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**On Banishing Socrates' Wife:
The Interiority of the Ear in
*Phaedo***

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In William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, the voice of Addie Bundren suddenly appears in the middle of the book to speak to us after her death. Her family has been tending to the steady transformation of her body into a corpse. They must now transport her to a distant town for burial in the midst of a torrential rain. In a novel composed of discrete interior monologues, we have been granted access to the characters' thoughts, while conspicuously barred from Addie. We are barred from her outer and inner voices, until, that is, a single "Addie" section is finally interposed after her death. It is neither her last words nor an inner monologue on the threshold of death – the body that would claim to host such a voice has passed away. Faulkner will not describe the location from which she speaks. In this, her only monologue, she will comment on the voice's incommensurability, that words are "a shape to fill a lack" and "don't ever fit even what they are trying to say at."¹ Words are "just the gaps in people's lacks, coming down like the cries of the geese out of the wild darkness in the old terrible nights, fumbling at the deeds like orphans to whom are pointed out in a crowd two faces and told, That is your father, your mother."²

We know from Plato's *Phaedrus* that such a description matches that of written words, which, "orphaned," must call upon the support of (but cannot hope to locate) a missing "father." There is, in Plato's lexicon, no "mother" of the voice, only the mother of the world that hosts the space or airy background for words' appearance.

Has Addie survived her death to speak to us? To survive one's own death is to find the impossible pleasure of total revenge. Her final wish, that her corpse be brought to the distant town of Jefferson, Mississippi, is also a final revenge upon her family – they must carry the coffin over a river whose bridge has been washed away by a powerful flood. In introducing her "voice," Faulkner introduces the possibility that she may survive her own death and enjoy the suffering of her survivors who must cope with the brute burden of her corpse. This is the impasse of many fantasies of suicide: one would no longer be there to see the suffering of those who made one suffer. Thought cannot go beyond that desire for witnessing, a darker version of the very proof of existence of the cogito: one cannot think unthinking. What death teaches in *As I Lay Dying* is the emergence of the speaking subject out of the displacement of the mother as the primary other. We might say that Addie's dead voice is the condition of the novel's very claim to language.

1 William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (New York: Vintage International, 1990), 171.

2 Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, 174.

I would like to show how this is the case in a very ancient way. Plato's *Phaedo* documents the death and last words of Socrates, in which he confirms his theory of the soul's immortality and the claim that philosophy is the practice of dying. It is framed as *Phaedo* repeating the story of Socrates' final hours and, with it, his last argument concerning knowledge as recollection of what the soul gleaned before embodiment. *Phaedo* repeats the story to Echechrates who was not present. The very structure of the dialogue raises the dead and gives the words of Socrates out of the mouth of *Phaedo*. When Echechrates asks who else was present in those final hours, *Phaedo* somewhat astonishingly remarks that Plato, if he remembers correctly, was not there; he was "not strong enough to attend."³ As Nicole Loraux writes of this moment, "behind this narrator with the faulty memory stands Plato the writer."⁴ It is, she continues,

Socrates himself who does the most to persuade us of the truth of the *Phaedo*: the truth of the philosopher's last moments, which this dialogue stages so imaginatively that the reader feels he is actually present; also, the truth of the arguments in favor of the immortality of the soul, which rather depend on Socrates' presence to carry conviction. ... [T]he person and the *logos* of Socrates mutually reinforce one another.⁵

Indeed, *pistis* or conviction (in Christian traditions understood as faith) is not a logical experience, but an affective artifact produced and recognized by the body. Paradoxically, though it would seem to be prior to language and even emotion, it is commonly marshaled by it in sophistry and rhetoric. For Plato, *pistis* is a pre-philosophical state, untested by argument; it is the sort of brute fact one needs to survive – that things are simply this way and must be. To feel in the gut, or from a sophistic perspective, to be compelled to embodied belief. It is fundamentally relational as a rhetorical artifact, wrought in the body, not in the mind, by the voice of an other.

