socrates] myself am wise in the things concerning which I refute someone else,”²⁶¹
- “For I [Socrates] do not suppose they [the men he made fools of] would be willing to speak the truth,”²⁶²
- “I [Socrates] am not persuaded by you, Meletus, nor do I suppose is any other person.”²⁶³
- “Do you suppose you are accusing Anaxagoras [as opposed to Socrates], Meletus?”²⁶⁴

²⁵⁷ *Apology*, 20d, 28a, 30a, 30c, 31d, 33b, 37d

²⁵⁸ “dēlon gar hoti oistha, melon ge soi,” “For it is clear that you know [who improves the youth],” *Apology*, 24d4

²⁵⁹ “oiimai de auto chalepon einai” *Apology*, 19a5

²⁶⁰ “oiimai gar se eskephthai dia tēn tōn hueōn ktēsīn,” *Apology*, 20b5

²⁶¹ “oiontai gar me ekastote hoi parontes tauta auton einai sophon ha an allon eskelegskō” *Apology*, 23a3-4

²⁶² “ta gar alēthē oiimai ouk an atheloiēn legein,” *Apology*, 23d6-7

²⁶³ “tauta ego soi ou peithomai, ō Melēte, oiimai de oude allon anthrōpōn oudena,” *Apology*, 25e5

²⁶⁴ “Anaxagorou oiei katēgorein, ō phile Melēte,” *Apology*, 26d5

- “and I [Socrates] suppose it will also convict me.”²⁶⁵
- “Rather than endure anything shameful, he [Achilles] despised danger so much that when his mother (a goddess) spoke to him as he was eager to kill Hector— something like this, I [Socrates] suppose,”²⁶⁶
- “Surely you do not suppose that he [Achilles] worried about death and danger?”²⁶⁷
- “But when the god stationed me [Socrates], as I supposed and assumed, order me to live philosophizing and examining myself and others,”²⁶⁸
- “And I [Socrates] suppose that until now no greater good has arisen for you in the city than my service to the god.”²⁶⁹
- “For, as I [Socrates] suppose, you [jurymen] will even be helped by listening,”²⁷⁰
- “For I [Socrates] do not suppose it is sanctioned that a better man be harmed by a worse.”²⁷¹
- “But this man [Meletus] no doubt supposes, and others too, that these [death and banishment] are great evils,”²⁷²
- “while I [Socrates] do not suppose that they [death and banishment] are [great evils].”²⁷³

²⁶⁵ “oimai de kai airēsei,” *Apology*, 28b1

²⁶⁶ “epeidē eipen hē mētēr autō prothumoumenō Hektora apokteinai, theos ousa, houtōsi pōs, hōs egō oimai,” *Apology*, 28c4-5

²⁶⁷ “mē auton oiei phrontisai thanatou kai kindunou,” *Apology*, 28d4-5

²⁶⁸ “tou de theou tattontos, hōs egō ōēthēn te kai hupelabon, philosophounta me dein zēn kai esketazonta emauton kai tous allous,” *Apology*, 28e4-6

²⁶⁹ “kai egō oiōmai ouden pō hūmin meizon agathon genesthai en tē polei ē tēn emēn tō theō hupērsian,” *Apology*, 30a5-6

²⁷⁰ “kai gar, hōs egō oimai, onēsesthe akouontes,” *Apology*, 30c3-4

²⁷¹ “ou gar oiōmai themiton einai ameinoni andri hupo cheironos blaptesthai,” *Apology*, 30c8-d1

²⁷² “alla tauta houtos men isōs oietai kai allos tis pou megala kaka...” *Apology*, 30d2-3

²⁷³ “...ego d’ouk oiōmai,” *Apology* 30d3

- “I [Socrates] am now far from making a defense speech on my own behalf, as someone [jurymen] might suppose.”²⁷⁴
- “For, I [Socrates] suppose, I offer a sufficient witness that I speak the truth: my poverty.”²⁷⁵
- “I [Socrates] supposed that I must run the risk with the law and the just rather than side with you because of fear of prison or death,”²⁷⁶
- “Do you [jurymen] suppose, then, that I [Socrates] would have survived so many years if I had been publicly active,”²⁷⁷
- “For I [Socrates] at least did not suppose it [the guilty vote] would be by so little...”²⁷⁸
- “Since, as I [Socrates] suppose, if you had a law like other persons, not to judge anyone in a matter of death in one day alone, but over many, you would be persuaded.”²⁷⁹
- “Perhaps you suppose, men of Athens, that I [Socrates] have been convicted because I was at a loss for the sort of speeches that would have persuaded you, if I had supposed that I should do and say anything to escape the penalty.”²⁸⁰
- “But neither did I [Socrates] then suppose that I should do anything unsuitable to a free man because of the danger,”²⁸¹

²⁷⁴ “pollou deō egō huper emautou apologeisthai, hōs tis an oioito,” *Apology*, 30d5-6

²⁷⁵ “ikanon gar, oimai, egō parechomai ton martura hōs alēthē legō, tēn penian.” *Apology*, 31c2-3

²⁷⁶ “nomou kai tou dikaiou ōmen mallon me dein diakinduneuein ē meth’ humōn genesthai mē dikaiā bouleuomenōn,” *Apology*, 32c1-2

²⁷⁷ “ar oun an me oisthe tosade etē diagenesthai ei epatton ta dēmosia” *Apology*, 32e2-3

²⁷⁸ “ou gar ōmēn egōge houtō gar oligon esesthai alla para polu...” *Apology*, 36a4-5

²⁷⁹ “epeī, hōs egōmai, ei ēn hūmin nomos, hōsper kai allois anthrōpois, peri thanatou mē mian hēmeran monon krinein alla pollas, epeisthēte an” *Apology*, 37a6-b1

²⁸⁰ “isōs me oiesthe, ō andres Athēnaioi, aporia logōn healōkenai toioutōn hois an humas epeisa, ei ōmēn dein hapanta poiein kai legein hōste apophugein tēn dikēn.” *Apology*, 38d3-5

²⁸¹ “oute tote ōmēthēn dein heneka tou kindunou praxai ouden aneleutheron,” *Apology*, 38e2-3

- “Perhaps these things [the verdict] even had to be so, and I suppose there is due measure in them.”²⁸²
- “For you [jurymen] have now done this deed [rendering the verdict] supposing that you would be released from giving an account of your life,”²⁸³
- “For you [jurymen] suppose that by killing persons you will prevent someone from reproaching you for not living correctly, you are not nobly minded”²⁸⁴
- “Now, you [jurymen] yourselves see what has occurred to me [Socrates], these very things [verdict and sentence] which someone might suppose to be, and are believed to be, extreme evils,”²⁸⁵
- “For I [Socrates] suppose that if someone had to select that night in which he slept so soundly that he did not even dream...”²⁸⁶
- “...then I suppose that the Great King [King of Persia] himself, not to mention some private man, would discover that they [sound, dreamless sleeps] are easy to count,”²⁸⁷
- “...take it correctly who suppose [incorrectly] that being dead is bad,”²⁸⁸
- “As I suppose, it [going to heroes’ heaven] would not be unpleasant.”²⁸⁹

²⁸² “tauta men pou isōs houtōs kai edei schein, kai oimai auta metriōs exein,” *Apology*, 39b6

²⁸³ “nun gar touto eirgasthe oiomenoi men apallaxesthai tou didonai elegchon tou biou” *Apology*, 39c6-7

²⁸⁴ “ei gar oiesthe apokteinontes anthrōpous epischēsein tou oneidizein tina humin hoti ouk orthōs zēte, ou kalōs dianoeisthe,” *Apology*, 39d3-5

²⁸⁵ “nuni de sumbebēke moi haper ‘orate kai autoi, tauti ha ge dē oiētheiē an tis kai nomizetai eschata kakōn einai,” *Apology*, 40a6-8

²⁸⁶ “egō gar an oimai, ei tina eklexamenon deoi tautēn tēn nukta en hē houtō katedarthen hōste mēde onar idein,” *Apology*, 40d2-3

²⁸⁷ “oimai an mē hoti idiōtēn tina, alla ton megan basilea euarithmētous,” *Apology*, 40d7-8

²⁸⁸ “osoi oiometha kakon einai to tethnanai,” *Apology*, 40c1

²⁸⁹ “ōs egō oimai, ouk an aēdes eiē,” *Apology*, 41b4

- “And yet it was not with this thought in my [Socrates’] mind that they [jurymen] voted to condemn me and accused me: rather, they supposed they would harm me.”²⁹⁰
- “...or if they [my sons] suppose they are something when they are worth nothing [reproach them].”²⁹¹

There are a few cases which are more nuanced. The first is when Socrates proposes that Meletus supposes the jurymen are ignorant.²⁹² Socrates states that Meletus supposes incorrectly about the jurymen’s knowledge: the jurymen do not know Anaxagoras’ writings from Socrates’s philosophizing. In this case, *oiomai* is being used as a third person incorrect supposition. Another case is where Socrates is describing a hypothetical scenario where this trial would be justified, in a case where he supposed himself wise but in fact was not.²⁹³ Like when Socrates uses *dokeō* where sometimes Meletus or others *seem* to have some characteristic like nobility or virtue, this is a case where Socrates is *supposing* he has this virtue of *sophia*, but as this is a hypothetical contrary to fact, it does not reach the level of second-order usage of *oiomai*. There is a similar construction that Socrates uses to indicate second-order knowledge of his own. Similarly, Socrates uses this same construction to talk about the possible heaven that awaits him, where he can examine those dead heroes and discover “who among them is wise and who supposes he is but is not.”²⁹⁴

²⁹⁰ “kaitoi ou tautē tē dianoia katepsēphizonto mou kai katēgoroun, all’ oiomenoi blappein,” *Apology*, 41d7-8

²⁹¹ “kai oiontai ti einai ontes oudenos axioi,” *Apology*, 41e6-7

²⁹² “kai houtō kataphroneis tōnde kai oiei autous apeirous grammatōn einai hōste ouk eidēnai,” “And do you so much despise these men here and suppose that they are so inexperienced in letters...” *Apology*, 26d5-6

²⁹³ ““oti ou nomizō theous einai apeithōn ē manteia kai dediōs thanaton kai oiomenos sophos einai ouk ōn.” *Apology*, 29a3-4

²⁹⁴ “tis autōn sophos estin kai tis oietai men, estin d’ou.” *Apology*, 41b6-7

3.3.2.4 *Sunoida*

In the *Apology* Socrates never uses *oida* as a second-order knowledge verb. *Sunoida*, a compound of the prefix *sun-* (“with”) and *oida* (to know), is used in a few cases of second-order knowledge.²⁹⁵ Most of the time throughout the *Apology* when Socrates switches to second-order knowledge he uses *oiomai* instead of *sunoida*. This could in part be because of the more uncertain nature of thinking about reflexive thinking and his professed Socratic ignorance: it is rare to find a single thing that Socrates knows on a first-order level, much less something Socrates knows that he knows. But the switch to *oiomai* cannot be explained merely as a decrease in orders of certainty, because otherwise Socrates could just use the word *dokeō*, that he seems to know something, or that Meletus seems to know something. Instead, Socrates chooses to use the word *oiomai*, that he supposes he knows. I will expand on this shortly, after the instances of *sunoida* in the *Apology*:

- “For I [Socrates] know about myself/For I am conscious that I am not at all wise, either much or little.”²⁹⁶
- “I [Socrates] knew about myself/I was conscious that I knew nothing [of craft].”²⁹⁷
- “...that they [jurymen] know/are conscious/recognize that Meletus speaks falsely, while I [Socrates] am being truthful?”²⁹⁸

Often this compound verb *sunoida* is translated “I am conscious of,”²⁹⁹ which is helpfully distinct from mere knowing and contains a reflexive property essential to second-order

²⁹⁵ Woodruff, 1990, p. 62, Footnote 3; *Phaedrus*, 235c7

²⁹⁶ “egō gar dē oute mega oute smikron sunoida emautō sophos ōn,” *Apology*, 21b3-4

²⁹⁷ “emautō gar sunēdē ouden epistamenō hōs epos eipein,” *Apology*, 22c8-d1

²⁹⁸ “hoti sunisasi Melētō men pseudomenō, emoi de alētheuonti?” *Apology*, 34b4-5

²⁹⁹ Wests’ translation (*Four Texts on Socrates*), p. 71 (*Apology*, 22c8-d1)

knowledge. It is not merely knowing (or not knowing) how to make a vase, but being conscious that you know (or do not know) how to make a vase.

The above are the only places we see *oida* used as a second-order knowledge indicator in the *Apology*, when it is *sunoida*. The *Apology* is more focused on negative knowledge—Socrates not supposing to know what he does not, or the citizens of Athens supposing to know what they do not.

3.3.2.5 *Oiimai* & *Oida*

For uses of *oiimai* in cases of second-order thinking, it is not a matter of needing to trust context to determine when Socrates uses a knowledge word such as *oida* or *oiimai* to mean first- or second-order thinking. Instead, a knowledge word such as *oida* is paired with a thinking word like *oiimai*. Context-independently that is an indication that Socrates is referring to second-order knowledge. Socrates does indeed have a concept of second- vs first-order knowledge because this is indicated by examining his grammar and vocabulary. These two arguments the key focus of this section. The next chapter will argue for an idea of Socratic knowledge that encompasses both positive and negative second-order knowledge.

There are a few instances where Socrates refers to someone else “supposing” about their own thinking. These would be cases of second-order thought—not necessarily knowledge, because often when Socrates speaks of someone else’s thinking they are, in fact, wrong. These constructions are more common in the *Apology*, where so much of knowledge is defined negatively by instances of people being wrong about what they suppose they know. But, just because they are wrong does not preclude this from second-order thinking processes: these individuals are thinking about their own thinking, but they

are also making errors. Error is not unfamiliar to Socratic philosophy; Socrates states in the *Apology* that if he is in error about improving the youth, he ought to be corrected, not punished, because no one including himself would knowingly make the youth worse.³⁰⁰ Error in belief is a persistent theme in the *Apology*, so it is no small wonder that it is present when Socrates speaks about second-order thinking.

When referring to his past spent examining the supposed knowledgeable citizens of Athens, Socrates does not question those who profess ignorance, or even those who *other* people think are knowledgeable. Instead he seeks out those citizens who *suppose themselves* to have knowledge. Socrates points to this as the main difference between himself and the people he interrogates: it is not a matter of a politician or craftsman having some particular knowledge-set that Socrates does not. Some may—Socrates speaks positively of craftsmen who do indeed have skills or knowledge that he does not.³⁰¹ If they stopped there, Socrates would not be wiser than these people. w Last of the third-person “supposing,” Socrates refers back to his examinations when explaining why he would often gather a group of youths around him. It was because “they enjoy hearing men examined who suppose they are wise,”³⁰² but are not. In this case the “supposing” is paired not with “knowing” (*oidaleidenai*) but instead “wise” (*sophois*). This is another instance of second-order thinking because Socrates refers back to the same incidents with the same men.

Finally are the first-personal uses of *oiomai* in the *Apology*. All second-order thinking in the *Apology* is predicated by two thinking words. Some combination of *oiomai*

³⁰⁰ *Apology*, 25d-26a

³⁰¹ *Apology*, 22d7

³⁰² “*oti akouontes chairousin exetazomenois tois oiomenois men einai sophois,*” *Apology*, 33c2-3

and *oída* is the most common construction in the *Apology*, as Socrates is hesitant to claim that he knows he knows anything. Therefore this combination of “I suppose I know” or “I do not suppose I know” is the most common way we see Socrates express second-order beliefs in the *Apology*. Note how this differs from the usages of *dokeō*: when Socrates speaks about others knowledge, he is not performing a second-order task: he is saying Meletus seems to be courageous or Meletus seems to know what he does not. But when speaking about second-order beliefs, Socrates switches to *oiomai*. Even in those rare cases where there can be a third-personal assessment of second-order knowledge, such as “Meletus supposes that he knows,” Socrates uses the third person form of *oiomai*. But as these are first-personal instances, these are all instances where Socrates is thinking about his own thinking. The quintessential instance of this is when Socrates makes a shift from speaking third personally about how some politician he interrogated “seems to be wise,” to the other citizens of Athens.³⁰³ Socrates uses *dokeō* here to talk about how the politician’s characteristic of wisdom “seems” to others. The use of *dokeō* here is because this is first-order knowledge. Then in the next sentence Socrates switches from “seems” (*dokeō*) to “supposes” (*oiomai*): “And then I tried to show him that he supposed he was wise, but was not.”³⁰⁴ The shift from *dokeō* to *oiomai* is because Socrates switches from speaking about first-order thinking to second-order thinking. An outsider thinking about this politician is not engaging in second-order thinking when he notes that the politician seems wise. But the politician himself, thinking about his own wisdom, *is* engaging in second-order thinking. Therefore, when Socrates switches from talking about how the

³⁰³ “edoxe moi houtos ho anēr dokein men einai sophos allois te pollois anthrōpois kai malista heautō, einai d’ ou,” *Apology*, 21c5-7

³⁰⁴ “kapeita epeirōmēn autō deiknunai hoti oioito men einai sophos, eiē d’ ou.” *Apology*, 21c7-8

politician “seems” (*dokeō*) to others, to how the politician thinks about his own thinking, now we see the switching to *oiomai*, “supposes” himself wise, he uses different words because there is a difference between first- and second-order thinking.

Socrates states famously that “...that what I do not know, I do not suppose I know either.”³⁰⁵ This is a sentence that is constructed with both third-personal and first-personal instances of *oiomai* being used to indicate second-order thinking. Socrates states that “...but he supposes he knows something when he does not know,”³⁰⁶ where he uses *oiomai* in the third person “*oietai*” to describe the citizen’s second-order belief about his own knowledge. Then Socrates continues: “...and I, whereas I do not know, neither do I suppose I know,”³⁰⁷ now speaking first-personally about his own second-order thinking, that does not suppose he knows when he does not know. This is a negative construction of second-order knowledge. One salient reason for the switch between these two somewhat-synonymous verbs would be because Socrates switches between first- and second-order knowledge. The first half of the sentence uses two different aspects of *dokeō*: first, the man Socrates is interrogating seems wise to others; second, the man seems to Socrates to seem wise to others.³⁰⁸ This is both a third-personal and first-personal use of *dokeō*: the man seems a way to Socrates, or “seems to me;” as well as seems wise to others “seemed to be wise, both to many other people and most of all to

³⁰⁵ “oti ha mē oida oude iomai eidenai.” “...that what I do not know, I do not think I know either.” *Apology*, 21d7

³⁰⁶ “alla houtos men oietai ti eidenai ouk eidōs,” “...but he supposes he knows something when he does not know,” *Apology*, 21d6

³⁰⁷ “egō de, hōsper oun ouk oida, oude iomai,” “...and I, whereas I do not know, neither do I suppose I know,” *Apology*, 21d7

³⁰⁸ “edoxe moi houtos ho anēr dokein men einai sophos allois te pollois anthrōpois kai malista heautō, einai d’ ou...” “It seemed to me that this man seemed to be wise, both to many other people and most of all to himself...” *Apology*, 21c5-6

himself”³⁰⁹. But then, the next half of the sentence switches to using the verb *oiomai* (in the third-personal form *oioito*) to describe how the man thinks about his own wisdom. Instead of “it seemed (*dokeō*) to me that this man seemed (*dokeō*) to be wise-”³¹⁰ Socrates switches to “And then I tried to show him that he supposed he was wise-”³¹¹ with “supposed” being the verb *oioito* (*oiomai* in the third person). The rest of the sentence remains the same surrounding that one verb switch. In the Greek it goes from *dokein men einai sophos*, or “seemed on the one hand to be wise” to *oioito men einai sophos*, or “supposed on the one hand to be wise.” The only difference lies in the switch from Socrates thinking about how another person’s wisdom seemed to him, versus thinking about how other person’s wisdom seems to himself. The difference between thinking about how another person’s wisdom seems to Socrates versus how another person’s wisdom seems to himself is the difference between first- and second-order knowledge: the third-personal experience of thinking about how someone else’s knowledge seems is first-order knowledge; while the first-personal experience of thinking about one’s own knowledge is second-order knowledge. The switch in word choice between these two parts of the sentence corresponds to the switch from first- to second-order knowledge.

Most positive second-order beliefs in the *Apology* are incorrect and third-personal—politicians or craftsmen supposing they know something (when they do not). In a variation of this, Socrates later states that Meletus incorrectly accuses him of being an atheist, fearing death, and of “supposing that I am wise when I am not.”³¹² This

³⁰⁹ *Apology*, 21c5-6

³¹⁰ *Apology*, 21c5-6

³¹¹ “...kapeita epeirōmēn autō deiknunai hoti oioti men einai sophos, eiē d’ ou.” “And then I tried to show him that he supposed he was wise, but was not.” *Apology*, 21c8-9

³¹² “hoti ou nomizō theous einai apeithōn tē manteia kai dediōs thanaton kai oiomenos sophos einai ouk ōn.” “Saying that I do not believe that there are gods, since I would be disobeying the divination, and fearing death, and supposing that I am wise when I am not.” *Apology*, 29a3-4

Socrates denies and presents as the opposite of who he is: he does not engage in this incorrect second-order thinking, supposing he is wise when he is not, but instead only ever does *not* suppose he knows when he does not.

The last time Socrates talks first-personally about his own second-order thinking is concerning the afterlife, after he receives his sentence. As part of his argument against fear of death he once again states that when he does not know something he does not suppose he knows.³¹³ Since he does not know what happens in the afterlife, he does not suppose that he knows what happens in the afterlife. This prevents him from feeling fear with regards to death through a series of arguments which are more questionable but irrelevant to the topic of his second-order thinking.

