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**Speech and Enchantment in Early Greek Thought  
from the Archaic to the Hellenistic Period**

R. J. Barnes

2022

Submitted to the Faculty of Bryn Mawr College  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Department of Greek, Latin, and Classical Studies

Doctoral Committee

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## **Abstract**

When describing complex aesthetic or cognitive experiences, speakers often reach for idiomatic language. For ancient Greeks, one major cache of idiomatic terms comes from the language of enchantment. This dissertation accounts for how and why ancient Greeks used words related to θέλω, κηλέω, γοητεία, μαγεία, μαγγανεία, ἐπωδή, and ψυχαγωγία as a way of describing the effects of speech and song. Examination is given to writers from the Archaic to the Hellenistic period. Most important are Gorgias of Leontini, Plato, and Philodemus, who each remark in detail about the experience of enchantment. The study reveals that Greek writers use the language of enchantment to underscore a wide variety of effects that speech and song have on mind and body. These effects can include the feelings of being gripped by a narrative, moved by the sounds of a poem, or dumbstruck by a philosophical argument. Different writers provide their own fascinating and idiosyncratic ways of conceptualizing the psychology of these ‘enchantments.’ However, what unifies all accounts is a common motivation to avoid domesticating these aesthetic or cognitive effects with a technical or familiar vocabulary and, instead, to use the language of magic as a way of granting these effects asylum from the ordinary.

## **Acknowledgments**

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To my family, I offer especially profound thanks and especially to my mother who instilled in me my enduring love of language.

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## Introduction

... [W]e demand rigidly defined areas of doubt and uncertainty.

- Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*<sup>1</sup>

In a short essay on the act of communication, the writer Ursula K. Le Guin describes speech as magic:

This is why utterance is magic. Words do have power. Names have power. Words are events, they do things, change things. They transform both speaker and hearer; they feed energy back and forth and amplify it. They feed understanding or emotion back and forth and amplify it.<sup>2</sup>

Le Guin is neither the first nor the last to sense something extraordinary in human speech and to pin that something with the label of magic. Similar remarks are made by many others, such as Thomas de Quincey, Kenneth Burke, and more recently Rita Felski, who sense that speech is capable of a certain enchantment – whether through the allure of literature, the hortatory force of powerful rhetoric, or the cut and thrust of everyday conversation.<sup>3</sup> Evidence for these sorts of remarks can be

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<sup>1</sup> Adams 1979: 179.

<sup>2</sup> Le Guin 2004: 199.

<sup>3</sup> De Quincey senses a certain magic in the “life, velocities, and contagious ardour of conversation” (De Quincey 1964 [1847]: 268). Kenneth Burke feels compelled to address the magic inherent in the exhortative power of speech (Burke 1969: 40 et passim). Rita Felski argues that literary critics ought to speak more about their experience of enchantment – an experience which, she suggests, is undoubtedly what drew them to literature in the first place (Felski 2008: 51-76; cf. Felski 2015: passim).

multiplied almost at will and, taken together, it testifies to a peculiar habit of mind that stretches back at least to classical antiquity.

As early as Homer, we find descriptions of the incantatory powers of speech and song. We hear, for instance, of how Odysseus' 'lying tales' cast the Phaeacians several times into a state of enchantment (κηληθμός).<sup>4</sup> According to Pindar, songs can enchant (θέλξαν) with their touch.<sup>5</sup> According to Eupolis, Pericles used to enchant (ἐκήλει) through the force of his rhetoric.<sup>6</sup> This semantic habit is so deeply ingrained in the Greek imagination that early sophists, philosophers, and literary critics can be found drawing upon the conceptual framework of magic as a way of theorizing about the more exceptional features of human communication.

## 1. Scope

In the following chapters, I trace this semantic habit chronologically from archaic Greece to the close of the Hellenistic period. The material I survey is anchored to a specific family of words that the Greeks used to mark out the experience of enchantment – terms such as θέλω, κηλέω, γοητεία, μαγεία, μαγγανεία, ἐπωδή, and ψυχαγωγία. I work to recover the various ways that Greek authors used this language of enchantment as a descriptor of speech. In doing so, I aim to gain insight into what motivated these authors to associate magic and speech in the first place. With this end in mind, I tether the focus of each chapter to a writer (or set of writers) who have something specific to say about the means, outcomes, or experiences of being enchanted by speech: Chapter 1 focuses on Gorgias of Leontini, Chapter 2 on Plato, and Chapter 3 primarily on the writings of Philodemus and the Hellenistic traditions that he preserves. My study ultimately reveals that the

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<sup>4</sup> Hom. *Od.* 11.334, 13.1-3.

<sup>5</sup> Pin. *Nem.* 4.3.

<sup>6</sup> Eup. 102 K.-A = 94 Kock = *Demoi* fr. 1 Telò.



language of enchantment serves as a familiar way of labeling unfamiliar things *as unfamiliar*. That is to say, the label of enchantment does not domesticate or familiarize what it labels but instead underscores its difference. Greek writers turn to the language of enchantment both as a way of speaking about extraordinary channels of communication and, at the same time, as a way of framing these channels as extraordinary. Gorgias, as we shall see, uses the language of enchantment as a way of articulating the dangerous and yet delightful effects of non-discursive modes of speech which had yet to receive proper attention from Pre-Socratic thinkers; Plato uses the language of enchantment to mark out as extraordinary a strain of psychosomatic effects produced by speech; and, in the Hellenistic period, writers continue the use of the category of enchantment as a frame for staking out the values of specific literary genres (such as poetry and rhetoric) and types of pleasure (such as the physical pleasures of sights and the sounds of music) which seem to exhibit an exceptional sway over mind and body.

## **2. Previous studies and my own**

Most studies on the Greek notion of enchanting speech are concerned with individual works or authors.<sup>7</sup> The closest forerunners to my broader study are *The Therapy of the Word in Classical Antiquity* by Pedro Laín Entralgo and *Magic and Rhetoric in Ancient Greece*, which comes from Jacqueline de Romilly's Carl Newell Jackson lectures given at Harvard University.<sup>8</sup> The former aims primarily to recover a classical antecedent for the mid-modern idea of psychotherapy and largely focuses on instances of enchanting speech that have a psychologically curative effect. The argument

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<sup>7</sup> Particularly Homer (Finkelberg 1985; on the idea of *θέλγειν*, Pucci 1987: 191-209; on the idea of *κήλησις*, Peponi 2012: ch. 4 et passim; et al.) and Plato (Belfiore 1980; Gellrich 1994; Vallejo 2000; Casadesús Bordoy 2002; et al.). Walsh 1984 and Parry 1992 are slightly more far-reaching but largely impressionistic. Halliwell 2011 deals with the early Greek concept of enchantment quite well, albeit sporadically, as a subdomain to his more extensive inquiry into specific sites of early Greek aesthetic thought.

<sup>8</sup> Laín Entralgo 1970 [1958]; De Romilly 1975.

Láin Entralgo makes is that early Greek authors (e.g., Homer, Gorgias, and Plato) shared a belief in the psychologically curative power of the word and expressed this belief by drawing an analogy between magic and the power of speech and song. As we see in the following chapters, not all speech described as enchanting is straightforwardly psychotherapeutic; much is shown to have a harmful or even somatic (rather than psychological) effect. Thus, Láin Entralgo's study offers only a partial picture of the semantic tradition. The study by Jacqueline De Romilly is essentially a Doddsian attempt to illustrate how early Greek writers (e.g., Gorgias, Plato, and Isocrates) used the language of magic metaphorically to describe the role played by 'the irrational' within the art of rhetoric. De Romilly's book is rich and insightful, but slim – running to around 100 pages with notes and index. It is only a provisional foray into what is a larger and more complex topic, and the author herself suggests as much in the first sentence of her work.<sup>9</sup> My dissertation goes into much greater detail than De Romilly's study and cleaves more tightly to the Greek concept of enchanting speech than Láin Entralgo's work.

## **2.1. Continuity vs. decline**

In addition to providing an updated and more detailed study than those that came before, I also use this thesis to correct several broad misconceptions which have dogged earlier interpretations of the language of enchantment in ancient Greek literature. The first misconception is the tendency to view the Greek idea of enchanting speech within a decline narrative. The works of Láin Entralgo and De Romilly, for instance, suggest that the concept of enchanting speech was

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<sup>9</sup> "I am not at all sure I am the right person to deal with the theme I have chosen for this series of lectures; in fact, I doubt it very much" (De Romilly 1975: 3). See also remarks by reviewers: "These four essays are lectures in transcription. They have retained their innate oral quality, which is to say, they are often enthymematic, suggestive, but not always conclusive" (Holmberg 1977: 104); "Without such a careful examination the work remains an interesting but essentially speculative argument awaiting more cogent verification" (Enos 1977: 202).

primarily a classical phenomenon which flourished brilliantly up until the beginning of the Hellenistic period when it was driven underground only to resurface either with the advent of Christianity (according to Laín Entralgo)<sup>10</sup> or with the second sophistic (according to De Romilly).<sup>11</sup> Whether motivated by the relative scarcity or undervaluation of Hellenistic texts, this conclusion that enchanting speech peters out around the time of or just after Aristotle has no real basis in evidence. As I show in my final chapter, post-Platonic authors – be they poets, historians, or philosophers (including Aristotle himself) – continue to use the concept of enchantment as a way of speaking about the powers of speech.

## **2.2. Metaphorical vs. literal, belief vs. disbelief**

A second and more complex misconception that I set out to revise is the habit of treating remarks about enchanting speech as *either* literal *or* metaphorical. When, for instance, Plato describes a poem as an enchantment, the first question philologists often ask is whether magic is meant literally or metaphorically. I suggest that branding these remarks as one or the other reveals very little about the content of the remarks themselves. That is, it does not help illuminate the specific experience of the poem that the author is trying to communicate. One reason for this (which I will return to in the next section) is that there is no broad consensus about what magic ‘literally’ is. Without this, there is no easy way of determining what magic is a ‘metaphor’ for.<sup>12</sup> This comes into

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<sup>10</sup> “With the death of Aristotle original speculation on the psychological action of the human word, and hence on its curative power, comes to an end... Only with Christianity – within which the divine person who ‘became flesh’ will be called Logos, ‘Word’ – will a new possibility begin for verbal psychotherapy” (Laín Entralgo 1970 [1958]: 240).

<sup>11</sup> According to De Romilly, “the theorists of the fourth century had equally refused all the different meanings this simile [i.e., of speech as incantation] could involve: they had disregarded the irrational impact of oratory, the poetical strangeness in style, and any reliance on inspiration. They had made a choice” (1975: 66-70).

<sup>12</sup> To borrow a term from G. E. R. Lloyd, we may say that the language of enchantment has a great deal of ‘semantic stretch’ – a concept introduced in Lloyd (1987: 174-5) with n. 7 and further developed in later works (see most recently Lloyd 2018).

greater focus if we look toward a counterexample, such as ‘the king is a good shepherd.’ Here, there is a relatively broad consensus on what a shepherd literally is, and it is correspondingly easier to determine what the word shepherd is a metaphor for. Thus, pointing out that ‘shepherd’ is meant metaphorically or literally has a direct bearing on what is being communicated about the king, since there are noticeable differences between a king who is a literal shepherd and a king who is a metaphorical shepherd. The same is not necessarily true for the language of enchantment. The main difference between a literal claim that a poem is an enchantment and a metaphorical claim that a poem is an enchantment has less to do with the nature of the poem than it has with the speaker’s belief in magic. By branding remarks about enchanting speech as either metaphorical or literal, commentators are not so much helping to explain the experience that the author is trying to communicate as making a wager regarding the author’s belief in magic, and, what is more, they are treating this belief in terms of a simple binary.

Determining an author’s belief in magic is a ticklish game even in the best of circumstances. Belief is itself a highly mobile system, open to contradiction, change, and many levels of rational or irrational types hedging.<sup>13</sup> When it comes to the murky domain of magic, this mobility is often relatively high and exceedingly difficult to hive off into a neat binary of straightforward belief or disbelief. Moreover, even if one could determine that, say, Gorgias or Plato believed in the literal magic of speech or that one or the other conceived only of a metaphorical type of magic, this would yield very little insight into the ‘magical’ quality of speech that motivates their remarks in the first place.

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<sup>13</sup> Note the remarks in Gordon 2008: 143 and Gordon 2009: 7.

For these reasons, I shall largely sidestep the dichotomy of literal or metaphorical and the question of belief or disbelief in my study of enchantment. Instead, I suggest that the *literal* remark that speech *is* magical and the *metaphorical* remark that speech *is like* magic both gesture toward the same idea – i.e., that speech is somehow capable of producing extraordinary experiences. To explain what I mean by this last remark, it will be helpful to briefly review some significant advances made in the study of the concept of magic itself.

### 2.3. What does ‘magic’ mean?

Magic is a notoriously tricky term to define.<sup>14</sup> What may seem to be a religious or scientific practice to one person may smack of the occult to another. This relativity makes the category of magic a rather difficult one to pin down unless we treat it more as a social construct – that is, as a category that can only be roughly defined against the systems of social power in which it is enmeshed.<sup>15</sup> From this perspective, magic is not a universal pattern of actions but a mobile and socially contingent pattern of perceptions; it consists only of practices deemed, in one way or another, as *non-normative* by a particular individual or society.<sup>16</sup> For example, an ancient Greek society may be *less likely* to deem as magical the actions of a male citizen sacrificing at the city’s central altar during a festival. Such an action would more likely be regarded as ordinary (religious) behavior performed by a centrally normative member of the city. On the other hand, a Greek society may be *more likely* to deem as magical the actions of an old widow burning strange materials over a makeshift altar in the woods at the dead of night. This latter action would more likely be regarded as extra-ordinary (magical) behavior performed by a more peripheral member of the city. Thus, what

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<sup>14</sup> See, in general, Styers 2004 and, more recently, Sanzo 2020.

<sup>15</sup> Such is the approach taken by Gordon 1999; Stratton 2007; Edmonds 2019; et al.

<sup>16</sup> For the notion that magic, as a category, shares in the aspect of non-normativity, see Edmond 2019: esp. 8-10.

constitutes as a 'magical' practice is ultimately in the eye of the beholder, and the main feature that motivates the appearance of magic is the strangeness of that practice, its distance from what is expected and ordinary.

In this dissertation, I am less interested in magic as a social practice and more interested in how the language of magic comes to be used to describe other human experiences, such as the experiences of speech and song. Yet the category of magic functions primarily as a label in both cases. In one case, speakers use the label of magic to mark out extraordinary ritual behavior *as extraordinary*, for better or for worse. In the other, speakers use the label of magic to mark out extraordinary utterances or songs *as extraordinary*, for better or for worse. Thus, the central motivation which binds together the entire semantic tradition is a desire to draw on the sense of exceptionality and strangeness inherent to the category of magic and to do so as a means of explaining or coloring the ways in which speech or song yields extraordinary experiences. Put briefly, 'magic' can be a label for bringing strange experiences into arm's reach while, at the same time, keeping them at arm's length.

#### **2.4. What types of speech are deemed magical?**

One final misconception about the semantic category of enchantment is that it was used by the Greeks to refer consistently to a fixed experience or a fixed type of speech. For instance, many scholars, like De Romilly, claim that enchantment stands for an irrational (rather than rational) experience. Closely allied with this view is the additional claim that enchantment is a purely aesthetic experience brought about by means of the sound (rather than the content) of an utterance or song. Finally, there is a frequent tendency to suggest that enchantment is a pejorative term (rather than a laudative one), denoting an experience whose ends or outcome is unwanted and detrimental rather than desirable and beneficial.

These claims about the *means*, *ends*, and *experience* of enchantment impose dichotomies that do not map well onto actual usage. It is true that many remarks about enchanting speech underscore the dangerous ends or outcomes of the experience of being enchanted – as when Homer describes the Sirens,<sup>17</sup> when Plato describes the dangerous allure of contemporary poetry,<sup>18</sup> or when Eratosthenes suggests that all poetry aims at mere enchantment as opposed to education.<sup>19</sup> However, this does not mean that the language of enchantment is only or even primarily pejorative. There are very many instances in which authors describe the benefits of incantatory speech and song. For instance, the author of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* describes how the maidens of a Delian chorus enchant the tribes of men with their pleasing, imitative song;<sup>20</sup> in his *Laws*, Plato describes the enchantments of educational-cum-entertaining choral songs of Magnesia;<sup>21</sup> and the historian Polybius describes how historical prose can be both a benefit and an enchantment to a reader.<sup>22</sup> As for the experience of enchantment and the means by which it is brought about, there are indeed some writers, like the Euphonist critics mentioned by Philodemus, who treat enchantment mainly as an aesthetic experience and stress the role that sound and musicality play in bringing it about. However, there are again many counterexamples in which enchantment appears to be a much more rational experience – such as the experience of being enchanted by Socratic elenchus,<sup>23</sup> or the sense of enchantment felt upon grasping a mathematical proof.<sup>24</sup> It is telling how the Siren song of the *Odyssey* (an archetypal example of verbal enchantment) achieves its effect not only through its

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<sup>17</sup> Hom. *Od.* 12.40, 44.

<sup>18</sup> Pl. *Resp.* 601b1, 607c8 et al.

<sup>19</sup> Strabo 1.1.10 and 1.2.3 = Eratosth. I A 20 Berger. See ch. 3, pp. 166-8.

<sup>20</sup> *Hymn Hom. Ap.* 161.

<sup>21</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 659e1 et al. See ch. 2, pp. 127-35.

<sup>22</sup> Polyb. 6.2.8-9 et al. See ch. 3, pp. 168-9.

<sup>23</sup> Pl. *Symp.* 215b3-216c3, *Men.* 79e8-80b6. See ch. 2, pp. 123-4.

<sup>24</sup> Hypsicles, *Eucl. Lib.* XIV pr. 12.

melodious sound (μελίγηρυν), but through the knowledge it shares about “however much occurs on the fruit-bearing earth” (ὅσσα γένηται ἐπὶ χθονὶ πουλυβοτείρῃ).<sup>25</sup> The experience described is not just aesthetic, but also intellective.

What the evidence reveals then is that enchantment as a category may point to positive or negative experiences, and these experiences may be brought about by a wide variety of different types of speech which may appeal to reason and/or sensation, ψυχή and/or σῶμα. What binds these qualities together is, again, their perceived exceptionality – how they seem to exceed the expected and ordinary function of speech, for better or for worse.

### 3. Chapter overview

In Chapter 1, I examine Gorgias’s *Encomium of Helen*, which contains the first extended description of speech as a type of enchantment. I begin by showing how the whole picture of λόγος that Gorgias paints in the *Helen* is best understood as a response to earlier Pre-Socratic theories of language which placed a high premium on the notion of linguistic reference – that is, on how *nomina* correspond to *nominata*. Gorgias’s description of speech is decidedly not a referential theory of language, but one in which λόγος impresses itself onto the soul through the manipulation of opinion and thus functions less as a sign than as a sort of psychic sensation. Enchantment is one of the frames Gorgias draws on to articulate this newfangled, non-referential notion of speech. In the last half of the chapter, I show how Gorgias draws his picture of enchanting speech from a pre-existing idea of enchantment popular in archaic poetry. Gorgias uses this frame to foreground the extraordinary and unstable qualities of non-discursive speech.

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<sup>25</sup> See Hom. *Od.* 12.184-191 with Montiglio 2019. See also ch. 1, p. 75 below. Throughout this thesis, all translations are my own unless otherwise noted.



In Chapter 2, I move ahead to Plato. I begin by showing how Plato makes frequent mention not only of enchanting speech but also the social practice of magic. I argue that his attitude towards magic is not monolithic but mobile. That is to say, when Plato remarks on the practice of magic, he tends to bracket questions about the supernatural efficacy of spells and curses. Instead, he remarks only on their rhetorical efficacy (i.e., how these practices produce a powerful expectation that a supernatural effect will take place) and their moral-cum-religious implications (i.e., how these claims about the coercion of the gods may affect popular morality). For Plato, then, magic is treated primarily as a rhetorical act regardless of whether it is supernatural. When he uses the language of enchantment to describe the effects of poems or the force of sophistic or Socratic rhetoric, he is highlighting a contiguous relationship between the rhetorical/[supernatural] efficacy of magic and the rhetorical/[supernatural] efficacy felt in these other forms of human communication. The experience that these effects share and that Plato marks with the label of enchantment are psychosomatic experiences in which speech induces either a mental expectation so strong that it leads to a physical experience or a physical experience so strong that it instills a mental expectation. In the final portion of the chapter, I turn to the *Laws* and show how Plato harnesses this psychosomatic experience of enchantment for his own philosophical purposes. In particular, I show how Plato uses the mechanisms of state-run choruses and legislative preambles (both of which he calls enchantments) as a means of non-coercively ensuring citywide obedience to the laws.

In Chapter 3, I trace how Hellenistic authors continue to use the language of enchantment to describe the powers of speech. In the first half, I show how Hellenistic literary critics, following in the footsteps of Aristotle, treat enchantment as the main effect of a good poem. Their remarks about enchantment are primarily preserved in the writings of Philodemus, who shows them engaging in a widespread Hellenistic debate over whether poetic enchantment is a product of a poem's form or

content. One group, known as the Euphonists, breaks from Aristotle by downgrading the primacy of plot as the source of poetic enchantment and plumps instead for the primacy of sound. This heightened interest in the sounds of poetry runs parallel with an increasing tendency to question the didactic value of poetry and, specifically, poetic enchantment. This latter tendency ossifies into the widespread opposition between two distinct literary ends or aims – enchantment (ψυχαγωγία) and education (διδασκαλία) – which are treated as either compatible or incompatible by different Hellenistic authors. When the Epicurean Philodemus weighs in on these Hellenistic debates, he revives a more Aristotelian point of view on poetry in which content is regarded as essential to the experience of enchantment produced by poetry; however, unlike Aristotle, Philodemus maintains the Epicurean position that poetic enchantments are of no use to education. In the second half of the chapter, I turn to the Stoics who use the language of enchantment to categorize a subset of pleasures – namely physical pleasures, such as pleasure from sights (i.e., γοητεία) and pleasures from sounds (i.e., κήλησις). I begin by placing these Stoic remarks about κήλησις and γοητεία within the larger Stoic theory of emotions and show that, within the rigidly rationalistic framework of Stoic emotions, enchanting pleasures are exceptional since they are some of the most physical and, thereby, least straightforwardly rational types of pleasure. In closing, I turn to Diogenes of Babylon, who, in his writings on music (preserved again by Philodemus), provides the only surviving Hellenistic account of how Stoics might conceptualize the experience of enchanting speech and song. We see how Diogenes argues that pleasure derived from songs can be both rational and beneficial. He illustrates this by developing a notion of psychic harmony in which sounds pass over the soul and harmonize with it in ways that produce psycho-physical effects.

In my conclusion, I underscore once more the common thread that binds these authors together – namely, their shared hunch that speech (whether in the form of song, poetry, oratory, or

daily conversation) produces experiences that exceed what is commonly expected. The language of magic provides these ancient writers with a way of speaking about this extraordinary quality, without domesticating or familiarizing that quality. In closing, I turn to an example of how the language of enchantment continues to be used in current discussions of 'the disenchantment' or 're-enchantment' of modernity. There, we find that scholars use the language of magic as a frame for negotiating the nature and limits of human experience, the *non plus ultra* of what experiences can be deemed as ordinary and what must necessarily remain just beyond reach, granted asylum from the ordinary through the language of enchantment.

## Chapter 1. Gorgias

Human beings entrap animals in the mesh of human purposes using an array of psychological techniques, but these are primitive by comparison with the psychological weapons which human beings use to exert control over the thoughts and actions of other human beings. The technology of enchantment is the most sophisticated that we possess.

~ Alfred Gell<sup>1</sup>

Although the notion of enchanting speech is alive and well as early as Homer (and no doubt earlier), the first extant author to offer an account of what gives speech its magical quality is the fifth-century sophist, Gorgias of Leontini (c. 483-375 BCE).<sup>2</sup> According to tradition, Gorgias arrived in Athens on embassy from Sicily in the year 427 BCE.<sup>3</sup> In mainland Greece, he had great success as a public speaker and is said to have excelled all other orators and sophists of his time.<sup>4</sup> In his surviving display speeches, we find that Gorgias had practical as well as theoretical interest in how humans communicate thoughts and feelings, truths and untruths. Each of his speeches (*Defense of Palamedes*, *Encomium of Helen*, and *On Not Being*) approaches the act of communication from a different angle, variously stressing the remarkable efficacy or inefficacy of certain communicative modes and techniques. It is in the *Encomium of Helen* that Gorgias underscores the extraordinary

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<sup>1</sup> Gell 2008 [1988]: 162.

<sup>2</sup> For a collection of some earlier, non-Greek examples of the idea of enchanting speech, see Nünlist 1998: 126.

<sup>3</sup> Thuc. 3.86.3-4; DK 82A4 = Diod. Sic. 12.53.1-5; DK 82A7 = Paus. 6.17.8-9. For a treatment of Gorgias and his intellectual milieu, specifically from the perspective of Sicilian intellectual history, see Willi 2008: 264-322. Enos 1992 gives an account of Gorgias's diplomatic trip to Athens.

<sup>4</sup> DK 82A19 = Pl. *Men.* 70a-b; DK 82A35 = Philostr. *Ep.* 73, p. 257.2-7 Kayser.

efficacy of human speech and describes the way it persuades and moves auditors as if by a potion or a spell.

Gorgias's younger contemporaries – such as Antiphon (c. 480-411 BCE), Thrasymachus (c. 470-400 BCE), and Socrates (c. 469-399 BCE) – betray a similar fondness for describing certain acts of speech in terms of magic.<sup>5</sup> In the following generation, Socrates's students – Isocrates (436-338 BCE), Xenophon (c. 431-354 BCE), and above all Plato (429/7-347 BCE) – would continue to shape and develop this notion of incantatory speech in different ways and to differing degrees.<sup>6</sup> As we shall see in later chapters, even as the increasingly technical disciplines of philosophy, rhetoric, and literary criticism emerge and ossify, the concept of incantatory speech continues to serve as a useful frame through which to discuss extraordinary channels of communication. In this chapter, I focus on the earliest stage of this intellectual history. This is a stage that begins with Gorgias but, as we shall see, has roots that stretch deep into the earliest poetic and philosophical traditions of Ancient Greece. Thus, our inquiry into Gorgias's remarks about speech and magic will require a careful analysis of not only Gorgias's own words and ideas, but also the Pre-Socratic and poetic contexts from which they emerged.

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<sup>5</sup> Antiphon of Rhamnus is said to have claimed to be able “to help those in pain through his power of speech” (τοὺς λυπουμενούς διὰ λόγων θεραπεύειν) and “to remove any grievance from the mind” (ἄχος [...] ἐξελεῖν τῆς γνώμης, DK 87A6 = [Plut.] *Vit. X Orat.* 833c-d; Philostr. *V S.* 1.15, pp. 15.32–16.3 Kayser). Thrasymachus is shown by Plato to boast about his own ability “to cast a spell over an angry audience” (ὠργισμένοις ἐπάδων) and “to enchant them” (κηλεῖν, DK 85B6 = Pl. *Phdr.* 267c = Radermacher 9.6 with note ad loc.). Apart from Plato, who frequently depicts Socrates speaking of enchantment, Xenophon too suggests that Socrates had a penchant for this type of language (Xen. *Mem.* 2.6.1-39; 3.11.1-18), and Aristophanes may, likewise, allude to this penchant when he writes: “over by the Shade-footed folk there lies a lake, where unwashed Socrates conjures/beguiles spirits” (πρὸς δὲ τοῖς Σκιάποσιν λίμνη τις ἔστ', ἄλουτος οὗ | ψυχαγωγεῖ Σωκράτης, Ar. *Av.* 1553-5). Here, Aristophanes seems to play on the semantic ambiguity of the word ψυχαγωγεῖν, which had originally meant ‘to raise the dead’ but later takes on the sense of ‘enchant/beguile (often with speech)’ (cf. Dunbar 1998 ad loc.). It is possible that Socrates (along with Gorgias) prompted or catalyzed this semantic extension of the language of ψυχαγωγία. I shall treat the relation between Gorgias and the concept of ψυχαγωγία in more detail below (pp. 85-6).

<sup>6</sup> Plato will be the subject of Chapter 2. For Xenophon, see ch. 2, nn. 10, 87. For Isocrates, see ch. 2, nn. 76, 84; ch. 3, n. 13 as well as De Romilly 1975: 52-58.

In the first part of the chapter, I argue that Gorgias uses the conceptual category of enchantment to challenge a prevailing Pre-Socratic idea of language and how it works. Early philosophers, such as Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Empedocles, share a common concern regarding linguistic reference or how words correspond to things in the world. Gorgias sidesteps this worry over linguistic reference by suggesting that speech may instead simply stamp the soul with its meaning, both directly and physically. Although Gorgias's account can hardly be considered a coherent theory of communication per se, it nevertheless serves as a provocative challenge to the linguistic thought of his time and as an early attempt to account for less familiar and more non-discursive channels of communication. It diverts the prevalent focus on the relation between words and things by reframing words *as things* – in fact, *as magical things* – capable of affecting the listener in ways that cannot be explained easily by the framework of *nomen et nominatum*.

In the second part of the chapter, we turn to the poetic tradition from which Gorgias drew his notion of incantatory rhetoric. Long before Gorgias, poets had used the language of magic and enchantment to mark out various extraordinary experiences, such as being immersed in a story, enthralled by a song, or duped by false accounts. These instances of enchanting speech were, on the whole, depicted as psychosomatic experiences of distraction which may result in positive or negative ends. I show how Gorgias adopts this poetic concept of enchantment in the *Encomium of Helen* and splices it with contemporary discourse about medicine and the soul (ψυχή). For Gorgias, speech qua enchantment is an experience that occurs in the ψυχή, but functions much like a sensory experience. It conveys content to the mind, but does so in a physical manner. The upshot of this experience is deeply ambivalent: λόγος can provide either a benefit or a detriment, instilling belief in truths just as much as lies. This ambivalence is accentuated by the conceptual framework of magic

that Gorgias draws upon. Like a spell, the Gorgianic λόγος is potentially a terrific boon or a terrible bane.<sup>7</sup>

## 1. Gorgias on λόγος

### 1.1. On linguistic and paralinguistic thought in Archaic Greece

Gorgias's remarks about speech and magic emerge alongside (and largely in opposition to) the rise of certain systematic ways of thinking and talking about language. The first examples of linguistic thought found in Greek literature betray a broad concern over how to distinguish three levels of linguistic reference – i.e., words for things, ideas of things, and things themselves. The human ability to use words in order to communicate ideas about things in the world comes under increasing scrutiny, even suspicion as the Greeks grappled more and more with significant hermeneutic questions linked to pre-Platonic cosmological inquiry, divination, medical prognosis, and poetic exegesis.<sup>8</sup> It is from this growing suspicion toward linguistic reference that finally sprang, in the sophistic and philosophical traditions, increasingly refined semantic theories which set the ball rolling toward modern language theory.<sup>9</sup>

According to popular histories of linguistics, this emergence of a more rational and scientific view of language overtook the non-referential (or what they often call a 'pre-rational' or 'magical' attitude) that had existed in the earliest periods. As I will show, these 'pre-rational' or 'magical' attitudes toward language will kindle and rekindle for centuries – even in the cool confines of philosophy, rhetoric, and literary criticism. For certain thinkers, there persists a hunch or maybe a

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<sup>7</sup> For the radical ambivalence inherent to the cultural category of magic in antiquity, see Gordon 1999: 191ff. and Edmonds 2019: 25ff.

<sup>8</sup> On the role divination and medical prognosis played in the emergence of linguistic thought, see Manetti 1993, 1996, 2010. On the role played by early rhapsodic exegesis, see Sluiter 1997: 166-8; Novokhatko 2015: 28-34.

<sup>9</sup> For standard accounts of Greek linguistic thought, see Robins 1968; Pinborg 1975; Matthews 1994; Law 2003. For several concise and incisive treatments of the earliest stages (from Homer to Plato), see Schmitter 1990, 2000, 2001.

hope that the effects of speech are too extraordinary, too uncanny to be articulated and explained by recourse to the framework of *nomen et nominatum*. In order to underscore this perceived excess in human communication, certain ancient thinkers turned to the conceptual domain of magic. For them, the powers of speech appear, at times, to enchant (κηλεῖν, θέλγειν, γοητεύειν) for better or for worse and are thus best described in terms of magical incantations (ἐπωδαί).<sup>10</sup>

As noted at the outset, our first explicit reflection upon this magical quality of speech comes down to us in sections 8-14 of Gorgias's *Encomium of Helen*. In what follows, I first address the difficulties of interpreting Gorgias's *Helen* and his remarks about λόγος in isolation from their intellectual context. Following this, I provide that context by situating Gorgias's comments about λόγος against the intellectual backdrop of Pre-Socratic speculation regarding the correspondence between words and things in the world.

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<sup>10</sup> It is worth noting that the "vorrationalen Ansicht" (Schmitter 2000: 349), which modern scholars see as having preceded the moment when Greeks explicitly distinguished between words and referents, is frequently and misleadingly described as a *magical* view of language: "the magical identification of name and object" (Guthrie 1969: 20), "magischen Weltansicht" (Kraus 1987: 18), "magical semiotics" (Manetti 1993: 39-41). As Kirk explains: "a more or less irrational belief in a natural connexion between names and things recurs again and again in Greek thought. Such a belief is perhaps magical in origin: knowledge of the exact name of a person, which is an essential part of him, confers power over him" (Kirk 1951: 240). Similar to Kirk, Ineke Sluiter explains how "an understanding of names was taken to imply an understanding of the corresponding realities. This same presupposition explains certain magical practices in which names and things named do not essentially differ from each other" (Sluiter 1997: 156). This notion of 'magic' has filtered into modern psychology as well as the modern language sciences as a technical term that marks out an early, pre-rational thought process that instinctively blurs levels of reference or causality. The language of magic made its way into child and developmental psychology by way of Piaget 1929 and into modern linguistics by way of G. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards's influential 1923 book, *The Meaning of Meaning* – a post-war manifesto against the dangers of treating words as things (Richards and Ogden 1946). As we shall see, when Greeks begin to describe moments when words appear to function more like things, they too turn to the language of magic. However, the developmental model of magical thinking as a pre-rational phenomenon that gives way to reason does not line up with the way ancient authors use the language of magic. In the case of Gorgias and later authors, the move to reconceive of words as *thing-like* and *magical* in their ends and efficacy is made after and in spite of the growing interest in distinguishing levels of linguistic correspondence.



## 1.2. What to make of Gorgias's Encomium of Helen

### 1.2.1. ἐγκώμιον/παίγνιον

A cursory glance over the scholarly reception of Gorgias's *Encomium of Helen* reveals that it can be quite a ticklish text to interpret. One ambiguity, which provides a fine entry point to Gorgias's account of λόγος, involves the ostensible target of the encomium. At least since Isocrates in the fourth century BCE, readers have sensed that the *Helen* is not so much an ἐγκώμιον as an ἀπολογία.<sup>11</sup> Gorgias suggests, at the outset, that his motive is to praise (ἐπαινεῖν § 1) and ultimately labels the speech an "encomium of Helen" (Ἑλένης [...] ἐγκώμιον § 21). However, not much of what intervenes can easily be called encomiastic. Only briefly does Gorgias pay tribute to Helen's famed beauty (§ 3) before launching into a short defense of her lineage (§ 4) and a lengthy defense of her notorious flight from Sparta to Troy (§§ 5-21). As he argues, Helen must have either been compelled by divine fate (§ 6), overpowered by physical force (§ 7), persuaded by λόγος (§§ 8-14), or overwhelmed by eros (§§ 15-19). In each case, it may be right to pity her (ἐλεεῖν; οἰκτίρειν § 7) and to defend her (ἀπολογίασασθαι § 8), but hardly to praise her.

The fact is, Gorgias does not write the *Helen* with a singular purpose in mind. As he puts it at the very end of the work: "I wanted to write this speech as an encomium of Helen and as a game for myself" (ἐβουλήθην γράψαι τὸν λόγον Ἑλένης μὲν ἐγκώμιον, ἐμὸν δὲ παίγνιον § 21). He has thus threaded throughout the text a twofold account (or δισσὸς λόγος). Helen's encomium runs along the surface of the text only to be subverted by the authorial game running beneath. The subtle

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<sup>11</sup> "He gave an account about a woman who excelled by far in birth, beauty, and reputation. Yet, he too made a small oversight: for he claims to have written an encomium about her but ends up giving a defense on behalf of her actions" (περὶ τοιαύτης ἐμνήσθη γυναικός, ἥ καὶ τῷ γένει καὶ τῷ κάλλει καὶ τῇ δόξῃ πολὺ διήνεγκεν. οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦτον μικρόν τι παρέλαθεν· φησὶ μὲν γὰρ ἐγκώμιον γεγραπμένον περὶ αὐτῆς, τυγχάνει δ' ἀπολογίαν εἰρηκῶς ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐκείνη πεπραγμένων. Isoc. *Hel.* 14).

interplay of these motives produces an unstable landscape where Gorgias's claims often appear to give way to tacit counterclaims, where categories collapse into new categories, where eulogy morphs into antilogy.<sup>12</sup> There is little doubt that, for a casual reader, this playful Möbius-like quality to the text proves quite thrilling; however, it becomes a problem for scholars who endeavor to extract from it a stable point of view.<sup>13</sup>

### 1.2.2. Encomium of Helen or Encomium of λόγος?

In the face of such interpretive difficulties, scholars often build around one fundamental assumption: Gorgias's display-speech aims, at bottom, to display his skill at constructing a speech. If there is any proper ἐγκώμιον to be found, it is implicitly embedded within Gorgias's account of the irresistible powers of λόγος (§§ 8-14).<sup>14</sup> His account of λόγος stands out conspicuously from the rest of the work both in its elevation of style and its relative size, taking up about a third of the entire

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<sup>12</sup> As Arthur Adkins cautions: "we shall observe Gorgias several times introducing a distinction that is valid in one context and subsequently applying it more widely" (1983 [1977]: 109). For instance, Gorgias's central proofs for Helen's innocence – against divine necessity, violent force, persuasive speech, and eros – tend to overextend and undermine themselves: "upon closer inspection, Gorgias manages, through a never-spoken logic of entailments and verbal repetitions, to equate without quite conflating necessity, violence, persuasion, and eros, by 'showing' in effect that each of the terms may be viewed as an aspect of the remaining terms [... ultimately,] his four alternatives dissolve into a series of approximations and analogies. They are convergent to the point of identity" (Porter 1993: 274; cf. Blondell 2018: 119). At other times, Gorgias's claims implicitly backfire, such as when Gorgias's account concerning the (dangerous) power of λόγος conspicuously calls into question his own rhetoric: "Gorgias elaborates so fully on the dangerous power of artful language that it is hard to avoid a suspicion that he is throwing a sort of veil of uncertainty over his own persuasive prowess" (Halliwell 2011: 268).

<sup>13</sup> "The *Encomium* [...] defies easy categorization or understanding" (Halliwell 2011: 267); "one of Gorgias's principal intentions is probably to baffle us about his intentions" (Barney 2016: 3). Simon Goldhill describes how the game may, in fact, enact the slipperiness of language which it describes: "Perhaps his parody is so sharp that it raises serious questions about contemporary grand theories about man and language: any doubt about whether you have apprehended Gorgias' seriousness or playfulness seems to enact his argument [...] Does Gorgianic seriousness exist, can you apprehend it and can you interpret it?" (Goldhill 2002: 55).

<sup>14</sup> Gorgias's discussion of λόγος has been called "the most important and interesting passage" of the work (MacDowell 1993 [1982]: 12), and the outsized scholarly interest in the passage corroborates the claim (Robinson 1973: 53 calls it Gorgias's "favorite theme"; cf. Kerferd 1981a: 78–82; Verdenius 1981; Connors 1986: 44–49; et al.). "The speech itself, in fact, is as much an encomium on the power of the *logos* as on Helen herself" (Segal 1962: 102); "His real 'client' is not Helen but the personified art of rhetoric, and with it the sophist himself" (Blondell 2018: 121). Halliwell calls the account of the powers of speech the "central *topos* [...]" which even displaces Helen herself from the foreground of the picture" (2011: 268).

speech. Whatever the upshot of Gorgias's crossfire agenda in the *Helen*, it is plain to see that the power of human speech is an important theme, just as it is in Gorgias's writings more generally.<sup>15</sup>

Although most readers of the *Helen* agree that Gorgias gives pride of place to his account of λόγος, there is much less agreement about what to make of that account. Many have endeavored to extract a more or less unified *theory* of speech, poetics, or aesthetics from it.<sup>16</sup> Others have treated the entire discussion of λόγος as little more than a *game* (cf. παίγνιον) with no serious point.<sup>17</sup> My reading will forge a middle path between these two approaches.

### 1.2.2. Gorgias's account of λόγος (Helen §§ 8-14)

How seriously should we take Gorgias's account of λόγος? Gorgias's parting remark about his speech being a παίγνιον suggests strongly that the *Encomium of Helen* is not meant to be viewed as a monument for all time. His discussion of λόγος in sections 8-14 is part and parcel of the very

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<sup>15</sup> In this chapter, my focus will be limited to Gorgias's linguistic thoughts expressed in the *Encomium of Helen* and *On Not Being*. For a reflection on Gorgias's recurrent interest in speech and language throughout all three works, see Kerferd 1981a: 78-82. It may be noted that the *Funeral Oration* – Gorgias's fourth, partially surviving work – also betrays minor signs of Gorgias's preoccupation with the value of different types of speech: “For these men had possessed divine excellence, but only human mortality, greatly preferring lenient fairness to stubborn justice, correctness of speech to the strictness of law” (οὔτοι γὰρ ἐκέκτηντο ἔνθεον μὲν τὴν ἀρετὴν, ἀνθρώπινον δὲ τὸ θνητόν, πολλὰ μὲν δὴ τὸ πρᾶον ἐπιεικὲς τοῦ αὐθάδους δικαίου προκρίνοντες, πολλὰ δὲ νόμου ἀκριβείας λόγων ὀρθότητά, DK 82B6 = Syrian. In *Hermog.* 90.17–91.16). On the notion of ὀρθότης λόγων in the sophistic theories of speech, see below (pp. 48-9).

<sup>16</sup> These readings regard Gorgias's statements about language and perception in the *Helen* as final rather than speculative and provisional. Jacqueline de Romilly, for instance, states that (“[Gorgias'] theory is too complete and too eloquently put forward not to have represented, more or less exactly, its author's view about speech and speeches” (1975: 21-2). Many of these readings also begin from the assumption that the “theory of literature and rhetorical art was largely a sophistic creation” (Kerferd 1981a: 78–82). Eric Havelock, for instance, calls the *Helen* “a rationalisation of this whole emotive apparatus to which Hesiod alludes” (1963: 161 n. 25), while Jonathan Barnes reconstructs from the *Helen* “a genuine theory of [...] literature and painting” based on deception (ἀπάτη, 1982: 366). Others have focused on Gorgias's mention of fear and pity as well as his drug metaphor and have extracted from this signs of a unified, pre-Aristotelean ‘catharsis-theory’ of poetry: “In diesen Ausführungen haben wir nichts weniger als die Lehre von der κάθαρσις παθήματων, wie sie uns Bernays verstehen gelehrt hat” (Süss 1910: 85–86, followed by Pohlenz 1965 [1920]: 466-7; pace Halliwell 1986: 170, 188-9). In a parallel reading, Augusto Rostagni (1922) presents Gorgias as systematizing Pythagorean speculations about the power of musicality.

<sup>17</sup> “...one may imagine the twinkle in Gorgias' eyes as he reveals in the very last word that he regards the whole paradoxical composition as a game” (MacDowell 1993 [1982]: 43). For a denunciation of the *Helen* as an intellectually bankrupt exercise in sophistry, see especially Gomperz (1912), who calls the *Helen* “rein epideiktische” (18).

same παίγνιον which runs through the text and, thus, his claims about the nature and substance of human communication should not be read as Gorgias's final word on the power of words.<sup>18</sup> The lack of seriousness in Gorgias's account of λόγος is sensed most clearly in the conspicuous ambiguity and high-flown hyperbole with which his claims are often presented. Already in section 8, Gorgias's definition of λόγος smacks of something strange and superlatively schizoid:

λόγος δυνάστης μέγας ἐστίν, ὃς σμικροτάτῳ σώματι καὶ ἀφανεστάτῳ θειότατα ἔργα ἀποτελεῖ.<sup>19</sup>

Speech is a mighty dynast, which accomplishes the most divine deeds with the tiniest and most invisible body.

As Gorgias presents it, speech is a powerful, physical, albeit imperceptible entity, pitched ambivalently (but also superlatively) between the mighty and the minuscule, the human and the divine. As we read on, Gorgias's schizoid λόγος continues to flicker between a new atomic element and a powerful mythic agent. At one moment, λόγος is described in terms of a mighty actor and, in that role, it becomes almost indistinguishable from the mythical Paris himself as the active (and grammatically masculine) perpetrator responsible for persuading (πείσας) and deceiving (ἀπατήσας) the passive (and grammatically feminine) targets of soul (ψυχή) and opinion (δόξα). At the next moment, λόγος is described in terms of a tiny and invisible body – one reminiscent of the imperceptible, material substances that were being variously theorized about in contemporary

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<sup>18</sup> In his recent book-length project on play in antiquity, Stephen Kidd sums up Gorgias's use of the word παίγνιον as follows: "the word *paignion* suggests that if Gorgias had some grand masterwork in mind to commit himself to and base his reputation on, the *Encomium of Helen* is not it" (2019: 200).

<sup>19</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the Greek of all texts and fragments of sophists and Pre-Socratic philosophers corresponds to the recent editions by Andre Laks and Glenn Most (2016).

medical and cosmological accounts.<sup>20</sup> By deftly weaving together the theoretical with the traditional, the most minute with the most mighty, Gorgias effectively does just what silver-tongued intellectuals of his day were known to do: he makes the great seem small, and the small seem great, the old seem new, and the new seem old.<sup>21</sup> Gorgias essentially gives us a loose and provocative account of what *will have been* the nature of human speech and, to this end, he sacrifices coherence for novelty, credibility (πίστις) for pleasure (τέρψις) – as he himself well recognizes: “telling those

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<sup>20</sup> The understanding of language as a partially material entity is, no doubt, already obliquely evident in Homer’s “winged words.” The seemingly materialistic view of language which Gorgias puts forward riffs on the materialistic theories of perception bandied about by Pre-Socratic thinkers – most notably Empedocles (DK 31A92 = Pl. *Men.* 76a-e; DK 31B89 = Plut. *Quaest. nat.* 916d; DK 31B109 = Arist. *De an.* 1.2 404b13-15 (et al.) cf. DK 31A57 = Arist. *Sens.* 6 446a26-28) and Democritus (DK 68A135 = Theophr. *Sens.* 50). Gorgias seems to splice these theories of perception together with contemporary cosmological and medical interest in the element of air and breath, which is not only apparent in fragments of Diogenes of Apollonia (DK 64B5 = Simpl. *in Phys.*, 152.22-153.16 Diels; DK 64A20 = Arist. *De an.* 1.2 405a 21-25) and some early Hippocratic treatises (*de Flat.* passim; *Morb. sacr.* §16) but also Aristophanes’s satirization of flighty philosophy in the *Clouds* which was produced (423 BCE) several years after Gorgias’s arrival in Athens (427 BCE). One may also recall how the Derveni Papyrus seems to conflate air (ἀήρ) and breath (πνεῦμα) and elevates the importance of this element (cols. 18.1-2; 19.3-4; 23.3 Laks and Most). If it is true that Gorgias’s brother was a doctor by the name of Herodicus, Gorgias would putatively have a clear point of contact with the ins and outs of medical theory of the time (DK 82A2 = *Suda* Γ.388; DK 82A22 = Pl. *Grg.* 456b cf. Pl. *Grg.* 448b). On other possible materialist influences on Gorgias more generally, see Segal 1962: 104–106 and Ford 2002: 175–187. A note of caution should be sounded against reading Gorgias’s materialistic theory of language too seriously. Gorgias himself breeds skepticism toward the astronomers and philosophers whom he clearly draws upon when he undercuts the authority of philosophical disputations (φιλοσόφων λόγων ἀμίλλας), the public oration (cf. εἰς λόγος πολὺν ὄχλον ἔτερψε), astronomical speculation (τοὺς τῶν μετεωρολόγων λόγους, *Helen* § 13). Brooke Holmes is probably right to note how Gorgias’s “breezy confidence in conflating the mechanics of the physical body with what happens in the soul may very well be a challenge to the alibis created out of the new physics, a wink at an audience too easily transfixed by its desires and its fears” (2010: 215).

<sup>21</sup> For example, “[w]ill we allow Gorgias and Tisias to rest undisturbed, who saw likelihoods as more venerable than truths and, furthermore, *make small things appear great and great things appear small through the power of speech, and new things seem old, and the opposite seem new*” (Τισίαν δὲ Γοργίαν τε ἐάσομεν εὐδῆν, οἱ πρὸ τῶν ἀληθῶν τὰ εἰκότα εἶδον ὡς τιμητέα μᾶλλον, τὰ τε αὖ σμικρὰ μέγала καὶ τὰ μέγала σμικρὰ φαίνεσθαι ποιοῦσιν διὰ ῥώμην λόγου, καινὰ τε ἀρχαίως τὰ τ’ ἐναντία καινῶς, Pl. *Phaedr.* 267a-b = DK 82A25 = Radermacher 7.18). But, of course, not everyone saw these powers of rhetoric as a danger in the way Plato does. However, Isocrates makes the same claim and presents it as a virtue of oratory: “but since speeches have such a nature that they can explain the same things in many different ways—to make the great things seem humble or to invest minor things with greatness, to report old things in a new way or to speak about recent matters in an old fashioned manner—it is the case then that one must not avoid the subjects which others have spoken about before, but must try to speak better than they” (ἐπειδὴ δ’ οἱ λόγοι τοιαύτην ἔχουσι τὴν φύσιν, ὥσθ’ οἷόντ’ εἶναι περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν πολλαχῶς ἐξηγήσασθαι, καὶ τὰ τε μέγала ταπεινὰ ποιῆσαι καὶ τοῖς μικροῖς μέγεθος περιθεῖναι, καὶ τὰ τε παλαιὰ καινῶς διελθεῖν καὶ περὶ τῶν νεωστὶ γεγεννημένων ἀρχαίως εἰπεῖν, οὐκ ἐτι φευκτέον ταῦτ’ ἐστὶ περὶ ὧν ἕτεροι πρότερον εἰρήκασιν, ἀλλ’ ἄμεινον ἐκείνων εἰπεῖν πειρατέον, Isoc. *Paneg.* 7–8).

who know the things that they already know is persuasive but it does not bring delight” (τὸ γὰρ τοῖς εἰδόσιν ἂ ἴσασι λέγειν πίστιν μὲν ἔχει, τέρψιν δὲ οὐ φέρει).<sup>22</sup>

If Gorgias’s account of λόγος is more of a game than a coherent theory, does this mean that there is nothing serious or theoretical about the account? As we shall see, Gorgias’s remarks about speech are, in fact, quite novel in the way they challenge the earlier speculation about human communication and how it works. Unlike other Pre-Socratic linguistic theories, which focus on the role of linguistic reference, Gorgias’s λόγος is presented as a substance that is apprehended somewhat like a sense perception. I suggest that this innovation is a serious one, even if it is not made in all seriousness.

According to Aristotle, Gorgias understood well how effective lightness and humor could be at undercutting a rival claim:

δεῖν ἔφη Γοργίας τὴν μὲν σπουδὴν διαφθείρειν τῶν ἐναντίων γέλωτι τὸν δὲ γέλωτα σπουδῇ.

Gorgias used to say that it is necessary to diffuse the seriousness of others with laughter and their laughter with seriousness.<sup>23</sup>

Elsewhere, Aristotle praises Gorgias’s capacity to produce comic metaphors that are neither too

“ridiculous” (γελοῖον) nor “too solemn and tragic” (σεμνὸν ἄγαν καὶ τραγικόν), nor even “far-fetched” (πόρρωθεν) or “obscure” (ἄσαφεις).<sup>24</sup> He also approvingly compares Gorgias’s ironic use of enthusiasm

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<sup>22</sup> *Helen* § 5.

<sup>23</sup> Arist. *Rh.* 3.18 1419b3-5 = DK 82B12 = Radermacher 7.22 with note ad loc.

<sup>24</sup> Arist. *Rh.* 3.3 1406b4-19 = DK 82A23. In the *Politics*, Aristotle recounts how Gorgias questions the idea of autochthonous citizenship by remarking – “*partly out of aporia and partly ironically*” (τὰ μὲν ἴσως ἀπορῶν τὰ δ’ εἰρωνευόμενος) – that just as Larissan craftsmen (δημιουργοί) are pot-makers, Larissan leaders who bestow citizenship are Larissan-makers (Arist. *Pol.* 3.1 1275b26-30 = DK 82A19). Part of the humor rests on the punning ambiguity of δημιουργός (which means ‘craftsman’ but looks like ‘people-maker’). For other examples with discussion, see Noël 1994.

and bombast with Plato's ironic display speeches in the *Phaedrus*.<sup>25</sup> Gorgias's playfulness may then carry with it an undercurrent of polemic. It is the type of provisional and playful argumentation that would have been right at home in the competitive context of a symposium.<sup>26</sup> Prior to Gorgias, Pre-Socratic speculation about language centered on the question of linguistic reference. His account of λόγος conspicuously and, I suggest, provocatively omits any model for linguistic reference. His λόγος is not passive and semantic but active and somatic. Gorgias's λόγος is able to produce fear (ἐφόβησαν § 14) and stop fear (φόβον παῦσαι § 8; εἰς θάρσος κατέστησαν τοὺς ἀκούοντας § 14), cause pain (ἐλύπησαν § 14) and remove pain (λύπην ἀφελεῖν § 9), bring delight (χαρὰν ἐνεργάσασθαι § 9; ἔτερψαν § 14) and, ultimately, persuade (§§ 8-14 passim). In this capacity, it does not correspond to reality so much as shape (πλάττειν § 11), impress (τυποῦν § 13), and fashion (ἐνεργάζεσθαι § 8, 13) the very arrangement (τάξις § 14) of the soul (ψυχὴ passim) and opinion (δόξα passim) to line up with what is or what is not, in fact, real.<sup>27</sup> The various frames through which he projects his account of λόγος – such as his agent-object narrative, notions of atomistic materialism and psychology, as well as the hazy domain of magic – all

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<sup>25</sup> “For inspired speakers say these sorts of things with the result that audiences accept them as something clear because they are in a similar state of mind [...] it is necessary [to use this style] in this way [i.e., in the way Isocrates had] or with irony as Gorgias had and as is found in the *Phaedrus*” (φθέγγονται τε γὰρ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἐνθουσιάζοντες, ὥστε καὶ ἀποδέχονται δῆλον ὅτι ὁμοίως ἔχοντες [...] ἢ δὴ οὕτω δεῖ, ἢ μετ’ εἰρωνείας, ὅπερ Γοργίας ἐποίει καὶ τὰ ἐν τῷ Φαῖδρῳ, Arist. *Rh.* 3.7 1408b17-20).

<sup>26</sup> Plato's depiction of Gorgias's pupil Agathon in the *Symposium* is quite similar: “Let this speech of mine, Phaedrus, [...] be dedicated as an offering to the god – a speech which, as much I could muster, shares in matters of amusement and matters of measured seriousness” (Οὗτος [...] ὁ παρ’ ἐμοῦ λόγος, ὦ Φαῖδρε, τῷ θεῷ ἀνακείσθω, τὰ μὲν παιδιᾶς, τὰ δὲ σπουδῆς μετρίας, καθ’ ὅσον ἐγὼ δύναμαι, μετέχων, Pl. *Symp.* 197e). Alcidas, another pupil of Gorgias's, likewise ends his (written) speech by remarking how the written medium lends itself to playful content: “[...] if he were to put effort into extemporaneous speaking always and in every effort, turning his attention to writing only as an amusement and as a diversion, would he not be judged to reason well by those who reason well?” (οὐκ εἰκότως ἂν τοῦ μὲν αὐτοσχεδιάζειν αἰεὶ τε καὶ διὰ παντὸς ἐνεργὸν τὴν μελέτην ποιοῖτο, τοῦ δὲ γράφειν ἐν παιδιᾷ καὶ παρέργῳ ἐπιμελόμενος, εὖ φρονεῖν κριθεῖη παρὰ τοῖς εὖ φρονοῦσιν; Alc. *Soph.* 34 Radermacher). It may be noted (since it is often overlooked) that Gorgias's speech is explicitly written (cf. γράψαι § 21).

<sup>27</sup> Ford 2002: 180 stresses the physical dimensions of the verb ἐνεργάζεσθαι citing Plato's *Philebus* 47a.

supply new conceptual starting-points from which one may begin thinking and speaking about those modes of speech which cannot be explained simply by the framework of name and referent.<sup>28</sup>

To appreciate just how Gorgias's account undercuts earlier preoccupations with linguistic reference, we must draw on a thread of intellectual history that leads back to early Pre-Socratic thinking about language and reality. It is there, in the early speculations of cosmologists, that ontology splinters into onomatology and that the gap between words and things becomes a tangible problem. Only after reaching this broader vantage point can we hope to attain a clearer perspective on how Gorgias's encomium of λόγος breaks from earlier views about language and, in doing so, helps propagate a longstanding interest in the qualities of speech which seem to produce uncommon effects and to function less like speech per se and more like a spell.

### 1.3. Pre-Socratics on λόγος

While Gorgias's *Helen* omits any discussion of linguistic reference, most prior intellectual interest in speech circles tightly around this very issue. Figures such as Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Empedocles stumble upon the problem of linguistic reference at different angles as they all inquire into the nature of reality. According to these thinkers, the true nature of things is hidden behind a veil of appearances. In order to grasp true nature, one must, in one way or another, penetrate past these appearances and correct human opinions about them. It is from this loftier cosmological concern regarding the correspondence between appearances and reality, opinion and truth, that Pre-Socratic thinkers are led to the secondary, linguistic concern about the correspondence between words and referents. As they see it, if words denote what we perceive in

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<sup>28</sup> As Michael Gagarin notes well: "It does not matter whether anyone is persuaded of Helen's innocence; the important thing is that Gorgias's arguments open up new ways in which to think about language, emotion, causation, and responsibility. His case may be shocking, even perverse; it may be completely unconvincing; but his *logos* remains one of the most interesting and intellectually stimulating works of the sophistic period" (2001: 285).



the world and if what we perceive in the world is mere appearance, how can words be used to describe anything other than mere appearance? Different Pre-Socratics tackle the issue in different ways, and, in order to illustrate the evolution of this early concern with linguistic correspondence, it will be helpful to look at how the problem manifests in the fragments of Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Empedocles before turning back to Gorgias who, in his *On Not Being*, faces down the problem directly.

### 1.3.1. Xenophanes

Central to the cosmology of Xenophanes of Colophon (c. 570 – c. 475 BCE) are the epistemic gaps between appearance and reality, opinion and truth, words and things. In what most take to be a programmatic statement, he claims:

καὶ τὸ μὲν οὖν σαφὲς οὐτις ἀνὴρ γένηετ' οὐδέ τις ἔσται  
εἰδὼς ἄμφι θεῶν τε καὶ ἄσσα λέγω περὶ πάντων·  
εἰ γὰρ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα τύχοι τετελεσμένον εἰπὼν,  
αὐτὸς ὅμως οὐκ οἶδε· δόκος δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσι τέτυκται.

And, so, there never has nor will be any man with clear knowledge about the gods and however much I say about all things. For, even if he happened, for the most part, to speak what is perfect, he himself nevertheless does not know it. For opinion has been set upon all things.<sup>29</sup>

Xenophanes's concern with the deficiency of human knowledge appears to be motivated by a sense of deference toward divine omniscience: what mortals know is absolutely inferior to what gods know.<sup>30</sup> Xenophanes recognizes how humans frequently and foolishly make pronouncements that require superhuman knowledge, and he takes no small amount of relish in pointing out these sites

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<sup>29</sup> DK 21B34 = Sext. Emp. *Math.* 7.49, 7.110 (cf. 7.51), 8.326 (et al.). Note the emphatic hyperbaton (τὸ μὲν οὖν σαφὲς [...] εἰδὼς ἄμφι θεῶν) perhaps underscoring the gap between mortal and divine.

<sup>30</sup> This type of epistemic pessimism is characteristic of Archaic Greek poetry and serves as a broader backdrop against which Pre-Socratic speculation about the cosmos initially emerges (Leshner 2008). Xenophanes's rather hard-lined epistemic pessimism leads him even to reject divination as a way of accessing more-than-mortal knowledge (DK 21A52 = Aët. 5.1.2; Cic. *Div.* 1.5).

of epistemic hubris. For instance, he declares that, when mortals claim to depict the gods, they merely depict themselves,<sup>31</sup> and when mortals sing of the gods, they sing only of their own false wars and shameful actions.<sup>32</sup> The same epistemic pessimism applies to simple claims about the reality of the phenomenal world, which, for Xenophanes, are likewise undermined by the limitations of the mortal perspective.<sup>33</sup> When Xenophanes makes his own pronouncement about the limitlessness of the earth, the identity of the primal elements, and their cyclicity, he holds himself to the same epistemic standards and advises his audience against taking his remarks as hard facts: “let these be taken as opinions resembling real things” (ταῦτα δεδοξάσθω μὲν εὐκότα τοῖς ἐτύμοισι).<sup>34</sup>

Thus, for Xenophanes, humans are blinkered by the world of appearances and are far from attaining a divine perspective on reality. In certain fragments, this sense of an insuperable epistemic deficiency problematizes not only the relation between our perception of things and how they truly are but also our names for things and the things themselves. In fragment 32, Xenophanes states:

ἦν τ’ Ἴριον καλέουσι, νέφος καὶ τοῦτο πέφυκε,  
πορφύρεον καὶ φοινίκεον καὶ χλωρόν ιδέσθαι.

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<sup>31</sup> DK 21B14 = Clem. Al. *Strom.* 5.109.1 (et al.); DK 21B15 = Clem. Al. *Strom.* 5.109.1 (et al.); DK 21B16 = Clem. Al. *Strom.* 7.22.1; cf. DK 21A12 = Arist. *Rh.* 2.23 1399b6-8.

<sup>32</sup> DK 21B1 = Ath. 11.7 462c. In specific reference to Homer and Hesiod, see DK 21B11 = Sext. Emp. *Math.* 9.193; DK 21B12 = Sext. Emp. *Math.* 1.289; cf. DK 21B13 = Aul. Gell. *Noct.* 3.11.2.

<sup>33</sup> For instance, “If god had not created pale honey, they [i.e., mortals] would assert that figs are much sweeter” (εἰ μὴ χλωρόν ἔφυσε θεὸς μέλι, πολλὸν ἔφασκον | γλύσσονα σῦκα πέλεσθαι, DK 21B38 = Hdn. *Mon. Lex.* 2, p. 946.23 with Leshner 1992: 180-2).

<sup>34</sup> DK 21B35 = Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 746b. For his claims about the limitlessness of the earth: DK 21B28 = Ach. Tat. *Intr. Arat.* 4; cf. DK 21A47 = Aët. 3.9.4. The elements: DK 21B29 = Philop. in *Phys.* 125.30 Vitelli. Cyclicity: DK 21B27 = Sext. Emp. *Math.* 10.313. For other claims about nature, see DK 21B30 = Crates in Schol. Genav. in *Il.* 21.196; DK 21B31 = Heracl. *Alleg.* 44.5; DK 21B33 = Sext. Emp. *Math.* 9.361, 10.314, (et al.). As James Leshner notes, “there is no suggestion that Xenophanes considered himself exempt from these [sc. epistemic] limitations” (Leshner 1992: 181). Compare how Xenophanes’s caps the verses wherein he calculates his own age: “Sixty-seven are the years already shaking my thought across the Greek lands, and from birth, there were twenty-five years added to those – if, in fact, I know how to speak truly of these things” (ἤδη δ’ ἐπτά τ’ ἔασι καὶ ἐξήκοντ’ ἐνιαυτοί | βληστρίζοντες ἐμὴν φροντίδ’ ἄν’ Ἑλλάδα γῆν· | ἐκ γενετῆς δὲ τότε ἦσαν ἐείκοσι πέντε τε πρὸς τοῖς, | εἵπερ ἐγὼ περὶ τῶνδ’ οἶδα λέγειν ἐτύμως. DK 21B8 = Diog. Laert. 9.19).

...and what they call Iris, this too is by nature a cloud, purple, red, and greenish-yellow to look on.<sup>35</sup>

Here, Xenophanes recognizes how the gap between humans and celestial bodies can lead to a misunderstanding of phenomena and, by extension, *names for those phenomena*.<sup>36</sup> And as we already saw in fragment 34, Xenophanes elevates his skepticism toward language one notch higher when he claims that even if one *could speak* in a way that aligns perfectly with reality, this speech does not necessarily correlate with any knowledge of that reality (εἰ γὰρ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα τύχοι τετελεσμένον εἰπών, αὐτὸς ὅμως οὐκ οἶδε *supra*). Only a god – that is, Xenophanes’s god – can stand outside of it all, know it all, and circumvent the problems of speech and perception.<sup>37</sup> For mortals, all that can be hoped for is that a slightly better knowledge of things may be gleaned from constant investigation.<sup>38</sup>

When Heraclitus and Parmenides begin inquiring into the nature of reality, they will raise similar concerns with the veil of appearances and its trickle-down effect on language; yet, unlike Xenophanes, they will insist more overtly on the human capacity to circumvent this veil of

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<sup>35</sup> DK 21B32 = Schol. BLT Eust. ad *Il.* 11.27b. For Xenophanes’s cloud-metaphysics, see, in general, see Mourelatos 2008.

<sup>36</sup> The problem of ancient color perception and description adds an extra (albeit unintentional) layer of proof to Xenophanes’s argument for the instability of human perception and naming: “it is striking that while both Xenophanes and Aristotle, for instance, discuss the rainbow, the colours they identify in it, with the exception of ‘red’, *phoinikoun*, differ: Aristotle talks of *prasinon* and *halourgon*, where Xenophanes (Fr. 32) sees *chloron* and *porphuroun*” (Lloyd 2006: 17-8).

