

## SOCRATES' DIALECTIC THERAPY ACCORDING TO PLATO'S APORETIC DIALOGUES<sup>1</sup>

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The paper's aim is to claim that Socrates' philosophy according to Plato's dialogue should be taken as a dialectic therapy. Socrates' dialectic therapy as care of the self is not an isolated inspection of the individual conscience. As long as the Socratic therapy is dialectical, the possibility of the interlocutor's self-transparency is possible through dialogical cooperation. This self-transparency is not the possessing of the good, but the very dialogue and mutual examination of the self. The therapeutic dialogue demands that the interlocutor be able to recognise himself in the dialectic of defining what he wants. Therefore, the dialogue enables the person to know his own good through the dialogue's activity.

**Keywords:** Dialogue – Will – Counsel – Care – Self – Plato – Socrates

### 1. Introduction

According to a therapeutic conception of philosophy,<sup>2</sup> some scholars have understood the several Socratic therapies found in the Platonic dialogues based on a developmental approach to Plato's thought.<sup>3</sup> Álvaro Vallejo Campos (2016), for example, distinguishes three phases in this development and argues that Plato's therapeutic philosophy evolves from the "Socratic" dialogue *Apology*, where there is a therapy focused on the individual soul; going through the "transitional" dialogue *Gorgias*, where the therapy is a political art; up to the "middle" dialogue *Republic*, in which a holistic therapy is put to work with the utopian character of the ideal city (227). This means that Socrates' attitude in relation to truth has changed radically from the *Apology* to the *Republic*, which is correlative to the transformation of his character from a physician of soul to a physi-

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<sup>2</sup> See especially P. Hadot (1995), M. Foucault (2005), M. Nussbaum (1994). See also the following texts: Mace (1999), Fischer (2011, 49 – 82), Omelchenko (2012, 73 – 81), Banicki (2014, 7 – 31). In regards to Socrates' therapy see Cushman (1958), Lampe (2010), Cooper (2012) and Suvák (2018).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Tigerstedt (1974, 25).

cian of culture (233). For this reason, Vallejo Campos detects in Plato “a very important shift in the conception of philosophy as therapy” (230).

In contrast to this, I claim that Socratic therapy is a way of life, whose dynamic nature and limits correspond to Plato’s dialectic thought. The interlocutors, according to Plato’s dialogues, are not mere adornments in the debate but dramatic standpoints by which it is revealed that every dialogue’s content depends on its form. This means that every issue in the Platonic dialogue and the form in which Plato treats it correspond to the interlocutors at play. Thus, if Socrates takes care of others according to different methods, this is because it is demanded by the interlocutor’s character.<sup>4</sup> In consequence, if every Platonic dialogue can be interpreted according to the interlocutor’s way of being, then an approach to Socrates therapy has to take into account for the motivations, intentions and, in sum, for what the interlocutor wants. Because what the interlocutor wants reveals who he is (*Gorgias* 491e – 492e), Socrates’ therapy, whatever the interlocutors may be speaking about, is always focused on the self. Indeed, every dialogue, as Nicias said, is “about our self” (περὶ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν) (*Laches* 188b7 – c1).

In this paper I will attempt to make clear the general conditions of Socrates’ therapy as far as the so-called *aporetic* dialogues is concerned. Thus, my approach does not deal with the historical Socrates, but only with the Socrates of the Platonic drama. I shall have to leave aside the meaning of Socrates’ *Daimonion* and Socrates’ erotic nature in order to focus on the dialogical structure of Socrates’ therapy.<sup>5</sup> First, I will show the main focus of Socratic therapy. From this point of view, it will be possible to place the therapeutic question within its communal dimension. This will allow us to understand the intention and possibility of the therapeutic question. Finally, we will know how Socrates’ dialectic therapy pursues the interlocutor’s self-recognition of his authentic will.