Another instance where Socrates switches between *dokeō* and *oiomai* that indicates this first- and second-order thinking shift is when he speaks about a hypothetical other man who is before the jury. That man, at the beginning of this excerpt seems to have some quality, reported by *dokeō*, as expected: “*hoiousper egō pollakis heōraka tinas hotan krinōntai, dokountas men ti einai.*”³¹⁴ As the construction of the sentence indicates, Socrates is setting up a “they seemed this way, but in *fact*–” turn. The second half of the sentence reads: “*thaumasia de ergazomenous, hōs deinon ti oiomenous peisesthai ei apothanountai, hōsper athanatōn esomenōn an hūmeis autous mē apokteinēte,*”³¹⁵ where we find out that actually these men are not the virtuous men they seemed to be.

³¹³ “kai ei dē tō sophōteros tou phaiēn einai, toutō an, hoti ouk eidōs ‘ikanōs peri tōn en Haidou houtō kai oiomai ouk eidenai.” “...and if I were to say that I am wiser than anyone in anything, it would be in this: that since I do not know sufficiently about the things in Hades, so also I suppose that I do not know.” *Apology*, 29b4-6

³¹⁴ “I have often seen some who are just like this when they are judged: although they seem to be something...” *Apology*, 35a3-5

³¹⁵ “...they do wondrous deeds, since they suppose that they will suffer something terrible if they die.” *Apology*, 35a5-6

Importantly, Socrates says that these men “suppose they will suffer something terrible,” and Socrates uses *oiomenous* here. In this case it is being used to describe what these men think of themselves, in contrast to the *dokeō* which is used to describe what *others* think of them. Socrates did not have to switch verbs here—he could just conjugate *dokeō* in the first person and third person, something like “these men seem this way to us; these men seem this way to themselves.” But instead he changes his word choice to *oiomai* to describe the first-personal experience of what the men think of themselves. It is not a shift between first- and second-order thinking, but rather a switch between an outsider perspective, *dokeō*, and the first-personal perspective, *oiomenous*.

3.4 Significance

Socrates has concepts of both first- and second-order knowledge throughout his body of work, and this is evident with a close reading of the *Apology*. An analysis of the vocabulary he chose and deployed, coupled with the words Socrates paired together in particular contexts, gives a picture of a man who had a clear idea of the distinction between knowledge and knowledge-of-knowledge. When Socrates speaks about craftsmen knowing fine and good things, or jurymen knowing the laws, he is referencing first-order knowledge. The scope of first-order knowledge is limited in the *Apology*, which makes sense thematically as this is a work that begins with Socrates declaring “I do not know” and disavowing the knowledge Meletus and others accused him of claiming. In contrast, when Socrates speaks about what he supposes he knows (or, more often, does *not* suppose he knows), he is referencing second-order knowledge. Again, there is a limited scope to this: most often in the *Apology* Socrates claims to *not* suppose that he

knows, in contrast to those men he has examined who erroneously *do* suppose themselves to know.

A close reading of Socrates' word choice shows a consistent commitment to the distinction between first- and second-order knowledge. Socrates often pairs *oimai/oimai* ("supposes") with other thinking words such as *oida/eidenai* ("knows") when referencing second-order knowledge, i.e., he does not suppose himself to know about things in Hades when he does not. For first-order knowledge, Socrates will often speak more singularly about the activity of thought, i.e. he knows that it is good to obey one's betters. There is no pairing of "knows" in this case with another word, such as "supposing" he knows this information. Instead of understanding various knowledge verbs like *epistamai*, *eidenai*, *gignōsko*, &c. and nouns *sophia* and *epistemē* as being interchangeable,³¹⁶ the words Socrates pairs with "know" indicates whether he is speaking about first- or second-order knowledge. The grammatical construction of the suppose-knows is a consistent indicator of Socrates referencing second-order knowledge in the *Apology*.

Reeve's construction of Socratic wisdom is that there is negative and positive content. Reeve argues that "knowing that one does not know," as Socrates repeatedly avows throughout the *Apology* as well as other works, is the negative content of Socratic wisdom. While Reeve does not utilize the distinction between first- and second-order knowledge, this does not contradict Reeve's conception of Socratic wisdom in the *Apology* as the negative component of Socratic wisdom. Socrates' resistance to supposing he knows when he does not know is a resistance to claiming second-order knowledge when it is wholly absent. Socrates is still left with "negative" first-order content:

³¹⁶ Vlastos, 1985, p. 2, footnote 4

not knowing. This is not “content” in the traditional sense: Socrates’ resistance to supposing he knows when he does not know is a resistance to claiming second-order knowledge when it is absent.

By understanding Socrates as distinguishing between first- and second-order knowledge, this reveals the shape of the missing knowledge of Reeve’s challenge more clearly. Socrates speaks about his negative first-order content throughout the *Apology*. Socrates does not know anything fine and good, Socrates does not know if death is an ill, &c. These are first-order disavowals of knowledge, or Reeve’s negative content of Socratic wisdom. The few avowals of knowledge that Socrates makes, such as that it is good to obey one’s betters, Reeve dismisses as candidates for the positive content of Socratic wisdom. This left open the question of what the positive content of Socratic wisdom was. If the negative content of Socratic wisdom exists at the level of first-order knowledge, then perhaps Reeve’s positive content can be found in second-order knowledge.

The most notable second-order knowledge in the *Apology* is the Socratic awareness that he does not know. Although this awareness is *about* what Reeve would call “negative” content, the awareness itself is “positive” content: Socrates possesses the awareness that he does not know. Although Socrates does not make the claim for it in the *Apology*, there could also be second-order knowledge over positive content: knowledge that one knows something. This second-order knowledge over positive content is in part the focus of the *Charmides*.

Thus, the picture of Socratic wisdom is much clearer. There are four kinds of knowledge that Socrates may have: three categories of first-order knowledge, and two

categories of second-order knowledge. For first-order knowledge, there is Reeve's standard negative content, e.g. Socratic disavowals of knowledge, and positive content, e.g. Socrates' few avowals of knowledge. The third category is Socrates' refusal to "suppose" things he does not know, which is *also* negative content of Socratic wisdom, though not explicitly stated in Reeve's standard construction. Then there is the second-order knowledge, which includes Socrates supposing himself to know something, which would be second-order knowledge over positive content, and Socrates supposing himself not to know something, which would be second-order knowledge over negative content.

3.5 Conclusion

What Reeve argues is the "negative" content of self-knowledge is present as first-order knowledge in the *Apology*. This is captured in the Socratic dictum that "whatever I do not know, I do not even suppose I know." However, there is also second-order knowledge in the *Apology* with "positive" content: Socrates's awareness that he is wise about nothing. Therefore, Reeve's challenge is answered in part. There is knowledge with "positive" content in the *Apology*. However, that second-order knowledge is over a domain of what Reeve might term "negative" content. Therefore, Reeve's challenge remains only half-answered. I will now turn to the *Charmides* for the second half of this challenge, where there is second-order knowledge over a domain of what Reeve might understand as "positive" content.

The distinction that Socrates draws between first- and second-order knowledge is critical to understanding why Reeve was unable to find "positive" content of Socratic wisdom in the *Apology*. It is because Reeve conflated two different types of knowledge,

one of which was “negative” content, one of which was positive, when he argued that the Socratic elenchus was largely negative content.³¹⁷ The “negative” content was first-order knowledge of Socrates refusing to suppose he knows when he does not. The “positive” content was second-order knowledge of Socrates being aware that he was wise in nothing. Since being wise in “nothing” is “negative” content on the first-order level, there is still one more component of Socratic wisdom left to find in order to answer Reeve’s challenge: “positive” second-order knowledge which is over the domain of “positive” content. The positive content, as I will argue in Chapter 4, is *sōphrosunē* as found in the *Charmides*, when defined as knowledge-of-knowledge.

Finally, once I answer Reeve’s challenge and defend the positive content of self-knowledge as second-order knowledge of what one affirmatively knows, I will be able to return to Vlastos’ Socratic paradox. A negative and positive conception of second-order knowledge in Socrates forms a complete definition of Socratic wisdom which remains compatible with Socrates’s disavowal of knowledge. Socrates disavows having wisdom great or small, particularly of godly moral knowledge. But first-personal second-order knowledge is not godly knowledge: it is, definitionally, knowledge of a human, when performed by a human. Socrates’s wisdom is wisdom of Socrates himself: second-order knowledge that he knows and refusal to suppose what he does not know. This recontextualization of self-knowledge in terms of second-order knowledge allows a resolution to the paradox without presuming Socrates to know anything outside of what he states directly in the texts.

³¹⁷ Reeve, 1989, p. 45

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS: *CHARMIDES*

4.1 Introduction

The *Apology* provides a negative conception of Socratic wisdom: it is not supposing to know what one does not know. I have demonstrated that this can be recontextualized as a type of second-order knowledge: the knowledge that one does not know something. Socrates does draw a distinction between first and second-order knowledge in his language and content of the Socratic corpus. What is left is to discover the “positive” content of Socratic wisdom that Reeve left as a challenge to future scholars. I propose that this “positive” content is *sōphrosunē* as depicted in the *Charmides*: a type of self-knowledge that is particularly second-order knowledge of one’s own knowledge.

First I will give a brief history of the word and virtue itself: the etymology and development of different meanings and focuses of the virtue, from Homer through Plato. Helen North and others argue convincingly that a prominent aspect of the virtue in Plato is self-knowledge. Then I will give a detailed description of the ten definitions of *sōphrosunē* that are contained within the *Charmides*, including the supposed aporetic ending. Scholars debate if there is a definition of *sōphrosunē* which the *Charmides* is meant for the reader to come away with, and I will examine three different categories of these definitions: *sōphrosunē* definitions that are implicit in the text rather than explicit, *sōphrosunē* as self-knowledge, and *sōphrosunē* as knowledge-of-knowledge. I will particularly focus on the “positive” content of *sōphrosunē* as self-knowledge in order to answer Reeve’s challenge. In order to do this, I will demonstrate how recontextualizing

sōphrosunē as seen in the *Charmides* as second-order knowledge of what one knows is the correct understanding of self-knowledge in the dialogue. The issue of *sōphrosunē* as self-knowledge is already well-trod: my contribution is to narrow the content of self-knowledge to specifically the “positive” content of second-order awareness of one’s own knowledge. With this, I will have successfully answered Reeve’s challenge, thus presenting a complete understanding of Socratic wisdom as both second-order awareness that one does not know and second-order knowledge of what one knows.

4.2 History of *Sōphrosunē*

In order to understand the question “what is *sōphrosunē*?” in context, it is important to first understand the history of the word. As a word with no perfect modern translation, one way to understand both the literal and implicit meanings of the word, as well as the connotative meanings that a Greek would bring to the word, is by examining the etymology and history of it. The suffix “*phren*” connects the word to “mind,” indicating that “*sōphrosunē*,” contains an element of the mental to it.³¹⁸ In this way is elevated beyond mere bodily “continence,” a word which is often used to translate it in the vernacular. It is often used in contrast to “*mania*”, madness, further solidifying its connection to the mental³¹⁹. The prefix “*sō*” has a sense of sound or safe, thus the common modern translation “sound-mindedness.”³²⁰ The basic concept of *sōphrosunē* as one of controlling irrational aspects of the self implies, by contrast, that *sōphrosunē* has a rational element to it.³²¹

³¹⁸ Moore and Raymond, 2019, p. xxx

³¹⁹ Clark, 2018, p. 767

³²⁰ West and West, 1986, p. 6

³²¹ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 91

But a sole analysis of the etymology is not enough to understand the connotative history of the word that would be front of mind for any Greek reading the Socratic works. For instance, the etymological analysis does not illuminate the ethical aspects of the word, which are so central that Plato establishes it as one of the four central virtues in his *kallipolis*. A history of *sōphrosunē* in the cultural canon of any Greek contemporary with Plato will help to situate it as an ethical concept.

The first place *sōphrosunē* appears in extant literature is in Homer.³²² It appears four times: once in the *Iliad* and three times in the *Odyssey*. In each case in Homer *sōphrosunē* has a connotation of “good sense” or “prudence.”³²³ “Good sense” can relate to mental processes, whereas “prudence” relates more to moral ones. At the same time, in Homer there is little distinction between the mental and the moral.³²⁴ For instance, in the *Odyssey* Penelope says “My dear Nurse, the gods have made you mad, the gods who can make foolish [*aphron*] even one who is exceedingly sensible [*epiphron*] and who have brought the light-minded [*chaliphroneon*] to *saophrosune*.”³²⁵ Here, *sōphrosunē* is contrasted with an undesirable mental character of “light-mindedness”, and paralleled in the first half of the sentence with “foolish” contrasted to “sensible.” This would indicate a mental aspect to *sōphrosunē* that speaks ill of one’s character.³²⁶ A later use of *sōphrosunē* in the same scene again associates *sōphrosunē* with prudence,³²⁷ though North (1966) argues the use of the substantive plural associates this use of *sōphrosunē* with Telemachus’ actions rather than purely an intellectual exercise.³²⁸

³²² Moore and Raymond, 2019, p. xxix

³²³ Moore and Raymond, 2019, p. xxx

³²⁴ Moore and Raymond, 2019, p. xxx

³²⁵ *Odyssey*, 23. 11-13

³²⁶ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 3

³²⁷ *Odyssey*, 23. 30

³²⁸ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 5

In the *Iliad*, North argues, a particular use of *sōphrosunē* is the first time “self-knowledge” becomes a part of the meaning in the extant literature.³²⁹ Apollo replies to Poseidon’s challenge to battle “Earth-shaker, you would not consider me *saophron*, if I were to fight with you for the sake of wretched mortals.”³³⁰ Apollo, god of knowledge, is both being prudential in his refusal to fight Poseidon, but also demonstrating a knowledge of himself and his status both among the gods and separate from mortals.³³¹ The fact that “Know thyself” later becomes Apollo’s dictum at his temple in Delphi is, perhaps, not insignificant.³³²

In other contexts, non-philosophers used *sōphrosunē* to mean different things. Euripides often employs *sōphrosunē* to mean self-control, specifically in terms of sexual chastity.³³³ “Know that whoever ruins another’s wife, in secret love, and then is forced to take her himself, is pitiable, if he thinks that the *sōphronein* which did not govern her before will do so with him.”³³⁴ This is not the only subject-matter Euripides describes *sōphrosunē* as ruling over, but as sexual passion is a common theme in his plays, it is also a common subject of the virtue.³³⁵ At the same time, the intellectual components of *sōphrosunē* are key to the tragedy of Hippolytus in his titular play. Although Hippolytus is a model of chastity and therefore possesses that aspect of *sōphrosunē*, he lacks the intellectual component of knowing himself (*gnothi sauton*). This leads to his tragic downfall, ignoring Aphrodite’s legitimate claims and his immoderate rejection of

³²⁹ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 5

³³⁰ *Iliad*, 21. 462-464

³³¹ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 5

³³² North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 5

³³³ Euripides, *Electra* 923, 1080, 1099. For a complete list, see North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 89 Footnote 105

³³⁴ *Electra*, 923

³³⁵ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 89

Phaedra.³³⁶ Similarly in his play the *Bacchae*, Euripides examines the tragedy of *sōphrosunē* only partly possessed. Pentheus possesses (or believes himself to possess) chastity and sobriety, but is brought low by the end of the play because he lacks the intellectual aspects of *sōphrosunē* such as self-knowledge and understanding.³³⁷ Thus by the time of Euripides, to the average Greek *sōphrosunē* consists at least in part in self-knowledge, for Euripides to utilize it to thematic end in his tragedies.

The sophistic age in the decades just before Plato's lifetime brought a reexamination of traditional values, especially by sophists looking to prove their expertise in argumentation. Much like Gordon Gecko arguing "Greed is good," in late twentieth century America, sophists like Protagoras, Antiphon, and Callicles challenged traditional mores to declare "*sōphrosunē* is cowardice."³³⁸

Protagoras is the first extant record of an analysis of *sōphrosunē* as a virtue of the state, not just the individual. As a political art, North argues that Protagoras takes *sōphrosunē* to be synonymous with shame (*aidōs*).³³⁹ Moore and Raymond (2019) point to Socrates' gloss of *sōphrosunē* as "acting correctly and beneficially" in the *Protagoras* as a definition with which the sophist agrees.³⁴⁰ Later in the dialogue Socrates introduces his theory of the unity of virtues, with *sōphrosunē*, wisdom, courage, &c. all different but united facets of virtue.³⁴¹ Potentially this marks *sōphrosunē* as some kind of knowledge, but the dialogue leaves that discussion as unanswerable for the time being.³⁴² When

³³⁶ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 94

³³⁷ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 97

³³⁸ North, 1947, p. 9

³³⁹ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 101

³⁴⁰ Moore and Raymond, 2019, p. xxvii

³⁴¹ *Protagoras*, 359b

³⁴² *Protagoras*, 361c

Charmides defines *sōphrosunē* as shame (*aidōs*) in the *Charmides*,³⁴³ it is not a definition original to his mind, but instead one that Plato is utilizing to draw a connection between different contexts. In the *Protagoras*, Plato depicts the elder sophist as agreeing that *sōphrosunē* is something like acting correctly and beneficially. In the *Charmides*, the titular young man's second definition is along a similar vein. This connection between two Platonic works demonstrates that, to Plato at least, the idea of social shame and proper behavior is a common contemporary understanding of *sōphrosunē*.

In Antiphon there is the first formal definition of *sōphrosunē* that is still known today. The primary function of *sōphrosunē*, according to him, is control of the passions.³⁴⁴ Throughout his surviving fragments, Antiphon reveals three separate definitions of *sōphrosunē*, all of which appear to be common uses of the word at the time.³⁴⁵ First, when speaking on the problems of marriage,³⁴⁶ Antiphon twice uses *sōphrosunē* to mean “outward reputation, won by good moral conduct.”³⁴⁷ This is an external value of *sōphrosunē* as a kind of proper shame or modesty—a quality that previous writers associated *sōphrosunē* with before Antiphon. Next, Antiphon describes a *sōphrōn* man who chooses not to harm his neighbor after deliberating the consequences.³⁴⁸ This man is *sōphrōn* or *sōphronesteros*, or a kind of prudent with regards to himself and his own well-being.³⁴⁹ This reflexive quality of *sōphrosunē* is key to some of the latter definitions Socrates and Critias explore in the *Charmides*.³⁵⁰ The third definition of *sōphrosunē* that

³⁴³ *Charmides*, 160e5

³⁴⁴ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 101

³⁴⁵ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 105

³⁴⁶ Antiphon, Fragment 49

³⁴⁷ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 104

³⁴⁸ Antiphon, Fragment 58

³⁴⁹ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 104

³⁵⁰ *Charmides*, 166e5-6

Antiphon offers is self-control, in the context mastery of desires and psychic conflict.³⁵¹ This definition harkens back to the key elements in many of Euripides tragedies, where the conflict between the passions and reason are the downfall of his characters.³⁵² It also contains the reflexive quality of his second definition. North argues that all three definitions Antiphon is utilizing common definitions of *sōphrosunē* at the time: he is not radically reevaluating the virtue or how we use the word.³⁵³

By the time immediately before and partially contemporaneous with Plato, playwrights like Aristophanes and Sophocles were satirizing the immorality of the sophists including their rejection of *sōphrosunē* as a virtue and transformation of it into a vice.³⁵⁴ In his *Clouds*, Aristophanes uses the Unjust Arguments to give voice to the sophistic rejection of *sōphrosunē* as an old virtue that is essentially chastity and denial of physical pleasures.³⁵⁵ North even argues that the conversation between Charmides and Socrates in his *Charmides* parallels the conversation between the Just Argument and Unjust Argument in Aristophanes' *Clouds*.³⁵⁶ On the matter of *sōphrosunē*, the outcomes of play and dialogue are contrary.³⁵⁷

The contrast between Athens and Sparta is a main theme throughout Thucydides' *History*. Throughout, Thucydides associates *sōphrosunē* as a Spartan virtue in contrast to Athens' *metrios* (civic moderation).³⁵⁸ In his *History*, *sōphrosunē* is the virtue of the aristocratic oligarchs. It is sound and conservative political consideration, in contrast to

³⁵¹ Antiphon, Fragment 59

³⁵² North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 105

³⁵³ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 105

³⁵⁴ North, 1947, p. 8

³⁵⁵ Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 1071-1074

³⁵⁶ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 115

³⁵⁷ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 115

³⁵⁸ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 120

the more vigorous and bold action of the Athenian democracy.³⁵⁹ In the most ungenerous interpretation, Spartan *sōphrosunē* is lethargic compared to Athenian vigor, and ignorant because of its conservative resistance to changing the status quo.³⁶⁰ Archidamus defends Spartan *sōphrosunē* against accusations of unmanliness or cowardice, and advises his fellow Spartans that there is no shame in a policy of slowness and caution.³⁶¹ He contrasts it with the vice of *hubris*. While others such as the Corinthians say *sōphrosunē* results in sluggishness and reluctance to act, “Archidamus calls it prudent deliberation.”³⁶²

Thucydides’ *History* gives a clear account of the common Athenian understanding of *sōphrosunē* at the time of Alcibiades and Socrates. It is a virtue of oligarchs, not democrats. The restoration of the oligarchy in Thasos and other cities is described as the state acquiring *sōphrosunē*. The meaning of *sōphrosunē* as “chastity” is completely absent from Thucydides, though as he is writing a political history rather than a psycho-sexual tragedy, this makes sense.³⁶³ Instead, *sōphrosunē* is the virtue of a disciplined, moderate, stable government. It does not act rashly due to irrational whims of its citizens.³⁶⁴ But the Athenian democrat, *sōphrosunē* has undergone a transvaluation of meaning, and is the vice of cowardice, over-intellectual deliberation, and reluctance to act.³⁶⁵ “[M]odesty, the cloak of cowardice; to be wise in everything, to be lazy in everything.”³⁶⁶ By the time Plato writes the *Charmides*, he would be working against these

³⁵⁹ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 120

³⁶⁰ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 121

³⁶¹ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.84.1

³⁶² North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 122

³⁶³ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 134

³⁶⁴ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 135

³⁶⁵ North, 1947, p. 9

³⁶⁶ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 3.82

less favorable connotations of the virtue among his fellow Athenians, and as setting it as a virtue he is reestablishing an older way of understanding the word.³⁶⁷

In other contexts, pre-Socratic philosophers began the transition from equally mental and moral aspects of *sōphrosunē* to emphasize the mental aspects more.³⁶⁸ North argues that in the fifth century *sōphrosunē* seems to encapsulate as diverse meanings as good sense, moderation, self-knowledge, and a sort of anti-hubris restraint from excess or mania.³⁶⁹³⁷⁰ But in different contexts by different authors, *sōphrosunē* could be read with more specificity. For instance, instead of using *sōphrosunē* to mean “good sense,” philosophers such as Heraclitus used it to mean something more like “self-knowledge.”³⁷¹ This is tied to the “prudential” sense of *sōphrosunē* in the way that self-knowledge can be understood as the ability to make a plan in contrast to immediate impulses and reflect upon what is best for the person.³⁷² This connection to self-restraint extends not just to resisting the desire for unhealthy food or impulsive sex, but also restraining oneself according to the social norms of the day.³⁷³ In this way *sōphrosunē* relates to *aidōs* (having an appropriate sense of shame or modesty), which is Charmides’ second definition of it in his titular dialogue.³⁷⁴ In the same way that self-restraint requires an intellectual component of planning what the proper thing is for the self (healthy food, exercise, limitations on screentime, &c.), the social component of *sōphrosunē* also

³⁶⁷ North, 1947, p. 15

³⁶⁸ North, 1966 (2019 ed), p. 31

³⁶⁹ North, 1947, p. 3

³⁷⁰ Tuzzo, 2011, p. 90

³⁷¹ Heraclitus, Fragment 116 (DK); Fragment 112

³⁷² Annas, 1985, p. 119

³⁷³ Tuzzo, 2011, p. 90-91

³⁷⁴ Tuzzo, 2011, p. 91

requires the self-knowledge of one's social standing in society and what is expected of a person of such standing.³⁷⁵

By the time of the *Charmides* *sōphrosunē* is both understood as an older core virtue, but one which has fallen out of fashion and can be seen as weakness at its extremes. As a virtue it makes a reasonable subject of a Socratic dialogue, and its recent storied past makes for a not uncontroversial subject to examine. More so than a virtue like courage, there is a strong intellectual aspect to *sōphrosunē*, in part because of its etymology, in part because of its link to knowing the self. *Sōphrosunē* is not a mere matter of willpower or control, but an intellectual exercise of some kind. Not only is it an intellectual activity, but it is a self-reflexive one. But unlike the virtue of wisdom or justice, it is not merely an intellectual activity. Although all the virtues, especially as Plato defines them, have intellectual components to them, they exist on a spectrum of least to most intellectual. Courage, although it has intellectual components to it,³⁷⁶ is less a solely intellectual exercise than wisdom. *Sōphrosunē* exists on this spectrum—there is the bodily control aspect to it, as Socrates demonstrates in controlling his reaction to the physical charms of Charmides, but there is also an inherently intellectual aspect to the virtue. The usage history of the word in the cultural canon of the ancient world places it somewhere between courage and wisdom—it controls the self, which includes the physical desires of the self. But it does so by not mere strength, but through some kind of intellectual exercise. All of these disparate aspects of the word come together in the *Charmides*.