<sup>37</sup> Xenophanes’s god differs from humans in form and thought (DK 21B23 = Clem. Al. *Strom.* 5.109.1, DK 21B24 = Sext. Emp. *Math.* 9.144; cf. Philop. *Aetern.*, 582.21-23 Rabe). It seems that Xenophanes’s god even lacks a voice (φωνή, DK 21B14 = Clem. Al. *Strom.* 5.109.1 (et al.)) and moves all things by the cognitive organ of his mind (νόου φρενί, DK 21B25 = Simpl. in *Phys.*, 23.20 Diels).

<sup>38</sup> It seems that, despite Xenophanes’s doubt, he maintained a small hope that investigation could yield better understanding (DK 21B18 = Stob. 1.8.2; 3.29.41 with commentary in Lesher 1992: 149-155).

appearances and will present their own pronouncements about nature and reality as truth rather than conjecture.

### 1.3.2. Heraclitus

For Heraclitus of Ephesus (fl. c. 500 BCE), the veil of appearances can be circumvented, and the nature of reality can be glimpsed *noetically*. The fundamental nature which appearances conceal is, for Heraclitus, a deep *concordia discors* or a backsprung union (παλίντροπος ἁρμονίη) of all things. This aspect of nature cannot be perceived from a normal, mortal perspective because mortals perceive only one side of nature at a time.<sup>39</sup> That is to say, humans perceive and conceive of life as life, of waking as waking, of youth as youth. According to Heraclitus, when these things are viewed from a synoptic or god's eye perspective, life is death, waking is sleeping, young is old.<sup>40</sup> To take one

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<sup>39</sup> "They do not understand how in differing it agrees with itself: a backsprung union as of a bow and lyre" (ξυνιάσιν ὅκως διαφερόμενον ἑωυτῷ ὁμολογέει παλίντροπος ἁρμονίη ὅκωσπερ τόξου καὶ λύρης, DK 22B51 = Hippol. *Haer.* 9.9.2 (et al.); cf. DK 22B54 = Plut. *An. proc.* 1026c); "For as many as encounter things, many do not consider them such as they are, nor do they recognize after learning, but they suppose they do" (οὐ γὰρ φρονέουσι τοιαῦτα πολλοί, ὁκόσοι ἐγκυρεῦσιν, οὐδὲ μαθόντες γινώσκουσιν, ἑωυτοῖσι δὲ δοκέουσι. DK 22B17 = Clem. Al. *Strom.* 2.8); "Without understanding, after hearing they resemble the deaf – the utterance bears testimony about them: while present they are absent" (ἄξύνετοι ἀκούσαντες κωφοῖσιν ἐοίκασιν· φάτις αὐτοῖσιν μαρτυρεῖ παρόντας ἀπείναι, DK 22B34 = Eus. *PE* 13.42 (et al.); cf. DK 22B19 = Clem. Al. *Strom.* 2.24.5). For Heraclitus's notion of *concordia discors* see also DK 22B10 = Porph. *Quaest. Hom. ad Il.* 14.200; DK 22B61 = Hippol. *Haer.* 9.10.5; DK 22B62 = Hippol. *Haer.* 9.10.6), DK 22B111 = Stob. 3.1.177; DK 22B126 = Schol. in Tzetz. *in Il.*, p. 126. Heraclitus criticizes the earlier poets who did not understand this underlying feature of reality, such as Homer (DK 22A22 = Arist. *EE* 7.1 1235a25-28) and Hesiod (DK 22B57 = (Ps.-?) Hippol. *Haer.* 9.10). A similar critique may also be beneath the further criticisms of Hesiod, Pythagoras, Xenophanes, Hecataeus (DK 22B40 = *Etym. Gen.* B.338), of Homer and Archilochus (DK 22B42 = Diog. Laert. 9.1), of Homer again (DK 22B56 = (Ps.-?) Hippol. *Haer.* 9.9.6), and of Pythagoras again (DK 22B129 = Diog. Laert. 8.6).

<sup>40</sup> "The same is in what is living and what is dead, what is waking and what is sleeping, and what is young and what is old" (ταὐτό γ' ἐνὶ ζῶν καὶ τεθνηκός καὶ τὸ ἐγρηγορὸς καὶ καθεῦδον καὶ νέον καὶ γηραιόν, DK 22B88 = Ps.-Plut. *Cons. Ap.* 106e). For life and death, see also DK 22B62 = Hippol. *Haer.* 9.10.6 cf. Philo *Quaest. Gen.* 4.152, 359.34–360.6; Philo *Leg. alleg.* 1.33.107–8. See also the discussion of DK 22B48 below.

example, when we perceive a road, we perceive it sloping downwards; yet, as Heraclitus reminds us, a road, in its totality, goes both upwards *and* downwards (ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω μία καὶ ὤυτή).<sup>41</sup>

For Heraclitus, then, we are all blinkered by our mortal and contingent perspective on the world and, just as our perspective distorts our ideas about the world, our language too is skewed by our distorted ideas. As Heraclitus writes in fragment 67:

ὁ θεὸς ἡμέρη εὐφρόνη, χειμῶν θέρος, πόλεμος εἰρήνη, κόρος λιμός· ἀλλοιοῦται δὲ  
ὄκωσπερ, ὁκόταν συμμιγῇ θυνώμασιν, ὀνομάζεται καθ' ἡδονὴν ἑκάστου.

God: day night, winter summer, war peace, fullness hunger – it alters just as, when mixed with incense, it is named in accordance with the pleasure of each one.<sup>42</sup>

What Heraclitus hints at here is that each word tends to point out a particular referent – just as the word for ‘day’ points to the idea of day, ‘winter’ to winter, ‘war’ to war, and so forth. A word does not effectively designate both a thing and its opposite, and yet, from a synoptic, Heraclitean perspective, this is how things are: day is night, winter is summer, war is peace, satiety is hunger.<sup>43</sup> Words, by their very nature, are defective insofar as they denote only the partial appearance of things and not the reality running beneath – or, to follow Heraclitus’s analogy in fragment 67, words name only the changing scents and incense but not the underlying fire.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> DK 22B60 = Hippol. *Haer.* 9.10.4. Compare also: “The path of carding-combs: straight and crooked” (γνάφων ὁδὸς εὐθεῖα καὶ σκολιή, DK 22B59 = Hippol. *Haer.* 9.10.4; cf. DK 22B103 = Porph. *Quaest. Hom. ad Il.* 14.200); “The sea, water most clean and most foul, potable and salubrious for fish, while unpotable and destructive to humans” (θάλασσα, ὕδωρ καθαρώτατον καὶ μιαιώτατον, ἰχθύσι μὲν πότιμον καὶ σωτήριον, ἀνθρώποις δὲ ἄποτον καὶ ὀλέθριον, DK 22B61 = Hippol. *Haer.* 9.10.5).

<sup>42</sup> DK 22B67 = Hippol. *Haer.* 9.10.8.

<sup>43</sup> Elsewhere, Heraclitus suggests that although words do not denote their opposites, they still may implicitly entail them, as in the case of the word ‘justice’: people could not grasp ‘justice’ without a corresponding category of ‘injustice’ (DK 22B23 = Clem. Al. *Strom.* 4.10.1).

<sup>44</sup> “The question is, can we stand outside language in its entirety, outside everything that makes human experience human, so as to view ourselves in this godlike perspective? I believe that Heraclitus’ most profound contribution to philosophy is the realisation that we cannot. There is no naming except from a particular point of view” (Burnyeat 2012 [1982]: 203).

For Cratylus and later Heracliteans, this changeable quality of words seemed to undercut the possibility for human communication quite severely.<sup>45</sup> However, Heraclitus himself seems only to have wanted to bend speech, not break it. Unlike Xenophanes, who maintains a pious skepticism about human claims to knowledge and promotes a humble program of natural investigation, Heraclitus's fragments betray a certain expectation that reality can be known and communicated in spite of deceptive appearances and our shoddy system of communication.<sup>46</sup> His solution seems to be that mortals can circumvent their private perspective on the phenomenal world noetically – that is to say, if we can *know* that appearances reveal only half the truth, we may be able to think our way around them and supply the other half. For instance, even though the road may appear to slope downward, we can, nevertheless, *reason* that the road slopes both upward and downward *in toto*.<sup>47</sup>

Heraclitus's trademark obscurity (coupled with his disciplinary tone) may be the mechanism by which he aims to trigger a reasoned, dianoetic response in his audience.<sup>48</sup> To be sure, the knots of amphibole and oracular ambiguity which riddle the fragments of Heraclitus establish language as an obstacle to be scrutinized and reasoned through. To take the most familiar example, in fragment 48, Heraclitus states:

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<sup>45</sup> We learn from Aristotle that Cratylus, at some point, gave up speech altogether and resorted to merely pointing at things (Arist. *Metaph.* 4.5 1010a7-9).

<sup>46</sup> Heraclitus says that he will account for things in accordance with their nature (κατὰ φύσιν, DK 22B1 = Sext. Emp. *Math.* 7.132 (et al.)). For Heraclitus's rejection of Xenophanes's provisional reliance on investigation and polymathy, see DK 22B40 = Diog. Laert. 9.1 (et al.) = *BNJ* 1 (Hekataios of Miletos) T21. Aristotle will later take Heraclitus to task for treating his conjectures about nature as knowledge (Arist. *EN* 7.5 1146b29-30 cf. Ps.-Arist. *MM* 2.6 1201b5-9).

<sup>47</sup> The notion that some may be able to work their way past mere appearances, seems to underpin Heraclitus's remark that "poor witnesses for humans are the eyes and ears of those who have foreign souls" (κακοὶ μάρτυρες ἀνθρώποισιν ὀφθαλμοὶ καὶ ὠτα βαρβάρους ψυχᾶς ἐχόντων, DK 22B107 = Sext. Emp. *Math.* 7.126) as well as his observation that "Although the λόγος is common, many go on as though they have their own private thought" (τοῦ λόγου δ' ἐόντος ξυνού ζώουσιν οἱ πολλοὶ ὡς ἰδίαν ἔχοντες φρόνησιν, DK 22B2 = Sext. Emp. *Math.* 7.133 cf. DK 22B113 = Stob. 3.1.179 and DK 22B116 = Stob. 3.5.6).

<sup>48</sup> On the role of Heraclitean ambiguity more generally, see Hussey 1982: 54-6. Heraclitus's statements about oracles are often thought to be a metacommentary on his own opaque style (DK 22B93 = Plut. *Pyth. orac.* 404d; cf. DK 22B92 = Plut. *Pyth. orac.* 397a with commentary Kahn 1979: 123-6).

τῷ οὖν τόξῳ ὄνομα βίος, ἔργον δὲ θάνατος.

The bow has the name of life but the deed of death.<sup>49</sup>

The word βίος, when unaccented, can signify 'life' (βίος) and/or 'bow' (βιός). Thus, Heraclitus uses the ambiguity of language to hint connotatively at the totality of 'life' (βίος) and non-life (βιός ≈ 'death'). Similarly, in fragment 32, Heraclitus states:

ἐν τῷ σοφόν μόνον λέγεσθαι οὐκ ἐθέλει καὶ ἐθέλει Ζηνὸς ὄνομα.

One, wise alone, does and does not want to be called by the name of Zeus.<sup>50</sup>

Here, Heraclitus engages in some more trademark wordplay; the genitive form of the name of Zeus recalls the word for living (Ζηνός ≈ ζῆν), and the unitary, wise principle does and does not want to be called by this name because the name represents one side of a totality: living without dying. To take one final example, Heraclitus states in fragment 57:

διδάσκαλος δὲ πλείστων Ἡσίοδος· τοῦτον ἐπίστανται πλεῖστα εἰδέναι, ὅστις ἡμέρην καὶ εὐφρόνην οὐκ ἐγίνωσκεν· ἔστι γὰρ ἓν.

The teacher of most is Hesiod: they decide that he knows most things – he who did not recognize day and night, for they are one.<sup>51</sup>

Here, Heraclitus hints at the unity of day and night by using two words – ἡμέρα and εὐφρόνη – which share the secondary meaning of 'kindly.' Thus, the seeming opposites (day/night) collapse into one another connotatively when the audience is invited to peer past what the words at first appear to denote. By playing on partial ambiguities in language and foregrounding them in this way, Heraclitus's fragments seem to trigger a sense of suspicion toward the poverty of mere words

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<sup>49</sup> DK 22B48 = *Etym. Mag.* s.v. βίος, p. 198.26, with commentary in Kahn 1979: 201-2.

<sup>50</sup> DK 22B32 = Clem. Al. *Strom.* 5.115.1.

<sup>51</sup> DK 22 B57 = Hippol. *Haer.* 9.10.

and, by extension, the ability of the mind to overcome this poverty by reasoning around language.<sup>52</sup>

But, of course, to conjecture further about the motives underlying Heraclitus's notorious obscurantism is a tricky bit of business even in the best of circumstances. At the very least, what remains clear is that Heraclitus, like Xenophanes, betrays strong misgivings about the capacity of normal language to penetrate the veil of appearance and pick out the hidden reality of things. Yet, he may also betray a certain expectation that problems with linguistic reference can be overcome through the connotative (and oftentimes ambiguous) use of words and syntax.

### 1.3.3. Parmenides

For Parmenides of Elea (fl. c. 504/500 BCE), the truth about nature can be derived from the recognition of two fundamental suppositions: (1) nothing can arise from nothing and (2) 'what is' (ἐόν) cannot become 'what is not' (μὴ ἐόν). What results from this is a highly unintuitive picture of reality – namely, that nature simply *is* and that not-being is unreal. Furthermore, all things must be, in some sense, changeless, ungenerated, and unitary, since, without not-being, there is no longer room for *x* and not-*x*, road and not-road, life and not-life. All plurality, change, generation, and destruction which we always perceive in the world, are, for Parmenides, mere illusion. They are products of our well-worn habit (ἔθος πολύπειρον) of taking false appearances as true.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Note how Seneca extracts a lesson about the instability of language from the famous river fragment: "This is what Heraclitus says: 'Into the same river we step and do not step twice.' For the name of 'river' remains the same while the water carries on by" (*hoc est, quod ait Heraclitus: 'in idem flumen bis descendimus et non descendimus.' manet enim idem fluminis nomen, aqua transmissa est*, Sen. Ep. 58.23).

<sup>53</sup> DK 28B7.3. Whether or not Parmenides was a 'monist' is unclear. My interest here is merely to extract from the fragments the basic Eleatic ontology which Gorgias will eventually react to. From Aristotle onwards, Parmenides was viewed as a monist of one stripe or another, and Parmenides's followers, such as Melissus, seem to present themselves as monists (Arist. *Ph.* 1.2 184b15-1.3 186b4; *Metaph.* 1.5 986b28–31). As Jaap Mansfeld and others have shown, later accounts of Eleatic philosophy were likely drawn (via Aristotle) from writings of Hippias and Gorgias, who may have schematized the theories of their predecessors (Mansfeld 1990 [1986]; 2006; cf. Palmer 2009: 35ff.). For Gorgias, this meant "emphasizing the oppositions between thinkers and the contradictions within their own works"



When Parmenides's unnamed goddess gives her account of the correct and incorrect ways of understanding the world, she describes it in terms of three paths. The idea of being and the idea of not-being are two utterly distinct paths – the former is real, thinkable, and speakable, while the latter is unreal, unthinkable, and unspeakable.<sup>54</sup> Most mortals tend to follow a third, backsprung path (παλίντροπός κέλευθος) which muddles together being and not-being.<sup>55</sup> This third path is the way of opinion (δόξα) and, although one may speak it and think it, their thinking and speaking are not correct; the path of mortals is deceptive since they consider things both to be *and* not to be at once – that is to say, they think day to be day and day not to be night, life to be life and life not to be death. According to Parmenides, each of the three paths has a distinct impact on speech: the true path of being corresponds to correct and trustworthy speech, the unreal path of not-being is unthinkable and unutterable and, thus, cannot correspond to speech at all, and the mortal path of opinion corresponds to speech which is misleading (ἀπατηλὸν) since it suggests a notion of not-being which is impossible.<sup>56</sup> As Parmenides describes it, mortals, who follow the third path and embrace appearances, end up with incorrect opinions and, in turn, impose (κατέθεντο) words onto those

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(Runia 2008: 33). Or, as Jaap Mansfeld puts it: “Gorgias [...] stressed what he took to be the philosophers' insoluble disagreements [...] he amusingly went on to argue that all were wrong” (2006: 27). If Parmenides was not himself a monist, he seems to have become one in the eyes of later thinkers.

<sup>54</sup> “And it is, in fact, decided, as is necessary, to leave one [path] as unthinkable and unnameable (for it is not the true path), and for the other to exist and to be real” (κέκριται δ' οὖν, ὥσπερ ἀνάγκη, | τὴν μὲν ἔαν ἀνόητον ἀνώνυμον (οὐ γὰρ ἀληθὴς | ἔστιν ὁδός), τὴν δ' ὥστε πέλειν καὶ ἐπήτυμον εἶναι. DK 28B8.16-8). On the unthinkability and unutterability of not-being, see also DK 28B8.7-9; DK 28B2.3-7; DK 28B3.

<sup>55</sup> “For [I keep] you away from this first path of inquiry [i.e., the path on not-being], and yet also from this one that two-headed mortals fabricate knowing nothing. For the helplessness in their breasts steers a wandering mind. And they are carried along, deaf and at the same time blind, dumbstruck, an undiscerning tribe who consider that ‘being’ and ‘not-being’ are the same and not the same, and for all the path is backsprung” (πρώτης γὰρ σ' ἀφ' ὁδοῦ ταύτης διζήσιος <εἰργω>, | αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' ἀπὸ τῆς, ἣν δὴ βροτοὶ εἰδότες οὐδέν | πλάττονται δίκρανοι ἀμηχανίη γὰρ ἐν αὐτῶν | στήθεσιν ἰθύνει πλαγκτὸν νόον· οἱ δὲ φοροῦνται | κωφοὶ ὁμῶς τυφλοὶ τε, τεθηπότες, ἄκριτα φῦλα, | οἷς τὸ πέλειν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶναι ταῦτ' ἐνὸς νενόμισται | κοῦ ταῦτόν, πάντων δὲ παλίντροπός ἐστι κέλευθος, DK 28B6.3-9; cf. DK 28B8.50ff.; DK 28B1.28-32).

<sup>56</sup> DK 28B8.53.

false opinions.<sup>57</sup> This δόξα-derived speech falsely suggests that things come to be (γίγνεσθαι) and pass away (ὄλλυσθαι), that, in reality, we may find both being and not-being (εἶναί τε καὶ οὐχί);<sup>58</sup> it suggests that things were born (ἔφν τάδε), now are (νυν ἔασι), and, after growing, will pass away (τελευτήσουσι τραφέντα).<sup>59</sup> All such speech is out of joint with the true nature of reality, according to Parmenides.

Since language is naturally founded upon ideas of change and difference, we are left to wonder what correct speech looks like to Parmenides and how Parmenides thinks he can circumvent the pitfalls of speaking incorrectly. On these questions, Parmenides is even less forthcoming than Heraclitus. Yet, so far, the epistemic-cum-linguistic predicament which Parmenides sets up is not unlike Heraclitus's: there is a gap between appearance and reality and, since words tend to correlate with appearances, there is a concomitant gap between words and reality. One difference is that Parmenides drives a much deeper wedge between appearance and reality. While Heraclitus had supposed that the true nature of things underlies false appearances and yet, in a partial sense, accounts for those appearances, Parmenides gives no indication that true nature correlates in any way with appearances. Instead, reality is only grasped when all appearances are eliminated as false, through and through. Since Parmenides drives a deeper wedge between reality and appearances, he likewise drives a deeper wedge between words and reality. For

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<sup>57</sup> "For they established two forms to name their views; one of which is not necessary (in this they have gone astray)" (μορφὰς γὰρ κατέθεντο δύο γνώμας ὀνομάζειν· ἢ τῶν μίαν οὐ χρεῶν ἐστὶν (ἐν ᾧ πεπλανημένοι εἰσὶν), DK 28B8.53-4).

<sup>58</sup> "for this [i.e., 'what is'] all things will be a name, as many things as mortals, having been persuaded that they are true, establish as both coming to be and passing away, being and not being, changing place, and altering their bright color" (τῷ πάντ' ὄνομ' ἔσται, ἢ ὅσα βροτοὶ κατέθεντο πεποιθότες εἶναι ἀληθῆ, ἢ γίγνεσθαι τε καὶ ὄλλυσθαι, εἶναί τε καὶ οὐχί, ἢ καὶ τόπον ἀλλάσσειν διὰ τε χροῶ φανὸν ἀμείβειν, DK 28B8.38-41).

<sup>59</sup> "Thus, according to opinion, these things grew, now are, and, after growing up, will perish. And, to these, humans establish a name for each" (οὕτω τοι κατὰ δόξαν ἔφν τάδε καὶ νυν ἔασι ἢ καὶ μετέπειτ' ἀπὸ τοῦδε τελευτήσουσι τραφέντα· ἢ τοῖς δ' ὄνομ' ἀνθρώποι κατέθεντ' ἐπίσημον ἑκάστω, DK 28B19).

Heraclitus, words maintain a partial bearing on reality since they derive from a partial view of reality which underlies things and, therefore, words may be bent and finessed into clusters of amphibole and ambiguity (e.g., βίος ≈ life/death, see above), which encourage a view toward the backsprung nature of the word. For Parmenides, there is no explicit or implicit indication that conventional words can be or even need to be manipulated to serve the purpose of communicating correctly.<sup>60</sup> We might say that, for Parmenides, words (like numbers or computer code) may be helpful tools for *deduction* even if they are faulty tools for *description*. As long as speech allows the audience to assent to the underlying logic of the Parmenidean refutation (ἔλεγχος) – namely, that nothing can arise from nothing and that ‘what-is’ cannot become ‘what-is-not’ – then the speech in question is correct even if the words themselves are generally defective and misleading. That is to say, for Parmenides, correct speech naturally follows from correct conceptions about the world.<sup>61</sup> It is for this reason that those who presuppose the Parmenidean way of truth can ‘speak’ (λέγειν DK 28B2.1; 8.1; 6.1), ‘express’ (φράζειν 2.6; 3.1; 7.2), and ‘affirm’ (φάσθαι 1.23; 8.8) things correctly, whereas those who do not presuppose the way of truth are only able to ‘utter names’ (ὀνομάζειν DK 28B8.53; 9.1) and ‘impose’ words (κατατιθέναι 8.29; 8.53; 19.3) that reflect their false opinions about fleeting appearances. All Parmenides must do to communicate the nature of reality is to remind his auditors of the logic of his starting principle and flag words that imply change, generation, and destruction as necessarily false.

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<sup>60</sup> Parmenides makes no comparable attempt to communicate figuratively. Although Parmenides’s plain style is often the butt of criticism by modern readers, his poem was admired by some in antiquity for its ‘unadorned’ (ἀκαλλώπιτος), ‘crisp’ (ισχνός), and ‘pure’ (καθαρός) mode of expression (DK 28A18 = Procl. *In Parm.*, p. 665.12–21).

<sup>61</sup> The auditor must discern the truth of the argument: “But, by the discourse, decide the much-contested refutation spoken by me” (κρίναι δὲ λόγῳ πολύδηριν ἔλεγχον ἐξ ἐμέθεν ῥηθέντα, DK 28B7.5–6). “it [i.e., the idea of being] is the path of persuasion for it attends upon reality” (πειθοῦς ἐστὶ κέλευθος, ἀληθείη γὰρ ὀπηδεῖ, DK 28B2.4). “Nor will a force of persuasion ever permit something to come to be beside itself out of not-being” (οὐδέ ποτ’ ἐκ μὴ ἐόντος ἐφήσει πίστιος ἰσχὺς | γίγνεσθαι τι παρ’ αὐτό, DK 28B8.12–3).

As we have seen thus far, early concerns with the correspondence between appearance and reality result in a certain distrust of linguistic reference. Heraclitus and Parmenides are keen to take on this problem of faulty appearances and to communicate their own versions of reality. However, in this, they both face a conundrum: if speech has a limited bearing on reality, how can reality be disclosed through speech? Heraclitus may have sought to utilize certain techniques of connotation and ambiguity to evoke descriptively his own take on what the nature of reality looks like, while Parmenides doubles down on the logical proof of his first principle and trusts that a logically sound proposition about reality can cut through the smoke of words and appearances. The problem with Parmenides's approach, even more so than Heraclitus's, is that it places a massive burden on his ontological presuppositions. If an opponent should undercut the principle of pure being in any way, all the rest of Parmenides's claims would topple down. And, as we shall see, Gorgias does just that in his treatise, *On Not Being*, which effectively swaps Eleatic ontology for a new, playful meontology – trading the path of being, thinking, and speaking for the path of not-being, not-thinking, and not-speaking. But, before turning to Gorgias and the sophists, we must treat one more Pre-Socratic – one who was singularly aware of the problems of linguistic reference and whose teachings seem to have had a significant influence on Gorgias's thought.

#### 1.3.4. Empedocles

Empedocles of Acragas (c. 494 – c. 434 BCE) was an older contemporary and Sicilian compatriot of Gorgias. According to tradition, Empedocles was Parmenides's student<sup>62</sup> and

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<sup>62</sup> DK 31A1 = Diog. Laert. 8.56; DK 31A2 = *Suda* E.1002. Others call him an emulator (ζηλωτής) of Parmenides (DK 31A1 = Diog. Laert. 8.55, 6; DK 31A7 = Simpl. *in Phys.* 25.20 Diels). Empedocles is also often linked with Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism: DK 31A1.54 = Diog. Laert. 8.54 = *BNJ* 566 (Timaios) F14 = *BNJ* 84 (Neanthes) F26; DK 31A2 = *Suda* E.1002; DK 31A7 = Simpl. *in Phys.* 25.21 Diels; DK 31A11 = Ath. 1.3e; DK 31A19 = Schol. *lambl. VP.* 150.10-12 Deubner cf. Procl. *In Parm.* 2.723.15–724.8.

Gorgias's teacher.<sup>63</sup> Although most early philosophical pedigrees are highly disputed, it is quite clear that, even if Empedocles did not know Parmenides personally, he was influenced by Parmenidean ontological claims. Moreover, scholars are often willing to accept that Empedocles had some influence on Gorgianic thought.<sup>64</sup> We have evidence from Plato to indicate that Gorgias had some interest in the Empedoclean theory of perception, which involves pores and effluences.<sup>65</sup> According to the Satyrus who wrote in the second century BCE, Gorgias reports that he was physically present when Empedocles was performing magic (γοητεύων).<sup>66</sup> For now, we will pass over the issue of Empedoclean magic and its possible influence on Gorgias in order to treat, instead, Empedocles's role as a predecessor to Gorgias's ideas about speech and persuasion. To do so, let us first quickly sketch out Empedocles's central cosmological tenets from which extends his interest in language.

Whether directly or not, Empedocles adopts into his theory of nature the Parmenidean principle that nothing can arise from nothing and that 'what is' cannot become 'what is not.'<sup>67</sup> Thus, for Empedocles, the notion that things can come into being and pass away is the result of false appearances and is not in keeping with reality.<sup>68</sup> However, this does not mean that the Empedoclean

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<sup>63</sup> DK 82A2 = *Suda* Γ.388; DK 82A3 = Diog. Laert. 8.58-59; DK 82A10 = Olymp. *In Gorg.* Prooem. 9 (7.22-8.12 Westerink); DK 82A14 = Quint. *Inst.* 3.1.8.

<sup>64</sup> See Diels 1969 [1884] and Kerferd 1985. Diels admits that Gorgias betrays "ein bestimmender Einfluss;" however, he notes that Empedocles was probably only around ten years older than Gorgias and, thus, a strict teacher-student relationship may be unlikely (1969 [1884]: 160).

<sup>65</sup> DK 82B4 = Pl. *Men.* 76a-e cf. DK 82B5 = Theophr. *De Igne* 73.

<sup>66</sup> Diog. Laert. 8.58-59 = DK 82A3 = DK 31A1. On this account, see Schorn 2004: 372-8. On Empedocles as a practitioner of magic and his use of incantations, see Faraone 2019.

<sup>67</sup> DK 31B12 = Philo *Aetern. mund.* 5, p. 74.7-8 (v. 1-2); Ps.-Arist. *MXG* 2 975a3-4; cf. DK 31B13 = Aët. 1.18.2; DK 31B14 = Ps.-Arist. *MXG* 2 976b25. See Graham 1999 for a discussion of the relation between the cosmologies of Parmenides and Empedocles.

<sup>68</sup> "The fools. For they have no long-reaching thoughts, those who expect that what was not before comes to be or that something dies and is destroyed completely" (νήπιον οὐ γὰρ σφιν δολιχόφρονές εἰσι μέριμναι, | οἱ δὲ γίγνεσθαι πάρος οὐκ ἔδον ἐλπίζουσιν | ἢ τι καταθνήσκειν τε καὶ ἐξόλλυσθαι ἀπάντη. DK 31B11 = Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1113c).

cosmos is stuck forever in changeless unity as it seems to have been for the Eleatics. Empedocles allows nature to admit a major process of change. This process of change is anchored to four eternal elements or ‘roots’ (ρίζώματα) – namely, earth, water, fire, and air – which undergo seasons of mixture and separation.<sup>69</sup> These seasons of change are governed by natural forces of attraction and repulsion, which Empedocles calls ‘strife’ (νεῖκος) and ‘love’ (φιλότης).<sup>70</sup> Love drives like elements to like, whereas strife draws all four different elements into a spherical mixture that occludes their true form.<sup>71</sup> When Empedocles writes his cosmology, the cosmos seems to be in a season dominated by strife, where false appearances largely conceal reality and where reality is commonly conceived of and spoken of in terms of generation and destruction.

As with previous Pre-Socratics, we can see that Empedocles distrusts appearances and the human perspective on things. In fragment 2, he remarks upon the tenuousness of mortal resources (στεινωποὶ [...] παλάμαι), how impinging weaknesses (δείλ’ ἔμπαια) blunt mortal thoughts (ἀμβλύνουσι μερίμνας), and how humans, with a swift fate (ὠκύμοροι), gaze upon only a small part of life (παῦρον [...] βίου μέρος ἀθρήσαντες).<sup>72</sup> This limited perspective tricks humans into misinterpreting nature and, in particular, it causes them to perceive generation and destruction in the world. When humans use language, they use it in ways that reflect such false appearances. Like Parmenides, Empedocles betrays a particular distrust in words that suggest any false notion of

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<sup>69</sup> DK 31B6 = Aët. 1.3.20.

<sup>70</sup> Love is also called by the name of ‘Aphrodite’ (Ἀφροδίτη) and ‘Cypris’ (Κύπρις) as well as, perhaps also, Calliope (Καλλιόπεια, DK 31B131.3 = Hippol. *Haer.* 7.31) and “his much-courted white-armed virgin muse” (πολυμνήστη λευκώλενε παρθένε Μοῦσα, DK 31B3.3 = Sext. *Emp. Math.* 7.125 (et al.)).

<sup>71</sup> “For at one time it grew to be one from many, and, again, at another time it grew apart to be many from one – fire and water and earth and the boundless height of air, and destructive strife, separate from these, is balanced in every direction, and love among these is equal in length and width” (τοτὲ μὲν γὰρ ἐν ἡϋξήθη μόνον εἶναι | ἐκ πλεόνων, τοτὲ δ’ αὖ διέφω πλέον’ ἐξ ἑνὸς εἶναι, | πῦρ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ γαῖα καὶ ἡέρος ἄπλετον ὕψος, | νεῖκος τ’ οὐλόμενον δίχα τῶν, ἀτάλαντον ἀπάντη, | καὶ Φιλότης ἐν τοῖσιν, ἴση μῆκος τε πλάτος τε, DK 31B17.16-20 = Simplicius *in Phys.*, 158.1–159.4 (et al.) Diels).

<sup>72</sup> DK 31B2 = Sext. *Emp. Math.* 7.123 (et al.).

generation out of nothing or destruction into nothing.<sup>73</sup> Yet, at the same time, Empedocles seems to go farther than earlier Pre-Socratics in addressing the fact that he himself uses defective words in his explanation of nature.<sup>74</sup> For instance, in a somewhat corrupt passage from Plutarch, Empedocles seems to admit to the necessity of bending to convention:

οἱ δ' ὅτε μὲν κατὰ φῶτα μίγη φύσις αἰθέρι <γαίης>  
 ἢ κατὰ θηρῶν ἀγροτέρων γένος ἢ κατὰ θάμνων  
 ἢ κατ' οἰωνῶν, τότε μὲν τὸν <φασὶ> 'γενέσθαι.'  
 εὖτε δ' ἀποκρι<ν>θῶσι, τὸ δ' αὖ 'δυσδαίμονα πότμον'  
 <ἢ ..... 'θάνατον' καλέουσιν 'ἀλοίτην.'>  
 ἢ θέμις, <οὐ> καλέουσι· νόμῳ δ' ἐπίφημι καὶ αὐτός.

When the nature of <earth> was mixed with aether in a man, or in the race of savage beasts or in the race of plants or in the race of birds, then <they say> he 'came to be.' When they are parted, that again <they name> 'unhappy fate' <or ... 'avenging death.'> *They do <not> name them rightly; but by custom I too call them so.*<sup>75</sup>

Empedocles thus knows that the words humans use by convention (νόμῳ) may not always correspond to reality in any legitimate way (θέμις). Yet he seems confident that he can check and harness the illegitimate and merely conventional speech of mortals in a way that successfully discloses the true nature of the cosmos.

To determine just how Empedocles thinks he can circumvent the problem of linguistic reference, we must first recognize his interest in the problem of appearances more generally. We can tell from Empedocles's interest in the nature of human perception that he was not simply interested in accounting for how things are but also for how things seem. That is to say, for Empedocles,

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<sup>73</sup> DK 31B8 = Aët. 1.30.1 (et al.); DK 31B15 = Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1113d.

<sup>74</sup> ... as Andreas Willi rightly notes: "Innovativ ist also nicht Empedokles' Interesse für die sprachliche Abbildung von Wirklichkeit, sondern erst die Konsequenzen" (Willi 2008: 246).

<sup>75</sup> DK 31B9 = Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1113a-b. The text and translation are from Janko 2017, slightly adapted, and the italics are my own. As noted, the Greek is quite corrupt. Janko's is the most recent attempt to solve the textual problems. Fortunately for us, most important is the final line, the reading of which Plutarch partially corroborates by quoting it a second time elsewhere (Plut. *Praec. Ger.* 820f).

appearances are as much a part of nature as the nature which they happen to obscure, and any cosmology must include an account of appearances as well as an account of reality.<sup>76</sup> In a similar vein, Empedocles seems interested not simply in true speech but also in conventional and deceptive speech. He notes that, like appearances, the conventional speech of mortals can be persuasive (πίστιος) and that this persuasion works like a force against the mind (ἐπὶ φρένα [...] ὀρμή) which distracts from truth (ἀληθείη).<sup>77</sup> Just as Empedocles is attuned to the workings of sense perceptions and how they mislead, so, too, is he attuned to the workings of conventional speech and how it misleads.

In order to disclose the truth about reality without succumbing to the deceptive and distracting forces of conventional speech, Empedocles puts to use two different methods of checking and harnessing the persuasive power of certain words. The first method can be seen in passages where Empedocles freely intervenes and flags certain misleading words, like ‘birth,’ so as to renegotiate their semantic boundaries. For instance, in fragment 8, Empedocles remarks:

ἄλλο δέ τοι ἐρέω φύσις οὐδενός ἐστιν πάντων  
 θνητῶν, οὐδέ τις οὐλομένου θανάτοιο τελευτή,  
 ἀλλὰ μόνον μῖξις τε διάλλαξις τε μιγέντων  
 ἐστί, φύσις δὲ βροτοῖς ὀνομάζεται ἀνθρώποισιν.

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<sup>76</sup> Theophrastus notes how Empedocles is exceptional for his explicit focus on sense-perception (DK 31B86 = Theophr. *Sens.* 27). On Empedocles’s interest in sense-perception more generally, see Long 1966.

<sup>77</sup> “Friends, I know that truth is in the words that I will speak. But certainly troublesome and overeager for men is the impulse of persuasion onto the mind” (ὦ φίλοι, οἶδα μὲν οὔνεκ’ ἀληθείη πάρα μύθοις | οὗς ἐγὼ ἐξερέω μάλα δ’ ἀργαλέη γε τέτυκται | ἀνδράσι καὶ δύσζηλος ἐπὶ φρένα πίστιος ὀρμή. DK 31B114 = Clem. Al. *Strom.* 5.9.1). See also: “It is not accessible for us to draw near with our eyes, to grasp with hands – by which the greatest highway of persuasion for humans assails the mind” (οὐκ ἔστιν πελάσασθαι ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἐφικτόν | ἡμετέροις ἢ χερσὶ λαβεῖν, ἢ πέρ τε μεγίστη | πειθοῦς ἀνθρώποισιν ἀμαξιτὸς εἰς φρένα πίπτει, DK 31B133 = Clem. Al. *Strom.* 5.81.2; Theod. *Cur.* 1.74).



I'll tell you another thing: of all mortal things, there is no birth, nor is there an end coming from destructive death, instead only mixture and separation of things mixed exist, *and birth is a name given by mortal humans*.<sup>78</sup>

Rather than reject a word, Empedocles reminds his audience of the Parmenidean principle of being and shows that the sense of total generation or destruction implied by the word is impossible.<sup>79</sup> This limiting and denotative method of correcting speech is supplemented by a positive and more connotative method used tacitly to foreground and reinforce correct ways of thinking about certain words or concepts. The key to this second method is to be found in Empedocles's strange, poetic style. At least as early as Aristotle, readers have been perplexed by Empedocles's figurative and somewhat outlandish mode of expression, and modern scholars have found that Empedocles's poetry is, indeed, filled with an outsized quantity of hapax legomena, irregularities in syntax and usage, as well as many odd metaphors, kennings, and paremologies.<sup>80</sup> Thus, Empedocles uses language in a highly unconventional, even baffling, way; yet, like Heraclitus, he is not twisting conventional speech without a purpose. According to Andreas Willi, Empedocles's strange style is best understood in terms of oracular speech or 'studied ambiguity'.<sup>81</sup> Empedocles not only uses ambiguous and unconventional speech to disrupt the passive and conventional interpretation of

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<sup>78</sup> DK 31B8 = Aët. 1.30.1 (et al.). Compare also: "A man, wise in his mind, would not divine such matters – namely that, as long as they live (this thing they call 'life'), they then exist for this time and have good and lesser things, but that, before mortals are composed and after they dissolve, they are nothing" (οὐκ ἂν ἀνὴρ τοιαῦτα σοφὸς φρεσὶ μαντεύσαιο, | ὡς ὄφρα μὲν τε βιώσι, τὸ δὴ βίοντον καλέουσι, | τόφρα μὲν οὖν εἰσίν, καὶ σφιν πάρα δειλὰ καὶ ἐσθλὰ, | πρὶν δὲ πάγεν τε βροτοὶ καὶ <ἐπεὶ> λύθεν, οὐδὲν ἄρ' εἰσίν, DK 31B15 = Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1113d).

<sup>79</sup> It is worth noting that Plutarch already recognized this method. When he quotes fragment 9 (quoted in n. 78 above), he indicates rightly that Empedocles "did not drive a wedge between speech and convention, rather *after doing away with only the deceptive element* that was harming the things [named] he returned to the words their customary usage [...] after teaching in what way [these words] fall short, he did not do away with using customary expressions regarding these things" (μηδὲ τὴν φωνὴν ἐκβαλεῖν ἐκ τῆς συνηθείας, ἀλλ' ὅσον εἰς τὰ πράγματα βλέπουσαν ἀπάτην παρῆχεν ἀφελὼν αὐθις ἀποδοῦναι τοῖς ὀνόμασι τὸ νενομισμένον [...] ἢ σφάλλονται διδάξας οὐκ ἀφείλετο τὸ χρῆσθαι ταῖς εἰθισμέναις φωναῖς περὶ αὐτῶν, Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1113a-b).

<sup>80</sup> Willi 2008: 193-229 collects and discusses many of these peculiarities.

<sup>81</sup> The phrase 'studied ambiguity' is borrowed from Charles Kahn, who likewise sees similarities between the stylistic peculiarities of Heraclitus and Empedocles (Kahn 1969: 441).

words (much like Heraclitus) but also invests these words and phrases with new meaning through the use of figurative associations and pareymology.<sup>82</sup> For instance, in fragment 105, Empedocles describes the heart:

αἷματος ἐν πελάγεσσι τεθραμμένη ἀντιθορόντος,  
τῇ τε νόημα μάλιστα κυκλήσκειται ἀνθρώποισιν·  
αἷμα γὰρ ἀνθρώποις περικάρδιόν ἐστι νόημα.

[the heart is] nourished in the oceans of pumping blood and that is for the most part why humans call it by the name of mind: since the mind, for humans, is the blood around the heart.<sup>83</sup>

As Andreas Willi has shown, Empedocles's comment about the word νόημα makes sense only if we understand that he is implicitly hinting at a family of pareymologies – namely, νάω 'flow,' νέω 'swim,' and νοά 'spring.'<sup>84</sup> By tapping this network of phonetic resemblances, Empedocles invites his audience to rethink νόημα in terms of these points of resonance which reflect what, according to Empedocles, νόημα truly is – namely, a current of blood flowing around the heart. For another example, we might turn to fragment 17, where Empedocles describes the cosmic force of Love and remarks approvingly on its conventional associations with Joy and Aphrodite:

καὶ φιλότης [...]  
τὴν σὺ νόωι δέρκευ, μὴδ' ὄμμασιν ἦσο τεθηπώς·  
ἥτις καὶ θνητοῖσι νομίζεται ἔμφυτος ἄρθροις,  
τῇ τε φίλα φρονέουσιν καὶ ἄρθρια ἔργα τελοῦσιν,  
Γηθοσύνην καλέοντες ἐπώνυμον ἢδ' Ἀφροδίτην·  
τὴν οὐ τις μετὰ τοῖσιν ἐλισσομένην δεδάηκε  
θνητὸς ἀνὴρ·

And Love [...] gaze you upon her with your mind – and do not sit bewildered with your eyes. She who mortals think is even implanted in the joints and by whom they think loving

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<sup>82</sup> See Willi 2008: 230-63, who, like Kahn, links the strange use of language up with the cultural notion of oracular speech.

<sup>83</sup> DK 31B105 = Porph. in Stob. 1.49.53.

<sup>84</sup> Willi 2008: 245.

thoughts and perform acts of union, calling her Joy fittingly<sup>85</sup> and Aphrodite, she who no mortal man has learned of twirling among them [i.e., the elements].<sup>86</sup>

Here Empedocles flags the appropriate way of thinking and speaking about φιλότης by foregrounding one aspect of love – namely, love as a force of joining (cf. ἄρθρον, ἄρθμιος). From there, he commends the way people associate φιλότης with Γηθοσύνη (‘joy’) and Ἀφροδίτη (‘Aphrodite’). Similar to the tacit paretyymology in fragment 105 above, a subtle network of phonetic resonances legitimize the words Γηθοσύνη and Ἀφροδίτη:

φιλότης = Ἀφροδίτη = Γηθοσύνη  
τῇ τε φίλα φρονέουσι καὶ ἄρθμια ἔργα τελοῦσι  
Γηθοσύνην καλέοντες ἐπώνυμον ἡδ’ Ἀφροδίτην

Here, Empedocles again subtly plays on similar sound patterns in order to invite his audience to rethink the semantic range of certain words – this time, the role of love, joy, and Aphrodite. But instead of casting love as the loosener of limbs (λυσιμελής), he presents it as the cosmic joiner.<sup>87</sup> Similar wordplay and ambiguity can be found across the fragments of Empedocles;<sup>88</sup> when he instructs his audience to trust their gut (σπλάγχχον) and their noggin (πραπίδες) regarding the account which he gives, he is likely calling for them to work out the meaning that he conjures up at the periphery of the words and phrases.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> LSJ s.v. ἐπώνυμος for ‘fittingly,’ ‘rightly,’ or ‘in conformity with the name.’

<sup>86</sup> DK 31B17.20-6 = Simpl. in *Phys.*, 158.19-23 Diels.

<sup>87</sup> Hesiod’s foam-born Aphrodite (Ἀφροδίτη ≈ Ἀφρογενής *Theog.* 196) is the most popular way of etymologizing Aphrodite’s name in antiquity, followed by Euripides’s mindless Aphrodite (Ἀφροδίτη ≈ ἀφροσύνη *Tro.* 990). To my knowledge, Empedocles’s etymological wordplay is not paralleled unless perhaps in Plutarch’s *Dialogues on Love* 750c.

<sup>88</sup> Empedocles even riffs on his own name at DK 31B17.11 = Simpl. in *Phys.*, 158.1-159.4 (et al.) Diels; DK 31B26.10 = Simpl. in *Phys.* 33.19-34.3 (et al.) Diels and DK 31B77 = Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 649c). He may also riff on the name of his addressee, Pausanias, at DK 31B111.3 = Diog. Laert. 8.59 cf. Obbink 1993: 88-9 with n. 91; Wright 1981: 224.

<sup>89</sup> “But it is certainly the case that bad people distrust what prevails. And, as the proofs of our muse command, you know this in your gut once the discourse has been teased apart [i.e., analyzed]” (ἀλλὰ κακοῖς μὲν κάρτα πέλει κρατέουσιν ἀπιστεῖν. | ὥς δὲ παρ’ ἡμετέρης κέλεται πιστώματα Μούσης, | γνῶθι διατμηθέντος ἐνὶ σπλάγχχοισι

In sum, Empedocles is not unique in his attempt to articulate the hidden nature of things. However, he does appear to go farther than previous Pre-Socratics in considering the implications of accounting for the unapparent nature of reality *through speech*. As a result, he betrays an attitude toward linguistic reference that looks something like a synthesis of Parmenidean and Heraclitean attitudes. Like Parmenides, Empedocles is careful to note the illusive (ἀπατηλός) quality of words which derive from false ideas about generation and destruction; yet, somewhat like Heraclitus, Empedocles betrays a certain hope that words can be used unconventionally to disclose truths which go beyond the semantic and syntactical boundaries of conventional language. Moreover, rather than simply triggering an aporetic and noetic response through formal and syntactic twists, as Heraclitus appears to, Empedocles uses pockets of parechesis and paretymology to generate associations between different words and across semantic categories. As we look ahead to the sophists, Empedocles is an important predecessor precisely for the steps he takes to remedy and renegotiate the problem of linguistic reference through methods of explicit denotation and implicit connotation – methods that, we shall see, are roughly mirrored in the two ways sophists discuss the phenomenon of human speech.

#### 1.4. The sophists on λόγος

Sophists were purveyors of wisdom. Many lived as itinerant teachers, and many sold their wisdom at a price. The wisdom on offer varied widely; however, the one category of knowledge that all sophists shared was the skill at speaking. Not only was this skill at effective speaking in high

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λόγοιο, DK 31B4 = Clem. Al. *Strom.* 5.18.4). “For if, after planting them on your sturdy noggin, you gaze upon them favorably with pure attention, these things will all be very present to you throughout life, and you will have obtained many other things besides. For these [i.e., the roots] grow into each kind of character, according to the nature of each” (εἰ γὰρ κέν σφ’ ἀδινῇσιν ὑπὸ προπίδεσσιν ἐρείσας | εὐμενέως καθαρῇσιν ἐποπτεύσης μελέτησιν, | ταῦτά τέ σοι μάλα πάντα δι’ αἰῶνος παρέσονται, | ἄλλα τε πόλλ’ ἀπὸ τῶνδ’ ἐκτίσσαι· αὐτὰ γὰρ αὔξει | ταῦτ’ εἰς ἦθος ἕκαστον, ὅπῃ φύσις ἐστὶν ἑκάστῳ. DK 31B110.1-5 = Hipp. *Haer.* 7.29.26 (et al.)).

demand amongst wealthy Greek males aspiring toward success in public life, but it would also be a prerequisite for any sophist who aspired to sell (and communicate effectively) any sort of wisdom. The problem of linguistic reference continues to feature in sophistic writings; however, in the hands of the sophists, the once ontological-cum-onomatological problem of linguistic reference transforms into more of a practical problem of effective – that is, persuasive – communication. When faced with the possibility that language has no fundamental connection to what it refers to in the world, the sophists focused less on probing the ontological boundaries between words and objects than on producing practical methods for how to speak clearly and persuasively in spite of the potential arbitrariness of language.<sup>90</sup>

Of the various approaches to the harnessing of speech, it is helpful to distinguish two main varieties, which we may call the sticklers and the stylists. The sticklers endeavor to stitch words and sentences back onto the surface of things by imposing grammatical and lexical rules designed to tighten up conventional semantics and tidy away aberrant usage. The stylists sidestep the question of linguistic reference and univocity in order to explore how utterances communicate below or beyond the threshold of linguistic reference – that is, through connotation, emotion, or even sound.<sup>91</sup> As we shall see, Gorgias is firmly in the stylist camp. Not only does his attitude toward speech differ

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<sup>90</sup> For classic treatments of the sophists and their views on language, see Classen 1976 [1959] and Kerferd 1981a: 68-77.

<sup>91</sup> Mark Griffith has argued that Greek wisdom (σοφία) can be split up into three categories: “(a) knowledge and factual accuracy (the *sophos*-poet knows how things were and are, tells them ‘truly,’ gets names, pedigrees, and events right, and is therefore valuable to the community as a repository of information); (b) moral and educational integrity (the *sophos* presents advice or instruction, or unambiguous examples of good and bad conduct, by which the community is supposed to be collectively and individually improved); (c) technical skill and aesthetic/emotional impact (the *sophos*’ uncanny verbal, musical and histrionic powers can excite the ear and the eye as well as the mind, dazzle and delight an audience, and arouse in it irresistible feelings of wonder, sympathetic engagement, and emotional release – ‘tears and laughter,’ ‘pity and fear’” (1990: 188-9). If we map the stickler/stylist distinction onto this framework, we can say that the stickler’s interest in speech and communication centers on ‘knowledge and factual accuracy,’ whereas the stylist’s interest in speech and communication centers on ‘technical skill and aesthetic/emotional impact.’

from those of the sticklers, but it seems partially motivated by a certain dissatisfaction with the very notion of linguistic reference. This becomes clearer in his treatise *On Not Being*. But before turning to this work, it is worth giving an account of both sophistic avenues of inquiry into language and communication.

### 1.4.1. Protagoras and Prodicus

The stickler camp of sophistic inquiry into speech and language is best exemplified by the lexical and grammatical developments attributed to Protagoras of Abdera (c. 490-420 BCE) and Prodicus of Ceos (c. 465-395 BCE). According to Plato, Protagoras was interested in ‘correct speaking’ (ὀρθοέπεια) – a practice that, at some level, involved structuring and promoting certain grammatical rules.<sup>92</sup> For instance, Protagoras is remembered for having developed four different verbal moods or ‘foundations’ (πυθμένες): entreaty (εὐχολή), question (ἐρώτησις), answer (ἐπὶόκρισις), and command (ἐντολή).<sup>93</sup> He is also credited with distinguishing three grammatical genders: masculine (ἄρρενα), feminine (θήλεα), and inanimate (σκεύη).<sup>94</sup> From Aristotle, we learn that Protagoras used these grammatical criteria to offer several critiques of Homer. In one instance, he critiques Homer for using a command – “sing (ᾄδε), muse, of the wrath ...” – when he should have (politely) begun his poem with an entreaty – “would you sing (ᾄδοι), muse, of the wrath...”<sup>95</sup> Elsewhere, Protagoras is said to have corrected Homer’s use of the words “wrath” (μῆνις) as well as “helmet” (πῆληξ) which appear as feminine nouns when they should (at least according to

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<sup>92</sup> Pl. *Phdr.* 267c = DK 80A26 = Radermacher 3.4. Hermias ad loc. defines Protagorean ὀρθοέπεια as κυριολεξία – i.e., the use of words in their literal sense as opposed to a metaphoric (παράβολος) or secondary (ἐπιθετος) sense.

<sup>93</sup> Diog. Laert. 9.53-4 = DK 80A1 = Radermacher 3.10 cf. Quint. *Inst.* 3.4.10 = Radermacher 3.12. Protagoras may also have been interested in verb tenses (μέρη χρόνου, Diog. Laert. 9. 52 = DK 80A1 = Radermacher 3.24), although it is unclear just what Diogenes means by this (Pfeiffer 1968: 38-9).

<sup>94</sup> Arist. *Rh.* 3.5 1407b6 = DK 80A27 = Radermacher 3.6.

<sup>95</sup> Arist. *Poet.* 19 1456b15–19 = DK 80A29 = Radermacher 3.13.

Protagoras) function as masculine nouns.<sup>96</sup> The upshot of all this grammatical nitpicking seems to have been less dogmatic than pragmatic. Protagoras's students were encouraged to critique the merits and weaknesses of verses of poetry as a way of sharpening their own skills in debate and verbal expression.<sup>97</sup> In other words, for Protagoras, the better one becomes at scrutinizing and debating the language, syntax, and morals of a poem, the better one will be at monitoring and controlling the cut and thrust of public discourse – a skill which would become helpful in achieving excellence (ἀρετή).<sup>98</sup> Protagorean ὀρθοέπεια can, thus, be understood as a practice in which semantic and grammatical categories are created and imposed with the aim of establishing short term authority in open debate.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Arist. *Soph. El.* 14 173b17–22 = DK 80A28 = Radermacher 3.7. The words are, in fact, treated as feminine in most places. Protagoras's reasoning for treating them as masculine is unclear. It may be due to a belief that 'wrath' and 'helmet' are masculine concepts. If we look to his word for 'neuter' (σκεύη, which, in later grammatical accounts, is changed to οὐδέτερον), we might infer that Protagoras's grammatical genders are more biological than purely linguistic categories. Otherwise, Protagoras may be making this criticism with the belief that nouns with sibilant endings reflected a family of masculine words (Willi 2003: 99). Whatever Protagoras's argument was, his concerns with grammatical gender seem to become the butt of Aristophanic satire when Socrates is shown, in the *Clouds*, to quibble over the gender of the word 'chicken/rooster' (Ar. *Nub.* 658–693 = DK 80C3; cf. Ar. *Nub.* 228, 251).

<sup>97</sup> "I consider [...] the greatest part of a man's education to be cleverness concerning words. That is to say, being able to know the things said by the poets, both to understand and to distinguish things spoken correctly and incorrectly, and to offer an account of this when questioned" (ἡγοῦμαι [...] ἀνδρὶ παιδείας μέγιστον μέρος εἶναι περὶ ἐπῶν δεινὸν εἶναι· ἔστιν δὲ τοῦτο τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν ποιητῶν λεγόμενα οἷόν τ' εἶναι συνιέναι ἅ τε ὀρθῶς πεποιήται καὶ ἃ μὴ, καὶ ἐπίστασθαι διελεῖν τε καὶ ἐρωτώμενον λόγον δοῦναι. Pl. *Prt.* 338e6–339a3 = DK 80A25).

<sup>98</sup> Like many other sophistic era teachers coming after him, Protagoras was broadly interested in teaching/selling ἀρετή (Pl. *Prt.* 349a; cf. Pl. *Prt.* 320–24). On the commodification of ἀρετή at this period, according to Aristotle, see Arist. *Pol.* 7.6 1341a 28–32.

<sup>99</sup> Diogenes Laertius, citing Timon, is perhaps describing the Protagorean practice of ὀρθοέπεια when he remarks that: "He was the first [...] to introduce sophisms to the squabblers. Doing away with the meaning, he elicited discussion about the word itself, and he gave birth to the tribe of eristics common today" (καὶ πρῶτος [...] καὶ σοφίσματα τοῖς πραγματολογοῦσι προσήγαγε· καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν ἀφείς πρὸς τοῦνομα διελέχθη καὶ τὸ νῦν ἐπιπόλαιον γένος τῶν ἐριστικῶν ἐγέννησεν, Diog. Laert. 9.52 = DK 80A1). On the fact that the onomastic and grammatical hair-splitting which Protagoras and Prodicus engaged in were effective tools in establishing authority in open debate, see Arist. *Soph. el.* 14 173b17ff. = DK 80A28 = Radermacher 3.7. It is worth noting also that the root -επεια, from ἔπειν, denotes the act of speaking and, thus, the term ὀρθοέπεια would seem to suggest a concern with the active process of the right way of speaking more than the static study of correct speech per se. There is no indication that Protagoras thought of language as anything other than conventional. Indeed, his eponymous character in Platonic dialogues suggests that language was a creation of humankind (Pl. *Prt.* 322a). See also, Pl. *Cra.* 391c = DK 80A24 = Radermacher 3.9; Pl. *Prt.* 339a = DK 80A25 = Radermacher 3.14.

Born about twenty years after Protagoras, Prodicus seems to have had more interest in sorting out the seeming arbitrariness of language. He was particularly interested in the correctness of specific words (ὀνομάτων ὀρθότης) and put a great deal of effort into developing a practice of synonymics or what he called “dividing” (διαίρεσις).<sup>100</sup> Prodician lexical distinctions crop up across Plato’s dialogues, such as the distinctions found in the *Protagoras* between ‘impartial’ (κοινός) and ‘equal’ (ἴσος), ‘to contest’ (ἀμφισβητεῖν) and ‘to vie’ (ἐρίζειν), ‘to respect’ (εὐδοκμεῖν) and ‘to praise’ (ἐπαινεῖσθαι), ‘to enjoy’ (εὐφραίνεισθαι) and ‘to take pleasure in’ (ἡδεσθαι).<sup>101</sup> Although Plato is sometimes dismissive of these Prodician divisions, we know that Prodician exercises in synonymy had plenty of admirers.<sup>102</sup> Unlike Protagoras, Prodicus seems to have aimed more squarely at establishing a univocity of language by forging stiffer bonds between words and what they conventionally refer to. Yet, in the case of both, the goal seems only to establish a provisional type of certainty about words and what they denote referentially.

#### 1.4.2 Gorgias and Thrasyarchus

The stylist camp of sophistic inquiry into speech and language focuses less on linguistic content and denotation than on emotional content, form, and connotation. Figures such as

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<sup>100</sup> “First, as Prodicus says, one must learn about the correctness of words” (πρῶτον γάρ, ὥς φησι Προδίκος, περὶ ὀνομάτων ὀρθότητος μαθεῖν δεῖ, Pl. *Euthyd.* 277e3-4 = DK 84A16 = Radermacher 8.10). Plato notes that Prodicus devoted whole lectures to the topic of διαίρεσις (Pl. *Cra.* 384b = DK 84A11 = Radermacher 8.6 with note ad loc.).

<sup>101</sup> Pl. *Prt.* 337a-c = DK 84A13. For other Prodician distinctions in Plato, see *Euthyd.* 277e = DK 84A16 = Radermacher 8.10 with note ad loc.; Pl. *Prt.* 340-341b = DK 84A14; *Chrm.* 163d = DK 84A18; *Lach.* 197b-d = DK 84A17. cf. *Men.* 75e = DK 84A15 and *Prot.* 358a-e.

<sup>102</sup> ... including, it seems, Thucydides who is said to have “emulated” (ἐζήλωσε) Prodician “precision with words” (τὴν ἐπὶ τοῖς ὀνόμασιν ἀκριβολογίαν, Marcellin. *Vit. Thuc.* 36 = DK 84A9; cf. Thuc. 3.82-83). Aristophanes may be parodying Prodicus or, at least, the Prodician interest in diarexis in the battle of the prologues in *Frogs* 1119-97 (Pfeiffer 1968: 39-40). Segal 1970 argues that the target is actually Protagoras. It may be noted that the practice of synonymy may have been more widespread. The Hippocratic writers, who worked toward establishing a more technical language of medicine, also practiced diarexis. See, for instance, Hippoc. *Nat. Hom.* 5 where the author self-consciously ‘distinguishes’ (διωρίζει) the names for blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile by convention (κατὰ νόμον).



Thrasymachus and Gorgias are the best exemplars of this approach. Their interest in speech is less grammatical and lexical than it is stylistic. For this reason, both Gorgias and Thrasymachus were regarded, throughout antiquity, as pioneers in the development of various rhetorical techniques.<sup>103</sup> Thrasymachus is remembered for his focus on rhythm<sup>104</sup> and periodic composition,<sup>105</sup> while Gorgias is remembered for his development of a range of rhetorical figures and techniques,<sup>106</sup> which he exemplified in his own pathbreaking prose style.<sup>107</sup> To be sure, when we look at the surviving writings of both Thrasymachus and Gorgias, we can sense heightened attention to sound and affect. The one extended fragment that survives from Thrasymachus is not only written in a highly periodic style but also almost entirely without hiatus.<sup>108</sup> When we look at the texts that survive from Gorgias's speeches, we find an even more affected style; not only are his writings filled with many of

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<sup>103</sup> "Thrasymachus [...] and Gorgias, who are said to be the first to arrange words artfully" (*Thrasymachus [...] et Gorgias, qui tamen primi traduntur arte quadam verba vinxisse*, Cic. *Or.* 3.40 = Radermacher 9.16; cf. Cic. *Or.* 12.39 = DK 85A30 = Radermacher 7.34 et 9.14; Athan. *Alex. In Hermog.* Περί στάσεων 14.180.9–16 = DK 82B5a).

<sup>104</sup> Arist. *Rh.* 3.8 1409a1–3 = DK 85A11 = Radermacher 9.12. Cicero also notes Gorgias's interest in prose rhythm (*numerosus*, Cic. *Or.* 52.175). Plato remarks on Hippias's study of ῥυθμοί (Pl. *Hp. mi.* 368d = DK 86A12 = Radermacher 11.10; Pl. *Hp. mai.* 285d = DK 86A11 = Radermacher 11.11); this could be a study of prose rhythm, yet, since Hippias was himself a poet, it may refer to poetic rhythm.

<sup>105</sup> *Suda* Θ. 462 = DK 85A1; Radermacher 9.17. As Denniston points out, "besides its logical value as a means to the clearer exposition of ordered thought, the period has an aesthetic value. It gives artistic shape to the combination of words, and thus to some extent takes the place of metre" (1952: 14).

<sup>106</sup> Plato remarks on Gorgias's interest in concision and amplification (βαρυλογία Pl. *Grg.* 449c = DK 82A20 = Radermacher 7.14; συντομία/ μῆκος λόγων Pl. *Phdr.* 267a–b = DK 82A25 = Radermacher 7.18). Gorgias also came to be known for his practice of extemporaneous speaking (Philostr. *V S* 1.1 proem. p. 3.19–24 Kayser = DK82A1) as well as his invention of a set of rhetorical figures, such as antithesis, isocolon, parison, homeoteleuton (Diod. *Sic.* 12.53.4 = DK 82A4 = Radermacher 7.32).

<sup>107</sup> Gorgias seems to have had many imitators. Apart from his pupils (e.g., Alcidas, Polos, Licymnius, and Polycrates), we might say that the Gorgianic style lives on in the Hippocratic *On Breaths* and *On the Art* as well as Antisthenes's *Ajax*, the so-called Hibe sophist, all the way up to Epicurus' πρὸς μενουκέα and the 'asianic' texts of Hegesias and Herakleides Kritikos (to name a few).

<sup>108</sup> On Thrasymachus's periodic style, see Denniston 1952: 14–5. Dover recognizes how there are only ten instances of hiatus in Thrasymachus's fragment of 600+ syllables (Dover 1997: 178). It is a curiosity that Thrasymachus's one extended surviving fragment does not include the paeonic rhythms that Aristotle associates with him; Dover suggests that it must simply be atypical in this regard (Dover 1997: 173). When Plato describes Thrasymachus's skill at enchanting audiences, he seems to affect a rather rhythmical style himself (cretic and choriambic), which may parody Thrasymachus' own penchant for prose rhythm (Radermacher 9.6 with note ad loc.).

the rhetorical figures of which he became eponymous, but also plenty of other jingles and metrical flourishes.<sup>109</sup>

Thus, whereas Protagoras and Prodicus seem to value accuracy and clarity in speech and focus on correct grammar and lexical definitions, Gorgias and Thrasymachus value affect and musicality and seem to focus more on style. For the latter two, speech was not so much a tool for picking out the identity of things in the world as much as a tool for instilling feelings and beliefs in auditors. Whereas Protagoras put effort into correcting Homeric grammar, Gorgias put effort into tricking out Homeric verses and themes and spinning them into his own brand of prose rhapsody.<sup>110</sup> Likewise, whereas Prodicus taught how to divide words in accordance with their precise meanings, Thrasymachus taught how to charge words with emotion. According to Plato and Aristotle, he even designed rhetorical techniques towards such an end – an end which he (like Gorgias) described as a matter of enchantment (κῆλησις).<sup>111</sup>

These experiments with style and affect proved quite divisive among ancient and modern readers of Gorgias and Thrasymachus.<sup>112</sup> Since so little remains from Thrasymachus, it is impossible

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<sup>109</sup> In the Gorgianic corpus, we can find patterns of paeon: ~~~~, molossus: ---, dispondaeus: ----, cretic: - ~ -, choriamb: - ~ ~ -, cretic-trochee: - ~ - - ~, and ditrochee: - ~ - ~ peppered throughout. On Gorgianic style generally, see Norden 1915: 15-75.

<sup>110</sup> DK 82B17 = Arist. *Rh.* 3.17 1418a32-37 = Radermacher 8.19; DK 82B14 = Pl. *Phdr.* 261b-c = Radermacher 8.1.

<sup>111</sup> DK 85B6 = Pl. *Phdr.* 267c = Radermacher 9.6 (see n. 108 above).

<sup>112</sup> De Romilly remarks how “Gorgias made the glamour of elevated style available to all” and calls it “a remarkable conquest” of which Gorgias “could be proud” – even though the whole endeavor is “charged with dynamite” and bound to result in “scandal” (1975: 21). Dodds calls Gorgias “an indefatigable stylist, a man who polished painfully every sentence that he wrote” and, yet, finds the writing to be “affected and boring: the well-drilled words execute *ad nauseam* the same repetitive manoeuvres with the mechanical precision of a platoon on a barrack square” (1959: 8). Many, like Denniston, are even more contemptuous: “Gorgias [...] and Thrasymachus, and perhaps other sophists in a less degree, did exercise considerable influence on Greek prose. In the case of Gorgias, the influence was, I believe, wholly bad [...] starting with the initial advantage of having nothing particular to say, he was able to concentrate all his energies upon saying it [...] we are left wondering how it was that Gorgias, performing in the πρυτανεῖον τῆς σοφίας, before an audience whose taste had been educated by a century of great literature, was able to ‘get away with it’” (1952: 10-2). Pfeiffer is probably correct in suggesting that Gorgias’s stylistic flourishes tend to attract ridicule because “this is easier than to try to reach a balanced judgment on them” (1968: 49).

to determine why he chose to focus so squarely on the stylistic, emotive, and connotative side of speech. For Gorgias, however, we are on slightly better footing. As I shall suggest, Gorgias's extreme stylistic experiments may correspond to his tendency to reject Pre-Socratic concerns with linguistic reference. He is far less concerned than his predecessors with distinguishing paths toward truth and falsity, being and not-being, and much more interested in understanding the third path – the way of δόξα – along which there lie many types of distraction, both destructive and delightful. Gorgias's most direct engagement with earlier, Pre-Socratic theories of language comes in a remarkable work known as *On Not Being, or On Nature* (περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἢ περὶ φύσεως). It is here we shall turn next before returning to the *Helen*.