## 2. The main focus of Socrates’ therapy

In the *Apology* Socrates declares to his fellow citizens that his only intention was to exhort each one to be concerned with himself (ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι) (36c). To be concerned with himself means, according to Socrates, dialoguing about virtue (38a). Socrates, by raising the question of what is the being of virtue, examines and refutes his interlocutors in order to urge them to be concerned with themselves (29e – 30a). But what is this “self” that demands concern? This self would only be the soul of the interlocutor (*Alcibiades I* 130e). Nevertheless, the problem is still not solved with

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Phaedrus* 270b – d.

<sup>5</sup> With regard to these aspects see Benardete (1953), Halperin (1986), Belfiore (2012), Jedrkiewicz (2018, 299 – 318).

such recognition. In fact, what this self is to which Socrates is referring becomes more questionable.

Socrates has carried out in private<sup>6</sup> what he deemed to be the greatest benefit, namely, to try to persuade each person “to care for himself and his own perfection in goodness and wisdom, rather than for any of his belongings and for the πόλις itself, rather than for its interest in regard to the πόλις” (36c).<sup>7</sup> Socrates does not accuse his fellow citizens of laziness or a lack of interest. What the words of Socrates imply is that the Athenians are themselves concerned only with outward needs and possessions. By assuming they are concerned with themselves, they take notice only and solely of the things they are dealing with. Hence the exhortation of Socrates is not to produce concern in others, but, rather, to provoke in others a change regarding what the look is pointing to. This change of focus is, therefore, an awakening by which a certain countermovement can be generated, that is, *a return from the matters in which the person is taken towards the discovery of himself*. Socrates, however, emphasizes that this redirection of the focus also implies deviating from matters related to the πόλις and to look out for the πόλις itself. This is highly significant. The concern which Socrates appeals to does not imply severing the relationship with others and turning towards the solitude of the individual conscience. The Socratic concern consists in bracketing the things of the world in order to be aware of the world itself.

Self-concern, according to Socrates, means to take care of the world in which one is. This means that Socrates does not understand the self as an isolated and individualized identity in front of an external world, but as a *way of being in the world*. As long as the focus of the therapy is the self and the πόλις itself, the Socratic therapy focuses on the being as a whole.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the self is not individual, but essentially political.<sup>9</sup> This means that one only knows oneself best and one only knows what one

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<sup>6</sup> The fact that Socrates philosophizes with others in private does not mean that he carries out conversations only in enclosed spaces. Socrates' therapy demands *close personal contact*, either inside a house or in the *agora*. Socrates never addresses the masses or uses public procedures to exhort others (*Apology* 31d5 – 32a3; *Gorgias* 474a – b). Cf. Long (2014, 8 – 18). The *Apology*, of course, is the only exception to this.

<sup>7</sup> Translated by Harold North Fowler.

<sup>8</sup> This unity of the self and the world, nevertheless, becomes deeply controversial according to the so-called “analogy of the soul and the πόλις” in *Republic*, which is raised from book II and evaluated and modified in book IX (Cf. Roochnik, 2003, 10 – 30).

<sup>9</sup> One could say that Socrates himself is an example of an individual, but I think that the word “individual” to portray Socrates is misleading. Socrates is an example, but not of individualism. In *Apology* Socrates says to his fellow citizens that the god merely uses his name and makes him as an example as “if he were to say: *This one of you, O human beings, is wisest, who, like Socrates, recognizes that he is in truth of no account in respect to wisdom*” (23b) (Translated by Harold North Fowler). Socrates is not the individual par excellence, but the example of the fundamental negativity of a human being. For that reason, Socrates is ἄπορος, poor, needy, having no way

properly wants through caring for oneself with another. As I shall try to explain, this mutual care is concretized when the interlocutors take counsel together. For the moment the next step will be clarify the communal dimension of the dialogue.