³⁷⁵ Tuzzo, 2011, p. 93

³⁷⁶ *Laches*, 192d-194

4.3 *Sōphrosunē* in *Charmides*

The *Charmides* contains a multitude of definitions and variations on definitions of *sōphrosunē*. There are five major definitions, four sub-definitions, and one hypothetical definition posited in order to examine if *sōphrosunē* is beneficial or not. The latter definitions, particularly the ones which are concerned with knowing and knowledge, are most relevant to the overarching discussion of positive and negative Socratic wisdom.

The initiating premise of the discussion in the *Charmides* is that if *sōphrosunē* is present inside someone—i.e. if they are *sōphrōn*—then they will possess a belief about it.³⁷⁷

“For it is clear that if *sōphrosunē* is present to you, you can offer some opinion about it. For surely it is necessary that it, being in you, if it is in you, would furnish some perception from which you have some opinion about it as to what and what sort of thing *sōphrosunē* is. Don’t you suppose so?”³⁷⁸

Socrates first asks if Charmides is *sōphrōn*. Critias, his uncle, assures Socrates that he is. Socrates introduces his premise that a quality being present in a person, such as *sōphrosunē*, causes the effect of that person having an opinion about it; specifically, about what it is and what kind of thing it is.³⁷⁹ Both Socrates and Charmides suppose this to be the case.

This presumption could seem like too large an inductive leap from the perspective of a modern audience; possessing a trait or quality does not necessarily mean the possessor would have an opinion about that trait or quality—a person could have blue

³⁷⁷ *Charmides*, 159a1

³⁷⁸ *Charmides*, 159a1-3, “Delon gar hoti ei soi parestin sōphrosunē, exeis ti peri autēs doxazein. Anagkē gar pou enousan autēn eiper enestin, aisthēsēsin tina parech ein, ex hēs doxa an tis soi peri autēs eiē hoti estin kai hopoion ti hē sōphrosunē: ē ouk oiei?”

³⁷⁹ *Charmides*, 159a1-3

eyes, and without a mirror or being told, they may never know they have blue eyes, nor hold a belief about blue eyes. But *sōphrosunē* is theoretically a virtue, which places it in a special category of quality. Being *sōphrōn* is not like being blue-eyed; therefore perhaps it has different effects on its possessors than other qualities.

The discussion in the *Charmides* differs from some of the other dialogue in one key way. Socrates begins the *Charmides* with the definitional question “what is *sōphrosunē*,” in order that he might discover if the titular Charmides possess the virtue. In other of the so-called definitional dialogues,³⁸⁰ often this process is reversed: the quality or attribute of a virtue is the starting point, and from there Socrates and an interlocuter work backwards until the main focus of the inquiry is the definition of the virtue itself. In the *Euthyphro*, Socrates and Euthyphro begin by examining if this activity Euthyphro is undertaking—prosecuting his father for the negligent death of a murderer—possesses the quality of piety,³⁸¹ and from there they work backwards until they find themselves seeking a definition of piety itself.³⁸² In the *Meno*, the initial discussion is over whether or not virtue possesses the quality of being teachable.³⁸³ From there the discussion evolves until they are asked the question of what is virtue itself.³⁸⁴ Similar developments occur in the *Laches* and *Lysis*.

Yet none of this explains why Socrates would assume that a possessor of *sōphrosunē* would know that they possessed it. Whether or not other virtues have this effect on their possessor—if the courageous woman knows she is courageous, or the

³⁸⁰ Tuozzo, p. 143

³⁸¹ *Euthyphro*, 4e1-2

³⁸² *Euthyphro*, 5d6

³⁸³ *Meno*, 70a1

³⁸⁴ *Meno*, 71d5

pious woman that she is pious—there is another reason, unique to *sōphrosunē*, that Socrates might suppose that imbues the *sōphrōn* individual with the knowledge that she is *sōphrōn*. If the definition of *sōphrosunē* at the conclusion of the dialogue is self-knowledge or self-awareness, which is a common definition of *sōphrosunē* at the time this dialogue was written, then having *sōphrosunē* would necessarily mean being aware that one had *sōphrosunē*. Socrates cannot articulate this argument at the beginning of the discussion, as they have yet to agree on any definition of *sōphrosunē*, much less one that includes self-knowledge. But it would be paradigmatic of *sōphrosunē* to be the one virtue which has as its effect on its possessor necessarily the awareness that one has it.

Socrates asks young Charmides if he believes himself to be *sōphrōn*, and Charmides demurs.³⁸⁵ Now the investigation begins in earnest, with the framing device of Socrates trying to determine if *sōphrosunē* is present in Charmides, but the actual thrust of the argument an attempt to determine what the definition of *sōphrosunē* is.

The first definition of *sōphrosunē* that Charmides offers is that temperance is a kind of quietness (*hēsuchiotes*) or doing things in a quiet way.³⁸⁶ Since the Greek word for “quietly” (*hēsucheī*) is also associated with “slowness,”³⁸⁷ Socrates inquires whether quietness and slowness are truly admirable traits.³⁸⁸ In specific contexts these traits may be admirable, but not all the time. Therefore Socrates and Charmides agree this first definition cannot be correct, since the opposite of quietness, “quickness and speed,” can

³⁸⁵ *Charmides*, 158c-158d

³⁸⁶ *Charmides*, 159b1-5

³⁸⁷ Sprague, *Charmides* 159c4, Footnote 4

³⁸⁸ *Charmides*, 159-160

be more admirable in certain contexts.³⁸⁹ As a virtue, *sōphrosunē* must be good at all times, regardless of context.

The second definition of *sōphrosunē* that Charmides gives is that *sōphrosunē* can be seen in its effect on people: those who are *sōphrōn* are ashamed and bashful, so *sōphrosunē* is a kind of shame (*aidos*).³⁹⁰ However again Socrates reveals that shame, although sometimes good, can be bad at times. Since *sōphrosunē* is a virtue it must always be good, regardless of context.

Definition three of *sōphrosunē* is “to do the things of oneself,”³⁹¹ or as it is sometimes more colloquially translated, “minding one’s own business.”³⁹² Socrates first asks that they define “to do the things of oneself” before they move on to evaluating it as a definition of *sōphrosunē* specifically. Socrates argues that “to do the things of oneself” cannot be narrowly interpreted, because to write only one’s own name or to do only one’s own laundry, house building, &c. would not lead to a functioning society.³⁹³ The conversation passes from Charmides to Critias here, and Critias argues that Socrates has conflated “making” and “doing.”³⁹⁴ Critias argues his definition of *sōphrosunē* includes craftsmen who “make” things for others (e.g. to make other’s work, such as a cobbler making a pair of shoes for someone else), but excludes craftsmen “doing” other’s things (e.g. doing the task of a different craft, such as a cobbler trying to build a ship).³⁹⁵ Critias further refines this definition, using Hesiod as a source, that *sōphrosunē* is the making of

³⁸⁹ *Charmides*, 160b3-5

³⁹⁰ *Charmides*, 160e3-5

³⁹¹ *Charmides*, 161b4-5

³⁹² Sprague, *Charmides* 161b4-5

³⁹³ *Charmides*, 161d-162b

³⁹⁴ *Charmides*, 163a8-9

³⁹⁵ *Charmides*, 163a5-7

one's own *good* things.³⁹⁶ Socrates expands this to include not just actions which result in a product (working or making) but “performing” any good actions is *sōphrōn*.³⁹⁷ Critias agrees, and this is the definition that they go on to examine: to have *sōphrosunē* is to perform good actions.³⁹⁸

The problem with definition three, once Socrates and Critias agree on the details of it, is a person's imperfect knowledge of causes. Socrates appeals to an example of a physician treating a patient but not knowing whether she has helped or harmed the patient in the moment.³⁹⁹ The fact that people have imperfect knowledge of causes, coupled with this third definition of *sōphrosunē* as doing one's own good work, means that the physician who does her own good action—curing a patient—would somehow practice *sōphrosunē* without knowing she was practicing it.⁴⁰⁰ This conflicts with Socrates' initial assumed premise, that a person with *sōphrosunē* would know that she had it. Realizing this, both Critias and Socrates reject this third definition of *sōphrosunē*.⁴⁰¹

The fourth definition of *sōphrosunē* incorporates Socrates' assumption that to possess a virtue is to know that one possesses it, and defines *sōphrosunē* as “to know oneself.”⁴⁰² Therefore, Socrates argues, this definition asserts that *sōphrosunē* is some kind of knowledge (*epistēme*), and particularly, a knowledge with a defined subject area.⁴⁰³ Critias explains that it is knowledge of oneself.⁴⁰⁴ But knowledge sets tend to produce some kind of result: knowledge of medicine produces good health, knowledge of

³⁹⁶ *Charmides*, 163b

³⁹⁷ *Charmides*, 163e1

³⁹⁸ *Charmides*, 163e4

³⁹⁹ *Charmides*, 164c1

⁴⁰⁰ *Charmides*, 164c6

⁴⁰¹ *Charmides*, 164c7-8

⁴⁰² *Charmides*, 164d4; “to gignōskein heauton”

⁴⁰³ *Charmides*, 165c5

⁴⁰⁴ *Charmides*, 165c6

housebuilding produces a house.⁴⁰⁵ Because of the earlier discussion, the results relevant to the discussion must be positive or beneficial results. Socrates then asks Critias what good result does *sōphrosunē*, or knowledge of the self, produce?⁴⁰⁶

Critias argues that this is a category error, and the particular type of knowledge of *sōphrosunē* is not like the knowledge of medicine or housebuilding, and therefore does not result in a product. He compares the *sōphrosunē* knowledge of the self to knowledge of geometry; mathematical knowledge does not produce a result in the same way knowledge of medicine produces health or knowledge of housebuilding produces a house. Socrates agrees, but asks then what is *sōphrosunē* knowledge “of,” in the same way that knowledge of calculation is knowledge of the odd and the even.⁴⁰⁷ An added criterion to this question is that Critias’ answer cannot be that *sōphrosunē* is knowledge of *sōphrosunē*, because every other knowledge has both a) a set of things that it is knowledge of, and b) an activity that practicing this knowledge is. In the case of mathematics, the odd and the even are the domain, and calculation is the activity.⁴⁰⁸ Therefore, Socrates expects there to be both a domain that *sōphrosunē* is knowledge of and also an activity of being *sōphrōn*, and that the domain and activity are non-identical. Critias responds that *sōphrosunē* is a unique type of knowledge in that it is a knowledge of itself and also a knowledge of other “knowledges.”⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁵ *Charmides*, 165c-165e

⁴⁰⁶ *Charmides*, 165e1

⁴⁰⁷ *Charmides*, 166a

⁴⁰⁸ *Charmides*, 166a9-10

⁴⁰⁹ *Charmides*, 166c1-4; The word “epistēmai” is the plural of “epistēmē.” “Epistēmē” is often translated as “knowledge,” which leads to a conundrum on how to translate the plural. Many translations (Sprague, 1997 Cooper ed., p. 652), utilize “sciences” for the plural, as a collection of “knowledges.” Some opt for “kinds of knowledge” for the plural (Moore and Raymond, 2019, p. 10, footnote 61). As I am focusing on what sort of knowledge Socrates possesses and the intellectual aspects of *sōphrosunē*, I opt to use the imperfect “knowledges,” (West and West, 1986, p. 36, footnote 46).

This then is the new refined fourth definition of *sōphrosunē*, that it is the knowledge of itself and knowledge of other knowledge-sets.⁴¹⁰ Socrates asks if that means *sōphrosunē* would be the knowledge of the absence of knowledge.⁴¹¹ Critias answers in the affirmative. Socrates extrapolates that this means the *sōphrōn* person would both know himself and also “know what he knows and does not know.”⁴¹² Critias again agrees that this is what he means.

The rest of this part of the dialogue devotes itself to examining this definition of *sōphrosunē*: is it reflexive knowledge of knowledge and other knowledge-sets? The next section of the dialogue asks two things: is it possible to know that one knows and does not know what one knows and does not know,⁴¹³ and secondly, if there are benefits to this knowledge,⁴¹⁴ if it is indeed possible.

They only examine the first question from 167c-169b before dismissing it as unable to answer for the time being. First Socrates uses an analogy to vision.⁴¹⁵ Sight is the power to see other things that are there, such as things with color.⁴¹⁶ Socrates points out how odd it would be to have a sense, such as vision, that sees only itself and other visions. He also argues that vision cannot see the lack of other visions.⁴¹⁷ But this is what Critias is describing when he defines *sōphrosunē* as the knowledge of itself and the other knowledge-sets, and that it can also be the knowledge of the absence of knowledge.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁰ *Charmides*, 166e5-6

⁴¹¹ *Charmides*, 166e7-8

⁴¹² *Charmides*, 167a1-3

⁴¹³ *Charmides*, 167b1-2

⁴¹⁴ *Charmides*, 167b2-3

⁴¹⁵ *Charmides*, 167c8-10

⁴¹⁶ *Charmides*, 167c-d

⁴¹⁷ *Charmides*, 167d1

⁴¹⁸ *Charmides*, 166e

Socrates argues this is the same for all the senses, as well as desires, wishes, love, fears, and opinions.⁴¹⁹ Therefore, Socrates argues, it is odd that there would be a knowledge that does this—is knowledge of itself and other knowledge-sets and also the absence of knowledge—when no other sensory nor intellectual capacity does this.⁴²⁰ While with vision Socrates goes through the argument step-by-step; for none of the other senses does he. It is fair for Socrates to presume the senses are analogous in this way. But then he makes a transition into intellectual capacities, starting with desire which is an intellectual capacity the most connected to the physical senses.⁴²¹ Critias agrees that desire is analogous to the senses, presumably because it is so rooted in the senses. But then Socrates continues through intellectual capacities, each growing more distant from the senses. By the time Socrates asks Critias if he agrees opinion (*doxā*) is the same as the senses, with regards to there being no opinion that is an opinion “of itself and other opinions” and also the absence of opinions, Critias agrees almost by rote, as he has agreed to the last several things.⁴²²

The analogy Socrates makes is between senses and knowledge, and this analogy fails. Knowledge is an intellectual capacity, not a capacity of the senses. The domain of things for knowledge and the senses are different in category: the knowledge grasps intelligible things, while the sense grasp the sensible. Socrates’ strategy of incrementally moving from the sensible to the intelligible causes Critias to agree that things are analogous when they are not, such as opinion having the same sort of relationship with its domain as vision.

⁴¹⁹ *Charmides*, 167d-168a

⁴²⁰ *Charmides*, 168b1-2

⁴²¹ *Charmides*, 167e1

⁴²² *Charmides*, 168a6

The next argument Socrates uses against Critias' definition of *sōphrosunē* is similar in structure to the vision argument. Socrates begins with an analogy of knowledge to the "greater" and establishes a relationship the "greater" has with its domain.⁴²³ The starting premise is that since knowledge is a knowledge "of" something, it has "a certain faculty of being 'of something.'"⁴²⁴ Critias agrees, and Socrates draws the analogy to the "greater" having "a faculty of being greater [of] something."⁴²⁵ Critias agrees that this is fair. The domain of things the "greater" must be over things that are less than it, definitionally.⁴²⁶ However if the "greater" worked the same as Critias' proposed definition for *sōphrosunē*, then there would be something that is "greater" than itself, which would make it also less than itself, a contradiction.⁴²⁷

The problem here is that Socrates uses an example which does not possess the reflexive property, a logical property which some predicates have but some do not. "x is the greater of y" does not. But "x is identical with y" does—someone is identical to themselves. "x is sister of y" is non-reflexive—someone cannot be sister of herself. But "x is divisible by y" is reflexive—all numbers are divisible by themselves.⁴²⁸ Socrates' example is non-reflexive, and when he lists more examples they are all non-reflexive: x is double of y,⁴²⁹ x is more than y, x is heavier than y, x is lighter than y, x is younger than y, &c.⁴³⁰

⁴²³ *Charmides*, 168b2-6

⁴²⁴ *Charmides*, 168b2

⁴²⁵ *Charmides*, 168b5-6

⁴²⁶ *Charmides*, 168b8

⁴²⁷ *Charmides*, 168c2

⁴²⁸ As the concept of "0" and "dividing by 0" was not known to the Greeks at this time, I am setting aside that particular counter-example as irrelevant to the greater point

⁴²⁹ *Charmides*, 168c4-7

⁴³⁰ *Charmides*, 168c9-d1

Socrates then tests the same predicates on empty domains. Hearing requires there to be sound, otherwise there is no hearing.⁴³¹ Vision requires color, otherwise it sees nothing. This is both an argument against the reflexivity of these predicates and also an argument against the ability of a predicate to act on an empty domain. Socrates states that hearing produces no sound, and vision produces no color, therefore they cannot hear nor see themselves.⁴³² Socrates does not explicitly test the reflexivity of number predicates on the absence of something in their domain but states that he considers these impossible.⁴³³ Socrates does not continue the argument the same as he does his initial argument from physical senses to intellectual capacities, so it is not clear what argument he makes here, and if it is meant to be distinct from the argument he already made at 167d-168b. One argument he could be making is that no sensory capacity can function in the absence of the subject—if something is silent, hearing cannot hear it, if something is colorless, sight cannot see it. As Critias' definition of *sōphrosunē* includes both knowledge of itself and also knowledge of the absence of knowledge, perhaps Socrates intended to extend this argument to the intellectual capacities as well: can desire, desire something which is undesirable? Can love, love something which is unlovable? &c. until he asked Critias if you can have an opinion on something which is unopinable. If this was Socrates' intention, then the same argument against it applies, which is that the intellectual capacities are not necessarily analogous to their subjects in this way.

After examining the fourth definition and its modifications, Socrates and Critias are at an impasse. They cannot conclude whether or not there is such thing as knowledge of

⁴³¹ *Charmides*, 168d6-7

⁴³² *Charmides*, 168e3-7

⁴³³ *Charmides*, 168e3-7

knowledge, and therefore cannot determine if this is an appropriate definition of *sōphrosunē*.⁴³⁴ At this point the dialogue proceeds hypothetically: if *sōphrosunē* is knowledge of knowledge, is that beneficial or not?⁴³⁵ In the first part of this discussion, Critias states that if *sōphrosunē* is knowledge of knowledge, then the *sōphrōn* person should know himself.⁴³⁶ Socrates accepts this presumption as matter of fact, while expressing confusion about the mechanism behind this process of *sōphrosunē* producing knowledge of the self in the *sōphrōn* person.⁴³⁷ While Charmides argues these are the same thing, Socrates disagrees. Knowledge of what one knows and does not know is not necessarily the same thing as “knowledge of self.”⁴³⁸ Presuming the hypothetical that knowledge of knowledge exists, Socrates what they mean by that as the ability for an individual to know the difference between opinions that they hold and knowledge that they have.⁴³⁹ This ignores the possibility Socrates offers in the *Meno*, which is that someone can possess knowledge but be unaware that they do.⁴⁴⁰ Perhaps Socrates does not consider that option relevant, since the primary question at the moment is the ability to distinguish between opinion and knowledge; not the ability to recognize knowledge when present.