Plato distinguishes between words related to *pistis* (belief, conviction) and those related to *didaskhein* (instruction and learning). Here, we might turn to P. Christopher's Smith's grossly ignored recuperation of the hermeneutics of original argument, and with it, a material and acoustical impulse prior to Aristotle's ultimate rejection of acoustical experience.⁶ *Pistis* or conviction, Smith writes, "concerns things wholly incidental and ancillary to

3 Plato, *Phaedo*. Translated by Eva Brann et al. (Newburyport: Focus Publishing, 1998). Cited hereafter in text.

4 Nicole Loraux, "Therefore, Socrates Is Immortal" in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body, Part Two*. Edited by Michel Feher (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 1989), 31.

5 Loraux, "Therefore, Socrates Is Immortal," 31-32.

6 This shift in Aristotle has also been richly traced and critiqued by the work of Adriana Cavarero. She names Aristotle's splitting of *logos* from its dependency on sound the "devocalization of *logos*." See *For More than One Voice*. Translated by Paul Kottman (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2005), 33-41.

argument, whereas the second set [or instruction and learning] concerns only that things that are essential to it.”⁷ *Pistis*, we might say, is also wholly acoustical in nature, as the material basis of an oral argument: it is the voice, not the words, which compel to this state of pre-cognitive belief. Thus, I suggested that words for Plato are with father, but no mother, as the incidental space in which the *logos* manifests. This acoustical material, which had been all important in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, is incidental to the *Poetics*’ fetishism of structure: to become itself – a perceptual whole – structure must marginalize acoustical experience and its ritualistic elements. We might say, after Trinh T. Minh-ha, “death strolls between images.” The essential movement of the *Poetics*, a work at odds with itself and with contrary tendencies, is to replace an understanding of tragedy as “ritual reenactment for an audience (*akouontes*) [from *akoúō*, to hear], themselves caught up in the rhythms and cadences of the voices that they hear.”⁸ This earlier understanding still operates within the *Poetics*, Smith shows, but only in displaced form, along the margins of an “exposition of tragedy as representation for spectators (*theôretes*) looking on from a distance and surveying a logical ‘whole.’”⁹ Of course, the entire aim of Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy* will be to wrest tragedy away from the logicians and towards what Nietzsche calls the “aesthetic listener.”

All transmission, nevertheless, calls upon what Plutarch calls the “ambiguity of listening.”¹⁰ This ancillary material can never be fully shed. Listening is the most *pathetikos* and the most *logikos* of the senses. Only the ear can receive the *logos*, but it is the same medium of *pathos*. The ear must be trained, as Plutarch describes, to purge, not to admit what is *pathetikos* in the course of transmission. The ear is fundamentally split, a divided organ. We will find occasion to return to this split ear in a moment.

We have remarked on Socrates’ willingness to die or his notion that philosophy is the practice of dying. In *Crito*, his friends meet him in jail to implore him to escape, an idea he rejects in his devotion to the law, which has also mandated his death. Socrates, the court maintains, is an atheist and sullies the minds of young men, but the court also maintains he is a follower of what his prosecutor calls “strange gods,” or *kairon daimonen*. How can he be both an atheist and the follower of deities? In the *Apology*, Socrates states: “I...go around seeking and investigating in accordance with the god...I come to the god’s aid...because of my devotion to the god... the god stationed me...ordering me to live

- 7 Christopher P. Smith, *The Hermeneutics of Original Argument* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 235.
- 8 Smith, *The Hermeneutics of Original Argument*, 272.
- 9 Smith, *The Hermeneutics of Original Argument*, 272.
- 10 See Michel Foucault’s discussion of Plutarch’s treatise “On Listening” in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*. Translated by Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2005), 331-354.