### 3. The *συνουσία* as the communal dimension of the dialogue

In my view, what seems to be in the background of the self is *συνουσία* as the constitutive dimension of the dialogue. The *συνουσία* can be understood as co-existence or being-with, which is the fundamental mode of being to which Socrates appeals. In this sense, Socrates does not depart from tradition but radicalizes the most important moment of Greek political unity in form and content. What does *συνουσία* mean? Traditionally, the being-with “refers to the constant association of a younger generation with the older, more accomplished men” (Robb, 1994, 197). In that sense, “the youth listened, they absorbed the accumulated wisdom and skills of elders, and they sought to imitate their virtues” (Ibidem). The being-with, therefore, constituted the bond between generations in the ancient *πόλις*. With Socrates, this being-with takes on a broad and fundamental meaning based on the dialogue.<sup>10</sup> Socratic being-with not only differs from that *συνουσία* promoted by the sophists, who educated men and collected money for it (*Apology* 19d – 20a), but also from that relationship between the adult and the adolescent by which the *πόλις* is held together. The traditional being-with was not enough, according to Socrates, where sport and music shaped the character, neither the *συνουσία* of the sophist, who requires only that young men be attentive to its long instructive monologue (*Protagoras* 318e – 319a). The Socratic *συνουσία* requires that everyone participates in the dialogue, youngster or elder. As long as being-with is based on dialogue, self-concern becomes dialectic, rather than merely authoritarian. Thus, the presence of the other in the dialogue is recognised as constitutive of the thought. As Bosch-Veciana puts it, “for Socrates, thought is not self-sufficient, but is constituted in communion with the other, which is what is truly *συνουσία*, a real presence of the other” (2004, 40). According to Socrates, only in dialoguing does the thought acquire its own virtue and clarity.

In view of the above, Socratic therapy does not consist in a relationship between an expert and a student. In opposition to what Terence Irwin says (1977, 75), Socrates does not have a *τέχνη*, a craft knowledge about how to understand a person’s soul. Nevertheless, Socrates is a master. But he is not the kind of master who transfers knowledge to his pupils nor a master who has an epistemological superiority (*Apology* 33a – b). According to Gary A. Scott, Socratic philosophy is “a cross-examination

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through (*Hippias Major* 304c; *Meno* 80c) and *ἀποπώτατος*, namely, the most unplaced human being (*Theaetetus* 149a).

<sup>10</sup> On the use of *συνουσία* by Plato see Tarrant (2005, 133 – 138).

between two people, [...] a testing in dialogue, a scrutiny in the face of others who provide the necessary forthrightness to function as the mirror to one's character" (2000, 154). This is possible by Socrates' awareness of his ignorance about the knowledge of virtue.<sup>11</sup> This awareness enables him, on the one hand, to be attuned to the limits of human wisdom and, on the other hand, to listen to the λόγος. In that sense Socrates is a master, because he is able to listen better than his interlocutors, because the dialogue fundamentally consists in obeying the discourse,<sup>12</sup> in going after the trace of the argument (*Crito* 48c7, *Phaedo* 107b7, *Phaedrus* 274a4, *Republic* 365d2, 394d7). By listening to the λόγος Socrates and his interlocutors evaluate and discriminate whether they are headed to virtue in a good or bad way during the dialogue.<sup>13</sup>

Socratic therapy is a mutual care of the self, whose activity lies in a dialogue between interlocutors who are both seekers and mutual examiners. However, one could insist that the hierarchical difference between Socrates and his dialogue-mates would be an objection to the claim of mutual care provided by the dialogue. But, as I have already mentioned, Socrates' superiority is not an epistemological one. His superiority does not eliminate his state of ἀπορία (*Meno* 80c). Socrates always seeks with the other (*Charmides* 165b – c, *Meno* 80d, *Gorgias* 505e – 506a, *Protagoras* 348c – d) and he always benefits in some way from the conversation (*Hippias Major* 304e). Plato's Socrates is a co-participant and co-learner in the pursuit of the philosophical comprehension of virtue as an elusive and fragile phenomenon.<sup>14</sup> Socrates is a seeker, the most untiring seeker among the interlocutors, because, as Jaspers says: "the essence of [Socratic] philosophy is not the possession of truth but the search for truth" (1954, 12). This is the core of the Socratic συνουσία.