## 1.5. Gorgias on λόγος

### 1.5.1. περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος

Gorgias's *On Not Being* (henceforth *ONB*) has been preserved in paraphrase by two sources: Sextus Empiricus's *Against the Logicians* and the Pseudo-Aristotelean *On Melissus, Xenophanes, and Gorgias* (henceforth *MXG*). As both versions of *ONB* agree, Gorgias's original work was built upon a triple-tiered thesis: (1) nothing is, (2) even if something is, what is cannot be known, (3) even if something is and can be known, what is and is known cannot be communicated to others (οὐ δηλωτὸν ἄλλοις).<sup>113</sup> For our purposes, the third and final thesis, which is about non-communicability, will be of the greatest importance.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> *MXG* 979a12-3. For Sextus: "inexpressible and inexplicable to another" (ἀνέξοιστον καὶ ἀνερμήνευτον τῷ πέλας, *Sext. Emp. Math.* 7.65 = DK 82B3).

<sup>114</sup> My treatment of *ONB* will aim to synthesize both redactions of the work rather than reject one in favor of another. Regarding the dates of the works, it seems that both versions were composed around the same time. Jaap Mansfeld (1988) has persuasively argued that *MXG* was written by a "Pyrrhonizing Aristotelean" sometime in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. Sextus, too, seems to have written in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. However, it is likely that the source material for each

As we analyze the final thesis of *ONB*, we ought to tread carefully just as with the account of λόγος in the *Helen*, since here too, Gorgias's claims are probably not to be taken too seriously. On the one hand, it has been long recognized that Gorgias's *ONB* is conspicuously constructed to undercut Eleatic philosophy by negating not only being but also thinking and speaking – the very three things Parmenides had united.<sup>115</sup> For Parmenides, the notion of being is real, thinkable, and speakable, whereas the idea of not-being is unreal, unthinkable, and unspeakable. Gorgias merely swaps out what is real and unreal and runs with the Eleatic claim of unthinkability and unspeakability as far as he can. What results is an absurd travesty of Eleatic philosophy.<sup>116</sup> On the other hand, we should recall that arguing for impossible, self-undermining, or highly unintuitive claims (such as Gorgias's triple-tiered negation of being, thinking, and speaking) was the stock and trade of many intellectuals at Gorgias's time. We can think of Plato's *Euthydemus*, in which the title character argues that Ctesippus's father is a dog,<sup>117</sup> or Pheidippides, in the *Clouds*, who argues that

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version goes back to the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE; Jaap Mansfeld (1988) suggests that the material of *MXG* may go back to Agrippa, the Pyrrhonist philosopher, while David Sedley (1992) suggests that Sextus's material on Gorgias may have been drawn from Aenesidemus. Despite a similar pedigree, the perceived reliability of the two versions has varied dramatically over time. Hermann Diels preferred Sextus's version of Gorgias's treatise and relegated *MXG* to a footnote in his edition of the Pre-Socratic fragments. His opinion prevailed until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century when scholars began to privilege *MXG* largely because Sextus's version is freighted with later philosophical jargon. Despite this fact, there is some reason to believe that Sextus's version is more faithful to the structure of Gorgias's argument insofar as it mirrors more closely the argument structures favored in Gorgias's other speeches (Rodriguez 2019). All in all, I agree with George Kerferd and Mario Untersteiner that in order to understand what Gorgias himself wrote, we must take both versions into account and find a suitable synthesis of both redactions (Kerferd 1981b: 321; cf. Untersteiner 1954: 97).

<sup>115</sup> Kerferd lays this position out nicely (1981a: 99).

<sup>116</sup> "Whatever his own position, he reflects the prominence of Eleatic theory in the fifth century and offers a reaction against it by a leading intellectual" (Graham 2010: 725). If we can date the treatise to the 440s (DK 82A10 = Olymp. in *Gorg.* Proem. 9 (7.22-8.12 Westerink)), then *ONB* may be in contemporary conversation with Melissus, who wrote around the same time (see n. 53 above).

<sup>117</sup> Pl. *Euthyd.* 298d-e.

it is a just thing for a son to punish his father.<sup>118</sup> The proper response to these types of arguments (and most knew it) was not to capitulate and assent to the unintuitive claim, but to admire the clever way in which the argument was constructed and, perhaps, to reflect upon the slipperiness of broader philosophical questions about, say, justice – or, in Gorgias’s case, ontology and language. That being said, Gorgias’s *ONB* should not be thought of as a *mere* rhetorical trick or as a *mere* travesty of Eleatic thought with no philosophical value, as some have claimed.<sup>119</sup> Even if Gorgias’s unbelievable claims about non-communicability do little to arrest our intuitive trust in the human capacity to speak, it nevertheless invites us to *question the way we speak about speaking*. That is, it raises questions about whether or not speech can be reduced to a matter of linguistic reference as the Pre-Socratics tended ostensibly to do, and whether or not an alternative, non-referential account of speech is possible.

As I shall illustrate, Gorgias’s *ONB* challenges the Pre-Socratic model of linguistic reference and opens up a new theoretical space for an alternative model to be drawn. As we shall see, this suggestion of an alternative model of speech can be found in an important set of concessions made

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<sup>118</sup> Ar. *Nub.* 1405. We can also, of course, recall the practice of offering encomia on unlikely or difficult subjects – such as Polycrates’s praise of mice (Arist. *Rh.* 2.24 1401b15 = Radermacher 21.10 with note ad loc.) and pebbles (*Alex. Rh.* 3.10-2 = Radermacher 21.9 with note ad loc.) and the anonymous encomium of salt we hear of from Plato (*Symp.* 177b) and Isocrates (*Hel.* 12). Gorgias’s pupil Alcidas is also said to have given an encomium on death (Cic. *Tusc.* 1.48.116 = Radermacher 22.12). To be sure, Gorgias’s *Encomium of Helen* may be regarded as a species of these.

<sup>119</sup> E.g., “man darf den Gedankengehalt dieser παίγνια nicht 'ernst' nehmen [...] Der ‘philosophische Nihilismus’ des Gorgias ist aus der Geschichte der Philosophie zu streichen. Seine Scherzrede fiber die Natur hat ihren Platz in der Geschichte der Rhetorik” (Gomperz 1912: 35); “There is nothing here of philosophical importance; only a kind of clever-silliness” (Robinson 1973, 58). As will become apparent, my position on the relative seriousness of Gorgias’s *ONB* aligns more closely with Gisela Striker’s: “How seriously are we to take Gorgias’ arguments? They are certainly not serious in the sense of being honest attempts at establishing their conclusions. But they might be serious objections to Parmenides – if, that is, they are good enough to show that there must be something wrong with Parmenides’ way of reasoning [...] surely the question should not be whether we find these arguments intelligent or compelling, but whether they were as good as or rather worse than Parmenides’s or Melissus’ own arguments [...] I for one would be inclined to say that Gorgias is no worse than Parmenides” (1996: 13-14). Patricia Curd argues that Gorgias’s treatise was specially designed to “demonstrate that Parmenides’ requirements are self-defeating, for they allow the reality of what-is-not just as they demonstrate the reality of what-is” (2006: 188 cf. Gagarin 2001: 286).

at the close of Sextus's version of *ONB*. There, Gorgias offers both an exit clause to his absurd reduction of Pre-Socratic linguistic models as well as the primary criteria for a new theory of communication which is most fully realized in the playful and speculative account of λόγος which he puts forth in the *Helen*. To illustrate this, we shall briefly treat Gorgias's sequence of arguments made in his final proof and, after this, his final concessions, which set the foundation for the model of speech found in the *Helen*.

### 1.5.1.1. On non-communicability

In both versions of *ONB*, the third and final thesis – namely, that reality cannot be communicated – begins by targeting the fraught correspondence between words and things: speech (λόγος) refers to things in the world yet it is not equivalent to the things to which it refers. Since speech is distinct from all of the things to which it might refer, it cannot manifest meaning in the way that things in the world can. As Gorgias puts it, things in the world (which he equates with perceptible phenomena) are apprehended by organs of perception, such as sight and hearing. The meaning of speech is apprehended neither by sight nor hearing per se nor any faculty of sense-perception any more than the eyes can see sound or the ears can hear color:

ὥσπερ γὰρ οὐδὲ ἡ ὄψις τοὺς φθόγγους γινώσκει, οὕτως οὐδὲ ἡ ἀκοὴ τὰ χρώματα ἀκούει, ἀλλὰ φθόγγους· καὶ λέγει ὁ λέγων, ἀλλ' οὐ χρῶμα οὐδὲ πρᾶγμα.

For just as sight cannot recognize sounds, so too hearing does not hear colors, rather sounds. And so, the one speaking utters speech, not a color or a thing.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Ps.-Arist. *MXG* 6 980b1-3. See also Sextus's version: "For the thing by which we communicate is speech, and speech is not the things which exist and are. Therefore, we do not communicate things that are to other people, rather speech, which is distinct from things that exist. Then, just as what is visible could not become audible and vice versa, so too, because what is exists separately [from speech], [what is] could not become our speech. And not being speech, [what is] could not be signified to another person" (ὥ γὰρ μηνύομεν, ἔστι λόγος, λόγος δὲ οὐκ ἔστι τὰ ὑποκείμενα καὶ ὄντα· οὐκ ἄρα τὰ ὄντα μηνύομεν τοῖς πέλας ἀλλὰ λόγον, ὃς ἕτερός ἐστι τῶν ὑποκειμένων. καθάπερ οὖν τὸ ὄρατόν οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο ἀκουστόν καὶ ἀνάπαλιν, οὕτως ἐπεὶ ὑπόκειται τὸ ὄν ἐκτός, οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο λόγος ὁ ἡμέτερος· μὴ ὦν δὲ λόγος οὐκ ἂν δηλωθεῖν ἐτέρῳ. *Sext. Emp. Math.* 7.84-5 = DK 82B3).

By Gorgias's account, λόγος stands apart from the phenomena to which it might refer, and it is denied any faculty through which one might perceive its meaning. It is merely a mute kernel reference, sealed away into a tautology: "the one speaking utters speech" (λέγει ὁ λέγων).<sup>121</sup>

#### 1.5.1.2. Exit clause (Sext. Emp. *Math.* 7.85-6)

In the final part of the Pseudo-Aristotelean MXG, Gorgias is shown to pivot to a new claim that, even if words could manifest meaning, no two individuals could have the same mental representation of the same word.<sup>122</sup> However, in Sextus's version, Gorgias does not pivot to a new topic about the correspondence between words and thoughts. Instead, he continues to flesh out his claims about the correspondence between words and things. In this account, we can find two important concessions which gesture toward an alternative account of language. First, Gorgias is shown to remark that certain phenomena, such as taste and color, can, in fact, trigger verbal responses which correspond to the quality of that particular taste or color:

ὁ γε μὴν λόγος, φησὶν, ἀπὸ τῶν ἔξωθεν προσπιπτόντων ἡμῖν πραγμάτων συνίσταται, τουτέστι τῶν αἰσθητῶν· ἐκ γὰρ τῆς τοῦ χυλοῦ ἐγκυρῆσεως ἐγγίνεται ἡμῖν ὁ κατὰ ταύτης τῆς ποιότητος ἐκφερόμενος λόγος, καὶ ἐκ τῆς τοῦ χρώματος ὑποπτώσεως ὁ κατὰ τοῦ χρώματος. εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, οὐχ ὁ λόγος τοῦ ἐκτὸς παραστατικός ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐκτὸς τοῦ λόγου μηνυτικὸν γίνεται.

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<sup>121</sup> "The one speaking does not speak sound or color, but speech" (οὐ <ψόφον> λέγει <ὁ λέ>γων οὐδὲ χρῶμα, ἀλλὰ λόγον, Ps.-Arist. MXG 6 980b6). Gorgias's description of speech in ONB may have some affiliation with another remark from his fragments: "but what no hand grasps and what no eye sees, how can the tongue express it or the listener's ear hear it?" (DK 82B28 [in Syriac] trans. Laks and Most 2016). Jacques Brunschwig notes that few would actually consider problematic the fact that words are not concrete things like their referents – after all "qui a jamais pensé qu'on pouvait se nourrir en lisant le menu" (1971: 81). Instead, the deficiency in language only becomes a problem when viewed from a strict Eleatic perspective which aims to establish a unitary correspondence between speech, thought, and being. Thus, Gorgias's claims about non-communicability are intrinsically tethered to his meontological (i.e., bizarro-Eleatic) hypothesis. I agree with Brunschwig that Gorgias's claim about non-communicability is not an expression of what he truly believes. Instead, "il voulait faire place nette pour un autre modèle de la communication, libéré de la conception étroitement référentielle du langage qui fait toute la vulnérabilité de celui qu'il critique" (Brunschwig 1971: 83).

<sup>122</sup> In Ps.-Arist. MXG 6 980b8-19, Gorgias is shown to move on from his argument about the correspondence between words and things and to present a new argument that targets the fraught correspondence between words and thoughts. In this case, he, in a sense, doubles back to the second thesis of ONB – namely, that even if something existed, it could not be known. What this claim adds is that, for Gorgias, speech is not only non-referential but also non-representational: a word neither *refers* to a specific thing in the world nor *represents* a single idea to all minds.

To be sure, speech, he says, is for us composed of things that strike us from the outside – i.e., perceptibles. For instance, from contact with flavor, there arises within us speech expressed by that quality, and, from the encounter with color, the [speech expressed] by that color. But, if this is the case, speech is not an indicator of the external, rather the external is revelatory of speech.<sup>123</sup>

Surprisingly, Gorgias rebuilds the bridge between words and things which he had only just before tried to demolish. However, the traffic of the bridge moves in the opposite direction since it is things in the world that give expression to speech, and not vice versa.<sup>124</sup> While this passage does help to rebuild a bridge between words and things, it does not entirely bridge the gap between words and their interpretations – that is, it does not explain how the meaning of an utterance is apprehended.

If we read further, Gorgias makes one more concession which suggests that even if λόγος does not exist in the same way as phenomenal objects exist in the world, λόγος may nevertheless exist and somehow be apprehended *differently*:

εἰ γὰρ καὶ ὑπόκειται, φησὶν, ὁ λόγος, ἀλλὰ διαφέρει τῶν λοιπῶν ὑποκειμένων, καὶ πλείστῳ διενήνοχε τὰ ὁρατὰ σώματα τῶν λόγων· δι' ἑτέρου γὰρ ὀργάνου ληπτὸν ἐστὶ τὸ ὁρατὸν καὶ δι' ἄλλου ὁ λόγος.

For even if speech exists, Gorgias says, it at the very least differs from the rest of things that exist, and visible bodies would differ most of all from things spoken. For the visible is apprehensible through one organ and speech through another.<sup>125</sup>

Here we are left with a final hope. Communication may be possible if speech “differs from the rest of things that exist” and has its own way of being received. If we take this final remark into account as we review the work of *ONB* as a whole, we might even be able to add an embedded fourth thesis:

1. Nothing is.

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<sup>123</sup> Sext. Emp. *Math.* 7.85-6 = DK 82B3.

<sup>124</sup> Mourelatos 1987 also recognizes this first concession and extracts from it the conclusion that Gorgias had a behavioralist theory of communication. As noted above, I am not sure that Gorgias develops any strict theory of communication per se. In *ONB*, Gorgias seems to me to advertise how referential theories of language fall short and hints at some possible alternatives, which he playfully explores in the *Helen*.

<sup>125</sup> Sext. Emp. *Math.* 7.86 = DK 82B3.



2. Even if something is, what is cannot be known.
3. Even if something is and can be known, what is known cannot be communicated
4. Even if something is and can be known *and can be communicated, what is communicated must be altogether different and received differently from other sensory experiences.*

If this is correct, then Gorgias, after arguing at length that speech fails to be apprehended by any sense organs, closes his speech by posing a new possibility: if communication *does* work like sense perception, it would need something like a sixth sense. What I would like to claim is that Gorgias develops this pseudo-sensory model of communication within his *Helen* and draws upon the concept of magic as a frame for articulating it.

### 1.5.2. Encomium of Helen (§§ 8-14) as an alternate model of λόγος

When we turn back to Gorgias's non-referential account of λόγος in the *Helen*, we find that he accommodates for the criteria left open at the end of *ONB*. He does so, on the one hand, by turning speech into a physical thing that differs from all other phenomenal things:

λόγος δυνάστης μέγας ἐστίν, ὃς σμικροτάτῳ σώματι καὶ ἀφανεστάτῳ θειότατα ἔργα ἀποτελεῖ.

Speech is a mighty dynast that achieves the most divine things with the smallest and **most aphenomenal body**.<sup>126</sup>

Here, speech is a physical (perhaps atomic) entity that differs markedly from phenomenal entities. In addition to giving speech substance while setting it apart, Gorgias also provides a way of apprehending speech by invoking a new concept which had been emerging (messily) in Gorgias's own lifetime – namely, the soul (ῥή ψυχή).<sup>127</sup>

τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ λόγον ἔχει ἢ τε τοῦ λόγου δύναμις πρὸς τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς τάξιν ἢ τε τῶν φαρμάκων τάξις πρὸς τὴν τῶν σωμάτων φύσιν.

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<sup>126</sup> *Helen* § 8.

<sup>127</sup> On the emergent concept of the soul, see Laks 1999.

The power of speech has the same relation to the order of **the soul** as the order of drugs has to the nature of the body.<sup>128</sup>

The word ψυχή appears only in Gorgias's *Encomium of Helen*, and it is clearly a crucial ingredient for the model of speech which he develops in sections 8-14. By including the soul as a receptor of speech, Gorgias ensures that λόγος is no longer a mute kernel of inaccessible meaning. Instead, it is apprehensible in a way somewhat parallel to sense perceptions. Gorgias shows how λόγος is able to shape (πλάττειν § 11), impress (τυποῦν § 13), and fashion (ἐνεργάζεσθαι § 8, 13) the soul in ways that recall the haptic mode of perception commonly associated with sense organs.<sup>129</sup>

Importantly, this verbal psychagogy differs markedly from the psychagogy which derives from the faculty of sight. When Gorgias describes how vision works in sections 15-19, he paints a picture which recalls the one he painted of λόγος; however, in accordance with the *ONB*, both modes of apprehension differ from one another. According to Gorgias, the eyes passively receive sights of whatever might happen to be there:

ἂ γὰρ ὁρῶμεν, ἔχει φύσιν οὐχ ἣν ἡμεῖς θέλομεν, ἀλλ' ἣν ἕκαστον ἔτυχε· διὰ δὲ τῆς ὀψεως ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τοῖς τρόποις τυποῦται.

For the things which we see do not have the nature we wish them to, but the one each happens to have. And through sight, the soul is shaped even in its basic disposition.<sup>130</sup>

Moreover, when the eyes apprehend a sight, they react immediately and witlessly to it and their reaction, in turn, affects the soul directly.

αὐτίκα γὰρ ὅταν πολέμια σώματα [...] εἰ θεάσῃται ἡ ὄψις, ἐταράχθη καὶ ἐτάραξε τὴν ψυχὴν, ὥστε πολλάκις κινδύνου τοῦ μέλλοντος <ὡς> ὄντος φεύγουσιν ἐκπλαγέντες.

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<sup>128</sup> *Helen* § 14.

<sup>129</sup> As Brooke Holmes has argued, Gorgias slots ψυχή into the role of σῶμα (as it appears in medical writings) where it functions as “a kind of interval” fitted conceptually between the “external catalyst and a (visible) outcome” (Holmes 2010: 214). He also, as I shall argue, slots δόξα into the role of a semi-somatic sense faculty.

<sup>130</sup> *Helen* §15.

For immediately, whenever martial bodies [...] if sight sees them, it is perturbed and it perturbs the soul so that often people are startled and flee approaching danger <as if> it were present.<sup>131</sup>

As Gorgias describes, when people see an oncoming army, their eyes are perturbed and their eyes, in turn, immediately perturb the soul. When it comes to the apprehension of words, on the other hand, Gorgias writes that speech impacts the soul in whatever way it wants and does so not by appealing to the ears or any organ of sense perception but to the human faculty of opinion (δόξα):

ὥστε περὶ τῶν πλείστων οἱ πλείστοι τὴν δόξαν σύμβουλον τῇ ψυχῇ παρέχονται. ἡ δὲ δόξα σφαλερὰ καὶ ἀβέβαιος οὖσα σφαλεραῖς καὶ ἀβεβαίοις εὐτυχίαις περιβάλλει τοὺς αὐτῇ χρωμένους.

So that, concerning most things, most people supply themselves with opinion as a counselor for the soul. But, being slippery and unstable, opinion sends those who use it into slippery and unstable fortune.<sup>132</sup>

Unlike sight, which passively receives images and transmits its reactions directly to the soul, human opinion acts as “a counselor of the soul” (σύμβουλον τῇ ψυχῇ).<sup>133</sup> In this capacity, it is “slippery” (σφαλερὰ) and “unstable” (ἀβέβαιος). By appealing to the eyes of opinion (as opposed to the eyes themselves or the ears *per se*), speech shapes the soul in whatever way it wants – making manifest even things that are unclear and unbelievable.

ὅτι δ' ἡ πειθὼ προσιούσα τῷ λόγῳ καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐτυπώσατο ὅπως ἐβούλετο, χρὴ μαθεῖν πρῶτον μὲν τοὺς τῶν μετεωρολόγων λόγους, οἵτινες δόξαν ἀντὶ δόξης τὴν μὲν ἀφελόμενοι τὴν δ' ἐνεργασάμενοι τὰ ἄπιστα καὶ ἄδηλα φαίνεσθαι τοῖς τῆς δόξης ὁμμασιν ἐποίησαν

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<sup>131</sup> *Helen* §16.

<sup>132</sup> *Helen* § 11.

<sup>133</sup> The notion of a human faculty serving as a σύμβουλος to the soul is rare. However, it is also found in Plato who describes confidence (θάραρος) and fear (φόβος) as senseless advisors (ἄφρονες συμβούλων) to the soul at *Ti.* 69c8-d4 and labels pleasure (ἡδονή) and pain (λύπη) as antagonistic and senseless advisors (συμβούλων ἐναντίω τε καὶ ἄφρονες) at *Leg.* 644c6-7, see ch. 2, p. 116-8 with n. 63. Antiphon makes similar use of the term σύμβουλος when he speaks of how anger (ὀργή) and prejudice (διαβολή) are the worst σύμβουλοι since anger destroys that faculty by which one makes decisions – i.e., our judgment (αὐτὸ γὰρ ᾧ βουλευέται, τὴν γνώμην, διαφθείρει τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, *Antiph.* 5.73).

For evidence that persuasion, while joining with speech, also shapes the soul in whatever way it wants, it is necessary to study first of all the accounts of cosmologists, who, in dispelling and instilling one opinion instead of another, have made unbelievable and unclear things manifest to the eyes of opinion.<sup>134</sup>

Put simply, speech impacts the soul through the medium of human opinion (δόξα), just as sights impact the soul through the medium of the eyes. Rather than functioning referentially or digitally, Gorgias's λόγος might be thought to act more like an analog frequency which, though imperceptible, is nevertheless received and amplified by the faculty of opinion before it is retransmitted to the soul.

In final analysis, when Gorgias's remarks about speech are viewed against the larger backdrop of Pre-Socratic concerns with linguistic reference, it becomes clear that Gorgias's description of how speech works runs counter to earlier preoccupations with language and linguistic reference. Not only does Gorgias's *ONB* portray the question of linguistic reference as self-defeating, but it also opens the way toward a new model of communication, with which he experiments in the *Helen*. There, he offers a loose, psychosomatic model of communication in which a sub-phenomenal entity (λόγος) impinges upon the soul by way of human opinion in whatever way it wants. When it comes down to explaining the actual mechanics of how this psychosomatic, indeed, psychagogic, process of communication works, Gorgias is more provocative than precise. He draws upon a collection of overlapping frames which offer different models for intuiting (if not entirely understanding) the underlying mechanics of Gorgias's mighty λόγος. And among these frames, we find magic. In the next half of the chapter, we shall address what Gorgias means when he uses the language of magic and how that language complements his psychagogic account of λόγος.

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<sup>134</sup> *Helen* § 13.

## 2. Gorgias on enchantment

In sections 10 and 14 of the *Helen*, Gorgias associates the power of λόγος with the power of magic. In these two short sections, we find a surprisingly wide variety of different words associated with magic – such as ἐπωδή, θέλγειν, γοητεία, ἐκγοητεύειν, μαγεία and words closely allied with magic such as φάρμακον, φαρμακεύειν, ἐπαγωγοί, ἀπαγωγοί.<sup>135</sup> Gorgias is even responsible for the first appearance of the literal term for magic itself (μαγεία).<sup>136</sup> Although the phenomenon of magical enchantment is limited to a short section of the speech, it receives a rich treatment and is often considered one of the more memorable and salient themes of the speech as a whole. That being said, it is not immediately obvious why Gorgias felt the need to include magic and incantations as examples of the powerful nature of speech in sections 8-14.<sup>137</sup> He cites plenty of other examples of powerful speech elsewhere – such as poetry (§ 9) and various forms of debate and oratory (§ 13) – which could have putatively sufficed to exemplify the non-discursive δύναμις of speech. Thus, for Gorgias, the category of enchantment is specifically picked out and included for the particular light

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<sup>135</sup> “In a luxurious bunch of words he combines all the expressions that can be used for magic and witchcraft” (De Romilly 1975: 2); “most of the basic terms of magic in the technical sense are present in his description of rhetoric [...] only the term κατάδεσμος seems to be missing” (Braarvig 1999: 34-5). There are, in fact, some key terms missing – notably, any word related to κήλησις – but, suffice to say, the breadth of diction is remarkable. One of the common meanings of φάρμακον is “enchanted potion, philtre: hence charm, spell” (LSJ s.v. I 3) – a meaning which modern readers often overlook (as noted by Pharr 1932: 272–274, Dickie 2001: 14, Edmonds 2019: 14, et al.). On a similar use of ἐπαγωγοί and ἀπαγωγοί in the context of magic compare the Hippocratic, *On the Sacred Disease*: “He who can lead away such an affliction by purifications and magic and also bring it on by devising other means” (Ὅστις γὰρ οἷός τε περικαθαίρων ἐστὶ καὶ μαγεύων ἀπάγειν τοιοῦτον πάθος, οὗτος κὰν ἐπάγοι ἕτερα τεχνησάμενος, *Hp. Morb. Sacr.* 3.10).

<sup>136</sup> For the birth of the term ‘magic’ in ancient Greece, see Bremmer 2008.

<sup>137</sup> “Gorgias likens the persuasive word of the charmer to the sorcerer’s spell, even though his culture would have enabled him to make the distinction, if he had wanted to” (Graf 1997: 26).

is casts onto his account of non-discursive λόγος.<sup>138</sup> In the remaining pages of this chapter, we shall determine what kind of light this is.

Scholars who have commented upon the role of magic in Gorgias's *Helen* have tended to cut directly to the question of whether Gorgias speaks of magic *metaphorically*<sup>139</sup> or *literally*<sup>140</sup> and whether his account of a magical λόγος is meant to *rationalize* the concept of magic or *irrationalize* the concept of λόγος.<sup>141</sup> As we shall see, these are not the best questions with which to begin. Not only are the dichotomies of literal and metaphorical, rational and irrational, quite slippery criteria to work

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<sup>138</sup> See the astute remark by Wilhelm Süss: "Die gorgianischen Vergleiche sind niemals ein müßiges Spiel der Worte, sondern sie müssen sich eine dialektische Kelter gefallen lassen, die immer neue Ingredienzien aus ihnen zu ziehen versteht" (1910: 83).

<sup>139</sup> "...the δύναμις of the incantation consorting . . .' can really be read only as a metaphor. It explains nothing; [...] What Gorgias really offers is a verbal 'slide,' [...] implying – without proof – that θέλγειν, when used to instill pleasure and banish pain, is persuasion" (Adkins 1983 [1977]: 111-2). "This brings us to a case of magical language which in fact is not necessarily magic per se, 'magic' used to describe another phenomenon, namely rhetoric. Magic and rhetoric may have certain features in common, but one would be wrong to identify the two [...] Gorgias does not say that rhetoric is magic: it is rather like magic, speeches are magical, in the way one might say of a cunning speaker even today, who influences and manipulates like a powerful master" (Braarvig 1999: 36-7). On the figurative quality of Gorgias's language, see also Lain Entralgo 1970: 63, 88.

<sup>140</sup> Marie-Pierre Noël argues that Gorgias is giving an earnest account of magic – the type of magic he would have been familiar with through his encounters with Empedocles: "Comme nous l'avons vu pour Gorgias, il ne faut pas considerer ces termes comme de simples métaphores. Tous reposent sur une expérience magique, qui est celle du pouvoir de la parole" (1989: 148). Similarly, Walter Burkert places Gorgias's statements in the *Helen* neatly within the tradition of what he calls 'shamans' – a tradition which included Empedocles, Epimenides, and the ἀγύρται whom Plato denigrates in the *Republic* (1962: 48, 55).

<sup>141</sup> De Romilly (under the influence of Dobbs) reads Gorgias's discussion of magic and λόγος as a shift "from irrational models to rational teaching" and, after citing the rational character of the word τέχνη, concludes that Gorgias is a "theoretician of the magic spell of words" and that "he was deliberately shifting magic into something rational" (1975: 16, 20). This approach of reading Gorgias as either a rationalizer or irrationalizer has been influential, with only minor pushback. For instance, George Walsh prefers "nonanalytical or analogical" to irrational (1984: 83), and Hugh Parry questions whether the word τέχνη carries that much of a rationalizing tone (1992: 151). Nevertheless, Parry concludes that "Gorgias was, like Hippocrates, a rationalist, intent on pressing the claims of the non-literal 'magic' of rhetorical persuasion" (1992: 152). James Porter sums up the different attitudes toward this problem in the following way: "If the role played by magic in his speech stands out in curious contrast to the appeals to scientificity, there are a few possible explanations available. The appeal to the invisible is as much a leap of faith as it is a badge of rationalism: Gorgias could be parodying rather than endorsing the hyperconfidence of science. Alternatively, magic could be a genuine sign of his recalcitrance towards the spirit of late fifth-century rationalism. Or, finally, Gorgias' stance could reflect the fact that magic and rationalism coexisted, however oddly to us, in late fifth-century minds" (2010: 284).

with, but they hinge largely upon one's (unprovable) presupposition about Gorgias's belief or lack of belief in magic.<sup>142</sup>

In what follows, I take a different route by establishing first the context of Gorgias's remarks by surveying how earlier writers used the language of enchantment. As we shall see, Gorgias's discussion of magical incantations plays on a long tradition that had preceded him. Archaic poets, from Homer onward, make rich use of the language of magic and enchantment. When they do, they often use it to mark out a range of psychosomatic experiences which result in either highly positive or highly negative sorts of diversion. As I shall illustrate at the close of this chapter, Gorgias evokes and even builds upon this poetic category of enchantment as a way of complementing his pseudo-sensory model of speech which, much like enchantment, is presented as extraordinary in its power yet dangerously ambivalent in its effects. In short, Gorgias turns to the language of enchantment not only as a way of articulating unfamiliar channels of communication but also to underscore these channels as strange or extraordinary.

## **2.1. Enchantment before Gorgias: experience, means, and ends**

### **2.1.1. The experience of enchantment**

When it comes to tracing the usage of the language of magic, we can begin at the beginning. Words related to *θέλγειν*, *κηλεῖν*, and *ἐπωδῆ* go all the way back to Homer and, from Homer onwards, they are most often used by poets to refer to a family of psychosomatic experiences which affect gods and mortals alike.<sup>143</sup> Although it is often quite difficult to tease descriptions of real magic

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<sup>142</sup> On the problem of demarcating what is said literally from what is said metaphorically, see Introduction, pp. 9-11. For a discussion of the problems with the Doddsian dichotomy of rational and irrational in relation to two other Pre-Socratics, Empedocles and Parmenides, see Laks 2013 [2003].

<sup>143</sup> In the *Iliad*, gods are the sole agents of enchantment, and enchantment is denoted only by forms of *θέλγειν*. From the *Odyssey* onwards, both mortals and gods perform enchantments which are denoted through forms of *θέλγειν*, *κηλεῖν*, and *ἐπαοιδῆ*.

apart from descriptions of metaphoric magic, the experience that this lexical category points to is primarily one of diversion. In this capacity, the language of enchantment overlaps with a range of neighboring experiences – such as delight (τέρψις), astonishment (ἐκπληξις), awe (ἄγη), ecstasy (ἔκστασις), as well as forms of pleasure (χάρις/ἡδονή), desire (ἕμερος/πόθος), deception (ἀπάτη/δόλος /ψεῦδος), persuasion (πειθός/πάρφρασις), forgetting (λήθη), and even sleep (κῶμα/ὕπνος).<sup>144</sup> Each of these experiences can be enchanting because each is able to change (μεθιστάναι), turn aside (παρὰτρέπειν), or steal (κλέπτειν/ἀφαιρῶν) one’s mind or attention to differing degrees of intensity.

Scholars who have commented upon the lexical category of enchantment in Homer have often highlighted the fact that it almost always carries with it a sense of “self-loss,” “amnesia,” “unconsciousness,” or deep “immersion.”<sup>145</sup> In the *Iliad*, for instance, we see that enchantment denotes not only the experience brought on by Hermes’s hypnotic ῥάβδος,<sup>146</sup> but also the confusion

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<sup>144</sup> Some readers have attempted to subsume enchantment under one of these experiences. Finkelberg, for instance, takes θέλξις as an ‘intensifier’ form of τέρψις (1998; 1985). As we shall see, this is inadequate. Although enchantment does partially overlap with the semantic range of τέρψις, the category also floods well beyond it.

<sup>145</sup> “Enchantment is a kind of unconsciousness” (Walsh 1984: 17); “the ‘loss of oneself’” (Pucci 1987: 193 followed by Clay 1994); “The effect of *thélxis*, then, is not just a pleasurable feeling of relaxation and enjoyment; *thélxis* brings amnesia: of unpleasant realities as well as of duties one should not forget” (Graf 2019: 135). Recently, a group of classicists has intriguingly equated the poetics of enchantment in Homer with the modern, experiential criterion of “immersion” recently popularized in virtual reality studies (Allan, De Jong, De Jonge 2017: 37, 46). Note too, Louis Pratt’s remarks on the modern concept of literary absorption (1993: 79-80).

<sup>146</sup> See also 14.252 when personified Sleep describes hypnotizing Zeus. The passages in which Hermes is described as enchanting mortals with sleep have already ossified into a formula in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*: “he took his wand with which he enchants the eyes of the men whom he wants to; others, too, he wakes from slumber” (εἴλετο δὲ ῥάβδον, τῇ τ’ ἀνδρῶν ὄμματα θέλγει | ὦν ἐθέλει, τοὺς δ’ αὐτε καὶ ὑπνῶντας ἐγείρει, *Il.* 24.343-4 = *Od.* 5.47-8). A variation of the formula occurs again at *Od.* 24.3-4: “he took in his hands the fine golden wand with which he enchants the eyes of the men whom he wants to; others too he wakes from slumber” (ἔχε δὲ ῥάβδον μετὰ χρυσῆν καλὴν χρυσεῖν, τῇ τ’ ἀνδρῶν ὄμματα θέλγει ὦν | ἐθέλει, τοὺς δ’ αὐτε καὶ ὑπνῶντας ἐγείρει). The folk etymology linking θέλγω with ἐθέλω, which we find later in the Greek tradition (θέλγειν εἰς τὸ θέλαιν ἄγειν, Apollonius Sophista 86.30: ΘΕΛΓΕΙΝ), may already partially underpin the wording of this Homeric formula.



cast by Zeus, Poseidon, and Apollo into the minds of soldiers on the battlefield.<sup>147</sup> There is also the experience of seduction brought on by the powers of Aphrodite's κεστός, which steals even the strong mind (ἐκλεψε νόον πύκα) with fondness (φιλότης), desire (ἔμερος), and intimate persuasion (ὁαριστὺς πάρφασις).<sup>148</sup> In the *Odyssey*, the language of enchantment can be found clustering around a similar family of distractions ranging between hypnosis,<sup>149</sup> seduction,<sup>150</sup> and mental delusion.<sup>151</sup> The distracting force of enchantment, moreover, complements nicely the theme of memory and forgetting, which echoes throughout the *Odyssey* when enchantresses (e.g., Calypso,<sup>152</sup> Circe,<sup>153</sup> and the Sirens<sup>154</sup>) all threaten to distract the unenchantable mind (ἀκήλητος νόος) of Odysseus from remembering his duty to hearth and home.<sup>155</sup>

### 2.1.2. The ends of enchantment

The experience of enchantment is marked not only by an overriding sense of distraction, but also by a radical sense of ambivalence. That is to say, enchantments may result in wanted or unwanted distractions, dangerous delusions, or restorative diversions, which result in detriment or benefit. Also, in the *Odyssey*, the tale of Odysseus's survival which reaches Ithaca may be the truth or

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<sup>147</sup> Zeus uses enchantment against a group of Greek soldiers (*Il.* 12.255), Poseidon against Alcahous (*Il.* 13.435), Apollo against a group of the Greek soldiers (*Il.* 15.321), Zeus once more against a group of Greek soldiers (*Il.* 15.594), Apollo tricks (i.e., enchants) Achilles by shape-shifting into Agenor (*Il.* 21.604).

<sup>148</sup> *Il.* 14.215. A scholiast ad loc. glosses ὁαριστὺς πάρφασις with πειθώ. Pindar uses the word for deceitful speech (*Pind. Nem.* 8.32).

<sup>149</sup> See note 146.

<sup>150</sup> Aegisthus enchants/seduces (θέλγεσκ') Clytemnestra with words (ἔπεσσι, *Od.* 3.264); Penelope can enchant/seduce (θέλγειν) the suitors with her mere appearance (*Od.* 18.212).

<sup>151</sup> Telemachus suspects that a δαίμων has been able to enchant/delude (θέλγειν) him into seeing his father alive and well (*Od.* 16.195). Athena and Zeus are projected to enchant/delude (θέλγειν) the suitors (16.298).

<sup>152</sup> Calypso attempts to enchant/divert (θέλγειν) Odysseus's nostalgia with soft and wheedling words (μαλακοῖσι καὶ αἰμυλίοισι λόγοισιν) so that he might forget Ithaca (ὅπως Ἰθάκης ἐπιλήσεται, *Od.* 1.57).

<sup>153</sup> Circe fails in her attempt to enchant (θέλγειν) and to poison with drugs (φάρμακα) the unenchantable mind (ἀκήλητος νόος) of Odysseus (*Od.* 10.318-26). There may be some affinity between ἀκήλητος (*Od.* 10.329) and Odysseus's defining characteristic πολύτροπος (*Od.* 10.330) – a word which, outside the prologue, appears only here in this passage.

<sup>154</sup> Sirens fail to enchant (θέλγειν) Odysseus with their sonorous song (λιγυρῇ ἀοιδῇ, *Od.* 12.40-4).

<sup>155</sup> For a reading of how the motif of enchantment-*qua*-distraction works in the *Odyssey*, see Rabel 2002.

a mere lie (ψεῦδος) fashioned to win favor (χαρίζειν); either way, whether a desired true tale or an unwanted lie, the tale is powerful enough to enchant (θέλγειν) the heart (ἦτορ) of his auditor.<sup>156</sup> Even when the enchanting speech is true, as with the enchantments (θελκτήρια) of Phemius's song-craft, it may bring desired experiences of pleasure to some (such as Telemachus) or undesired pain to others (such as Penelope).<sup>157</sup> Very often, this shifting ambivalence embedded within the concept of enchantment can be used to underscore the tragic irony of a particular scene. For instance, in the *Odyssey*, the Trojan embassy ironically calls the wooden horse a potential enchantment (θελκτήρια) of the gods and thereby ironically underscores the unwanted danger of the object while presenting it as a desired benefit.<sup>158</sup> In final analysis, the language of enchantment, in Homer, is inherently ambiguous and unstable, and, because of this, it often transforms what it labels into something of a *pharmakon* – an entity that shifts between medicine and poison, health and harm.<sup>159</sup>

In the subsequent poetic tradition, the language of enchantment continues to be used to denote a comparable range of experiences that cluster around sites of distraction and float ambiguously between the positive and the negative, the healthful and the harmful. For instance, in the *Hymn to Apollo*, the delusive quality of enchantment becomes a boon rather than a bane when the mimetic performances of the Delian choristers beguile the tribes of men (θέλγουσι [...] φῶλ'

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<sup>156</sup> *Od.* 14.378; 17.514. For a discussion of these passages, see Pratt 1993: 80-1.

<sup>157</sup> *Od.* 1.337. For an insightful reading of this scene, see Halliwell 2011: 1-5.

<sup>158</sup> *Hom. Od.* 8.509.

<sup>159</sup> Pietro Pucci, who recognizes the ambivalence inherent in the word θέλγειν, borrows the Derridean notion of *supplement* to describe how "the incompatible effects or meanings [of the word] spin together [...] and surface as neatly opposite only through a domesticated and self-serving reading" (1987: 194; cf. Bergren 1981). Jenny Strauss Clay describes the ambiguity of Homeric enchantment similarly: "The power to numb the mind, to cause forgetfulness of self, is, of course, profoundly ambiguous, both pleasurable and dangerous. For every healing drug, there is a lethal one; the delights of sex may be life-affirming, or they may entail disastrous consequences" (1994: 2). See also Graf 2019: 135 quoted in n. 145.

ἀνθρώπων) with no obvious threat of danger.<sup>160</sup> In other cases, the delusive language of enchantment is tinged with the threat of unwanted danger or detriment. Theognis, for instance, warns against the disingenuous words of a fellow symposiast which might beguile (θέλγειν) the intellect (φρόνη).<sup>161</sup> More subtly, Bacchylides's compound moniker for Aphrodite – θελξιμβροτος ('enchanter of mortals') – takes on a sinister note only because it is mentioned in close conjunction with the name of Deianira, the "destroyer of men" (δαΐ-άνειρα), whose magical pharmakon proved fatal to Heracles himself.<sup>162</sup> Further evidence for this radical ambivalence can also be found on the tragic stage. For instance, in Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, just as the plot moves from Argos to Athens, from savage to civilized, the lexical category of enchantment likewise evolves from negative to positive –

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<sup>160</sup> *Hymn Hom. Ap.* 161. In a similarly positive light, Asclepius, the god of healing, is called a great boon for humankind (χάρμα μέγ' ἀνθρώποισι) and the enchanter (θελκτῆρ) of pain (*Hymn. Hom. Ascl.* 4). Pindar repeatedly casts the power of song – especially epinician song – as a powerful force for good (*Nem.* 4.3, 8.49, *Pyth.* 1.11, 3.64) as well as dance (*Dith.* 2.22 = Fr. 70b.22 Maehler = Strabo 10.3.13) and comments on the restorative powers of medical magic (*Pyth.* 3.52). A more ambiguous instance is in a disputed fragment of Archilochus where song (ᾠοιδή) itself is said to enchant (κηλεῖν) humans and animals alike (Fr. 253 West = Phld. *Mus.* 4.49; cf. Delattre 2007: ad loc. and Gigante 1993). Finally, in another contested line, this time from the *Works and Days*, fallow land (νειὸς) is called the averter of evil (ἀλεξιάρη) and the good enchanter of children (εὐκηλήτειρα παίδων, Hes. *Op.* 464 Merkelbach and West). Interpretations of the text vary widely, though Proclus may be correct in suggesting that, in Hesiod's mind, the relative silence of the fallow land would grant peaceful sleep to children – i.e., enchant (Procl. ad. loc.; cf. Ritoók 1989: 335-6).

<sup>161</sup> Thgn. 981.

<sup>162</sup> Bacchyl. *Ep.* 5.175; cf. Cairns 2010 ad loc. Enchantment, likewise, appears in a negative light when, in the *Hymn to Demeter*, the vain hope (ἐλπίς) of reuniting with Demeter can enchant/delude (θέλγειν) the great mind (μέγαν νόον) of Persephone (*Hymn Hom. Dem.* 37). Also, just as Pindar discusses beneficial enchantments, so too does he discuss the dangerous love magic of Jason (Pind. *Pyth.* 4.217), the necromancy of Asclepias (Pind. *Pyth.* 3.57), and the siren-like power of the Κηληδόνες (Pind. *Pae.* 8.71). Less certain is a fragment from Hipponax that may contain a passage in which someone (Hipponax?) negatively labels a shady (σκότος) wine vendor as a charmer (κηλήτης, fr. 79 Degani = P. Oxy. 2174 fr. 11 col. I [79, 1-17]). However, the papyrus is too badly damaged to tell us exactly what is going on. We also find the language of enchantment clustering around the γλυκύπικρος site of love and seduction. Sappho, for instance, casts blame upon her target for allowing the bare ankles (σφυρά) of Andromeda – a mere rustic girl (ἀγροῖωτις) – to enchant/seduce (θέλγειν, fr. 57 Lobel and Page = Ath. 21bc [1.46 Kaibel] [et al.]). Ibycus laments his unwilling submission to the enchantments (κηλήματα) of ἔρως even in his old age (Fr. 287 Davies = Procl. in *Plat. Parmen.* 5.316).

labeling, first, the negative (human) sacrifices aimed at controlling what is divinely ordained,<sup>163</sup> and, later the positive power of persuasive rhetoric found in Athens which, with Athena's help, allays the vengeful wrath of the Erinyes.<sup>164</sup>

### 2.1.3. The means of enchantment

What this survey has shown thus far is how, in the early Greek poetry that precedes Gorgias, the lexical category of enchantment is distributed across a range of experiences of distraction and diversion. These oscillate between wanted and unwanted, benefit and detriment. But what does this all have to do with the cultural practice of curses, erotic binding spells, necromancy, and the social practices of magic writ large? It seems quite likely that this notion of enchantment is linked to a particular subdomain of the larger cultural category of magic. When poets use words related to θέλξις and κήλησις in order to describe certain experiences, such as immersion or seduction, the magic they are describing lies closer to the imagined effects of certain erotic binding spells and curses than it does to the realm of necromancy or weather magic which we find attested elsewhere.<sup>165</sup> In fact, the poetic descriptions of this experience of enchantment might be read as

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<sup>163</sup> The chorus sings of Paris who is unable to enchant (παρὰθέλγειν) the implacable anger (ὀργή ἀτενής) of the gods with either burnt or unburnt sacrifices (ὑποκαίων οὐτ' ἐπιλείβων ἀπύρων ἱερῶν, Aesch. *Ag.* 71) and declares later that no charm can call people back from the dead (πάλιν ἀγκαλέσαιτ' ἐπαείδων, Aesch. *Ag.* 1021; cf. *Eum.* 649). Finally, the sacrifice of Iphigeneia is described as a charm to soothe Thracian winds (ἐπώδον Θρηκίων ἀημάτων, Aesch. *Ag.* 1418).

<sup>164</sup> After Clytemnestra's failed attempts at enchanting Electra and Orestes in Argos (Aesch. *Cho.* 420, 670; cf. 1029), Apollo directs plot action to Athens where there will be "jurors [...] and enchanting words" (δικαστὰς [...] καὶ θελκτῆριους μύθους) which will be the means (μηχανὰς) of salvation (Aesch. *Eum.* 81). There in Athens, Athena successfully enchants the Eumenides with the "reverent power of persuasion and the salve and enchantment of [...]her] tongue" (Πειθοῦς σέβας, ἢ γλώσσης [...] μείλιγμα καὶ θελκτῆριον, Aesch. *Eum.* 886-890).

<sup>165</sup> The latter are attested in Empedocles (DK 31B111 = Diog. Laert. 8.59 [et al.]) and, of course, the Homeric *Nekyia*.

implicit attempts to theorize about the affinity (metaphoric or literal) between binding spells, on the one hand, and the uncanny experience of total absorption and distraction, on the other.<sup>166</sup>

Although the exact mechanics of the experience of enchantment are never spelled out explicitly by the early poets, we do find some traces of evidence for how states of enchantment were thought to be brought about. Poets point to different organs of perception, sensation, and cognition, which are affected by the power of enchantment as well as a variety the tools and techniques involved. For instance, when a god or mortal experiences enchantment, the sites of that experience float somewhere between the *physical* and the *psychical*<sup>167</sup> – acting upon organs of perception, such as sight (ὄσσε, ὄμματα),<sup>168</sup> touch (γυῖον),<sup>169</sup> or hearing (ἀκοή)<sup>170</sup> as well as occurring in the black box of the mind (νόος),<sup>171</sup> (φρήν),<sup>172</sup> spirit (θυμός),<sup>173</sup> or heart (ἤτορ).<sup>174</sup> Although the soul (ψυχή) does not appear as the anatomical site of enchantment in our earliest poetic sources (indeed, not until Gorgias), we may nevertheless say that the poetic notion of enchantment functions

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<sup>166</sup> “Speculation about how incantation might work is doubtless as old as attempts to use language to help reflect marvellous changes in the world” (Gordon 2002: 76). It is probably significant that the imagery of binding does accompany some poetic description of enchanting seduction and delusion (cf. Hom. *Il.* 13.435; Ibycus Fr. 287 Davies = Procl. in Plat. *Parmen.* 5.316).

<sup>167</sup> Machemer notes how the verb θέλγειν takes as its object either “the person or animate being in whom a desired change or deceit is wrought” or the psychic-sensory “organ of perception or reception through which it is wrought” (1993:117).

<sup>168</sup> ὄσσε φαεινά, *Il.* 13.435. ὄμματα, *Il.* 24.343; *Od.* 5.47, 24.4; cf. Ibycus fr. 287 Davies = Procl. in Plat. *Parmen.* 5.316; Aeschylus *Supp.* 1004.

<sup>169</sup> Pind *Nem.* 4.5.

<sup>170</sup> The word for hearing is not used, but the sense of hearing is very commonly implied.

<sup>171</sup> Hom. *Il.* 12.255, 14.217, 14.252; Hom. *Od.* 10.321; *Hymn Hom. Dem* 37; Sapph. Fr. 57 Page and Lobel = Ath. 21bc (1.46 Kaibel) (et al.).

<sup>172</sup> Theognis 981-3; Pind. *Pyth.* 1.12.

<sup>173</sup> Hom. *Il.* 15.321, 15.594; *Od.* 18.211, 18.283; Aesch. *Cho.* 420; Pindar *Pyth.* 3.64; *Pyth.* 4.219; Pind. *Pae.* 8.78.

<sup>174</sup> Hom. *Od.* 17.514; cf. καρδιά at Pind. *Pyth.* 1.11. Enchantment also impacts reified emotions such as anger (κότος at Aesch. *Eum.* 900; ὀργή at Aesch. *Ag.* 71).

*psychosomatically*.<sup>175</sup> This view is, moreover, entirely in keeping with the particular way in which Greeks conceived of spells as working. The very notion that a curse or love spell might work upon a target directly and *psychosomatically* is a feature not found so much in, say, Egyptian *heka* but quite fundamental to Greek ideas about *mageia* from Homer to Plotinus and beyond.<sup>176</sup>

The different tools and techniques with which the experience of enchantment is brought about are also quite numerous. Many physical devices are named, such as Apollo's αἰγίς (*Il.* 15.318), Hermes's ῥάβδος (*Il.* 24.342; *Od.* 5.46, 24.2), Aphrodite's κεστός (*Il.* 14.214), Circe's φάρμακα (*Od.* 10.213ff.), the Trojan horse (*Od.* 8.509), and so on.<sup>177</sup> Yet from at least Homer's *Odyssey* onwards, the most common means of enchantment are the many manifestations of speech and voice (λόγος/ ἔπος/ μῦθος/ ῥῆμα/ φθόγγος/ αὐδή/ ὄψ/ γῆρυς).<sup>178</sup>

It should be noted that the concept of enchanting speech, which we find in the early poets, is not limited to (nor even primarily linked to) sung or poetic speech. The affiliation between the two

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<sup>175</sup> The conspicuous absence of ψυχή, in comparison to its relative abundance in later descriptions of enchantment, is because ψυχή has not yet become the unified locus of an individual's sensation and cognition in this period. We must wait until Gorgias for the explicit inclusion of ψυχή within the discourse of psychosomatic enchantment. See more on this below, pp. 84-6.

<sup>176</sup> Gordon 2002: 76-81; cf. Gordon 1999: 221 and, *mutatis mutandis*, Lain Entralgo 1970: 27-28.

<sup>177</sup> For a discussion of some of these magical devices and others in Homer, see Wathelet 2000.

<sup>178</sup> There are only two points in the *Iliad* when speech comes close to being involved with the act of enchantment: when Apollo can enchant (θέλγειν) the Achaeans as he shakes his Aegis and "he himself shouts a mighty shout at them" (ἐπὶ δ' αὐτὸς ἄνσε μάλα μέγα *Hom. Il.* 15.320-1) and when Achilles complains that Themis was able to enchant (θέλγειν) him with lies (*Hom Il.* 21.276). Instances of verbal enchantments are much more common in the *Odyssey*. They include Calypso's attempt to enchant away (θέλγειν) Odysseus's nostalgia with soft and wheedling words (μαλακοῖσι καὶ αἰμυλίοισι λόγοισιν, *Od.* 1.57), the allurements (θελκτήρια) of Phemius's songcraft (*Od.* 1.337), Aegisthus's efforts to enchant/seduce (θέλγεσκ') Clytemnestra (*Od.* 3.264), the Phaeacians' silent rapture/enchantment (κηληθμός) during and after Odysseus's narration of his tales (*Od.* 11.333-4 = 13.1-3 cf. Peponi 2012: 29-32), the Sirens who enchant (θέλγειν) through song (*Od.* 12.40, 12.44), the lies of Odysseus that just might be able to enchant (θέλγειν) Eumaeus (*Od.* 14.387), the tales that Eumaeus relays to Penelope and that had been able to enchant (θέλγειν) him (*Od.* 17.514, 17.521), as well as the effective lies which Penelope uses to enchant/beguile (θέλγειν) the suitors (*Od.* 18.283). The one outlier which does not explicitly refer to a psychosomatic state of distraction is the actual incantation (ἐπαοιδή) which physically heals young Odysseus's wound (*Od.* 19.457).

domains tends to be exaggerated in scholarship.<sup>179</sup> Nor is enchantment an experience linked primarily to the *form* (as opposed to the *content*) of speech – another misleading correlation made by scholars.<sup>180</sup> Instead, enchanting speech, as the poets describe it, seems to transcend the dichotomies of the sung and the spoken, poetry and prose, even form and content. It is true that early poets like to underscore their craft's capacity to enchant; we need only call to mind the figure of Phemius or the Delian choristers in the *Hymn to Apollo* – each of whom has rightly attracted a great deal of scholarly attention. However, most speech labeled as enchanting in early poetry is not explicitly poetic speech. In a particularly telling example, Eumaeus' simile in Book 17 of the *Odyssey* indicates that enchanting speech may be explicitly non-poetic:

εἰ γάρ τοι, βασίλεια, σιωπήσειαν Ἀχαιοί·  
οἳ' ὃ γε μυθεῖται, θέλγοιτό κέ τοι φίλον ἦτορ.  
[...]  
ὥς δ' ὅτ' αἰοδὸν ἀνὴρ ποτιδέσκεται, ὅς τε θεῶν ἔξ  
αἰίδει δεδαῶς ἔπε' ἱμερόεντα βροτοῖσι,  
τοῦ δ' ἄμοτον μεμάασιν ἀκούμεν, ὅππότε' αἰείδῃ·  
ὥς ἐμὲ κείνος ἔθελγε παρήμενος ἐν μεγάροισι.

If the Achaeans, queen, would please keep quiet, for what he speaks would enchant your dear heart [...] Just as when a man looks upon a bard who sings to mortals desirable words that he learned from the gods, and they are eager to listen endlessly whenever he sings, in this way he [i.e., Odysseus] enchanted me when he sat in my hall.<sup>181</sup>

Here, as in other places, the enchanting words of Odysseus are pointedly not sung, and yet their effect is equivalent to the enchantment a bard might produce. Even if the categories of poetry and

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<sup>179</sup> Studies that touch upon enchantment in early Greek literature (e.g., Walsh 1984, Pucci 1987, Pratt 1993, Finkelberg 1998, 1985, Halliwell 2011, and Peponi 2012) treat enchantment under the aegis of poetry and song and have thus exaggerated the affinity between the power of the bard and the power of enchantment broadly construed.

<sup>180</sup> Those who focus on the dichotomy between poetry and prose, sung and spoken, often try to distinguish between form and content within the semantic field of verbal enchantment. For instance, Finkelberg suggests that θέλξις can be distinguished by τέρεψις only insofar as θέλξις is “a ceaseless desire to hear, directed towards the narrative *content* [as opposed to the form] of song” (1998: 91; cf. “an insatiate desire” Finkelberg 1985: 3; cf. Walsh 1984: 79). As we shall see, this is an untenable distinction. Both form and narrative content are equally capable of bringing about an experience of enchantment in early Greek thought.

<sup>181</sup> Hom. *Od.* 17.513-27.

song are closely tied (even, perhaps, genealogically) to the idea of verbal enchantment, it is nevertheless the case that already by the time of Homer, the experience of enchantment is not tethered to the poetic or melic voice.<sup>182</sup> The same goes for the dichotomy of form versus content. It is certainly true that poets often foreground formal features of enchanting speech when they remark upon the soft (μαλακός),<sup>183</sup> gentle (μειλίχιος),<sup>184</sup> sonorous (λιγυρός),<sup>185</sup> sweet (γλύκειος),<sup>186</sup> honey-voiced (μελίγηρυς),<sup>187</sup> honey-tongued (μελίγλωσσος),<sup>188</sup> or shapely quality of words (μορφῇ ἐπέων) that enchant.<sup>189</sup> Moreover, it is true that when poets speak of a particular magical context, the soundscape of the poem becomes more striking. For instance, we can look to a passage from Sophron, the 5<sup>th</sup> century Syracusan writer of Mime:

αἶτε κα ἅπ' ἀγχόνας ἀίξασα,  
αἶτε κα λεχοῦν διακναίσασα,  
αἶτε κ' ἄν νέκρος μολοῦσα πεφυρμένα ἐσέλθῃς,  
αἶτε κα ἐκ τριόδων καθαρμάτεσσιν ἐπισπωμένατῳ παλαμναίῳ συμπλεχθῇς

Whether having darted from the hanging, or having worn out the woman in childbirth, or having come as a sullied corpse you enter, or attracted by off-scourings from the crossroads you are entwined with the murderer.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> For the notion that song and incantation are genealogically linked, see Lain Entralgo 1970: 44ff. In a similar vein, Boris Maslov has recently suggested that the early Greek language surrounding song and singer (αοιδός) may, in fact, have been a back formation derived from the lexical domain of enchantment (ἐπαοιδός): “I suggested tentatively that the rhetoric of enchantment was inherited by properly poetic professionals from a preexistent (and possibly continuing) subliterate tradition of professional performers of ἐπωδαί” (2009: 31). Other scholars have (less tentatively) suggested that the very form and content of early poetry is derived from the ritualized rhymical patternings and historiologiae of the tradition of magical incantations. John Garcia, for instance, argues that Greek poetry owes its look and feel less to a rhetorical register (à la Aristotle’s remarks on exoticism/poeticism in the *Poetics*) than to a ritualistic register and that poetic speech hovers between the normal speech of humans and the divine language of the gods (2003; cf. Garcia 2002; Furley 1995; Lord 1963: 200-2, et al.).

<sup>183</sup> Hom. *Od.* 1.56; Pind. *Pyth.* 3.52.

<sup>184</sup> Hom. *Od.* 18.283. Cf. Athena’s description of her own persuasive speech in the Eumenides as a salve (μείλιγμα, Aesch. *Eum.* 886).

<sup>185</sup> Hom. *Od.* 12.44.

<sup>186</sup> Pind. *Pae.* 8.75.

<sup>187</sup> Pind. *Pyth.* 3.64.

<sup>188</sup> Aesch. *PV* 173; cf. “honey-minded” (μελίφρων, Pind. *Pae.* 8.78).

<sup>189</sup> Hom. *Od.* 11.367.

<sup>190</sup> Ascribed to his mime, *The Women Who Say They are Expelling the Goddess*, Fr. 8 = Plut. *De Superst.* 170b (trans. Rusten 2003).



Here, the excessive rhythm and rhyme are implicitly understood as salient features of magical incantations. Indeed, the whole fragment does seem to calque the formal excesses found in actual curses.<sup>191</sup> Nor is this an isolated case. Other poetic representations of magical speech or magical contexts tend to betray a similar tendency toward heightened formal effects – such as those found in the necromancy scene of Aeschylus’s *Persians*,<sup>192</sup> the binding songs of Clytemnestra and the Erinyes in Aeschylus’s *Oresteia*,<sup>193</sup> Demeter’s counter-curse in the *Hymn to Demeter*,<sup>194</sup> and elsewhere.<sup>195</sup> Despite the conspicuous poetic concern with the form and delivery of enchanting speech, poets do not eschew the possibility that the content of speech may be responsible for imparting the experience of enchantment as well. The Sirens’ song is only the most famous example where sound and sense, form and content doubly determine the enchanting effect of their song.<sup>196</sup> Elsewhere too, enchanting speech does not simply tickle the ear, but enchants by ingratiation (χαρίζειν;<sup>197</sup> αἰμύλιος),<sup>198</sup> by the sheer novelty of subject matter (ὅθεν κέ τις οὐδὲ ἴδοιτο),<sup>199</sup> or by mimesis (μιμεῖσθαι).<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> For studies of the formal features of incantations, see Versnel 2002 and the remarks by Levi 1975: 212-3.

<sup>192</sup> For an excellent reading of some of the strange formal elements of the necromancy scene in the *Persians*, see De Romilly 1975: 17ff.

<sup>193</sup> Clytemnestra: Aesch. Ag. 958ff. (see McClure 1996). Erinyes: Aesch. *Eum.* 235ff. (see Faraone 1985; Prins 1991).

<sup>194</sup> Richardson comments on the “incantatory” character of the rhyme, chiasmus, and the anaphora of οἶδα (1974: 229–31; cf. Faraone 2001).

<sup>195</sup> Cf. βάρβαρα μέλη μαγεύουσ’ (Eur. *Iph. Taur.* 1337-8), et al. It should be noted that magic was a popular theme in drama – especially satyr plays. Aeschylus wrote a *Psychagogoi* (Radt TrGF vol. 3 F 273a, 275), Sophocles, a *Rhizotomoi* (Radt TrGF vol. 4 F 534–6). Comic poets such as Cratinus, Alexis, and Menander also explicitly took up magical themes for their plays.

<sup>196</sup> For a recent treatment of the form and content debate regarding the siren song, see Montiglio 2019.

<sup>197</sup> Hom. *Od.* 14.387.

<sup>198</sup> Hom. *Od.* 1.5.

<sup>199</sup> Hom. *Od.* 11.366.

<sup>200</sup> *Hymn Hom. Ap.* 162-4.

In sum, the language of magic, which we find in the poetic tradition, regularly marks out a certain psychosomatic experience of distraction which is radically ambivalent in its ends – either highly positive or highly negative. Of the various means of enchantment, the most common are the manifold manifestations of speech and voice. What this wide variety of enchanting speech shows us is that the label of enchantment is neither limited to a single genre of speech nor linked solely to form or content. The wide distribution suggests an awareness that the experience of enchantment can be engendered through many extraordinary speech types and techniques. What binds these types and techniques together under the lexical category of enchantment is the fact that they seem to produce an extraordinary experience in mind and body. Thus at bottom, enchantment is less of a special style than it is a special effect – with particular emphasis on *special*. With this in mind, it is time for us to turn back to Gorgias and his account of non-referential speech.

## 2.2. Enchantment in the *Encomium of Helen*

In the remainder of the chapter, we will see that when Gorgias invokes magic in the *Helen*, he is importing the concept of enchantment which we have traced through the preceding poetic tradition. Yet unlike the poets, Gorgias theorizes more explicitly about the actual mechanics of this process of enchantment. In doing so, he revises and builds upon the descriptions of enchantment that came before him in important and lasting ways.<sup>201</sup> As we shall see, the magic Gorgias describes

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<sup>201</sup> I thus generally agree with Richard Gordon, who remarks that “Gorgias’ reflections on this matter [i.e., magic] in the mid-fifth century BC certainly stem from, while also decisively modernising in terms of current medical theory, a tradition of more or less sophisticated interest in the matter, focussing on the word *thelgo* and its derivatives. His treatment of the theme in the *Helen* [...] might almost be part of a commentary upon the Homeric passages describing the song of the Sirens” (1999: 220-1). Walsh makes a similar observation; however, I cannot agree that the “difference between Gorgias’s theory and traditional views” is the “rejection of the primitive belief that the relationship between words and physical objects is naturally fixed, that words magically reflect the truth” (1984: 84). Enchantment does not seem to be in any way aligned with truth in the early Greek thought. For a rebuttal of Walsh on this point, see Halliwell 2011: 48 n.23.

in the *Helen* is not the magic that heals physical wounds, alters the weather, or even raises the dead.<sup>202</sup> Instead, Gorgias's incantatory λόγος, like the enchantments described by the poets, produces a certain psychosomatic experience – an experience which Gorgias further defines as a combination of “errors of the soul and deceptions of opinion” (ψυχῆς ἀμαρτήματα καὶ δόξης ἀπατήματα § 10). Since Gorgias's remarks about magic are often read in divergent ways, it is best to treat them in detail in order to iron out several semantic disputes before positing reasons for Gorgias' inclusion of the category of magic in his *Helen*.