philosophizing and examining myself and others....”¹¹ Socrates’ strange god, with him since childhood, comes to him in the form of an inner voice that others cannot hear: “...a sort of voice (*phonê*) comes, which, whenever it does come, always holds me back from what I am about to do but never urges me forward.”¹² We do not have here the *logos* as defined by Aristotle in the *Poetics* as *phonê semantikê*, where the semantic still requires this material vehicle of sonorosity. The daimon is phonetic, but not semantic. It is closer to sound than to speech; one wonders if this voice “speaks” at all, or if it is not instead an activity suspended just before speech, a holding back, as in the *tacet* direction of a musical score indicating that an instrument should “keep quiet” (from *tacere* or verbal silence, not to be confused with *silere* as the absence of noise, linked also to the silence of the dead).¹³ However, this activity of the daimon seems irreducible to the tacit state of *pistis* in which one has been converted to belief without being able to find – or without knowing to search for – an external cause. *Pistis* merely is as the tacit or keeping silent, even though it was once wrought, from a rhetorical point of view, by the persuasiveness of the sound of the voice. The daimon, as a “sort of voice,” is silent, yet somehow other from this order of *tacere*.

We should remember that Socrates, in listening to his daimon that cannot be heard by others, engages in the crime of a “moral reformation” of the state’s deities:

...his gods cannot be fully identified with those of popular tradition. For Greek popular thought assumed as a fundamental principle from Homer on that justice consists in reciprocation, in repayment in kind: a gift for a gift, an evil for an evil (the *lex talionis*).¹⁴

One displays these reciprocations before and with the gods. Socrates’ true crime, we might say, is the interiorization of the voice, and with it, the ear. One performs publically for the gods to ward off their wrath. The strange voice that drives Socrates to philosophize cannot be displayed in acts of sacrifice; it does not participate in the economy of retribution; its action is non-retributive. In fact, as an activity, it is beyond the scope of action; it is unritualistic and without any sphere.

His daimon is the first truly autonomous voice, the individual splitting off by way of “my voice” for me and no other. Therein lies the strangeness of his personal voice. Socrates is no

11 Qtd. in Mark L. McPherran, “Introducing a New God: Socrates and His *Daimonion*” in *Socrates’ Divine Sign: Religion, Practice, and Value in Socratic Philosophy*. Edited by Pierre Desirée and Nicolas D. Smith. (Academic Printing and Publishing, 2005), 114.

12 McPherran, “Introducing a New God,” 114.

13 Roland Barthes locates two movements of the silence of *tacere*, that of the discreet man and that of the skeptic who has a moral obligation to withhold or refrain from a position. The ecological claim to a right to silence or to be rid of noise, Barthes argues, fails to address the true pollutant, which is speech. *The Neutral*. Translated by Rosalind Krauss and Denis Hollier (New York: Columbia University Press), 2005, 21-26.

14 Mark L. McPherran, “Socratic Religion” in *Cambridge Companion to Religion*. Edited by Donald R. Morrison (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 119.

atheist, but a religious man, and prayers often intercede in Plato's renderings of Socratic voice. How to reconcile the strange voice within this frame? It is a moment of splitting off, of historic separation.

He nonetheless remains a loyal citizen. In *Phaedo*, Socrates thus asserts not only that his death will be at the hands of the state, but also that suicide is unethical. He would rather be killed than kill himself. Critics have remarked upon this time and again. Socrates willingly dies, and philosophy is the non-retributive practice of learning to die, of preparing the soul to depart the prison of the body. But what of his particular unwillingness to die that arises in this moment amongst his disciples? This unwillingness is not owed to what Nietzsche calls Socrates' "decadence," a phrase related to his translation of Socrates' final words in *The Birth of Tragedy*: "to live – is to be sick a long time." In telling the story, *Phaedo* explains to Echecrates that the executioner had advised Socrates to cease talking because talk warms the body, which slows the poison. Socrates will have to drink it several times as a consequence, the executioner had said.