Socrates goes on to argue that *sōphrosunē*, as knowledge with other knowledge-sets as its domain, appears somewhat useless as a knowledge. He demonstrates this in two ways. First, as a piece of reflexive knowledge; that is, as useless to the *sōphrōn*

⁴³⁴ *Charmides*, 169b5-9

⁴³⁵ *Charmides*, 170d

⁴³⁶ *Charmides*, 169e4-5

⁴³⁷ *Charmides*, 169e6-8

⁴³⁸ *Charmides*, 170a2-4

⁴³⁹ *Charmides*, 170a6-8

⁴⁴⁰ *Meno*, 85c-e

person for identifying knowledge within herself. Second, as knowledge applied externally, for the *sōphrōn* person to judge whether or not someone else has knowledge.

In the first case, of the utility of *sōphrosunē* with regards to the self, Socrates argues that the knowledge of knowledge is not helpful in identifying knowledge in a person for themselves. In the case of medicine, a doctor who is *sōphrōn* and who used *sōphrosunē* on herself to evaluate what knowledge she had would not be able to do so because she was *sōphrōn*.⁴⁴¹ A doctor knows that someone is healthy because of knowledge of medicine, not because of *sōphrosunē*. The only benefit that *sōphrosunē* can confer on its possessor is the ability to identify *that* she is knowledgeable, or not. Therefore, the benefits of *sōphrosunē* as a reflexive power of knowledge of knowledge are not evident.

The second case Socrates examines is that of the external benefits of *sōphrosunē* as knowledge of knowledge. This is the case where a *sōphrōn* person examines someone else's knowledge or absence of knowledge.⁴⁴² A person who is not a musician but is *sōphrōn* would be able, according to this formulation, see Yo-Yo Ma and identify that he had knowledge. But the *sōphrōn* person would not be able to identify that Yo-Yo Ma had knowledge of music. In order to know what Yo-Yo Ma had knowledge of, the *sōphrōn* person would have to have some other power aside from *sōphrosunē*—knowledge of harmonies or some such. Therefore, once again *sōphrosunē* proves to provide little, if any, benefit to its possessor, when *sōphrosunē* is understood as knowledge of knowledge.

⁴⁴¹ *Charmides*, 170c

⁴⁴² *Charmides*, 170d6-7

Socrates concludes (perhaps with some irony) at the end of the dialogue that their discussion has been a failure in every way.⁴⁴³ They have failed to come up with a definition for *sōphrosunē*,⁴⁴⁴ hypothesized that a knowledge of knowledge exists despite having no proof positively or negatively,⁴⁴⁵ and hypothesized that some knowledge exists which knows “the tasks”⁴⁴⁶ of other knowledge-sets.⁴⁴⁷ Socrates argues they had no justification to make an assumption of this magnitude. The hypothesis as Socrates articulates it here is that someone could know both that she knows things she knows and also know that she does not know things she does not know.⁴⁴⁸ Socrates finds this to be an absurd assumption *prima facie*, something that would need to be proven before the argument moves forward.⁴⁴⁹ It is impossible for someone to know what she does not know, Socrates argues.⁴⁵⁰ Finally, Socrates concludes that their discussion must have gone wrong somewhere, likely the places he listed, because the result was that *sōphrosunē* was unbeneficial, as they defined it earlier.⁴⁵¹ This could not possibly be the case, as *sōphrosunē* is a virtue, and therefore *must* be beneficial. Something terrible has gone wrong along the way for them to end up at this impasse.

Socrates does not believe himself to have any more knowledge than he started, because his inquiry has proved fruitless.⁴⁵² But as with many Socratic dialogues, even the impasse is philosophically interesting. Socrates and the interlocutors discuss the

⁴⁴³ *Charmides*, 175b1-3

⁴⁴⁴ *Charmides*, 175b3

⁴⁴⁵ *Charmides*, 175b6

⁴⁴⁶ “*Erga*”: task, work

⁴⁴⁷ *Charmides*, 175b7-8

⁴⁴⁸ *Charmides*, 175c1-3

⁴⁴⁹ *Charmides*, 175c3-6

⁴⁵⁰ *Charmides*, 175c3-6

⁴⁵¹ *Charmides*, 175d3-4

⁴⁵² *Charmides*, 176a3

reflexivity of predicates in relation to potential definitions of *sōphrosunē*. Although Socrates uses a, perhaps inapt, analogy to sensory predicates, the discussion itself is open-ended for the reader to test their own theories. The discussion also eliminated several possible definitions of *sōphrosunē*, including disanalogous cognitive states.

4.4 *Sōphrosunē* in *Charmides*—Secondary Literature

The *Charmides* ends, *prima facie*, in aporia: Charmides, Critias, and Socrates do not agree on a definition of *sōphrosunē*. This has not stopped subsequent scholars from debating over whether or not the dialogue is aporetic, if Socrates intends for the audience to conclude anything about *sōphrosunē* by the end, amongst other things. Some scholars argue that the definition can be found reading between the lines and not in any of the definitions offered. Some argue that the fourth definition is the right one, some the last, and some offer modifications of both. I will give a brief summary of all these positions, not listing exhaustively every scholar that argues for the various positions but instead offering a few examples of each.

4.4.1 Definition Not Explicit, Implicit

There are several different points of view on what implicit definition of *sōphrosunē* Socrates (or Plato) means for the audience to take away from the dialogue. One of the definitions with larger support is that, since Plato proposes an ethical system wherein the virtues are united, *sōphrosunē* is, like all virtues, knowledge of good and evil. To what degrees and under what *circumstances* *sōphrosunē* is knowledge of good and evil differs between scholars.

McKim (1985) argues that the definition of *sōphrosunē* in the *Charmides* is implicit, not explicit, in the dialogue. The discussion in the last stage of dialogue, where Socrates

examines if the hypothetical definition of knowledge-of-knowledge for *sōphrosunē* is beneficial, is meant to persuade the interlocuters not that *sōphrosunē* is knowledge-of-knowledge, but that *sōphrosunē* must be more beneficial than that faulty definition.⁴⁵³ Instead, McKim argues, like all virtues *sōphrosunē* is the knowledge of good and evil.⁴⁵⁴ The rest of the discussion in the dialogue demonstrates that the *elenchus* cannot aid its practitioners in grasping the knowledge of good and evil, and therefore is an insufficient tool for becoming *sōphrōn*.⁴⁵⁵

Kahn (1988) also argues that the definition of *sōphrosunē* is implicit in the *Charmides*.⁴⁵⁶ Like McKim, Kahn believes the implicit definition of *sōphrosunē* is the knowledge of good and evil.⁴⁵⁷ This is gestured to in the dialogue via Socrates' dream, which leaves open the question of what knowledge would be useful for a happy life, if not knowledge of what one knows and does not.⁴⁵⁸ This knowledge, argues Kahn, is of course knowledge of Forms and specifically the Good.⁴⁵⁹ Like McKim, Kahn argues that part of the goal of the *Charmides* is to demonstrate that the *elenchus* is an insufficient tool to gain this knowledge of the Good, and therefore incapable of making the wielder *sōphrōn*.⁴⁶⁰ The only way for Socrates to utilize the *elenchus* to examine the virtue of his fellow citizens would be if he already knew about the Good.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵³ McKim, 1985, p. 68

⁴⁵⁴ McKim, 1985, p. 59

⁴⁵⁵ McKim, 1985, p. 63-64

⁴⁵⁶ Kahn, 1988, p. 542

⁴⁵⁷ Kahn, 1988, p. 542

⁴⁵⁸ Kahn, 1988, p. 543

⁴⁵⁹ Kahn, 1988, p. 544-545

⁴⁶⁰ Kahn, 1988, p. 549

⁴⁶¹ Kahn, 1988, p. 548

Clark (2018) argues similarly to both McKim and Kahn, but with the addition that *sōphrosunē* is an *application* of specific knowledge of good and bad.⁴⁶² Specifically, the application captures the reflexive, self-knowledge aspect of *sōphrosunē* that some of the definitions attempt to get at throughout the dialogue.⁴⁶³ Rather than *sōphrosunē* being the knowledge of good and bad generally, as all virtues are, *sōphrosunē* is the knowledge of good and bad with “relation of an agent to herself.”⁴⁶⁴ This goes back to the opening of the dialogue, with Socrates exemplifying the virtue when he controls the passions that are aroused within himself upon seeing down Charmides’ cloak.⁴⁶⁵ Socrates is able to control those passions, marking him as *sōphrōn*, because he knows which of his internal passions are good and bad.

Tuozzo (2011) also argues that *sōphrosunē* is knowledge of the good.⁴⁶⁶ He points to the definition of *sōphrosunē* as self-knowledge as a stepping-stone to defining *sōphrosunē* as knowledge of the good—a step that Socrates never takes in this dialogue explicitly.⁴⁶⁷ As *sōphrosunē* has to be something beneficial, since it is virtue, Tuozzo argues the only two options would be human good (something like human happiness), or a godly good, which would for Plato be the Form of the Good.⁴⁶⁸ As this dialogue was written by Plato, Tuozzo concludes that the knowledge which is the object of *sōphrosunē* is the transcendent good, or Form of the Good.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶² Clark, 2018, p. 763

⁴⁶³ Clark, 2018, p. 772

⁴⁶⁴ Clark, 2018, p. 774

⁴⁶⁵ *Charmides*, 155d4-5

⁴⁶⁶ Tuozzo, 2011, p. 304

⁴⁶⁷ Tuozzo, 2011, p. 304

⁴⁶⁸ Tuozzo, 2011, p. 330

⁴⁶⁹ Tuozzo, 2011, p. 331

Mahoney (1996) makes this same distinction as Tuozzo, between the human and godly concerns, but Mahoney argues there is a human *sōphrosunē* and godly *sōphrosunē*.⁴⁷⁰ For the gods, *sōphrosunē* is the expert knowledge of good and evil. For humans, *sōphrosunē* is still knowledge of good and evil, but an imperfect one.⁴⁷¹ Much like McKim and Kahn, Mahoney argues that the tool most readily available to humans in gaining this knowledge of good and evil is the *elenchus*, imperfect though it may be.⁴⁷²

But “knowledge of good and evil,” in all kinds, is not the only implicit definition of *sōphrosunē* scholars have argued is present in the *Charmides*. For North, control over the passions is the implicit definition of *sōphrosunē* most clearly on display in the dialogue.⁴⁷³ The reason this classic and obvious definition of the virtue is not brought up in the dialogue, North argues, is because the purpose of the *Charmides* was never to define *sōphrosunē*. Instead, the purpose of the dialogue is to discuss virtue as knowledge.⁴⁷⁴ By the last discussion in the dialogue—whether or not knowledge of good and evil is of any benefit—North argues Socrates gives away the true intention of the dialogue, which is to examine the connection between virtue and knowledge.⁴⁷⁵ The definition of *sōphrosunē* as control of one’s passions in the dialogue is therefore left implicit, modeled by Socrates’ actions rather than his words.⁴⁷⁶

Danzig (2017) agrees with North that the implicit definition of *sōphrosunē* in the *Charmides* is control over the passions.⁴⁷⁷ This is also how Plato defines *sōphrosunē* in

⁴⁷⁰ Mahoney, 1996, p. 197

⁴⁷¹ Mahoney, 1996, p. 197

⁴⁷² Mahoney, 1996, p. 197

⁴⁷³ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 181

⁴⁷⁴ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 185-186

⁴⁷⁵ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 184

⁴⁷⁶ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 181

⁴⁷⁷ Danzig, 2017, p. 307

the *Symposium*, Danzig points out.⁴⁷⁸ The emphasis on the intellectual aspects of *sōphrosunē* are meant to gesture, through its absence, to the non-intellectual aspects of the virtue.⁴⁷⁹ Again, like North and others, Danzig argues that the purpose of the dialogue is not so much to find a singular definition of *sōphrosunē*, but instead examine the connection between knowledge and virtue.⁴⁸⁰

Rademaker (2005) makes a similar argument to Danzig, that the implicit definition of *sōphrosunē* which the dialogue supports is the control of desire. The absence of any discussion or even suggestion of this definition, which should be prototypical of *sōphrosunē* at the time, is a notable absence which supports that as the true definition.⁴⁸¹ Again, Rademaker points to the dramatic context of the dialogue and the not-obviously philosophical moments that happen before and during the dialogue. Socrates' self-control when he sees Charmides, Charmides and Critias' threat of force at the end, the reader's knowledge that they will become part of the Thirty Tyrants, and the knowledge that Socrates is ultimately the greatest benefactor of the Athenian polis all support the idea of *sōphrosunē* being a kind of self-control.⁴⁸²

Finally, Vorwerk (2001) points to the structure of the dialogue as his argument for the implicit message of the *Charmides*.⁴⁸³ The development from the first two definitions as both externally-based and individual-focused definitions of *sōphrosunē*, all the way through a knowledge of *Sōphrosunē* itself (what Vorwerk argues is essentially the same as the knowledge-of-knowledge definition examined fifth in the dialogue) is a

⁴⁷⁸ Danzig, 2017, p. 307

⁴⁷⁹ Danzig, 2017, p. 309

⁴⁸⁰ Danzig, 2017, p. 315

⁴⁸¹ Rademaker, 2005, p. 294

⁴⁸² Rademaker, 2005, p. 340

⁴⁸³ Vorwerk, 2001, p. 30

development from particulars to universals, or human to transcendent.⁴⁸⁴ Essentially, Vorwerk argues that the definitions of *sōphrosunē* in the *Charmides* offer a new Diotima's ladder, starting at the lowest level of theory and continuing to the Form of *Sōphrosunē* Itself.⁴⁸⁵ This is all implicit to the dialogue, not argued explicitly the same way the ladder of Beauty is explained in the *Symposium*.

4.4.2 Self-Knowledge

None of this is to argue that the preponderance of evidence is for an implicit reading of the definition of *sōphrosunē*, rather than an explicit one. A number of academics argue that the answer to a Socratic definition of *sōphrosunē* can be found within the explicit text of the *Charmides*. Some argue that the definition of *sōphrosunē* is some variation of self-knowledge, even though that definition is rejected in the course of the dialogue. There are three main categories of this argument: first that *sōphrosunē* is self-knowledge which allows one to have self-control; second that it is self-knowledge which is knowledge of one's own mental states; and finally that it is self-knowledge which allows for "wholeness of being."

Annas (1985) argues that self-knowledge is the definition of *sōphrosunē* that Socrates means for us to accept.⁴⁸⁶ Both self-control and self-knowledge are widely accepted or at least utilized definitions of *sōphrosunē* at the time of this dialogue.⁴⁸⁷ Therefore, the *type* of self-knowledge relevant to *sōphrosunē* is a type that can capture what self-control refers to.⁴⁸⁸ In fact, Annas argues, the state of being in control of the self

⁴⁸⁴ Vorwerk, 2001, p. 33

⁴⁸⁵ Vorwerk, 2001, p. 43

⁴⁸⁶ Annas, 1985, p. 120

⁴⁸⁷ Annas, 1985, p. 119

⁴⁸⁸ Annas, 1985, p. 120

is subsidiary to having knowledge about the self; having knowledge of the self is what allows for control of the self.⁴⁸⁹ When Critias equates self-knowledge to *sōphrosunē*, Annas believes this raises the question of what knowledge of the self is relevant to virtue. The answer is objective knowledge of an individual's place in society, and duties associated with that place.⁴⁹⁰ With this type of self-knowledge an individual can be *sōphrōn*.

As a modification on this, Rappe (1995) proposes that the sort of self-knowledge which is essential to *sōphrosunē* is “epistemic” self-knowledge, or knowing one's own knowledge.⁴⁹¹ Rappe argues that Socrates likely believes *sōphrosunē* to be self-knowledge, which is why he investigates this proposal of Critias' so vigorously.⁴⁹² In contrast to some other scholars, Rappe argues that *sōphrosunē* cannot be either knowledge of the good or self-knowledge by themselves, and that the dialogue tries but fails to bridge the gap between the two.⁴⁹³ It is obvious there is some relationship between all these various concepts: knowledge of the good, self-knowledge, virtue, and *sōphrosunē*. Rappe's suggestion is that the key lies in examining the self's “desires, opinions, fears, and appetites,” and then excising the bad from the self and keeping the good.⁴⁹⁴ This then marries the idea of *sōphrosunē* as self-control with the idea of self-knowledge, with a priority on the awareness of the individual's own mental states.

Somewhat divergent from Rappe and Annas' concept of *sōphrosunē* as self-knowledge, Stern (1999) argues that *sōphrosunē* is a “wholeness of being” which is

⁴⁸⁹ Annas, 1985, p. 120

⁴⁹⁰ Annas, 1985, p. 121

⁴⁹¹ Rappe, 1995, p. 21

⁴⁹² Rappe, 1995, p. 14

⁴⁹³ Rappe, 1995, p. 17

⁴⁹⁴ Rappe, 1995, p. 21

rooted in self-knowledge.⁴⁹⁵ Stern agrees that the definition of *sōphrosunē* is self-knowledge, but disagrees on the specific understanding of what this means. Self-knowledge for Stern is Socrates' understanding that there is a distinction "between knowing what one knows and know what one does not know."⁴⁹⁶ This understanding of his self leads Socrates to be one of the few people who have a whole and complete sense of themselves, in terms of what knowledge he has and does not.⁴⁹⁷

In addition to self-knowledge, Politis (2008) argues that *sōphrosunē* also includes other kinds of reflexive knowledge.⁴⁹⁸ The essential character of *sōphrosunē* is the reflexivity of the knowledge, not the self-knowledge part.⁴⁹⁹ *Sōphrosunē* is knowing particularly the limit of one's own knowledge, not just anything about the self.⁵⁰⁰ Moreover, there are other essential qualities to *sōphrosunē* in *addition* to knowledge of what one knows and does not.⁵⁰¹ When Socrates and Critias move on to examine whether or not this definition of *sōphrosunē* is beneficial or not, Critias makes a mistake in allowing Socrates to examine *sōphrosunē* as if its only essential characteristic is that it is knowledge of what one knows and does not.⁵⁰² Thus, when this fails, it is not a failure of the definition of *sōphrosunē* as self-knowledge, but a failure of the definition of *sōphrosunē* as only self-knowledge of what one knows and does not.

⁴⁹⁵ Stern, 1999, p. 403

⁴⁹⁶ Stern, 1999, p. 406

⁴⁹⁷ Stern, 1999, p. 409

⁴⁹⁸ Politis, 2008, p. 2

⁴⁹⁹ Politis, 2008, p. 2

⁵⁰⁰ Politis, 2008, p. 3

⁵⁰¹ Politis, 2008, p. 24

⁵⁰² Politis, 2008, p. 25

4.4.3 Knowledge-of-Knowledge

Finally, there is the view that the last definition of *sōphrosunē* in the *Charmides*, knowledge-of-knowledge, is the correct one. It is never disproven by either Socrates or the interlocutors in the dialogue, merely abandoned as beyond their abilities at the moment.

Benson (2000) argues that *sōphrosunē* is knowledge-of-knowledge, which means it must be a *dūnamis*.⁵⁰³ If this is true, then there must be something associated with knowledge-of-knowledge which is the subject of it. Socrates makes this argument with the examples of calculation having as its object the greater or lesser; or hearing having as its object sound. For Benson, this means that in cases of the individual expertise, there is an object associated with that expertise.⁵⁰⁴ For instance a priest's expertise might be in piety, or a politician's in justice. *Sōphrosunē* then is the object of some particular person's expertise. That expert is the *sōphrōn* person.

4.5 *Sōphrosunē* as Self-Knowledge

In the *Charmides*, Socrates and his interlocutors debate the meaning of *sōphrosunē*, and the dialogue ends without a conclusive definition agreed upon—at least on the surface. But it is evident, and I will demonstrate here, that at least one aspect of the virtue must be self-knowledge, although defining exactly what “self-knowledge” entails leads to the inability of the men to agree upon a definition by the end of the dialogue.

There are more aspects than just “self-knowledge” to *sōphrosunē* in the *Charmides*, as evinced by the opening of the dialogue. Critias points out his younger cousin's blossoming beauty to Socrates, and Socrates, an admirer of the physical beauty

⁵⁰³ “Faculty, power” *Charmides* 168b3, 5

⁵⁰⁴ Benson, 2000, p. 210

of young men,⁵⁰⁵ is appropriately smitten. But even as Socrates notices and is affected by Charmides' beauty,⁵⁰⁶ he embodies *sōphrosunē* as the virtue of self-control and chastity.⁵⁰⁷ With Socratic dialogues, there is the risk of reading too overcomplicated of a meaning into them. McKim, Kahn, and Clark are all correct that the implicit meanings of *sōphrosunē* are present throughout the discussion—the beginning scene of Socrates bringing his baser lusts under control is surely a nod to the traditional “self-control” definition of *sōphrosunē*, via the dramatic language of the fictionalized dialogue. Similarly, the unity of virtues in that they all are, in some part, knowledge of good and evil, is of course present implicitly and at times explicitly in the discussion, such as when Socrates asks Critias if knowledge of medicine brings about health or harm.⁵⁰⁸

While these implicit aspects of *sophrosune* are in the background of the discussion, all discussions of definitions have, in their background, connotative meanings of the word or concept. This does not mean that the implicit meanings *are* the meaning of the word, nor that they should be taken as the *primary* meaning of the word. Similarly with *sōphrosunē*: although these implicit meanings and connotations are of course *part* of the virtue, they are not the core of it.