### 2.2.1. Textual difficulties: § 10-14

After introducing his third proof for the defense of Helen (namely, that she was helplessly overcome by the mighty dynast, λόγος), Gorgias offers two examples which illustrate the peculiar δύναμις of this dynast. In section 9, Gorgias describes the remarkable effects of poetry and notes that these effects come about through speech (διὰ λόγων) since, in his words, poetry is nothing more than ‘speech set to meter’ (λόγον ἔχοντα μέτρον). In section 10, Gorgias offers a second example that illustrates the power of λόγος, namely, magical incantations. His account begins as follows:

φέρει δὴ πρὸς ἄλλον ἀπ’ ἄλλου μεταστῶ λόγον. αἱ γὰρ ἔνθεοι διὰ λόγων ἐπωδαὶ  
ἐπαγωγοὶ ἡδονῆς, ἀπαγωγοὶ λύπης γίνονται·

Now I will switch from one argument to another. For, through speech, divine incantations become bringers of pleasure and dispellers of pain.

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<sup>202</sup> Gordon, too, remarks in reference to the ἐπαιοιδῆ scene in the *Odyssey* that “his [i.e., Gorgias's] explicitly psychological account [...] seems to *abandon any claim to be able to explain how incantation might halt bleeding*” (2002: 76, emphasis mine).

As Gorgias describes it, the extraordinary effects associated with the domains of poetry and magical incantations are carried out through speech (διὰ λόγων) and, in some sense, owe their power to speech. Immediately following this passage, Gorgias explains how magical incantations work:

συγγινομένη γὰρ τῇ δόξῃ τῆς ψυχῆς ἢ δύνάμει τῆς ἐπωδῆς ἔθελξε καὶ ἔπεισε καὶ μετέστησεν αὐτὴν γοητεία. γοητείας δὲ καὶ μαγείας δισσαὶ τέχναι εὗρονται, αἱ εἰσι ψυχῆς ἀμαρτήματα καὶ δόξης ἀπατήματα.

This passage has proven rather tricky for scholars to interpret and, thus, I have left it untranslated for the moment. The crux of the problem centers on the phrase δισσαὶ τέχναι. To many scholars, this phrase indicates that Gorgias is limiting the power of magic to *two separate arts* of speech and that these two arts must be supplied from context. For instance, many have looked back to §9 assuming that Gorgias's claim about the δισσαὶ τέχναι refers to the shared magical arts of incantations and poetry.<sup>203</sup> Some who follow this tack have gone even further suggesting that the δισσαὶ τέχναι refer not only to the arts of poetry and incantations but to the arts of poetry and *prose* – thus, interpreting away the category of magic altogether.<sup>204</sup> This move to link Gorgias's remark about the δισσαὶ τέχναι directly back to the earlier remarks about poetry in section 9, has rightly seemed unnecessary to some scholars. For instance, MacDowell, in his commentary, proposes that the two arts in question should correspond to the two genitives of μαγεία and γοητεία.<sup>205</sup> While this reading is not impossible, it problematically suggests that the phrase 'γοητείας [...] καὶ μαγείας' is not another

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<sup>203</sup> De Romilly 1973, 1975: 3-22.

<sup>204</sup> Untersteiner 1954: 116; cf. Duncan 1938: 406 ("inspired incantations in prose"). Verdenius counters these interpretations and rather perplexingly proposes that the δισσαὶ τέχναι refer to "oratory and incantation" (1981: 122 n. 37).

<sup>205</sup> Macdowell 1993 [1982]: 33.

pleonasm (which would be quite characteristic of Gorgias's style). Instead, it hints at some Prodician distinction between μαγεία and γοητεία which elsewhere function as close synonyms.<sup>206</sup>

I suggest that there are two possible solutions. One would be to read δισσαί not as 'two' but, more strictly, as 'twofold'.<sup>207</sup> If the τέχναι of magic are not read as two in number but twofold by nature, we no longer need to look for two separate arts of incantatory speech. Instead, we would say that Gorgias depicts the τέχναι of magic as a family of various arts of speech which together have a dual nature. Another solution, offered by Thomas Buchheim, is to take δισσαί as 'two' and to take τέχναι as meaning not 'arts' per se, but the 'products' that result from certain arts.<sup>208</sup> On both readings, δισσαί – the twofold nature of the arts or two products of arts – would correspond to the subsequent relative clause wherein Gorgias mentions errors of the soul and deceptions of opinion (ψυχῆς ἀμαρτήματα καὶ δόξης ἀπατήματα).<sup>209</sup> This reading receives further support from my earlier interpretation of how speech works in the Helen – namely, it involves a dual process in which λόγος is picked up by the eyes of opinion, and opinion then counsels the soul similarly to how sights are picked up by the eyes themselves which in turn impact the soul. Following this line of reasoning, a possible translation would run as follows:

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<sup>206</sup> Cf. Aeschin. 3.137. MacDowell admits that Gorgias makes no explicit distinction between these two τέχναι – “Gorgias does not indicate what he thinks is the difference between them [i.e., γοητεία and μαγεία].” This admission is especially glaring insofar as one of MacDowell's arguments against reading the two τέχναι as, say, 'prose and poetry' is that “if Gorgias had meant this, he would have given *some sort of definition or indication of what the two techniques were*” (1993 [1982]: 34 my emphasis). Others who have followed this line of interpretation have fallen into a similar predicament. For instance, Dickie raises the problem only to dismiss it: “Whether it is anything more than a difference in name that leads Gorgias to speak of mageia and goeteia as separate crafts it is impossible to say. However that may be, what is clear is that Gorgias cannot in fact distinguish between the pair, which is to say that they are not really separate concepts” (2001: 34; cf. Collins 2008: 58-9).

<sup>207</sup> Compare δισσαίσιν ἀπειροῖς κλιθεῖς at Soph. *Trach.* 101 with Jebb 2004 [1892] ad loc.

<sup>208</sup> Buchheim 1989: ad loc. Compare Aristotle's comment: “For a τέχνη is used for the thing which comes from the 'art' as well as the artistic thing itself, and so to φύσις is used to denote the thing which comes from a 'nature' and the natural thing itself” (τέχνη λέγεται τὸ κατὰ τέχνην καὶ τὸ τεχνικόν, οὕτω καὶ φύσις τὸ κατὰ φύσιν λέγεται καὶ τὸ φυσικόν, Arist. *Ph.* 2.1 193a31-3; cf. Arist. *Soph. el.* 34 183b-184a).

<sup>209</sup> A similar conclusion is reached by Segal 1962: 112.

συγγινομένη γὰρ τῇ δόξει τῆς ψυχῆς ἢ δύνάμει τῆς ἐπαρδῆς ἔθελξε καὶ ἔπεισε καὶ μετέστησεν αὐτὴν γοητεία. γοητείας δὲ καὶ μαγείας δισσαὶ τέχναι εὔρηνται, αἱ εἰσι ψυχῆς ἀμαρτήματα καὶ δόξης ἀπατήματα.

For the power of the incantation, joining with the opinion of the soul, enchants and persuades and alters it with magic. And the arts of enchantment and magic are found to be twofold by nature (or ‘the products of enchantment and magic are found to be two in number’) – namely, the errors of the soul and the deceptions of opinion.

On this reading, the power of magic, which Gorgias refers to pleonastically as both γοητεία and μαγεία, is in keeping with the concept of enchantment found in the poets – that is to say, the arts of magic are *not* limited to two modes of speech but *available to all types and techniques of speech which happen to produce a certain psychosomatic effect*. Gorgianic enchantment is, thus, not the sister art of poetry, nor is it explicitly limited to a particular genre or style.<sup>210</sup> It is a special effect shared by many types of speech. Unlike the poets, however, Gorgias grounds this special, psychosomatic effect in a rough psychagogic model that hinges on the errors of the soul and deceptions of opinion.

In sections 11-13, Gorgias goes on to describe how speech produces deception of opinion and errors of the soul; however, his label for this process changes from enchantment to persuasion. In section 11, Gorgias tells his audience that, since mortals cannot know the past, present, or future, knowledge is, for most (πλεῖστοι), founded upon slippery and unstable opinion (δόξα σφαλερὰ καὶ ἀβέβαιος). Thus, those who *persuade* others (πείθουσι) do so merely by fabricating false speech (ψευδῆ λόγον πλάσαντες) which deceives opinion (δόξα) – “the counselor to the soul” (σύμβουλον τῇ ψυχῇ). In section 12, which is unfortunately quite corrupt, Gorgias describes the effect of persuasive speech on the soul and compares this effect to a physical force (βία) or constraint

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<sup>210</sup> It is worth stressing that, like the poets, Gorgias nowhere links the magical effect with purely phonic or acoustic tricks (as some have stressed, such as Gordon 2002: 76-7, Ford 2002: 161 ff., et al.). It is, perhaps, due to Gorgias’s own formal flourishes that scholars frequently tend to equate Gorgias’s remarks about the magic of speech with the magic of rhythm, rhyme, and sonority. While Gorgias would hardly deny that these features of speech are conducive of enchantment, his remarks about the power of λόγος are not so limited.

(ἀνάγκη). Finally, in section 13, Gorgias offers three examples of the persuasive λόγος which “imprints the soul as it wishes” (τὴν ψυχὴν ἐτυπώσατο ὅπως ἐβούλετο). These examples are: (1) the words of cosmologists, which “by removing and establishing one opinion for another, make unbelievable and unclear things appear before the eyes of opinion” (δόξαν ἀντὶ δόξης τὴν μὲν ἀφελόμενοι τὴν δ’ ἐνεργασάμενοι τὰ ἄπιστα καὶ ἄδηλα φαίνεσθαι τοῖς τῆς δόξης ὄμμασιν ἐποίησαν); (2) the courtroom speech, which is “written with art, not spoken with truth” (τέχνη γραφαίς, οὐκ ἀληθείᾳ λεχθεῖς);<sup>211</sup> and (3) philosophical debate, which shows “how the rapidity of thought makes the trust in opinion easily changeable” (γνώμης τάχος ὥς εὐμετάβολον ποιοῦν τὴν τῆς δόξης πίστιν).

It is not until section 14 that the category of enchantment reappears. In this section, Gorgias offers a final analogy which acts as a summary statement about “the power of speech” (ἡ τοῦ λόγου δύναμις). This time, the power of speech is not compared to the power of an incantation (ἡ δύναμις τῆς ἐπωδῆς), as it was earlier (§ 10), but to the power of drugs (φάρμακα). Gorgias claims that λόγος affects the soul (ψυχὴ) just as drugs (φάρμακα) affect bodies (σώματα); he qualifies his comparison by drawing upon contemporary, medico-magical trends of cathartic healing and claims that, just as a φάρμακον may expel one fluid or another, producing health or death, so too, utterances may cause pain or pleasure, fear or bravery, and may even “drug and *enchant* the soul by some evil persuasion” (πειθοῖ τινα κακῇ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐφαρμάκευσαν καὶ ἐξεγοήτευσαν).

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<sup>211</sup> The parallel in Isocrates *Antid.* 1.4 indicates that “compulsory speeches” (τοὺς ἀναγκαίους διὰ λόγων ἀγῶνας) ought to be taken as “courtroom speeches.”

### 2.2.2. Why magic?

There are obvious complications with Gorgias's account of magic. If Gorgias's definition of enchantment is not limited to a set of techniques or genres of speech but, instead, acts as a label for all techniques which induce errors of the soul and deceptions of opinion, it becomes difficult to distinguish enchantment from, say, persuasion. Matters are made worse when, later, persuasion blends back into deception, and, finally, when enchantment, persuasion, and deception are all lumped together with *φάρμακα* and are all slapped with the label of *λόγος*. Thus, Gorgias seems to present *λόγος* through a collection of overlapping frames which, in final analysis, become rather difficult to distinguish by the end of his account. Nevertheless, there is a tendency in scholarship to pick one of these overlapping categories as a master category and to read the others as mere subdomains which are epiphenomenal or metaphorical. It is for this reason that Gorgias's account is variously read as a doctrine of deception,<sup>212</sup> a model of persuasion/rhetoric,<sup>213</sup> a theory of catharsis,<sup>214</sup> or an account of the magical power of the word.<sup>215</sup>

Gorgias is, unfortunately, not so straightforward. In fact, he seems to have expended some effort in allowing for these various categories to blend together. And this process of blending is quite characteristic of Gorgias's style – especially in the *Helen*. We saw, in the first half of this chapter, how Gorgias's four carefully enumerated proofs for Helen's defense (divine necessity, force, powerful

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<sup>212</sup> For instance, Verdenius 1981: 116: "Gorgias based his art of rhetoric on two principles, viz. (1) persuasion is a form of deception, and (2) the cogency of a speech depends largely on its poetic qualities." See also Bons 2004: 245.

<sup>213</sup> For instance, Parry 1992: 152: "Gorgias was, like Hippocrates, a rationalist, intent on pressing the claims of the non-literal "magic" of rhetorical persuasion." See also Lain Entralgo 1970: 99: "metaphors that transform the persuasive word into 'glad satiety,' 'charm,' and 'witchery.'"

<sup>214</sup> Collins has argued that a medico-magical theory of catharsis sits at the center of Gorgias's account of *λόγος* (2009: 542; 2008: xiii, 58-60).

<sup>215</sup> Gorgias is a "theoretician of the magic spell of words" (De Romilly 1975: 20). George Walsh, rightly, lets the ambiguity stand, noting that the words for persuasion, deception, enchantment seem to be used interchangeably (1984: 154 n. 9).



speech, and eros) all bleed together increasingly in the course of the speech through the use of recurrent diction and the tacit conflation.<sup>216</sup> On a more minute, stylistic level, we can also see that Gorgias frequently stirs separate yet neighboring semantic categories into eddies of assonance wherein similar sounds seem to erode differences in meaning. We can take, for instance, **λαβοῦσα** καὶ οὐ **λαθοῦσα** ('choosing and not forgetting' § 4), **νομίζω** καὶ **ὀνομάζω** ('deeming and naming' § 9), **πεισθεῖσα** ὡς **ἀναγκασθεῖσα** ('being persuaded and being coerced' § 12).<sup>217</sup> By phonically assimilating different terms and categories in this way, Gorgias can subtly coin new conceptual domains which share semantic elements from each part of the blend. For instance, ignorance may be framed variously as an 'error' (**ἁμαρτία** καὶ **ἁμαθία** § 1), as a 'sickness' (**νόσημα** καὶ **ψυχῆς ἀγνόημα** § 19), and as an 'injustice' (**μώμου ἀδικίαν** καὶ **δόξης ἁμαθίαν** § 21). A similar process is at play with Gorgias's careful blending of the concepts of persuasion, deception, drugs, and enchantment in sections 8-14. By eliding categories such as these in a sort of Prodician nightmare,

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<sup>216</sup> See n. 12 above.

<sup>217</sup> Examples of this can be gathered from all parts of the speech:

**ἁμαρτία** καὶ **ἁμαθία**, § 1  
**ὁμόφωνος** καὶ **ὁμόψυχος**, § 2  
**λαβοῦσα** καὶ οὐ **λαθοῦσα**, § 4  
**προβήσομαι** καὶ **προθήσομαι**, § 5  
**ἐρασθεῖσα** εἴτε λόγῳ **πεισθεῖσα** εἴτε βίῳ **ἀρπασθεῖσα** εἴτε ὑπὸ **θείας ἀνάγκης ἀναγκασθεῖσα**, § 6 = § 20  
**βία** ἢ **ῥάσθη** καὶ **ἀνόμως ἐβιάσθη** καὶ **ἀδίκως ὑβρίσθη**, § 7  
**ἀπολογήσασθαι** καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν **ἀπολύσασθαι**, § 8  
**σμικροτάτῳ** σώματι καὶ **ἀφανεστάτῳ**, § 8  
**νομίζω** καὶ **ὀνομάζω**, § 9  
**πραγμάτων** καὶ **σωμάτων**, § 9 and § 18  
**γοητείας** δὲ καὶ **μαγείας**, § 10  
**ψυχῆς ἁμαρτήματα** καὶ **δόξης ἀπατήματα**, § 10  
**πεισθεῖσα** ὡς **ἀναγκασθεῖσα**, § 12  
**ἔτερεψε** καὶ **ἔπεισε**, § 13  
**ἐφαρμάκευσαν** καὶ **ἐξεγοήτευσαν**, § 14  
**ἀπέσβεσε** καὶ **ἐξήλασεν**, § 17  
**χρωμάτων** καὶ **σωμάτων**, § 18  
**ἀπώσασθαι** καὶ **ἀμύνασθαι**, § 19  
**νόσημα** καὶ **ψυχῆς ἀγνόημα**, § 19  
**ἀρπάσας** ὡς **ὑβρίσας** ἠδίκησεν, ἢ δὲ **ἀρπασθεῖσα** ὡς **ὑβρισθεῖσα** ἐδυστύχησεν, § 20  
**μώμου ἀδικίαν** καὶ **δόξης ἁμαθίαν**, § 21.

Gorgias allows the blend to constitute a new conceptual domain wherein the various semantic ranges of persuasion, deception, drugs, and enchantment are all weighted towards one another centripetally with λόγος at the center.<sup>218</sup> In the end, Gorgias's account is not a doctrine of deception, nor persuasion, nor catharsis, nor enchantment only; instead, it is an account of the power of λόγος, and this power of λόγος is colored in one way or another by each of these categories.

For us, it will be most important to determine what color the category of enchantment adds to this blend. What I shall argue is that the category of enchantment serves as a suitable complement to Gorgias's account of non-discursive speech in two ways: (1) it provides a useful psychosomatic analog for intuiting how Gorgias's theory of λόγος works; and (2) it provides a frame for how to judge the ends and efficacy of Gorgias's λόγος. In particular, the category of enchantment helps frame speech as an ambivalent agent of distraction – an attitude about speech that not only fits the immediate context (which aims to portray Helen as a hapless victim), but also appears in line with Gorgias's own attitude about speech more generally.

#### **2.2.2.1. Framework for psychagogy**

As we saw in the first half of the chapter, Gorgias's *Helen* presents a newfangled account of how speech works. This account departs from previous Pre-Socratic theories of speech insofar as it is not founded upon the concept of linguistic reference and instead promotes the idea that speech acts upon the listener directly, just as sensory phenomena act upon the senses directly. However, Gorgias's λόγος is sub-phenomenal and imperceptible and, instead of impacting the organs of

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<sup>218</sup> It may be helpful to think of Gorgias's move here as a studied form of 'conceptual integration' or 'blending', as described by cognitive linguists Fauconnier and Turner 2002. For an application of this concept to the poetry of Timotheus and New Music more broadly, see Budelman and LeVen 2014. Gorgias could be productively read in juxtaposition with the poets of New Music who are experimenting with poetry in ways that may resemble Gorgias's experiments with prose.

hearing and sight, it impacts the soul (ψυχή) through opinion (δόξα). In effect, Gorgias proposes a psychosomatic account of speech which is not a far cry from how poets traditionally describe enchanting speech. By drawing the category of verbal enchantment into his account of non-discursive speech, Gorgias provides a complementary framework for intuiting how his model of speech works.

Not only does Gorgias utilize the traditional framework of enchantment as an analog for his theory of λόγος, but he also theorizes about it more explicitly than the poets had and updates it slightly to fit his linguistic model. As we saw above, poetic descriptions of verbal enchantment often hover between mind and body. But while the poets describe an array of mental and bodily organs which are variously influenced by magic – ranging from, eyes (ὄσσε/ὄμματα) to limbs (γυῖον) to heart (ἤτορ) to spirit (θυμός) to mind (νόος/φρήν) – none speak of enchanting the soul (ψυχή) as Gorgias does. This is because the word ψυχή had not yet taken on the meaning of soul per se. In early texts, such as Homer, ψυχή refers primarily to the smoke-like substance which departs the body at death. Thus, in magical discourse, ψύχή was primarily the organ associated with necromancy (ψυχάγωγία).<sup>219</sup> Over the course of the fifth century, ψυχή had slowly come to be understood as the unified locus of an individual's sensation and cognition.<sup>220</sup> This new role makes the soul an appealing target of not only Gorgias's λόγος, which impacts the mind in the way sensory phenomena impact the senses, but also the psychosomatic effect of enchantment, which, likewise, flits between the physical and the psychical.<sup>221</sup> By bringing discourses surrounding ψύχή

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<sup>219</sup> ψυχάγωγοις [...] γόοις, Aesch. *Pers.* 687; cf. Ar. *Av.* 1555.

<sup>220</sup> See Laks 1999.

<sup>221</sup> We can find other contemporary 'materialistic' descriptions of the soul in Hippocratic writings; however, the closest *comparandum* is Democritus and the Democritean descriptions of soul therapy. It seems that Democriteans

into dialectic with traditional discourse surrounding magic, Gorgias opens up a new theoretical space for understanding speech which is based on a process of psychagogy. Although Gorgias does not use the word ψυχαγωγία explicitly, he may be in some way responsible for its popular extension in meaning from necromancy to verbal enchantment, which likewise takes hold in the fifth century.<sup>222</sup> Whether or not Gorgias is a pioneer in revising the poetic concept of enchantment as a type of soul-moving, the framework of psychagogy which he uses to justify these linguistic ideas does prove to have lasting power.<sup>223</sup>

#### 2.2.2.2. Frame for a powerful and distracting effect

In addition to providing a framework for how λόγος might be understood to work, the concept of enchantment also provides Gorgias with a frame for judging the ends and efficacy of this non-discursive form of λόγος. As we noted before, Gorgias's account of enchantment is presented as one part of a larger constellation of different frames (e.g., deception, persuasion, and drugs) that not

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were developing theories of ψυχαγωγία around the same time as Gorgias was developing his ideas of psychagogic speech (see my remarks on the comic poet Timocles and the Democritean Apollodotus in ch. 3, n. 12). Heraclitus is another early outlier in the way he uses the word ψυχή as well as λόγος. The word ψυχή is reimagined as the organ by which one may grasp the λόγος of the universe (DK 22B45 = Diog. Laert. 9.7; DK 22B85 = Plut. *Cor.* 22 (et al.); DK 22B107 = Sext. *Emp. Math.* 7.126; DK 22B115 = Stob. 3.1.180a). It may be tempting to trace a line of influence from Heraclitus to Gorgias; however, much is still in dispute about what Heraclitus means by either term (Nussbaum 1972; Betegh 2007; Johnston 2014).

<sup>222</sup> It was once popular to theorize about Gorgias's role in coining this use (Süss 1910: 77-9; Pohlenz 1965 [1920]: 2:436-72). In the end, it is probably impossible to tell what hand Gorgias had in the semantic shift. It should be noted that forms of ψυχαγωγία never cease to be used to refer to necromancy as well (De Romilly 1975: 15). The important role of ψυχαγωγία in the history of rhetoric more generally, has been underappreciated, as Stauffer notes: "Obwohl sie in rhetorischen Werken zumeist nicht als Stichwort expliziert oder gar diskutiert wird – und die Forschung sie daher bislang kaum je beachtet hat – spielt die P. in jeder Phase der Rhetorikgeschichte von den Anfängen bis zum heutigen Tag eine nicht zu unterschätzende Rolle" (2005).

<sup>223</sup> Already, Euripides uses ψυχή as the locus of enchantment when Hippolytus is labeled as an enchanter (ἐπωδός) and magician (γόης) who might overpower Theseus's soul (τὴν ἐμὴν [...] ψυχὴν κρατῆσαι, Eur. *Hipp.* 1038-1040). An important and fascinating later *comparandum* for Gorgias's concept of psychagogy is the Derveni Papyrus, wherein verbal enchantments are explicitly said to strike fear into the daimons which are equated with souls (ψυχαί): "the incantation of the magoi turn the daimons (i.e., souls) when they get in the way" (ἐπ[αιδῆ] δ[ὲ] τ(ῶν) μάγων δαίμονας ἐμ[ποδῶν] γ[ινομένου]ς μεθιστάναι, § 17 Laks and Most). As Radcliffe Edmonds has shown, Gorgias and the Derveni author seem to be playing similar epideictic games (2013: 124-35).

only work together to frame Gorgias's description of λόγος, but also frame one another in particular ways. That is, each category frames and is framed by each other category. When Gorgias describes λόγος in terms of enchantment (μαγεία, γοητεία, θέλξις, ἐπαοιδαί), for instance, this category of enchantment is framed by the other categories of persuasion (πειθός), deception (ἀπάτη), and drugs (φάρμακα) that Gorgias also brings in to describe the force of λόγος. This process of blending is made possible because there already exists a great deal of overlap between these neighboring semantic domains.<sup>224</sup> As we saw in the survey of the poets above, the category of enchantment often colors the categories of persuasion and deception. Gorgias seems to go farther than the earlier poets by casting verbal enchantment as somehow equivalent to or interchangeable with verbal persuasion or deception. This allows Gorgias to give the sense that λόγος does not simply deceive or persuade but enchant. In other words, it deceives and persuades *in an extraordinary way*. Thus what the frame of enchantment brings to Gorgias's defense is the requisite sense of *extraordinary* distraction, while the frames of persuasion and deception orient that experience towards the type of hapless bamboozlement which one might imagine Helen undergoing (rather than, say, the experience of a delightful diversion).

### 2.2.2.3. Frame for ambivalent ends and efficacy

With that being said, Gorgias's discussion of the deceptive and persuasive qualities of speech need not be read as entirely negative. In the *Helen* and elsewhere in Gorgias's writing, the categories of deception and persuasion are – like enchantments and φάρμακα – highly ambiguous.<sup>225</sup> For Gorgias, truth is certainly a desirable element of speech. Yet the difficulty in

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<sup>224</sup> See, in general, Pratt 1993: 73-81 for the semantic overlap between θέλξις, ἀπάτη, and πειθός. For the semantic overlap between words for enchantment and drugs, see Dickie 2001: 13; cf. Collins 2008: 60.

<sup>225</sup> “*Magos* and *goes* are coupled with the sense ‘deceivers’ by Gorgias, *Helen*, 10 (though Gorgias did not disapprove of deception)” (Gordon 1987: 90 n.5).

assessing the truth of speech leads Gorgias to explore the relative benefits and detriments of untrue or only subjectively true speech.<sup>226</sup> His ambivalence is especially evident in the opening of the *Helen*:

κόσμος πόλει μὲν εὐανδρία, σώματι δὲ κάλλος, ψυχῇ δὲ σοφία, πράγματι δὲ ἀρετή, λόγῳ δὲ ἀλήθεια.

An ornament is manliness for a city, beauty for a body, wisdom for a soul, excellence for an action, and truth for speech.

I have presented the most common reading of the passage. However, should we read truth as an ornament for speech, or ornament as the truth for speech? The syntax allows for both and it is quite likely that Gorgias welcomes the ambiguity.<sup>227</sup> In the rest of the *Helen* and elsewhere in his writings, Gorgias focuses not so much on how speech can be true but how speech can seem to be true in a subjective manner. What interests him, primarily, are the various uses, applications, merits, and faults of the subjective powers of speech. With the question of truth put to one side, Gorgias can explore how deceptive speech or persuasive speech can carry out their effect for good or for ill. In a well-known fragment preserved by Plutarch, Gorgias is said to have remarked on the positive nature of becoming immersed in, or, more pointedly, deceived by a fictional stage performance:

ἀπάτην [...] ἢν ὁ τ' ἀπατήσας δικαιότερος τοῦ μὴ ἀπατήσαντος καὶ ὁ ἀπατηθεὶς σοφώτερος τοῦ μὴ ἀπατηθέντος.

[Tragedy is] a deception [...] wherein the one who deceived is more appropriate than the one who did not deceive, and the one who is deceived is wiser than the one who is not deceived.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> I agree, in broad outline, with Morgan that “Gorgias operates with two notions of truth, one factual and one subjective. The difficulty of establishing the former leads to emphasis on the latter as criterion” (2000: 123).

<sup>227</sup> Compare Gorgias’s comments about seeming and being (DK 82B26 = Procl. *In Hes. Op.* 83) and his genealogy of Helen where Zeus *seems* to be the father because he *is*, Tyndareus merely says or is said to be the father (*Helen* § 4).

<sup>228</sup> DK 82B23 = Plut. *Gloria Ath.* 348c. The sentiment is not uniquely Gorgianic. Plutarch quotes the fragment again in another treatise wherein he couples the Gorgias quotation with Homer’s description of Aphrodite’s *κεστός* and Simonides’s remark that the Thessalians were too ignorant to be deceived (*ἐξαπατᾶσθαι*) by him (Plut. *Quomodo adul.* 15d). See also the *Dissoi Logoi*: “In tragedy and painting whoever deceives most in making things similar to true things, is the best” (*ἐν γὰρ τραγωδοποιίᾳ καὶ ζωγραφίᾳ ὅστις <κα> πλεῖστα ἐξαπατῇ ὅμοια τοῖς ἀληθινοῖς ποιέων, οὗτος ἀριστος*, *Dialex.* 3.10; cf. 3.17, 2.28).

Plutarch follows up with a highly probable explanation of what Gorgias means:

ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἀπατήσας δικαιότερος, ὅτι τοῦθ' ὑποσχόμενος πεποίηκεν· ὁ δ' ἀπατηθεὶς  
σοφώτερος· εὐάλωτον γὰρ ὑφ' ἡδονῆς λόγων τὸ μὴ ἀναίσθητον.

The one who deceives is more appropriate because he has carried out what he has promised. The other who is deceived is wiser. For whatever is not without sensation is easily captured by the pleasure of words.<sup>229</sup>

For Gorgias, ἀπάτη is not a dirty word.<sup>230</sup> Nor is πειθος. Even though Gorgias cites ‘some evil persuasion’ (πειθοῖ τινι κακῇ) at the close of section 14, he may be, as Halliwell suggests, tacitly suggesting that there is a good form of persuasion as well.<sup>231</sup> Thus, in the *Helen*, by including the frames of enchantment and φάρμακα, Gorgias is able to underscore his ambiguous attitude toward deception, persuasion, and λόγος, more generally. As he notes, λόγος, insofar as it functions like an enchantment and like a φάρμακον, is capable of both positive and negative effects – of bringing pleasure and pain (ἐπαγωγοὶ ἡδονῆς, ἀπαγωγοὶ λύπης §10; οἱ μὲν ἐλύπησαν, οἱ δὲ ἔτερψαν §14), imparting courage and fear (οἱ δὲ ἐφόβησαν, οἱ δὲ εἰς θάρσος κατέστησαν τοὺς ἀκούοντας §14). Thus, just as Gorgias orients the category of enchantment toward deception and persuasion, he likewise infuses the categories of persuasion and deception with the ambivalence of enchantments.

As we shall see in later chapters, the ambivalence of Gorgianic enchantment is somewhat peculiar. Gorgias seems to have wanted to embrace the ambiguous ends of the category magic,

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<sup>229</sup> Plut. *Gloria Ath.* 348c. “Plutarch proves to be a reliable and faithful ‘reporter’ of the fragment under consideration” (Bons 2004: 248).

<sup>230</sup> It is a word that differs from ψεῦδος, insofar as it describes a deception not solely linked to a factual falsehood: “pseudos describes the objective falsity of (almost always) speech, while thelxis and apate describe a psychological effect that may be caused not only by words but by deeds or things, not only by what is false (a pseudos) but by anything that creates a lapse of perception or judgment” (Pratt 1993: 73-4; cf. 19 n.10). Similarly, Untersteiner writes that ἀπάτη “denotes the subjective condition under which deception may occur” (1954: 109). Some have tried to etymologize the word as having a sense of “leading away” (Verdenius 1981: 116; cf. Bons 2004: 245 and “leading astray” Bons 2007: 43). But the etymology is actually unclear (Beekes 2010: ad loc.; cf. Aesch. *Supp.* 111 where ἀπάτη is linked to ἄτη).

<sup>231</sup> “...‘evil persuasion,’ actually entails the possibility of ‘good persuasion’” (Halliwell 282 n.37).

which oscillates between curse and miracle, boon and bane. Most other writers are careful to indicate whether the enchantment they speak of is positive or negative, desirable or undesirable. When we turn to Plato, we shall see how he not only inherits the Gorgianic concept of verbal enchantment but also carefully harnesses that category in ways that fit his philosophical ends – carefully demarcating positive uses of verbal enchantment from negative ones. Before moving ahead, it is worth taking a sidelong glance toward the poetry of Pindar, an older contemporary of Gorgias’s, who anticipates Plato’s program of distinguishing good enchantment from bad and, in this way, serves as a useful foil for the description of incantatory rhetoric we find in the *Helen* and helpful preface to Plato.

### **Coda: Pindaric Magic**

Pindar’s poetry showcases the phenomenon of magic in various ways. Not only do Pindar’s myths involve love magic and healing magic, but Pindar himself often compares the powers of his own song with the powers of magic. When he does so, he is careful to comment upon this analogy and frame it in ways that augment his claims to poetic excellence and personal righteousness.

In *Pythian* 3, an ode performed for Hieron of Syracuse, Pindar tells the story of the corruption of Asclepius, who, although capable of magically healing plague-stricken people with gentle incantations (μαλακαὶ ἐπαιδαί), soothing (προσανέα) draughts, and drugs (φάρμακα),<sup>232</sup> was tempted by profit and used his healing magic to raise the dead, thereby, incurring the retribution of Zeus.<sup>233</sup> After reaching this point in the story, Pindar draws a personal moral from the tale:

χρὴ τὰ εὐκότα παρ

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<sup>232</sup> Pind. *Pyth.* 3.47-54.

<sup>233</sup> Elsewhere, Pindar describes wealth as a beguilement of pleasure (θέλγητρον ἄδονᾶς) which stings/pricks (νύσσει, Fr. 223 Maehler).



δαιμόνων μαστευόμεν θναταῖς φρασίν  
γνόντα τὸ παρ ποδός, οἷας εἰμὲν αἴσας.  
μή, φίλα ψυχά, βίον ἀθάνατον  
σπεῦδε, τὰν δ' ἔμπρακτον ἄντλει μαχανάν.  
εἰ δὲ σώφρων ἄντρον ἔναι' ἔτι Χείρων, καί τί οἱ  
φίλτρον ἐν θυμῷ μελιγάρυες ὕμνοι  
ἀμέτεροι τίθεν, ἱατῆρά τοι κέν νιν πίθον  
καί νυν ἐσλοῖσι παρασχεῖν ἀνδράσιν θερμᾶν νόσων  
ἢ τινα Λατοῖδα κεκλημένον ἢ πατέρος.

One should seek what is appropriate from the gods with mortal minds, knowing what lies at our feet and what our lot in life is. Do not, my dear soul, seek an immortal life, rather exhaust the practical means left to you. And if wise Chiron were still dwelling in his cave, and if my honey-voiced hymns could put a spell on his heart, I would surely have persuaded him to provide now a healer for the feverish illnesses of good men, either someone called a son of Leto or Zeus.<sup>234</sup>

Unlike Asclepius, Pindar vows to stick within the limits of what is mortal and practicable. He does not raise Chiron from the dead or even attempt to heal the sick himself; instead, he assures the audience that if Chiron were alive, he would produce a charm (φίλτρον) of his own – namely, his honey-sweet songs (μελιγάρυες ὕμνοι) – which would certainly (τοι) persuade Chiron to deliver true healers with divine pedigrees. For Pindar, then, the power of song can produce extraordinary benefit without exceeding the limits set upon human agency. Pindaric magic is a form of pragmatic (ἔμπρακτον) magic that differs from divine magic more in degree than in its means, ends, or efficacy. When Pindar uses it, he does so to persuade those in power, like Chiron (a lightly-veiled stand-in for Hieron), to do good and not evil.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Pind. *Pyth.* 3.58-68.

<sup>235</sup> Sarah Iles Johnston has shown how, in *Pythian* 4, Pindar presents Jason's deceptive love magic as a negative foil to his own poetic program of truth-oriented enchantment: "Jason's experiences stand in sharp contrast to those of both Battus and Pindar. He was an accomplished rhetorician in his own right, but when he met the limits of his own abilities, rather than subordinating himself to divine female voice, as Pindar and Battus did, he deployed a deceptive, magical voice to constrain the divinity within Medea. His heroic program, appropriately, fell short of completion while Pindar's and Battus' met with success. Just as *peithô dolia* is destined to fail in human relationships, so it fails to establish the proper relationship between human and divine" (1995: 200).

Pindar's analogy between the power of song and the power of magic is echoed elsewhere in his victory odes. In *Nemean* 8, performed in celebration of Deinias of Aigina, Pindar welcomes the opportunity to apply a fitting boast (πρόσφορον κόμπον) to his family, and he compares his own encomiastic song to incantations (ἐπαοιδαῖς) which a man (ἀνὴρ τις) may use to make toil (κάματον) painless (νώδυνον).<sup>236</sup> Pindar presses this analogy even further at the outset of *Nemean* 4:

Ἄριστος εὐφροσύνα πόνων κεκριμένων  
 ἱατρός· αἱ δὲ σοφαί  
 Μοισᾶν θύγατρες ἀοιδαὶ θέλξαν νιν ἀπτόμεναι.  
 οὐδὲ θερμὸν ὕδωρ τόσον γε μαλθακὰ τεύχει  
 γυῖα, τόσσον εὐλογία φόρμιγγι συνάρορος.  
 ῥῆμα δ' ἐργμάτων χρονιώτερον βιοτεύει,  
 ὅ τι κε σὺν Χαρίτων τύχῃ  
 γλῶσσα φρενὸς ἐξέλοι βαθείας.

The best healer of toils which passed the test is celebration; and the wise daughters of the Muses, song, enchant this with a touch.<sup>237</sup> Nor does even warm water relieve limbs as much as praise, the companion to the lyre. For the word lives longer than deeds, which the tongue, with the help of the Graces, draws out from the depths of the mind.<sup>238</sup>

For Pindar, the effect of song is not unlike the effect of magical enchantments. Songs can persuade, and encomiastic songs can heal “with a touch” (ἀπτόμεναι). By drawing upon the label of magic to describe the power of his own song, Pindar, like Gorgias, can frame the powers of speech in the light of uncanny efficacy. However, he must be careful to frame that efficacy as safe, positive, and beneficial. As noted above, the language of enchantment swings ambivalently between the positive and negative, delight and deceit. Pindar's appropriation of magic is, thus, not without risk. To avoid attracting accusations of flattery and deception with his use of the language of enchantment, Pindar

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<sup>236</sup> Pind. *Nem.* 8.48-51.

<sup>237</sup> Machemer, following Aristarchus, argues for taking εὐφροσύνα as the antecedent of νιν – *contra* Bundy (and Didymus) and others who take πόνων as the antecedent. In the end, Machemer shows that the passage hinges upon a “... comparison between the relative effectiveness of the healer's and the poet's art” and ultimately contains “an argument that song is superior to all other means of making hearts glad” (1993: 114, 140).

<sup>238</sup> Pind. *Nem.* 4.1-8. A more truncated version of the same claim can be found at Pind. *Nem.* 3.17-18.

carefully frames his comparison between song and incantation as positive and practicable but no less efficacious. In *Nemean* 4 and 8, he frames his own poetic magic through the positive lens of healing, and, in *Pythian* 3, he constructs a negative foil – Asclepius’s necromancy – as a way of setting his own claim to magic in positive relief.<sup>239</sup>

Unlike Pindar, Gorgias foregrounds the ambiguity of enchantment and, in doing so, accents his own attitudes about the ambivalent nature of speech – especially non-referential speech. Despite Pre-Socratic concerns with linguistic correspondence, Gorgias insists that forms of speech do communicate at the peripheries of language, that emotions, desires, pains, and pleasures continue to body forth between individuals without ever being put into words. These extraordinary transmissions of feeling and meaning are best thought of in terms of magical enchantments, speech that takes hold of the soul itself, for better or for worse.

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<sup>239</sup> He also develops a negative foil in *Pythian* 4; see note 162 above.

## **Chapter 2. Plato**

For Plato, the experience of becoming enchanted by speech is not simply an alluring aspect of human psychology (as it had been for Gorgias). It was a real problem whose moral-cum-social implications posed a threat to the well-being of “individuals, whole households, and cities.”<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I argue that Plato’s dialogues betray a thoroughgoing attempt to harness the category of enchantment in ways that complement his philosophy. As we shall see, Plato incorporates into his dialogues the psychagogic framework of incantatory rhetoric that Gorgias had developed in his *Encomium of Helen*. However, Plato describes the effect of incantatory speech in greater detail than Gorgias had. Unlike Gorgias, he is careful to separate out the positive and negative ends to which the experience of enchantment should be directed and discusses with greater specificity some verbal and acoustic techniques which are particularly conducive to that experience.

The current chapter is divided into two parts. The first part treats Plato’s views on the category of magic more generally, and the second treats Plato’s views on incantatory *speech* more specifically. After making some introductory remarks about the language of magic in the Platonic corpus as well as the scholarly opinions about this language, I begin the first part by showing how, for Plato, the category of magic always labels a phenomenon that produces an extraordinary experience in an indirect manner. It is thus often indistinguishable from the psychagogic powers of

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<sup>1</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 909b5-6.

rhetoric. The sheer difficulty of distinguishing supernatural efficacy from rhetorical efficacy in matters of magic leads Plato to elide the two. Since the former is more difficult to account for than the latter, Plato frames most of his remarks about magical power in terms of the rhetorical dimension of magic – i.e., the uncanny ability to *convince* people that such extraordinary, indirect effects are real. After this, I account for how Plato conceives of the experience of rhetorical enchantment, which affects the body and soul. As several important passages from the *Laws*, *Republic*, and *Timaeus* will illustrate, Plato treats enchantment as an independent category of human experience in which a person's opinions are involuntarily altered through the manipulation of the sensory imagination. In the second part of the chapter, I show how Plato regulates the proper means and ends of incantatory speech. He acknowledges that enchantment can be brought about through a variety of verbal and acoustic techniques, of which Plato primarily stresses the psychagogic powers of song, myth, and dialectic while, at the same time, indicating that each technique can be used positively or negatively. What distinguishes good incantatory rhetoric from bad are the ends to which that rhetoric is directed. To illustrate these aspects of Plato's conception of incantatory rhetoric, I close the chapter by turning to the *Laws* where I show how Plato, in his final dialogue, harnesses the powers of verbal enchantment for good by incorporating it into the socio-political framework of his Cretan city.

## 1. Magic within the dialogues

Words associated with ἐπωδή, γοητεία, φαρμακεία, κήλησις, μαγεία, μαγγανεία, ψυχαγωγία, and, to a lesser extent, θέλγω/θέλξις all appear scattered throughout the dialogues.<sup>2</sup> When faced with this cache of magical language, scholars often aim to determine whether or not Plato or Socrates (be he the Platonic Socrates or historic Socrates) put any real stock in the ritual practice of magic. As one might expect, answers to this question are often guided by one's opinion about who Plato or Socrates was or is – whether we ought to think of him as more of a 'mystic,' a 'skeptic,' a 'moralist,' a 'rationalist,' or an 'ironist.' The differing presuppositions have shaped how the language of magic has been interpreted in the dialogues. Plato is often portrayed either as a staunch opponent of all things having to do with magic or the inventor/reviver of a good kind of philosophical magic.<sup>3</sup> This good/Platonic magic has, moreover, been interpreted in terms of

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<sup>2</sup> Although popular with other authors, words related to θέλγω/θέλξις appear only in Agathon's speech at Pl. *Symp.* 197e3. Otherwise, they are only attested in several epigrams dubiously attributed to Plato. When words associated with ψυχαγωγία appear in the dialogues, the older magical sense of the word, having to do with the practice of necromancy, is never entirely lost (De Romilly 1974: 15; Taylor 1928 ad Pl. *Tim.* 71a6). Moreover, words associated with μαγεία do not solely recall the political-cum-religious practices of the Persian μάγοι but also the Greek practice of magic (cf. Pl. *Plt.* 280e1 and Denyer 2001 ad *Alc.* 122a1).

<sup>3</sup> In antiquity and well on through the Renaissance, Plato was widely regarded as having a particular affinity for the magical arts. Modern readers of Plato are (generally) less quick to label him as a fully-fledged magician. However, scholars such as Dodds and Burkert see in Plato's magical diction a faint echo of an earlier 'shamanic' influence (Dodds 1951: 207-235; Burkert 1962). Other scholars move in the opposite direction and present Plato as the harshest critic of all things magical while highlighting the moments in the dialogues when magical practitioners come under fire (cf. Casadesús Bordoy 2002). De Romilly begins her chapter on Plato and magic in very much the same vein by underscoring Plato's apparent "hate of conjurers" (1975: 32). However, she notes that Plato's attitude toward magic broadly construed is not so one-sided and she ultimately finds that Plato distinguishes *two types of magic*: bad magic, which is illusion, and good (Socratic) magic which "rests on the obstinate destruction of all illusions" and wherein those affected are "bewildered by the power of thorough analysis" (De Romilly 1975: 36). For others who similarly find a distinction between good and bad types of magic within the dialogues, see Gellrich 1994, Belfiore 1980, Láin Entralgo 1970 [1958]: 122 ("As there are false soothsayers and true soothsayers [*Charm.*, 173c], so there are false *epôdoi* and true *epôdoi*. To this second and salutary class of charmers or enchanters Socrates and Plato wish to belong"). As we shall see, my reading bears affinities with this latter trend of scholarship.

rationality versus irrationality.<sup>4</sup> There is still more uncertainty over whether many of Plato's remarks about 'magic' are meant to be taken as metaphoric or literal, ironic or serious.<sup>5</sup> In this chapter, we see how Plato's notion of magic fails to fit neatly into any one of the scholarly binaries of metaphorical/literal, ironic/serious, approving/disapproving. Instead, much like Pindar, Plato always keeps the category of magic both at arm's length and within arm's reach; he is cautious of the ambiguous category of magic which may entail positive or negative experiences but, nevertheless, remains interested in harnessing its conceptual-cum-rhetorical value for his own philosophical ends.

### 1.1. The magic of rhetoric and the rhetoric of magic

We find Plato's most important remarks about the category of magic in his longest and latest dialogue: *Laws*.<sup>6</sup> Plato's most explicit discussion of magic per se comes in book 11 when our guiding

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<sup>4</sup> For Dodds 1951, Plato's remarks about magic and incantations constitute a domain of irrationality. For those who find, in Plato, two types of magic – one good and one bad – there is a tendency to align the category of bad magic with 'irrational' forms of persuasion and the category of good, Socratic/Platonic magic with 'rational' forms of persuasion (such as elenchus, dialectic, and the like) (De Romilly 1975, Belfiore 1980). Others, however, have rightly resisted this distinction between a rational and irrational mode of magic: "it is not sufficient to maintain, as some have done, that the incantation represents a purely rationalistic reinterpretation of the old Greek motif – prominent in Homer and given a fresh statement in Gorgias's *Helen* – of the 'magic of words'" (Halliwell 2011: 199; cf. Láin Entralgo 1970 [1958]: 122, Gellrich 1994). As I shall likewise illustrate, a strict dichotomy between rational and irrational is not as helpful in defining Plato's category of enchantment as it would first seem. The techniques of philosophical, 'Platonic' enchantment found in the dialogues do appeal primarily to the irrational parts of the soul. However, what makes this form of enchanting speech good and philosophical is the way in which it guides the irrational parts of the soul toward rational ends and ultimately trains them to evaluate embodied experiences properly.

<sup>5</sup> "[L]'usage même métaphorique du mot épode" (Boyancé 1937: 36 quoted in Láin Entralgo 1970 [1958]: 113 n. 8; cf. "metaphorical sense," Dodds 1951: 226 n. 20). Those who read Plato as developing a new category of philosophical magic often stress the metaphorical nature of this new category: "simile of magic" (De Romilly 1975: 31 et passim); Belfiore reads Plato's category of philosophical magic as a metaphoric "counter-magic" (1980: passim). Láin Entralgo begins by separating out completely what he considers the "concrete meaning" and the "new metaphorical or analogical meaning" of incantation, which both appear in Plato's dialogues. However, he ends up feeling rather uncomfortable with calling the latter a simple metaphor and falls back on the label of "true analogy" wherein, real magic and metaphoric magic overlap in the domain of what one might call the power of "suggestion" or "suggestive action" (1970 [1958]: 120). Others have likewise hesitated to present Plato's use of magical language as straightforwardly metaphorical, such as Gellrich, who recognizes a "family resemblance" between ritual magic and Plato's rhetorical magic (1994: 25; cf. Hobbs 2017: 109-111 and n.30). As will become apparent, my position shares some affinities with this latter trend.

<sup>6</sup> "Plato, an attentive if untrusting student of the sophists, will elaborate on [Gorgias's] cognitive theory of *mageia* and *goeteia*, especially in his late *Laws*" (Graf 2019: 120; cf. Graf 2002).

interlocutor, an unnamed Athenian, frames and drafts a law concerning ‘poisoning’ (φαρμακεία).<sup>7</sup> As we shall see in this passage and elsewhere, magic is defined by its *rhetorical* effect as much as by its *supernatural* effect. That is to say, for Plato, magicians are not simply those who use the supernatural devices of spells and curses to create extraordinary harm or benefit; they are also (and, perhaps, more so) those who use *rhetorical* devices to create the expectation in others (and, sometimes in themselves) that such supernatural harm/benefit is possible.<sup>8</sup>

### 1.1.1. Laws 11.932e-933e

To illustrate this, let us turn to the discussion of magic in *Laws* 932e-933e. The Athenian begins by making a crucial division between two types of poisoning (φαρμακεία), as it pertains to the human race (τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων [...] γένος): one class of poisoning results in *actual harm* and the other results in *suspected harm*.

Ὅσα τις ἄλλος ἄλλον πημαίνει φαρμάκοις, τὰ μὲν θανάσιμα αὐτῶν διείρηται, τῶν δ’ ἄλλων περι βλάβεων, εἴτε τις ἄρα πώμασιν ἢ καὶ βρώμασιν ἢ ἀλείμμασιν ἐκὼν ἐκ προνοίας πημαίνει, τούτων οὐδέν πω διερρήθη. διτταὶ γὰρ δὴ φαρμακεῖται κατὰ τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων οὔσαι γένος ἐπίσχουσι τὴν διάρρησιν. ἦν μὲν γὰρ τὰ νῦν διαρρήδην εἶπομεν, σώμασι σώματα κακουργοῦσά ἐστι κατὰ φύσιν· ἄλλη δὲ ἡ μαγανείαις τέ τισι καὶ ἐπωδαῖς καὶ καταδέσεσι λεγομέναις πείθει τοὺς μὲν τολμῶντας βλάπτειν αὐτούς, ὡς <ὄντως> δύνανται τὸ τοιοῦτον, τοὺς δ’ ὡς παντὸς μᾶλλον ὑπὸ τούτων δυναμένων γοητεύειν βλάπτονται.

Of the cases wherein one person harms another with drugs, the types that result in death were treated earlier, but nothing has yet been said about those that result in harm, whether someone caused it willingly with forethought by means of drink, food, or ointment. The reason is that poisoning is of two kinds with respect to human beings. One, which we already spoke of explicitly, is when harm is carried out through bodies in accordance with nature. The other is that which, through certain magic tricks and incantations and so-called

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<sup>7</sup> Richard Gordon describes the passage as “by far the most interesting and suggestive of any account we possess for the Classical and Hellenistic period” (1999: 251).

<sup>8</sup> Collins is right to note how “Plato concedes that his fellow Greeks practice magic, although he stops short of claiming that their activities exert anything other than psychological effects. He further adds that such activities also reinforce the practitioner’s belief in his own powers – a statement that might have come right out of the writings of Frazer, Malinowski, or Tambiah” (2008: 44).



binding curses, *persuades those who dare to do harm that they are able to do such a thing in reality and others that they really are being harmed by those capable of doing magic.*<sup>9</sup>

The Athenian's division of *φαρμακεία* into two types correlates with a larger, categorical division between *the art of the medical doctor* (ιατρός) and *the art of the magical seer* (μάντις). Doctors can do actual (ἐστὶ) and natural (κατὰ φύσιν) harm through direct contact (σώμασι σώματα), whereas magicians use tricks (μαγγανείαι), incantations (ἐπωδαί), and binding spells (καταδέσεις) to create the fearful *expectation* that harm is being done – an expectation so powerful that it borders on (παντὸς μᾶλλον) the actual experience of harm.<sup>10</sup> This does not mean, however, that the Athenian thinks all magic can be boiled down to mere rhetoric. After separating magical *φαρμακεία* from medical *φαρμακεία*, he explicitly brackets the question of whether the former is effected by supernatural means or by mere rhetorical means:

ταῦτ' οὖν καὶ περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ξύμπαντα οὔτε ῥάδιον ὅπως ποτὲ πέφυκε γινώσκειν, οὔτ' εἴ τις γνοίη, πείθειν εὐπετέες ἐτέρους. ταῖς δὲ ψυχαῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων δυσωπουμένους πρὸς ἀλλήλους περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα οὐκ ἄξιον ἐπιχειρεῖν πείθειν, κἄν<sup>11</sup> ποτε ἄρα ἴδωσί που κήρινα μιμήματα πεπλασμένα, εἴτ' ἐπὶ θύραις εἴτ' ἐπὶ τριόδοις εἴτ' ἐπὶ μνήμασι γονέων αὐτῶν τινές, ὀλιγωρεῖν πάντων τῶν τοιούτων διακελεύεσθαι μὴ σαφές ἔχουσι<sup>12</sup> δόγμα περὶ αὐτῶν.

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<sup>9</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 932e1-933a5.

<sup>10</sup> This division between two types of *φαρμακεία* is foreshadowed in book 1 of the *Laws* when the Athenian discusses the effects of wine. Wine is a *φάρμακον* which induces confidence (θάραρος) when physically imbibed. However, the Athenian stresses how, unlike wine, no *φάρμακον* exists which can instill *fear* and notes that only a γόης would suggest that such a thing does exist: “god, it seems, bestowed on humans no such drug for fear nor have we ourselves contrived one – for I do not count magicians to be in our company” (τοῦ μὲν δὴ φόβου σχεδὸν οὔτε θεὸς ἔδωκεν ἀνθρώποις τοιοῦτον φάρμακον οὔτε αὐτοὶ μεμηχανήμεθα· τοὺς γὰρ γόητας οὐκ ἐν θοίνῃ λέγω, Pl. *Leg.* 649a2-4). As De Romilly notes, this is probably a reference to the rhetorical power which is at the heart of Plato's category of magic (1975: 97 n.3). Compare also the immaterial nature of magic protections in the *Statesman* (τὴν μαγευτικὴν τὴν περὶ τὰ ἀλεξιφάρμακα, Pl. *Plt.* 280e1 with 279c-d). A similar conception of magic also seems to be implicit in Xenophon's Socratic dialogues (Xen. *Mem.* 2.6.31).

<sup>11</sup> The text has seemed problematic to editors. However, with Schöpsdau, I accept Schramm's κἄν as the only necessary emendation (2011: ad loc.).

<sup>12</sup> Saunders notes the difficulty of the participle ἔχουσι (1991: 320-321). Is the agent to be understood as ‘us’ or ‘them’? One could potentially leave it ambiguous since the passage already indicates that matters about magic are generally difficult to grasp (οὔτε ῥάδιον... γινώσκειν) – presumably for ‘us’ and for ‘them.’ However, it does not follow that *opinion* (δόγμα) about such matters is also unclear both to us and to them. I find it more likely that those who actually fear wax poppets have quite vivid *opinions* about what they see, whereas the speaker of this passage is among those who ‘have no clear opinion’ (μὴ σαφές ἔχουσι δόγμα).

Regarding these matters, and all such things surrounding them, it is not easy to know how in the world they have come about, and, even if someone did know, it is no simple matter to persuade others of it. It is not appropriate to attempt to persuade those people who bear mistrust in their souls towards one another, and even if they should ever happen to see certain wax-molded-poppets upon thresholds, crossroads, or graves of their ancestors it is not appropriate for us to order them to dismiss all such matters when we have no clear opinion concerning them.<sup>13</sup>

In this passage, which has struck readers as quite strange and even unacceptable,<sup>14</sup> the Athenian suggests that since it is difficult for humans to understand or even discuss matters surrounding *φαρμακεία*, it is unreasonable to try to convince the populace not to be suspicious of, say, a maleficent wax poppet positioned upon a threshold, a crossroad, or a grave.<sup>15</sup> Regardless of whether magic has any actual, supernatural effect, it is inevitable that the practice of cursing (real or not) will produce a potent rhetorical-cum-psychological effect on a population. For the Athenian, the practice of malign magic suggests a threat, and that suggestion of magical harm poses a danger irrespective

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<sup>13</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 933a5-933b5.

<sup>14</sup> Even some of the most seasoned readers of the *Laws*, such as Trevor Saunders, have found it hard to accept that the Athenian, our guiding interlocutor in the dialogue, would remain aporetic about the topic of magic when he had so firmly opposed the pretensions of magicians earlier in book 10. The confusion arises from the unnecessary presupposition that “In this intriguing and ingenious set of laws we meet again our old friends the magicians of the law of impiety” (Saunders 1991: 318; cf. Mayhew 2008: 202). In fact, there is no indication that book 10 and book 11 legislate against the same types of magic. In book 10, the magicians in question are those impious people who pretend to persuade the gods, and as a result, their punishment is life imprisonment. In book 11, there is no mention of the persuasion of the gods, only the persuasion of people, and the price to pay is not imprisonment but execution. As we shall see below, a critical difference between these two passages and these two practices of magic is the *expectation* that each act of magic rhetorically produces. The magic mentioned in book 10 spreads a dangerous kind of hope – namely, that gods can be bought – whereas the magic in book 11 spreads a dangerous fear – namely, that certain hidden individuals possess the power to harm others in untold and unknowable ways. It is because these two magical practices have two different rhetorical *effects* that they receive two different punishments and should not be lumped together as they often are.

<sup>15</sup> As André Laks has noted, throughout the *Laws* the Athenian tends to assume an aporetic stance regarding matters which lie beyond the ken of mortals; he labels these moments as “retreats from the sacred line” (2000: 269-73). The Athenian’s aporetic stance regarding magic is best read as yet another one of these retreats. See also Pl. *Leg.* 738b-c, 739a1-5.

of whether it carries any weight.<sup>16</sup> The law against poisoning is thus presented as a means of curbing the suggestive powers of malign magic over and above the suggested powers themselves.

When the Athenian turns to the law itself, he makes little distinction between those who *attempt* curses and those who successfully *execute* them and focuses more on the practitioners' relative claims to knowledge of magic and calibrates the punishment in accordance with these claims.

[...] πρῶτον μὲν δεῖσθαι καὶ παραινεῖν καὶ συμβουλεύειν μὴ δεῖν ἐπιχειρεῖν τοιοῦτο δοῖν μηδὲ καθάπερ παῖδας τοὺς πολλοὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων δειμαίνοντας φοβεῖν, μηδ' αὖ τὸν νομοθέτην τε καὶ τὸν δικαστὴν ἀναγκάζειν ἐξιᾶσθαι τῶν ἀνθρώπων τοὺς τοιούτους φόβους, ὡς πρῶτον μὲν τὸν ἐπιχειροῦντα φαρμάττειν οὐκ εἰδότα τί δοῖν, τὰ τε κατὰ σώματα, ἐὰν μὴ τυγχάνῃ ἐπιστήμων ὦν ἰατρικῆς, τὰ τε αὖ περὶ τὰ μαγγανεύματα, ἐὰν μὴ μάντις ἢ τερατοσκόπος ὦν τυγχάνῃ. λεγέσθω δὲ λόγος ὅδε νόμος περὶ φαρμακείας· [...] ἐὰν δὲ καταδέσειν ἢ ἐπαγωγαῖς ἢ τισιν ἐπωδαῖς ἢ τῶν τοιούτων φαρμακειῶν αἰστισινοῦν δόξη ὅμοιος εἶναι βλάπτοντι, ἐὰν μὲν μάντις ὦν ἢ τερατοσκόπος, τεθνάτω, ἐὰν δ' ἄνευ μαντικῆς, ὦν τῆς φαρμακείας ὄφλη, ταὐτὸν καὶ τούτῳ γιγνέσθω· περὶ γὰρ αὖ καὶ τούτου τιμάτω τὸ δικαστήριον ὅ τι ἂν αὐτοῖς δεῖν αὐτὸν δόξη πάσχειν ἢ ἀποτίνειν.

[...] we must first urge and exhort and advise them not to attempt to do such a thing and not to frighten a large swath of the population startled like children and force the lawgiver and judge to cure the people of such fears, since the one who first attempts to poison knows not what he does, both in respect to physical reactions (unless he happens to have the knowledge of a doctor) and with respect to those things concerning magical practices (unless he happens to be seer or watcher of portents). Now, let this be the law regarding poisoning: [...] If he is harming someone with spells of binding or attraction or certain incantations or any such type of poisoning, he will be put to death, if he happens to be a seer or watcher of portents, but, if the one convicted of this type of poisoning is ignorant of the mantic art, the same procedure will also be followed [as with all layman]: the court will dole out the punishment for the person that seems necessary for him to suffer or pay.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> "Once again, psychology is at the centre of Plato's attention" (Saunders 1991: 319). Fritz Graf terms it "psychological poisoning [...] since magical spells, as Plato understands them, rely on psychological means based on ritual action, [...] in order to persuade (πείθειν) or, rather, to frighten" (2002: 97).

<sup>17</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 933b7-933e5. My text differs from Bury's, where I follow the mss reading. See Schöpsdau 2011 ad loc. with Saunders 1972: 115.

According to the Athenian, both the expert and the layman count as practitioners of the larger phenomenon of magic. The penalty for practicing malign magic correlates not with how much supernatural power a magician actually has but with how much power he or she rhetorically *claims* to have, since the greater the claim, the greater the *fear* and *expectation of harm* that ultimately spreads throughout the population – that is to say, the more authority a practitioner of malign magic is perceived to have, the harder it will be for “the lawgiver and judge to cure the people of such a fear.”

We may ask now whether the Athenian is abolishing all magical ritual with this law. Some readers of the *Laws* have answered in the affirmative.<sup>18</sup> However, the law is actually limited in two important respects. First off, the law is only concerned with *malign* magic ritual (i.e., the practice of using spells and incantations with the intent to harm).<sup>19</sup> Second, the law is not even particularly concerned with the supernatural effects of malign magic. Instead, the danger of malign magic is projected onto its rhetorical-cum-psychological effect (i.e., the widespread fear and suspicion it spreads). Thus, maleficent wax poppets are not outlawed for the harm they physically cause but for the harmful intent they imply and the fearful expectation of harm they produce amongst the citizens.

### 1.1.2. *Laws* 10.907e-909c

This same attitude toward magic can also be traced in book 10 of the *Laws*, where we find a second important condemnation of harmful magical practices. There, the Athenian proposes a piece of legislation directed against irreverence towards the gods in which the negative rhetorical effect of

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<sup>18</sup> Such as Casadesús Bordoy 2002: 193. See also n. 14 above.

<sup>19</sup> ...insofar as the entire law is aimed at penalizing “someone ... who harms willing and with forethought” (τις ... ἐκὼν ἐκ προνοίας πημαίνει Pl. *Leg.* 932e3-4). Not all diviners are treated as dangerous (Pl. *Leg.* 828b).

magic is again discussed and penalized. In this passage, the Athenian distinguishes three categories of irreverent beliefs:<sup>20</sup>

1. gods do not exist;
2. gods do exist but have no concern for human affairs;
3. gods do exist and may be bribed by human enticements.

At the close of book 10, when it is time to mete out punishments for these impious individuals, the Athenian introduces an additional division regarding all three categories of irreverent belief: an individual who holds one of these beliefs is *either* genuine in this belief or dishonest and ironic about it.<sup>21</sup> The Athenian sentences the honest individual to no less than five years in a correctional prison. However, for the dissembling individual, he reserves one of the greatest punishments in the entire work – life imprisonment away from all civilization with no burial after death.<sup>22</sup>

Within the category of dissembling impiety, the Athenian includes many (πολλοί) diviners and practitioners of magic.<sup>23</sup> He also includes tyrants, demagogues, generals, itinerant mystagogues, and sophists as potential members of the same class; however, the magician is, for the Athenian, the most salient exemplum. When he sets out to describe the punishment of those who are impious and

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<sup>20</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 885a-b, 901c-d; cf. Pl. *Resp.* 365d-366a. Plato may borrow this tripartite division from the sophists – perhaps from Protagoras’s writings on the gods or Gorgias himself. The logical structure nicely mirrors that of Gorgias’s *On Not Being*.

<sup>21</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 908a-e. The opposition is between one who exhibits *παρρησία* and one who is *ειρωνικός*, cf. Pl. *Soph.* 268a (*ἀπλοῦς* versus *ειρωνικός*).

<sup>22</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 909b-d. In Athens, the practice of denying burial (*ἀταφία*) was reserved for the worst criminals – temple robbers, traitors, and the like. This severe punishment effectively fulfills the Athenian’s earlier remark that this ironic (*ειρωνικόν*) class of impious individuals would deserve more than one or even two deaths (*οὐχ ἑνὸς οὐδὲ δυοῖν ἄξια θανάτοιν*, Pl. *Leg.* 908e2).

<sup>23</sup> “The [dissembling individual], although opining the same things as the other [i.e., the honest individual], since he has a gift, as they call it, and is truly full of deceit and treachery, it is this class from which a good many diviners are drawn and those versed in every magic trick...” (*ὁ δὲ δὴ δοξάζων μὲν καθάπερ ἄτερος, εὐφυῆς δὲ ἐπικαλούμενος, δόλου δὴ καὶ ἐνέδρας πλήρης, ἐξ ὧν μάντεις τε κατασκευάζονται πολλοὶ καὶ περὶ πᾶσαν τὴν μαγανείαν κεκινήμενοι ...*, Pl. *Leg.* 908d1-4). I follow the manuscripts (*κεκινήμενοι*) over Bury’s popular conjecture: *γεγεννημένοι* (cf. LSJ s. v. *κινέω* B. 6).

dissembling, he singles out magicians once again and this time on their own as the prime example of this worst kind of impiety:

ὅσοι δ' ἂν θηριώδεις γένωνται πρὸς τῷ θεοῦς μὴ νομίζειν ἢ ἀμελεῖς ἢ παραιτητοὺς εἶναι, καταφρονοῦντες δὲ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ψυχαγωγῶσι μὲν πολλοὺς τῶν ζώντων, τοὺς δὲ τεθνεώτας φάσκοντες ψυχαγωγεῖν καὶ θεοὺς ὑπισχνούμενοι πείθειν, ὡς θυσίαις τε καὶ εὐχαῖς καὶ ἐπωδαῖς γοητεύοντες, ιδιώτας τε καὶ ὅλας οἰκίας καὶ πόλεις χρημάτων χάριν ἐπιχειρῶσι κατ' ἄκρας ἐξαιρεῖν.