Socrates is unwilling to stop talking; he prefers a slow death. "Let him be! Just have him prepare his potion and be ready to give twice and, if he must, even three times" (Ph.63e4-6). Just before the guard's note of instruction, Cebes had asked why Socrates says, "it isn't lawful for [man] to do violence to himself, but the philosopher should be willing to follow after somebody who's dying" (Ph.61d3-5). In the midst of this conversation on the rightness of suicide, Socrates touches his feet to the ground and remains in that very position of sitting for the remainder of the dialogue: he occupies the space of staying, of slow death. He takes, as it were, the corpse pose while also refusing to silence himself in a way that will defer the action of the poison. He separates his body from his voice, the body in the attitude of death and the voice in the attitude of living – it is a voice this dialogue will position as living on after death.¹⁵

The voice and image here become separated from each other, only to be virtually reintegrated by Descartes' act of meditation, something we've always suspected to be a bit of a perverse suture. Characteristically, Socrates then asks Cebes, in response to the question of suicide, if he had ever heard Philolaus speak on this topic. Socrates has always gotten his words elsewhere, a lover of talk, a tissue of quotations. Cebes responds that he never much understood Philolaus. It is in this moment that the body of

15 I have, in my own telling, moved from the past tense to the present tense because that move is encouraged by the Platonic text itself.

Socrates takes on the pose of death. “Now certainly I too speak of them only from hearsay. What I happen to have heard, however, I don’t begrudge telling” (Ph.61d9-10). Plato, in depicting Socrates in this way, slowly extracts the voice from the body of the master to assume it for himself. This is, of course, Plato’s project as enacted across the dialogues, but here the operation is performed as the condition of possibility for Platonic textuality. In *Phaedrus*, Socrates covers his head before he will allow himself to recite a divinely inspired speech before the young boy. We might recall how, in his *Treatise on Musical Objects*, Pierre Schaeffer will later mythologize the blind listening practiced by the Pythagoreans, or *akousmatikoi*, who Schaeffer supposes listened to the master from behind a veil (both interlocutors, Cebes and Echecrates are Pythagoreans). The acousmatic voice brings with it void; this voice is dangerous, not in being disembodied, but in seeking a body, in being what Michel Chion has called a “not-yet-visualized” voice.

But this experience of the not-yet-visualized voice brings with it the activity of *Eros*, an originary force.¹⁶ This force is immortalized in the ambiguity of the Sirens who, though seen and heard by Odysseus, are not fully experienced. That full experience only leads to death, and as such, cannot be transmitted. It remains, then, on the other side of total visualization and with episteme (in the Greek, a “frame” or “view”). Do the Sirens kill after luring men with the sweetness of their song? Do men forgo bodily survival in the presence of their song? We are not able to say. (We do learn in *Phaedrus* that cicada song is issued by former men who died for their love of song, a dying into song that was rewarded by the Muses in the gift of reincarnation and incessant sound.) Homer does not answer the question of force, of what has drawn men there to the Sirens. The sweetness of their song, their sophistry, promises all time, for they promise to tell Odysseus the past, the present, and the future, to remove the void at the heart of experience, the mastery of the subject. What is the heart of darkness from which their sound emanates? Odysseus’ subjectivity is split by his desire to hear and then return. He returns from the experience from which no one is meant to return, that cannot properly be witnessed. Recast as myth, the otherness of desire is dispelled. Nonetheless, on the other side of their song persists the question of the corpse, the origin or beginning in death that he now separates from. So too, we learn from Aristotle that Chaos and Night could not have been at the beginning of things. It is in this context that Aristotle will argue that potentiality is not

16 Robert Laynton notes that *Eros* is neither a god nor mortal, but a “mediator.” (48-49).

prior to actuality, that in the beginning, there was substance and first motion. I will return to this problem of origin in discord a moment.

The words and teachings of Socrates are immortalized as Plato's, the insemination and dissemination that Plato will call dialectic. It will found the very motion of the Academy, of teaching living on, disembodied voices of masters re-embodied and reanimated. Surrounding Socrates in his slow death are his disciples who will carry the voice on for him after death: it is the primal scene of academicization.