The quality of self-control and other implicit definitions of *sōphrosunē* has a long history as part of the virtue, but there are other aspects that are more central to the definition in this dialogue. North argues that the central definition of *sōphrosunē* Plato means to be the focus of the *Charmides* is self-knowledge.⁵⁰⁹ The structure of the

⁵⁰⁵ *Charmides*, 154b7-8

⁵⁰⁶ *Charmides*, 155d3-4

⁵⁰⁷ *Charmides*, 155e3

⁵⁰⁸ *Charmides*, 170a-c

⁵⁰⁹ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 179

dialogue bears this out, as the first half discards three definitions of *sōphrosunē* not having to do with self-knowledge in rapid succession,⁵¹⁰ followed by a second half focused on more and more specific variations on a definition of self-knowledge, knowledge of itself, knowledge of knowledge &c.⁵¹¹ Although the dialogue ostensibly ends in a state of *aporia*, there is strong evidence that Socrates believes self-knowledge to be an appropriate, if incomplete or under-defined definition of *sōphrosunē*.⁵¹²

The fourth definition of *sōphrosunē* in the *Charmides* is knowledge of *oneself*, rather than knowledge of [knowledge] *itself*.⁵¹³ However the sort of self-knowledge relevant to the virtue must be defined; knowing how high I can jump or that I can juggle would not, on its own, be virtuous self-knowledge.⁵¹⁴ Annas and others argue the most important self-knowledge to *sōphrosunē* must be the type that allows for self-control. Socrates knowing that he is attracted to Charmides, Socrates knowing what his own station is in Athenian society, Socrates knowing Charmides' station, and Socrates knowing the standard mores of the society they both currently live in, would all be relevant self-knowledge to self-control. Again, although all this is surely part of the definition of *sophrosune*, and a part that plays into some of its connotative meaning at the time of Socrates, it is not the central part. Merely knowing what is and what is not appropriate to a man of his station is not what makes Socrates the philosophical exemplar that he is.

Instead, the fact that the dialogue spends so much time on examining types of knowledge, and particularly types of reflexive knowledge, indicates that the answer to

⁵¹⁰ *Charmides*, 159b5, 160e5, 161b6-163e10

⁵¹¹ *Charmides*, 165b4, 165c5, 170a6

⁵¹² North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 181

⁵¹³ *Charmides*, 165b4

⁵¹⁴ Werner, 2013, p. 3-4

what kind of self-knowledge is relevant to *sōphrosunē* must be of a kind that is not merely one's place in society—a focus that would be more central to a shame-based understanding of *sōphrosunē*—but instead must have something to do with what sort of knowledge Socrates has and *knows* he has. Socrates' particular reputation for his Socratic wisdom is yet another reason why, when Socrates is shown to the reader to be particularly *sōphrōn* at the beginning of the dialogue, we should suspect that we are meant to examine exactly what kind of reflexive self-knowledge Socrates holds which leads to him being *sōphrōn*.

There are two criteria which are relevant with regards to the domain of knowledge of the self: first, the self-knowledge must be more than simply that the self is the soul, because otherwise the Delphic command will be a simple thing to unpack and Socrates claims it is a “difficult” matter;⁵¹⁵ second, that set of knowledge must not be simple matters like eye color, height, &c., because much like “how to throw clay and make a vase” is indeed knowledge, it is not the sort of knowledge that Socrates requires for the definition of *sōphrosunē*.⁵¹⁶

On the other hand, maybe the domain of things the *sōphrōn* individual knows about herself is occupied not by things she knows in the positive, but rather in the negative. Socrates emphasizes the importance of knowledge that he does not know. Besides the *Apology*, Socrates emphasizes this throughout *Alcibiades I* as he and Alcibiades search for what sorts of knowledge could be the domain of self-knowledge.⁵¹⁷ As Alcibiades reveals how little he knows his own ignorance Socrates berates him for being the worst

⁵¹⁵ Warner, 2013, p. 3; *Alcibiades I* 129a1-3

⁵¹⁶ *Alcibiades I*, 131a8-b5

⁵¹⁷ Werner, 2013, 4

kind of stupid⁵¹⁸ (and himself, for loving the worst kind of dumb boy).⁵¹⁹ Many of the early Socratic dialogues are of this elenctic type, where the result is often what Reeve calls the negative content of Socratic wisdom: awareness that one does not know. In the *Meno*, the enslaved boy first starts out supposing that he knows the length of the sides of the square of double area to the two-by-two square. He answers “Clearly, Socrates, double,”⁵²⁰ when Socrates asks how long the sides of the new square, with area eight, would be, in comparison to the lengths of their original square, which were two units. Socrates responds by turning to Meno and stating that the boy “supposed to know” the answer at this point—much the same, in fact using the same wording even, as all those supposedly wise men that Socrates interrogated.⁵²¹ By the time they reach the end of Socrates’ interrogation, the boy does not know the answer to the puzzle yet, but he is now aware that he did not know the answer in the first place.⁵²²

To Socrates, this aporetic state that his *elenchus* so often produces is a virtuous thing. The boy knowing that he does not know the answer is better off than when he previously presumed himself to know but was wrong.⁵²³ The reason this is better is multifaceted. One benefit is that it leaves the interlocuter primed to seek out the correct knowledge, to replace the false belief they possessed before.⁵²⁴ Another is that they no longer possess incorrect knowledge, which as a natural evil to Socrates leaves the interlocuter in a state at least alleviated from that one ill, and thus better than before.⁵²⁵

⁵¹⁸ *Alcibiades I*, 118b4

⁵¹⁹ *Alcibiades I*, 119c5

⁵²⁰ “dēlon dē, o Sōkrates, hoti diplasia” *Meno*, 82e3

⁵²¹ “kai nun houtos oietai eidenai opoia estin...” *Meno*, 82e4-5

⁵²² Robinson, 1941, p. 11; *Meno* 84

⁵²³ Robinson, 1941, p. 11-12

⁵²⁴ Robinson, 1941, p. 11-12

⁵²⁵ Robinson, 1941, p. 11-12

The *elenchus* also does not have to be entirely about revealing incorrect knowledge, but can leave the interlocuter assured in what knowledge they *do* correctly hold.⁵²⁶ Broadly, the *elenchus*, when properly applied, can leave the interlocuter with an understanding of their web of beliefs.⁵²⁷ Some of these knowledges, like the awareness that one is wrong about the lengths of the sides of the doubled square, is considered by some scholars to be a weaker sense of knowledge, but still knowledge by Socrates' standards.⁵²⁸ For the examiner, like Socrates is, the *elenchus* can provide him with a basic knowledge base of what is untrue and what appears to be truly held beliefs, when applied often enough to enough different people around the city.⁵²⁹

Self-knowledge understood as Socrates possessing knowledge that Socrates himself does not know would fail to answer Reeve's challenge to define "positive content" of Socratic wisdom. Socrates himself is the most obvious beneficiary of this aspect of *elenchus*, as his entire claim to wisdom is the possession of this particular kind of "human wisdom."⁵³⁰ It is not a mere general skepticism that Socrates possesses, presuming himself always to lack expertise, but a concerted one, honed by years of practicing the *elenchus* on both himself and others. It is not a blanket "I know nothing," because that would be just as false for Socrates to declare as him saying "I know everything." Socrates knows *some* things: that it is wicked and shameful to do ill, what Love is, that to do harm wrongfully is more of a disgrace and evil than to be harmed.⁵³¹ Socrates, therefore, is wiser than the skeptic in his positive awareness of his knowledge, and wiser than the

⁵²⁶ Ferguson, 2019, p. 382

⁵²⁷ Rappe, 1995, p. 10

⁵²⁸ Woodruff, 1990, p. 64

⁵²⁹ King, 2008, p. 348

⁵³⁰ Reeve, 1989, p. 35

⁵³¹ See Appendix chart

false “experts” that he examines, who think they know something but are mistaken. The *elenchus* is what gives Socrates both of these types of wisdom, by focusing it on himself first and then others. And although using the *elenchus* also leaves Socrates in a state of *aporia* over the question of whether there even *can* be knowledge-of-knowledge, it does not eliminate the possibility completely.⁵³²

But even though the *Charmides* ends aporetically, there is evidence that it also resulted in positive output, not just negative. For one, the process of the elenctic argument can be used to engender virtue in the interlocuter upon whom it is used.⁵³³ Critias claims Charmides possesses *sōphrosunē*, and although Charmides responds with appropriate humility when Socrates asks him if he possesses it, Charmides begins the dialogue with the belief that he possesses *sōphrosunē*.⁵³⁴ If he does not have *sōphrosunē*, being made aware of this lack could, with a willing subject, lead to greater virtue in the self: humility, self-knowledge, and even maybe *sōphrosunē* itself depending on the definition.⁵³⁵ For if *sōphrosunē* is defined as knowledge of oneself,⁵³⁶ then the *elenchus* can help reveal things about the self—the possession or lack of knowledge in the area of inquiry, most specifically.

In others, the *elenchus* engenders this same self-knowledge, although perhaps it is not as welcome as it is as when Socrates uses it on himself. Although the *elenchus* can be used on anyone—from an enslaved boy to the aristocratic policy-makers and most pious men of Athenian society—Socrates largely uses it on those men whom society and

⁵³² Rosenmeyer, 1957, p. 89

⁵³³ Reeve, 1989, p. 35

⁵³⁴ *Charmides*, 159

⁵³⁵ Danzing, 2017, p. 309 & 315

⁵³⁶ *Charmides*, 165c5

themselves declare the wisest.⁵³⁷ The elenchus, more often than not, ends with the interlocuter now aware that he does not know.⁵³⁸ However, although it seems obvious that self-knowledge is the end result of the elenchus for the interlocuter, the object of this self-knowledge is a hotly-debated topic.⁵³⁹ The idea that the interlocuter has any justified, true beliefs at all could be the self-knowledge Socrates hopes to engender in the interlocuter.⁵⁴⁰ The awareness of what they do know is another option.⁵⁴¹ Self-consistent beliefs, virtue, or knowledge-of-knowledge are all also strong contenders.⁵⁴² Finally is the notion that *elenchus* is *sōphrosunē*. This may seem odd for a few reasons. First, the elenchus is often viewed as a largely negative tool, in contrast to the dialectic. Also, the elenchus is not traditionally considered a virtue, in the way that courage, piety, et al. are. Second, although *sōphrosunē* and self-knowledge are closely related notions, they are not, I will argue, identical. However, there is some secondary literature equating *sōphrosunē* with, in addition to self-knowledge, but also the elenchus itself.

In the *Sophist* Socrates directly equates purging the self from ignorance via the elenchus with being in a “*sōphrōn*” state.⁵⁴³ Other scholars point to the *Timaeus* as another dialogue that connects the elenchus and knowing only one’s own matters as *sōphrōn*.⁵⁴⁴ Other scholars point to the very practice of performing the elenchus against the self and one’s own belief as a kind of practice of moderation: holding oneself back from presuming to know what one does not is the sign of a restrained and moderate

⁵³⁷ Rappe, 1995, p. 7

⁵³⁸ Rappe, 1995, p. 1

⁵³⁹ Rappe, 1995, p. 2

⁵⁴⁰ Ferguson, 2019, p. 382

⁵⁴¹ Ferguson, 2019, p. 382

⁵⁴² Rappe, 1995, p. 2

⁵⁴³ Annas, 1985, p. 119; *Sophist* 230d4

⁵⁴⁴ Annas, 1985, 119

person.⁵⁴⁵ Some scholars go so far as claiming that the “human wisdom” which Socrates claims to possess is *sōphrosunē*, understood as a moderate version of wisdom. It is not strong positive knowledge of things virtuous and good, which might be more along the lines of the “divine wisdom” Socrates makes no claims upon, but the result of the elenchus as “human wisdom,” some say is *sōphrosunē*.⁵⁴⁶ Socrates’ practice of inquiry functions to promote not a specific knowledge-set in terms of *epistēmē*, but instead promotes the wisdom of *sōphrosunē*.⁵⁴⁷ This allows Socrates to possess *sophia* without possessing any particular *epistēmē*, because *sōphrosunē* is the moral wisdom that Socrates gains by means of the elenchus. Yet other scholars argue that *sōphrosunē* is not a practice but a personal quality which is engendered by the particular practice of the elenchus.⁵⁴⁸

There are two arguments for self-knowledge as *sōphrosunē* that, when taken together, capture the concept examined in the *Charmides*. The first is Rappe’s definition of knowledge which comprises *sophia* as self-knowledge.⁵⁴⁹ Self-knowledge for Rappe is both knowledge of *what* you know as well as knowledge *that* you know.⁵⁵⁰ Knowledge of either what or that one knows is second-order knowledge—what Socrates terms “knowledge of knowledge.”⁵⁵¹ In the *Charmides* this notion of *sōphrosunē* is part of the discussion when Socrates and Critias first examine whether or not *sōphrosunē* could be knowledge of what one knows and does not know.⁵⁵² Socrates proposes they examine whether it is possible to know *that* one knows and does not know *what* he knows and

⁵⁴⁵ King, 2008, p. 348-350

⁵⁴⁶ King, 2008, p. 346

⁵⁴⁷ King, 2008, p. 346

⁵⁴⁸ Danzing, 2017, p. 317

⁵⁴⁹ Rappe, 1995, p. 7

⁵⁵⁰ Rappe, 1995, p. 3

⁵⁵¹ *Charmides*, 166e8

⁵⁵² *Charmides*, 167a7-8

does not know.⁵⁵³ Although this discussion does not resolve in the *Charmides*, my analysis of the language Socrates uses in the *Apology* to distinguish between first- and second-order thinking should prove sufficient that Socrates does believe such a distinction in knowledge exists, even if he cannot rigorously defend it.⁵⁵⁴ The ability to know something about one's own knowledge—that one has it or does not have it—is a particular type of self-knowledge, and does not encompass all possible types of self-knowledge. There could be self-knowledge of one's body, such as that I am five foot three inches tall or that I am hungry right now. There could be self-knowledge of one's bodily limitations or dispositions, such as that I could walk a mile right now but not run a marathon, or that if offered ice cream right now I would be disposed to accept it. None of these are the particular “epistemic self-knowledge” that Rappe singles out as the type of knowledge Socrates has which others lack.⁵⁵⁵ On the other hand, none of these should be *excluded* as types of self-knowledge which Socrates possesses. Socrates also demonstrates self-knowledge of his own desires and dispositions, such as with Charmides or Alcibiades. The knowledge of his own knowledge is a particular aspect of self-knowledge.

The specifically intellectual component of *sōphrosunē* as self-knowledge is only one-half of the definition. The other aspect of it is the reflexive awareness of epistemic condition that Nightingale argues for.⁵⁵⁶ Reflexivity is a key component of *sōphrosunē*. In one part, it is the reflexive aspect of the virtue that causes confusion in the discussion between Socrates and the interlocutors. Socrates argues against this using examples of

⁵⁵³ *Charmides*, 167b1-4

⁵⁵⁴ Berardo, 2024, Section 3.3 p. 34-52

⁵⁵⁵ Rappe, 1995, p. 3

⁵⁵⁶ Nightingale, 2010, p. 10

predicates that are not reflexive, such as hearing, greater, or double. From here, Socrates concludes that it is doubtful that any faculty should be able to be reflexive. But reflexive predicates exist: I am the same age as Emma Stone, and I am also the same age as myself. I am as tall as Wolverine,⁵⁵⁷ and I am also as tall as myself. The question is now whether any *faculty* could be reflexive. The ear does not hear itself, the mouth does not taste itself, the nose does not smell itself. But the eye, perhaps, can see itself,⁵⁵⁸ though Socrates eliminates it in the *Charmides* by stating that *vision* (rather than the eye) cannot see itself.⁵⁵⁹ Socrates himself does not completely eliminate the possibility of a reflexive faculty, but merely says its existence is doubtful.⁵⁶⁰ But some kinds of knowledge of epistemic states seem possible, at least according to how Socrates describes his own experiences at his trial. He states that he does not know about the afterlife, and then expresses reflexive thinking in supposing that he does not know.⁵⁶¹ Therefore, although Socrates may be unable to argue for it in the *Charmides*, he in other places at the least expresses a tacit belief that he is capable of thinking reflexively about his own thinking. *Sōphrosunē* is this very faculty: the ability to think reflexively about one's own thinking, or, reflexive self-knowledge about in particular what one knows and does not.

The fullness of *sōphrosunē* is not necessarily captured here, with just its intellectual or mental aspects. As a virtue under the classical Athenian conception, *sōphrosunē* encompasses the wholeness of the character of a person. Socrates' behavior around Charmides at the start of the dialogue is evidence for this; he shows self-restraint

⁵⁵⁷ In the comics

⁵⁵⁸ *Alcibiades*, ____insert here

⁵⁵⁹ *Charmides*, 168e1

⁵⁶⁰ *Charmides*, 168e5

⁵⁶¹ *Apology*, 29b4-6

and self-possession of his bodily urges in a way that is indicative of classic *sōphrosunē*. But as one half of Socratic wisdom, *sōphrosunē* can be understood in the largely intellectual sense. To understand the intellect as possessing both first- and second-order knowledge aids in distinguishing the difference between *sōphrosunē* and the whole of Socratic wisdom. *Sōphrosunē* is the positive reflexive self-knowledge of one's own knowledge. When Socrates knows he knows something, such that it is bad and shameful to do injustice and to disobey one's betters,⁵⁶² that would be *sōphrosunē*. In addition to this, *sōphrosunē* also encompasses reflexive self-knowledge of what one does *not* know as well. When Socrates supposes that he does *not* know what happens after death, that is *also* *sōphrosunē*.⁵⁶³ Both of these are examples of "positive" aspects of Socratic wisdom, embodied by the virtue *sōphrosunē*. The aspect of Socratic wisdom which is not encompassed by *sōphrosunē* is the "negative" aspect, which is when Socrates does not suppose to know what he does not. To suppose one knows or to suppose one does not know are both positive suppositions, or positive self-knowledge—just over negative and positive domains. But to not suppose one knows when one does not is a negative supposition. Distinguishing between first- and second-order knowledge clarifies this distinction. It is not the domain that the second-order knowledge is over that makes the knowledge positive or negative: to know that I do not know is positive, and to know that I know is positive. It is the unique Socratic refusal to suppose when does not know that is the negative half of Socratic wisdom, and the combination of both halves which makes Socrates so uniquely wise.

⁵⁶² *Apology*, 29b6-7

⁵⁶³ *Apology*, 29b4-6

4.6 Second-Order Knowledge in *Charmides*

In the *Charmides*, much like in the *Apology*, Socrates uses both word choice and word pairings to mark a distinction between first- and second-order knowledge. As in the *Apology*, *dokeō* is used primarily as a first-order knowledge word. *Oida*, when used alone, is a first-order knowledge word, but when paired with *Oiōmai*, becomes an indication of second-order knowledge. Unique from the *Apology*, in the *Charmides* *oida* is also used paired with itself to indicate second-order knowledge. This is because where the conception of second-order knowledge, or the resistance to it, is largely negative in the *Apology*, in the *Charmides* Socrates and Critias seek out and examine whether they or others possess second-order knowledge. Therefore through the new construction of *eidenai... oide* the *Charmides* introduces a “positive” conception of second-order knowledge, rather than the *Apology*’s limited “negative” conception.

First I will focus on *dokeō* (“seems”) and how it indicates first-order knowledge. Then I will examine *oida* and the different ways it is used in the *Charmides*: alone to indicate first-order knowledge, borderline cases of note, and then doubled as *eidenai... oide* to describe second-order knowledge. Then I will examine the use of *oiōmai* in the *Charmides*: first alone, where it indicates first-order knowledge, and then paired with *oida*, where, like the *Apology*, it indicates second-order knowledge. I will then explain the significance of this analysis.