For those who have become bestial and, in addition to not believing in the gods or believing that the gods do not care or can be bought off, they, in contempt of humankind, enchant many of the living while claiming to commune with the dead and while promising to persuade the gods, just as if they were doing magic through sacrifices, prayers, and incantations; and they endeavor to destroy utterly private individuals, whole households, and cities, all for the sake of money.<sup>24</sup>

The wordplay, which pulls together the dual meaning of ψυχαγωγεῖν, underscores the salience of rhetoric to the very practice of magic. However, it is pointedly not *all* magicians, but *many* (πολλοί) – specifically those who both maintain impious beliefs and also aim to deceive. The assertions (φάσκοντες) and promises (ὑπισχνούμενοι) that these magicians make about raising the dead and persuading the gods are what pose the greatest threat to the “private individuals, whole households, and cities.” In this law against impiety, we see once again that magic as a category is shorthand for a form of rhetoric that convincingly imparts beliefs, fears, and hopes in the hearts of the populace.

### 1.1.3. Outside the *Laws*

Throughout Plato’s dialogues, magic continues to be represented as an act that relies more on a psychological, rhetorical type of efficacy than any supernatural, ritual efficacy. In the *Republic*, for instance, Adeimantus complains about the negative rhetorical effect that is caused by practitioners of magic who claim to know incantations (ἐπωδαί), sacrifices (θυσίαι), and binding

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<sup>24</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 909a8-b6.

spells (κατάδεσμοι, ἐπαγωγαί). What Adeimantus finds so contemptible about these magical practitioners is not the dangerous supernatural effect that they *might* have on putative victims so much as the corrosive, rhetorical effect that they *do* have on general beliefs about the gods and virtue – in particular, their astonishing claims (θαυμασιώτατοι [...] λόγοι) that mortals can persuade gods into harming the just and unjust alike (ὁμοίως δίκαιον ἀδίκῳ).<sup>25</sup> We find a similar ambivalence in the *Charmides* where Socrates’s headache spell (ἐπωδή) – which he describes in positive terms – is first introduced as a ritual technique, but quickly and tacitly becomes equated with Socrates’s own philosophical-cum-rhetorical technique of dialectic.<sup>26</sup> To take one final example, we can look at Socrates’s remarks about speech-writers in the *Euthydemus*. After censuring Euthydemus and Dionysodorus for their Protean form of rhetoric that aims more at enchanting (γοητεύοντε) than displaying real wisdom,<sup>27</sup> Socrates launches into his own rhetorical display. In it, he discusses the

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<sup>25</sup> “The most astonishing of all are accounts given about gods and virtue – how gods dole out misfortune and a wretched life to many good people, and to the opposite an opposite fate. Itinerant priests and seers traveling to the doors of the wealthy persuade them that they have a power, procured from the gods through sacrifices and incantations, that, if an injustice has been committed by the individual or their ancestors, it is remedied through pleasure and feasting, or, if one should want to harm some enemy, it will (together with a minor payment) harm the just and unjust alike with certain spells of binding and attraction, *persuading the gods*, so it goes, to serve a subsidiary role” (τούτων δὲ πάντων οἱ περὶ θεῶν τε λόγοι καὶ ἀρετῆς θαυμασιώτατοι λέγονται, ὥς ἄρα καὶ θεοὶ πολλοὶς μὲν ἀγαθοῖς δυστυχίας τε καὶ βίον κακὸν ἔνεμαν, τοῖς δ’ ἐναντίοις ἐναντίαν μοῖραν. ἀγύρεται δὲ καὶ μάντιες ἐπὶ πλουσίων θύρας ἰόντες πείθουσιν ὥς ἔστι παρὰ σφίσι δύναμις ἐκ θεῶν ποριζομένη θυσίαις τε καὶ ἐπωδαῖς, εἴτε τι ἀδίκημά του γέγονεν αὐτοῦ ἢ προγόνων, ἀκεῖσθαι μεθ’ ἡδονῶν τε καὶ ἐορτῶν, ἐάν τέ τινα ἐχθρὸν πημῆναι ἐθέλῃ, μετὰ σμικρῶν δαπανῶν ὁμοίως δίκαιον ἀδίκῳ βλάψει ἐπαγωγαῖς τισιν καὶ καταδέσμοις, τοὺς θεοὺς, ὥς φασιν, πείθοντές σφισιν ὑπηρετεῖν. Pl. *Resp.* 364b3-c5).

<sup>26</sup> Most interpreters of the *Charmides* are quick to read all of Socrates’s remarks about the headache spell as somehow metaphoric for types of philosophical discourse (Van der Ben is representative, glossing ‘incantation’ and ‘charm’ with “i.e., philosophy”; see 1985: 4,14). Others go some way in the opposite direction, stressing that Socrates’s remarks should be read as a serious artifact of Greek or Vedic magic ritual (Brisson 2000a; Faraone 2010). Still other interpreters underscore the difficulty of marking where real magic ends and rhetorical magic begins before offering their own solutions (e.g., McPherran 2004, Redfield 2011). The disparity between interpretations underscores the problems that come with trying to shoehorn Plato’s remarks about enchantment into dichotomies of metaphorical/literal, belief/non-belief.

<sup>27</sup> “Ctesippus, I’ll tell you now the same thing I told Cleinias, that you do not recognize the wisdom of these strangers, what a marvel it is. Yet they are unwilling to display it to us in any serious manner and instead imitate the Egyptian sophist, Proteus, by simply enchanting us” (ὦ Κτήσιππε, καὶ νῦν δὴ ἂ πρὸς Κλεινίαν ἔλεγον, καὶ πρὸς

extraordinary efficacy of speeches and speech-writing, which he describes as an integral element of magical incantations:

καὶ γὰρ μοι οἷ τε ἄνδρες αὐτοὶ οἱ λογοποιοί, ὅταν συγγένωμαι αὐτοῖς, ὑπέρσοφοι, ὧ Κλεινία, δοκοῦσιν εἶναι, καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ τέχνη αὐτῶν θεσπεσία τις καὶ ὑψηλή. καὶ μέντοι οὐδὲν θαυμαστόν· ἔστι γὰρ τῆς τῶν ἐπωδῶν τέχνης μόνον σμικρῷ τε ἐκείνης ὑποδεεστέρα. ἢ μὲν γὰρ τῶν ἐπωδῶν ἔχεων τε καὶ φαλαγγίων καὶ σκορπίων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων θηρίων τε καὶ νόσων κήλησιν ἔστιν, ἢ δὲ δικαστῶν τε καὶ ἐκκλησιαστῶν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὄχλων κήλησιν τε καὶ παραμυθία τυγχάνει οὕσα.<sup>28</sup>

Whenever I'm in their company, Cleinias, men who write speeches seem to me to be extraordinarily wise, and the art of theirs is something divine and lofty indeed. And yet, this is no surprise; for *it is part of the art of incantations and only a slightly subordinate part*. While the art of incantations involves the enchantment of snakes, spiders, scorpions, and other beasts and illnesses, the other art simply happens to involve the enchantment and encouragement of jurors, assemblies, and other gatherings.<sup>29</sup>

Here, Socrates is clear in stressing the contiguous relationship between rhetoric and magic. A magician is as much an orator as an orator is a magician. Both produce a similar effect on their audience. What distinguishes them is simply how bestial their audience happens to be.<sup>30</sup> What these passages illustrate is that, for Plato, rhetorical power is central rather than peripheral to his concept of magic as a whole. Although Plato never entirely dismisses the possibility that some magical

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σὲ ταῦτ' αὐτὰ λέγω, ὅτι οὐ γινώσκεις τῶν ξένων τὴν σοφίαν, ὅτι θαυμασία ἐστίν· ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐθέλετον ἡμῖν ἐπιδείξασθαι σπουδάζοντε, ἀλλὰ τὸν Πρωτέα μιμῆσθον τὸν Αἰγύπτιον σοφιστὴν γοητεύοντε ἡμᾶς. Pl. *Euthyd.* 288b4-8). Socrates uses the label of Proteus to dismiss Euthyphro (Pl. *Euthyphr.* 15d) and Ion (Pl. *Ion.* 541e), who similarly change subjects rapidly. The closest parallel is in the *Republic* when Socrates declares that the divine forms do not change before our eyes – like Proteus (Pl. *Resp.* 381d4) – thereby deceiving and bewitching us (ἐξαπατῶντες καὶ γοητεύοντες, Pl. *Resp.* 381e; cf. 380d1, 383a3).

<sup>28</sup> Gifford 1905: ad loc. draws attention to the similar wording and similar sentiment at Pl. *Phdr.* 271c where Socrates describes the art of speaking as a matter of psychagogy (λόγου δύναμις τυγχάνει ψυχαγωγία οὕσα).

<sup>29</sup> Pl. *Euthyd.* 289e1-290a4.

<sup>30</sup> For a similar analogy to beast-charming, we can turn to the *Republic*, where it is Socrates who is able to enchant (κηλεῖν) the beastly Thrasyarchus like a snake charmer (Pl. *Resp.* 358b). Later in the same dialogue, Socrates labels tyrant-makers (τυραννοποιοί) as terrific magicians (δεινοὶ μάγοι) who can turn a potentate into a giant winged drone (ὑπόπτερον καὶ μέγαν κηφῆνά τινα, Pl. *Resp.* 572e3-573a1). As we shall see later on, enchantment, as Plato conceives of it, plays on the lower, more infantile, and, indeed, most bestial part of the human soul. In this capacity, it can be used either to stoke the bestial nature of a person or lead that nature back into alignment with human reason.



practices are founded upon supernatural or divine causes,<sup>31</sup> he consistently focuses on the rhetorical, psychological causes that all magical practices naturally and necessarily involve.

At this point, we may ask: how metaphorical are Plato's remarks about enchantment? If Plato consistently portrays magicians as persuasive speakers and elides the supernatural efficacy of magic with a type of rhetorical efficacy, then how metaphorical is Plato being when he describes persuasive speakers as magicians and elides powerful rhetorical effects with the supernatural effects of spells and incantations? In *Laws* 932e-933e and elsewhere, Plato shows us that 'doing magic' is *not* simply the practice of using spells, incantations, wax puppets, or other traditional magical devices. Instead, it is the practice of rhetorically convincing others (and even oneself) that such things are possible. When Plato labels speakers as various types of enchanters – be they magicians,<sup>32</sup> animal charmers,<sup>33</sup> midwives,<sup>34</sup> nurses singing enchanting lullabies,<sup>35</sup> or Orpheus himself<sup>36</sup> – he is underscoring a contiguous relationship between the rhetoric of the magician, sophist, and philosopher alike. In the remainder of this chapter, we shall explore the nature of this rhetorical power which Plato labels as incantatory.

## 2. The experience of enchantment

Like Gorgias, Plato considers what the effect of enchantment consists of. He also remarks throughout his dialogues on the sources of this experience and the proper ends toward which this experience should be directed. In what follows, we shall examine first how Plato conceptualizes this

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<sup>31</sup> In the *Symposium*, for instance, we find rather earnest and more or less positive remarks about magic in the speech of Diotima (Pl. *Symp.* 203a, 203d with Bury 1909: ad loc.; cf. Pl. *Symp.* 197e).

<sup>32</sup> Pl. *Men.* 80b, *Resp.* 572e, 598d, *Soph.* 234c-235a; cf. Pl. *Soph.* 241b, *Plt.* 303c, *Hp. mai.* 371a.

<sup>33</sup> Pl. *Resp.* 358b; cf. *Euthphr.* 289e-290a; Pl. *Grg.* 483e; Pl. *Plt.* 268b.

<sup>34</sup> Pl. *Tht.* 149d, 157c.

<sup>35</sup> Pl. *Phd.* 77e, 114d; cf. Pl. *Leg.* 790e, 887d.

<sup>36</sup> Pl. *Prt.* 315a.

experience of enchantment before turning to Plato's remarks about what the appropriate *means* and *ends* of incantatory rhetoric are.

## 2.1. Enchantment as a specific category of experience

As with his predecessors, Plato describes enchantment as a psychosomatic experience of distraction and, like Gorgias, he describes this experience as a type of ψυχαγωγία. Although it would be wrong to say that Plato had developed a fully-fledged theory of enchantment, his various remarks about the rhetorical powers of magical acts and the magical powers of rhetorical acts do reflect a much more expansive and still more focused attempt to understand and articulate the experience of enchantment than can be gleaned from any earlier discussion of incantatory rhetoric.

First of all, Plato is our earliest author to treat enchantment explicitly as an independent category of experience. As we saw in the previous chapter, Gorgias and the poets blend the experience of enchantment with neighboring experiences of sleep (κῶμα/ὕπνος) or forgetting (λήθη), and often cast it as a sort of mental theft (κλέπτειν/ἀφαιρεῖν) or compulsion (βιάζειν).<sup>37</sup> These competing frames make for rather fuzzy semantic boundaries. As we saw, Gorgias takes full advantage of these in the *Helen*, where he aims to represent speech and persuasion as literal acts of physical compulsion. Plato is far stricter in his usage and more careful to distinguish the experience of enchantment from the neighboring experiences which his predecessors freely and poetically intertwine.

In book 3 of the *Republic*, Plato offers something of a definition for his concept of enchantment. The passage occurs when Socrates is describing how to select those guardians whose firm devotion to the city cannot be swayed – lit. 'compelled' (βιάζειν), 'robbed' (κλέπτειν), and

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<sup>37</sup> See ch. 1, p. 66.

*'enchanted'* (γοητεύειν).<sup>38</sup> After Glaucon expresses confusion over the bold choice of terms, Socrates apologizes for speaking so much like a tragic poet (τραγικῶς) and specifies what he means by compulsion, theft, and enchantment. As he notes, these three categories correspond to three types of experience wherein one is involuntarily (ἀκουσίως) deprived of their belief (δόξα). People who have been *'robbed'* (κλαπέντας) are those who have, in fact, been persuaded (μεταπεισθέντας) by an argument (λόγος) or made to forget (ἐπιλανθανομένους) by the passing of time.<sup>39</sup> Those who are *'compelled'* (βιασθέντας) are those who are made to change their opinion (μεταδοξάσαι) through some bodily pain or suffering (ὁδύνη τις ἢ ἀλγηδών).<sup>40</sup>

Τοὺς μὴν γοητευθέντας, ὡς ἐγῴμαι, κὰν σὺ φαίης εἶναι οἱ ἂν μεταδοξάσωσιν ἢ ὑφ' ἡδονῆς κηληθέντες ἢ ὑπὸ φόβου τι δείσαντες.

And those who have been *'enchanted,'* as it seems to me, and as you would agree, are those who have their opinions changed either being bewitched by pleasure or stricken with fear.<sup>41</sup>

Glaucon recognizes and accepts this use of the language of enchantment and even offers his own more economical definition by equating γοητεία with ἀπάτη: “‘to enchant’ seems to mean

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<sup>38</sup> “It is necessary then to select from the rest of the guardians those men who appear under our close scrutiny to work with extreme enthusiasm through their whole life toward whatever they consider benefits the city and are, on the other hand, in no way willing to produce the opposite [...] it seems to me that it is necessary to look closely over these men in all stages of their lives, whether they are observant of this conviction and are not enchanted or compelled to stray, forgetting the conviction that it is necessary to do what is best for the city” (Ἐκλεκτέον ἄρ' ἐκ τῶν ἄλλων φυλάκων τοιούτους ἄνδρας, οἱ ἂν σκοποῦσιν ἡμῖν μάλιστα φαίνωνται παρὰ πάντα τὸν βίον, ὃ μὲν ἂν τῇ πόλει ἡγήσωνται συμφέρειν, πάσῃ προθυμία ποιεῖν, ὃ δ' ἂν μή, μηδενὶ τρόπῳ προᾶσαι ἂν ἐθέλειν. [...] Δοκεῖ δὴ μοι τηρητέον αὐτοὺς εἶναι ἐν ἀπάσαις ταῖς ἡλικίαις, εἰ φυλακικοὶ εἰσι τούτου τοῦ δόγματος καὶ μήτε γοητευόμενοι μήτε βιαζόμενοι ἐκβάλλουσιν ἐπιλανθανόμενοι δόξαν τὴν τοῦ ποιεῖν δεῖν ἅ τῇ πόλει βέλτιστα. Pl. Resp. 412d9-e7).

<sup>39</sup> “By *'robbed,'* I mean those who are dissuaded and made to forget something, either because passing time or an argument snatches it away from them unawares.” (κλαπέντας μὲν γὰρ τοὺς μεταπεισθέντας λέγω καὶ τοὺς ἐπιλανθανομένους, ὅτι τῶν μὲν χρόνος, τῶν δὲ λόγος ἐξαιρούμενος λανθάνει, Pl. Resp. 413b4-6).

<sup>40</sup> “Now by *'compelled,'* I mean those for whom some bodily pain or suffering causes a change of opinion” (Τοὺς τοῖνυν βιασθέντας λέγω οὓς ἂν ὁδύνη τις ἢ ἀλγηδών μεταδοξάσαι ποιήσῃ. Pl. Resp. 413b9-10).

<sup>41</sup> Pl. Resp. 413c1-3.

everything that deceives" (Ἐοικε γάρ [...] γοητεύειν πάντα ὅσα ἀπατᾷ).<sup>42</sup> After distinguishing enchantment from mental theft and compulsion, Socrates discusses how to test a person's susceptibility to this experience of enchantment by drawing an analogy to husbandry. Just as herdsmen might test the grit of a young foal with loud noises, he says, one can test how enchantable a youth is by bringing him into contact with pleasures (εἰς ἡδονὰς) and fearsome things (εἰς δειμάτ' ἄττα) where his involuntary reactions may be gauged.<sup>43</sup> The youth who remains well-disposed (εὐσχήμων), well-composed (εὐθυθμος), and well-balanced (εὐάρμοστος) in the face of fearsome and pleasurable things is the one who is difficult to enchant (δυσγοήτευτος) and, thus, a good candidate for the guardians of the city.<sup>44</sup>

What this passage of the *Republic* shows us is, first of all, that enchantment constitutes a specific category of experience and, second, that this experience is conceived of as a type of ἀπάτη which is triggered by passions such as pleasure (ἡδονή) or fear (φόβος). Later in the *Republic*, we find several more remarks about the specific psychology of enchantment. In these passages, enchantment is described as a psychosomatic experience that affects the sensory imagination. For instance, in book 9, Socrates links enchantment (γοητεία) to the relative and illusory way in which

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<sup>42</sup> Pl. *Resp.* 413c4. As noted in ch. 1, n. 230, the language of ἀπάτη, in early Greek literature, is not precisely equivalent to ψεῦδος. While it can denote 'deception,' it also often denotes a state of 'distraction' that allows for deception. While I translate the term here as 'deception,' it should be understood as less severe than the lying deception implied by ψεῦδος.

<sup>43</sup> "Well then we must also test for the third type, that of enchantment, and watch for it. Just as people observe foals while bringing them into contact with loud noises or commotions to see whether they exhibit fear, so too we must bring these young men face to face with fearsome things and then transfer them to pleasures, testing them even more thoroughly than gold in the fire" (Οὐκοῦν [...] καὶ τρίτου εἶδους τοῦ τῆς γοητείας ἄμιλλαν ποιητέον, καὶ θεατέον—ὥσπερ τοὺς πώλους ἐπὶ τοὺς ψόφους τε καὶ θορύβους ἄγοντες σκοποῦσιν εἰ φοβεροί, οὕτω νέους ὄντας εἰς δειμάτ' ἄττα κομιστέον καὶ εἰς ἡδονὰς αὐτὰ μεταβλητέον, βασανίζοντας πολὺ μᾶλλον ἢ χρυσὸν ἐν πυρί. Pl. *Resp.* 413d6-e1).

<sup>44</sup> "If one appears difficult to enchant and well-disposed in all of this, he is a good guardian of himself and of the cultural training he has learned, showing himself to be well-composed and well-balanced in all of this, the type who would be most useful for the city and himself" (εἰ δυσγοήτευτος καὶ εὐσχήμων ἐν πᾶσι φαίνεται, φύλαξ αὐτοῦ ὢν ἀγαθὸς καὶ μουσικῆς ἧς ἐμάνθανεν, εὐθυθμόν τε καὶ εὐάρμοστον ἑαυτὸν ἐν πᾶσι τούτοις παρέχων, οἷος δὴ ἂν ὢν καὶ ἑαυτῷ καὶ πόλει χρησιμώτατος εἴη. Pl. *Resp.* 413e1-5).

humans experience pleasure and pain. He notes that even when the soul is in a neutral, restful state (ήσυχία), that state of rest can be experienced as pleasant (ήδύ) if one imagines a relatively painful state (τὸ ἀλγεινὸν). Conversely, it can be experienced as painful (ἀλγεινὸν) if one imagines a relatively pleasant state (τὸ ήδύ).<sup>45</sup> These phantom pleasures or pains triggered by the sensory imagination are what Socrates labels as a kind of enchantment (γοητεία τις). He alludes to this illusory experience of enchantment again, later in the *Republic*, when he compares the experience of enchantment with σκιαγραφία. As he puts it, what σκιαγραφία produces is nothing short of enchantment (γοητείας οὐδὲν ἀπολείπει) insofar as it stirs our inborn passion (πάθημα) and creates a disruption in the soul (ταραχή [...] ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ).<sup>46</sup> In both passages, enchantment denotes a particular psychosomatic experience in which *either* external, sensory illusions trick the psyche *or* internal, psychic illusions trick the senses. Just as illusory art can strike the senses and trigger a false perception within our soul, so too our sensory imagination within us can trigger illusory sensations of pleasure or pain.

The basic picture of enchantment that emerges from these passages in the *Republic*, is reflected in other dialogues, where it is similarly described as a psychosomatic experience affecting

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<sup>45</sup> “This [state of rest between pleasure and pain] does not exist, rather this state of rest appears pleasant when juxtaposed to pain and appears painful when juxtaposed to pleasure, and there is nothing healthy in these appearances as it pertains to the inherent truth of pleasure, instead, it is a type of enchantment” (Οὐκ ἔστιν ἄρα τοῦτο, ἀλλὰ φαίνεται [...] παρὰ τὸ ἀλγεινὸν ήδύ καὶ παρὰ τὸ ήδύ ἀλγεινὸν τότε ήήσυχία, καὶ οὐδὲν ὕγιες τούτων τῶν φαντασμάτων πρὸς ήδονῆς ἀλήθειαν, ἀλλὰ γοητεία τις. Pl. *Resp.* 584a6-10).

<sup>46</sup> “And the same are objects that look bent and straight to those who look at them in and out of the water, or concave and convex through the error of sight regarding color, and each kind of thing that is a clear disruption present by itself in our soul. Thus, *skiagraphia*, insofar as it takes advantage of our natural passions, differs in no way from enchantment, any more than wonderworking and many other such techniques” (Καὶ ταῦτὰ καμπύλα τε καὶ εὐθέα ἐν ὕδατι τε θεωμένοις καὶ ἔξω, καὶ κοῖλά τε δὴ καὶ ἐξέχοντα διὰ τὴν περὶ τὰ χρώματα αὐτῶν πλάνην τῆς ὀψεως, καὶ πᾶσά τις ταραχή δὴλη ήμῖν ἐνοῦσα αὕτη ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ· ᾧ δὴ ήμῶν τῷ παθήματι τῆς φύσεως ή σκιαγραφία ἐπιθεμένη γοητείας οὐδὲν ἀπολείπει, καὶ ή θαυματοποιία καὶ ἄλλαι πολλαὶ τοιαῦται μηχαναί. Pl. *Resp.* 602c10-d4).

hearing, touch, and sight as well as spirit (θυμός), thought (νόημα), and soul (ψυχή).<sup>47</sup> Like Gorgias, Plato fundamentally tethers the experience of enchantment to the soul (ψυχή), which he conceives of as the seat of both cognition and sensation.<sup>48</sup> As we saw in the examples in the *Republic*, this psychosomatic experience of enchantment can be externally or internally motivated. Sometimes, an external, somatic experience affects the soul;<sup>49</sup> other times, it is an internal, psychic experience that resonates through the body.<sup>50</sup> In the dialogues, we find many examples in which an individual's soul is said to be enchanted by certain external, somatic experiences – be it the rhythmic murmur of a mother's lullaby<sup>51</sup> or popular music.<sup>52</sup> This external, somatic dynamic of enchantment is most clearly expressed in the *Phaedo* when Socrates remarks how the sensual corruptions of the *body* are, by their very nature, sources of enchantment for the *soul*.

Ἐὰν δέ γε οἶμαι μεμιασμένη καὶ ἀκάθαρτος τοῦ σώματος ἀπαλλάττηται, ἅτε τῷ σώματι αἰεὶ συνοῦσα καὶ τοῦτο θεραπεύουσα καὶ ἐρῶσα καὶ γοητευομένη ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ὑπὸ τε τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν καὶ ἡδονῶν, ὥστε μὴδὲν ἄλλο δοκεῖν εἶναι ἀληθὲς ἀλλ' ἢ τὸ σωματοειδές, οὐ τις ἂν ᾤψαιτο καὶ ἴδοι καὶ πίοι καὶ φάγοι καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἀφροδίσια χρῆσταιτο, τὸ δὲ τοῖς

<sup>47</sup> θυμός: Pl. *Resp.* 411a5-b3. νόημα: Pl. *Symp.* 197e2-5.

<sup>48</sup> For ψυχή, see Pl. *Phd.* 81b3, *Crat.* 403e1, *Leg.* 659d1, 664b4, 906b7, et Pl. *Charm.* passim. Plato also invokes the language of ψυχαγωγία: see Pl. *Leg.* 909b2, 3, *Phaedr.* 261a8, 271d1, *Tim.* 71a6 (cf. ἔλκει τὴν ψυχήν, Pl. *Ion* 536a).

<sup>49</sup> ...as with the perception of illusory art (Pl. *Resp.* 602c10-d4 above).

<sup>50</sup> ...as with the phantom pleasures and pains originating in the sensory imagination (Pl. *Resp.* 584a6-10 above).

<sup>51</sup> “Thus, when mothers want to soothe the restlessness of their children, they do not give them rest but, on the contrary, motion, as when they constantly rock them in the crook of their arm, and not silence but a certain singing, and through this cast an utter spell over the children (not unlike those in a Bacchic frenzy) using the combined dancing movement and song as a remedy” (ἡνίκα γὰρ ἂν που βουληθῶσι κατακοιμίζειν τὰ δυσπνούντα τῶν παιδίων αἱ μητέρες, οὐχ ἡσυχίαν αὐτοῖς προσφέρουσιν ἀλλὰ τούναντίον κίνησιν, ἐν ταῖς ἀγκάλαις αἰεὶ σείουσιν, καὶ οὐ σιγὴν ἀλλὰ τινα μελωδίαν, καὶ ἀτεχνῶς οἷον καταυλοῦσι τῶν παιδίων, καθαπερεὶ τῶν ἐκφρόνων βακχείων, ἰάσει ταύτη τῇ τῆς κινήσεως ἅμα χορεία καὶ μούσῃ χρώμεναι. Pl. *Leg.* 790d5-e4)

<sup>52</sup> “Therefore, whenever someone gives himself over to music, to enchant and rain down upon his soul, through his ears just as through a funnel, things which we would now describe as sweet and soft and mournful harmonies, and passes his whole life warbling, overjoyed by the song, if he had any spirit, he would first off soften it like iron and make it into something usable rather than raw and hardened. And whenever he does not let up from pouring in music, he is enchanted and melts and drips away until he dissolves and cuts away his spirit just as cords from the soul and is made into ‘soft spearman’” (Οὐκοῦν ὅταν μὲν τις μουσικῇ παρέχῃ καταυλεῖν καὶ καταχεῖν τῆς ψυχῆς διὰ τῶν ὠτων ὥσπερ διὰ χώνης ἅς νυνδὴ ἡμεῖς ἐλέγομεν τὰς γλυκείας τε καὶ μαλακάς καὶ θρηνώδεις ἀρμονίας, καὶ μινυρίζων τε καὶ γεγανωμένος ὑπὸ τῆς ᾠδῆς διατελῇ τὸν βίον ὅλον, οὗτος τὸ μὲν πρῶτον, εἴ τι θυμοειδὲς εἶχεν, ὥσπερ σίδηρον ἐμάλαξεν καὶ χρήσιμον ἐξ ἀχρήστου καὶ σκληροῦ ἐποίησεν· ὅταν δ' ἐπιχέων μὴ ἀνιῇ ἀλλὰ κηλῇ, τὸ δὴ μετὰ τοῦτο ἡδὴ τήκει καὶ λείβει, ἕως ἂν ἐκτῆξῃ τὸν θυμὸν καὶ ἐκτέμῃ ὥσπερ νεῦρα ἐκ τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ ποιήσῃ “μαλθακὸν αἰχμητήν”. Pl. *Resp.* 411a5-b3)

ὄμμασι σκοτῶδες καὶ αἰδές, νοητὸν δὲ καὶ φιλοσοφία αἰρετόν, τοῦτο δὲ εἰθισμένη μισεῖν τε καὶ τρέμειν καὶ φεύγειν, οὕτω δὴ ἔχουσιν οἱ ψυχὴν αὐτὴν καθ' αὐτὴν εἰλικρινῇ ἀπαλλάξεσθαι;

As I see it, if [the soul] is released from the body after being polluted and corrupted – because of being in constant contact with the body, serving it, loving it, and being enchanted by all of its sundry desires and pleasures, so that it thinks that nothing else is true except that which is embodied, which one can touch and see and drink and eat and use for sexual gratification, and thereby becoming accustomed to hate, fear, and avoid that which is invisible and unseen by the eyes yet thinkable and graspable by philosophy – do you think that the soul faring in this way would be released free and untarnished?<sup>53</sup>

By this account, our very embodiment gives rise to the experience of enchantment insofar as it accustoms the soul to desire and fear various somatic experiences rather than heed more intellectual motivations. In other places in the dialogues, the opposite trajectory is found where the experience of enchantment originates in the soul and spreads to the body. For instance, in the *Meno*, Socrates's spellbinding arguments lead Meno's soul directly into a state of aporia, and this mental state is psychosomatically experienced as a sensation of numbness.<sup>54</sup> Likewise, in the *Charmides*, Socrates

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<sup>53</sup> Pl. *Phd.* 81b1-c1.

<sup>54</sup> "Socrates, before I ever encountered you, I used to hear that you did nothing else but express your doubt and make other feel doubt. And now, it seems, you are enchanting, bewitching, and simply ensorcelling me into a state of utter doubt. If I must put it in jest, you seem to me to be the spitting image of a flat torpedo fish both in form and in other respects. For it benumbs anyone, whoever comes near and touches it. You, too, seem to have benumbed me in some way. For truly, my soul and mouth are numb, and I have nothing to respond to you. Even though I have spoken about virtue thousands of times at length and to many people – and quite well, if I do say so myself – I now have no idea what to say it is. You would seem well-advised not to travel from here or move from home. For if you were ever to do these sorts of things as a stranger in a foreign city, you would be taken as a magician." (Ὁ Σώκρατες, ἤκουον μὲν ἔγωγε πρὶν καὶ συγγενέσθαι σοι, ὅτι σὺ οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ αὐτός τε ἀπορεῖς καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ποιεῖς ἀπορεῖν· καὶ νῦν, ὥς γέ μοι δοκεῖς, γοητεύεις με καὶ φαρμάττεις καὶ ἀτεχνῶς κατεπάδεις, ὥστε μεστὸν ἀπορίας γεγονέναι· καὶ δοκεῖς μοι παντελῶς, εἰ δεῖ τι καὶ σκῶψαι, ὁμοιότατος εἶναι τό τε εἶδος καὶ τὰλλα ταύτῃ τῇ πλατεῖα νάρκη τῇ θαλαττίᾳ. καὶ γὰρ αὕτη τὸν αἰεὶ πλησιάζοντα καὶ ἀπτόμενον ναρκᾶν ποιεῖ· καὶ σὺ δοκεῖς μοι νῦν ἐμὲ τοιοῦτόν τι πεποιηκέναι [ναρκᾶν]. ἀληθῶς γὰρ ἔγωγε καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ τὸ στόμα ναρκῶ, καὶ οὐκ ἔχω ὅ τι ἀποκρίνωμαί σοι. καίτοι μυριάκις γε περὶ ἀρετῆς παμπόλλους λόγους εἶρηκα καὶ πρὸς πολλούς, καὶ πάννυ εὖ, ὥς γε ἐμαυτῷ ἐδόκουν· νῦν δὲ οὐδ' ὅ τι ἔστι τὸ παράπαν ἔχω εἰπεῖν. καὶ μοι δοκεῖς εὖ βουλευέσθαι οὐκ ἐκπλέων ἐνθύνδε οὐδ' ἀποδημῶν· εἰ γὰρ ξένος ἐν ἄλλῃ πόλει τοιαῦτα ποιοῖς, τάχ' ἂν ὥς γόης ἀπαχθείης., Pl. *Men.* 79e8-80b6). As David Blank has shown, Socrates's dialectical and elenctic types of rhetoric have as much of an emotional and visceral effect on interlocutors as they have an intellectual effect (1993). Laura Candiottio has linked the emotional charge created by aporia to the concept of "extended mind" or "extended emotion," as is described by cognitive science (2019).

specifically defines ἐπωδαί as a family of techniques which affect the *body* through the medium of the *soul*.

δεῖν οὖν ἐκεῖνο καὶ πρῶτον καὶ μάλιστα θεραπεύειν, εἰ μέλλει καὶ τὰ τῆς κεφαλῆς καὶ τὰ τοῦ ἄλλου σώματος καλῶς ἔχειν. θεραπεύεσθαι δὲ τὴν ψυχὴν [...] ἐπωδαῖς τισιν· τὰς δ' ἐπωδὰς ταύτας τοὺς λόγους εἶναι τοὺς καλοὺς· ἐκ δὲ τῶν τοιούτων λόγων ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς σωφροσύνην ἐγγίγνεσθαι, ἧς ἐγγενομένης καὶ παρούσης ῥάδιον ἤδη εἶναι τὴν ὑγίειαν καὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ καὶ τῷ ἄλλῳ σώματι πορίζειν.

Now it is necessary to treat [the soul] first and foremost if one intends to treat well the matters of the head and the rest of the body. To treat the soul [...] involves certain incantations. These incantations are words of a fine sort: from such words, prudence is produced within the soul, and when it is produced and made present, it is, at that time, a simple matter to secure health for the head and the rest of the body.<sup>55</sup>

In the course of the *Charmides*, Socrates will use the fine, incantatory λόγοι of his dialectic, which might better incentivize an ethos of prudence (σωφροσύνη) within the soul of Charmides and thereby prevent future headaches (or, in this case, hangovers). Whatever the trajectory, the experience of enchantment consistently involves give and take between soul and body, imagination and sensation.

To get a clearer picture of how Plato conceptualizes this psychosomatic experience of enchantment, it will be helpful turn to several passages from the *Laws* and *Timaeus* that offer evidence for what the enchanting passions (παθήματα) of pleasure (ἡδονή) and fear (φόβος) are and how they stir the soul (ψυχή) into a state of spellbinding distraction (ἀπάτη). They also offer a framework for understanding how enchantments can induce their psychosomatic effect both externally and internally. In the famous human puppet analogy in the *Laws*, we find a framework for understanding the psychosomatic quality of the experience of enchantment, which sits at the tidal zone between physical experience and psychical expectation and imagination. In particular, the

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<sup>55</sup> Pl. *Charm.* 157a1-b1.



language of enchantment marks out instances in which there is a blurring of the line between physical pleasures or pains and psychic pleasures or pains that are imagined or expected. In the *Timaeus*, we see how this experience plays out on a more anatomical-cum-psychological level. In that dialogue, we find a description of how ψυχαγωγία affects the part of the soul that is most deeply entangled with somatic, embodied experiences. As we shall see, enchantment occurs when images and apparitions, pleasures and pains that arise from external or internal sources effectively intimidate or placate the soul in ways that may or may not ally with reason.

## 2.2. Between experience and expectation, sensation and imagination (*Laws* 1.644d7-645c6)

In book 1 of the *Laws*, the Athenian famously describes a human as a divine puppet (θαῦμα) attached to five cords: four iron cords that correspond to the passions of pleasure (ἡδονή), pain (λύπη), fear (φόβος), and confidence (θάραχος); and one golden cord that corresponds to calculation (λογισμός) – and ultimately, to law itself (νόμος).<sup>56</sup> In order to live a good life, the human puppet must follow the tug of the golden cord of calculation and law. And since gold is malleable, the cord of calculation and law requires support from the iron cords as well. These iron cords are arrayed along two tiers: pleasure and pain are *physical experiences*,<sup>57</sup> whereas fear and confidence are *psychical expectations* (ἐλπίδες).<sup>58</sup> These two tiers correspond to one another insofar as fear (φόβος) is the expectation (ἐλπίς) of pain (λύπη) and confidence (θάραχος) is the expectation (ἐλπίς) of pleasure (ἡδονή).<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 644d7-645c6.

<sup>57</sup> Plato labels pleasure (ἡδονή) and pain (λύπη) as antagonistic and senseless advisors (συμβούλω ἐναντίω τε καὶ ἄφρονε, Pl. *Leg.* 644c6-7).

<sup>58</sup> These “expectations” are synonyms for opinions (δόξαι, Pl. *Leg.* 644c9–d1). In the *Philebus*, they are described as pleasures and pains which belong to the soul alone (αἱ γὰρ διὰ τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτῆς ἡδοναὶ καὶ λύπαι, Pl. *Philb.* 39d1–5).

<sup>59</sup> For an instructive reading of this passage, see Sauvé-Meyer 2012; 2015: ad loc.

According to this motivational framework, which is echoed in earlier dialogues, human actions and beliefs are largely motivated through the manipulation of physical experiences of pleasure and pain as well as psychic expectations of pleasure or pain.<sup>60</sup> If we slot Plato's category of magic into this framework, we find that it marks an intervallic point between physical experience and psychical expectation. As we saw in *Laws* 932e-933e, the psychosomatic effect of magic is what distinguishes medical poisons from magical poisons. The former harm the body naturally through direct contact (σώμασι σώματα), whereas the latter produce an indirect, *psychic expectation* of harm that is so powerful that it borders on (παντὸς μᾶλλον) a physical *experience* of harm. Elsewhere we also saw how enchantment always involves an interplay between mind and body, imagination and sensation. It can be triggered by external, physical experiences or internal, psychical expectations. Plato's category of enchantment thus labels moments when the iron cords cross and the differentiation between experience and expectation becomes blurred. These enchantments may be powerful, physical experiences that instill psychical expectations (such as sensual pleasures, which instill a state of confidence or desire) or powerful, psychic expectations that induce physical experiences (such as psychological fears, which manifest as physical presentiments or intimations of harm being done).

### 2.3. Psychology of psychagogy in the *Timaeus*

To grasp how Plato conceptualizes the psychosomatic experience of enchantment on a more minute, anatomical level, we can turn to the *Timaeus*, where we find a description of ψυχαγωγία as

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<sup>60</sup> As Sauvé-Meyer notes, this framework is not limited to the *Laws* but can be found present in many other dialogues as well (2012: 317). We will see in the next chapter that Plato's fourfold motivational framework is later taken over by the Stoics and incorporated into their theory of emotion. For the Stoics, the experience of enchantment is a sub-category of pleasure alone (ἡδονή).

it occurs within the soul itself.<sup>61</sup> Here Plato accounts for how the body (σῶμα) serves as a vehicle (ὄχημα) for the mortal form of the soul (ψυχή).<sup>62</sup> This form of the soul – which consists of the *thumetic* and *epithumetic* parts – experiences all of the terrible and necessary passions (δεινὰ καὶ ἀναγκαῖα [...] παθήματα) that include not only pleasure (ἡδονή) and pain (λύπη) but also the senseless advisors (ἄφρονε συμβούλω) of confidence (θάρος) and fear (φόβος),<sup>63</sup> inconsolable machismo (δυσπαραμύθητος θυμός), and, finally, expectation (ἐλπίς) which is so easily led (εὐπαράγωγος). Here we have all the iron cords from the puppet analogy accounted for – ἡδονή, λύπη, θάρος, φόβος – with the extrapolation of ἐλπίς and the addition of θυμός.<sup>64</sup> Naturally, θυμός is located in the spirited part of the soul (θυμοειδές), which is said to be located in the chest, near the deliberative part of the soul, which he locates in the head. The rest of the psychic passions – all those that necessarily result from being embodied (ὅσων ἔνδειαν διὰ τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἰσχει φύσιν) – are felt in the appetitive part of the soul (ἐπιθυμητικόν), which is located in the belly, just above the navel.<sup>65</sup> It is in this lower part of the soul that we also find the experience of ψυχαγωγία.<sup>66</sup>

εἰδότες δὲ αὐτὸ ὡς λόγου μὲν οὔτε ξυνήσειν ἔμελλεν, εἴ τέ πη καὶ μεταλαμβάνοι τινὸς αὐτῶν αἰσθήσεως, οὐκ ἔμφυτον αὐτῷ τὸ μέλειν τινῶν ἔσοιτο λόγων, ὑπὸ δὲ εἰδώλων καὶ φαντασμάτων νυκτός τε καὶ μεθ' ἡμέραν μάλιστα ψυχαγωγήσοιτο [...]

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<sup>61</sup> There is some scholarly debate about whether or not Plato is working with the same concept of the soul in the *Laws* as he is in the *Republic* and the *Timaeus* – particularly, whether or not Plato still maintains the idea of tripartition in the *Laws*. Although I agree with those who see tripartition latently maintained in the *Laws* (see, for instance, Brisson 2012: 292-300 with bibliography), my remarks here do not depend on this stance. What I hope to offer is a framework for understanding how Plato conceptualizes ψυχαγωγία in the most general terms. For a recent treatment of the role of *thumoeides*, see Wilburn 2014.

<sup>62</sup> Pl. *Ti.* 69c5-d4.

<sup>63</sup> Pl. *Ti.* 69c8-d4. This use of the term σύμβουλος is rare. Plato uses the term in a similar context in the puppet analogy of the *Laws*; however, it appears there in reference to pleasure and pain rather than fear and confidence (Pl. *Leg.* 644c6-7 with n. 57 and 58 above). The closest antecedent to this use of σύμβουλος is Gorgias's remark about δόξα as an unstable advisor to the soul (see ch. 1, n. 133).

<sup>64</sup> There are also phrasal resonances between this passage and the passage in the *Laws* (e.g., ἄφρονε συνβούλω at n. 63 above).

<sup>65</sup> Pl. *Ti.* 70d6-e3.

<sup>66</sup> On this passage, see Taylor 1928: ad loc., who rightly stresses the magical inflection of the word ψυχαγωγεῖν.

Knowing that this part of the soul would not comprehend reason, and even if it could somehow partake in a certain apprehension of this, it would not be naturally inclined to concern itself with any type of reason, and instead it would mostly enchant itself by images and appearances night and day [...] <sup>67</sup>

In this passage, Plato uses the language of ψυχαγωγία to denote a non-discursive experience located in the lower parts of the soul. This psychagogic process is here described as a negative, irrational experience motivated from outside images (εἰδωλα) and phantoms (φαντάσματα) which stir a host of embodied passions. This external, irrational process recalls the passage in the *Phaedo* where our very embodiment is said to involve a constant experience of enchantment. However, this passage goes on to describe an alternative way of harnessing ψυχαγωγία positively and internally in order to serve rational ends.<sup>68</sup> In this process, the more rational parts of the soul use the medium of the liver (ἥπαρ) to communicate with the lowest part of the soul for the purpose of incentivizing or disincentivizing certain passions. The liver can communicate non-discursively with the lowest part of the soul by using its surface to reflect images (εἰδωλα) as on a mirror (οἶον ἐν κατόπτρῳ), while contorting in painful or pleasant ways and emitting a complementary sweetness (γλυκύτης) or bitterness (πικρότης). To *disincentivize* certain passions, the liver reflects threatening images full of bilious colors (χολώδη χρώματα) that frighten (φοβοῖ) the appetitive part of the soul. It also emits a certain bitterness and blocks various passages and ducts, resulting in pain (λύπη) and nausea (ἄση). To *incentivize* certain passions, the liver smooths out its form, emits a certain sweetness (γλυκύτης), and is colored (ἀποζωογραφεῖν) with the opposite kinds of images (ἐναντία φαντάσματα) that render the appetitive part of the soul more amenable (ἥλεων) and serene (εὐήμερον). It is through

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<sup>67</sup> Pl. *Ti.* 71a3-7.

<sup>68</sup> Whether or not one should label this internal process of ψυχαγωγία as rational or irrational is up for debate. For two recent opposing views on whether the process is irrational or involves ‘reasoned evaluation’, see Moss 2012 and Lorenz 2012. See also p. 138.

this intra-psychoic process of ψυχαγωγία that the rational part of the soul asserts its power over the lowest part of the soul. It does so when the lowest part does not and, indeed, cannot heed the rational orders that are described as being issued from the “acropolis” of the head.<sup>69</sup>

What this section reveals is that ψυχαγωγία is imagined to affect the part of the soul that is farthest away from reason and most entangled with somatic experiences. The process is largely non-discursive and experiential, and the experiences that motivate it may be external or internal to the soul. They also may either support or disobey reason. It is quite telling that immediately following this passage in the *Timaeus*, we find an excursus on dream divination which is described as the moment at which the higher, rational part of the soul is at rest and the lower, somatically oriented part of the soul is left free to arrive at bits of knowledge or illusion non-discursively.<sup>70</sup> Like divination, ψυχαγωγία appeals to the lowest part of the soul. In the case of dream divination, this part of the soul arrives independently and non-discursively at certain pieces of knowledge, whereas, in the case of enchantment, the same part of the soul is led in a similarly non-discursive manner toward assuming feelings, attitudes, or beliefs that may or may not be guided by reason. It is no coincidence that the seer is a master not only of interpreting dreams but also of uttering spells since both phenomena, according to Plato, are coded in the same, non-discursive language of the bestial ἐπιθυμητικόν.

The passages we have looked over in this section, from the *Republic*, *Laws*, and *Timaeus*, show us not only that Plato uses the language of magic to mark out an independent category of experience

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<sup>69</sup> Pl. *Ti.* 70a6. It might be added, here, that this positive form of enchantment, starting from knowledge and ending in a sort of self-habitation, is alluded to in the dialogues when arguments of types of knowledge are described as wards or antidotes (ἀλεξιφάρμακα) against worldly enchantments (see, for instance, Pl. *Alc.* 132b, *Resp.* 595b, *Leg.* 947d cf. Pl. *Resp.* 598d, *Plt.* 279c-280e, *Epist.* 7.333). In the *Republic*, Socrates notes how one must repeat to oneself the argument against the value of the poetic arts as an antidote to the charm of poetry itself (Pl. *Resp.* 608a).

<sup>70</sup> For a recent interpretation of this passage, see Struck 2016: 73-90.

but also that he has reflected upon what that experience might involve, even on a psychological-cum-anatomical level. Enchantment marks out the moment when psychic experiences blend with somatic experiences and function as powerful motivational forces on the human subject.

Enchantment can be used to lead souls by incentivizing or disincentivizing certain beliefs, attitudes, fears, confidences, and desires. On an anatomical level, this process of enchantment (ψυχαγωγία) occurs when the appetitive part of the soul is led toward or away from reason by various non-discursive means – some sensory (akin to the sweetness and bitterness of the liver), others imagistic/mimetic (akin to the reflection of images [εἰδωλα] and apparitions [φαντάσματα] projected upon the liver), and still others coercive/aporetic (akin to the way the liver painfully shuts off ducts and passages). As we shall see, the anatomical-cum-psychological picture of ψυχαγωγία that we get, particularly in the *Timaeus*, serves as something of a microcosm for how incantatory rhetoric functions politically. It does so between speaker and audience as well as state and citizenry. When Socrates, a sophist, a state-run chorus, or self-aggrandizing seer utilizes incantatory speech, the one speaking or singing is shown to use a variety of non-discursive, rhetorical techniques – some sensory, some mimetic/imagistic, and still others aporetic/elentic. These encourage or discourage the desires (ἐπιθυμίας) of the auditor. In the following section, we shall account for such rhetorical techniques, which Plato primarily labels as incantatory. What becomes clear is that Plato's division between good and bad enchantment is not so much based on the means of enchantment as the ends to which that enchantment is directed.

### 3. The means and ends of enchanting speech

In an influential article on Plato's *Phaedrus*, Elizabeth Asmis shows that the unifying element of the dialogue is found in the overarching revision of the concept of  $\psi\upsilon\chi\alpha\gamma\omega\gamma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ .<sup>71</sup> Initially, when Socrates defines the art of speaking as a type of  $\psi\upsilon\chi\alpha\gamma\omega\gamma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ , the term stands for an ambivalent process of beguiling or (mis)leading a listener's opinions and emotions.<sup>72</sup> As the dialogue progresses, this definition proves inadequate, and the  $\psi\upsilon\chi\alpha\gamma\omega\gamma\acute{\iota}\alpha$  which Socrates places at the heart of the art of rhetoric is reinterpreted as the process of consciously leading a listener's soul into alignment with truth and reason.<sup>73</sup> As we shall see, this latent agenda of separating out good types of enchanting speech from bad types of enchanting speech which characterizes the *Phaedrus* also persists through many of Plato's other dialogues, especially in his final work, the *Laws*.

Some scholars have assumed that Plato has in mind a good and bad type of enchantment, each characterized by a different *rhetorical technique*.<sup>74</sup> For instance, bad enchantment involves song and myth, whereas good enchantment involves dialectic and elenchus. However, this type of dichotomy between correct and incorrect *techniques* of enchantment is not so clear-cut. At times, the enchanting power of acoustically and mythically ornamented speech is pressed into the service of Platonic philosophy. Likewise, the spellbinding techniques of dialectic and elenchus are not only rhetorical tools used by Socrates in the service of philosophy, but also by sophists to the detriment of philosophy. As I shall argue, the experience of being enchanted by speech is fundamentally ambiguous for Plato – just as it had been for his predecessors. But unlike Gorgias, Plato works hard

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<sup>71</sup> Asmis 1986.

<sup>72</sup> Pl. *Phdr.* 261a7-b2.

<sup>73</sup> Pl. *Phdr.* 271c9-272b4: "a transition from *psychagogia* as beguilement to *psychagogia* as guidance of the soul. Throughout this progression, Socrates serves as an example of a true rhetorician and true 'psychagogue'" (Asmis 1986: 157).

<sup>74</sup> Such as Morrow 1993 [1960]: 309-310.

to flag instances of enchanting speech as positive or negative. His criterion for doing so ultimately rests upon the ends to which the act of speech is directed, rather than the means through which it achieves its psychagogic effect.

In the following pages, we shall survey the various rhetorical techniques that attract the label of enchantment in the course of the dialogues and show how the techniques are directed toward positive or negative ends. In closing, we turn to the *Laws*, which contains Plato's final thoughts on how one might harness the experience of enchantment in the service of philosophy.

### 3.1. The techniques of enchantment and the enchantment of technique

Plato was aware that rhetorical enchantment might be induced in various ways. Indeed, in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates notes that the rhetorical techniques for generating ψυχαγωγία are as numerous and diverse as people's souls.<sup>75</sup> Throughout the dialogues, we find that enchantment is produced by many different types of speech, which may be roughly organized into three categories: acoustic, elenctic, and imagistic. As we look over each, we shall see that no single category is deemed by Plato to be the right or wrong way of achieving the experience of enchantment. Instead, as we shall see later, it is the ends of enchantment that justify the means.

Acoustic techniques enchant by means of the sound and rhythm of the voice. For instance, in the *Republic*, Socrates points to meter, rhythm, and harmony as fundamental to the enchanting effect of poetry.

ἐάντε περὶ σκυτοτομίας τις λέγῃ ἐν μέτρῳ καὶ ῥυθμῷ καὶ ἀρμονίᾳ, πάννυ εὖ δοκεῖν  
λέγεσθαι, ἐάντε περὶ στρατηγίας ἐάντε περὶ ἄλλου ὁτιοῦν· οὕτω φύσει αὐτὰ ταῦτα  
μεγάλῃν τινὰ κήλησιν ἔχειν.

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<sup>75</sup> Pl. *Phdr.* 271c9-272b4. See also how Socrates describes using an array of philosophical arguments to see which one would maieutically induce intellectual labor (Pl. *Thet.* 157c6-d5).



Whether someone speaks about shoemaking, or generalship, or some other such thing in meter, rhythm, and harmony, everything seems to be spoken well. In this way, such things have a great type of enchantment to them.<sup>76</sup>

Although the acoustic mode of enchantment is here and elsewhere implicitly cast in a negative light, there are also passages in which acoustic enchantments are treated more positively. For instance, in the *Statesman*, the good πολιτικός is described as a herdsman who knows the right music to play or sing in order to soothe enchantingly or enliven the souls of his herd.<sup>77</sup> This positive application of acoustic enchantment is especially well evidenced in the *Laws*, where, as we shall see below, the enchanting musicality of the voice is exploited in the service of the city.<sup>78</sup>

On the other end of the spectrum, the effect of dialectical or elenctic speech frequently attracts the label of enchantment.<sup>79</sup> This type of enchanting speech induces aporia by refuting or undermining habituated beliefs and desires. We already witnessed this in the passage of the *Meno*, when Socrates enchants the title character into a state of aporia regarding virtue.<sup>80</sup> Perhaps the most

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<sup>76</sup> Pl. *Resp.* 601a7-b1. Isocrates makes a similar claim about the acoustic techniques available to poets (Isoc. *Ev.* 8-11). See also Socrates's description of audiophiles at Pl. *Resp.* 411a5-b3 (quoted in n. 52) and the opening description of Protagoras's enchanting voice in the *Protagoras*: "People were following behind, listening to what was being spoken – a great part of them strangers, whom Protagoras led from each of the cities through which he passed, enchanting them with his voice like Orpheus; others follow having just now been enchanted by his voice" (τούτων δὲ οἱ ὀπισθεν ἠκολούθουν ἐπακούοντες τῶν λεγομένων, τὸ μὲν πολὺ ξένοι ἐφαίνοντο, οὓς ἄγει ἐξ ἐκάστων τῶν πόλεων ὁ Πρωταγόρας, δι' ὧν διεξέρχεται, κηλῶν τῇ φωνῇ ὥσπερ Ὀρφεύς, οἱ δὲ κατὰ τὴν φωνὴν ἔπονται κεκλημένοι, Pl. *Prt.* 315a5-b1).

<sup>77</sup> "[T]he herdsman is himself the tender of the herd, himself the doctor, himself the matchmaker, he alone knows the midwife's art of aiding the labor and birth of their offspring. Furthermore, as far as each nursling is naturally disposed toward play and music, no one else better enlivens and soothes them, enchanting with musical instruments or with voice alone performing the music best for his own herd" (ἀλλ' αὐτὸς τῆς ἀγέλης τροφὸς ὁ βουφορβός, αὐτὸς ἰατρός, αὐτὸς οἶον νυμφευτὴς καὶ περὶ τοὺς τῶν γιγνομένων τόκους καὶ λοχείας μόνος ἐπιστήμων τῆς μαιευτικῆς· ἔτι τοίνυν παιδιᾶς καὶ μουσικῆς ἐφ' ὅσον αὐτοῦ τὰ θρέμματα φύσει μετείληφεν, οὐκ ἄλλος κρείττων παραμυθεῖσθαι καὶ κηλῶν πραῦναι, μετὰ τε ὀργάνων καὶ ψιλῷ τῷ στόματι τὴν τῆς αὐτοῦ ποίμνης ἄριστα μεταχειριζόμενος μουσικῇ, Pl. *Plt.* 268a7-b5). See also Agathon's praise of Eros at Pl. *Symp.* 197e3-5 and the description of Thrasymachus's rhetorical techniques at Pl. *Phdr.* 267c6-d4 with Yunis 2011: ad loc., who points out the formal and metrical flourishes therein.

<sup>78</sup> See pp. 126-43.

<sup>79</sup> See, in general, Louis 1945: 69-70.

<sup>80</sup> Pl. *Men.* 79e8-80b6 quoted in n. 54.

expansive description of this elenctic technique of enchantment is found in the speech of Alcibiades toward the end of the *Symposium*. There, Alcibiades states that Socrates's powers of enchantment are more marvelous (θαυμασιώτερος) than Marsyas who, with his pipe-playing, enchanted humankind (ἐκίλει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους). Socrates, on the contrary, produces the same effect (ταὐτὸν τοῦτο) with no instrument (ἄνευ ὀργάνων) and only naked prose (ψιλοῖς λόγοις) which astounds and mesmerizes even when it is transferred into the mouth of a poor speaker. Socrates's powerful rhetoric – which makes a heart jump (καρδία πηδᾷ), tears flow (δάκρυα ἐκχεῖται) and utterly compels the soul as if it were enslaved (ἀνδραποδωδῶς διακειμένου) – derives its effect from the way it forces one to agree (ἀναγκάζει [...] ὁμολογεῖν) that he or she is greatly deficient (πολλοῦ ἐνδεῆς).<sup>81</sup> Like the acoustic enchantments, these more elenctic, aporetic techniques which block habituated beliefs and passions through dialectical argument are not cast solely in a positive or negative light. Just as elenchus can be used in the service of philosophy, so too can it be used in the service of sophistry. For instance, in the *Sophist*, wily intellectuals are said to frequently enchant people into aporia with Eleatic arguments (not unlike what we saw Gorgias doing in *On Not-Being*).<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Pl. *Symp.* 215b3-216c3. Also of note is how Socrates describes the enchanting sound of the siren-like cicadas (Pl. *Phaedr.* 259a-b). He interprets their chirping less as music and more as a type of dialectic. The enchantment the chirping induces is then interpreted less as an opportunity to become passively immersed in sound and more as a siren song calling one to engage in philosophical conversation. See Yunis 2011: ad loc.

<sup>82</sup> “for you see how deft and powerful they are at producing objections and impasses if we track him down in the class defined by the art of falsifiers and enchanters” (τὰς γὰρ ἀντιλήψεις καὶ ἀπορίας, ἐὰν αὐτὸν διερευνῶμεν ἐν τῇ τῶν ψευδουργῶν καὶ γοήτων τέχνῃ τιθέντες, ὁρᾷς ὥς εὖποροι καὶ πολλοί, Pl. *Soph.* 241b5-7). As Nehamas has argued: “Antilogic seems to be not a method distinct from dialectic, but rather the use of dialectic for the purpose of generating (or avoiding) a contradiction. And how different is this from what Socrates actually succeeds in doing time after time in Plato's early dialogues, whatever his stated purpose may have been?... Socrates cannot have differed in method from those sophists who practiced the method of question-and-answer and who did not intentionally use fallacious reasoning” (1999: 114-5). Eventually, Aristotle will enumerate four different types of dialectical rhetoric – didascalical, dialectic, peirastic, and sophistic – all distinguished by their presuppositions (Arist. *Soph. el.* 165a37-b8). Although the line between, say, peirastic and sophistic types of argument is not so clearly distinguished in Plato, the difference between sophistic and Socratic uses of aporia-inducing dialectic does seem to come down to the presupposed ends rather than the means.

Between the poles of acoustic and elenctic techniques of enchantment fall a wide variety of other rhetorical techniques, which may be labeled as imagistic or imitative. These include a vast array of ways in which speech can be used to paint certain virtual realities that are, in turn, capable of enticing the lower parts of an individual's soul.<sup>83</sup> Myth is often pinpointed as one of these imagistic, mimetic techniques that can be used for positive or negative ends.<sup>84</sup> In the *Phaedo*, Socrates describes his cosmological myth as an enchantment which one should utter to oneself throughout his or her life.<sup>85</sup> On the other hand, the Great Myth uttered by Protagoras, in the eponymous dialogue, is no less enchanting in its effects. Yet, it is cast in a negative (or ironically positive) light.<sup>86</sup> What distinguishes these two types of mythic enchantment is not the means of myth-telling itself but the ends – i.e., the upshot of generating or arresting certain desires or fears, pleasures or pains in

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<sup>83</sup> A sophist is able to enchant (γοητεύειν) from afar (πόρρω) the ears of the young with spoken images of all things (εἰδωλα λεγόμενα περὶ πάντων, Pl. *Soph.* 234c1-7; cf. μιμητῆς ὦν τῶν ὄντων, Pl. *Soph.* 235a1, Pl. *Phdr.* 267c, Pl. *Resp.* 607c-d). In the *Laos*, the Athenian notes how language can be tweaked on the most minute level in order to project a different tableau to the mind and, in some cases, bias our own misfortunes in positive or negative ways – “there are myriad excuses one might find to sing an incantation in the consolation of such matters” (ἡ μυρί' ἂν ἔχοι τις τοιαῦτα παραμυθούμενος ἐπάδειν, Pl. *Leg.* 944b2-3). A defeated soldier can either call himself a ‘shield-flinger’ (ῥίψασπις) or a ‘dropper of gear’ (ἀποβολεὺς ὀπλων); each label calls a different image to the mind and thereby enchants the soldier's own opinion about his misfortune for better or for worse (Pl. *Leg.* 944b7-c1).

<sup>84</sup> On the magic of myth, see Edelstein 1949; Brisson 1998: 10, 77-8. Isocrates likewise points to myth as a potent source of ψυχαγωγία (Nic. 48).

<sup>85</sup> “To rely upon these things [i.e., myth] as I have related them is not befitting of a man of sense. Yet, it does seem appropriate and worth the risk for the one believing them to infer that either these remarks or remarks like them about the soul and its dwelling place are, in fact, the case, since indeed the soul seems to be immortal – this leap is a fine one to make – and one ought to sing such things to oneself like an incantation. It is for that reason that I spent so much time on telling the myth” (Τὸ μὲν οὖν ταῦτα δυσχυρίσασθαι οὕτως ἔχειν ὡς ἐγὼ διελήλυθα, οὐ πρόπει νοῦν ἔχοντι ἀνδρὶ ὅτι μέντοι ἢ ταῦτ' ἐστὶν ἢ τοιαῦτ' ἅττα περὶ τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν καὶ τὰς οἰκῆσεις, ἐπείπερ ἀθάνατόν γε ἡ ψυχὴ φαίνεται οὖσα, τοῦτο καὶ πρόπειν μοι δοκεῖ καὶ ἄξιον κινδυνεύσαι οἰομένῳ οὕτως ἔχειν – καλὸς γὰρ ὁ κίνδυνος – καὶ χορὴ τὰ τοιαῦτα ὥσπερ ἐπάδειν ἑαυτῷ, διὸ δὴ ἔγωγε καὶ πάλαι μηκύνω τὸν μῦθον. Pl. *Phd.* 114d1-7 with Rowe 1993: ad loc., who notes the difference in character from the enchantment proposed at Pl. *Phd.* 77e7-8).

<sup>86</sup> “After Protagoras performed such great things as these, he fell silent. And I, enchanted for some time, stared at him, desiring that he say something more. When I perceived that he had, in reality, stopped speaking, I scarcely brought myself back together, so to speak...” (Πρωταγόρας μὲν τοσαῦτα καὶ τοιαῦτα ἐπιδειξάμενος ἀπεπαύσατο τοῦ λόγου. καὶ ἐγὼ ἐπὶ μὲν πολὺν χρόνον κεκλημένος ἔτι πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔβλεπον ὡς ἐροῦντά τι, ἐπιθυμῶν ἀκοῦειν· ἐπεὶ δὲ δὴ ἡσθόμην ὅτι τῷ ὄντι πεπαυμένος εἴη, μόγις πῶς ἑμαυτὸν ὥσπερ εἰ συναγείρας..., Pl. *Prt.* 328d3-7).

the lower part of an individual's soul.<sup>87</sup> The same goes for all other modes of enchantment. Acoustic enchantments generate passions in the soul that can be beneficial or detrimental, and elenctic enchantments neutralize passions which can likewise turn out to be beneficial or detrimental.<sup>88</sup>

Plato's most explicit remarks on the proper application of incantatory rhetoric are found in his final work, the *Laws*, which acts as something of a collecting point for his prior thought about the enchanting nature of speech. It is there that we shall turn for the remainder of the chapter in order to gather Plato's final thoughts on how best to harness the experience of enchantment in a positive and beneficial manner.

### 3.2. Enchantments in the *Laws*

As we saw at the beginning of the chapter, the *Laws* contains several important discussions of the negative use of enchantment. In book 11, while legislating against *φαρμακεία*, the Athenian penalizes the practice of cursing because of the negative rhetorical effect it has on the souls of the

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<sup>87</sup> Another technique that could very well fit in this category is flattery. Very often, the enchanting effect of flattery is cast in a negative light, as in the *Menexenus* when Socrates is enchanted by encomia embedded in funeral orations: "decorating the most beautiful things with words, they enchant our souls [...] so that, when I am praised by them, Menexenus, I am disposed to feel ennobled and each time I listen and am enchanted I stand tall, considering myself to be bigger and nobler and more beautiful than I am in reality" (κάλλιστά πως τοῖς ὀνόμασι ποικίλλοντες, γοητεύουσιν ἡμῶν τὰς ψυχὰς ... ὥστ' ἔγωγε, ὦ Μενέξενε, γενναίως πάννυ διατίθεμαι ἐπαινούμενος ὑπ' αὐτῶν, καὶ ἐκάστοτε ἔστηκα ἀκροώμενος καὶ κηλούμενος, ἡγούμενος ἐν τῷ παραχρῆμα μείζων καὶ γενναιότερος καὶ καλλίων γεγονέναι, Pl. *Menex.* 235a1-b2 with Tsitsiridis 1998: ad loc., who stresses the acoustic valence of κήλησις). In the *Lysis*, we find that flattery appears to enchant (κηλεῖν) in a soothing manner, but often it ends up causing the young ἐρώμενοι to go wild (ἐξαγριαίνειν) with self-pride (Pl. *Lys.* 206b1-2). And again, this technique of flattery is not cast in a wholly negative light by Plato. Socrates himself enchants through flattery from time to time (e.g., Pl. *Symp.* 194a). In Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, Socrates is shown to speak of knowing spells of flattery, which are tailored specifically for each target (Pl. *Mem.* 2.6.10-13 cf. 2.6.31).