The *Phaedo* is a framed tale, a missed encounter. Socrates has already died, and Phaedo has come to deliver the news. Echebrates had implored Phaedo to tell what happened as exactly as possible; he wants nothing from that scene that he missed, as if by accident, to be lost (Ph.58d2-4). What Echebrates wants is to have been there. That is what the re-animation of the voice of Socrates by way of Phaedo will claim to make possible. Phaedo remarks that, "to remember Socrates is ever the most pleasant of all things – at least for me – whether I myself do the speaking or listen to somebody else" (Ph.58d6-8). Again, Echebrates implores Phaedo to be as exact as he can. Exact replication. This is no mere recollection, but an incantation of the soul by way of the voice. This is a séance. But it is one that removes precarity from the scene and, in fact, converts it from having been a scene of loss. If nothing was lost, nothing must be regained.

Hannah Arendt notes in *The Human Condition* that no one survives her supreme act; the supreme act is a suicidal mission that necessarily hands the life-narrative over to others. If speech and action together form a fundamental unit for Arendt, then in the supreme act they become separate, the acting body no longer speaking on its behalf, but handing over its voice to others who become responsible for telling the story. One cannot guarantee that such a narrative will fit or encapsulate the agent. There is a precarity within the supreme act, for, in becoming an agent, one then relinquishes that status totally. Agency cannot be permanent or else it is despotism; it is timely and temporal; it belongs to the realm of *kairos*, as the opportune moment or passing occasion.¹⁷ In the corpse pose, Socrates plays a trick; he plays dead, as it were, ensuring that the final discourse belonging to the supreme act will be spoken in his own voice. He maintains control over the *logos* and the dissemination of his supreme act. He does the unthinkable: he tells his own story after death. He becomes a ventriloquist.

17 On the original meaning of *kairos*, see Marcel Detienne, *The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece*. Translated by Janet Lloyd (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 1996), 112, 116.

It is said that Plato, so disgusted by the immorality of Socrates' state-mandated death, disappeared for a time before returning to found the Academy of Athens. We can think about this dialogue as dramatizing the beginnings of what we continue to call the academy. A primal scene or beginning.

* * *

I want now to turn to a passing moment when Socrates' wife is asked to leave the space of dialogue, a dramatization of the disambiguation of listening, the separation of *logos* from *pathos*, the soul from the body:

We hadn't waited for a long time when he came and told us to go in. So we went in and caught Socrates just freed from his bonds and Xanthippe – you know her – holding his little boy and seated beside him. Now when Xanthippe saw us, she cried out and then said just the sort of thing women usually say: "Socrates, now's the last your companions will talk to you and you to them!" And Socrates gave Crito a look and said: "Crito, have somebody take her home." (Ph.59e8-60a6).

They banish Xanthippe as the trace of the grief they cannot express if they are to occupy the realm of philosophy, constructed as it is by the space of talk or *muthos*. Women talk, but do not speak.¹⁸ She was there, but not as a disciple in the space of dialogue – she remains embedded in the margins of fiction, described and then displaced. Where does Xanthippe go? She is, as it were, off-screen. She is escorted off the stage. In a final gesture before returning at the end of the dialogue, as if its very shell to its kernel, she beats her breast, the gesture that seems to localize, figure, and contain all that Socrates will go on to discard from theory of the soul. She has a right to be angry. Sometimes there are no words, and one must beat one's breast and cry out.

The foundation of the city, as has been well established in various accounts of the *Republic*, is also founded upon banishment, or what Ramona Naddaff calls "exiling the poets." If the soul and city are such in perfect mutual figuration, one that will admit of no distance or relay, then the soul's various lacks of admittance are also founded upon exile. This exile is dramatized nowhere more vividly than in banishing Socrates' wife from the scene of the last argument.