Therefore, what constitutes the Socratic συνουσία is the practice of the dialogue, namely, the giving and receiving of λόγος, whose cooperation reveals a therapy of the self. Thus, Socrates' dialogue constitutes the space of care through the shared word. In this view, the dialogue is, in sum, a dialectic therapy. In order to understand more clearly Socrates' dialectic therapy, it is now necessary to explain the intention and possibility of the therapeutic question.

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<sup>11</sup> This point is very important, because several scholars have identified Socrates' disavowal of knowledge of virtue as ironic. Cf. Magrini (2018, 30 – 38).

<sup>12</sup> Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* asserts that "to have λόγος" means in a sense being able to listen to the λόγος, that is to say, to obey it (1102b29 – 1103a3).

<sup>13</sup> According to Plutarch "virtue only is afforded by the ears" (*De Recta Ratione Audiendi*, 38b).

<sup>14</sup> In *Alcibiades* Socrates says to him: "...we can improve ourselves to the utmost. For observe that when I speak of the need of being educated I am not referring only to you, apart from myself; since my case is identical with yours" (124b – c). Translated by W.R.M. Lamb. Socratic therapy as a mutual care of the self is also understood by D. Halperin as "erotic reciprocity" (1986, 60 – 80). For his part, A. Hooper says: "As a lover each party will strive towards the good, and as a beloved each will have a duty to care for the other, and aid them in their own journey" (2012, 109).

#### 4. Intention and possibility of the therapeutic question

The Socratic dialogue is a therapy of the self, through which Socrates questions something and the other person replies. Questioning is a knowing search that implies: (1) what is asked, for example, whether knowledge or virtue; (2) to whom the question is addressed (the interogatee), perhaps Theaetetus or Hippocrates; (3) what the question, as such, is searching, namely, the “being” of knowledge or the “being” of virtue. And last but not least, (4) the person who asks, Socrates (the interrogator). So long as Socrates asks the question, begins and participates in the search. In this way, he is concerned with himself and aware of not knowing the answer. When asking for what the being of something is, Socrates goes into something *with* the interlocutor and, thus, pays full attention to the questioned person. The question of the being of something and whose knowledge is sought, is addressed to the interlocutor as one who already *has* an opinion on the matter, as one who *behaves* in relation to it. What the interlocutor believes to be true about moderation, for example, depends on the way he deals with things that demand moderation. Correspondingly, Socrates talks about himself as a midwife. When asking about the being of something, Socrates exposes the truth of life in order to assess whether the interlocutor’s replies truly represent the birth of something authentic or are mere phantasmagoria (*Theaetetus*, 149b – 151b).

It is important to acknowledge that, according to Socratic questioning, the separation between a knowing subject and an independent object becomes futile. Inasmuch as the interogatee is interested in the question, or the question seems obvious and insignificant for him, there is no gap between the person being questioned and what is being asked. The diligence, carelessness and presumption show that the person being questioned and what is asked are *already* in a certain relationship.<sup>15</sup> The transparency of this relationship will depend solely on the way in which the person being questioned is concerned with the being of what is asked. In this sense, what is at stake in the dialogue is how the person being questioned actually replies. According to the way the interlocutor strives for truth (*Theaetetus* 186a), both the limits and the cognitive reach of the soul will become more or less transparent for him (187c). This means that the interogatee, when answering the question, *somehow* discovers who he is in the meaning of being of what is asked. For example, if Charmides answers that moderation *is* quietness (*Charmides* 159b), it is because he is *willing* to be quiet. The being of moderation is revealed by the will. Thus, “being” in each Socratic question is nothing but δύναμις (*Sophist* 247 e4),<sup>16</sup> namely, power, capacity, and possibility, not merely logical,

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Kirkland (2012, 26).