<sup>88</sup> It has been argued that Plato's positive valuation of elenctic modes of enchantment is limited to the 'Socratic' dialogues, whereas in the 'Platonic' dialogues, myth and rhetorical ornamentation are modes of enchantment that are valued more positively (Vallejo 2000). Although there is some room for debate, the observation does indicate a general trend. Whether or not it reflects a *chronological* evolution of Platonic thought concerning the appropriate use of incantatory rhetoric or simply a *change in emphasis* varying between dialogues, which center on different issues and are populated by different dramatis personae, is probably impossible to know – as Vallejo likewise suggests. What I hope to show, at the very least, is that, in the course of Plato's dialogues, the label of enchantment is attracted to a variety of rhetorical techniques, which can all be directed toward positive or negative ends, and, when taken together, it is these ends which primarily color an enchanting speech act as good or bad in Plato's eyes.

citizens.<sup>89</sup> Earlier in book 10, we find a second important discussion of bad magic when the Athenian legislates against the worst kinds of impious individuals (including many magicians) whose enchanting rhetoric and loose morals pose a threat to “individuals, whole households, and cities.”<sup>90</sup> In these passages, magic, as a category, is intrinsically tied to a pernicious form of rhetoric that convincingly imparts dangerous beliefs, fears, and hopes into the hearts of the populace. To combat this, the Athenian develops a complex form of state-sanctioned enchantment which aims at imparting positive beliefs, fears, and hopes into the hearts of the citizens.

These positive forms of rhetorical enchantment are fused directly onto the armature of the state as a rhetorical support system for the laws themselves. In one instance, formal choruses are marshaled together to enchant the souls of the young into becoming better disposed toward the laws. In another, rhetorically affective preambles are appended to (or sometimes, entirely replace) the city’s laws. Their purpose is to enchant the citizens into becoming more accepting of the coercive nature of the laws to which they are connected. When a citizen proves to be particularly irreverent toward the city’s laws and even scoffs at the divine power that underpins them, city officials may resort to a different mode of rhetorical enchantment that aims to correct the citizen’s deviant and irreverent attitude toward the law and the divine.

All in all, the project of spelling out the laws and institutions of the second-best city is also a project of spelling out, more clearly than in any other dialogue, a positive and state-wide application of incantatory rhetoric. In the remainder of the chapter, I shall focus on the enchantment produced by choral songs and legislative preambles. What should become apparent is that, for Plato, the experience of becoming enchanted by speech is not to be taken lightly. Instead, enchantment is a

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<sup>89</sup> See pp. 98-102.

<sup>90</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 909b5-6. See pp. 102-4.

powerful source of human motivation which can, in time, shape a person's character for better or for worse. In his 'second best' city, this powerful incantatory rhetoric must not be banished from the borders of the city so much as harnessed by the city itself.<sup>91</sup>

### 3.2.1. Choruses

At the close of book 1 of the *Laws*, the Athenian has finished arguing that the *φάρμακον*, wine, can be used in a societally beneficial way by providing a window into a person's true character: *in vino veritas*. When book 2 begins, the Athenian sets out (on a somewhat meandering path) to discover what use wine might have in social education. As he will eventually argue, wine provides certain liquid confidence, which may not only reveal a person's true character but also encourage those of good character to educate the young through choral song and dance. Within this overall argument, the Athenian introduces choral performance, reconceptualizes its role as a mechanism of social education, and, crucially, redefines it as a form of incantatory rhetoric.

According to the Athenian, young people are innately loud and full of energy.<sup>92</sup> At the periodic festivals which dot the city's calendar and, particularly, during choral performances at these festivals, the young are afforded an opportunity to express their pent-up vocal energy in the production of harmonies (*ἁρμονίαι*), and physical energy in the stomping out of rhythms (*ῥυθμοί*) through dance.<sup>93</sup> However, as the Athenian stresses, these choral performances are not simply acts of

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<sup>91</sup> For a recent reading of the role of incantations in the *Laws*, see Helmig 2003 who shows how the language of incantations (*ἐπιδάμι*) is used to describe three positive rhetorical practices which can be categorized as pedagogical, political, and philosophical. Roughly speaking, Helmig's category of pedagogical incantation corresponds to my larger discussion of the choral enchantments, whereas his categories of political and philosophical incantation correspond to legislative preambles.

<sup>92</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 653d-e; cf. 664e-665a.

<sup>93</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 653e-654a. It should be noted that, for Plato, dance is conceptually subordinated to vocal performance: "In general, anyone who speaks, whether in song or speech, cannot keep his body still. Wherefore, an imitation through

needed recreation (παιδιά) but also sites of social education (παιδεία).<sup>94</sup> As he notes, the young are not only full of vocal and physical energy but also underdeveloped with respect to the rational part of their soul and are thus highly impressionable when it comes to the motivational forces of pain and pleasure, desire and hate,<sup>95</sup> as well as the influential power of mythic tales<sup>96</sup> and mimetic attractions.<sup>97</sup> The choral performances that occur on festive occasions not only offer a space for the young to release their youthful energy, but also serve as a mechanism through which to harness and habituate youthful souls into alignment with the community's values – values that are expressed, in their final form, as the laws of the city.<sup>98</sup> While the main focus of this practice of choral education is on the children whose souls are still most raw and malleable, the rhetoric of these lawful songs, performed at periodic festivals, is also directed at the re-education of adult citizens whenever their characters lapse naturally and periodically throughout life.<sup>99</sup> Ultimately, these choral songs are used

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gestures of things uttered is what gave rise to the entire art of dancing" (ὅλως δὲ φθεγγόμενος, εἴτ' ἐν ᾠδαῖς εἴτ' ἐν λόγοις, ἡσυχίαν οὐ πάνυ δυνατός τῳ σώματι παρέχεσθαι πᾶς, διὸ μίμησις τῶν λεγομένων σχήμασι γενομένη τὴν ὀρχηστικὴν ἐξηγάσατο τέχνην σύμπασαν, Pl. *Leg.* 816a3–6; cf. Pl. *Resp.* 400d). Thus, speech and vocal effects are fundamental to the choral enchantments which the Athenian describes.

<sup>94</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 656c, 798b–d, 803c–804d. At times in the *Laws*, παιδεία becomes synonymous choral education, as when the uneducated person (ἀπαιδευτος) is ἀχόρευτος and the one educated well (ὁ καλῶς πεπαιδευμένος) is described as "one capable of dancing and singing well" (ἄδειν τε καὶ ὀρχεῖσθαι δυνατός καλῶς, Pl. *Leg.* 654a–b).

<sup>95</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 636d–e, 653a–c, 656b, 659d; cf. 732e–733d.

<sup>96</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 663e–664a.

<sup>97</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 643b; cf. Pl. *Resp.* 395c.

<sup>98</sup> "Our conversation seems to have been carried around in a circle for the third or fourth time arriving back at the same position – namely, that education is the dragging and leading of children toward the principle pronounced as correct by law and jointly confirmed through experience as indeed correct by the most venerable and aged individuals" (Δοκεῖ μοι τρίτον ἢ τέταρτον ὁ λόγος εἰς ταῦτον περιφερόμενος ἤκειν, ὥς ἄρα παιδεία μὲν ἐσθ' ἡ παίδων ὀλκή τε καὶ ἀγωγή πρὸς τὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου λόγον ὀρθὸν εἰρημένον καὶ τοῖς ἐπιεικεστάτοις καὶ πρεσβυτάτοις δι' ἐμπειρίαν ξυνδεδογμένον ὥς ὄντως ὀρθός ἐστιν, Pl. *Leg.* 659b7–d4). Morrow and others have rightly linked this recurrent language of "leading" (ἀγωγή) with Plato's concept of ψυχαγωγία (Morrow 1993 [1960]: 301).

<sup>99</sup> ...what the Athenian calls the 'slackening' and 'corruption' of human character which occurs in the course of one's life (χαλᾶται [...] καὶ διαφθείρεται κατὰ πολλὰ ἐν τῷ βίῳ, Pl. *Leg.* 653c8–9). Elsewhere, the Athenian describes how the entire population, male and female, old and young, free and enslaved, must sing these songs to themselves (Pl. *Leg.* 665c quoted in n. 115 below).

to convince the young and remind the old that the best (ἄριστος) life, according to law, is also the most pleasant (ἡδιστος) life.<sup>100</sup>

Although children and young adults need minimal coaxing to participate in choral performance, it is not *their* characters that must shine forth from the performance. Instead, it is the elderly who have lived long and law-abiding lives and serve as the moral benchmark for the rest of the citizens. As the Athenian stresses, choral performances are reflections (μιμήματα) of character and only when a choral performance reflects (and instills) a good character can it be deemed a good song.<sup>101</sup> Thus, in the end, it is the elderly – those who are, oxymoronicallly, the least eager to perform in dance and song – who are now the most qualified practitioners of choral performance, as the Athenian has now redefined it.<sup>102</sup>

At the close of book 2, the question regarding the proper role of wine in education finally resurfaces. To solve the problem of getting the elderly to perform, the Athenian suggests using wine as a φάρμακον that might stir these individuals into educating younger generations through the proper use of song and dance.

τετταράκοντα δὲ ἐπιβαίνοντα ἐτῶν, ἐν τοῖς ξυσσιτίοις εὐωχηθέντα, καλεῖν τοὺς τε ἄλλους θεοὺς καὶ δὴ καὶ Διόνυσον παρακαλεῖν εἰς τὴν τῶν πρεσβυτῶν τελετὴν ἅμα καὶ παιδιάν, ἣν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐπίκουρον τῆς τοῦ γήρως ἀυστηρότητος ἐδωρήσατο φάρμακον ὥστ' ἀνηβᾶν ἡμᾶς, καὶ δυσθυμίας λήθη γίγνεσθαι μαλακώτερον ἐκ

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<sup>100</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 664b7–8. At Pl. *Leg.* 840b–c, the Athenian speaks of how children will learn to regard victory over pleasure as the greatest type of victory all because “we will enchant them from childhood, it seems, by communicating it with myths and sayings and singing it with melodies” (ἐκ παίδων πρὸς αὐτοὺς λέγοντες ἐν μύθοις τε καὶ ἐν ῥήμασιν καὶ ἐν μέλεσιν ἄδοντες, ὡς εἰκός, κηλήσομεν).

<sup>101</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 655d–e.

<sup>102</sup> It is for this reason that the eldest chorus of the city – the chorus of Dionysus – is said to sing the most beautiful song (κάλλιστα Pl. *Leg.* 665d3; cf. κυριώτατον [...] τῶν καλλίστων τε καὶ ὠφελιμωτάτων ᾠδῶν, Pl. *Leg.* 665d4–5, τῆς καλλίστης ᾠδῆς, Pl. *Leg.* 666e1) – one that is, in fact, finer than the music of the other choruses and the music found in public theaters (μοῦσαν τῆς τῶν χορῶν καλλίῳ καὶ τῆς ἐν τοῖς κοινοῖς θεάτροις, Pl. *Leg.* 667a10–b1). What is most beautiful about their song is not the fine sounds and rhythms but the beauty of the performers’ characters that shines through. As the Athenian states, the good character, which is reflected in a good performance, is itself an assimilation (ὁμοιοῦσθαι) to the good and the beautiful (ἐκείνην τὴν ὁμοιότητα τῷ τοῦ καλοῦ μιμήματι, Pl. *Leg.* 668b1–2).



σκληροτέρου τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἦθος, καθάπερ εἰς πῦρ σίδηρον ἐντεθέντα τηκόμενον, καὶ οὕτως εὐπλαστότερον εἶναι; πρῶτον μὲν δὴ διατεθεὶς οὕτως ἕκαστος ἄρ' οὐκ ἂν ἐθέλοι προθυμότερόν γε, ἦττον αἰσχυνόμενος, οὐκ ἐν πολλοῖς ἀλλ' ἐν μετρίοις, καὶ οὐκ ἐν ἀλλοτρίοις ἀλλ' ἐν οἰκείοις, ἄδειν τε καὶ ὁ πολλακίς εἰρήκαμεν ἐπάδειν;

The man who reaches the age of forty, in joining in the common meals, calls upon the other gods and calls Dionysus to join the rite and recreation of the old men, which was the gift he bestowed upon humankind as an aid to the harshness of old age, the *pharmakon* that renews youth, and through the forgetfulness of despair, softens the hardened character of the soul, just as iron melts when placed in fire, and in this way becomes more malleable. In this disposition, would not each, first of all, become more eagerly willing and less ashamed to sing both songs and also *incantations* (*as we have often called them*), not in a large crowd of strangers but in a modest gathering of familiars.<sup>103</sup>

As the Athenian notes, the chorus of tipsy elders is not only to perform a song but an *incantation* (ἐπάδειν). As he indicates, this is not the first time he uses the language of enchantment to describe these songs. Earlier, we hear that it is not just the elderly, but all three of the city's choruses (young, adult, and old) who are responsible for "enchanting the souls of children, still young and tender."<sup>104</sup> Indeed, elsewhere he states that every member of the city must participate in this process of musical enchantment.<sup>105</sup>

Just as in the *Phaedrus* where Socrates redefines what proper ψυχαγωγία is, here, too, the Athenian has redefined what a proper choral performance is – and he goes on to relabel it.<sup>106</sup> This is explicit when the Athenian notes, midway through book 2, that the choral performances he has been describing are not so much songs (ὥδαί) as incantations (ἐπωδαί):

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<sup>103</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 666 b2-c6.

<sup>104</sup> "For I say that the three choruses must enchant the souls of the children, which are still young and tender" (φημὶ γὰρ ἅπαντας δεῖν ἐπάδειν τρεῖς ὄντας τοὺς χοροὺς ἔτι νέαις οὖσαις ταῖς ψυχαῖς καὶ ἀπαλαῖς τῶν παίδων; Pl. *Leg.* 664b3-5).

<sup>105</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 665c4 with n. 99 and n. 115. Those beyond the age of sixty are not expected actually to sing and dance but instead utter myths (μυθολόγους) in an inspired manner (διὰ θείας φήμης, Pl. *Leg.* 664d1-4). However, it should be noted that the exact age brackets vary slightly throughout the *Laws* (see Morrow 1993 [1960]: 318).

<sup>106</sup> See Elizabeth Asmis's reading of *Phaedrus* at p. 120 above. In commenting on the choral songs and legislative preambles of the *Laws*, scholars, such as Morrow, have seen "the climactic fulfillment of the art of psychagogy that he [sc. Plato] had outlined in the *Phaedrus*" (1953: 242, also Yunis 1996: 212 et al.)

ἵν' οὖν ἡ ψυχὴ τοῦ παιδὸς μὴ ἐναντία χαίρειν καὶ λυπεῖσθαι ἐθίζηται τῷ νόμῳ καὶ τοῖς ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου πεπεισμένοις, ἀλλὰ ξυνέπηται χαίρουσά τε καὶ λυπούμενη τοῖς αὐτοῖς τούτοις οἷσπερ ὁ γέρων, τούτων ἕνεκα, ἃς ᾠδὰς καλοῦμεν, ὄντως μὲν ἐπαρδὰι ταῖς ψυχαῖς φαίνονται νῦν γεγονέναι, πρὸς τὴν τοιαύτην ἣν λέγομεν συμφωνίαν ἐσπουδασμέναι.

So that the soul of a child does not get into the habit of feeling enjoyment or pain towards things which are at variance with the law and the people who obey it, but instead accords with delighting and feeling pains at those very things which the old man does – for these reasons there seem to exist those things which we call songs, but are in reality incantations for souls, purposefully designed for that certain thing we call consonance.<sup>107</sup>

The wordplay makes sense on multiple levels. On one level, choral performance (as the Athenian has now redefined it) is, in fact, a song (ᾠδὴ) sung with a specific orientation or end (ἐπ-). On a higher level, the experience this performance induces for the purpose of educating and re-educating the population fits neatly within the larger Platonic idea of enchanting speech. When citizens participate in these choral performances, they undergo a psychosomatic experience that involves the transfer of the *physical pleasures* derived from the performance into *psychical expectations* of future pleasure and vice versa. The Athenian sums up the psychosomatic principle of choral enchantment in the following way:

Ἄρ' οὖν θαρροῦντες λέγωμεν τὴν τῇ μουσικῇ καὶ τῇ παιδιᾷ μετὰ χορείας χρεῖαν ὀρθὴν εἶναι τοιῶδέ τι τρόπῳ; χαίρομεν ὅταν οἴωμεθα εὖ πράττειν, καὶ ὅποταν χαίρωμεν, οἴομεθα εὖ πράττειν αὖ;

May we confidently say that the correct application of music and play in choral performance is, in a certain way, the following – namely, that we feel enjoyment whenever we believe we are acting rightly, and we believe we are acting rightly whenever we feel enjoyment?<sup>108</sup>

For the young, who look on and participate in the choral dance, the physical enjoyment of the performance shades into a positive, psychic evaluation of the lawful and prayerful content being

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<sup>107</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 659d4-e2. England 1921: ad loc. wrongly dismisses the passage as mere wordplay. Others have since noted that Plato's use of the language of enchantment is programmatic (Morrow 1953: 238-243; 1993 [1960]: 301-2).

<sup>108</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 657c2-6. Welton 1996 similarly points to this passage (which he labels as the "Pleasure-Belief Principle") and connects it with the phenomenon of enchantment within the *Laws*.

performed. For adults, the positive, psychic evaluation of these lawful songs, which has been conditioned within them repeatedly since youth, encourages them to re-perform the dance and thereby re-enchant themselves through the very pleasure of the performance.<sup>109</sup> The self-perpetuating process of enchantment and re-enchantment repeats throughout the city and throughout life, continuously tugging the iron chords of the marionette back into alignment with the golden chord of reason and law.

### 3.2.1.1. The means and ends of choral enchantment

The specific means for imparting this belief through choral performance include certain harmonies (ἁρμονίαι) and rhythms (ῥυθμοί) as well as various levels of mimesis – be it horizontal, person to person imitation through vocal and somatic participation in choral performance or vertical, ideational imitation through mythic or pantomimic recreation of things imagined.<sup>110</sup> Although the Athenian makes judgments here and there about the propriety of certain modes of song,<sup>111</sup> dance,<sup>112</sup> and myth,<sup>113</sup> he fundamentally tethers his judgment of the relative propriety of a choral performance to the overall, ethical-cum-religious orientation of that performance. As he often stresses, what distinguishes the training of the average poet from his enchanters (ἐπωδοί) is the ability to recognize the compositions of song and dance which are oriented toward positive ends:

τὸ γὰρ τρίτον οὐδεμία ἀνάγκη ποιητῇ γινώσκειν, εἴτε καλὸν εἴτε μὴ καλὸν τὸ μίμημα, τὸ δ' ἁρμονίας καὶ ῥυθμοῦ σχεδὸν ἀνάγκη· τοῖς δὲ πάντα τὰ τρία τῆς ἐκλογῆς ἔνεκα τοῦ καλλίστου καὶ δευτέρου, ἢ μηδέποτε ἱκανὸν ἐπὶ δὸν γίγνεσθαι νέοις πρὸς ἀρετὴν.

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<sup>109</sup> For the tendency of a person's evaluations of music to become ossified with age: Pl. *Leg.* 802c-d; cf. Pl. *Resp.* 424c-425a. Clenias claims that, as an old man, he is utterly unable to perform any song that he did not pick up in his youth (Pl. *Leg.* 666d).

<sup>110</sup> Choral performance as an imitation of imagined actions: Pl. *Leg.* 655d-656a, 798d-e, 814d-817d.

<sup>111</sup> ... such as dirges and threnodic choruses which he considers unbecoming to the citizens of Magnesia (Pl. *Leg.* 800c-e). For a recent interpretation of this passage, see Prauscello 2014: 182-191.

<sup>112</sup> ... such as when he criticizes comedic dances (Pl. *Leg.* 815b-816e with Prauscello 2014: 173-181).

<sup>113</sup> ...such as the tale of the Theban Spartoi (Pl. *Leg.* 663e-664a; cf. 636c-d).

For while a poet must know what is fitting in terms of rhythm and harmony, he does not need to know this third thing – whether the representation is or is not fine and good. Our choristers have all three for the selection of what is finest and second finest, otherwise, a chorister would not be a sufficient enchanter of the young toward virtue.<sup>114</sup>

It is this *tertium quid* of correct orientation – in conjunction with pleasant harmonies and rhythms – that fundamentally distinguishes a mere poet (ποιητής) from an enchanter (ἐπωδός), a mere song (ᾠδή) from a proper incantation (ἐπωδή).<sup>115</sup> Thus it is, at bottom, the maintenance of virtuous and lawful ends that elevate these musical performances to the status of good magic in the eyes of the Athenian.

Taken together, this network of choral enchantments is used to produce a certain gravitational pull that, through the sheer incantatory power of song and dance, draws citizens into a willing alignment with the laws of the state. If we look back over earlier dialogues, there are clear

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<sup>114</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 670e4-671a1. The Athenian will repeat this point later: “We said, I think, that the sixty-year-old singers of Dionysus need be exceedingly perceptive regarding both rhythms and arranging harmonies, so that, when it is a matter of imitation through melodies, imitating the good or bad, whenever the soul becomes involved with passions, someone, who is capable of picking out the things which are approximations of the good and those which are the opposite, can reject the latter and, carrying the former in public, sing it and enchant the souls of the young, inviting each of them to follow in trail toward the acquisition of virtue through these imitations” (Ἐφραμεν, οἶμαι, τοὺς τοῦ Διονύσου τοὺς ἐξηκοντούτας ᾠδοὺς διαφερόντως εὐαισθητοὺς δεῖν γεγονέναι περὶ τε τοὺς ῥυθμοὺς καὶ τὰς τῶν ἁρμονιῶν συστάσεις, ἵνα τὴν τῶν μελῶν μίμησιν τὴν εὖ καὶ τὴν κακῶς μεμιμημένην, ἐν τοῖς παθήμασιν ὅταν ψυχὴ γίγνηται, τὰ τε τῆς ἀγαθῆς ὁμοιώματα καὶ τὰ τῆς ἐναντίας ἐκλέξασθαι δυνατός ὢν τις τὰ μὲν ἀποβάλλῃ, τὰ δὲ προφέρων εἰς μέσον ὕμνῃ καὶ ἐπάδῃ ταῖς τῶν νέων ψυχαῖς, προκαλούμενος ἐκάστους εἰς ἀρετῆς ἔπεσθαι κτήσιν συνακολουθοῦντας διὰ τῶν μιμήσεων, Pl. *Leg.* 812b9-c7; cf. 654c-d).

<sup>115</sup> Whatever the chosen sound pattern, a good choral song must fundamentally be εὐφημία – involving prayerful and lawful sentiments (Pl. *Leg.* 800e10-801a4; cf. *Resp.* 607a). Likewise, dances performed to whatever rhythm must fundamentally be a manifestation of a person “self-consciously acting in the right way” (ἐν δόξῃ τοῦ πράττειν εὖ, Pl. *Leg.* 815d7; cf. ὅταν οἰώμεθα εὖ πράττειν, Pl. *Leg.* 657c5). Although the Athenian praises the Egyptians for sticking to a single mode of performance (Pl. *Leg.* 656d – 657b, 798e-799a) and warns of the dangers of adopting new styles of performance (Pl. *Leg.* 700a-701a; cf. Pl. *Resp.* 424), he nevertheless still advises all Magnesians to innovate continually as they enchant themselves forever with their songs: “That all men and children, each free person and each slave, male and female, and, in fact, the entire city, should not ever cease from enchanting itself with these songs which we described, always changing things up in one way or another and in all cases supplying variety, so that there may be pleasure and an insatiable desire for these songs” (Τὸ δεῖν πάντα ἄνδρα καὶ παῖδα, ἐλεύθερον καὶ δούλον, θῆλυν τε καὶ ἄρρενα, καὶ ὅλην τὴν πόλιν ὅλην τὴν πόλιν αὐτὴν αὐτῇ ἐπάδουσιν μὴ παύεσθαι ποτε ταῦτα ἃ διεληλύθαμεν ἀμῶς γέ πως αἰεὶ μεταβαλλόμενα καὶ πάντως παρεχόμενα ποικιλίαν, ὥστε ἀπληστίαν εἶναι τινα τῶν ὕμνων τοῖς ἄδουσι καὶ ἡδονήν. Pl. *Leg.* 665c1-7).

precedents for this idea. For instance, in the *Gorgias*, we can see how Callicles attacks a similar socio-cultural practice of enchantment which is already occurring in Athens:

πλάττοντες τοὺς βελτίστους καὶ ἐρρωμενεστάτους ἡμῶν αὐτῶν, ἐκ νέων λαμβάνοντες, ὥσπερ λέοντας, κατεπάδοντές τε καὶ γοητεύοντες καταδουλούμεθα λέγοντες, ὡς τὸ ἴσον χρὴ ἔχειν καὶ τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὸ δίκαιον.

... molding our best and strongest, taking them from youth, just like lions, bewitching and enchanting we enslave them, saying that it is necessary to have an equal share and that this is fine and just.<sup>116</sup>

Callicles, of course, sees such enchantments as a fool's errand since, as he believes, a powerful individual will inevitably rise up, "trampling our writings, magic tricks, incantations, and laws which are all transgressions of what is natural;" (καταπατήσας τὰ ἡμέτερα γράμματα καὶ μαγγανεύματα καὶ ἐπωδὰς καὶ νόμους τοὺς παρὰ φύσιν ἅπαντας).<sup>117</sup> In the *Laws*, Plato refines this concept of socio-cultural enchantment in ways that, ideally, will not succumb to the rise of the *Übermensch*. His best tactic against this, however, is not his network of choral song. It is a second arm of state-sanctioned enchantment, namely, legislative preambles.

### 3.2.2. Preambles

After defining choral performance as a form of incantation, the Athenian is quick to note that lawgivers, too, engage in a similar practice, only on a higher level:

ταῦτόν δὴ καὶ τὸν ποιητικὸν ὁ ὀρθὸς νομοθέτης ἐν τοῖς καλοῖς ῥήμασι καὶ ἐπαινετοῖς πείσει τε καὶ ἀναγκάσει μὴ πείθων τὰ τῶν σωφρόνων τε καὶ ἀνδρείων καὶ πάντως ἀγαθῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐν τε ῥυθμοῖς σχήματα καὶ ἐν ἀρμονίαις μέλη ποιοῦντα ὀρθῶς ποιεῖν.

In the same way, the upright lawmaker persuades – and if he cannot persuade, compels – the poet, with fine phrases and praises, to make things correctly in producing dances in rhythms and songs in harmonies which befit prudent and courageous and altogether good men.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Pl. *Gorg.* 483e4-484a2.

<sup>117</sup> Pl. *Gorg.* 484a4-5.

<sup>118</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 660a3-7; cf. 719b.

Thus before the choral performers can spread their enchanting song through the population, the lawgiver must first use his own brand of enchanting speech to inspire the institution of choral enchantment in the first place. Unlike the choristers, however, the lawgiver's tool for enchantment is not so much song as a type of rhetorical persuasion (especially in the form of the legislative preamble) that convinces each citizen to not only embrace the rule of law broadly construed but individual laws themselves.<sup>119</sup>

These legislative preambles are introduced in book 4, where the Athenian, after breaking off from an imaginary address to the Magnesians, realizes that laws must be presented in two forms.<sup>120</sup> One form includes the dictates of the law itself, and the other the persuasive sentiment behind it.<sup>121</sup> The Athenian goes on to explain this division by offering an analogy to the medical profession and, in particular, to the difference between doctors of slaves and doctors of free citizens. While the doctor of slaves may prescribe whatever remedy he finds most effective, no matter how unpleasant, the doctor of free citizens must first persuade his patients into accepting his remedies irrespective of how unpleasant they may at first appear.<sup>122</sup> In this way too, the lawgiver must persuade the Magnesians to accept the law willingly rather than have it foisted upon them.<sup>123</sup>

To persuade these citizens of the necessity and desirability of individual laws, the Athenian proposes the use of rhetorically persuasive preambles. They are, as he notes, not too different from

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<sup>119</sup> As Morrow notes: "The purpose of these enchantments [i.e., preambles] is to bring about conformity to the law, not merely in the public relations of citizen to citizen, but in all the details, even the most intimate, of private life" (Morrow 1953: 242).

<sup>120</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 718b-723d.

<sup>121</sup> One might think of it in terms of 'good cop' and 'bad cop,' as Fossheim memorably puts it (Fossheim 2013: 87).

<sup>122</sup> This analogy correlates closely with the medical analogy used to explain the function of choral enchantments: just as a doctor can habituate patients toward enjoying healthier foods, so too can incantatory choral performances habituate the young toward embracing the laws (Pl. *Leg.* 559e-660a; cf. 667b).

<sup>123</sup> The whole project of the *Laws* is, in part, guided by this larger attempt to establish "the natural rule of law over willing subjects and without violent force" (κατὰ φύσιν δὲ τὴν τοῦ νόμου ἐκόντων ἀρχὴν ἀλλ' οὐ βίαιον πεφυκυῖαν, Pl. *Leg.* 690c2-3).

the practice of clarifying or prefacing what one intends to say or do – a practice that all speakers of any language engage in constantly.<sup>124</sup> The closest cousin to this concept of legislative preamble is said to be the musical preamble which effectively warms up the audience for the musical performance to follow:

καὶ δὴ πον κιθαρωδικῆς ᾠδῆς λεγομένων νόμων καὶ πάσης Μούσης προοίμια  
θαυμαστώως ἐσπουδασμένα πρόκειται. τῶν δὲ ὄντως νόμων ὄντων, οὓς δὴ πολιτικούς  
εἶναί φαμεν, οὐδεὶς πώποτε οὐτ' εἶπέ τι προοίμιον οὔτε ξυνθέτης γενόμενος ἐξήνεγκεν  
εἰς τὸ φῶς, ὥς οὐκ ὄντος φύσει.

To be sure, marvelously elaborated preambles can be plainly seen in the form of the kitharodic song which we call νόμοι and all other music. And as for the real νόμοι, which we label as political, no one has ever yet offered a preamble nor has any composition of one come to light, as if such a thing does not exist.<sup>125</sup>

By exploiting the slippage between the legal and musical meanings of the word νόμος, the Athenian explains the role of the lawgiver as not only legislative but also poetic.<sup>126</sup> Just as poets must sometimes perform a preamble before their song, so, too, lawgivers must sometimes perform a preamble before (or even in place of) their laws in order to train the listeners' ears and souls to become more well-disposed toward the content of these laws.

Like choral song, these preambles are described as enchantments. However, they differ slightly in both their orientation and their means. Choral performance is a collective enchantment, whereas the preamble is a corrective enchantment. That is to say, choral enchantments act as a

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<sup>124</sup> Beginning with a prefacing remark of his own, the Athenian explains as follows: "What kind of thing do I speak of? I mean to say this, that such a thing is present in all speech and all activity involving the voice and that these preambles are really a kind of warm-up, bearing a certain design which is handy for getting one started on what is intended to be done" (τί δὲ ταῦτ' εἶρηκα; τόδε εἰπεῖν βουλευθεῖς, ὅτι λόγων πάντων καὶ ὅσων φωνὴ κεκοινώνηκεν προοίμια τέ ἐστιν καὶ σχεδὸν οἷόν τινες ἀνακινήσεις, ἔχουσαι τινα ἔντεχνον ἐπιχείρησιν χρήσιμον πρὸς τὸ μέλλον περαινέσθαι. Pl. *Leg.* 722d1-6).

<sup>125</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 722d6-e4.

<sup>126</sup> The lawmaker is the composer of the "truest tragedy" (τραγωδίαν τὴν ἀληθεστάτην, Pl. *Leg.* 817b5 with a recent interpretation of the entire passage by Laks 2010). See also Pl. *Leg.* 734e and 822e-823a with Morgan 2013, who draws similarities between the role of Plato's lawmaker and the role of epinician poets. Moreover, it should be noted that the equivocation of poet with lawgiver is, in fact, quite traditional to early Greek thought (Steiner 2015: 32-36).

central, rhetorical magnet, drawing all citizens into performing one assimilated song or incantation; legislative preambles function on the periphery of society where they, in conjunction with law itself, set limits to human action within the city. In addition to having a slightly different orientation, preambles also utilize slightly different techniques of enchantment. To create effective preambles, the lawgiver must not only know which types of speech produce goodness but also how different types of souls respond to different types of speech. In order to be an effective psychagogue, then, the lawgiver must be a good psychologist, and just as people's souls vary widely, so do rhetorical techniques.<sup>127</sup> Legislative preambles vary from law to law and range from strong emotional and stylistic set pieces to cool and collected argumentation.

There is a longstanding scholarly debate over whether or not these preambles appeal to reason. For Christopher Bobonich, the preambles represent a form of "rational persuasion."<sup>128</sup> Others cite the emotionality and stylistic flourishes of the preambles to stress how they are closer to "sermon preaching" than rational argumentation.<sup>129</sup> André Laks proposes to break up the preambles into three groups: one group which uses rhetorical techniques of praise and blame, another which uses the technique of myth, and the final group (comprised only of the preamble regarding the law of impiety in book 10) which uses reasoned argumentation.<sup>130</sup> Luc Brisson generally agrees with Laks; however, he stresses that book 10 is an exception that proves the rule that preambles generally do not appeal to reason.<sup>131</sup> If we loop the discussion of legislative preambles back into Plato's

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<sup>127</sup> The Athenian stresses that the art of politics comes down to knowing the souls of one's citizens: "So this would be one of the most useful tools – namely, knowing the natures and dispositions of souls – for that art which involves tending for matters; and by this, I suppose we mean politics" (Τοῦτο μὲν ἄρ' ἂν τῶν χρησιμωτάτων ἐν εἴῃ, τὸ γινῶναι τὰς φύσεις τε καὶ ἕξεις τῶν ψυχῶν, τῇ τέχνῃ ἐκείνῃ ἣς ἐστὶ ταῦτα θεραπεύειν· ἐστὶ δέ που, φαμέν, ὥς οἶμαι, πολιτικῆς. *Pl. Leg.* 650b6-8).

<sup>128</sup> Bobonich 1991.

<sup>129</sup> Stalley 1994, Yunis 1996: 211-236.

<sup>130</sup> Laks 1991.

<sup>131</sup> Brisson 2000b; 2005: 117.



broader conception of enchantment, we may not need to draw such a strict line between rational and irrational persuasion. It is true that the preamble, as a form of Platonic enchantment, appeals primarily to the lower, less rational parts of the soul. However, this appeal may come from irrational songs and images or from reason itself – as we saw in Plato’s *Timaeus*. Outside of the *Laws*, we have already seen how dialectical arguments, while functioning on a rational plane, can still enchant the lower parts of the soul, especially when they block habituated desires and beliefs by inducing types of aporia.<sup>132</sup> Preambles, like all enchantments, may appeal to the lower part of the soul through rational or irrational means. Before closing, it will be helpful to look closely at two preambles, which the Athenian explicitly labels as incantatory, in order to get a sense of how this mode of enchantment works.

### 3.2.2.1. Preamble to marriage law

In book 6, the Athenian discusses the marriage customs of the city of Magnesia and, in particular, the guidelines for choosing a spouse.<sup>133</sup> As he goes on to state, these guidelines are so counterintuitive and controversial that they will not only invite ridicule but also produce resentment in a large part of the population (πρὸς τῷ γελοῖᾳ εἶναι θυμὸν ἂν ἐγείρει πολλοῖς).<sup>134</sup> As a result, they cannot be written into law and must be enforced solely through the enchanting (ἐπάδοντα)

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<sup>132</sup> “Platonic *psychagogia* is not opposed to the dialectical argumentation of Plato’s Socrates – it consists in large measure in Socrates’ argumentation” (Blank 1993: 439).

<sup>133</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 773a-e. The problem of legislating marriage customs is, for the Athenian, the clearest example of why legislative preambles are necessary: Magnesia’s “single law” (ἅπλοῦς νόμος) regarding marriage – namely, that male citizens must, in their early thirties, marry a woman – is offered as the primary example of the type of law which would require a preamble (Pl. *Leg.* 721b-c). It may be noted here that the Athenian never actually persuades both of his interlocutors of the necessity of enforcing heterosexual relationships. Although he persuades Megillus, he fails to convince Cleinias and, thus, promises to attempt to enchant him (ἐπάδων) into approving of the mandate sometime later (Pl. *Leg.* 837e1-7). This promise is never fulfilled in the course of the dialogue.

<sup>134</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 773c7-8.

performance of the preamble.<sup>135</sup> Before a young man even looks for a spouse, he must first listen to this enchanting preamble which, in effect, urges him to choose a spouse who not only balances out his own temperament but also comes from a less well-off family.<sup>136</sup> The preamble goes on to explain that this practice is necessary to balance out the city both economically and temperamentally. After admitting that most citizens cannot actually envision how their personal marriage choices can stratify a community, the preamble offers an infamously florid metaphor as an aid:

οὐ γὰρ ῥάδιον ἐννοεῖν ὅτι πόλιν εἶναι δεῖ δίκην κρατῆρος κεκραμένην, οὗ μαινόμενος μὲν οἶνος ἐγκεχυμένος ζεῖ, κολαζόμενος δὲ ὑπὸ νήφοντος ἑτέρου θεοῦ καλὴν κοινωνίαν λαβὼν ἀγαθὸν πῶμα καὶ μέτριον ἀπεργάζεται.

It is not easy to know that a city must be blended like a mixing bowl where the mad wine, when poured, bubbles up, but after being chastised by the other sober god of water and assuming a fine partnership, it is turned into a good and measured drink.<sup>137</sup>

In conjunction with the style and argumentation of the preamble, this highly-wrought sympotic metaphor engenders within the soul of the young bachelor an expectation that this is the best and most pleasant marital custom for the city collectively to follow.<sup>138</sup> It enchants him into rejecting marriages based on money or intemperate passion and into following, instead, the tale (μῦθος)

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<sup>135</sup> “For this reason, it is necessary to omit these matters from the law, and rather try to persuade, by enchantment...” (τούτων δὲ χάριν ἔαν μὲν νόμῳ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἀναγκαῖον, ἐπάδοντα δὲ πείθειν πειρᾶσθαι ..., Pl. Leg. 773d5-6).

<sup>136</sup> Pl. Leg. 773a-b. For similar marriage advice, see Pl. Plt. 310b-d.

<sup>137</sup> Pl. Leg. 773c7-d3. According to pseudo-Longinus, this metaphor had become infamous among critics: “they say that labeling water as the ‘sober god’ and mixture as ‘chastisement,’ smacks of a poet who is himself not sober” (νήφοντα γὰρ, φασί, θεὸν τὸ ὕδωρ λέγειν, κόλασιν δὲ τὴν κρασιν, ποιητοῦ τινος τῷ ὄντι οὐχὶ νήφοντός ἐστι, Ps.-Long. Subl. 32.7).

<sup>138</sup> It is worth noting also the other rhetorical figures such as *figura etymologica* (γάμους χρὴ γαμεῖν, Pl. Leg. 773a1; κρατῆρος κεκραμένην, Pl. Leg. 773d1), chiasmic constructions (φεύγειν τὸν τῶν πενήτων μηδὲ τὸν τῶν πλουσίων διώκειν, Pl. Leg. 773a2-3, θάπτους δὲ ἤθεσι πρὸς βραδυτέρους καὶ βραδυτέρους πρὸς θάπτους, Pl. Leg. 773c5-6) and plenty of other jingles to tickle the ear: οἱ σοὶ παραινοῖεν, Pl. Leg. 773a2; ἀλλ’ ἐὰν τᾶλλα ἰσάζῃ, Pl. Leg. 773a3; et al.

which the lawgiver tells about marriage – namely, that one must seek a union that is best for the city, not sweetest for oneself.<sup>139</sup>

### 3.2.2.2. Preamble to the law against impiety

The next legislative preamble worth discussing comes from book 10, where the Athenian addresses how best to deal with impiety in the city. This preamble, taking up almost the entirety of the book, is far more expansive and variegated than the one previously discussed. If we take up, again, the analogy to music, this long exhortation against irreverent beliefs is not so much a prelude as a concert consisting of entire movements that together utterly dwarf the νόμος tagged on at the end.<sup>140</sup>

The sheer size and grandiosity of this preamble are internally warranted when one considers the audience which it aims to persuade.<sup>141</sup> The impious citizens whom the Athenian hopes to reform are, in effect, all those who are (by their very natures) immune to the rest of the city's enchantments.

οὐ πειθόμενοι τοῖς μύθοις, οὓς ἐκ νέων παίδων ἔτι ἐν γάλαξιν τρεφόμενοι τροφῶν τε ἤκουον καὶ μητέρων, οἷον ἐν ἐπιδόξαις μετὰ τε παιδιᾶς καὶ μετὰ σπουδῆς λεγομένων [...] τούτων δὴ πάντων ὅσοι καταφρονήσαντες οὐδὲ ἐξ ἐνὸς ἱκανοῦ λόγου, ὥς φαῖεν ἂν ὅσοι καὶ σμικρὸν νοῦ κέκτηνται, νῦν ἀναγκάζουσιν ἡμᾶς λέγειν ἃ λέγομεν, πῶς τούτους ἂν τις ἐν πράξει λόγοις δύναίτο νοθεύων ἅμα διδάσκειν περὶ θεῶν πρῶτον ὥς εἰσὶ;

In not believing the myths, which they have been weaned on from infancy as sucklings, hearing them from their mothers and nurses, the type that were uttered, in seriousness or in play, as incantations, [...] When all these people condemn all these things – and for no single, sufficient reason as everyone with a smidgen of sense would admit – and now compel us to have this discussion, how does one put these people into the right frame of

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<sup>139</sup> “All in all, let there be one story we tell about marriage: each man must seek out a marriage that is best for the city, not most pleasurable for himself” (καὶ κατὰ παντὸς εἰς ἕστω μῦθος γάμου· τὸν γὰρ τῇ πόλει δεῖ συμφέροντα μνηστεύειν γάμον ἕκαστον, οὐ τὸν ἥδιστον αὐτῷ. Pl. Leg. 773b4-6). England notes the poetic flavor of μνηστεύειν γάμον which recalls μνηστεύω γάμους οὐκ ὄντας ὥς εἴξασιν at Eur. IA 847 (England 1921 on Pl. Leg. 773b5).

<sup>140</sup> The legislation which does come at the end of the book essentially restricts the use of private shrines (Pl. Leg. 909d-e, 910b-d). This has felt a bit underwhelming to commentators: “*Laws* 10 ends not with a bang, but with a whimper” (Mayhew 2008: 212).

<sup>141</sup> The preamble is meant to prevent “all things in word or deed which someone commits through their speech or action in disrespect to the gods” (ὅσα δὲ λόγῳ καὶ ὅσα ἔργῳ περὶ θεοὺς ὑβρίζει τις λέγων ἢ πράττων, Pl. Leg. 885b2-3).

mind, and at the same time teach them about the gods – firstly, that they exist – and do so in gentle terms?<sup>142</sup>

Although steeped from infancy in the musical and socio-cultural modes of education about the gods, the soul of the irreverent individual, which is often described as bestial in nature, remains unaffected.<sup>143</sup> On the contrary, many of these bestial individuals (especially the clever beasts) work their own antinomian and impious enchantments on other citizens – and thereby pose a major threat to the city. Like wolves who enchant away the attention of guard-dogs with bait, many such impious individuals are experts at enchanting other citizen by appealing to the lowest and most bestial parts of their souls.<sup>144</sup> As we saw earlier in the chapter, many magicians are included in this category of irreverent individual who is clever and dissembling since they enchant many of the living (ψυχαγωγῶσι πολλοὺς τῶν ζώντων) in claiming to raise the dead (τοὺς δὲ τεθνεῶτας φάσκοντες ψυχαγωγεῖν) and promising to persuade the gods (θεοὺς ὑπὸ πεισχνούμενοι πείθειν).<sup>145</sup>

In order to combat the enchanting rhetoric of these individuals, the Athenian composes his special preamble, which includes reasoned argumentation<sup>146</sup> as well as an enchanting myth.<sup>147</sup> These

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<sup>142</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 887d2-888a2. Elsewhere, he describes similarly recidivous characters – temple robbers and the like – as that “stubborn bean” (κερασβόλος) that just will not soften in the pot (Pl. *Leg.* 835d; cf. 880a-b).

<sup>143</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 906b, 909a8. Note also how bad choral enchantments tend to imitate bestial sounds (Pl. *Leg.* 669e7). In general, bad enchantments drive a person wild, whereas good enchantments humanize the bestial part of the soul: cf. Pl. *Euthyd.* 289e1-290a4 with n. 30 above, as well as Pl. *Lys.* 206b2-3 with n. 87 above. See also a similar observation by Graf 1997: 25-6 with note, Brisson 2000a: 279.

<sup>144</sup> On the analogy to ‘certain watchdogs enchanted by wolves’ (τισι κυσὶ κεκληλημένοις ὑπὸ λύκων), see Pl. *Leg.* 906b-e. The passage is explicitly about the possibility of individuals enchanting gods (understood as watchdogs); however, it implicitly looks forward to the way in which the dissembling and impious individual enchants the masses (see Schöpsdau 2011 on Pl. *Leg.* 609b7).

<sup>145</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 909a8-b6 quoted at p. 103 above. Elsewhere, the Athenian describes this promise to persuade the gods in terms of enchanting the gods (Pl. *Leg.* 885d, 906b).

<sup>146</sup> It explicitly contains arguments (λόγοις, Pl. *Leg.* 887a5) and functions as a rational demonstration (ἀπόδειξις, *Leg.* 887a5, 893b2; ἐπίδειξις, Pl. *Leg.* 892c6). On the highly rational dimension of the preamble in book 10, see Laks 1991 and Brisson 2000b.

<sup>147</sup> “Indeed, [we are done] with compelling him with our arguments to agree that what he says is wrong. But enchantments still seem necessary in the form of certain myths” (Τῷ γε βιάζεσθαι τοῖς λόγοις ὁμολογεῖν αὐτὸν μὴ λέγειν ὀρθῶς. ἐπρωδῶν γε μὴν προσδεῖσθαι μοι δοκεῖ μύθων ἔτι τινῶν, Pl. *Leg.* 903a10-b2). For an interpretation of this myth, see Vorwerk 2003.

rhetorical tactics are marshaled together to persuade citizens to abandon their irreverent belief regarding the nature and existence of the gods.<sup>148</sup> In the end, it is this particular preamble against impiety (the one that Cleinias suggests should preface the entire project of legislation),<sup>149</sup> which aims at preventing the rise of the powerful and destructive individual (the one that Callicles described as “trampling our writings, magic tricks, incantations, and laws”<sup>150</sup> or that the Athenian claims can destroy “individuals, whole households, and cities”).<sup>151</sup> The preamble aims to enchant and rehumanize this type of bestial soul. If it falls on deaf ears, more coercive types of reform are introduced. If this coercion proves useless against the most belligerently irreverent individual, whose soul is beyond reform, the state imposes a permanent exile into the wildest and most remote part of the city – a place that is, in the eyes of the Athenian, most befitting for the one with the most bestial soul.<sup>152</sup>

## Conclusion

Like Gorgias, Plato uses the language of enchantment as a way of articulating extraordinary experiences produced by speech. He uses this language particularly to mark out psychosomatic experiences in which sensations give way to opinions or when opinions give way to sensations. Enchanting rhetoric may appeal to the ear and terminate in a new belief instilled in the mind, or it may appeal to the mind by way of an argument which sends a sensation through the body. Plato not

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<sup>148</sup> As the Athenian notes, the impiety of these individuals makes him afraid (φοβοῦμαι, Pl. *Leg.* 886a) and his speech is designed to put that fear back onto them (τὸν δὲ εἰς φόβον τρέψαιμεν, Pl. *Leg.* 887a). In addition to the use of argument and myth, the preamble is also rife with references to and quotations of poetry – including Homer and Hesiod as well as, perhaps, Euripides and Critias – as positive or negative exempla.

<sup>149</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 887b-c.

<sup>150</sup> Pl. *Gorg.* 484a4-5 quoted at p. 134; cf. Pl. *Leg.* 890a.

<sup>151</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 909b5-6 quoted at p. 103.

<sup>152</sup> Earlier, the Athenian notes that the preamble has no effect on the one who has an utterly savage soul (παντᾶπασιν ὠμῆς ψυχῆς, Pl. *Leg.* 718d).

only deepens Gorgias's earlier musings on enchantment but also explicitly distinguishes between positive and negative uses of enchanting speech. For Plato, our susceptibility to enchantment represents an extraordinary weakness in human nature, which is often exploited for ill, but can and should be harnessed for good.

### Chapter 3. Hellenistic continuities

According to Jacqueline de Romilly and Pedro Laín Entralgo, the notion of enchantment – as it appeared in the writings of Plato, Gorgias, and the early poets – drops away in the Hellenistic age and does not reappear until the birth of Christianity<sup>1</sup> or even the second sophistic.<sup>2</sup> As we shall see, this narrative is not entirely accurate. In the centuries following Aristotle, the traditional notion of verbal enchantment is not somehow driven underground. Instead, it persists, not only in poetry<sup>3</sup> and common idiom<sup>4</sup> but also in philosophical debates regarding the role of literature and the nature of pleasure. In this chapter, we shall trace how this semantic habit persists in the latter philosophical

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<sup>1</sup> For Laín Entralgo, the category is resurrected “only with Christianity – within which the divine person who ‘became flesh’ will be called Logos, ‘Word’” (1970 [1958]: 240).

<sup>2</sup> According to De Romilly, “the theorists of the fourth century had equally refused all the different meanings this simile [i.e., of speech as incantation] could involve: they had disregarded the irrational impact of oratory, the poetical strangeness in style, and any reliance on inspiration. They had made a choice” (1975: 70).

<sup>3</sup> Theocritus: θέλξει, *Epigr.* 5; ἀκηλήτω, *Id.* 22.169. Lycophron: ἀθέλκτους, *Alex.* 1335. Moschus: κατέθελε, *Europ.* 94. Bion of Smyrna: θέλγονται, fr. 2 Gow. In his *Argonautica*, Apollonius of Rhodes speaks of magic and enchantment mostly with words related to θέλξις (1.27, 1.31, 1.515, 1.777, 2.772, 3.4, 3.28, 3.33, 3.86, 3.143, 3.738, 3.766, 3.820, 4.147, 4.150, 4.436, 4.442, 4.667, 4.894, 4.1080, 4.1665, cf. κήλησις 1.515). Some appearances seem to be learned echoes of Homer (e.g., 3.33, 4.894, 4.1080). Callimachus does not speak of enchantment as frequently. However, he does speak of the so-called Telchines who represent an opposing aesthetic to his own. Callimachus may be playing upon the old etymological connection between the name Τελχίνες and θέλξις (Hsch. τ 448 s.v. Τελχίνες). The etymology is made as early as the fifth century by Xenomedes (*BNJ* 442 [Xenomedes of Keos] F 4a). We know, moreover, that Callimachus read Xenomedes (*Aet.* 3 fr.75.54 Pfeiffer = *BNJ* 442 [Xenomedes of Keos] F 1). On Callimachus’s possible connections to contemporary trends in literary criticism, see Romano 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Outside of high poetry, we find idiomatic uses of words related to γόης (*Alex.* fr. 222 Kock; *Lysim.* 3 Müller = *BNJ* 621 [Lysimachos, *Aigyptiaka*] F 4), κήλησις (*Theopomp.* Com. fr. 30 Kock; *Bato* fr. 5 Kock; *Chariclid.* fr. 1 Kock), ἐπαιδιή (*Anaxandr.* fr. 33 Kock), ψυχαγωγία (*Hypsi.* *Eucl. Lib.* XIV pr. 12; *P.Hamburg* 1.91 with Clarysse 2002: 103-6). See also “the magic tricks of haute cuisine” (μαγειρικά μαγανείας, *BNJ* 594 [Dioscurides] F 8 with Graf 2019 135 n. 80).

and literary critical discourse of the Hellenistic age, beginning with Aristotle's *Poetics* and carrying on up through the works of Philodemus.

As we shall see, enchantment continues to occupy an ambivalent position, oscillating between positive and negative judgments, rationality and irrationality, delight and harm – much as it had in the writings of Plato and Gorgias. The authors whom we shall be treating in this chapter specifically draw upon this language of enchantment in order to negotiate the social-cum-intellectual value of the verbal arts, to debate the efficacy of form versus content, and to stake out what they regard as the rational or irrational limits of our own experiences of speech and song. For them, enchantment comes quite close to being *terminus technicus* for the extraordinary and elusive experience produced by powerful poetry, music, or rhetoric. It is a label that not only categorizes this family of experiences, but also captures their exceptional and ambiguous status.

Relatively little remains of Hellenistic literature and, thus, much of the material we pick through from here on is fragmentary. That is to say, it comes down to us in quotations of lost works, scraps of papyri, or, in some cases, quotations of lost works partially preserved upon scraps of papyri. The excellent recent advances in collecting, editing, and interpreting this Hellenistic material allow for a fresh reassessment of the idea of enchantment after Aristotle. One source central to this chapter is the collection of charred (and subsequently mangled) papyri found in the Villa dei Papiri at Herculaneum. The first century BCE Epicurean philosopher Philodemus, whose works comprise about half of what has been recovered there, will be crucial – especially his writings on the arts of poetry, music, and rhetoric.<sup>5</sup> Fortunately for us, Philodemus's writings contain not only Epicurean

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<sup>5</sup> For general discussions of Philodemus and his work, see Sider 1997: 3-23; Capasso 2020. In what follows, quotations from *On Music* are from Delattre 2007. Quotations from the first four books of Philodemus's *On Poems* are all taken



doctrine about the verbal arts but also a great deal of material from earlier Hellenistic writers who would have otherwise been lost.

This archival slant to Philodemus's writings is partially a product of the time in which he wrote. The Mithridatic wars caused an exodus of philosophers (and their libraries) from Athens. These later philosophers, unmoored from the Athenian Academy, Lyceum, Garden, and Stoa, began to write from new abodes – such as Rhodes, Alexandria, and Roman Italy – and to engage in a new type of philosophy characterized by a desire to record, revise, refute, and resolve philosophical disputes and doctrines of past authorities.<sup>6</sup> For our purposes, this back-turning gaze is quite helpful for recovering earlier Hellenistic discussion surrounding the idea of enchanting song and speech.

In the first part of this chapter, I trace how Hellenistic authors continue to debate the means and ends of enchantment within the realm of literary theory. I begin by showing how Aristotle did not suppress the concept of enchantment so much as apply to it a teleological framework that Hellenistic literary theorists largely adopt. But where Aristotle had primarily associated the means of enchantment with plot and content, later Hellenistic authors would primarily associate poetic enchantment with the sound of a poem. Their strict association between poetic enchantment and sound leads naturally into another Hellenistic habit in which authors sharply distinguish the ends of poetry/enchantment from the ends of prose/education. When Philodemus writes at the end of the Hellenistic period, he brings us closer to Aristotle again by opposing the tendency to hold sound

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from Janko 2000, 2011, 2020. When necessary, I follow the updated readings suggested in Janko 2020, which supersedes the earlier volumes. Quotations of the fifth book of *On Poems* are taken from Mangoni 1993. Philodemus's long work *On Rhetoric* is waiting on new editions. I use the text of Longo 1977 for books 1 and 2, Hammerstaedt 1992 for book 3, Sudhaus 1892-6 and Blank 2003 for the rest, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>6</sup> According to Sedley, Philodemus writes at a time in which “the history of philosophy had itself come to an end” (2003: 36).

primarily responsible for poetic enchantment, and plumps, instead, for content. Yet as with many other Hellenistic writers, he denies that poetic enchantment has any educative value.

In the second part of the chapter, I turn to how Hellenistic Stoics discussed the psychological experience of enchantment. Although there was clearly broad interest in the concept of enchantment throughout the Hellenistic period, there are not many substantial accounts of what the experience of enchantment consisted of. The one exception is the Stoic discussions of enchanting pleasures. I begin this part of the chapter by setting this notion of enchanting pleasure against the larger backdrop of the Stoic theory of emotions. I show that what Stoics call enchantments are physical pleasures. Within the highly rationalizing framework of Stoic emotions, enchanting pleasures are outliers, existing on the cusp of reason and unreason. In the final part of the chapter, I bring this picture of enchanting pleasures into communication with Diogenes of Babylon's Stoic writings on music which Philodemus preserves. I use this text to provide a window into what a Stoic, psychological model of aural enchantment might look like. As I show, the Stoic experience of aural enchantment is a rationalized experience of psychic tuning in which sounds pass over the soul and harmonize with it in ways that produce psycho-physical effects.

## **1. Literary enchantment, Aristotle and after**

### **1.1. Aristotle**

Aristotle (384-322 BCE), in what remains of the *Poetics*, twice remarks upon the *means* through which tragedy produces enchantment (ψυχαγωγία) – a word that, in his time, still

maintains a close relation to the domain of magic.<sup>7</sup> According to Aristotle, a tragedy not only enchants through its plot (μῦθος)<sup>8</sup> but also through its spectacle (ὄψις).<sup>9</sup> This general association between magic and the effect achieved by a good poetic performance is, of course, deeply traditional. Homer and the early poets as well as Gorgias and Plato all agree that poetry enchants, for better or for worse. But by the fourth century, these types of remarks were beginning to enter increasingly formalized aesthetic debates surrounding the verbal arts. These debates were in fact common enough for parody. The comic poet, Timocles, for instance, takes a shot at contemporary intellectuals when he has an unnamed speaker wax philosophical about the tremendous value of a tragedy – how it is capable of leaving an audience edified (παιδευθεῖς) and at the same time of providing an experience of consolation (παράψυχή) as well as enchantment (ψυχαγωγία).<sup>10</sup>

Scholars have noted before the similarities of this remark to Aristotle's own theory of tragedy – especially in connection with the use of the term ψυχαγωγία.<sup>11</sup> Yet Timocles need not be targeting

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<sup>7</sup> There is a tendency to water down the magical connotations of the word (Lucas 1968: 104; Gudeman 1934: 182–183). Stephen Halliwell rightly challenges this (Halliwell 1986: 64 n. 24, 189; 2011: 223–6, 259). As De Romilly recognized, the language of ψυχαγωγία never entirely loses its magical connotations (1974: 15; cf. Plut. *De sera* 560f; Luc. *Dial. D.* 7.224.1; Paus. 3.17.8; *et al.*). See Barnes 2022. It is worth noting also that Aristotle is not opposed to making casual references to magical spells in his biological works (Arist. *Hist. an.* 505b18–22, 577a7–13, 605a2–7, cf. 616b24, [Pr.] 926b20–31). He may even be responsible for writing a treatise which disambiguates the concept of μαγεία by distinguishing Greek magical practices from the religious practices of the Persian Magoi (Diog. Laert. 1.1 = Arist. Fr. 35 Rose; cf. Rives 2004). His pupil, Theophrastus, maintains a similar intellectual interest in the topic of magic. From the Hellenistic period onwards, his biological writings came to be treated as a treasury of magico-pharmaceutical lore (Gordon 1997: 131). He also has an interest in the therapeutic uses of song (Theophr. Frs. 719a–726c Fortenbaugh et al.). There is no hard and fast theoretical reason to believe that Aristotle would have resisted the idiomatic use of words related to enchantment. In fact, there is clear evidence that he did not: see Arist. *EE* 3.2 1230b31–35 with n. 20 below.

<sup>8</sup> Arist. *Poet.* 6 1450a33–5.

<sup>9</sup> Arist. *Poet.* 6 1450b16–20.

<sup>10</sup> “[Humankind] invented these [tragedies] as consolations of anxious thoughts. For the mind, having forgotten its own problems and having been enchanted by the suffering of another, goes off well pleased and edified” (παράψυχὰς οὖν φροντίδων ἀνεύρετο | ταύτας· ὁ γὰρ νοῦς τῶν ἰδίων λήθην λαβὼν | πρὸς ἀλλοτρίῳ τε ψυχαγωγηθεὶς πάθει, | μεθ’ ἡδονῆς ἀπὴλθε παιδευθεὶς ἄμα, Timocles fr. 6 KA). On this passage, see Olson 2007: 169–172 and Rosen 2012, who elucidates some of the humor.

<sup>11</sup> For instance, Rudolf Stark suggests that the passage parodies Aristotle directly (1972: 83–90).

Aristotle in particular.<sup>12</sup> Already, we find Isocrates (436-338 BCE) discussing how poetry produces ψυχαγωγία both with its contents and its form.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, in the ps.-Platonic *Minos* (most likely written in the fourth century), the character of Socrates discusses tragedy as the most enchanting genre of poetry (τῆς ποιήσεως [...] ψυχαγωγικώτατον).<sup>14</sup> As we shall see below, this interest in poetry's capacity to enchant only intensifies further as we progress into the Hellenistic period.

Contrary to what has been suggested by Laín Entralgo and De Romilly, Aristotle's most significant impact on the semantic tradition of incantatory rhetoric is found *not* in the way he resists it so much as in the way he absorbs it – particularly the way he incorporates it into his teleological framework for defining literary genres. Part of Aristotle's project in the *Poetics* is to list the essential components of a tragedy and rank them in their relative importance as follows: plot (μῦθος), character (ἦθος), thought (διάνοια), diction (λέξις), lyric poetry (μέλος), and spectacle (ὄψις). As we shall see, this ranking process establishes an important distinction between the types of enchantment that are either more or less essential to the realization of the genre of tragedy. Crucially, Aristotle places a plot-driven type of enchantment at the heart of a good tragedy:

πρὸς δὲ τούτοις τὰ μέγιστα οἷς ψυχαγωγεῖ ἡ τραγωδία τοῦ μύθου μέρη ἐστίν, αἵ τε περιπέτεια καὶ ἀναγνώσεις.

The elements of the plot – namely, reversals and recognitions – are the greatest in regard to what makes tragedy enchanting.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> If Timocles targets any specific doctrine, he may be targeting Democritean discourse. Democritus resembles the speaker of Timocles's fragment by promoting the practice of observing the lives of those worse off as a way of helping one approach the goal (τέλος) of life – namely, εὐθυμία (DK 68B191 = Stob. 3.1.210). Moreover, a certain Democritean by the name of Apollodotus is said to have traded the label of εὐθυμία for the label of ψυχαγωγία in describing that same τέλος of life (Clem. Al. *Miscell.*, 2.130.4-5 = BNJ [Hekataios] 264 T 3b, see Warren 2002: 182-3). See ch. 1, n. 221.

<sup>13</sup> He notes that much of poetry's enchantment derives from its contents – namely, myth (Isoc. *Nic.* 48-9). Elsewhere, he stresses that sound also factors into poetic ψυχαγωγία since, if one were to strip poetry of its meter and ornamentation, it would lose much of its effect (Isoc. *Ev.* 8-11). On Isocrates's literary theories, see Halliwell 2011: 285-304. On Isocrates and the concept of enchantment, see De Romilly 1975: 52-58.

<sup>14</sup> [*Min.*] 321a4-5.

<sup>15</sup> Arist. *Poet.* 6 1450a33-5.

Aristotle famously regards plot as the soul (ψυχή) and greatest goal (τέλος μέγιστον) of a tragic poem.<sup>16</sup> Thus, in the context of a tragic performance, a good plot (one involving reversal and recognition) is what will naturally produce the greatest experience of enchantment.<sup>17</sup> Further on in the *Poetics*, we find that although plot is the chief means of tragic enchantment, it is not the only means. Aristotle notes how an enchanting effect (ψυχαγωγικόν) also arises from sheer spectacle (ὄψις) – that is, the sights and sounds of the performance, including the sets, the costumes, and the delivery of lines.<sup>18</sup> However, since ὄψις is, according to Aristotle, both the *least* integral part of the poetic art (ἥκιστα οἰκεῖον τῆς ποιητικῆς) and the *least* technical (ἀτεχνότατον) insofar as it is not in the job description or τέχνη of the playwright per se, this type of spectacle-driven enchantment ranks lower than plot-driven enchantment in the realization of the genre of tragedy.<sup>19</sup>

In sum, Aristotle treats enchantment as a product of both plot and spectacle, content and form. Plot-driven enchantment is a more intellectual experience of mentally tracking the twists and turns of the narrative. In contrast, spectacle-driven enchantment is a more aesthetic experience of appreciating the sights and sounds of the performance. In the end, Aristotle treats plot and plot-

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<sup>16</sup> Goal: Arist. *Poet.* 6 1450a22-3. Soul: Arist. *Poet.* 6 1450a37.

<sup>17</sup> As Stephen Halliwell has shown, Aristotle predicates his later claims about the superiority of complex plots on this earlier remark about the enchanting powers of reversals and recognitions (2011: 223-4). Why are complex plots the most desirable? Because they enchant the most. As proof for the primacy of plot, Aristotle argues that, even without scenery and enactment, plot would somehow produce the same tragic emotions (Arist. *Poet.* 14 1453b1-6). Plot and the proper structuring of events (τὰ πρᾶγματα συνίστασθαι) are also, according to Aristotle, the most difficult thing for a tragedian to master – harder even than mastering diction and character (Arist. *Poet.* 6 1450a35-39).

<sup>18</sup> Arist. *Poet.* 6 1450b16-20. On ὄψις, see recently Sifakis 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Arist. *Poet.* 6 1450b16-20.

driven enchantment as more essential to the aims of a tragedy than spectacle and spectacle-driven enchantment.<sup>20</sup>

Later, Peripatetics will continue in Aristotle's teleological tradition by dividing and ranking the elements essential to specific literary genres.<sup>21</sup> One of the most significant developments in Hellenistic literary theory will be the radical reversal of the Aristotelian hierarchy of content over form, plot over performance.<sup>22</sup> As we shall see, Hellenistic theorists will increasingly treat the sound and sensation of a poem as the definitive source of poetic enchantment, over and above its content.

Before proceeding to these Hellenistic critics, it will be helpful to take a sidelong glance toward the realm of Attic oratory, where the language of enchantment also shows up with some regularity and where similar debates over the source of enchantment provide a helpful entree into Hellenistic discussions of the topic.

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<sup>20</sup> In the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle briefly mentions the enchanting effect of a more purely aesthetic experience of a sight or a sound. There, Aristotle notes how the distanced pleasures taken in the sight of a beautiful statue or the sound of a beautiful harmony are blameless types of pleasure since they are experiences that are not directly instrumentalized towards basic desires for sex, food, or drink. They are, thus, comparable to the inescapable and yet blameless experience of those enchanted (κηλούμενοι) by the Sirens' song (Arist. *EE* 3.2 1230b31-35). On this passage, see Tatarkiewicz 1970: 153: "It was not in the *Poetics*, but in the *Ethics*, particularly the *Eudemian Ethics*, that Aristotle characterized aesthetic experience." James Porter and Anastasia Peponi have both interpreted this Siren-like pleasure described in this passage as a Kantian type of "pure" and "disinterested pleasure" (Porter 2010: 52-3 and Peponi 2012: 71-3). For a critique of these readings, see Konstan 2015: 375-376; cf. Destrée 2014: 18-20; Destrée 2015: 473-4.