18 Hélène Cixous writes, "...they do utter a little, but they don't speak. Always keep in mind the distinction between speaking and talking. It is said, in philosophical texts, that women's weapon is the word, because they talk, talk endlessly, chatter, overflow with sound, mouth-sound: but they don't actually *speaking*, they have nothing to say. They always inhabit the place of silence, or at most, make it echo with their singing. And neither is to their benefit, for they remain outside knowledge." "Castration or Decapitation." *Signs* 7.1. (1981), 49.

We know that we must attend to Plato's props, the dramaturgy of scenes as they are elaborated just before they disappear to become the site of dialogue, its host where words alone manifest. It is there that Jacques Derrida finds the *pharmakon*, hiding in the off-hand remark about playing with Pharmacia or the winds of Boreas. It is there we found the cicadas, which sing their droning song and spy or listen in on Socrates in the *Phaedrus*. What's more, such banishment, as structure, can only be externally dramatized, taking the shape of scenography as such: embodied figures now stand in for the disembodied. The birth of the figure. It is in the process that the dialogue conducts its ultimate sleight of hand, transferring the dying master's discourse to *Phaedo*, who himself stands in for the body of Plato. The insensible must be made sensible within the space of discourse. It is in the props, in the proscenium and scaffolding of dramatization that the figures that function to support the argument are both constructed and discarded, but not without troubling remainders.

This banishment functions centrally in theory of contraries as laid out in *Phaedo* and elsewhere. One proof for the immortality of the soul is that it is contrary to death, and that opposites will not admit their opposite. Socrates explains through the figure of enumeration, "contraries [that] would never be willing to receive a coming-to-be from one another" (Ph.103c2-3):

...the three just now, though not contrary to the Even, does not for all that admit it, for the three always brings the contrary to bear against it, as does the two against the Odd and fire against the Cold, and as do a great many other things. Now see if this is how you'd mark it off: The contrary isn't alone in not admitting its contrary; there's also what brings some contrary to bear on that thing that comes at it; in other words, there's the thing itself that brings some contrary to bear, which thing never admits the contrariety of the thing it brings its contrary to bear on. Go back and recollect – it does no harm to hear it often. Five things won't admit the idea of Even, nor will ten (five doubled) admit the idea of the Odd. Now ten itself isn't contrary to anything, but nevertheless it won't admit the idea of the Odd. (Ph.104e10-105a11)

"Will not admit" is the common translation across many of Plato's texts for this form of demonstration that proves exact contraries. In the poetically inspired or divine truth before the secularization

of speech, however, the conditions were otherwise. As Marcel Detienne writes, “there can be no *Alétheia* without a measure *Léthe* [oblivion].”¹⁹ He continues, “Negativity is not isolated from Being. It borders the truth and forms its inseparable shadow. The two antithetical powers are thus not contradictory but tend toward each other. The positive tends toward the negative, which, in a way, ‘denies’ it but cannot maintain itself in its absence.”²⁰ Socrates’ theory of admittance must be related here to a physical border. To admit, or *δέχομαι* or *dechomai*, is to accept, but in the manner of receiving or giving warm welcome, as in a home. To welcome, but in middle voice, so highly related to the self that is acting upon itself. Indeed “auto” appears in Plato’s original phrasing: that which will not admit into itself. The force of keeping out is not outside of it, but within it and maintains itself without any other support.

Here, one is reminded of a different border in the *Republic*, the one that establishes the *polis* as homology of the soul. It is well known that in Book VII, Socrates imagines a man who could imitate anything, a charmer and musician, a player of the many-stringed instrument who could bend his voice in the most dazzling and deceptive of ways. What if he were to appear in the city? Socrates describes a scene of sanctification and sacrament. They would kneel down before and garland this man, as a god just before saying that there is *no room* for such a man in the city. It is not, then, that such a man does not *exist*, but rather that he *cannot be admitted*. The scene concerns turning the poet away, as if at the borders of the city: *dechomai*. Admittance of the soul, then, turns out to be related in figurative and figuring ways to the presence of music and poetry, or sacred speech, in the city, the soul continually visualized as a body.