<sup>16</sup> Although this paper is focused on the *aporetic* dialogues, this does not preclude the reference to other dialogues, like *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*, which some scholars consider belonging to Plato’s “mature stage”. However, both *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* are indeed *aporetic* dialogues. The conclu-

but dispositional. Theaetetus, for example, in replying to the question about what knowledge is and, in turn, in allowing himself to be refuted, somehow performs the knowledge. This means that the being of knowledge is only intelligible by the activity of knowing, that is, by exercising the power to know. A Socratic question, in that sense, does not demand a propositional definition of the being of knowledge. Rather, the question demands that the interrogatee be able to recognise himself in the dialectic of defining what is being asked. Therefore, the dialogue enables the person who is questioned to become what such person was seeking, through the activity of giving and receiving λόγος.

From this point, it is now necessary to focus on the pharmakon of Socrates dialectic therapy.

### 5. Dialectic therapy's pharmakon

If, according to *Theaetetus* (189e – 190a), thinking is a silent inner conversation of the soul with itself, then dialogue is the performance of the thought. Although the Socratic dialogue carries out therapy of the self, it cannot be overlooked that the common λόγος tends to be used in a spoiled manner, whereby the self is immediately disfigured by δόξα, oratory and eristic. In this way, the power and motivations of Socrates' interlocutor are sometimes ambiguous (Theages, Hippocrates, Crito), and in some cases they are disguised (Hippias, Euthyphro). For this reason, talking with others somehow becomes flattering and pleasing to the prejudices of the mass (Polo) or a mere ability to rebut the other person's statements (Dionisodorus, Euthydemus). The dialogue, then, becomes an agonal discussion, whose orientation does not guide towards the truth, but towards the humiliation and the victory of one's own position (*Euthydemus* 271c – 272a). Hence, given the threat of making the dialogue impossible to take place, it is necessary to expressly clarify certain conditions for the proper way of the conversation. In fact, Socrates, by noticing that Protagoras, instead of asking and answering reciprocally, performs long monologues, threatens to leave the meeting, considering that such a situation did not satisfy the minimum conditions for a dialogue. Indeed, Socrates' only aim is *testing himself with others and testing the truth through giving and receiving λόγος* (*Protagoras* 348a). Being dialogical, this

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sion of the first one is clearly *aporetic*, and the *aporetic* character of the second one can be deduced by the evident dissatisfaction of Socrates with what the Stranger has accomplished (cf. *Statesman* 257b2 – 4). Furthermore, the “chronology of composition” and “Plato's developmental approach” are assumptions that try to explain certain contradictions in the dialogues. But, in my view, there are no contradictions, but problems whose approaches depend on the context and whom Socrates is talking to. As far as the dialogues do not show the development of the author, but Socrates' different ways of approaching the problems, the intertextuality is not only legitimate, but also necessary for full comprehension of the Socratic philosophy and Plato's whole project.

mutual examination requires, therefore, an agreement (ὁμολογία) between the interlocutors and the acceptance of a fair procedure (cf. *Gorgias* 487e, 487e, 488a; *Crito* 49d, 52d; *Euthyphro* 6a, 10c; *Lysis* 214d; *Charmides* 162e, 172e, 175c, *et cetera*).