4.6.1 *Dokeō*

In the *Charmides*, Socrates uses “*dokeō*” almost exclusively to state “in my opinion/in your opinion/in his opinion.” In all of these instances, he is referring to either his own first-order belief or someone else’s first-order belief. This is markedly different

from the way *dokeō* is used throughout the *Apology*. The repeated construction of “in your opinion,” “in my opinion,” does not show up with any regular frequency in the *Apology* as it does in the *Charmides*. There are many reasons this could be. The *Charmides* is more dialectical than the *Apology*, with the former largely being a monologue. Perhaps the back-and-forth nature of the questioning, “In your opinion is this correct?” “In my opinion it is this way...” results in increased frequency of this construction. The subject matter of the *Charmides* could also be a factor—the dialogue is an investigation between three people into *sōphrosunē*, rather than one person relying facts about his history and charges against him. The natural cadence of speaking would lend itself more to “in my opinion...” constructions in a back-and-forth investigation than in a description of past events. However, there are some notable exceptions to the standard “in my opinion,” “in your opinion” constructions. First, the standard construction as it appears in the *Charmides*:

In the first person:

- “For those entering happen to be heralds and lovers of the one who is believed to be the most beautiful, right now, at least..”⁵⁶⁴
- “and indeed, at least in my opinion, all the others were in love with him, so excited and confused had they become as he came in...”⁵⁶⁵
- “Yet if he should be willing to strip, he said, he will seem to you to be faceless, so altogether beautiful he is in his looks.”⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁴ “gar tugchanousin hoi eisiontes prodromoi te kai erastai ontes tou dokountos kallistou einai ta ge dē nun,” *Charmides* 154a4-6

⁵⁶⁵ “hoi de dē alloi pantes egan emoige edokoun autou houtōs ekpeplēgmenoi te kai tethorubēmenoi ēsan, hēnik eisēei,” *Charmides*, 154c2-3

⁵⁶⁶ “houtos mentoi, ephē, ei etheloi apodunai, doxei soi aprosōpos einai,” *Charmides*, 154d3-4

- “Especially since he is both philosophic and, in the opinion of others as well as his own, quite poetic.”⁵⁶⁷
- “Then is it beautifully spoken in your opinion, and do you accept the argument?”⁵⁶⁸
- “But I have to tell you that Charmides is believed to stand out among his peers...”⁵⁶⁹
- “For no one on the continent is said to have been believed to be superior to your uncle Pyrilampes in beauty or stature...”⁵⁷⁰
- “In my opinion you bring shame on none of your ancestors.”⁵⁷¹
- “If you are of the opinion to be in need of these things,”⁵⁷²
- “And in my opinion, I said, we should investigate together whether or not you have acquired what I am asking about...”⁵⁷³
- “Then in my opinion, I said, we may best investigate it in this way.”⁵⁷⁴
- “And in my opinion, he said, it is in sum a certain quietness that you are asking about.”⁵⁷⁵
- “And he who takes counsel and makes discoveries with difficulty, who is believed to be worthy of praise...”⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁶⁷ “te kai, hōs dokei allois te kai eautō, panu poiētikos.” *Charmides*, 154e6-155a1

⁵⁶⁸ “oukoun kalōs soi dokei legesthai kai apodechē ton logon?” *Charmides*, 156c7-8

⁵⁶⁹ “legō mentoi soi hoti Charmidēs tōn hēikiōtōn ou monon tē idea dokei diapherein,” *Charmides*, 157d2-3

⁵⁷⁰ “purilampous gar tou sou theiou oudeis tōn en tē ēpeirō legetai kalliōn kai meisdōn anēr doxai einai,” *Charmides*, 158a2-4

⁵⁷¹ “Dokeis moi oudena tōn pro sou en oudeni hupobebēkenai.” *Charmides* 158b1-2

⁵⁷² “ei d’eti toutōn epideēs einai dokeis,” *Charmides*, 158c1-2

⁵⁷³ “kai moi dokei, ēn d’egō, koine an eiē skepteon eite kektēsai, eite mē ho punthanomai,” *Charmides*, 158d8-9

⁵⁷⁴ “tēde toinun, ephēn egō, dokei moi beltistē einai hē skepsis peri autou.” *Charmides*, 158e8

⁵⁷⁵ “kai moi dokei, ephē, sullēbdēn hēsuchistēs tis einai ho erōtas.” *Charmides*, 159b5-6

⁵⁷⁶ “kai mogis bouleuomenos te kai aneuriskōn epainou dokei axios einai,” *Charmides* 160a6-7

- “In my opinion, Socrates, he said, you have spoken correctly.”⁵⁷⁷
- “Yes, in my opinion.”⁵⁷⁸
- “It certainly seems to me to be as you say.”⁵⁷⁹
- “Yes, in my opinion, Socrates, he said, that is correctly spoken.”⁵⁸⁰
- “So investigate whether in your opinion he who says this speaks correctly.”⁵⁸¹
- “So in your opinion does the writing teacher write and read only his own name...”⁵⁸²
- “What then? In your opinion would a city be well-managed under a law...”⁵⁸³
- “Not in my opinion, he said.”⁵⁸⁴
- “Then more than anything, in my opinion, he put it forward as a riddle...”⁵⁸⁵
- “In my opinion, what I suspected is more true than anything...”⁵⁸⁶
- “But he didn’t endure this, and it was my opinion that Critias was angry with him...”⁵⁸⁷
- “So is it your opinion that they make only their own things or also those of others?”⁵⁸⁸
- “In your opinion, best of men, he said, isn’t it so?”⁵⁸⁹
- “Let that go, I said, for let us not yet investigate what my opinion is,”⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁷⁷ “orthōs moi dokeis, ephē, ō Sōcrates, eirēkenai.” *Charmides*, 160d4

⁵⁷⁸ “emoige dokei.” *Charmides*, 161a1

⁵⁷⁹ “alla mēn ‘outō ge dokei moi exein, hōs su legeis.” *Charmides*, 161a10

⁵⁸⁰ “all’ emoige dokei, ephē, ō Sōcrates, touto men orthōs legesthai.” *Charmides*, 161b3

⁵⁸¹ “skopei oun touto ei orthōs soi dokei legein ho legōv.” *Charmides*, 161b7

⁵⁸² “dokei oun soi to hautou onoma monon graphein ho grammatistēs kai,” *Charmides*, 161d4-5

⁵⁸³ “ti oun; ēn d; egō, dokei an soi polis eu oikeisthai hupo toutou tou nomou tou,” *Charmides*, 161e6-7

⁵⁸⁴ “ouk emoige dokei, ē d’ hos.” *Charmides*, 162a3

⁵⁸⁵ “pantos toinun mallon, hōs emoi dokei, ainigma auto proubalen,” *Charmides*, 162b4

⁵⁸⁶ “dokei gar moi pantos mallon alēthes einai,” *Charmides*, 162c4-5

⁵⁸⁷ “alla moi edoxen orgisthēnai auto hōsper poiētēs hupokritē kakōs diatithenti ta eautou poiēmata,” *Charmides*, 162d2-4

⁵⁸⁸ “ē oun dokousi soi ta eautōn monon poein ē kai ta tōn allōn;” *Charmides*, 162e8-163a1

⁵⁸⁹ “soi de, ē d’ hos, ō beltiste, oux houtō dokei?” *Charmides*, 163e4-5

⁵⁹⁰ “ea, ēn d’ egō: mē gar pō to emoi dokoun skopōmen, alla’ ho su legeis nun.” *Charmides*, 163e5-6

- “Nothing, but say whether in your opinion a certain doctor who makes someone healthy-”⁵⁹¹
- “For this inscription in my opinion was put up as if it were a greeting,”⁵⁹²
- “Such was the thinking of the one who put it up when he put it up, in my opinion.”⁵⁹³
- “Which is what happened in my opinion to those who put up the later inscriptions,”⁵⁹⁴
- “Yes I will do so, he said, for in my opinion you speak with due measure.”⁵⁹⁵
- “Think over whether in your opinion there is a kind of seeing that is not a seeing of what the other seeings are of,”⁵⁹⁶
- “In your opinion is there something of this kind?”⁵⁹⁷
- “In sum, investigate concerning all perceptions whether in your opinion there is a kind of perception of perceptions...”⁵⁹⁸
- “But is there in your opinion a kind of desire...”⁵⁹⁹
- “So he too in my opinion was compelled by my perplexity,”⁶⁰⁰
- “Now since he is well-reputed on every occasion,”⁶⁰¹
- “But if it seems proper, Critias,”⁶⁰²

⁵⁹¹ “ouden: alla lege ei dokei tis soi iatros, ugia tina poiōn,” *Charmides*, 164a7-8

⁵⁹² “kai gar touto ‘outō moi dokei to gramma anakeisthai,” *Charmides*, 164d7

⁵⁹³ “hōs dianoooumenos anethēken ho anatheis, hōs moi dokei,” *Charmides*, 164e5

⁵⁹⁴ “ho dē moi dokousin pathein kai hoi ta husteron grammata anathentes,” *Charmides*, 165a1-2

⁵⁹⁵ “alla, ephē, poiēsō houtō: dokeis gar moi metria legein,” *Charmides*, 166e3-4

⁵⁹⁶ “ennoei gar ei soi dokei opsis tis einai, hē hōn men hai allai opseis eisin, ouk esti toutōn opsis,” *Charmides*, 167c6-8

⁵⁹⁷ “dokei tis soi einai toiautē,” *Charmides*, 167d3

⁵⁹⁸ “sullēbdēn dē skopei peri pasōn tōn aisthēseōn ei tis soi dokei einai aistheseōn men aisthēsis kai eautēs,” *Charmides* 167d6-7

⁵⁹⁹ “alla epithumia dokei tis soi einai,” *Charmides* 167e1

⁶⁰⁰ “kakeinos edoxe moi hup’ emou aporountos anagkasthēnai kai autos halōnai hupo aporias,” *Charmides*, 169c5-6

⁶⁰¹ “hate oun eudokimōn ekastote,” *Charmides*, 169c7

⁶⁰² “alla’ ei dokei, ō Kritia,” *Charmides*, 169d3

- “In my opinion, Critias, we have not agreed beautifully.”⁶⁰³
- “Not in my opinion, I said.”⁶⁰⁴
- “And that is my opinion too.”⁶⁰⁵
- “It is not clear in my opinion that it [*sōphrosunē*] produces a good for us.”⁶⁰⁶
- “But in my opinion the happy man is defined well as one of those who live knowledgeably.”⁶⁰⁷

There are a few exceptional instances of *dokeō* throughout the *Charmides* that are worth look at individually. The first is an instance of *dokeō* being used to describe what someone believes about someone else’s wisdom. “As he was reputed to be quite wise.”⁶⁰⁸ Although something like a second-order belief, as it is thinking about someone else’s thinking, this is a first-order belief. “Wisdom” in this case is a quality of a person, the same as beauty or tallness, and therefore to believe something about this quality is to engage in a first-order belief, not a second-order one.

Another exceptional instance of *dokeō* is the reflexive use of it. “For I myself seemed to myself to have been caught by such a creature.”⁶⁰⁹ Even here, the activity of the self that is being reflected upon is being “caught”, which is not a process of thought but state of being. Therefore, this usage of *dokeō* is not in the service of second-order knowledge but first-order knowledge. Even in the reflexive “I believed of myself” construction, *dokeō* is not used when an individual is thinking about thinking.

⁶⁰³ “ou moi dokoumen, ō Kritia, kalōs hōmologēkenai.” *Charmides*, 172d5-6

⁶⁰⁴ “ou moi dokoumen, ēn d’ egō.” *Charmides*, 172e1-2

⁶⁰⁵ “kai emoi toi dokei houtō.” *Charmides*, 172e3

⁶⁰⁶ “ouden moi dēlon einai dokei hoti agathon ēmas apergasdetai.” *Charmides*, 172e6-173a1

⁶⁰⁷ “alla peri tinōn epistēmōnōs sdōnta su dokeis moi aphorisdesthai ton eudaimona.” *Charmides*, 173e6-8

⁶⁰⁸ “epei toi kai panu edokei sophos einai.” *Charmides*, 162b3

⁶⁰⁹ “autos gar moi edokoun hupo tou toioutou thremmatos healōkenai,” *Charmides*, 155e1

The only instance in the *Charmides* where *dokeō* approaches indicating second-order knowledge is the sentence: “Or an opinion that is an opinion of opinions and of itself, but which opines nothing of what the others opine.”⁶¹⁰ This sentence is in the context of Socrates and Critias investigating whether or not it is possible to “know what one knows and what one does not know, that one does not know it.”⁶¹¹ From there, Socrates presents a series of examples in the form of senses and feelings that he intends to use to demonstrate that they cannot be reflexive in the way Critias proposes knowledge can be. For instance, a desire for not pleasure but a desire for desire;⁶¹² a wish not for good but a wish for wishes;⁶¹³ love of not something beautiful but love of love,⁶¹⁴ &c. Each of these examples Critias answers in the negative, that no such desire/wish/love exists. *Dokeō* then is used in this context: is there a belief of not something in particular, but a belief of beliefs.⁶¹⁵ Importantly, the question is not is it possible to have a belief of a belief, e.g., to believe that one believes something. The question is if there is a belief of *beliefs*, generally speaking, as a set of things. Therefore, although this is about second-order beliefs, it is not about any practical, real instances of second-order beliefs. Socrates (through Critias’ agreement) does not dismiss the possibility of believing in a belief, such as believing that one believes it to be raining out. Instead, Socrates dismisses the possibility of there being an opinion of the set of all opinions.

⁶¹⁰ “doxan de doxōn doxan kai autēs, hōn de ai allai doxasdousin mēden doxasdousan,” *Charmides*, 168a2-4

⁶¹¹ *Charmides*, 167b2-3

⁶¹² *Charmides*, 167e1

⁶¹³ *Charmides*, 167e3-4

⁶¹⁴ *Charmides*, 167e5-6

⁶¹⁵ *Charmides*, 168a2-4

4.6.2 *Oida*

The difference between the *Apology* and *Charmides* is most stark with regards to the use of *oida*. Where in the *Apology* *oida* is only ever used on its own as a first-order knowledge word, in the *Charmides* Socrates uses it liberally when referring to second-order knowledge. This is because in the *Charmides* Socrates presents a positive conception of second-order knowledge, rather than mostly a negative conception of it as he does in the *Apology*. Now that there is something for Socrates, or the interlocutor, to know that he knows, Socrates can speak of “knowing what one knows,” rather than simply “supposing what one knows.” There are three distinct uses of *oida* in the *Charmides*: when it is alone, describing first-order knowledge; when it is paired with other knowledge-words; and when it is doubled, *eidenai... oide*, to describe second-order knowledge. This list of uses of *oida* in the *Charmides* is not exhaustive, as some instances of the word mean “see” in context, such as when Socrates says “In the state in which you see me, I replied,”⁶¹⁶ or “and as soon as they saw me.”⁶¹⁷ Instead this list will focus on uses of *oida* which concern knowledge.

Instances of first-order *oida*:

- “Socrates, in my opinion you will know very soon.”⁶¹⁸
- “You know him, no doubt, he said, but he wasn’t yet...”⁶¹⁹
- “I do know him, by Zeus!”⁶²⁰
- “You will know him very soon,”⁶²¹

⁶¹⁶ “kai egō pros auton apokrinomenos, houtōsi, ephēn, hōs su oras.” *Charmides*, 153b6-8

⁶¹⁷ “eidon eisionta ex aprosdokētou,” *Charmides*, 153b1

⁶¹⁸ “Sōcrates, autika moi dokeis eiseisthai,” *Charmides*, 154a4

⁶¹⁹ “oistha pou su ge, ephē, alla oupō en hēlikia ēn prin se,” *Charmides*, 154a8

⁶²⁰ “oida mentoi nē Dia, ēn d’egō,” *Charmides*, 154b1

⁶²¹ “autika, ephē, eisē kai hēlikos,” *Charmides*, 154b4

- “I do not know, by Zeus, he said. But perhaps nothing prevents even the one who said it from not knowing what he had in mind.”⁶²²
- “But you, no doubt, are likely to know because of your age...”⁶²³
- “But Critias, I said, you’re treating me as if I claim to know the answers to my own questions,”⁶²⁴
- “Is it that I myself don’t know the answers.”⁶²⁵
- “Then the skilled doctor doesn’t know about doctoring either.”⁶²⁶
- “Speak, so that we too may know what you are saying.”⁶²⁷
- “or anyone else pretending to know something that he doesn’t know.”⁶²⁸
- “He who knows everything that is going to be,”⁶²⁹
- “Someone of the sort who might know, besides what is to be,”⁶³⁰
- “By which he knows what among what is and what has happened and what is going to be?”⁶³¹
- “For how would I know what not even you two are able to discover”⁶³²

The next few cases of *oida* are at the intersection of first- and second-order knowledge. In the *Charmides*, the most common construction when Socrates and Critias are discussing knowing what one knows (i.e., second-order knowledge) is *eidenai* and

⁶²² “ouk oida ma Dia egōge, ē d’ hos: all’ isōs ouden kōluei mēde ton legonta mēden eidenai hoti enoei.” *Charmides*, 162b7-8

⁶²³ “se de pou eikos eidenai kai hēlikias heneka kai epimeleias,” *Charmides*, 162e1

⁶²⁴ “alla, ēn d’ egō, ō Kritia, su men hōs paskontos emou eidenai peri hōn erōtō prosperē pros me,” *Charmides*, 165b6-7

⁶²⁵ “gar meta sou aei to protithemenon dia to mē autos eidenai,” *Charmides*, 165b9-c1

⁶²⁶ “oude peri iatrikēs ara oiden ho iatrikos,” *Charmides*, 171a1

⁶²⁷ “Lege, hina kai hēmeis eidōmen hoti legeis,” *Charmides*, 173a2

⁶²⁸ “prospoiumenos ti eidenai ho mē oiden, lanthanoi an:” *Charmides*, 173b3-4

⁶²⁹ “eidota ta mellonta esesthai panta,” *Charmides*, 174a1

⁶³⁰ “ei tis pros tois mellousin kai ta gegonota panta eideiē kai ta nun onta,” *Charmides*, 174a3-4

⁶³¹ “hē ti oiden kai tōn ontōn kai tōn gegonotōn kai tōn mellontōn esesthai,” *Charmides*, 174b2-3

⁶³² “pōs gar an eideiēn ho ge mēd’ hūmeis oioi te este exeurein hoti pot’ estin,” *Charmides*, 176a8

oide, “to know what one knows and does not know.”⁶³³ But there are some few exceptional cases where Socrates or Critias are discussing knowing about some sets of knowledge, such as knowledge of health or knowledge of beauty, that are related to but not quite the explicit discussion of second-order “knowledge-of-knowledge” they will discuss later in the dialogue. In these cases, the dialogue uses constructions such as pairing *epistēmē* and *oida*, or *oida* and *sōphrosunē*, when *sōphrosunē* is defined as knowledge-of-knowledge.

There are also cases where Socrates pairs *epistēmē* with *oida* to discuss knowing about knowledge. Whether or not this should count as second-order knowledge is unclear. When described third-personally it does not appear to clearly be a case of second-order knowledge:

- “About knowledge he knows nothing; we assigned this to sound-mindedness.”⁶³⁴
- “If each of us does what he knows and hands over what he does not have knowledge of to others who have knowledge.”⁶³⁵

Socrates has already listed a series of examples of knowledge-sets which are more qualities of a person than second-order knowledge: the doctor who knows health, the lover who knows beauty, &c. Knowledge generally then may also be considered more a quality of a person: “about knowledge he knows nothing” could be first-order (lack of) knowledge in the same way “about pottery he knows nothing.”

⁶³³ “estin eidenai ha te tis oide kai ha mē,” *Charmides*, 169d7

⁶³⁴ “peri de he epistēmēs ouden oiden, alla touto dē tē sōphrosunē monē apedomen,” *Charmides*, 170e9-10

⁶³⁵ “ha men isasin, prattoein tauta, ha de mē epistainto, allois paradidoein tois epistamenois.” *Charmides*, 172d9

- “Let us see, if you wish, by conceding that we know it is possible even to have knowledge of knowledge,”⁶³⁶

In this example it is more clear that second-order knowledge is the object of *oída*, because the object is *epistasthai epistēmēn*, knowledge-of-knowledge. It is still somewhat removed from the direct *eidenai... oide* construction because rather than saying that someone knows that she knows, this sentence argues that the speakers know it is *possible* to have knowledge-of-knowledge. There is still some separation, thus the construction of *eidenai* with *epistasthai epistēmēn* rather than *eidenai... oide*.

One instance both pairs *oída* with *epistēmē* as well as with *sōphrosunē* when defined as knowledge-of-knowledge:

- “About knowledge he knows nothing; we assigned this to [*sōphrosunē*].”

In the next instance, *oída* appears with *sōphrosunē* (but without *epistēmē*), at a time in the dialogue that *sōphrosunē* is defined as knowledge-of-knowledge:

- “But by Zeus, Socrates, I don’t know whether I have it [*sōphrosunē*] or don’t have it [*sōphrosunē*].”⁶³⁷

As *sōphrosunē* is defined as knowledge-of-knowledge at this point in the dialogue, to know whether one possesses *sōphrosunē* or not should constitute second-order knowledge.

Finally, there are the instances where *oída* is paired with *oída*, indicating second-order knowledge. These *eidenai... oída* second-order constructions include:

⁶³⁶ “Idōmen gar, ei boulei, sugkōrēsantes kai epistasthai epistēmēn dunaton einai eidenai,” *Charmides*, 172c6-7

⁶³⁷ “alla ma Di, ē d’ hos, egōge, ō Sōcrates, ouk oída out’ ei ekō out’ ei mē ekō.” *Charmides*, 176a7-8

- “First, whether it is possible or not to know that one knows and does not know what he knows and does not know, and second, should this be perfectly possible, what benefit there would be for those who know this,”⁶³⁸
- “How is one any more able to know both what one knows and what not?”⁶³⁹
- “But this: what necessity is there for him who has this to know both what he knows and what he does not know?”⁶⁴⁰
- “...how knowing what one knows and knowing what someone does not know are the same.”⁶⁴¹
- “Then being sound-minded, and sound-mindedness, would not be knowing both what one knows and what one does not know, but only, it seems, that one knows and that one does not know.”⁶⁴²
- “Wasn’t this what we were saying about sound-mindedness, when we said how much of a good it would be to know both what someone knows and what he does not know?”⁶⁴³
- “But let us grant what we were setting down sound-mindedness to be from the beginning: knowing both what one knows and what one does not know.”⁶⁴⁴

⁶³⁸ “epeita ei hoti malista dunaton, tis an eiē hemin ōphelia eidosin auto,” *Charmides*, 167b2-4

⁶³⁹ “ti mallon hoion te estin eidenai ha te tis oide kai ha mē,” *Charmides*, 169d6-7

⁶⁴⁰ “all’ ekonti touto tis anagkē eidenai ha te oiden kai ha mē oiden;” *Charmides*, 169e7

⁶⁴¹ “ha oiden eidenai kai ha tis mē oiden eidenai,” *Charmides*, 170a3-4

⁶⁴² “ouk ara sōphronein tout’ an eiē oude sōphrosunē, eidenai ha te oiden kai ha mē oiden, all’ hōs eoiken, hoti oiden kai hoti ouk oiden monon.” *Charmides*, 170d1-3

⁶⁴³ “elegomen peri sōphrosunēs, legontes hoson agathon eiē to eidenai ha te oiden tis kai ha mē oiden;” *Charmides*, 172a4-6

⁶⁴⁴ “sōphrosunēn einai, to eidenai ha te oiden kai ha mē oiden,” *Charmides*, 172c6

- “So that our sound-minded one might become knowledgeable of both what he knows, that he knows it, and of what he does not know, that he does not know it.”⁶⁴⁵
- “...possibility of someone somehow or other knowing what he does not know at all. For our agreement asserts that he knows that he does not know this.”⁶⁴⁶

In the *Charmides*, Socrates, Charmides, and Critias seek out a definition of *sōphrosunē*, which eventually leads to them testing out the definition “knowledge-of-knowledge” for the virtue. This then leads to a positive conception of second-order knowledge: knowledge which is of knowledge, or, to know that one knows. Therefore the repeated use of the *eidenai... oida* marks a shift away from the negative conception of second-order knowledge present in the *Apology*—a supposing that one knows, indicated by *oiomai... oida*. The *Apology* lacks any such *eidenai... oida* construction because Socrates does not purport to know what he knows to any great extent in his courtroom defense. Significantly, the *oiomai... oida* construction *does* appear in the *Charmides*, because although it is focused more on the positive content of second-order knowledge, this does not preclude supposing about what one knows.