But it is the feminization of the space outside of dialogue that turns on various forms of admittance and banishment. Acceptance or admittance (in the English-language turn of phrase) has two meanings, and these meanings must be located in this principle of *dechomai* as difference excised from logic. *Dechomai*, we might say, is *the very principle of ambiguity*, because such admittance, or what we also call acceptance, is the state in which contraries abide. In acceptance, a contrary is allowed a place and warm welcome inside. It is not subsumed, but persists in its status as other. In isolating ambiguity as *the* sophistic principle, we thus turn on what it means to admit death. The space that claims to be a practice of dying turns out to be the one that secures the objective of eternal life. To admit, to accept.

19 Detienne, *The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece*, 81.

20 Detienne, *The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece*, 82.

Xanthippe admits death. It is just after she is not admitted that Socrates invokes his recurring dream and the intimation of his daimon, which demands that he “make music.” Nearing death and in “obedience to the dream,” he quickly composes these few lines of verse. It is, however, a composition in obedience and without serious thought that he should have lived otherwise. Socrates, in order to continue his own project, must ignore the literal dimension of what the daimon demands. Nietzsche calls attention to this moment to suggest that indeed, the daimon might be saying, make music, you fool! Even in death, Socrates will not acknowledge the ambiguity of listening. The most beautiful music he could have made, he says, is philosophy. If there is a rhetorical act within this final moment, it is at the level of narrative: Plato reminds us that this is a man who can only listen in one direction at once, whose life has been to purify the *logos* of the body. Even in his last moment he is deaf to the possibility that his own mode of listening has been falsely construed. He purges from the voice of the daimon what he cannot allow. He listens univocally, for in willing death, there can be no paranoia, only absolute repose that life has been correctly lived.

The daimon is ambiguous, both divine and mortal, and we have seen how it is both sound and silence. In the *Cratylus*, Socrates theorizes an etymology of the daimon that is consistent with this project of expurgation, noting there that the word *daimôn* (δαίμων: deity) is synonymous with *daêmôn* (δαήμων or knowing or wise) (cited in Laynton 48). However, Robert Laynton proposes that it is perhaps closer to *daiō* (δαίω or “to divide, to distribute destinies, to allot”) (48). Similarly, Giorgio Agamben considers the daimon according to its root in the verb *daiomai*, “to divide, lacerate,”²¹ but he locates a subsequent, rather than simultaneous, development in meaning as allotment.²² The daimon, Walter Burkert also writes, is not so much “a specific class of divine beings, but a peculiar mode of activity.”²³ As an activity, the daimon is without image; there is no figure and no cult. It changes not in face, but in activity.

Does not divine rapport become with Socrates a purely inward and self-reflexive act? This is what I mean by Socrates’ crime as being the interiorization of the ear. The daimon functions as the activity of interiorization.

We can see, for example, one origin of Augustine’s “mouth of the heart” that speaks in advance of speech, and is heard with this inward ear. Phaedo dramatizes the very labor by which the “voice”

21 Agamben, Giorgio, “History” in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*. Edited and Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999), 118.

22 “Only insofar as it is what divides can the *daimôn* be what assigns a fate and what destines (*daiomai* first means ‘to divide,’ then ‘to assign’; the same semantic development can be found in a word that is derived from the same root: *dēmos*, ‘people,’ which originally means ‘division of a territory,’ ‘assigned part.’” Agamben, “History,” 118.

23 Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1985), 180. In this monumental work, Burkert writes, “For *daimon* and *theos* are never simply interchangeable either. This is seen most clearly in the apostrophe often addressed to a person in epic: *daimonie*: it is more reproach than praise, and therefore certainly does not mean divine; it is used when the speaker does not understand what the addressee is doing and why he is doing it. *Daimon* is occult power, a force that drives man forward where no agent can be named. The individual

- not as sonorous substance, but as union of inner mouth and ear
- is interiorized, an object to which the gods alone can attest.