Socratic dialogue supposes, then, a fair agreement between both interlocutors on what the debate is about. If an interlocutor, by accepting the agreement, does not recognise the consequences of his previous concessions about the issue in question (either because he resists the given proofs or because, by finding himself in a plight, considers his reputation threatened), then the dialogue entails a possible refutation (ἔλεγχος),<sup>17</sup> which, in the case of Socrates, has the character of a pharmacon.<sup>18</sup> I understand the pharmacological nature of the refutation according to the words of Socrates in *Gorgias* (458a – b),<sup>19</sup> where the ἔλεγχος is used to refer to the liberation of a false opinion. Despite Socrates' cleansing intention, the refutation is experienced by many interlocutors as if it were a poison.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, this pharmacon becomes necessary, if the interrogatee is dominated by his own beliefs. Socrates, when asking what something is and by searching with the other person for the answer, exhorts the interrogatee to distance himself from what he deems to be true about this. In this process the interlocutor can find out his own good. In this sense, the Socratic refutation has the function of purifying the relationship of the interrogatee with what seems to be good to himself. For this reason, I think that the meaning of such possible refutation has nothing to do with an evaluation of the propositional contents of the speeches. Rather, the pharmacological nature of the refutation has to do with a purification that expels the evil of the soul and that, depending on the type of interlocutor, it will take several forms.

According to the above, the refutation of dialectic therapy purifies the relation with what the interlocutor believes. In that sense, the pharmacon's effectiveness will depend on the way the interlocutor is open to the question. I will show that the liberating or purifying function of this therapy is to provoke in the interlocutor a deliberative movement about what he considers good for himself. This deliberation, however, will be only possible if the interlocutor *wants* to answer the Socratic question.

## 6. The dialogue as the Council about one's own good

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<sup>17</sup> For further discussion of the meaning of the ἔλεγχος see Scott (2002).

<sup>18</sup> Derrida (1981, 62 – 172) makes use of the meaning of the pharmacon in order to consider the criticism of the written texts according to the oft-quoted passage from *Phaedrus* (274d – 275b). The context within which Derrida uses the word, therefore, is different than mine, although it is possible to think that a written text, instead of being a poison for the dialogue, can be a help, if the Derridian deconstruction is able to go beyond the writing's content.

<sup>19</sup> See also *Sophist* (230b – e).

<sup>20</sup> Hence, the ambiguity of the meaning of the Greek word φάρμακον (cf. Rinella, 2010 73 – 74).



As long as the dialogue is a care of the self through which both the questioner and the respondent are mutual examiners, Socrates' interlocutor turns out fully relevant. The role of the interlocutor is not simple a passive one and, in turn, the role of Socrates is not to command what his interlocutor should or should not do, but mainly to question in such a way that he provokes in the interlocutor what he wants to answer. This "wanting" is, therefore, the clue to understand the disclosing nature of the therapeutic dialogue. Thus, it becomes very important to clarify in what sense the person's will is at play in the Socratic question. First of all, it is important to notice how Socrates understands the will. I think that Socrates gives a very telling clue in Plato's dialogue *Gorgias*. He says the following to him: "Listen, then, Gorgias. You should know that I'm persuaded (ἐμμαντὸν πείθω) I'm one of those people who in a discussion with someone else really wants (βουλόμενος) to have knowledge of the subject of the discussion" (453a – b).<sup>21</sup> Socrates is persuaded to be someone who wants the issue at play to remain as transparent as possible. What Socrates' confession leads us to think is that "to want" (βούλεσθαι) comes from the capacity to obey oneself. To clarify this, it is necessary to be aware of the important linguistic relationships that will make us focus adequately on the phenomenon of the will.<sup>22</sup> The Greek word closest to our word "will" turns out to have a dialogical connotation. The word βουλή could be understood as will, but properly signifies assembly. This leads us to comprehend the relationship between the active voice βουλεύω (to take counsel) and the middle voice βούλομαι (want) as regarding to the verbs πείθω (persuade) and πείθομαι (to be persuaded, to obey). In this sense, it is admissible to think that "to want" is analogous to "obey", if we consider, in turn, "persuasion" as being analogous to "counsel". Therefore, it is sound to suggest that this analogy should be understood as expressing that "to want" something implies the capacity to listen and, in that sense, the willingness to obey. The will, according to these relationships, does not mean an arbitrary and capricious impulse, but the willingness to comply to one's own duty.