4.6.3 *Oiomai*

Much the same as in the *Apology*, in the *Charmides* when *oiomai* is paired with another knowledge word such as *oida* it indicates second-order thinking. When it is alone, it indicates first-order thinking. Some examples of *oiomai* in the first-order include:

⁶⁴⁵ “hina dē hemin genoito ho sōprōn epistēmōn hōn te oiden hoti oiden, kai hōn mē oiden hoti ouk oiden,” *Charmides*, 175c2-4

⁶⁴⁶ “oud’ episkepsamenoi to adunaton einai ha tis mē oiden mēdamōs, tauta eidenai hamōs ge pōs: hoti gar ouk oiden, phēsin auta eidenai hē hēmetēra homologia.” *Charmides*, 175c5-6

- “but now I suppose he must be quite a lad,”⁶⁴⁷
- “so also they say that it is quite mindless to suppose that one could ever treat the head itself,”⁶⁴⁸
- “For I don’t suppose that anyone here would easily be able to show two such families...”⁶⁴⁹
- “Don’t you suppose?” “I do suppose.”⁶⁵⁰
- “Then as to that which you suppose, I said, because you do have knowledge of how to speak Greek...”⁶⁵¹
- “Moreover, in the soul’s inquiries and in taking counsel it isn’t the quietest one, I suppose...”⁶⁵²
- “So do you suppose, if he was calling such works...”⁶⁵³
- “It is not to be thought, Socrates; but he too, I suppose, held that making is something other than...”⁶⁵⁴
- “But if you suppose that something I agreed to...”⁶⁵⁵
- “Yet someone might perhaps suppose they [know thyself versus *sōphrosunē*] are different.”⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁴⁷ “nun d’ oimai pou eu mala an ēdē meirakion eiē,” *Charmides*, 154b3

⁶⁴⁸ “kai au to tēn kephalēn oiesthai an pote therapeusai autēn eph’ heautēs aneu holou tou sōmatos pollen anoian einai,” *Charmides*, 156c1-2

⁶⁴⁹ “ou gar oimai allon oudena tōn enthade rhadiōs an exein epideixai poiai duo,” *Charmides*, 157e1-2

⁶⁵⁰ “ē ouk oiei; egōge, ephē, oimai.” *Charmides*, 159a4

⁶⁵¹ “oukoun touto ge, ephēn, ho oiei, epeidēper hellēnisdein epistasai,” *Charmides*, 159a5

⁶⁵² “alla mēn en ge tais sdētēsesin tēs psuchēs kai tō bouleuesthai ouk ho hēsukio0tatos, hōs egō oimai,” *Charmides* 160a5-6

⁶⁵³ “oiei oun auton, ei ta toiauta egra ekalei kai,” *Charmides*, 163b4

⁶⁵⁴ “ouk oiesthai ge chrē, ō Sōcrates, alla kai ekeinos oimai poiēsın praxeōs kai ergasias allo enomisden,” *Charmides*, 163b7-8

⁶⁵⁵ “alla ei tis u oiei ek tōn emprosthen hup’ emou ōmologēmenōn eis touto...” *Charmides*, 164c7

⁶⁵⁶ “taka d’ an tis oiētheiē allo einai,” *Charmides*, 165a1

- “For they suppose that ‘know yourself’ is a counsel...”⁶⁵⁷
- “And you are far from being unaware of this, for you are doing, I suppose, what you just denied that you were doing.”⁶⁵⁸
- “or don’t you suppose that it is a common good...”⁶⁵⁹
- “For surely if you investigate this same thing in other things, it will seem to you, I suppose, to be impossible.”⁶⁶⁰
- “Nor indeed any wish, I suppose, that wishes for no good,”⁶⁶¹
- “One, I suppose, is doctoring, one is politics...”⁶⁶²
- “I suppose, I said, that I am babbling,”⁶⁶³
- “I don’t suppose that you would say,”⁶⁶⁴
- “and yet, as I suppose, nothing would appear more unreasonable than this.”⁶⁶⁵
- “So this I certainly do not suppose is so,”⁶⁶⁶
- “Socrates, I suppose myself to be quiet in need of the incantation,”⁶⁶⁷

The second-order cases of *oiomai* are constructed such that *oiomai* is paired with *oida*. Much as in the *Apology*, in the *Charmides* when *oiomai* is paired with *oida* it almost always indicates second-order thinking. Without need to rely on the greater context, this

⁶⁵⁷ “kai gar houtoi sumboulēn ōēthēsan einai to Gnōthi sauton,” *Charmides*, 165a4

⁶⁵⁸ “alla gar oimai ho arti ouk ephēstha poiein,” *Charmides*, 166c4-5

⁶⁵⁹ “ē ou koinon oiei agathon einai skedon ti pasin anthrōpois,” *Charmides*, 166d4

⁶⁶⁰ “en allois gar pou to auto touto ean skopēs, doxei soi, hōs egōmai aduna ton einai,” *Charmides*, 167c4-6

⁶⁶¹ “oude mēn boulēsis, hōs egōmai, hē agathon men ouden bouletai,” *Charmides*, 167e3-4

⁶⁶² “alla to men oimai iatrikē, to de politikē,” *Charmides*, 170b3

⁶⁶³ “oimai men, ēn d’ egō, lērein me:” *Charmides*, 173a3

⁶⁶⁴ “Ou gar oimai toutou ge,” *Charmides*, 174a5-6

⁶⁶⁵ “kaitoi, hōs egōmai, oudenos hotou ouki alogōteron tout’ an phaneiē.” *Charmides*, 175c8

⁶⁶⁶ “taut’ oun panu men oun ouk oiomai houtōs ekein,” *Charmides*, 175e7

⁶⁶⁷ “ō Sōcrates, panu oimai deisthai tēs epōdēs,” *Charmides*, 176b2

pairing is a reliable indicator that Socrates is discussing second-order knowledge. What follows is those:

- “Fearing that unawares I might ever suppose that I know something when I don’t know.”⁶⁶⁸
- “In the same way it will be possible for him to investigate others in regard to what someone knows and supposes, if he does know, and what he himself supposes he knows but does not know.”⁶⁶⁹
- “And this is what being *sōphronein*, and *sōphrosunē*, and oneself recognizing oneself are: knowing both what one knows and what one does not know.”⁶⁷⁰

There is one case where Socrates uses *oiomai* without *oida* but in a way that is indicative of second-order thinking, and it is constructed much the same way as when he pairs *oida* with *epistēmē*. In this sentence, Socrates hypothesizes a doctor who has knowledge of his craft and compares him to someone who does not have knowledge of doctoring but “supposes he does.”⁶⁷¹

- “More than anything, then, if *sōphrosunē* is only a knowledge of knowledge and of non-knowledge, it will not be able to judge between a doctor who has knowledge of the things of his art and one who does not have knowledge but pretends or supposes he does, nor anyone else of those who have knowledge of anything at all...”⁶⁷²

⁶⁶⁸ “phoboumenos mē pote lathō oiomenos men ti eidenai, eidos de mē,” *Charmides*, 166d1

⁶⁶⁹ “kai tous allous hōsautōs dunatos estai episkopein ti tis oiden kai oietai, eiper oiden, kai ti au oietai men eidenai, oiden d’ ou, tōn de allōn oudeis,” *Charmides*, 167a2-4

⁶⁷⁰ “kai estin dē touto to sōphronein te kai sōphrosunē kai to eauton auton gignōskein, to eidenai ha te oiden kai ha mē oiden,” *Charmides*, 167a5-7

⁶⁷¹ *Charmides*, 171c6

⁶⁷² “ei hē sōphrosunē epistēmēs epistēmē monon estin kai anepistēmōsunēs, oute iatron diakrinai hoi ate estai epistamenon ta tēs technēs ē mē epistamenon, prospoioumenon de ē oiomenon, oute allon oudena tōn epistamenōn kai otioun,” *Charmides*, 171c3-7

4.6.5 Significance

The vocabulary in the *Apology* and way the words are paired together demonstrates that Socrates has concepts of both first- and second-order knowledge. A further analysis of the same vocabulary in the *Charmides* reveals that not only does Socrates have these concepts, but also a conception of positive and negative conceptions of first- and second-order knowledge. The most significant difference is between *oiomai... oida* as a negative conception of second-order knowledge and pairing *eidenai... oide* as a positive conception of second-order knowledge.

4.6 Self-Knowledge as Second-Order Knowledge

It should be clear that *sōphrosunē* as a virtue includes the positive content of self-knowledge as one of the many ways it is used, especially in the Socratic corpus. What remains unclear is if it is fair to describe self-knowledge as second-order knowledge; in particular, the type of positive-content self-knowledge that *sōphrosunē* encompasses in dialogues such as the *Charmides*. Although the *Charmides* itself ends superficially aporetically, Socrates declares that self-knowledge as knowledge of his own epistemic state—supposing correctly that he knows, supposing correctly that he does not know—is produced even in cases of *ēlenchus*.⁶⁷³ In particular we see Socrates again and again focus the *ēlenchus* on awareness of his own epistemic state or others' awareness of their own epistemic states.⁶⁷⁴ Socrates is declared by the Oracle at Delphi to be the wisest man in Athens, the Oracle which has not insignificantly the command “know thyself” inscribed across her temple.⁶⁷⁵ In the *Charmides*, the titular boy ends the dialogue

⁶⁷³ Ferguson, 2019, p. 382

⁶⁷⁴ Rappe, 1995, p. 12

⁶⁷⁵ Rappe, 1995, p. 9

convinced that Socrates at least possesses the virtue *sōphrosunē* as he submits to Socrates' incantations.⁶⁷⁶

Throughout the *Charmides*, the distinction between first- and second-order knowledge is essential to the debate. The first three major definitions of *sōphrosunē* (including three sub-definitions of the third definition) are all first-order definitions: *sōphrosunē* as the quality of quietness; *sōphrosunē* as the quality of modesty; *sōphrosunē* as the activity of doing one's own business, whether that means making things, doing things, or doing *good* things. But then the definitions shift to different types of knowledges. *Sōphrosunē* as the knowledge of oneself, knowledge of itself, and knowledge of knowledge are all second-order definitions. For instance, if *sōphrosunē* is defined as "knowledge of knowledge," then any thoughts about *sōphrosunē* would constitute second-order thinking, because the interlocuter would be thinking about their own thinking. When considering if Charmides possesses this kind of *sōphrosunē*, one which is some kind of knowledge, Socrates uses second-order thinking words about Charmides possessing *sōphrosunē*, in contrast to first-order words when he possessed the kind of *sōphrosunē* which was a quality or activity.

The particular definition of knowledge which halts the debate is reflexive: knowledge of itself and of the other knowledges. For knowledge to have as its object itself is reflexive knowledge, which Politis argues is essentially second-order knowledge.⁶⁷⁷ If there is a distinction to be drawn between first- and second-order knowledge, which I have demonstrated Socrates speaks as though there is, then it would be between

⁶⁷⁶ North, 1966 (ed. 2019), p. 185

⁶⁷⁷ Politis, 2008, p. 27

knowledge of something and self-reflexive “knowledge of the knowledge of something.”⁶⁷⁸ Although Socrates and his interlocuters cannot move forward here, it is not necessarily because the definition of *sōphrosunē* is *not* second-order knowledge. Instead, Socrates and Critias conflate first- and second-order “arts,” thus leading to the impasse which ends the argument. This is not in error, argues Sprague. The goal of comparing *sōphrosunē*, which Sprague takes definitively to be a second-order art, to first-order arts such as medicine, carpentry, or geometry, is to force Critias to realize in what ways second-order arts are the same and in what ways they are dissimilar.⁶⁷⁹ The two are alike in the sense that they both have positive content to them—both are “of” something.⁶⁸⁰ The first-order art of calculation is “of” the even and the odd.⁶⁸¹ The second-order art of *sōphrosunē* is “of” knowledge of good and evil.⁶⁸² But the two are dissimilar as well. First-order arts do not rule over other arts, while second-order arts such as rhetoric, statesmanship, or *sōphrosunē* rule over first-order arts. The paradoxes that result when Critias and Socrates are testing this second-order definition of *sōphrosunē* are a result of conflating these two different orders of arts.⁶⁸³

Although in the dialogue Critias and Socrates never reach the conclusion that *sōphrosunē* is knowledge of knowledge, or knowledge of oneself, or knowledge of *itself*, they do answer, or at least take as assumed, that *sōphrosunē* is a second-order art. Nor do they ever *disprove* that this is the case, as most of the error in the second half of the dialogue concerns the paradoxes that result from conflating first- and second-order

⁶⁷⁸ Politis, 2008, p. 27

⁶⁷⁹ Sprague, 1973, p. 53-54

⁶⁸⁰ Sprague, 1973, p. 53

⁶⁸¹ *Charmides*, 166a

⁶⁸² Sprague, 1973, p. 53

⁶⁸³ Sprague, 1973, p. 77; *Charmides* 165c

knowledges. Moreover, Critias successfully acknowledges the difference between first- and second-order knowledges, but errs further when he tries to shift the definition of *sōphrosunē* from knowledge of oneself to knowledge of *itself*.⁶⁸⁴ This error is understandable given the way this inquiry began: they were seeking temperance in Charmides, with the assumption that if he possessed it, he would know or at least have an opinion about it.⁶⁸⁵ If that is the case, then an individual with *sōphrosunē* would have knowledge of *herself*, but it would be knowledge of herself *that* she had *sōphrosunē*. Thus, Critias makes the understandable mistake of conflating knowledge of oneself and knowledge of itself in his definitions of *sōphrosunē*, when what he should have articulated was that *sōphrosunē* is knowledge of oneself *that* one has itself [*sōphrosunē*].

4.7 Conclusion

There are two essential questions this analysis of *sōphrosunē* as second-order self-knowledge in the *Charmides* is meant to answer. The first is Reeve's challenge. Reeve's challenge was that although the negative content of Socratic wisdom is presented to us in the *Apology* as well as the rest of the Socratic corpus, "what I do not know, I do not suppose [myself] to know," what positive content comprises Socratic wisdom is yet unanswered. *Sōphrosunē*, as second-order self-knowledge, is the answer. Understanding that Socrates' wisdom, and both the positive and negative content of it, is a second-order knowledge is the first step towards answering Reeve's challenge. The second is understanding what positive second-order knowledge is present in the *Charmides*. *Sōphrosunē* is this positive second-order knowledge. It is specifically knowledge of what one knows and knowledge that one does not know. Socrates is wise

⁶⁸⁴ Sprague, 1973, p. 79; *Charmides* 166c

⁶⁸⁵ *Charmides*, 159a1

because a) what he does not know, he does not suppose himself to know b) what he does know, he is aware he knows; and c) what he does not know, he is aware that he does not know. The former of these Socrates demonstrates in the *Apology*, the latter two are embodied by *sōphrosunē* in the *Charmides*. Socrates knows that it is wicked and shameful to do wrong, what Love is, and that to do harm wrongfully is more of a disgrace and evil than to be harmed. But more importantly, he is aware that he knows these moral truths. This what makes Socrates the exemplar of *sōphrosunē* in the *Charmides*, rather than the titular young man himself. This is what answers Reeve's challenge, in providing positive content to Socratic wisdom.

This also provides an answer to Vlastos' Socratic paradox. Socrates is still aware of knowing neither great nor small things, because Socrates has no godly knowledge. Even the virtue of *sōphrosunē* is, by the time of the fifth and fourth centuries, a human virtue. To have self-knowledge of his human self, Socrates possesses a knowledge that is of no concern to a god—for the god to know herself and what she knows is an entirely different sort of knowledge than for Socrates to know himself and what he knows. Moreover, by recontextualizing Socratic wisdom as two types of negative and positive second-order knowledge, this separates Socratic wisdom from the gods because this is a sort of knowledge that does not apply to their wisdom. Thus, Socrates can truthfully state that he is aware of knowing no great or small things when confronted by a god's prophecy, because he has no godly wisdom. He has only that he does not suppose himself to know what he does not know, awareness that he does not know what he does not know, and knowledge of what he does know.

CHAPTER 5

APPLICATION

Vlastos' articulation of the Socratic paradox is that Socrates disavows awareness of wisdom in things great or small, yet at the same time Socrates appears certain that he has lived a virtuous life.⁶⁸⁶ There are many ways to resolve this paradox. Vlastos argues that Socrates utilizes complex irony to both speak literally and ironically about his own knowledge.⁶⁸⁷ Therefore, when Socrates says that he is "conscious that I am not at all wise, either much or little," he encourages the listener to join himself in attempting to solve the god's riddle. The Pythia states that no one is wiser than Socrates; but Socrates himself is conscious that he is not at all wise. By disavowing this knowledge, Socrates emphasizes the obscure nature of the god's pronouncement. This guards against hubristic misunderstandings of the god's words, such as when Croesus took the Oracle's prophecy that "a great empire will be destroyed" to mean that his enemy's empire would be destroyed, rather than his own.

Socrates' disavowal of knowledge, according to Vlastos' complex-ironic reading, only goes as far as presenting the Oracle's words as a riddle to be solved. There is danger in taking the Oracle literally or *prima facie*, and so when she declares no one wiser than Socrates, Socrates disavows wisdom not in defiance of the god but in an effort to not misunderstand his words. Reeve then articulates a distinction between two types of Socratic wisdom: "positive content" and "negative content." This distinction could be the

⁶⁸⁶ Vlastos, 1991, p. 3

⁶⁸⁷ Vlastos, 1991, p. 114

beginning of a resolution to Vlastos' articulation of the Socratic paradox. Reeve defines the negative content of Socratic wisdom as the awareness that he does not know. This is Socrates' disavowal of knowledge which he makes after the Oracle declares no man wiser than he. But Reeve leaves open the question what "positive content" is there to Socratic wisdom, which would make the Oracle say such a thing? It cannot be mere propositional knowledge or even expertise in specific skillsets, such as pottery or politics, because Socrates' fellow citizens possessed such knowledge and yet Socrates was somehow wiser than they. If the positive content of Socratic wisdom could be discovered, then Socrates' riddle of his disavowal of knowledge might be resolved.

Today, the question of who in society is wise, while not framed quite the same way, remains relevant as ever. TED talks, interviews with technological moguls, celebrities, and policy solutions all involve seeking for wise people one way or another. In Athens, Socrates sought out the experts in fields of central relevance to Athenian life: politics, poetry, craft. Many he found to be experts in their fields (poets notwithstanding), and were knowledgeable about that domain. But then all without exception continued to speak about things outside their field of expertise, and believed themselves to know things they did not. Today, much the same happens when experts in particular subject matter opine about other areas of knowledge. Technological moguls think they know something about civil engineering, politicians think they know about gender, and artists think they know about ethics. The relevance of Socrates' quest to find someone with wisdom, or his example of living life with *sōphrosunē* remains strong.

How experts in one field can be so inexpert in another is not the question that Socrates or the modern epistemologist asks. Most people have areas of strength and

weaknesses, and it is no strange thing that an expert in political laws and practices might have little to know expertise in throwing clay to make a vase. But why expertise in political practices would cause someone to *think* they have expertise in the ethics of justice—and how to avoid such mistaken beliefs—is an important question, both for the individual to ask herself and to ask of others. It is as important to refrain from believing oneself capable of expertise in many areas outside one's domain of knowledge as it is to question those experts whom start opining about fields outside their domain of knowledge. Metacognitive awareness of what one knows and does not, as well as awareness of what others believe themselves to know but may or may not, is an ancient virtue with modern relevance.

5.1 Expertise in Socrates

Identifying a *sōphron* person, as well as practicing the virtue ourselves, must begin with defining expertise. It would be impossible to determine if an individual is practicing *sōphrosunē* without first identifying what areas they are expert in and what areas they are not. In this way, Socratic inquiry, and especially Socratic inquiry into knowledge, is also an inquiry into the nature of expertise. During the discussion of the last definition in the *Charmides* (that *sōphrosunē* is the knowledge of what one knows and does not know, that one knows and does not know it),⁶⁸⁸ the question of expertise arises with Socrates asks if *sōphrosunē* will allow someone to find out whether another person is indeed an expert.⁶⁸⁹ What distinguishes one person from another in expertise appears to be the difference between knowledge and ignorance, but what type of knowledge, in what areas, is a question that is often the focus of the Socratic elenchus. Euthyphro is a man known for his piety, engaged in a difficult pious act (prosecuting his father for the negligent

⁶⁸⁸ *Charmides*, 167b1-3

⁶⁸⁹ *Charmides*, 170d5-7

homicide of a murderer), but whether or not that makes him an expert in piety is a question which arises over the course of the titular dialogue. Socrates questions Charmides, a youth who would be the best example of a *sōphrōn* young man, directly as to whether or not he possesses *sōphrosunē*, and consequently if he has any expert knowledge in it. In order to examine expertise, therefore, the first question to answer should be: what knowledge makes up expertise?

The first quality of expertise Socrates references again and again is self-referential knowledge. As there are many kinds of self-referential knowledge, what sort in particular—if not every kind of self-referential knowledge—is important to determine. In the *Charmides* when Critias and Socrates are trying to determine the kind of knowledge which might make up *sōphrosunē*, they distinguish between two types of expertise: knowledge that makes up technical expertise and self-knowledge which makes up knowledge of one's knowledge.⁶⁹⁰ This is what modern epistemologists might call first-versus second-order knowledge: the knowledge particular to a technical domain would be first-order knowledge, but the self-knowledge of knowing that one possessed that technical knowledge would be second-order knowledge. Another kind of knowledge, moral knowledge, is not sufficient to make someone an expert, but it can be the subject of expert knowledge, just as technical knowledge can be.⁶⁹¹

Socrates also eliminates some kinds of knowledge which are not sufficient to indicate expertise. For instance, elenctic knowledge is not sufficient to indicate expertise, according to some scholars.⁶⁹² These disavowals of knowledge are the “negative” part of

⁶⁹⁰ Rappe, 1995, p. 7

⁶⁹¹ Reeve, 1989, p. 34

⁶⁹² Nightingale, 2010, p. 13

Socratic wisdom. But it is not the sort of thing that can make up expertise. Simply being ignorant in something—even *recognizing* that one is ignorant in something—does not make up expertise.⁶⁹³ We can see this mistake today when someone expresses humility in one area, but yet goes on to opine about another topic they are inexpert in. *Some* knowledge of what one does not know is not enough to make someone *sōphron*.