<sup>21</sup> On Aristotle's outsized influence on later literary criticism, see Richardson 1994; Montanari 2012. These scholars rightly challenge Pfeiffer's narrative, which oddly downplays Aristotle's role in the rise of ancient scholarship (Pfeiffer 1968: 67). Despite downplaying it, however, Pfeiffer does note that Aristotle's "new and central" idea to sort and rank literature teleologically is of "importance for the understanding of the great literary tradition" (1968: 67).

<sup>22</sup> Signs of this move toward a more sensual and acoustic appreciation of the verbal arts are detectable in Aristotle's time. As James Porter has shown, Aristotle, especially in his *Rhetoric*, fights against proto-euphonist theories of rhetoric and poetry, which had sprouted up amongst the sophists and their successors (2004, 2010: 312-319). It was not until the Hellenistic period that these theories became formalized and intimately associated with the concept of enchantment.

## 1.2. Attic Oratory

Orators such as Aeschines, Demosthenes, Lycurgus, Apollodorus, Demades, and Dinarchus all utilize the language of enchantment and do so primarily as a tool for discrediting their opponents. In the realm of forensic oratory (as opposed to poetry), a somewhat greater premium is put on truth and the perspicacity of speech. Thus, when an orator invokes terms related to ψυχαγωγία, γοητεία, κήλησις, or ἐπωδή, with their traditional connotations of psycho-somatic distraction and deception, he uses them primarily as terms of abuse. Aeschines, for instance, warns how enchanting words are those which can carry away a person's judgment (πρὸς ἑτέρῳ τινὶ τὴν γνώμην ἔχουσιν).<sup>23</sup> Elsewhere, he warns jurors how enchantment is not sent by the gods, as it is in tragedy, but comes about through the impetus of human expectation.<sup>24</sup> In their speeches, orators advance and parry accusations of verbal wizardry between one another, and, in doing so, they engage in a latent debate over what constitutes as enchanting speech.<sup>25</sup> One particularly illustrative (and, as we shall see, influential) exchange is found in the paired speeches of Aeschines's *Against Ctesiphon* and Demosthenes's *On the Crown*.

In *Against Ctesiphon*, Aeschines warns his audience that his opponent, Demosthenes, will call him a Siren for his smooth verbal delivery and natural talent (εὐροϊαν λόγων καὶ τὴν φύσιν μου).

In case there arises any confusion about what Demosthenes means, Aeschines clarifies that, by

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<sup>23</sup> Aeschin. 3.192.

<sup>24</sup> "... they are enchanted by those things which they expect to take pleasure in after having succeeded" (ἐφ' οἷς κατορθώσαντες εὐφρανθήσονται, τούτοις κεκλήνται, Aeschin. 1.191). See also Aeschin. 2.124, 3.137, 3.207; Dem. 4.49; 4.54, 19.109, 27.32, 44.63; Apoll. *Neaer*. 59.55.

<sup>25</sup> For example, Lycurgus remarks on his opponent's ability to enchant by words (τοῖς λόγοις ψυχαγωγῆσαι) and to draw out, with his own tears (τοῖς δακρύοις ...προαγαγέσθαι), the feeling of pity from his audience (Lycurg. *Leoc.* 33). Aeschines laments becoming entangled (συμπέπλεγμαι) with his opponent, Demosthenes, – the enchanter and lowlife (γόητι καὶ πονηρῷ) – who does not speak the truth, even unwillingly (ἄκων ἀληθὲς οὐδὲν εἴποι) and who "adds no meaningful content to his rhetorical marvels and his composition of words" (πρὸς τὴν τερατείαν τοῦ τρόπου καὶ τῇ τῶν ὀνομάτων συνθέσει νοῦν οὐκ ἔχει, Aeschin. 2.153). Earlier, he expresses his disturbance that people were enchanted (ψυχαγωγηθέντες) by Demosthenes's accusations and antitheses (ἀντιθέτοις, Aeschin. 2.4).

‘Siren,’ his opponent is suggesting a person who is able not only to enchant (οὐ κηλεῖσθαί) but also destroy (ἀπόλλυσθαι). He then goes on to deny that he is capable of such enchantment and stresses that the label is far more fitting for Demosthenes, who is “a man composed only of words” (ἐξ ὀνομάτων συγκείμενος ἄνθρωπος).<sup>26</sup> When Demosthenes responds to Aeschines’s slander, in *On the Crown*, he admits that his own brand of rhetoric has a certain power: “I am well aware of my rhetorical forcefulness – so be it” (εὖ οἶδ’ ὅτι τὴν ἐμὴν δεινότητα—ἔστω γάρ).<sup>27</sup> However, he protests that one cannot enchant through rhetorical forcefulness alone since it is up to the audience to assent to what is said.<sup>28</sup> According to Demosthenes, it is not rhetorical ornamentation so much as a lying character and false words that enchant an audience. Thus the real enchanter is not Demosthenes, but Aeschines.<sup>29</sup>

Underneath all of this name-calling are various latent queries regarding the means and ends of incantatory rhetoric. The orators dance around questions of whether enchantment is a matter of formal flourish or deceptive content, whether it involves assent on the part of the audience or whether it simply arises irrationally from the impingement of sounds onto the soul or senses,

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<sup>26</sup> Aeschin. 3.228-9. Demosthenic rhetoric frequently attracts the accusation of enchantment. Similar to Aeschines, Demades calls Demosthenes “a little homunculus composed of syllables and a tongue” (συγκείμενον ἀνθρώπιον ἐκ συλλαβῶν καὶ γλώττης, Demad. Fr. 89 de Falco 1955 = BNJ [Demades] 227 F 36 = Tzetz. *Chil.* 6 112 sqq.). Dinarchus speaks of Demosthenes’s enchanting laments and quackeries (τοὺς οἰκτοὺς καὶ τοὺς φενακισμοὺς, Dinarch. *In Dem.* 92; cf. *In Dem.* 66, 95-96). Orators will invoke Demosthenes’s semi-foreign status (i.e., Scythian on his mother’s side) to complement these charges of rhetorical wizardry – he is an ‘other’ who persuades through ‘other’ unsavory means.  
<sup>27</sup> Dem. 18.277.

<sup>28</sup> “... though I, for one, observe that the listeners are primarily in control of the power of the speakers. For the one speaking gains a reputation for wisdom only when you show approval and you confer favor to each” (καίτοι ἔγωγ’ ὁρῶ τῆς τῶν λεγόντων δυνάμεως τοὺς ἀκούοντας τὸ πλεῖστον κυρίου· ὥς γὰρ ἂν ὑμεῖς ἀποδέξησθε καὶ πρὸς ἕκαστον ἔχητ’ εὐνοίας, οὕτως ὁ λέγων ἔδοξε φρονεῖν, Dem. 18.277).

<sup>29</sup> “[Aeschines seems to think] that, if someone is ever the first to speak of his own attributes in reference to another, these things will seem true, and that the audience will no longer scrutinize what kind of person the speaker is. I know that all of you recognize this man and suppose that these epithets are more applicable to him than they are to me” (ὥς ἂν πρότερός τις εἴπη τὰ προσόνθ’ ἑαυτῷ περὶ ἄλλου, καὶ δὴ ταῦθ’ οὕτως ἔχοντα, καὶ οὐκέτι τοὺς ἀκούοντας σκεψομένους τίς ποτ’ αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ ταῦτα λέγων. ἐγὼ δ’ οἶδ’ ὅτι γινώσκετε τοῦτον ἅπαντες, καὶ πολὺ τούτῳ μᾶλλον ἢ ἐμοὶ νομίζετε ταῦτα προσεῖναι, Dem. 18.276-277).



somewhat like Gorgias's λόγος. The remarks that Aeschines and Demosthenes make hardly constitute well-reasoned theories of rhetorical enchantment; however, they do probe some semantic issues that become more explicit in the Hellenistic period. One interesting piece of evidence for this is a passage from the first century CE author Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who provides a surprising interpretation of Aeschines's remarks about enchantment in *Against Ctesiphon*:

καὶ γὰρ ἐνταῦθα πάλιν οὐ δέδοικε, μὴ τὸ κάλλος καὶ τὴν μεγαλοπρέπειαν αὐτοῦ τῶν ὀνομάτων ἀγαπήσωσιν Ἀθηναῖοι, ἀλλὰ μὴ λάθωσιν ὑπὸ τῆς συνθέσεως γοητευθέντες, ὥστε καὶ τῶν φανερῶν αὐτὸν ἀδικημάτων ἀφεῖναι διὰ τὰς σειρῆνας τὰς ἐπὶ τῆς ἀρμονίας. ἐκ δὲ τούτων οὐ χαλεπὸν ἰδεῖν, ὅτι δεινότητα μὲν αὐτῷ, ὅσῃ οὐχ ἑτέρῳ, μαρτυρῶν καὶ ταῖς σειρῇσιν ἀπεικάζων αὐτοῦ τὴν μουσικὴν, ἀγάμενος δὲ οὐ τῆς ἐκλογῆς τῶν ὀνομάτων αὐτόν, ἀλλὰ τῆς συνθέσεως, ἀναμφιλόγως αὐτῷ ταύτην παρακεχώρηκε τὴν ἀρετὴν.

Here again, Aeschines is not afraid that the Athenians might show affection toward the beauty and grandeur of Demosthenes's words, but that they may not notice how they were enchanted by his verbal composition and, as a result, let him off from his obvious injustices because of the Siren-song produced by his musical style. On account of these things, it is not difficult to recognize that, in comparing him with the Sirens, Aeschines acknowledges how Demosthenes's unique brilliance is in his musicality and, in praising him not for his word choice but his verbal composition, Aeschines concedes this latter quality without dispute.<sup>30</sup>

For a later writer like Dionysius, Aeschines's remarks about verbal enchantment are viewed as a full-blown theoretical reflection on how verbal composition or word order (σύνθεσις), as opposed to word choice (ἐκλογή), produces the effect of enchantment (γοητεία) rather than mere affection (ἀγάπη). As we shall see, in the centuries between the Attic orators and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the language of enchantment and the latent queries about it (evidenced in the speeches of Aeschines and Demosthenes) become deeply embedded within rhetorical and literary debates over form and content. The mere mention of enchantment in a quasi-theoretical context links Dionysius's mind to these intervening debates. He supports his views about verbal artistry with a patchwork of

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<sup>30</sup> Dion. Hal. *Dem.* 35.37-46.

Hellenistic critical terms (such as σύνθεσις and ἐκλογή) that are, over the centuries, woven in and through the semantic territory of verbal enchantment itself.<sup>31</sup> In what follows, I discuss not only theorists who, like Dionysius, associate literary enchantment with verbal composition or word order (σύνθεσις), but also those who link the experience with word choice (ἐκλογή) and even pure sound (ἦχος). In the wake of Aristotle, these theorists are in the business of dividing and ranking poetry into its most and least essential components. Unlike Aristotle, they emphatically privilege the magic of sound and form at the exclusion of meaning and content.

### 1.3. οἱ κριτικοί and the means of enchantment

In his work, *On Poems*, Philodemus takes as his opponents a group of Peripatetics whom he groups together under the moniker οἱ κριτικοί. These critics include the names of Andromenides, Heracleodorus, and Pausimachus, who are little known outside of Philodemus's text but who nevertheless represent an undoubtedly influential strand of discourse regarding the nature of poetry. As Philodemus indicates, what binds these figures together is their shared belief that the defining quality of poetry *qua* poetry is sound rather than content or plot:

'τους  
 ποητάς [μ]ῦθον παρ' ἐτέ-  
 ρων λαβόντας καὶ ταῖς ὑ-  
 ποκ[ε]ι[μ]έν[αι]ς λέξ[ε]σιν δη-  
 λω[μένους] μόνῃ τῇ  
 συνθέ[σ]ει [ψυχ]αγωγίαν ἐξ-  
 ἐργάζεσθαι, κ[αὶ] τὸ 'τὴν ἐ-  
 πιφαι[νο]μενένην [ε]ὐφωνί-  
 αν ἴδιον // [εἶ]ναι, τὰ δὲ νοή[ι]-  
 ματα κα//ὶ τὰς λέξεις ἐκτὸς  
 εἶναι κα//ὶ κοινὰ συνάγεσ-  
 θαι δεῖ[ν]', // παρὰ πᾶσι μὲν ὡς  
 συνθή[κη] μένει τοῖς κρι-

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<sup>31</sup> On Dionysius's use of the language of enchantment and its connection to Hellenistic criticism, see the discussion by de Jonge 2008: 333-340.

τικοί[ς]

[the claims that] ‘poets, in borrowing a plot from others and making it clear with pre-existent words, achieve enchantment by composition alone,’ and that ‘the supervening euphony is the quiddity of poetry, but the thoughts and words are external to poetry and must be considered common,’ persist as by treaty among all κριτικοί.<sup>32</sup>

The remarks which Philodemus quotes here are drawn specifically from the critic Heracleodorus and, in large part, they do reflect the fundamental assumptions shared by other κριτικοί.

Andromenides and Pausimachus would agree that a good poem produces enchantment and that this poetic enchantment is more of a product of form than content.<sup>33</sup> But a closer inspection of these critics’ remarks reveals that, despite sharing some fundamental beliefs about poetic enchantment, Andromenides, Heracleodorus, and Pausimachus differ in several important ways – especially in assumed *means* for producing this enchantment. Andromenides finds that it comes down to word choice (ἐκλογή), Heracleodorus to word order (σύνθεσις), and Pausimachus to a particular atomic sound (ἦχος).

Below, I reconstruct the theories of Andromenides, Heracleodorus, and Pausimachus in turn, showing that within this strand of poetic theory, the concept of verbal enchantment continues to

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<sup>32</sup> *De poem.* 2.69.26-70.10. Translation adapted from Janko.

<sup>33</sup> On the centrality of enchantment to these critics’ definition of poetry: “a feature common to all the critics was their detailed theoretical analysis of the means by which poetic language produced ψυχαγωγία” (Gutzwiller 2010: 340; cf. Schenkeveld 1968: 190; Porter 1995b: 88, 102). Throughout Philodemus’s *On Poems*, enchantment is primarily denoted by terms related to ψυχαγωγία (*De poem.* 1.109.11, 1.133.7, 1.136.16, 1.136.19, 1.151.8, 1.159.12, 1.159.19, 1.161.9, 1.162.15, 1.162.20, 1.162.22, 1.166.3, 1.208.12-13, 1.209.18-19, 2.41.27, 2.43.10, 2.52.22, 2.54.21, 2.68.24, 2.70.2, 2.70.25, 2.71.13, 2.73.6, 2.74.15, 2.159.19, 2.161.1, 2.161.9, 2.179.8, 2.193.21, 5 P.Herc. 1425 col. 16.6). For Philodemus and those he quotes, ψυχαγωγία denotes something stronger than mere entertainment (Fraser 1972: 759; Chandler 2006: 148; Gutzwiller 2006: 396 n. 54, “quasi-magical, physically entrancing effect”, 2010: 340, Halliwell 2011: 324 n. 155 *contra* Wigodsky 1995: 65–68, 2009: 19 n. 67 who argues for the translation ‘entertainment’). Janko favors the translation ‘enthralment.’ I will use the translation ‘enchantment’ since term ψυχαγωγία is closely linked with the terms related to θέλξις (*De poem.* 1.37.11, 1.37.16-7, 1.164.7-8, 1.164.12, 1.166.1, 2.76.26), κήλησις (*De poem.* 1.130.21, 1.130.22, 2.191.2), ἐπωδή (*De poem.* 1.12.18, 1.166.1-2), γοητεία (*De poem.* 1.111.25; cf. Dem. Lac. *De poem.* 1 col. 4.1 Romeo). On the meaning of ψυχαγωγία in Philodemus, see Barnes 2022.

serve as an important conceptual framework through which thinkers explore the limits of λόγος and mark out extraordinary instances in which words and the voice do more than speak.

### 1.3.1. Andromenides on enchantment and word choice (ἐκλογή)

Each of the three critics treated here is concerned with defining the quality most essential to the art of poetry and, thus, most responsible for poetic enchantment. For the earliest of the three critics, Andromenides (early 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. BCE), the primary job (ἔργον) of a poet comes down to word choice (ἐκλογή).<sup>34</sup> A good poet chooses words that not only have a particular appropriateness (οἰκειότης) to their context<sup>35</sup> but also have beauty.<sup>36</sup> The effect of a good poem that arises from appropriately chosen words is, then, partly intellective and partly aesthetic – partly derived from a word's meaning that suits the context and partly from a word's form that strikes the ear as beautiful. Although Andromenides labels both the intellective and aesthetic effects as enchantment,<sup>37</sup> his poetic theory places a much greater emphasis on the aesthetic impact of a well-chosen word than on

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<sup>34</sup> On Andromenides more generally, see Janko 2000: 143-154. He is a relatively obscure figure; however, he shows up again in an earlier piece of Epicurean literary theory, Demetrius Lacō's *On Poems*. In that text, Andromenides may again be speaking about "the enchantment of poetry" (ἡ τοῦ ποιήματος γοητεία, Dem. Lac. *De poem.* 1 col. 4.1 Romeo). The correlation between enchantment and word choice (ἐκλογή) is not only found again in Dionysius of Halicarnassus (quoted at pp. 154-5) but also in Ps-Longinus (*Subl.* 30): "It is probably redundant to discuss at length to someone who knows, how the choice of effective and grand words moves and enchants an audience marvelously so that it is the chief pursuit of all orators and prose writers" (ὅτι μὲν τοίνυν ἡ τῶν κυρίων καὶ μεγαλοπρεπῶν ὀνομάτων ἐκλογή θαυμαστῶς ἄγει καὶ κατακληῖ τοὺς ἀκούοντας καὶ ὥς πᾶσι τοῖς ῥήτορσι καὶ συγγραφεῦσι κατ' ἄκρον ἐπιτήδευμα, [...], μὴ καὶ περιττὸν ἢ πρὸς εἰδότας διεξιέναι).

<sup>35</sup> Andromenides advises poets "to select words that are most suited to the thing so that they are fitting and convincing" (οἰκειότατα τοῦ πρά[γ]ματος ἐγλ[έ]γεσθαι | θαι τὰ ῥήμα' θ' ἵνα προ[σαρ]μόσῃ | καὶ τὸ πιθαν[ὸν] ἔχη | Phld. *De poem.* 1.17.26-18.4). He means that the diction must fit the (heroic) character of the speaker – i.e. a lofty word for a lofty hero or god (Phld. *De poem.* 1.172.14-22; cf. *De poem.* 5 col. 34.35-35.20).

<sup>36</sup> "[T]he job of the poet will be brought about if he selects the more beautiful of the words used in respect to the work, but passes over the more shameful ones" (γενή|σεσθαι τοῦργον ἂν τὰ | κα[λ]λίω τῶν κατ' αὐτοῦ | τιθεμένων ῥήματ' ἐ|γλέγηται, τὰ [δ'] αἰσχίω | περιόστη[ται], Phld. *De poem.* 1.167.20-25).

<sup>37</sup> "The common person is enchanted by the diction conventionally deemed suitable for poets, both in the way that it excels in accordance with the mind's comprehension and in the way it produces enchantment in this type of person [...] and one is enchanted naturally and not irrationally" (ἡ ψυχὰ γὰρ | γείσθαι | τὴν πολὺν ὑπὸ τῆς | [νενο] | μισμένης τοῖς ποιηταῖς | λέξεως | προσήκειν, καὶ ἐπὶ | τῇ | κατὰ // δια]νοίας σύνεσιν | δια]φε[ρο]//μένη καὶ ἐπὶ | τῇ | ἐν τ[οιούτῳ] | τῳ ποιοῦσιν | ψυχὰ γὰρ // | ἴαν [...] καὶ | [φυσικῶς ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀλόγως | ψυχὰ γὰρ γείσθαι, Phld. *De poem.* 1.159.12-19 and 1.162.15-20).

the intellectual experience.<sup>38</sup> The essential quality that an effective and enchanting word must have is a beautiful sound, because beautiful sound, according to Andromenides, is the element that has the capacity to stir souls by nature (φύσει).<sup>39</sup> His proof for the natural power of beautiful sound is the phenomenon of the wordless lullaby (τῆς ὠιδῆς τῆς ἀγροαμμάτου) which nurses use to mollify infants.<sup>40</sup> Like a lullaby, a poem holds sway over an audience by dint of its beautiful sounds. Although a degree of semantic precision and appropriateness is necessary – and may, in fact, impress some audience members – it is the aesthetic dimension of poetic diction that gives poetry its mass appeal.<sup>41</sup> In sum, Andromenides’s theory of word choice (ἐκλογή) treats poetry primarily as a process of cobbling together beautiful words and, thus, presents poetic enchantment primarily as an aural phenomenon.

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<sup>38</sup> Andromenides is quite persistent about stressing the need for poets to seek out beautiful words: Phld. *De poem.* 1.18.17-26, 1.21.1-14, 1.24.1-12, 1.131.5-132.2, 1.161.2-16, 1.170.13-171.9, 1.181.4-22, 1.182.18-20, 1.187.5-8. Elsewhere, he seems to distinguish between the intellectual and aesthetic dimensions of poetry at Dem. Lac. *De poem.* 1 col. 1.1-8 Romeo.

<sup>39</sup> “Beautiful diction is one kind of natural thing” (τὴν καλὴν | λέξιν ἐν τ[ι] τῶν φυσικῶν | [ὑπ]άρχειν, Phld. *De poem.* 1.162.25-7 cf. 1.159.12-20 and 1.162.15-20 quoted in n. 36; Dem. Lac. *De poem.* 1 col. 10.2-10, 13.1-8 Romeo. Andromenides seems to have developed a psychological basis for the enchanting effect that pleasing/beautiful sound has on the soul of an auditor: “Enchantments please the ... of the soul. For (one) recognizes that bringing something about by way of pain does not set in motion any of the parts of the soul. For it is everyday speech’ he says, ‘and not poetic speech in which, they say, the arguments are trusted to be useful’” ([τῆς ψυχῆς κατ[...]| τ]ᾶς ἐπωδὰς τ[έρε]σθ[αι]. ἐπι|γ]νῶναι γὰρ ὅτι <τὸ> κατὰ λ[ύ|π]ην περαινόμενον [οὐ]| θέν ἄν ψυχικῶν [κινοίη. δι|ἀ]λεκτον γὰρ εἶναι”, [φησιν, “οὐ]| δὲ πόησιν, ἐν [ῆ] φασιν [τοὺς λό]| γους χρησίμους πισ[τεύε]ς| θαι, Phld. *De poem.* 1.12.18-25).

<sup>40</sup> Andromenides notes how people “by nature have a certain concern for and automatic kinship with the Muses, as is evident in the lulling of infants to sleep with a wordless lullaby” (φύσει|ι τοῖς| ἀνθρώπο]ις ἐπιμέλ[λ]ε[ι|ἀν τινα] καὶ συγγένειαν εἶ|ναι Μούσαις αὐτομαθῇ, | καθάπερ ἐμφανίζε|ν τοὺς τῶν βρεφῶν ὑπὸ| τῆς ὠιδῆς τῆς ἀγροαμμάτου κατακοιμισμούς, Phld. *De poem.* 1.131.16-23)

<sup>41</sup> “(Andromenides) said that the most beautiful diction (is) that which enchants the rabble, not that which is admired most correctly by just some” ([ταύτην τὴν λέξιν καλ|λίστην //ἐ//[λεγε, τὴν] τοὺς| ὄχλους [ψυχαγωγ]ῶσαν, | οὐ τὴν [κατ]ᾶ τὸ [γ’] ὀρθό|[τατ]όν [τισι δ]ὲ θαυμασθεῖ|[σαν], Phld. *De poem.* 1.161.7-12).

### 1.3.2. Heracleodorus on enchantment and word order (σύνθεσις)

For Heracleodorus (3<sup>rd</sup> cent. BCE), the quiddity (ἴδιον) of poetry is not word choice (ἐκλογή) so much as verbal composition (σύνθεσις) by which he means word order.<sup>42</sup> In his opinion, when poets write a line of poetry, they aim at arranging words in the proper sequence. If the poet arranges words effectively, a certain euphony (εὐφωνία) supervenes upon the verse and produces the experience of enchantment.<sup>43</sup> Crucially, for Heracleodorus, euphony and the enchantment it produces are almost entirely divorced from reason. He goes about proving this through a variety of demonstrations. One of these is to cite lines of poetry that are either unintelligible<sup>44</sup> or full of unpleasant content<sup>45</sup> in order to establish that, despite their meaning or lack thereof, they still enchant the listener by way of their sound.<sup>46</sup> Another tactic is to switch around the word order of famous lines of poetry while maintaining the same semantic meaning. Known as metathesis, this

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<sup>42</sup> On Heracleodorus, see especially Janko 2020:131-142, which updates Janko 2000: 155-165. Still useful is also Gomoll 1936.

<sup>43</sup> "[P]oets, in borrowing a plot from others and making it clear with pre-existent words, achieve enchantment by composition alone" [...] 'the supervening euphony is the quiddity of poetry, but the thoughts and words are external to poetry and must be considered common'" (Phld. *De poem.* 2.69.26-70.8 quoted at p. 156; cf. 1.55.18-27, 1.193.8-11, 1.195.4-8, 2.4.7-9, 2.7.5-9, 2.47.7-19, 2.62.8-13, 2.76.8-10, 2.83.22-5, 2.91.18-24, 2.132.2-5, 5 col. 29.24-30.2). Heracleodorus is careful to distinguish euphony from its effect of enchantment (Phld. *De poem.* 2.71.13-16).

<sup>44</sup> For example, he cites Homer's famous and yet hopelessly opaque description of animal sacrifice at *Il.* 1.459-61 = 2.422-4 (Phld. *De poem.* 2.41.4-23; cf. 2.60.1-14 and Janko 2020: 209-11). These incomprehensible verses "seem to resemble those which enchant, in accordance with word order (παρόμοια | δοκεῖν εἶναι κατὰ τὰς | συνθέσεις τοῖς ψυχᾶν | γούσιν, Phld. *De poem.* 2.41.25-42.1). Elsewhere, "the verses are unclear, but they enchant all the same" (ἄσαφῆ | μὲν τὰ | ποιήματα εἶναι, ψυχᾶν | γαίῃ δ' ὅμως, Phld. *De poem.* 2.54.20-2). See also Phld. *De poem.* 2.5.9-12, 2.32.1-13, 2.48.4-12, 2.49.17-50.26, 2.54.26-55.1, 2.65.1-3, 2.93.20-94.1. Heracleodorus's claims about the enchanting quality of obscure verses are, in part, meant to counter certain unnamed opponents who apparently had argued that obscurity hinders the experience of ψυχᾶν γαίᾳ (Phld. *De poem.* 2.52.20-3).

<sup>45</sup> "... (contents) that are hard to bear in regard to sight or smell, when spoken, do not make verses worse, except in regard to things heard" (τὰ δυσχερῆ πρὸς | [ὅ]ψιν καὶ πρὸς [ὅ]σφ[ρ]ησιν | [ο]ὐ ποεῖν ἀπαγγελλόμε | [ν]α χεῖρῶ τὰ [ποή]ματ' ἀλλ' ἢ | [πρὸς ἀκουστικά τ]ινα, (Phld. *De poem.* 2.62.23-7; cf. 1.207R.4-208R.3 (*olim* 209-10), 1.210R.8-211R.4 (*olim* 212-13), 2.9.21-25, 2.65.1-3).

<sup>46</sup> For Heracleodorus, even excellent content will not save poorly constructed verses, as in the case of the dramatist Chaeremon (Phld. *De poem.* 2.7.10-14, 2.33.12-20).

process is meant to show how the excellence of a verse can be stripped away by altering the sound alone.<sup>47</sup> For example,

Homer (*Il.* 16.112-114)

ἔσπετε νῦν μοι, Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι,  
ὅππως δὴ πρῶτον πῦρ ἔμπεσε νηυσὶν Ἀχαιῶν.  
Ἐκτῶρ Αἴαντος δόρυ μείλινον [...]

Tell (me now), Muses, you who inhabit dwellings upon Olympus, how fire was initially cast on the ships of the Achaeans. Hector, the ashen spear of Ajax [

Heracleodorus (*De poem.* 1.39.3-8)

ἔσπετε Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματα νῦν μοι ἔχουσαι,  
ὅππως πρῶτον δὴ νηυσὶν πῦρ ἔμπεσ' Ἀχαιῶν.  
Αἴαντος δόρυ μείλινον Ἐκτῶρ [...]

Here, Heracleodorus maintains the same vocabulary, dactylic hexameter,<sup>48</sup> and general semantic content.<sup>49</sup> Yet the soundscape he produces is radically different from Homer's and apparently quite offensive to the Hellenized ear.<sup>50</sup> What this demonstration is meant to prove is that a poem's capacity to enchant us has nothing to do with the lexical meaning of words and everything to do with word order and sound. For Heracleodorus, nowhere does intellection enter the equation. Instead, he stresses that the euphony, which a good poem produces, is an irrational sound (τὴν ἄλο[γον φ]ωνήν εὐφωνίαν εἶναι)<sup>51</sup> which is able to tickle (γαργαλίζειν) our irrational apperception (τὴν ἀλόγιστον ἐπαίσθησιν).<sup>52</sup> In fact, Heracleodorus is so committed to the irrational nature of poetic enchantment that he refuses to offer any rational explanation for how this tickling

<sup>47</sup> "If the same content and diction are present, and these (words) are shifted by metathesis, the verse is rendered either fine or base" (τῆς αὐτῆς | [δι]ανοίας | {ι} καὶ {της} λέξεως | [ἐ]νυπαρχο[υ]σῶν, τῶ]νδε | δὴ κ[ε]ινουμένω]ν παρὰ | τ[ὸ] μεταθ[ε]ῖναι, ἢ καλὸν | ἢ μ[ο]χ[λ]//θ[ε]//ηρὸν ἀποτελεῖς | θα[ι] τὸ // π[ι]//[ό]η]μα, Phld. *De poem.* 2.70.28-71.5; cf. 1.29.27-30.28, 1.37.1-27, 1.38.27-39.8, 1.39.28-40.28, 2.71.8-11, 2.76.1-13, 2.82.27-83.11). On the process of metathesis, see Greenberg 1958, Armstrong 1995, Armstrong and Oberhelman 1995.

<sup>48</sup> He does, however, destroy the caesurae.

<sup>49</sup> Although, the congruity of meaning is a bit strained by the displacement of νῦν μοι, as noted by Janko 2000: 227 n.1.

<sup>50</sup> For the sake of easily comparing Homer's version with that of Heracleodorus, I have removed the editorial marks that betray considerable difficulty on the part of the scribe. "By muddling the text, the scribe proves how upsetting a native speaker of Greek found the disruption of the verse-form" (Janko 2000: 227 n.1).

<sup>51</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 2.92.10-17.

<sup>52</sup> "... (the poet) tickles our irrational apperception with his word order or produces pleasure without content or in some other way makes (the composition) enchanting" (τὴν ἀ[λόγιστον ἐπαί] | σθησιν τῇ συ[ν]θέσει γαργα] | λίζειν, ἢ τὴν [ἡδονὴν παρ]έ | χεῖν ἄνευ δια[νοήματος], | ἢ καθ' ἑτερόν τ[ι]να τρόπον] | ψυχαγωγούσ[αν ποεῖν], Phld. *De poem.* 2.43.5-10; cf. 1.37.13, 1.208.12-16, 2.53.5).

process works. In a striking passage, Heracleodorus outright denies any possibility of ever comprehending just *how* word order is able to enchant (θέλγειν). All we can be sure of, he asserts, is that it does. Since enchantment is not subject to reason (τὸ οὐ λογικόν), it can only be judged as an epiphenomenon (τὸ ἐπιγινόμενον) and those who experience enchantment suffer what is irrational and observe what is inexplicable (παθεῖν ἄλογον κἀναπόδοτον βλέπειν).<sup>53</sup> Thus, with Heracleodorus's theory based on word order (σύνθεσις), the notion of poetic enchantment drifts even further from content and intellection. For him, a poem enchants through sound alone, and, like magic itself, this process may never be fully understood.

### 1.3.3. Pausimachus on enchantment and sound (ἦχος)

Pausimachus (c. 200 BCE) takes up essentially where Heracleodorus left off.<sup>54</sup> He, too, believes in the primacy of sound over linguistic content.<sup>55</sup> Also, like Heracleodorus, Pausimachus thinks that a good poem is one that enchants through the production of euphony. A crucial difference between Heracleodorus and Pausimachus is that the latter provides a way of rationally accounting for this euphony.<sup>56</sup> As Pausimachus understands things, euphony does not come down to word order (σύνθεσις) so much as pure sound (ἦχος).<sup>57</sup> By this, he means the atomic sounds of language – namely, *letters* (γράμματα).<sup>58</sup> Pausimachus insists that, even before discussing word order (or word choice), one must know about sounds in themselves (περὶ τῶν ἡχῶν αὐτῶν), how

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<sup>53</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 1.37.8-13 ~ 2.76.24-77.11 and 15-16.

<sup>54</sup> On Pausimachus, see Janko 2020: 142-154.

<sup>55</sup> As proof of this, he cites the experience of overhearing birdsong or a foreign language which, although unintelligible, often strikes the ear as either pleasant or unpleasant (Phld. *De poem.* 1.99.24-100.15, 2.184.26-185.26; cf. 1.114.19-115.17, 2.198.19-199.16, 2.199.24-6, 2.200.5-23).

<sup>56</sup> He complains about how his opponents “offer not even a rough hypothesis of what they mean by euphony and cacophony” (τὸ γε λεγόμεν[ο]ν ὑπὸ τούτων εὐφωνον! καὶ κα[κό]φωνον οὐδὲ! πονηρῶς ὑπογράφειν, Phld. *De poem.* 2.153.4-7). Thus, his project is to provide a set of rules guided by method (μεθοδικὴ παραγγελία, Phld. *De poem.* 1.79.27-81.9).

<sup>57</sup> Phld. *De poem.*, 1.91.21-25, 2.152.25-153.7, 2.154.27-155.6, 2.174.24-175.1 and 2.175.24-5, 2.176.6-7.

<sup>58</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 1.85.1-17 and 2.157.26-158.7.



they strike the ear both individually and in combination, for better or for worse.<sup>59</sup> At various points, Philodemus shows Pausimachus assigning different values to letters and letter combinations and ranking them according to their sound. What he ends up with is essentially a sonority hierarchy:<sup>60</sup> long and open vowels are to be preferred, semi-vowels are to be tolerated, and mute consonants along with most consonant clusters are to be avoided.<sup>61</sup> A good poet, like Homer, will stick to this hierarchy while also mixing in the appropriate degree of *variatio*.<sup>62</sup> For instance, Homer does well, according to Pausimachus, to repeat the euphionously lettered words lotus (λωτός) and Lotus-eaters (Λωτοφάγοι) as well as the name Nireus (Νιρεύς). It is not the content but the very sound structure of these individual words that, in Pausimachus's opinion, produces poetic enchantment (ψυχαγωγίαν).<sup>63</sup> Another example he provides is Homer's line: "greatly did the oaken axle crash"

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<sup>59</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 1.83.11-24.

<sup>60</sup> This general sonority hierarchy, which Pausimachus promotes, is echoed in many later sources. For references, see Janko 2000: 175-8.

<sup>61</sup> His terminology reflects these differences: under the umbrella of sounds (ῆχοι), he distinguishes between "noise" (ψόφος) which refers to consonantal speech and "vocalization" (φωνή), which refers to vocalic and semi-vocalic speech (Janko 2020: 385 n. 7). He also distinguishes between the more consonantal styles, which are harsh (τραχεῖα), the more vocalic styles, which are smooth (λεῖα), and the mixed style which is supple (εὐπαγής, Phld. *De poem.* 2.214.13-218.11). The literary theorist, Demetrius, writing around 100 BCE, may be directly influenced by Pausimachus's categorical distinctions between τραχεῖα, λεῖα, and εὐπαγής (*Eloc.* 176-8 with Janko 2020: 144). Demetrius does not, however, adopt the language of enchantment into his technical vocabulary as Pausimachus does.

<sup>62</sup> Variation is not only practical but also necessary to prevent too much repetition, which can sate the sense-organs (Phld. *De poem.* 1.87.1-8 and 2.162.25-163.1): "'Since the iota is judged to be worse than the eta,' Pausimachus says, 'one must not, for this reason, write (eta) everywhere'" (ἐ[πεὶ γὰρ τὸ] ἰῶτα τοῦ ἥτα [κρίνεται χει]ῖρον, διὰ τοῦτ', ἔ[φη, οὐ κατὰ] πάντα δεῖ γρά[φειν, Phld. *De poem.* 1.102R.1-8 (*olim* 99); cf. 2.213.7-13). This need for variation extends to accentuation – whether it is varying between acutes and graves on the ultima (*De poem.* 1.89.5-18, 2.165.6-9) or mixing up the syllables on which consecutive accents fall (Phld. *De poem.* 1.96R.10-19 (*olim* 93), 1.97R.1-13 (*olim* 94), 2.178.9-24, 2.179.5-9).

<sup>63</sup> "'The sounds', he says, 'produce enchantment in the (vocalizations) of the word lotus and Lotus-eaters, and so too in the vocalization of Nireus, since that which is arranged smoothly pleases when spoken always and often, while in regards to concepts it does not enchant'" ('ψυχαγωγίαν [το]ύς ἤχους' ἔφρασκε 'ποιεῖν] ἐ[πὶ] τῶν [τοῦ] Λωτοφάγων, ὡς καὶ ἐν τῇ φωνῇ τοῦ Νειρέως, ἐπειδὴ τὸ π[ρ]οσηνῶ[ς] διατ[εθ]έν | ἀεὶ καὶ πολλάκι λεγόμενον εὐφ[ρ]αίνει, καὶ [τὰ τὰς ἐπὶ οἴ]ας οὐ ψ[υ]χαφ[ω]γ[οῦν], Phld. *De poem.* 2.161.1-10; cf. 1.158.18-159.3). At *De poem.* 1.85.27-86.7, we find the counter example of Hom. *Il.* 164-5: "With the one spear, he struck the shield and it did not break through the shield" (καὶ ῥ' ἑτέρῳ μὲν δουρὶ σάκος βάλεν, οὐδὲ διαπρὸ | ῥήξε σάκος). Unlike λωτός and Νιρεύς, the repetition of sibilant-heavy σάκος irritates the Hellenized ear (Phld. *De poem.* 1.86.7-87.1, 2.160.1-10, 2.161.16-162.1).

(μέγα βραχε φήγινος ἄξων).<sup>64</sup> Here, Pausimachus notes that ‘holm-oaken’ (πρίνινος) would have had a greater semantic weight to it than the metrically equivalent ‘oaken’ (φήγιμος).<sup>65</sup> However, πρίν-ινος by dint of its narrow (στενή) and cumbersome (δύστομος) first syllable is weaker than φήγ-ινος, and Homer did well to avoid the former in exchange for the latter.<sup>66</sup> What this reveals is that, for Pausimachus, the primary job of the poet is the proper management of letter sounds – even if this duty comes at the expense of conveying the most precise or powerful content.<sup>67</sup>

For Pausimachus, the atomic sounds of speech are not only responsible for producing euphony and enchantment, but they are also capable of conveying a basic level of content.<sup>68</sup> For instance, by including φήγιμος instead of πρίνινος, Homer’s verse is said to produce an *experience* (παθος) *that bears witness to the thought* (τῶι νοουμένῳ μαρτυρεῖ), even if its lexical meaning falls short.<sup>69</sup> Pausimachus frequently speaks of how pure sounds can produce a suggestion (ὑποβολή),<sup>70</sup> a representation (φαντασία),<sup>71</sup> or a testimony (μαρτύρησις) to a thought or feeling.<sup>72</sup> These sonic

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<sup>64</sup> Hom. *Il.* 5.838.

<sup>65</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 1.103.21-104.9 and 2.192.22-5; cf. 2.192.1-4.

<sup>66</sup> For Pausimachus, ease of pronunciation (εὐστομία) is largely equivalent to euphony (εὐφωνία), and difficulty in pronunciation (δυστομία) is largely equivalent to cacophony (κακοφωνία, cf. *De poem.* 1.126.14-17, 2.206.11-25).

<sup>67</sup> The overriding emphasis on creating euphonious sound structures can even justify false, unclear, or ungrammatical content. Pausimachus, for instance, lauds Homer, for calling the narrow Hellespont broad (ἐπὶ πλατεῖ Ἑλλησπόντῳ, Phld. *De poem.* 1.103.17-21; cf. 2.191.3-11, 2.192.1-4), for misspelling of town names (Phld. *De poem.* 1.103.4-12 with Janko 2000: 310-1; cf. Janko 2020: 605 ad loc.) and epithets (τανύσφυρος → τανίσφυρος, Phld. *De poem.* 2.190.3-6), and for misgendering of words (κίονα μακρόν → κίονα μακρήν) all so that the resulting sound structure may be utterly enchanting (κατακηλῶν, Phld. *De poem.* 1.103.12-17 and 2.191.1-11).

<sup>68</sup> This aspect of Pausimachus’s theory may reflect a particular influence from Stoic theories of music and education, to which we shall turn in the final section of this chapter. Like Pausimachus, Stoics seem to have developed a materialistic framework for understanding how pure sound can communicate with and even educate the soul.

<sup>69</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 2.192.10-11, 2.192.15-16.

<sup>70</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 2.194.14, 2.193.24.

<sup>71</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 2.208.2, 2.217.26-218.1; cf. 2.176.26-177.1 and ἀποσημασία, 1.120.19 with Janko 2000: 333 n. 5.

<sup>72</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 2.192.15-16; cf. 2.192.10-11. Pausimachus also remarks how “a (poet) will grant understanding by placing there a (sound) that is easy at least on the ears” (τῷ/ις ἄ[πλ]ῆν ταῖς γούν] ἀ[κ]οα[ί]ς [θεις | κυρή]σει νοήσεω[ς] ἐνταῦ[θα], Phld. *De poem.* 2.157.19-22).

intimations of meaning seem to occur in the soul and yet remain entirely irrational.<sup>73</sup> They include onomatopoeic words – such as the “gibbering” (τετριγυῖα) of Patroclus’s spirit<sup>74</sup> or the pebbles that “tumble” (ὀχλεῦνται) beneath a strong current<sup>75</sup> – and extend all the way down to individual letters and letter combination.<sup>76</sup> For Pausimachus, then, a poem always communicates at two levels: a rational, digital level in which words denote lexical meaning and an irrational, analog level in which words connote or intimate meaning through sound alone. Both levels can please a listener.<sup>77</sup> But the process of intimating meaning through (especially vocalic) sounds is primarily responsible for producing enchantment, as Pausimachus understands it, and is thus the primary focus of a poet.<sup>78</sup> So as we look over Pausimachus’s theory based on a notion of atomic sound (ἦχος), we find that poetic enchantment continues to be understood as a product of form. Yet, in this case, form itself is reinvested with a basic sort of semantic content in its own right.

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<sup>73</sup> The most euphonious sounds please the “irrational sense of hearing” (ἀλόγοις ἀκοαῖς, Phld. *De poem.* 2.221.2-8; cf. 1.83.24-84.9, 2.157.7-14). However, this type of hearing seems to differ from purely physical experiences. For instance, taste is strictly physical, based merely on some somatic changes (σωμ[ατ]ικὰς | [τινας] ἀλ[λα]γ[ά]ς) – whereas hearing occurs through mental/psychic capacities (ψυχικὰς, Phld. *De poem.* 2.182.1-5).

<sup>74</sup> Hom. *Il.* 23.100-1, Phld. *De poem.* 1.106.5-107.10.

<sup>75</sup> Hom. *Il.* 21.260-1. Homer enchants the intellect (τὴν διάνοιαν [...] ψυχαγωγεῖ) by choosing ὀχλεῦνται instead of κινεῖνται (Phld. *De poem.* 1.193.19-184.1; cf. 1.107.25-108.21, 2.194.3-10).

<sup>76</sup> The sounds of the letters themselves (αὐτῶν | τῶν γραμμάτων) are the causes of representations (α[ἰ]τίας | εἶναι τῶν) φα[ντασιῶν], Phld. *De poem.* 2.207.24-208-2; cf. 2.194.11-15). Harsh pronunciations (ἐκφοραὶ τραχεῖαι) produce the thought of labor (τὴν ἐννόησιν [...] τὴν πρακτικὴν, Phld. *De poem.* 2.191.13-16). Sometimes we perceive baseness (αἰσθανόμεθα τῆς κακίας) out of the clashing of sounds (ἐκ τῶν συγκρουόντων, Phld. *De poem.* 1.125.25-126.1).

<sup>77</sup> Evidence for the pleasing quality of rational, lexical content, is found in his discussion of slanderous language, which can conciliate (οἰκτιροῦν) the listener naturally (φύσει) and unexpectedly (παρὰ λόγον) and does so not accordance with hearing (κατὰ τὴν ἀκοήν) or the soul (κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν) but by distracting the listener’s thoughts (Phld. *De poem.* 2.183.13-20; cf. 2.182.22-183.1).

<sup>78</sup> “... (we) cannot attain enchantment better through content” (καὶ μὴ ἀντιλ[αβεῖν δια]νοήματι βελ[τίον τῆς] | ψυχαγωγία[ς], Phld. *De poem.* 1.109.9-11). Pausimachus even warns that denotational content can, at times, ‘distract’ the mind from the proper experience of the poem (περισπᾶσθαι at Phld. *De poem.* 1.91.6, 1.100.13-14, 1.112.18-19, 2.183.13-20, 2.184.2, 2.185.11-12, 2.196.22-3, and 2.199.15; ἀποσπᾶσθαι at 1.123.27; cf. 1.114.2-10). Although the Greek language, he claims, is superior to foreign languages due to its sound (Phld. *De poem.* 2.185.23-6), we are often distracted away from its charms when we naturally attend to the content of what is spoken (Phld. *De poem.* 1.100.7-15 and 2.185.9-12). He also gives the example of a verse from Sophocles: “two sailors hauled the anchor (lit. fig) of the ship” (ναῦτα δ’ ἐμηπύσαντο νηὸς ἰσχάδα, Phld. *De poem.* 1.100.15-101.2 and 2.184.5-26). If listeners get hung up on the strict meanings of words, they may be led astray into thinking that Sophocles is writing about a fig and not an anchor – or at the very least become distracted away from the sound of the verse by the lexical ambiguity.

With Andromenides, Heracleodorus, and Pausimachus, we find a series of attempts not only to locate the source of poetic enchantment (whether it is in word choice, word order, or pure sound), but also to pin down its effect (whether it is entirely irrational or in some way semi-rational). They do this by following the Aristotelian paradigm of separating out the necessary parts of the poetic art and ranking them in terms of primacy. For each critic, sound ranks as supreme, and lexical meaning as secondary or not at all. This brings us quite far from the plot-driven enchantment that we encountered in Aristotle's *Poetics*. Below, I illustrate how these debates over the means of poetic enchantment relate to similar discussions regarding the ends of poetic enchantment. In particular, I show how the tendency to associate poetic enchantment closely with sound and formal flourish corresponds to a popular dichotomy that emerges in the Hellenistic age, between the goals of enchantment and education in the realms of poetry and prose.

#### **1.4. ψυχαγωγία, διδασκαλία, ὠφέλεια and the ends of enchantment**

The quarrel between poetry and philosophy, of which Plato famously spoke, still persists well into the Hellenistic period. However, throughout the interceding centuries, the dispute has essentially boiled down to a dichotomy between 'enchantment' (ψυχαγωγία), on the one side, and 'education/truth' (διδασκαλία/ἀλήθεια), on the other. Hellenistic authors generally agree that certain types of literature, such as poetry, aim at producing enchantment and that the aim of enchantment is radically distinct from or even exclusive of the goals of education and truth.<sup>79</sup> This dichotomy is most famously articulated by Eratosthenes of Cyrene (c. 3<sup>rd</sup> -2<sup>nd</sup> cent. BCE), who refused to collect geographical evidence from the poets on the assumption that "every poet aims at

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<sup>79</sup> "In the Hellenistic Age the debate about the goal of literature, colored by the oppositional positions staked out by Plato and Aristotle, crystallized round the term διδασκαλία, 'instruction,' and ψυχαγωγία, 'enthralment'" (Gutzwiller 2010: 340-2; cf. Meijering 1987: 5-12).

enchantment, not education” (ποιητὴν [...] πάντα στοχάζεσθαι ψυχαγωγίας, οὐ διδασκαλίας), and that poets are permitted to fashion “whatever seems appropriate for enchantment” (ὃ ἂν αὐτῇ φαίνεται ψυχαγωγίας οἰκεῖον).<sup>80</sup> Eratosthenes’s sentiment is echoed by another writer of geography, Agatharchides of Cnidus (c. 2nd cent BCE), who similarly forgives the inaccuracies of Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus, and Euripides, “since every poet is set on enchantment more than the truth” (ὅτι πᾶς ποιητὴς ψυχαγωγίας [μᾶλλον] ἢ ἀληθείας ἐστὶ στοχαστής).<sup>81</sup> This strong tendency to associate poetry with enchantment and to pitch enchantment as starkly opposed to truth and education is rehearsed by other Hellenistic authors as well.<sup>82</sup>

There is a good possibility that the opposition between ψυχαγωγία and διδασκαλία/ἀλήθεια initially gained currency in the realm of Hellenistic literary criticism. The growing tendency for κριτικοί to treat enchantment as a product of sound alone may have encouraged a similar Hellenistic habit of distinguishing sharply between the aims of enchantment and the aims of education. Andromenides, for instance, sharply distinguishes between the job of the poet and the job of the prose author: “it is necessary for the prose writer to seek after the truth, for the poet those things popular with the many” (δεῖν τὸν | μὲν σοφιστὴν ζητεῖν | τῇ[ν] ἀλήθ[εια]ν, τὸν δὲ πο[ι]ητὴν τὰ πα[ρὰ] τοῖς πολ[ι]τοῖς εὐδοκί[μ]ου[ν]τα).<sup>83</sup> In making this claim, he seems to

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<sup>80</sup> Strabo 1.1.10 and 1.2.3 = I A 20 Berger. On this remark, see Pfeiffer 1968: 166-167; Fraser 1972: 759-760; Geus 2002: 265-267; Broggiato 2014: 895-7.

<sup>81</sup> Phot. 8.444b = Agath. *De mari Erythraeo* 8.14-5 Müller. On this passage, see Ameling 2008: 26-33. Agatharchides himself receives praise from Diodorus Siculus for not spreading fantasies about the geography all for the sake of enchantment (τῆς ψυχαγωγίας ἔνεκα, Diod. Sic. 3.11.1-3 = BNJ [Agatharchides of Knidos] 86 F 1 = LGGA [Agatharchides] 19).

<sup>82</sup> ...especially in historical prose. For instance, Ephorus makes the etiological claim that humans introduced music (μουσική) for the sake of deception and enchantment (ἐπ’ ἀπάτην καὶ γοητεῖαν παρεισῆχθαι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, Polyb. 4.20.5 = BNJ [Ephorus] 70 F8). For a similar etiological claim about poetry and ψυχαγωγία, see Σ on Pseud.-Pl. *Just.* 374a = BNJ (Philochoros of Athens) 328 F1. The historian Zopyrus of Magnesia describes how readers of Homer are enchanted (ψυχαγωγούμενοι) by his repeated epithets – so much so that they can misread Πάλλας for πέλλον (Porph. Ad Hom. *Il.* 10.274 = BNJ 494 [Zopyrus of Magnesia] F 1 = LGGA [Zopyrus] 7 with Hainsworth 1993: 182).

<sup>83</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 1.161.2-6; cf. 1.187.5-8 with Janko 2000: 411 n. 2.

realize that picking out beautiful words is not the same as picking out true ones and, thus, the goal of poetry (as he defines it) no longer lines up with the goal of more scientific prose writers.<sup>84</sup> Heracleodorus will question whether truth is even a criterion for prose writers since some prose authors are as enchanting and euphonious as any poet.<sup>85</sup> When Eratosthenes claims that one should not judge poetry by its content (μὴ κρίνειν πρὸς τὴν διάνοιαν τὰ ποιήματα), he may be working under an assumption familiar from the κριτικοί – namely, that poetry should be judged instead by its form.<sup>86</sup> It is quite possible that the emphasis that the κριτικοί placed on the role of sound in the production of poetic enchantment motivated or at least corroborated the emergence of this strict dichotomy between ψυχαγωγία and διδασκαλία.

Although this strict, categorical distinction between ψυχαγωγία and διδασκαλία was widespread, we find some authors who nuance this dichotomy and allow the goal of ψυχαγωγία to exist alongside a more general goal of benefit (ὠφέλεια), if not διδασκαλία or ἀλήθεια per se.<sup>87</sup> Polybius is one source for this type of compromise. We can see that he distinguishes, as other authors do, between the goal of the poet and the goal of the prose writer (or, in his case, the historian): the poet aims to astound (ἐκπληξαι) and to enchant (ψυχαγωγῆσαι), he says, whereas

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<sup>84</sup> He even states that “there is no beautiful (diction) that accords with truth” (μηδεμίαν! εἶναι καλὴν κατ’ ἀλήθειαν, Phld. *De poem.* 1.160.26-161.1 and 1.161.13-15).

<sup>85</sup> Heracleodorus blurs the lines between poetry and prose when he labels Demosthenes, Xenophon, Herodotus, and Sophron as ‘poets’ for the way their prose enchants the ear (Phld. *De poem.* 1.196R.24-197R.25 (*olim* 1.198-9), 1.199R.8-10; cf. 1.52.15-28, 1.54.26-55.17, 1.203R.14-24 (*olim* 205)) and labels the writer of verse, who fails in this, as a versifier (ἐμμετροποιός, Phld. *De poem.* 1.46.1-14). He also complicates the traditional dichotomy when he suggests that prose does not necessarily aim for truth or facticity: “If it is not even expected that a prose writer writes things which accord with truth,” he says, “(the poet) needs to aim at writing things which are agreeable to the many” (‘εἰ καὶ λογογράφῳ μὴ πρόκειται τὰ κατ’ ἀλήθειαν γράφειν, φήσας ‘στοχάζεσθαι [δεῖν] τοῦ <τὰ> τοῖς πολλοῖς ἀρεσ[κοντα γράφειν,’ Phld. *De poem.* 1.49.1-5). Ultimately, however, he does maintain a distinction between the quiddity (ἰδιον) of the poet and the that of the prose writer (*De poem.* 2.69.4-23 quoted at p. 156). Pausimachus, as we saw, approves of Homer’s tendency to include falsehoods and inaccuracies as long as they serve the criterion of euphony (see n. 67).

<sup>86</sup> Strabo 1.2.17 = Eratosth. 1 A 17 Berger.

<sup>87</sup> Plato already calls for this type of compromise by insisting that poetry ought not only to be pleasant (ἡδεῖα) but also beneficial (ὠφελίμη, Pl. *Resp.* 10.607d).

the goal of the historian aims to teach (διδάξαι), and to persuade lovers of learning (πειῖσαι τοὺς φιλομαθοῦντας).<sup>88</sup> In the course of Polybius's writings, however, it becomes clear that he does not regard the aims of the poet and the historian as mutually exclusive. Instead, he imagines that historical prose can produce enchantment alongside benefit and that these products come from different parts of the work.<sup>89</sup> That is, histories confer *benefit* (ὠφελουσι) when historians recount the underlying *decisions* (διαλήψεις) and *causes* (αἰτίαι) of historical events.<sup>90</sup> And a historian enchants (ψυχαγωγεῖ) through the mere narrative description of these historical events.<sup>91</sup> Polybius provides his own spin on what enchantment is by treating it as a certain experience of narrative immersion. When thought of in this way, enchantment does not so much distract from the goals of a historian as aid these goals by drawing readers in and rewarding them with an ancillary experience of enjoyment.<sup>92</sup> Additional attempts to bridge the divide between enchantment and education are hinted at in other Hellenistic texts, such as the literary prologues of both Second Maccabees<sup>93</sup> and Ps.-Scymnus's *Periodos to Nicomedes*,<sup>94</sup> where enchantment is shown to coexist alongside benefit

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<sup>88</sup> For this reason, the poet must focus on what is merely probable, even if untrue, (τὸ πιθανόν, κὰν ἢ ψεῦδος) for the sake of illusion (διὰ τὴν ἀπάτην) whereas the historian must focus on truth for the sake of benefit (τάληθές διὰ τὴν ὠφέλειαν, Polyb. 2.56.11-13). This opposition is traditional for ancient historians, going back to Thucydides (Thuc. 1.22.4; cf. Joseph. 2.56.11-12).

<sup>89</sup> History, insofar as it is a study of causes and decision making, will confer both benefit as well as enchantment, particularly for those who love learning (τὸ ψυχαγωγοῦν ἅμα καὶ τὴν ὠφέλειαν ἐπιφέρει τοῖς φιλομαθοῦσι, Polyb. 6.2.8-9).

<sup>90</sup> By studying causes and decisions, one forms presentiments (προλήψεις) that guide one's own choices and attitudes toward the future (Polyb. 12.25.3).

<sup>91</sup> "[T]he outcomes of the actions enchant" (τὰ γὰρ τέλη τῶν πράξεων ψυχαγωγεῖ, Polyb. 11.18a.2). "the historical event alone, when simply described, enchants" (ψιλῶς λεγόμενον αὐτὸ τὸ γεγονὸς ψυχαγωγεῖ, Polyb. 12.25.2-3).

<sup>92</sup> Although he lays the groundwork for the possibility of an enchanting form of history, he admits that his is less of a narrative and more of a political history. Thus, it will be lacking in enchantment for most readers (τῷ δὲ πλείονι μέρει τῶν ἀκροατῶν ἀψυχαγωγῆτον, Polyb. 9.1.2-5).

<sup>93</sup> Where the author states that his work aims to be memorable (εἰς τὸ διὰ μνήμης ἀναλαβεῖν εὐκοπίαν) as well as both a benefit (ὠφέλεια) and an enchantment (ψυχαγωγία, 2 Maccabees 2.19-31 = BNJ 182 [Jason of Cyrene] T1). On this passage, see Doran 2012: ad loc. and, recently, Borchardt 2016.

<sup>94</sup> On this passage, see Hunter 2008.

within the stated goals of a work. For these writers, the poles of enhancement and education are not mutually exclusive, even if they are categorically distinct.

This attempt to find a compromise between enchantment (ψυχαγωγία) and benefit (ὠφέλεια) may have, again, originated in the realm of literary theory. In Philodemus's *On Poems*, for instance, we hear about another Peripatetic theorist by the name of Neoptolemus of Parium (c. 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. BCE) who offers a somewhat more multifaceted poetic theory than we found in the κριτικοί. For Neoptolemus, the art of poetry consists of three parts (εἶδη): the stylistic details of the poem (ποίημα), its plan or hypothesis (ποίησις), and the talent of the poet (ποιητής).<sup>95</sup> Although Neoptolemus, like the κριτικοί, ranks sound and style (i.e., πόνημα) somewhat more highly than ποίησις or ποιητής, he does not treat form and content as exclusive domains.<sup>96</sup> According to him, the perfect poet (ὁ τέλειος ποιητής) will be able to balance these three aspects of the art of poetry to provide benefit for the listeners (τὴν τῶν ἀκουόντων ὠφέλησιν) and edification (χρησιμολογίαν) along with enchantment (μετὰ τῆς ψυχαγωγίας).<sup>97</sup> Neoptolemus's theory and those like his seem to have had a lasting influence on later poetic and rhetorical theories. The most famous of which (and perhaps the most directly indebted to Neoptolemus himself) is Horace's claim, in his *Ars Poetica*, that a poet may benefit (*prodesse*) as well as enchant (*delectare*).<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 5 col. 14.5-11 = fr. 6 Mette.

<sup>96</sup> "[T]he details are primary among the divisions" (τὸ [τοί] | νυ[ν] π[ρ]ωτεύ[ει]ν τ[ῶν] | εἰδῶ[ν] τὰ ποιήματα λ[έ] | γων, Phld. *De poem.* 5 col. 15.27-28 with Porter 1995a: 123; cf. *De poem.* 5 col. 13.32-14.4 with Wigodsky 2009: 9).

<sup>97</sup> Phld. *On poem.* 5 col. 16.4-6 = fr. 6 Mette. On Neoptolemus, see Asmis 1992, Porter 1995a, *LGGA* (Neoptolemus). We also hear of Heraclides Ponticus (c. 390- c. 310 BCE) who believed that poetry confers both delight and benefit (ὠφέλεια, Phld. *On poem.* 5 col. 3.11-6.5 = fr. 116b Schütrumpf; cf. Phld. *On poem.* 2.98.19-99.28 = Fr. 116a Schütrumpf). According to Heraclides, this benefit seems to derive from sound (Phld. *De mus.* 4.49.1-20, 137.27-138.9 = Frs. 115a-b Schütrumpf). On Heraclides and his relation to the κριτικοί, see Janko 2000: 134-138, *LGGA* (Heraclides [1]).

<sup>98</sup> Hor. *Ars P.* 333-4. Words related to *delectare* are often used by Latin writers as a way of translating Greek words associated with enchantment – κήλησις, θέλξις, ψυχαγωγία, and the like (see n. 117 and pp. 183-4 below). Horace



What these Hellenistic literary critical trends reveal is that a broad dichotomy develops between the semantic domains of enchantment (ψυχαγωγία) and education (διδασκαλία). For some authors, it is a strict ‘either/or’ in which the goal of enchantment excludes the goal of education. For others, it is more of a ‘both/and’ situation in which the goal of enchantment may coexist with the goal of providing benefit. This popular dichotomy between the *ends* of enchantment/poetry versus the ends of education/prose arises alongside (and perhaps in consequence of) Hellenistic debates over the *means* of poetic enchantment. The final figure to include in this tradition is the man who preserves much of it: Philodemus.

### 1.5. Philodemus

In addition to preserving a large swath of our evidence for Hellenistic literary criticism, Philodemus also participates within the same debate about the means and ends of literary enchantment which we have traced thus far. Like others, Philodemus regards a good poem as one that enchants the soul:

τὰς ψυχὰς θέλγοι[ν] τῶν ἐ- <  
 παιδομένων. καὶ καθό- <

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will also calque the Greek literary critical term ψυχαγωγία more literally elsewhere in the *Ars*: “It is not sufficient for poems to have beauty; they must have charm and must lead the soul of the auditor wherever they will” (*Non satis est pulchra esse poemata; dulcia sunt | et quocumque volent animum auditoris agunto*, Hor. *Ars P.* 99-100). The connection between the poetic theories of Horace and Neoptolemus goes back to Porphyryon: *in quem librum congegessit praecepta Neoptolemi τοῦ Παριανοῦ De arte poetica, non quidem omnia, sed eminentissima* “in this book (Horace) gathered together the teachings of Neoptolemus of Parium on the art of poetry – not indeed all of them, but the most important” (1:162.6 Holder = fr. 5 Mette). See Brink 1971: xviii-xx; Rudd 1989: 23-6. However, with better editions of Philodemus’s works, it is becoming clear that Horace was reading and borrowing from Hellenistic criticism more widely and likely from Philodemus himself, whom Horace may have known personally (see Wigodsky 2009 and, most recently, Janko 2020: 162-166). Cicero’s later tripartite *officia oratoris* of *docere, delectare, movere* (*audientium animos*) may likewise betray some influence from the poetic theories of Neoptolemus and the like. Cicero, for instance, also presents the goal of rhetoric in similar terms: to teach (*docere*) but also to enchant (*delectare*) and to move the souls of listeners (*movere audientium animos*, Cic. *De Orat.* 2.27.115; cf. Quint. *Inst.* 9.4.9). See Grant and Fiske 1924 on the similarities between Ciceronian rhetorical theory and Horatian poetic theory. Also, see Asmis 1992: 218-20 on the similarities between Cicero’s rhetorical theory and Neoptolemus’s poetic theory.

[λου] δὲ τὴν ψυχᾶγωγίαν ἄ-  
 [κοήν τι]νᾶ ψυχῆς ἄγω[γὸ]ν  
 [καλοῦσιν]

[poetry would succeed if] it enchants the souls of those who are being spellbound. In general, people call *psuchagôgia* ‘a kind of hearing that moves the soul.’<sup>99</sup>

Here, Philodemus acknowledges the traditional notion of verbal enchantment. In the course of his aesthetic works (*On Poems*, *On Music*, and *On Rhetoric*), he participates within that tradition, and he is not the first Epicurean to do so.<sup>100</sup> In fact, we can see Epicurus himself remarking on how sophistic speeches produce the experience of ψυχᾶγωγία.<sup>101</sup> Philodemus, however, is the only Epicurean to speak at any length about this notion of poetic enchantment and to do so in reference to the Hellenistic debates about form and content, education and enchantment.

Philodemus’s view on poetic enchantment differs quite sharply from the trends in Hellenistic literary theory which we have traced thus far, especially in what he says about the means of poetic enchantment. More like Aristotle, Philodemus will argue that content rather than sound is the essential source of poetic enchantment. Despite plumping for the primacy of poetic content, Philodemus denies poetry any real capacity for education. Thus, regarding the ends of enchantment, Philodemus’s theory of poetry aligns with other Hellenistic critics who draw a strict line between the

<sup>99</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 1.166.1–3.

<sup>100</sup> According to Polystratus, some use syllogisms and axiomatic arguments and others use flattery (ἄρεσκειάς) or deceit (ἀπάτης) to create momentary assent (παραιντικά ἐπίνευσιν) or enchantment (ψυχᾶγωγίαν) in the masses (*De Contemp.* PHerc. 336 col. 18.2–7 Indelli). Carneiscus seems to label flatterers as γόη[τες] (*Philistas* 2 PHerc. 1027 col. 16.1–9 Capasso). Colotes may also speak of γόη[τες]; however, the context is lost (PHerc. 208 fr. 1 Crönert).