In this linguistic context, it is feasible to think that Socrates seeks precisely that the interlocutor be willing to evaluate his own desires on the one hand and that he is persuaded by the counsel about his own good on the other.<sup>23</sup> A physician, for example, when he advises a patient to take a certain medication, forces him to want what is necessary for his health, persuades him to do what he must do to recover from his illness. A physician persuades, because he has authority, because he knows what is

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<sup>21</sup> Translated by D. J. Zeil with a slight modification.

<sup>22</sup> Albrecht Dihle (1982) asserts that there are several words with many nuances to understand the phenomenon of the "will" according to the Greeks (20 – 47). In Plato's dialogues the most used verbs are βούλομαι and ἐθέλω. Depending on the context both verbs signify planning and reflecting, on the one hand, and to be disposed and to be prepared, on the other.

<sup>23</sup> For further discussion about the desire for the good in Plato see Barney (2010, 34 – 64).

necessary for the patient's health. Before the authority of the medical counsel the patient must to obey. The difference between medical counsel and dialogical counsel, however, is that Socrates, strictly speaking, does not advise, because he does not know. *Rather, Socrates and his interlocutor take counsel together in the manner of an interrogator and an interogatee.* In this sense, Socrates can say to Alcibiades in one occasion: "but we must take counsel together (κοινή βουλή), you know, as to the way in which we can improve ourselves to the utmost" (*Alcibiades I* 124b – c).<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, in some cases this Council is ruined due to the interlocutor's incapacity to listen to the λόγος. This happens when the interlocutor is carried by his own stubborn beliefs which only provoke his self-delusion. In *Gorgias*, for example, Callicles is led by Socrates' λόγος in several ways, but his lack of sincerity and his fear of the crowd that with watchful gaze is present in the discussion, force him to accept reluctantly Socrates' arguments. In the end, however, he does not want to answer him anymore (519d). In turn, who, when listening to the question, want to answer, are willing to accept a mutual examination of what each one considers as true. Therefore, they are able to deliberate on what is best for themselves. The willingness, in this sense, becomes the mark of the cooperation of dialoguing, and dialoguing turns out to be a Council in the manner of an assembly, the place where the persons together deliberate about what everyone wants and about what it is necessary to do. In this way, the interlocutor is willing to hold onto past mutual agreements until the end, even to the detriment of his own beliefs and views. Thus, bound by the question, the interlocutor can learn to want, that is to say that he is able to be persuaded and guided to the ἀπορία through the refutation of his previous convictions in order to obey what the Council has deliberated about his own good.

Within the therapeutic dialogue "to want" something supposes a willingness and a deliberative component that gives it a binding character. Nevertheless, when an interlocutor is self-deluded, the Socratic pharmacon appears necessary to lead the other person to step back from what he believes. In most cases the interlocutors respond to Socrates and, in principle, submit to Socratic therapy, but they are not able to manage the consequences of their own answers properly. Therefore, they do not have the willingness to take counsel about what is best for them. Nevertheless, as R. Cushman says, Socrates' purpose is "to arouse from slumber true opinions which each [respondent] feigned to disavow but really believed" (1958, 308).

## 7. Conclusion

The failure of Socrates' dialectic therapy and, therefore, the frustration of the Council, does not come from his impotence, but from the inability of the interlocutor'

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<sup>24</sup> Translated by W.R.M. Lamb with modifications.

listening. Nevertheless, Socrates seeks to make the interrogatee want to respond and helps him become responsible for his own answer (*Alcibiades I*, 127e). What Socrates wants, ultimately, is to open the possibility of the interrogatee's self-transparency through dialogical cooperation. This self-transparency, however, is not the possessing of the good, but the very dialogue and mutual examination of the self. Dialectic therapy, according to the above, does not advise based on the authority of the learned person. Under the authentic cooperation of the interlocutors, the interrogatee's answer is never a blind surrender to the mandate of a superior, but the deliberation of the jointed will through the mutual examination of what is best for each one (*Alcibiades I* 124e).

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