Expertise in any domain in knowledge means more than having any arbitrary knowledge within that domain. The objects of the expert knowledge of craftsmen are general. The object of the expertise of a doctor is not just “what is healthy for this individual patient” but “what is healthy for all patients, or all patients of this type.”⁶⁹⁴ Knowing that Glaucon can drink two cups of wine before he winds up with a hangover the next day is not medical expertise; knowing that two glasses of wine will cause most men of his height and weight and body fat percentage, with his history of alcohol consumption, to have a hangover next day *is* medical expertise. It is this general knowledge that Socrates thinks makes an expert, and it is not limited to just the sort of expertise Socrates is interested in—individual craft has this general knowledge as well.

This is not yet the entirety of what Socrates seeks when looking for someone wiser than himself. Craft-expertise seems to lack the self-reflexive quality that Socrates sees as a necessary condition for the type of expertise he is interested in. Another distinction Socrates draws between the sort of expertise he is interested in, at least with regards to *sōphrosunē* in the *Charmides*, is that the domain of other kinds of expertise, such as craft-expertise, differs fundamentally from the domain of *sōphrosunē*, which is expertise in

⁶⁹³ Nightingale, 2010, p. 10

⁶⁹⁴ Raymond and Moore, 2019, p. 20

“knowledges,” or knowledge of “knowledges.”⁶⁹⁵ In modern terms, this is second-order knowledge. But it is important to remember that this self-reflexive quality is a necessary but not sufficient condition. There is non-expert knowledge which is reflexive, but all expertise that Socrates finds makes up wisdom is reflexive.⁶⁹⁶

5.2 Self-Knowledge Expertise

One quality of the type of expertise that Socrates emphasizes as he seeks out someone wiser than himself is self-reflexivity. This means that the person who holds the expertise is aware that they possess the knowledge in their subject-area, and that awareness of their own subject-specific knowledge is what creates the expertise. Woodruff describes self-reflexivity in the expert as the ability “to know what she knows.”⁶⁹⁷ This sounds similar to how modern epistemologists describe second-order knowledge.

But depending on the contextual definition of self-reflexive, individuals who are experts in craft can have self-reflexive expertise and still not be what Socrates is looking for when he examines the citizenry of Athens for someone wiser than himself. This is the wisdom of Socrates, in his restraint in not presuming to know what he does not. It is not enough that the expertise be self-reflexive alone, because there are craftsmen who have self-reflexive expertise (of a kind) in their professional craft—often craftsmen who can teach others their craft have this kind of self-reflexive expertise. This is why both Socratic ignorance and *sōphrosunē* are equally necessary components of wisdom: there is the positive second-order knowledge of what one knows and that one does not, but there is

⁶⁹⁵ Raymond and Moore, 2019, p. 20

⁶⁹⁶ Woodruff, 1990, p. 66

⁶⁹⁷ Woodruff, 1990, p. 64

also the negative knowledge of restraining oneself from presuming to know when one does not.

Socrates' wisdom is not just from his ability to examine others and determine their expertise, but also from his ability to know *himself* and his own expertise, or lack thereof. Socrates has the wisdom to know that he *ought* to practice self-reflection, to determine what knowledge he does or does not have.⁶⁹⁸ This instinct of self-reflection is one the other interlocutors that Socrates examines seem to lack. Socrates seems to take the words carved into the temple of Apollo at Delphi, "know thyself," as an impetus for self-reflection. Specifically, reflection upon the knowledge he does or does not have. Although often expressed as negative self-reflection—the knowledge that Socrates lacks some knowledge—this is not always the case. Socrates also knows that he knows it is wicked and shameful to do wrong,⁶⁹⁹ what love is,⁷⁰⁰ and to do harm wrongfully is more of a disgrace and evil than to be wronged.⁷⁰¹ He comes to these conclusions via positive self-reflection, and states that he knows that he knows these things. Whether or not any of these pieces of knowledge make Socrates an expert is a different question, but at the very least Socrates can be said to possess both positive and negative second-order knowledge of a limited and specific domain.

Socratic wisdom is also Socratic virtue: by practicing some aspects of *sōphrosunē*, Socrates can prevent himself from committing the most blameworthy ignorance.⁷⁰² This is how Vlastos' paradox is answered. Socrates can both claim to possess no ethical

⁶⁹⁸ Woodruff, 1990, p. 69

⁶⁹⁹ *Apology*, 26b6

⁷⁰⁰ *Symposium*, 177e1

⁷⁰¹ *Gorgias*, 508d6-509a5

⁷⁰² *Apology*, 29b1

information, yet on the other hand know the ethical fact that he is living a virtuous life. There are two aspects to this: Socrates does not commit the most blameworthy ignorance, and Socrates can affirm his virtuousness even in the absence of domain-specific expertise. For the former aspect, Socrates can at the very least know he is not presuming himself to practice a particular virtue (e.g., be courageous), because he does not presume to know what the virtue is (e.g., courage). Socrates avoids the sin of presuming himself to know what he does not. For the latter affirmative aspect, Socrates can consult himself and determine whether he is successfully practicing a virtue, even in the absence of domain-specific knowledge of said virtue. Much in the same way Socrates' human wisdom allows him to investigate the expertise of others in areas which he lacks expertise—a politician in justice, a craftsmen in beauty, &c.—Socrates may investigate himself and test whether he is practicing courage, even where he lacks that affirmative expertise.

Finally, there is the issue of how to question others about knowledge one is not an expert in. Socrates purports to question his experts on their domains of knowledge.⁷⁰³ But then how can Socrates even know what is in the domain of knowledge he is not an expert in—how can he question Charmides on *sōphrosunē* if Socrates does not know what *sōphrosunē* entails?⁷⁰⁴ Or Euthyphro on piety if they cannot agree if it is the things dear to one god, many gods, all the gods, &c.? This is especially apparent in the *Charmides*, when the domain of *sōphrosunē* is particularly unclear and varies from “quietness”⁷⁰⁵ to

⁷⁰³ Rappe, 1995, p. 12

⁷⁰⁴ Mahoney, 1996, p. 192

⁷⁰⁵ *Charmides*, 159b5

“making things”⁷⁰⁶ to “good things”⁷⁰⁷ to “knowledge of the self”⁷⁰⁸ to “knowledge of itself...”⁷⁰⁹ All these things might have different domains, which would be a problem because until they figure out which of these things *sōphrosunē* is over, Socrates cannot test Charmides on them to determine whether or not he possesses *sōphrosunē*. In the modern era, such issues are as relevant as ever: if an expert in technology claims civil engineering is part of their domain of knowledge, and the inquirer is an expert in neither technology nor civil engineering, how is she supposed to determine if first, the expert in technology ought to know about civil engineering, and second, if their answers about civil engineering are correct? It is not unusual to hear an expert in one domain claim that their expertise applies to other domains, and the issue of how to adjudicate this from outside both areas of expertise could not be more relevant in the modern age.

5.3 Expertise in Modern Epistemology

First-order knowledge and second-order knowledge is a distinction in epistemology between knowledge of skillsets or facts and knowledge of first-order knowledge. Often, the distinction between amateur problem-solvers and expert problem-solvers is marked by a difference in first- and second-order knowledge, with the experts possessing second-order knowledge that the amateurs do not. A multitude of studies have been done that demonstrate this distinction. Schoenfeld’s work on how amateur and expert problem-solvers approach the same problem differently is a good example of this. What Schoenfeld’s research found was that although amateurs and experts may have

⁷⁰⁶ *Charmides*, 163b1

⁷⁰⁷ *Charmides*, 163e10

⁷⁰⁸ *Charmides*, 165b4

⁷⁰⁹ *Charmides*, 166e5-6

the same domain-specific⁷¹⁰ first-order knowledge when confronted with a math problem, the experts engage in a second-order process that the amateurs do not.⁷¹¹ In one experiment Schoenfeld gave both amateur and expert problem-solvers the same mathematical problem: inscribe the triangle with the largest area that can fit inside a given circle. The “amateurs” were university calculus students who had just learned the domain-specific knowledge needed for the task; the experts were mathematics instructors, some of whom had not done this specific type of problem in years.⁷¹² The domain-specific first-order knowledge was consistent between the groups. The expert problem-solvers more efficiently and successfully solved for the problem than the amateurs.

Before the experiment, Schoenfeld created six categories of ways the problem-solvers could spend their time: Read, Analyze, Explore, Plan, Implement, and Verify.⁷¹³ What Schoenfeld found was that experts spent the majority of their time in the Analyze category, leaving it to Implement and then returning *back* to it often.⁷¹⁴ Amateurs, on the other hand, spent almost all their time in the “Explore” category—between ninety and ninety-five percent of their time, in fact.⁷¹⁵ Schoenfeld’s conclusion from this, coupled with the experts’ greater success at solving the problem, was that the experts spent more time thinking about their own thinking.⁷¹⁶ They had second-order knowledge which the amateurs lacked. The amateurs did not reflect at all on their own knowledge, and instead explored the first method that occurred to them for nearly the entire problem-solving

⁷¹⁰ “Domain-specific” knowledge refers to knowledge specific to the domain under discussion; “Domain-independent” knowledge refers to knowledge that is applicable across multiple domains. Li, N. & al., 2012, p. 28

⁷¹¹ Li & al., 2012, p. 25

⁷¹² Schoenfeld, 1987, p. 192

⁷¹³ Schoenfeld, 1987, p. 193

⁷¹⁴ See Figure 4

⁷¹⁵ See Figure 3

⁷¹⁶ Schoenfeld, 1987, p. 195

time.⁷¹⁷ Many cognitive scientists since Schoenfeld recognize this as the process that the expert has in place to arbitrate between production rules when more than one applies to a given situation.⁷¹⁸

Expert problem-solvers are also able to think critically about their own knowledge, and therefore come to know relevant information about it with regards to problem-solving. It is not the mere ability to be able to recite a rule for problem-solving, which amateurs can do. The difference between the two is that expert problem-solvers know which parts of their knowledge is a salient feature for problem-solving in different contexts. Amateurs categorize different problems somewhat randomly, sometimes based on salient features but other times not. Experts, rather than guessing, know which mental rules are salient to which problems, and are able to categorize problems accordingly.⁷¹⁹ Strannegård (2009) found that amateur problem-solvers were slow or unable to identify if propositions were tautologies, while expert problem-solvers were not. The difference, argued Strannegård, was that experts were able to think about which methodology for identifying tautologies would be best in each context, whereas amateur problem-solvers lacked the second-order knowledge of their own knowledge to do the same.⁷²⁰ Bundy (1975) had amateur and expert problem-solvers write down their reasoning as they solved several different types of mathematical problems.⁷²¹ One significant difference Bundy found between the amateur and expert problem-solvers was that experts would utilize the same rule, such

⁷¹⁷ Schoenfeld, 1987, p. 193

⁷¹⁸ Li & al., 2012, p. 26

⁷¹⁹ Johansen, Palmeri, 2002, p. 482-500

⁷²⁰ Strannegård & al., 2009, p. 283

⁷²¹ Schoenfeld, 1987, p. 4-5

as “getting rid of nasty functions,” over multiple contexts.⁷²² Bundy distinguished this from any specific first-order knowledge for two reasons. First, the experts had never been taught the rule specifically, but instead extrapolated it from years of mathematical practice problem-solving.⁷²³ Second, the experts did not merely use the rule on every context, or in a single specific context. Instead, the experts would encounter a specific problem, and then decide whether or not to use that rule in that specific context. Bundy took this to mean that experts were thinking about their own problem-solving and implementing strategies accordingly.⁷²⁴ Amateurs, by contrast, tend to stick to whatever single rule they have been taught to utilize in a particular context, rather than self-reflecting on which rules might be useful in new contexts.

5.4 Ancient Lessons for Modern Times

The wisdom of Socrates may sometimes seem like a distant and inaccessible thing, trapped two millennia ago in Ancient Greece. But the distinction the Socratic dialogues draws between Socrates and his interlocutors is a similar distinction cognitive scientists and epistemologists have discovered in the modern era. Socrates, much like the expert problem-solvers in the previous examples, possesses second-order knowledge which his interlocutors lack. For each of the three components of Socratic wisdom, there is an example in cognitive science that is similar. The component I propose as the answer to Reeve’s “positive” content is *sōphrosunē* as presented in the *Charmides*: the second-order knowledge of what one *does* know. This part of Socratic wisdom is the one analogous to the most studied type of second-order knowledge in cognitive science.

⁷²² Schoenfeld, 1987, p. 4-5

⁷²³ Schoenfeld, 1987, p. 15-16

⁷²⁴ Schoenfeld, 1987, p. 15-16

Schoenfeld's study of amateurs and experts attempting to solve the same mathematical problems demonstrated that the most salient difference between the two's reasoning processes was the experts' time spent thinking about their own knowledge. Second-order cognitive processes seem to mark the difference between expert and amateur problem-solving.

What is lacking in the current literature, and something that Socrates can inform in the future, is the distinction between positive and negative content of Socratic wisdom. Knowing what one knows is well-studied in expert versus amateur problem-solving. But that is not the only component of Socratic wisdom. Socrates is also wise because that which he does not know, he does not suppose himself to know. It is easy to imagine how this could fit into the study of amateur and expert difference in cognitive science: an expert might know themselves and the field well enough to know they cannot use one strategy over another—i.e., when asked to find the x-intercept of a polynomial equation, an expert knows she has forgotten how to factor, but knows that she remembers the quadratic equation. This would inform her problem-solving strategy in the same way Socrates knew he did not know what happens after death, and therefore felt he had no reason to fear it.

In the same way, Socrates' refusal to suppose to know what he does not know could also be a component of expertise. The reservation of judgement is not something that seems to be studied in expertise or the problem of knowledge transfer. This therefore is potential fertile ground for further exploration: is there a benefit to not supposing to know when one does not? Is this an essential component of Socratic wisdom, or a personal quirk of the historical man himself? As the unity of virtues and "wholeness" of wisdom is a common theme throughout the Socratic corpus, it would align with Socrates'

personal philosophy that all components of his wisdom—positive and negative both—would be what makes him so wise and virtuous. But modern research could explore this and determine if both components are necessary to expertise, or if one is more important than the other.

The distinction that Socrates draws between knowledge and wisdom is not merely the difference between amateur and expert problem-solvers. An amateur problem-solver may possess first-order domain-specific knowledge. An expert problem-solver possesses similar domain-specific knowledge, but also the second-order reflexive knowledge of her own knowledge. This is *one* component of Socratic wisdom, but not the *only* component of Socratic wisdom. Modern expert problem-solvers, much like Socrates' expert politicians and craftsmen, know more than the amateurs in their fields. But they still can lack the wisdom that Socrates seeks. This wisdom includes not just the self-reflexive ability to know what one knows, but also the *restraint* of not presuming to know what one does not know. This is why both negative and positive components of Socratic wisdom are crucial to understanding how to evaluate experts and their expertise. Merely investigating a technological mogul's knowledge of technology is not enough to determine if he is wise. He must also be evaluated for whether or not he restrains himself from presuming to know what he does not. Given this two-fold criteria for wisdom, it is likely most modern experts will be found wanting, much like the experts in Socrates' Athens.

One final area of research in knowledge transfer that Socratic wisdom might contribute to is the ACT-R (Adaptive Character of Thought-Rational) model framework.⁷²⁵ Rau's (2012) research into how amateur problem-solvers learn to transfer knowledge

⁷²⁵ Singley, Anderson, 1989, p. 31

between different mathematical (or other) domains. In particular, Rau has found that multiple representations of the same concept—such as a graph, equation, and pictorial representation—help to foster a “deeper understanding” of the overarching concept in amateur problem solvers.⁷²⁶ One key component to the ACT-R model is the distinction between procedural memory and declarative memory.⁷²⁷ In the ACT-R model, procedural memory is represented with IF-THEN propositions: IF the problem-solver encounters a certain stimulus, THEN she follows whatever procedure she has learned. In the case of mathematical operations, a problem-solver may encounter fractions with uncommon denominators. The procedural rule for this case would be “IF adding fractions and denominators are not the same, THEN...” and what would follow would be the procedure for getting common denominators. By contrast, declarative memories are simple facts, such as times tables, the definition of a mammal, or what I ate for dinner last night.

An understanding of Socratic wisdom as different types of second-order knowledge could be applicable to the next part of Rau’s project: fostering knowledge transfer cross-contextually among amateur problem solvers. Rau’s research indicates that exposure to multiple representations of the same mathematical concept fosters a “deeper understanding” of the concept in amateur problem-solvers.⁷²⁸ Her explanation for why this occurs is because when amateur problem-solvers encounter a mathematical concept in a single type of representation they form a context-specific production rule about that concept. Then, when exposed to the same concept in a different context, they might form a parallel production rule for the same concept specific to the new context.

⁷²⁶ Rau & al., 2012, p. 174

⁷²⁷ Strannegård, Ulfsbäcker, Hedqvist, Gärling, 2009

⁷²⁸ Rau, Aleven, Rummel, & Rohrbach, 2012, p. 174

“Deeper understanding,” according to Rau, occurs when amateurs take these context-specific production rules and begin to consolidate them.⁷²⁹ For instance, imagine an amateur problem-solver is given a problem in a different representation, such as instead of adding fractions with uncommon denominators numerically, the amateur is given a rectangle cut in four equal parts with three sections shaded and a rectangle of the same size cut in eight equal parts with one section shaded. Instead of the procedural rule “IF two fractions have different numbers in the denominator, THEN...” this representation might activate a procedural rule such as “IF two pictures to be summed are divided up differently, THEN...”⁷³⁰ These two antecedents are different—Rau's amateur has encoded two different production rules in her mind. This is where Rau claims that “connection-making” needs to happen. Without any prompting to draw a connection between the numerical fractions and segmented rectangles, the amateur may never realize that the different representations are mapping to identical underlying concepts.

Rau has observed in her studies that just presenting multiple representations of the same mathematical concept to students is not enough to foster this “deep understanding” that is the goal of her research. Instead, students must be prompted to make a connection between the two (essentially) equivalent representations.⁷³¹ What Rau means by this phrase “connection-making” is that students understand on a more conceptual level how two different representations can be equivalent, or even just how they relate to each other.⁷³² When students *are* prompted to make connections between multiple representations of the same mathematical concept, learning gains are much

⁷²⁹ Rau, Alevan, Rummel, & Rohrbach, 2012, p. 174

⁷³⁰ See *Figure 4*

⁷³¹ Rau, 2012, p. 174

⁷³² Rau, 2012, p. 175

greater than otherwise.⁷³³ In fact, it would appear that without making the connection between the different representations of the same concept, Rau's students show no extra learning gains above and beyond that of the students who only interact with one representation or the other.⁷³⁴

There is a similarity between the process an amateur problem-solver undertakes in consolidating context-specific production rules and Socrates questioning himself and his interlocutors on what they know and suppose to know. Without a cross-examination of the context-specific procedural rules of the same concepts, amateur problem-solvers do not develop the general procedural rules that allow them to problem-solve cross-contextually. Similarly, without Socratic examination, Socrates's interlocutors display ignorance and false beliefs. Like in the *Charmides*, the first definition of *sōphrosunē* is a good one in the narrow context of Charmides as a young man in Athens, but is not once Socrates examines it in other contexts. The true definition of *sōphrosunē* that Socrates desires is one that is general, applicable cross-contextually; much like the general procedural rules that expert problem-solvers find most effective.

⁷³³ Rau, Aleven, & Rummel, 2009, p. 446

⁷³⁴ Rau, 2009, p. 446

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

-Whatever I do not know, I do not even suppose I know.

-I am conscious that I am not at all wise, either much or little.

-This is what being sōphrosunē [is]: knowing both what one knows and what one does not know.

There are three key components to Socratic wisdom. The first two are two different types of “negative” content of Socratic wisdom: the refusal to suppose to know what one does not know, and the knowledge that one does not know something. The difference between the interlocutors and himself is this part of his Socratic wisdom: that which he does not know, he does not suppose to know. For the latter type of negative content of Socratic wisdom, Socrates supposing that he does not know what happens after death is an example of reflexive second-order knowledge. The final component of Socratic wisdom is *sōphrosunē* as presented in the *Charmides*: the second-order knowledge of what one *does* know. This, coupled with second-order knowledge that one does not know and a refusal to suppose to know what one does not, culminates in a clear picture of Socratic wisdom.

The awareness that one is not wise is a second-order affirmative knowledge—it is simply over a domain of something Reeve might call “negative content.” But that does not make the second-order knowledge itself “negative content.” At the same time, there is another component of the “positive content” of Socratic wisdom left to answer Reeve’s

challenge: the self-knowledge of *sōphrosunē*, or the knowledge of what one affirmative knows. This is second-order knowledge over a domain of “positive content.”

Understanding Socratic wisdom under the framework of first- and second-order knowledge allows us to draw this distinction between two different types of “positive content” knowledge. This in turn presents a resolution to Vlastos’ version of the paradox of Socratic ignorance. When Socrates disavows all knowledge, great and small, the very disavowal that Vlastos cites as puzzling is itself an avowal of Socratic knowledge. Socrates is affirmatively *aware* that he knows nothing of great and small matters. To put it in Vlastos’ terms, Socrates *is* using “know” in different ways, but specifically along the lines of first- and second-order knowledge. Socrates knows (first-order) nothing of godly matters. But Socrates is aware (second-order) of his lack of knowledge (first order). Therefore, Socrates can live his virtuous life, as he possesses the requisite second-order knowledge (*sōphrosunē*) to assure that. Moreover, it can give modern scholars an insight into what it means to know something, both as an amateur and expert problem solver, and how to bridge the gap from the former to the latter. It is possible, through the application of a modern framework to ancient Socratic wisdom, that we might better understand what we know—and what we do not—today.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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