<sup>101</sup> (“‘Whenever they listen to them (i.e., sophists) at their display speeches and festival performances’ says Epicurus, ‘and are enchanted...whenever they listen in this way, they focus not on what is said, whether it is advantageous or not advantageous or, in general, whether it is true or not true, rather being enchanted by the sound alone and periodic structures, the examples of parison, the antitheses, and homoioteleuta’” (ἴδ' ἔστιν ἄκουσιν αὐτῶν ἐν ταῖς δέξιξις [ν] καὶ ταῖς παραινέσεσιν [φ]ησὶν [ὁ] Ἐπίκουρος, καὶ ψ[υ]χᾶγωγῇ θῶσι [...] ἴδ' ἔστιν δ' οὐκ ἄκουσιν, τοῖς μὲν ἡγερομένοις [ν] οὐκ ἐπὶ τῷ ὁσέχοντι [σ]ιν, [π]ότερα συμ[φ]έροντα ἢ οὐ συμφέροντα καὶ τὸ [...] σύνολον ἀληθῆ ἢ οὐκ ἀληθῆ, ὅτι αὐτῶν δὲ τοῦ ἡχοῦ καὶ τῶν [π]ερίοδων καὶ τῶν παρὶ σφ[υ]ν καὶ ἀντιθέσεων καὶ ὁμοιοτελεσιῶν ψυχᾶγωγῶν ἰσχυμένους, Fr. 53 Usener = Phld. *De Rhet.* 3 P.Herc. 1426 col. 3a.7–5a.2 = P.Herc. 1506 col. 50.22–52.4).

goals of poetry and prose, ψυχαγωγία and διδασκαλία. In what follows, I treat Philodemus's stance on the means and ends of enchantment in turn.

### 1.5.1. Means of enchantment: Philodemus and the primacy of content

One basic observation that Philodemus stresses in his arguments against the κριτικοί is that, since poets work in the medium of language, linguistic content must serve an important role in their art. As he points out, Pindar and Simonides, “insofar as they were musicians, produced meaningless noises and, insofar as they were poets, produced meaningful words” (καὶ θὸ [μ]ὲν μουσικοὶ τὰ ἀσήμαν|τα, κ[α]θὸ δὲ ποιηταὶ πεποιη|κέν[α]ι τοὺς λόγους).<sup>102</sup> For Philodemus, content is not just *an important* element of what makes a poem enchanting but *the most important*. As he puts it, poems enchant in being understood with regard to thought (τὰ ποιήματα, συνιέμενα πρὸς διάνοιαν, ψυχαγωγεῖ) whereas melodies and pleasing rhythms (μελῶν καὶ... ὀυθμῶν οἰκείων) are generally processed by hearing (ἐπὶ τὴν ἀκοήν).<sup>103</sup> By way of illustrating the primacy of the content of poetry, Philodemus draws on many of the concepts that the κριτικοί had put forth and refashions them to fit his own claims about the primacy of content. He speaks, for instance, of the importance of word choice (ἐκλογή). However, for him, word choice no longer entails picking out the prettiest words, as Andromenides had thought, so much as picking out the most precisely accurate words.<sup>104</sup> Elsewhere, he acknowledges the importance of word order (σύνθεσις). However, in his mind, σύνθεσις is not the nebulous (ἀέριος), autonomous thing (ἐπαινουμένη καθ’ αὐτήν) that Heracleodorus had thought it to be, but rather a handy paralinguistic tool that poets use to help communicate more effectively the content with which they enchant (π[ρ]ο]σπαρίστησι διανοίας αἷς

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<sup>102</sup> Phld. *De mus.* 4.143.30-33.

<sup>103</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 1.151.1-8.

<sup>104</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 2.67.26-68.10.

ψ[υ]χαγωγοῦσιν).<sup>105</sup> For Philodemus, then, poetic enchantment is first and foremost a matter of content.<sup>106</sup>

This strong emphasis on the primacy of content has led some to suppose that Philodemus had an overwhelmingly lexical and intellective understanding of ψυχαγωγία.<sup>107</sup> However, what becomes clear from a closer reading of the fragments is that Philodemus, much like Aristotle, acknowledges the existence of multiple sources of enchantment – some aesthetically-driven and others intellectively-driven.<sup>108</sup> Although Philodemus believes that poetic enchantment is primarily dependent upon content, he does not deny that a poem produces some ancillary experiences of sound-driven enchantment.

Philodemus's notion of sound-driven enchantment appears in a passage from *On Music*, where, after acknowledging that content (rather than music) is what ultimately makes poetry admirable (περὶ[κ]επτον), he notes how poets nevertheless add music to their content to help produce delight (τὴν τέρψιν) as well as enchantment (τὴν ψυχαγωγία[ν]).<sup>109</sup> Here, Philodemus describes an aesthetic rather than intellective response triggered by sound rather than meaning. As we look at other examples, we can see that Philodemus's notion of sound-driven enchantment differs from the one espoused by the κριτικοί in two critical ways. For one, when Philodemus speaks of sound-driven enchantment, he does not treat it as the goal of a poet so much as the goal of a

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<sup>105</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 2.70.12-28; cf. 2.4a.1-9.

<sup>106</sup> See also Phld. *De mus.* 4.125 and 4.131. At 4.133.26-134.6, Philodemus reinterprets the tale of the musical feats which Thaletas of Crete carried out in Sparta by asserting that, while Thaletas was able to distract (περὶσπᾶν) the Spartans with musical enchantments (μουσικαῖς ψυχαγωγίαις), his enchantments came about not through melody alone but through sung words (διὰ λόγων αἰδομένων).

<sup>107</sup> Schächter 1927 and Mangoni 1993: 319. A similar picture is painted by Chandler 2006: 147-167. However, he notes that there appear to be inconsistencies in the way words related to ψυχαγωγία are used in *On Rhetoric* and suggests that Philodemus uses the concept differently in different works. I argue that Philodemus's usage remains consistent.

<sup>108</sup> The distinction is again similar to the one Aristotle makes regarding ὄψις and μῦθος (pp. 148-52).

<sup>109</sup> Phld. *De mus.* 125.14-24.

performer. In *On Poems*, Philodemus stresses how a single word like λωτός does not enchant us autonomously (as Heracleodorus suggests); rather, it enchants only when a performer vocalizes it with all of the rhythms and verse-forms well woven in (εὖ | δὲ ῥυθμοῦ κα[ι] με[τ]ρ[ω]ν | παραπλεκόμενων).<sup>110</sup> It is thus the performer's enunciation of λωτός that achieves the aural enchantment, not the word itself as the poet scripts it. Elsewhere in *On Poems*, Philodemus acknowledges that poets may at best provide general cues (ἀφορμαί) within their writing which a reciter can follow with a view towards enchantment (εἰς τὸ ψυχαγωγεῖν). These cues may, for instance, take the form of a series of long vowels clustered together in a prologue which a reciter may notice and make the most of. What is crucial is that these features embedded within the script are only hints and that the actual production of aural enchantment is ultimately in the purview of the performer.<sup>111</sup> The goal of a poet and goal of poetry more generally is, for Philodemus, the effective communication of enchanting content.

The second reason that Philodemus's notion of aural enchantment differs from the κριτικοί is that it is at bottom an intellectual phenomenon. When explaining the efficacy of the embedded performance cues (ἀφορμαί), Philodemus stresses that people only respond to these patterns of sound because they have become naturalized to appreciate them as conventional (πρὸς τὰ θέματα ... πεφυ[σι]ωμένο[ι]).<sup>112</sup> Stylistic rules about consonant clustering or long compounds in tragedy, epic, dithyramb, or iambos are, for the Epicurean, a matter of convention. The enchantment they produce is a matter of belief instilled through repeated experience. What this means is that when an audience is enchanted by the sounds of a poetic performance, what they are responding to is a set of

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<sup>110</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 2.159.17-25.

<sup>111</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 2.73.1-17.

<sup>112</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 2.74.18-75.7.

preconditioned beliefs – what Epicureans call pre-conceptions (προλήψεις) – about poetic conventions that they have developed empirically over time.<sup>113</sup> For Epicureans, these beliefs are a matter of cognition and are certainly more rational than the irrational or sub-rational ticklings of sound of which Heracleodorus speaks.

In sum, Philodemus's writings on poetry and music describe two types of enchantment that are fundamentally products of the mind rather than bare sense experience. The first is a type of enchantment experienced when lexical content is conveyed clearly. This content-driven form of enchantment is the one that poets aim for. The second is enchantment experienced when the sounds of a poetic performance match an audience's pre-conditioned beliefs about poetic conventions. This second form of enchantment is *not* the one that poets primarily aim for and is more in keeping with the goals of a musician or performer.

### 1.5.2. Ends of enchantment: ψυχαγωγία versus διδασκαλία

Despite advocating for the role of content in poetic enchantment, Philodemus discounts poetry's capacity to teach anything useful. His stance on this issue is certainly at odds with his contemporary, Lucretius, who clearly found poetry a viable medium through which to educate. It seems that Epicureans were slightly divided on this question of poetry's educative value. Yet, the opinion which Philodemus expresses is in keeping with most other statements about the standard Epicurean attitude toward the arts.<sup>114</sup> We hear that Epicureans used to tell their students to 'hoist sail' and flee past the siren song of poetry.<sup>115</sup> By this, they meant that poetry must not be a distraction from the sober practice of Epicurean philosophy. Although they permitted students to

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<sup>113</sup> On Epicurean pre-conceptions, see Tsouna 2016 and Asmis 2020.

<sup>114</sup> On the Epicurean attitude toward poetry, see Asmis 2006 [1995]; Blank 2009b; and more recently McOskey 2020.

<sup>115</sup> See Epicurus's remark in his letter to Pythocles (163 Usener = Diog. Laert. 10.6 cf. Plut. *Mor. Quomodo adul.* 15d, *Mor. non posse suav.* 1974d; Quint. *Inst.* 12.2.24.

practice poetry avocationally – Philodemus was himself an acclaimed epigrammatist – they warned against allowing this practice to eclipse or guide students’ philosophical studies.<sup>116</sup> This stance on poetry, which Philodemus adopts, is more in line with other Hellenistic authors (such as Eratosthenes) who drew a strict line between the goals of poetry and goals of more scientific prose. A report from Sextus Empiricus on the Epicurean view of poetry drives this point home:

καὶ ὅτι οἱ συγγραφεῖς μᾶλλον ἢ οἱ ποιηταὶ τὰ χρήσιμα τῷ βίῳ δηλοῦσιν, εὐεπιλόγιστον. οἱ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ ἀληθοῦς στοχάζονται, οἱ δὲ ἐκ παντὸς ψυχαγωγεῖν ἐθέλουσιν, ψυχαγωγεῖ δὲ μᾶλλον τὸ ψεῦδος ἢ τὰληθές.

And it is simple to understand that prose-writers, as opposed to poets, disclose things useful for life. The former aim at truth, the latter are willing to enchant by all means, and what is false enchants more than what is true.<sup>117</sup>

This sentiment (if not the statement itself) probably goes back to Philodemus’s teacher Zeno of Sidon who, like his student, focused a great deal of his attention on questions of rhetoric, poetics, and aesthetics.<sup>118</sup> For the Epicureans, the problem with poetic enchantment is not that it aims only to tickle the ear rather than communicate content, but that it produces largely false and harmful content. Philodemus echoes this sentiment not only by treating ψυχαγωγία as the primary goal of poetry, but also by sharply distinguishing poetic ψυχαγωγία from educative utility. For Philodemus, the content through which poetry enchants is almost entirely harmful and counter-productive toward Epicurean philosophy. Philodemus even claims that if poems provide some utility, they do so not as poems per se (κἂν ὠφελῇ, | κα[θὸ πο]ήματ’ οὐκ ὠφε | λεῖ).<sup>119</sup> It is because

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<sup>116</sup> See Sider 1997 for a collection and commentary on Philodemus’s poetry.

<sup>117</sup> Similarly, the Epicurean Torquatus, in Cicero’s *De finibus*, draws a strict dichotomy between properly educative content which contributes to the good life (*beatae vitae disciplinam iuvaret*) and poetic content which has no secure usefulness (*nulla solida utilitas*) and is only childish enchantment (*omnisque puerilis est delectatio*, Cic. *Fin.* 1.71-2). On *delectatio* as a common calque for Greek words for enchantment, see n. 98 above and pp. 183-4.

<sup>118</sup> On the probable attribution of this statement/sentiment to Zeno of Sidon, see Asmis 1991: 12-13; Asmis 2006 [1995]: 257; cf. Blank 1998: xlvii; Janko 2000: 9 n.3.

<sup>119</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 5 col. 29 17-19.

poetry so often delights through the depiction of fictions and follies that ought to be avoided that neophytes ought to “hoist sail” away from its siren-like enchantment. Should Epicureans choose to enjoy poetry, they must treat it for what it is, a delightful diversion that enchants without necessarily providing any educative value.

Although the evidence is somewhat scantier, Philodemus makes similar claims about the value of enchantment in his treatise *On Rhetoric*.<sup>120</sup> There, Philodemus uses the language of enchantment primarily to label the effect of ‘sophistic’ rhetoric – by which he means epideictic rhetoric.<sup>121</sup> One of Philodemus’s central arguments in the treatise is that ‘sophistic’ rhetoric, unlike forensic or political rhetoric, should be understood as a τέχνη. In arguing for this view, Philodemus is countering another group of Epicureans, who denied all branches of rhetoric the status of τέχνη because no branch could ever adequately teach what they collectively purported to teach – namely, persuasion. Philodemus agrees that sophistic rhetoric not something that a good Epicurean should practice seriously. However, he argues that it still meets the criteria of being a τέχνη insofar as it is the one branch of rhetoric that does not aim to teach persuasion but rather something else.<sup>122</sup> The text, in its current state, is unclear about what this aim is. However, Robert Gaines has plausibly suggested that the aim of sophistic rhetoric is in fact ψυχάγωγία.<sup>123</sup> If this is true, the comparisons to poetry are clear enough. Both poetry and sophistic rhetoric are geared toward the production of a

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<sup>120</sup> On Philodemus’s *On Rhetoric*, see Kleve and Longo Auricchio 1992; Blank 2003, 2009a, 2009b; Gaines 2004, 2017; Chandler 2020.

<sup>121</sup> Phld. *De Rhet.* 2 P.Herc. 1674 col. 11; 3 P.Herc. 1426 col. 3a.7–5a.2 = P.Herc. 1506 col. 50.22–52.4 Hammerstaedt; 4 P.Herc. 1423 col. 3 with Blank 2009a: 88.

<sup>122</sup> See, in general, Blank 2009a, 2009b, Gaines 2004. On what activities an Epicurean sage should and should not focus on, see Diog. Laert. 10.117–21. Rhetoric may be practiced avocationally like poetry. However, skill in rhetoric is even handier than skill in poetry and is equated to having a basic knowledge of economics (Phld. *Oec.* 17, 22–23 with Blank 2009a, 2009b). In both cases, the knowledge one obtains must be non-technical, and one must neither become a professional rhetor nor a money-maker.

<sup>123</sup> Gaines 2017: 64. On Philodemus’s definition of τέχνη, see Rhet. 2a P.Herc. 1674 38.2–18 (edited in Blank 2003) and, more generally, Tsouna 2021.



type of enchantment; however, the ends of these modes of enchantment do not exactly align with the ends of Epicurean philosophy.<sup>124</sup>

From this evidence, it appears at first blush that Epicureans regarded the category of enchantment as broadly antithetical to the educative agenda of philosophy. However, there are some indications (even apart from Lucretius' poem) that this dichotomy between poetic/sophistic enchantment and philosophical education has some bend to it. In *On Rhetoric*, for instance, we find one suggestive fragment in which Philodemus speaks of producing enchantment throughout a whole life with an accompanying benefit (παρ' ὅλην τὴν ζωὴν μετὰ τῆς ὠφελίας [.] αὐτοῦ ψυχᾶγωγοῦντες).<sup>125</sup> This remark appears in conjunction with an apparent comparison between the act of doing rhetoric and the act of doing philosophy (τὸ ῥητορεύειν – φιλοσοφεῖν). Should we imagine that Philodemus is speaking here of a philosophical form of rhetoric that puts rhetorical enchantment into the service of philosophical benefit? In another suggestive fragment from *On Vices*, Philodemus remarks how the Epicurean sage does not behave like a flatterer and yet may resemble one in the way he enchants the mind as not even Sirens do (κη[λεῖ φρεῖ] νας οὕτως ὅν τρόπον οὐδ' αἱ μὴ θυγαῖρες Σειριῶνες).<sup>126</sup> Passages like these raise the question of whether or not Philodemus envisioned a philosophical form of enchantment akin to the one Plato represents in the *Laws*.<sup>127</sup> Should we understand, say, the famous *tetrapharmakos* as a tool for philosophical enchantment?

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<sup>124</sup> Philodemus draws a certain equivalence between poetry and forms of prose (Phld. *De Poem.* 5 P.Herc. 1425 col. 30.6-33 Mangoni). He says that the prose art of sophistic rhetoric has method to it but not much of it, just like poetry (φαμὲν τοίνυν τὸ μεθοδικὸν ἔχειν αὐτήν, οὐ πολὺ δὲ καθάπερ οὐδὲ τὴν ποιητικὴν, Phld. *De Rhet.* 2 P.Herc. 1672 col. 22.20-39 Longo Aurichio).

<sup>125</sup> Phld. *De rhet.* P.Herc. 1669, fr. 8. I take the text from Ferrario 1980, who calls Sudhaus's interpretation into question.

<sup>126</sup> Phld. *De vit.* P.Herc. 222 col. 2.2-7.

<sup>127</sup> On the general question of whether an Epicurean notion of philosophical rhetoric can be found, see Blank 2009b: 218-221, 232-3; Blank 2009a: 77, 88-93; cf. Gaines 2004: 217. Philodemus speaks of how an Epicurean will stick to "philosophical discourses" (λόγοι φιλοσόφοι) which are characterized by "truth, a lack of strife, and, in short, *ataraxia*" (ἀληθινῶν καὶ ἀφιλο[v]ε[ί]κων καὶ [σ]υ[λ]λήβδη[v] εἰπεῖν . [ἀτ]αράχων, Phld. *De oec.* 23.30-2 Tsouna).

Based on our evidence, these questions are not easy to answer. What remains clear from the foregoing account is that Philodemus and the Epicureans, like other Hellenistic thinkers, continued to find the semantic category of enchantment a helpful frame for articulating and negotiating the boundaries of reason and sensation, harm and benefit, within the realm of the verbal arts, such as poetry, music, and rhetoric. For all involved, enchantment is used as a label for articulating a family of experiences that Greek culture associated with the most effective and affective oratory, music, and poetry. Enchantment is the experience produced by Homer's poetry or the infectious oratory of the sophists. The means of this experience is debated, as is the upshot of enchantment – is it a beneficial or useless psychological phenomenon? In what remains, we shall turn to the Stoics who develop their own theory of enchantment and provide their own picture of what this experience looks like from a psychological point of view.

## 2. The Stoics on pleasure as enchantment

In the material covered thus far, we have come across only a handful of remarks which indicate that Hellenistic authors were thinking deeply about the psychological experience of enchantment. For instance, Heracleodorus seems to have a psychological-cum-anatomical model in mind when he discusses how enchanting speech is able to tickle (γαργαλίζειν) what he calls our irrational apperception (τὴν ἀλόγιστον ἐπαίσθησιν).<sup>128</sup> Pausimachus also seems to understand the experience of aural enchantment as irrational; however, he interestingly distinguishes it from other anatomical sensations such as taste – the latter is based merely on some physical changes (σωμ[ατ]ικὰς | [τινας] ἀλ[λα]γ[ά]ς) while the former on psychical (ψυχικὰς).<sup>129</sup> We find some

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<sup>128</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 2.43.5-10 (quoted in n. 52 above).

<sup>129</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 2.182.1-5 (discussed in n. 73 above).

attempts to define enchantment, such as Philodemus's tautological remark that "[poetry would succeed if] it enchants the souls of those who are being spellbound," which he accompanies with the remark that "In general, people call ψυχαγωγία 'a kind of hearing that moves the soul'".<sup>130</sup> Elsewhere Philodemus quotes a certain Megaclides (perhaps a contemporary of Theophrastus) who provides a different definition: "poetry produces enchantment, and that enchantment is the subjection of the soul" (τὴν πόλῃσιν κήλησι[ν φέρειν, τὴν ]|δὲ κήλησιν ψυχῆς εἶναι κα] |τάσπασιν).<sup>131</sup> What Heracleodorus means by ticklings, Pausimachus by psychic changes, or Megaclides by the subjection of the soul is never clarified by anything that comes close to an anatomical or psychological model. What these remarks do indicate is that Hellenistic authors are interested in the experience of enchantment and what it consists of. There is only one school that provides evidence robust enough for analysis, namely, the Stoics. In this section, we shall see how the Stoics incorporate the language of enchantment into their theories about physical pleasure. From what survives of Stoic writings on emotions and pleasure as well as from what Philodemus preserves about Stoic theories of enchanting music, we can roughly reconstruct what the Stoic experience of enchantment might look like psychologically.

Below, I begin by collecting and analyzing the sources in which enchantment appears as a subcategory of Stoic pleasure. I then explain this evidence by setting it within the larger context of the Stoic theory of emotion. We see that Stoic emotions are rational and involve assenting to certain experiences. All forms of pleasure are then products of the mind. The language of enchantment marks out a family of physical pleasures (pleasures at sights and sounds), which occupies the far outskirts of what is a largely rationalizing Stoic framework of human emotion. In the final section, I

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<sup>130</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 1.166.1–3 (quoted at p. 171).

<sup>131</sup> Phld. *De poem.* 1.130.20–3.

turn again to Philodemus and, specifically, to his treatise *On Music* which preserves the musical theories of the influential Stoic scholar, Diogenes of Babylon. Diogenes is our only Hellenistic source that provides systematic information on how the Stoics might have explained the experience of aural enchantment. From a careful analysis of his fragments, we can reconstruct what a Stoic psychological model of enchantment might look like.

## 2.1. Types of Stoic emotions

The language of enchantment plays a rather important role within Stoic discussions of pleasure. For the Stoics, pleasure (ἡδονή) is one of the four cardinal emotions, which also include pain (λύπη), fear (φόβος), and desire (ἐπιθυμία). Under each, Stoics list a variety of sub-categories. It is under pleasure that Stoics include the specific experiences of what they call κήλησις and γοητεία. Since it will be helpful to look at the evidence together, I quote below the relevant passages from Cicero, Arius Didymus, Ps.-Andronicus, Diogenes Laertius and discuss them as a whole.

Ps.-Andronicus:<sup>132</sup>

Ἡδονῆς εἶδη ε'. Ἀσμενισμός· τέρψις· κήλησις· ἐπιχαιρεκακία· γοητεία.

α' Ἀσμενισμός μὲν οὖν ἐστὶν ἡδονὴ ἐπὶ ἀπροσδοκίτοις ἀγαθοῖς.

β' Τέρψις δὲ ἡδονὴ δι' ὅψεως ἢ δι' ἀκοῆς.

γ' Κήλησις δὲ ἡδονὴ δι' ἀκοῆς κατακηλοῦσα· ἢ ἡδονὴ ἐκ λόγου τε καὶ μουσικῆς ἢ δι' ἀπάτης γινομένη.

δ' Ἐπιχαιρεκακία δὲ ἡδονὴ ἐπὶ τοῖς τῶν πέλας ἀτυχήμασιν.

<ε> Γοητεία δὲ ἡδονὴ κατὰ ἀπάτην ἢ διὰ μαγείας.

There are five types of pleasure: glee, delight, κήλησις, spite, γοητεία:

1. Glee is a pleasure at unexpectedly good things.
2. Delight is a pleasure through sight or hearing.
3. **κήλησις is a pleasure that bewitches through hearing – the pleasure which comes about from speech and song or by means of deceit.**

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<sup>132</sup> Ps.-Andron., *Path.* § 5 =SVF 3.401.

4. Spite is a pleasure at the misfortune of one's neighbors.
5. **γοητεία is a pleasure from deceit or by means of magic.**

Diogenes Laertius:<sup>133</sup>

ἡδονὴ δὲ ἐστὶν ἄλογος ἔπαρσις ἐφ' αἰρετῷ δοκοῦντι ὑπάρχειν, ὑφ' ἣν τάττεται κήλησις, ἐπιχαιρεκακία, τέρψις, διάχυσις. **κήλησις μὲν οὖν ἐστὶν ἡδονὴ δι' ὠτῶν κατακηλοῦσα**, ἐπιχαιρεκακία δὲ ἡδονὴ ἐπ' ἄλλοτρίοις κακοῖς, τέρψις δὲ, οἷον τρέψις, προτροπή τις ψυχῆς ἐπὶ τὸ ἀνεμμένον, διάχυσις δὲ ἀνάλυσις ἀρετῆς.

Pleasure is an irrational expansion at obtaining what seems to be good. Under it are arranged κήλησις, spite, delight, and complacency. **κήλησις is a pleasure which enchants through the ears**, spite is a pleasure at others' ills, delight (τέρψις) – like the word 'turning' (τρέψις) – is a certain protreptic toward weakness, and complacency is a dissolution of virtue.

Arius Didymus:<sup>134</sup>

ὑπὸ δὲ τὴν ἡδονὴν ἐπιχαιρεκακία καὶ ἀσμενισμοὶ καὶ γοητεῖαι καὶ τὰ ὅμοια· [...] ἐπιχαιρεκακία δὲ, ἡδονὴ ἐπ' ἄλλοτρίοις κακοῖς· ἀσμενισμὸς δὲ, ἡδονὴ ἐπὶ ἀπροσδοκίτοις· **γοητεία δὲ, ἡδονὴ δι' ὄψεως κατ' ἀπάτην**·

Under the category of pleasure, there are spites, glees, γοητεῖαι, and the like. [...] Spite is a pleasure at others' ills. Glee is a pleasure at unexpected things. **γοητεία is a pleasure from deception through sight.**

Cicero:<sup>135</sup>

Sed singulis perturbationibus partes eiusdem generis plures subiiciuntur [...] voluptali malevolentia laetans malo alieno, delectatio, iactatio et similia [...] Voluptatis autem partes hoc modo describunt, ut malevolentia sit voluptas ex malo alterius sine emolumento suo, **delectatio voluptas suavitate auditus animum deleniens, et qualis est haec aurium, tales sunt et oculorum et tactionum et odoratum et saporum, quae sunt omnes unius generis, ad perfundendum animum tamquam illiquefactae voluptates.** Iactatio est voluptas gestiens et se efferens insolentius.

Moreover, there are many subcategories of the same genus classified under each emotion [...] Under pleasure is spite (which rejoices at another's ill), enchantment, vainglory, and the like [...] They describe the subcategories of pleasure in the following way: spite is a pleasure derived from another's ill without any benefit to oneself, **enchantment is a pleasure which enchants the mind in hearing sweet sounds, and similar to these pleasures of the ears are**

<sup>133</sup> Diog. Laert. 7.114 =SVF 400.

<sup>134</sup> Arius Didymus in Stob., *Ecl.* 2.91-2 W. = SVF 3.394, 3.402.

<sup>135</sup> Cic., *Tusc. Disp.* 4.16, 20 = SVF 403.

**those of sight, touch, smell and taste, which are all of one class, in that they are pleasures which pour through the mind like liquids.** Vainglory is a pleasure in which one exults and puffs oneself up arrogantly.

The sources differ in their particulars, and their differences may be distributed in the following chart:

	Aural pleasure	Optical pleasure	Involving ἀπάτη
Ps.-Andronicus	κήλησις	γοητεία	κήλησις/ γοητεία
Diogenes Laertius	κήλησις		
Arius Didymus		γοητεία	γοητεία
Cicero	<i>delectatio</i>	( <i>delectatio</i> )	

For Ps.-Andronicus, γοητεία is a pleasure from deception (ἀπάτη), and it is associated with magic (μαγεία), whereas κήλησις is a pleasure in hearing also associated with deception (ἀπάτη).

Diogenes omits the label of γοητεία and yet similarly includes the label of κήλησις as a type of pleasure associated with hearing. Arius Didymus omits the label of κήλησις and yet includes the label of γοητεία. However, unlike Ps.-Andronicus, he provides a different definition for γοητεία – namely, pleasure derived through sight. This division between *optical* versus *aural* enchantment may be familiar to Cicero, who lists auditory pleasure (i.e., κήλησις, which he calques with term *delectatio*) and quickly notes that aural pleasure is, in fact, closely related to other sensual pleasures such as those derived through sight.

The slight variation from author to author as well as Cicero's choice to lump together periphrastically "all [...] pleasures which pour through the mind like liquids" (*omnes [...] ad perfundendum animum tamquam illiquefactae voluptates*), is consistent with other Stoic lists of minor emotions which tend to contain gaps, apparent redundancies, and variations in their details. As Margaret Graver has suggested, the jumbled quality of these lists may reflect a conscious choice on the part of the Stoics; rather than coin new terms for all of the varieties of human emotions, the

Stoics took a more mobile, bottom-up approach by drawing their labels from popular usage.<sup>136</sup> This choice to use popular language may have been further motivated by the Stoic tendency to invest a certain truth value into traditional tales and conventional speech. For them, customary stories and customary ways of describing experiences (such as γοητεία and κήλησις) must bear some fundamental correlation to what they traditionally label, otherwise people would not have begun or continued to use them as they do. Thus, when it came to the Stoic task of labeling all the sundry subcategories of pleasure, pain, fear, and desire, the lexicon of popular usage provided a ready and fitting cache of terms. When it specifically came to the task of describing certain sensual pleasures that tend to create the grounds for deception, they drew from the readymade category of enchantment.

Despite the loose way in which Stoics incorporated the words κήλησις and γοητεία into their discourse about pleasure, their usage had a clear impact on the semantic range of these words. Centuries later, Plutarch will show signs of Stoic influence when he writes how “pleasure which is derived through the ears has the name of κήλησις, whereas that which derives through the eyes has the name of γοητεία” (Ἡδονῆς δὲ τῇ μὲν δι’ ὠτῶν ὄνομα κήλησις ἐστὶ τῇ δὲ δι’ ὀμμάτων γοητεία).<sup>137</sup> He will also project this division etymologically onto the names Melpomenê for aural

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<sup>136</sup> “Where ordinary Greek is well supplied with terms, as in the vocabulary of anger and of grief, the philosophical classification should be correspondingly rich; where previously existing definitions can be assimilated to the Stoic system, these will be favored” (Graver 2007: 57).

<sup>137</sup> Plut. *De soll. an.* 961d8-9. See also, for instance, Porphyry who writes how “κήλησις is the name for the pleasure derived through the ears, and γοητεία is the pleasure derived through the eyes” (Ἡδονῆς δὲ τῆς μὲν δι’ ὠτῶν ὄνομα κήλησις ἐστὶν, τῆς δὲ δι’ ὀμμάτων γοητεία. Porph. *Abst.* 3.22.25-7; cf. *Suda* H.97; *Etym. Magn.* 510).

pleasure (μέλπειν “to sing”), and Terpsichorê for optical pleasure (τέρψις “enjoyment,” ὁρᾶν “to see”).<sup>138</sup>

## 2.2. Stoics on enchantment as pleasure

How, then, might the Stoics describe the experience of enchanting pleasures? To answer this, we must first understand what pleasure is in the framework of Stoic emotions. As we noted before, Stoics divide human emotions into the quartet of cardinal emotions: pain, pleasure, desire, and fear.<sup>139</sup> This quartet is not original to the Stoics but goes back to Plato.<sup>140</sup> Like Plato, the Stoics treat pleasure and pain as distinct from fear and desire. But their distinction is not cast in terms of bodily experiences (pleasure/pain) versus psychic expectations (fear/desire), as it had been for Plato. It is cast more in terms of present and future beliefs – that is to say, fear and desire are beliefs about a *future condition* whereas pain and pleasure are beliefs about a *present condition*. The reason for this difference is that unlike Plato, Stoics strictly limit the possibility for a human to have purely non-rational experiences. Instead, they treat each emotion as an evaluative response to some propositional content. For instance, pleasure or pain is never simply an unmediated experience (of

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<sup>138</sup> “Regarding the type of pleasure derived through the ears and eyes, whether it belongs to reason or emotion or common to both, the remaining two Muses, Melpomenê and Terpsichorê, pick this up and give it orderliness so that there is, on the one hand, delight as opposed to κήλησις and, on the other, delight rather than γοητεία” (τὸ δὲ δι’ ὧτων καὶ ὀφθαλμῶν ἡδονῆς εἶδος, εἴτε τῷ λόγῳ μᾶλλον εἴτε τῷ πάθει προσήκον εἴτε κοινὸν ἀμφοῖν ἔστιν, αἰλοῖται δύο, Μελπομένη καὶ Τερψιχόρη, παραλαβοῦσαι κοσμοῦσιν· ὥστε τὸ μὲν εὐφροσύνην μὴ κήλησιν εἶναι, τὸ δὲ μὴ γοητεῖαν ἀλλὰ τέρψιν, Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 746f4-747a2). The sense, here, is that κήλησις and γοητεία are the less-rational/orderly counterparts to εὐφροσύνη and τέρψις. Also, Diodorus Siculus’s slightly different version: “Melpomenê, from the singing by which she enchants audiences, and Terpsichorê from the delighting students with the advantages of education” (Μελπομένην δ’ ἀπὸ τῆς μελωδίας, δι’ ἧς τοὺς ἀκούοντας ψυχαγωγεῖσθαι, Τερψιχόρην δ’ ἀπὸ τοῦ τέρπειν τοὺς ἀκροατὰς τοῖς ἐκ παιδείας περιγινόμενοις, Diod. Sic. 4.7.4.11-13; cf. Luc., *Im.* 14). For the Stoic pedigree of these etymologies, see also Corn. *De nat. deor.* 14.4.

<sup>139</sup> For the leading expert on Stoic emotions, see Graver 2007; 2017. For accounts of Stoic pleasure more specifically, see Gosling and Taylor 1982: 415-427 and, more recently, Wolfsdorf 2013: 182-213.

<sup>140</sup> The only difference from Plato’s list found in the *Laws* is the replacement of confidence (θάραχος) with desire (ἐπιθυμία). In other dialogues, Plato similarly swaps out confidence for desire (e.g., *Phaed.* 83b6–7, *Resp.* 430a7–b1, *Theaet.* 156b4–5). On the interesting place of confidence (θάραχος) within the Stoic theory of emotions, see Graver 2007: 213-220.



body or mind), but always an evaluation or, rather, a “fresh belief” (τὸ δοξάζειν πρόσφατον) that one has in the moment about whether their experience is positive or negative.<sup>141</sup> Pain stems from the evaluation of one’s present experience as negative, whereas pleasure stems from the evaluation of one’s present experience as positive. In conceiving of emotion in this way, Stoics treat fear and desire as *primary*, and pain and pleasure as *secondary* because it is our future-oriented desires and fears that tend to dictate how we evaluate our present circumstances.<sup>142</sup> For instance, experiencing something that one has feared will be assessed in the moment as bad and will register as pain, whereas experiencing something that one has desired will be evaluated in the moment as good and will register as pleasure.

This Stoic conception of pleasure appears, at first blush, far more mental than physical. Yet, since the Stoics have a materialistic conception of the soul, a mental state (such as the rational evaluation of a present experience as good) is also a physical state. That is, each *emotion* corresponds to a specific psycho-physical *motion*. As the Stoics put it, each emotion is an impulse (ὁρμή) which they define as “an inclination of the soul toward something” (τὴν δὲ ὁρμήν εἶναι φορὰν ψυχῆς ἐπὶ τι).<sup>143</sup> This ‘something’ (τι) is a particular *psychic* motion (κίνησις): fear is a leaning away of the soul (ἔκκλισις), desire is a reaching out of the soul (ὄρεξις), pain is a contraction of the soul (συστολή, μείωσις, ταπείνωσις), and, finally, *pleasure is a swelling or outpouring of the soul* (ἔπαρσις, διάχυσις, Lat. *profusa*; cf. Cicero’s *ad perfundendum animum* above).<sup>144</sup> Our sources explain very little about

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<sup>141</sup> On fresh belief, see Ps.-Andron. *Path.* § 1 = SVF 3.391 = LS 65b; Stob. 2.90.7 = SVF 3.394; Stob. 2.88.6 = SVF 3.378 = LS 33I; Cic. *Tusc. Disp.* 3.74–75.

<sup>142</sup> In general, see Wolfsdorf 2013: 202–3.

<sup>143</sup> Stob. 2.86.19 = SVF 3.169 = LS 53Q. For a recent study of the role of impulse in the Stoic theory of emotions and its relation to psycho-physical responses, see Sauvé-Meyer 2018: 124ff., esp. 127.

<sup>144</sup> Gal. *PHP* 4. 4. 24 = SVF 3.46 = LS 65D; cf. Diog. Laert. 7.116 = SVF 3.431 = LS 65F; Stob. 2.90.14–18 = SVF 3.394 = LS 65E.

what these various psycho-psychical motions are; however, we can safely surmise that they correspond, in some way, to the psychosomatic experiences associated with each emotion – the rush of pleasure, the tug of desire, a sinking sensation of fear, and so forth.<sup>145</sup> Taken together, Stoic pleasure is thus not just a “fresh belief” about a present experience as being positive; it is also (on a psycho-physical level) an impulse toward the swelling or outpouring of the soul. If we put this all into the most basic terms, pleasure is a happy belief about the present moment accompanied by a certain rush.

At this point, we can turn back to the question of Stoic enchantment. If we place the experience of κήλησις and γοητεία back into the larger Stoic theory of pleasure, we can say that they are experiences of sounds or sights that are positively evaluated in the present moment and that produce a psycho-physical rush. As Cicero puts it, they are pleasurable sensations that “pour through the mind like liquids” (*ad perfundendum animum tamquam illiquefactae*).

Here, we reach an old problem about how *rational* such sensual emotions can actually be. While it is easy to imagine how pleasures of, say, spite (ἐπιχαιδεκακία, *malevolentia*) and vainglory (*iactatio*) might be evaluative responses to particular circumstances, it is less immediately obvious how becoming pleasurably enchanted by an attractive melody is anything more than a physical and non-rational response to a sensual experience. Ancient sources that bring up this dilemma point specifically to instrumental music and its power to trigger emotional responses.<sup>146</sup> To answer this question, we shall turn to the Stoic, Diogenes of Babylon, whose writings about the formative powers of melody and rhythm go some way toward explaining how the Stoics might specifically

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<sup>145</sup> On this possibility that the soul might sense its own movement, see Nemesisius, 78.7-79.2 = SVF 1.518 = LS 45C and Hierocles, *Elements of Ethics*, col. 4.38–53 = LS 53B with Graver 2007: 23-4; 2017: 207.

<sup>146</sup> Posidonius, for instance, points out that Chrysippus never sufficiently deals with this issue (Posidon. fr. 168 Kidd = Gal. *PHP* 5.6.20–22).

account for pleasure derived through hearing – an experience that Stoics, as we have seen, tended to label as κήλησις or *delectatio*.

### 2.3. The pleasure of music in Diogenes of Babylon

Diogenes of Babylon (c.230–c.152 BCE) is the fifth scholarch of the Stoa after Zeno of Tarsus, a pupil of Chrysippus, and the representative of the Stoic school in the philosophical embassy to Rome in 155 BCE. Traditionally, he has not attracted much attention from modern scholars. Yet, there is no doubt that he was a highly influential figure in the history of Stoic philosophy.<sup>147</sup> Among other notable contributions, he may have been one of the first Stoics for whom Plato and Aristotle were again treated as philosophical authorities.<sup>148</sup> After his death, his writings were influential enough to generate a healthy amount of polemic from later philosophers. Among those who locked horns with him is the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus, who devotes the fourth and final book of his treatise *De Musica* to the refutation of Diogenes's claims about the transformative power of melody and rhythm.<sup>149</sup> Fortunately for us, when Philodemus writes his polemics, he often extensively recounts his opponent's arguments before systematically dismantling them. Thus, in the first third of what remains of *De Musica*, we have Diogenes's own remarks about music. These remarks may, for our purposes, serve as a helpful account of what a prominent Stoic in the Hellenistic period could say about the psychology of κήλησις.

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<sup>147</sup> See Obbink and Vander Waerdt 1991, Janko 1992.

<sup>148</sup> Obbink and Vander Waerdt 1991: 357–8 argue that Diogenes's primary aim is to incorporate the doctrines of the Socratics into the fold of Stoic philosophy (cf. Delattre 1991: 3, 15–6; Blank 2011: 246).

<sup>149</sup> For an excellent edition of the text and French translation, see Delattre 2007. My quotations and citations all refer to this edition. Philodemus also deals with Diogenes in his *On Rhetoric* and *On Piety*.

### 2.3.1. Music as enchantment

It is important to note up front that Diogenes does not refer to the pleasure derived from hearing solely in terms of κήλησις. Instead, he draws together snippets of lyric poetry that discuss enchantment as well as a mélange of historical and mythical examples of enchantment – a concept he marks out with words related to θέλξις, κήλησις, and ψυχαγωγία. This material serves as evidence for his theory of how music soothes and stirs the mind with a sense of pleasure and, over time, instills certain ethical dispositions. For instance, he notes how early poets already knew that instrumental music is capable of producing an experience of enchantment (ψυχαγωγία).<sup>150</sup> He justifies this with a host of anecdotes about different early poets and musicians and even quotes some approvingly, as when he cites Archilochus’s remark that “all mortals are enchanted by songs” (κηλ’έεται δ’ ὅτις [βροτ]ῶν ἀοιδαῖς) and uses it as evidence for how a song can soothe its audience.<sup>151</sup> Some anecdotes he uses as evidence are drawn directly from myth, such as when he freely invokes Orpheus’s ability to enchant (θέλγειν) rocks and trees as evidence for the fact that melody and rhythm have the power to incite motion.<sup>152</sup>

In his rebuttal, Philodemus criticizes this Stoic tendency to support scientific claims with non-scientific evidence such as myths:

Κᾶν  
τὸν Ὀρφ[ε]α μ[ὴ] δ[ι]ὰ τῆ[ν] ἐξ[ο]-  
χὴν τῆς ἐμμελείας [ύ]πακού-  
ωμεν μεμυθεῦσθα[ι] κα[ὶ]

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<sup>150</sup> Phld. *Mus.* 4.47.

<sup>151</sup> Phld. *Mus.* 4.49. On this fragment, see Delattre 2007: ad loc.; Gigante 2003. In addition to Archilochus, Diogenes draws on the examples of many other poets and musicians, such as Ismenias the aulete (Phld. *Mus.* 4.41.21), Menander (Phld. *Mus.* 4.43.35), Timotheus (Phld. *Mus.* 4.43.23), et al. Philodemus complains how Diogenes does not argue by giving proofs (οὐκ ἀποδεικτικῶς) but rather narrates like a historian (ιστορικῶς) or exegete (ἐξηγητικῶς, Phld. *Mus.* 38).

<sup>152</sup> Phld. *Mus.* 4.41; cf. 4.63, 4.122. He elsewhere points to the likes of Olympus (Phld. *Mus.* 4.19), Amphion (Phld. *Mus.* 4.41) as other mythical *exempla*.

τοὺς λίθους καὶ [τὰ δ]έγδρα θέλ-  
 [[θ]]'γ'εῖν, ὥς καὶ ν[ῦν] ἡμεῖς γ' εἰ-  
 ὠθαμεν ὑπερβολικῶς λέ-  
 γειν, ἀλλὰ τοῖς τριηραύλαις,  
 ὥσπερ ὁ στρωικός, ἀναλ[ό]γως  
 ἐφ[ε]στῶτα ποιῶμεν οἰκο-  
 δόμοις, διὰ ταῦτα φήσομεν,  
 ο[ὐ]δ'ιὰ τὰ τούτου ληρήματα.

Even if we do not give credence to the myth of Orpheus enchanting rocks and trees through the preeminence of this song – since these days we are accustomed to speak hyperbolically – and instead we present the story as an analogy to the flute players on triremes, as the Stoic does, standing at the head of a team of builders, we will say that this effect occurs due to the reasons [I put forth], not through this man's [i.e., Diogenes's] nonsense.<sup>153</sup>

Even though Philodemus does not entirely endorse Diogenes's appeal to the myth of Orpheus, he nevertheless recognizes the analogical appeal of bringing stories of enchanting songs into conversation with scientific discussions of music. We can see how this Stoic tendency to invest a certain truth value into traditional poetry and myth may be what led some Stoics to draw the poetic language of enchantment into their scientific catalog of human emotions and, specifically, pleasure. For the Stoics, truths are not only to be found in traditional myths (such as that of Orpheus) but also within language itself. Etymology, for instance, is a valid form of explanation for Stoics.<sup>154</sup> Diogenes etymologizes the words for audience (θεατή and θέατρον) to show how music was invented primarily for the divine (πρὸς τὸ θεῖον) as well as for learning (τὸ θεωρεῖν). He even etymologizes name of the Muse, Erato, to point out how music naturally encourages love-making.<sup>155</sup> In col. 20, Diogenes strikingly extends this truth value to metaphors when he claims that people would not label music as magnificent (μεγαλοπρεπῆ), temperate (σωφρονικά), courageous (ἀνδρεῖα), fragile (δειλά), undisciplined (ἀκόλαστα), and shameful (αἰσχρά) if music did not, in fact, give rise

<sup>153</sup> Phld. *Mus.* 122.25-36. For a study of the references to Orpheus within the Herculaneum Papyri, see Vassallo 2015.

<sup>154</sup> On Stoic use of etymology, see Allen 2005.

<sup>155</sup> Phld. *Mus.* 4.38, 4.43.

(συνεπιφέρειν) to these dispositions (διαθέσεις).<sup>156</sup> This logic may be extended to the language of magic and enchantment: if music does not, in fact, produce an experience somehow akin to enchantment, people would not use language in that way; Archilochus would not write that “all mortals are enchanted by songs” if music did not have some enchanting effect and people would not continue to tell the tales of Orpheus singing trees and rocks into motion if music did not have some capacity to incite movement. Although Diogenes does not make technical use of the language of enchantment, his way of illustrating the powers of music through the evidence of myth and conventional language indicates a clear path through which this labeling process might have come about.

### **2.3.2. Diogenes’s psychology of music**

For Diogenes and later Stoics, there is a close correspondence between the experience of enchantment (κλήσις) and the pleasant experience of hearing a fine tune that holds an extraordinary sway over the mind and body of an auditor, for better or for worse. Diogenes’s overall project in his writings on music is to show how song can be harnessed to engender a positive form of enchantment, how it can direct rather than distract the mind through a certain delight and, in doing so, engender a more enlightened disposition in the soul of the listener.

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<sup>156</sup> Phld. *Mus.* 4.20.

Diogenes starts from the observation that music pleases all people.<sup>157</sup> On this point, even Philodemus agrees.<sup>158</sup> Where Diogenes draws Philodemus's ire is in making the additional claim that music also gives rise to certain dispositions and can, over time, shape an individual's character for better or for worse. In a way highly reminiscent of Plato's *Laws*, Diogenes proposes that it is philosophically responsible for one to use music from an early age in order to shape one's character for the better.<sup>159</sup>

Although Diogenes's account owes a great debt to Plato (particularly his *Laws*), it remains fundamentally Stoic in its principal assumptions. In particular, music's effect on the soul is described as a thoroughly physical process relying upon the Stoic theory of emotion and some creative ideas about musical harmony.<sup>160</sup> In effect, music triggers impulses that lead to virtuous intentions and actions. In col. 14, Diogenes describes how music can produce certain impulses (ὁρμάς τινας) and how, when these impulses constitute as emotions with an energy to them (πάθη τινα [νὰ με]|τὰ δυνάμεως), they become intentions which, in turn, lead to actions.<sup>161</sup> For example, a feeling of confidence can lead to courage (πρὸς ἀνδρεί[α]ν μὲν θάρ[ος]) just as a feeling of shame and

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<sup>157</sup> He speaks of how rhythms (ῥυθμοί) and melodies (μέλη) are naturally pleasant (ήδέα) to all and how all are inclined toward them (ἐπιζήτειν) without being forced by any actual teaching (ἐξ οὐδεμᾶς διδασχῆς) or previous habit (ἔθους) but, instead, it seems, autonomously (ὥσπερ αὐτομάτους, Phld. *Mus.* 4.17.7-13). He notes how music is common to Greeks (Ἑλ[ληνας]) and Barbarians (Βαρβάρους) of all age groups (κατὰ πᾶσα[ν] ... ἡλικίαν) and how even before we have reason (λογισμὸν) and intelligence (σύνεσιν), music touches us (ἄπτεσθα[ι] ἡμῶν), Phld. *Mus.* 4.25.8-14).

<sup>158</sup> "Music puts those listening to it in a more delightful disposition" (Τὸ γε ἐπιτεροπῶς ἡμᾶς ἀκροωμέ[νους] τῆς μουσικῆς διατίθει[σθαι], Phld. *Mus.* 4.132.9-11).

<sup>159</sup> Diogenes speaks of music as the educational tool for the soul ([π]αιδευτικὴν [...] [ψ]υχῇ μουσικ[ήν]) just as gymnastics (σώ[ματι] γυμνασ[τικ]ήν) is the educational tool for the body insofar as it establishes a certain harmony (ἁρμό[τ]εται, Phld. *Mus.* 4.8.3-10). Elsewhere music as protector and safeguard (τὴν σω[τήριαν] καὶ τὴν φυλακὴν) τῆς ἀρετῆς, Phld. *Mus.* 4.12.44-13.2) and that music appropriately disposes us toward many virtues (οἰκείως ἡμ[ᾶς] δυνάμει πρὸς πλείους ἀ[ρε]τὰς) and even all (καὶ πρ[ὸς] πᾶσας, Phld. *Mus.* 4.49.15-20). He quotes Plato's *Laws* directly (Phld. *Mus.* 4.51.13-47; cf. Delattre 1991; Woodward 2010). Also, like Plato, Diogenes notes that music, misapplied, poses the greatest harm to characters (τὰ ἥθλα, Phld. *Mus.* 4.51.14-20).

<sup>160</sup> For recent accounts of Diogenes's theory of music, see Barker 2001; Scade 2017.

<sup>161</sup> Phld. *Mus.* 4.14.5-10. Delattre takes δύναμις in the Aristotelean sense of aptitude or capacity (2007: 28 n.3).

decorum (αἰσχύνῃ<sup>161</sup>[ν κ]αὶ κόσμον<sub>1</sub>) can lead to moderation (πρὸς σωφροσύνην<sub>1</sub>).<sup>162</sup> To explain just how music triggers ethically inclined impulses and intentions, Diogenes incorporates an idea of harmonic ratio. What guides impulses toward specific intentions are the dispositions (διαθέσεις) which, according to Diogenes, are already physically encoded within the sound structure of the music itself.<sup>163</sup> Different types of music bear different dispositions encoded within their different sound structures.<sup>164</sup> When these different types of music pour through the soul, they can physically harmonize with and alter analogous dispositions already present within the soul.<sup>165</sup>

We may ask, at this point, how rational is this process? As we saw before, Stoics make little room for non-rational emotions, and this poses a problem with how best to explain sensual pleasures like the pleasure of hearing music. Diogenes's solution comes at col. 34 where he makes a distinction between two types of sense perception – intellective (ἐπιστημική) versus innate (αὐτοφυῆς αἰσθήσις) sense perception.<sup>166</sup> Innate sense-perception picks up on basic sensations such

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<sup>162</sup> Phld. *Mus.* 4.14.15-17. Courage (ἀνδρεία) and prudence (σωφροσύνη) are two of the four cardinal virtues for the Stoics. These four virtues receive subspecies, much like the four cardinal emotions of pleasure, pain, fear, and desire. What Diogenes is doing here is linking up a species of emotion up with a species of virtue. Confidence (θάρρος) is the emotion, which correlates with the sub-virtue of θαρραλεότης. The latter is itself a category of the overall virtue of ἀνδρεία (see Stob., 2.58.5-15 = SVF 3.95 = LS 60K; Cicero *Tusc. Disp.* 4.66 (*confidere*); also, Graver 2007: appendix). Shame (αἰσχύνῃ) and decorum (κόσμος) are emotions seem to correlate with the sub-virtues of αἰδημοσύνη and κοσμιότης respectively, which are themselves categories of the overall virtue of σωφροσύνη (on αἰσχύνῃ, see Glibert-Thirry 1977: 287 ad 61 and on κόσμος/κοσμιότης, see Glibert-Thirry 1977: 310 ad 7).

<sup>163</sup> Diogenes described how music has certain natural virtues (ἔχουσά τινας ἀ[ρετ]ᾶς συγ[γ]ενεῖς, Phld. *Mus.* 4.18.4-5). Its qualities accord with impulses (τὰ κατὰ τὰς ὁρ[μ]ᾶς) and accompany pleasure and pain (τὰ μεθ' ἡδονῆς καὶ [λύ]πης, Phld. *Mus.* 4.25.1-3).

<sup>164</sup> Phld. *Mus.* 4.36.1-14.

<sup>165</sup> According to Diogenes, we hold the causes (τὰς αἰτίας) of the appropriate dispositions (τῶν οἰκειῶν δ[ιαθέ]σ[ε]ων) within us (ἐν ἡμῖν) and do not take them from without (οὐκ ἔξωθεν, Phld. *Mus.* 4.25.3-6). In col. 20, he speaks of how music only calls forth dispositions already present in the individual. As he puts it, one cannot become more doctorly or knightly, if they have yet no knowledge of medicine or horsemanship, any more than can one become more courageous (ἀνδρ[ε]ιότερον) or better ([β]ελτ[ε]ρίονα) without having already exhibited some of the corresponding virtue (Phld. *Mus.* 4.20.8-14). When a melody enters the ears, it can change (μετακο[σμεῖν]) a person and redirect (ἀποστρέφειν) them from one impulse to the next (πρὸς ἄλ[λ]ην ὁρμὴν ἀπ' ἄλλης) leading the preexisting disposition (ὑπάρχουσιν) toward growth (αὐξησιν) or diminution (ἐλάττωσιν), Phld. *Mus.* 4.36.10-14).

<sup>166</sup> Phld. *Mus.* 4.34.2-21. For a recent reading of this passage, see especially Klavan 2019. However, I do not think it is necessary to claim that Diogenes coined this distinction.



as hot and cold, whereas intellectual perception picks up on whether a sensation is somehow in tune or out of tune (ῥημοσμέν[ον] καὶ ἀνάρμο[στον]). As he explains, even if these two modes of perception may agree (συμ[φ]ωνεῖν) that a sound striking the ear is harsh or clear ([π]ικρὸν ἢ λ[ιγ]υρὸν), they could disagree (διαφωνεῖν) about the pleasure or pain that accompanies it – i.e., about whether or not the harshness or clearness of the note harmonizes or not with what is good. Since these two processes occur simultaneously, hearing music is always partially intellectual;<sup>167</sup> a good, philosophical listener will have trained his or her intellectual sense of hearing over the years to be able to pick up on when sounds and rhythms harmonize with what is good or ‘natural’ (κατὰ φύσιν).<sup>168</sup> If Diogenes’s division between innate and intellectual sense-perception corresponds to the Stoic division between two types of belief – i.e., ‘judgment’ (κρίσις, ὑπόληψις) versus mere ‘belief’ (δόξα) or ‘weak judgment’ (ἀσθενὴς ὑπόληψις) – we may say that *intellectual* sense-perception involves judgment while *innate* sense-perception involves mere opinion or weak judgment.<sup>169</sup> In final analysis, Diogenes’s project in his writing about music seems to promote the practice of honing one’s intellectual sense of hearing to discern the rhythms and melodies that most harmonize with what is good and natural in the soul.

If we ask now how a Stoic may explain κήλησις (pleasure at sounds), we may say that it is understood as an aural experience evaluated in the moment as good. Diogenes gives an account of

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<sup>167</sup> As he puts it, one type of perception is closely linked (συν[ε]χ[ε]ς) with the other and, in many cases (ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ), follows alongside (παρὰκολουθεῖ) the other in the way in which we distinguish the pleasure accompanying each sensation ([π]αραπομέ[ν]ην ἡδονήν ἐκ]άστω τῶν αἰσθητῶν, Phld. *Mus.* 4.34.9-14).

<sup>168</sup> Diogenes describes how music has certain natural virtues (ἔχουσά τινας ἀ[ρετ]ὰς συγγενεῖς) that can allow a child to become a good listener (εὐηκό[ον]) insofar as the enjoyments they take at perceptions become very strict (Phld. *Mus.* 4.18.1-14). In col. 33, he describes how, after a great deal of noble effort has been amassed ([ἀθ]ροισμένης πολλ[ῆς τε καὶ] γενναίας σ[υ]ν[ε]χ[ε]ς), an attraction toward musical study no longer leaves space for other habits (οὐκέτι καταλεί[π]ει περ[ὶ] θ[α]υ[τά] χωρὰν τοῖς ἑωα[ρ]τίοις ἔθ[ε]σιν, Phld. *Mus.* 4.33.4-11).

<sup>169</sup> Stob. 2.88.6 = SVF 3.378 = LS 65A.

how this aural enchantment can be harnessed in a philosophically responsible way by habituating one's intellective sense of hearing into attunement with sounds that harmonize with what is considered good and natural by Stoics.

In some ways, this Stoic inquiry into enchanting pleasure takes us rather far from the discussions of poetic enchantment found in Aristotle and the κριτικοί. However, there is reason to believe that some possible cross-pollination occurred between these two discourses. Pausimachus's theory of sound (ῥῆχος) is particularly reminiscent of Diogenes's. Furthermore, we can be fairly sure from col. 48 that Diogenes was aware of the κριτικοί. There, he speaks of how music is useful for intelligence (πρὸς σύ[ν]εσιν) since we find in it many divisions, distinctions, demonstrations (ὁρίους, καὶ διαιρέσεις καὶ ἀπιδείξις ἐν ἀρμονικῇ). In this vein, the study of the structures of music and harmony is a theory (τινὰ θεωρίαν) quite close to criticism (ἐτῆι κριτικῇ).<sup>170</sup> Although Diogenes uses this art of criticism for different ends than the κριτικοί (Diogenes toward the Platonic end of musical-cum-philosophical education and the κριτικοί toward the Aristotelian end of developing a teleological poetics), both keep alive the semantic tradition of enchantment by placing it at the heart of their inquiries into the exceptional powers which poetry and music seem to hold.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we have traced how Hellenistic authors continued to debate the means and ends of enchantment within the realm of literary theory and how Stoics incorporated the language of enchantment into their psychological theories of pleasure. Contrary to earlier scholarly studies of the concept of enchantment, this chapter reveals that Aristotle did not so much suppress the notion of enchantment as supply to it a teleological framework through which it survived in the writings of

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<sup>170</sup> Phld. *Mus.* 4.48.22-30. On the label κριτικοί, see Blank 1994; Porter 1995b.

Hellenistic literary criticism. Following Aristotle, Hellenistic critics continue to divide and rank the most necessary elements of the art of poetry and take part in a debate regarding the means of enchantment. Unlike Aristotle, these authors focus mostly on the role sound plays in the production of poetic enchantment. This new focus leads naturally into another Hellenistic habit in which authors distinguish the ends of poetry/enchantment sharply from the ends of prose/education. When Philodemus writes at the end of the Hellenistic period, he opposes the tendency to hold sound as primarily responsible for poetic enchantment and plumps instead for content while at the same time denying that poetic enchantment has any educative value.

Although there was clearly broad interest in the concept of enchantment throughout the Hellenistic period, very few accounts discuss the actual psychology of enchantment. The exception to this is the Stoic theory of pleasure that uses the concept of enchantment to understand and discuss certain physical pleasures. The writings of Diogenes of Babylon, in particular, provide us with a glimpse into what one school's psychological model of aural enchantment might look like. In this case, it is a model of harmonic ratio in which sounds physically pass over the soul and harmonize with it in ways that result in psycho-physical changes.

What this chapter shows is that enchantment continues to be used as an important semantic frame through which authors debate and discuss the limits of speech and song. As we have seen in earlier chapters, the language of enchantment gravitates toward sites of human experience that appear exceptional. In the Hellenistic period, it is primarily drawn upon to mark out the ineluctable essence of good poetry and rhetoric as well as the strange sway physical pleasures hold over the mind and body, for better or for worse. Authors from Aristotle to Philodemus express keen interest in harnessing this category of enchantment in different ways so that they may stake out the rational

or irrational limits of speech and song and thereby negotiate the value of the pleasures derived  
therefrom.

## Conclusion

The idea of enchanting speech does not disappear at the close of the Hellenistic period but persists through the rise of the Roman empire, the second sophistic, and beyond.<sup>1</sup> My thesis traces only the early stage of its history. In doing so, it brings together the chief characteristics of the concept of enchantment and the motivations behind its recurrent use which extend well beyond early Greek thought.

As we have seen, different writers account for the experience of enchantment in different ways. In the first chapter, we saw how Gorgias of Leontini uses the language of enchantment to call attention to the extra-linguistic and para-linguistic powers of communication as well as the instability of these modes of speech. Like a magic spell, the Gorgianic λόγος – with its power to stir emotion, deceive, and delight – can be a bane or a boon. In response to Pre-Socratic preoccupations with the questions of language and linguistic reference, Gorgias recasts speech as a quasi-physical substance that manipulates the human soul.

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<sup>1</sup> The influence of the κριτικοί continues to be felt in the writings of later rhetorical and literary critics (such as Dionysus of Halicarnassus and Longinus) who keep the notion of poetic enchantment alive. The revival of interest in the writings of Plato and the sophists coupled with a broad interest in the recovery of the classical vocabulary of enchantment had the knock-on effect of spurring the popularity of the concept of enchantment. Not only do early grammarians (e.g., Julius Pollux, Apion, and others) include the language of enchantment in their lexica, but writers under the Roman Empire (e.g., Philo, Dio Chrysostom, Plutarch, Aelius Aristides, Numenius, Lucian, Maximus of Tyre, Philostratus, Aelian, and others) draw freely on the language of enchantment in their own works for their own purposes. De Romilly briefly touches upon this later tradition (1975: 75-88). For some post-antique manifestations of the semantic tradition of enchanting speech, see Ward 1988; Covino 1994.

In the second chapter, we saw how Plato takes up the Gorgianic notion of enchanting speech and harnesses it toward his own philosophical ends. For him, enchantment denotes a particular realm of experience located at the tidal zone between sensation and opinion. Plato sees this category of experience as a weakness that ought to be dealt with in a philosophically responsible manner. In his dialogues, he is careful to distinguish good applications of enchantment from bad and, in his final work, the *Laws*, he illustrates how the experience of enchantment can be exploited on a state-wide level in order to maintain equanimity between citizens and willing obedience to the city's laws.

In the final chapter, we turned to the Hellenistic period in which the language of enchantment is pressed into several sites of technical discourse regarding the quintessence of poetry and the nature of pleasure. Following Aristotle's lead, much of Hellenistic literary theory centered on a quest to determine how a poem produces its characteristic effect, namely, enchantment. Whereas Aristotle had privileged the enchanting quality of poetic content, later theorists viewed enchantment largely as a product of the sound structure of a good poem. In associating the cultural categories poetry and poetic enchantment strictly with sound, Hellenistic literary theory helped undercut the didactic role which poetry had traditionally served and led the way toward the widespread dichotomy between (poetic) enchantment (ψυχαγωγία) and (prosaic) education (διδασκαλία). The psychological experience of enchantment came to be of interest to Stoics, as well, who used the language of magic as a frame for understanding certain physical pleasures – including aural pleasure. In the musical theory of Diogenes of Babylon, we saw an example of how a leading Stoic philosopher of the Hellenistic age might describe the psychology of aural enchantment.

Despite broad differences between individual explanations of what enchantment consists of, what binds these authors together is their central motivation in striking an analogy between speech and magic in the first place. The language of magic is especially useful for talking about

extraordinary experiences *as* extraordinary. When writers like Gorgias, Plato, and Hellenistic writers describe speech as enchanting, they bring in to arm's reach some unfamiliar and exceptional channels of communication. But in doing so, in framing these channels in terms of magic, they simultaneously hold them at arm's length and invite an air of otherness and ambiguity. For Hellenistic writers, enchantment is a label for the uncanny powers which poetry and song have over the mind and body. In Plato's dialogues, enchanting speech stirs the irrational part of the soul with remarkable efficacy for better or for worse. For Gorgias, the language of enchantment provides a means for articulating his theory of non-discursive communication. At the same time, it also represents this mode of communication as strange, exceptional, and potentially dangerous. In each case, the language of enchantment provides a way of theorizing about extraordinary modes of speech without domesticating them as familiar or ordinary.

This common motivation, I believe, persists even in contemporary attempts to use the language of enchantment as a frame for thinking about human experiences. In the past several decades, for instance, modern scholars of philosophy, religion, literature, and the political sciences have frequently turned to the language of enchantment and disenchantment as way of defining the modern person's experience of life and literature.<sup>2</sup> This phenomenon is, at root, a belated response to Max Weber's claim about the modern West: "there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play but rather [...] one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted."<sup>3</sup> Weber's model of *disenchantment*, in which modernity is characterized by

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<sup>2</sup> Courtney Bender remarks how the term has become "exhaustingly" ubiquitous in the scholarly inquiry into modernity: "enchantment is a term, and terms have limits. [...] I invite us to consider whether maybe enchantment's current term is nearing an end. Our most brilliant writers and thinkers show us what we can do with it and what all its moves make possible to say [...] Of course, I admit that no matter what I say about it, enchantment will remain a potent game, one that seems to play itself and catch people in it" (2020).

<sup>3</sup> Weber 1991 [1917]: 139. For a good overview of this trend from Weber onward, see Saler 2006.

the sober progress of reason, was dominant in the academy until the past several decades when philosophers such as Jane Bennett and Akeel Bilgrami, as well as literary critics such as Rita Felski, Michael Saler, and others, began to promote a counter narrative that flies under the banner of modern enchantment or the re-enchantment of modernity.<sup>4</sup> For these writers, Weber's claim about the disenchantment of the modern world struck a chord. It seemed to entail a denial that modern (secular) individuals have any capacity to appreciate or tolerate the strange superabundance of the human experience. In response, they marshaled together various theories for how certain experiences – what they call 'enchantments' – are or can be made available within a modern context. For Bilgrami and Bennett, enchantment comes from re-attuning ourselves to the mysterious agency of nature either through a type of surrender or through an appreciation of objects as agents. For Saler, the modern experience of enchantment is achieved by our boundless imaginations and our capacity to become immersed in story worlds. For Felski, enchantment is the experience of absorption we feel when experiencing good art or literature. It is also the feeling that can be destroyed by certain methods of critical analysis commonly taught in the classroom. Although each theorist has a slightly different take on what enchantment is and how it is triggered, they collectively use the language in a similar manner. Like our ancient writers, they use the language of enchantment in order to draw attention to certain channels of experience and to represent them as extraordinary. It is for this purpose primarily that enchantment was and still is a remarkably rich and attractive category through which to negotiate our experiences of life, language, and literature.

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<sup>4</sup> Bennett 2001 and Bilgrami 2010a (as well as the back-and-forth between the two in Bennett 2010 and Bilgrami 2010b), Felski 2008, Saler 2012 (cf. Saler and Landy 2009, Landy 2012: *passim*). The trend extends well beyond this small sampling.



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