Socrates, nonetheless, also refuses the occult division and distribution enacted by the daimon. If the daimon were to pronounce outwardly and make itself audible as a voice for others, it would be with and as the force of sophistic speech. As ambiguous speech, functioning outside of the dictates of being and nonbeing, the voice of the daimon would only speak out loud to then deconstitute its very claim to substance or identity. The daimon, as activity, finds its essence not in *saying*, but in a sound that is dividing and ambiguating. The daimon is not visible to oneself, but only audible; it thus occupies *the* realm and modality of ambiguity. The peculiar nature of the daimon is to be behind one's back, visible only to others (Arendt 192). In *Apology*, Plato notes that the voice of the daimon is never prescriptive, it only ever warns. Similarly in *Phaedrus*: "My friend, I was just about to cross the river, the familiar divine sign came to me which, whenever it occurs, holds me back from something I am about to do. I thought I have heard a voice coming from this very spot, forbidding me to leave until I made atonement for some offense against the gods" (Ph. 242b-c). Its activity is to ward off action, to hold back. In *Phaedo*, however, the daimon will finally issue a single imperative or positive command: to make music.

What is it to make music and how does Socrates interpret that command? First, as I have already noted, he finds in it the description of his life as he already lived it as a philosopher. For him, there is no trace of the future or imperative tense. Just in case, he haphazardly composes a few musical lines. This act returns us to the broader project of expunging sophistic ambiguity, which makes itself felt as admittance between contrary bodies. This admittance between contraries, the possibility that Socrates could have lived an opposite life, *appears under the sign of music*; it is absolute resonance between contraries.

Music is left to the side... until it reappears in the middle of the dialogue as a figure. The section on harmony, occupying a long discussion, suddenly returns us to the question of music but meant only to elaborate the theory of soul, as it cannot admit death. Socrates has just been rehearsing for Simmias his theory of knowledge as recollection and the immortality of the soul, opening his argument up to dispute. Simmias (also a Pythagorean) proposes to read the issue of harmony differently: "Somebody might also give the same account about a tuning and a lyre and its strings –

feels as it were that the tide is with him, he acts with the daimon, *syn daimoni*, or else when everything turns against him, he stands against the daimon, *pros daimona*, especially when a god is favouring his adversary. Illness may be described as 'a hated daimon' that assails the sufferer; but then it is gods, *theoi*, who bring him release. Every god can act as a *daimon*; not every act of his reveals the god. *Daimon* is the veiled countenance of divine activity. There is no image of a daimon, and there is no cult. *Daimon* is thus the necessary complement to the Homeric view of the gods as individuals with personal characteristics; it covers that embarrassing remainder which eludes characterization and naming." (180).

that the tuning is something invisible and bodiless and something altogether beautiful and divine in the tuned lyre, but that the lyre itself and its strings are bodies and are body-like and composite, and earth-like and are akin to the deathbound” (Ph.85e3-86a4). We find here, then, the composite, what is also banished from the Socrates’ account of poetry and music in the *Republic* in its defense of “pure narrative” (*diegesis* without *mimesis*). Simmias notes, “the lyre and the strings and the sounds come into being earlier, while they’re still untuned, and the tuning is the last of all to be composed [emphasis added]” (Ph.92c1-3). Stated differently, discord is that out of which harmony is made, as if sounds were a pure block of undifferentiated matter only later divided. For Simmias, resonance is also of a material body. Without instrument, there can be no harmony; potential here stands as prior to actualization. Music, for Simmias, is principally defined as *resonance*, which needs a vibrating body to exist – wood, form, touch. Socrates ignores the very verb of the daimon’s command, to *make* music, while also positing harmony as prior to resonance. This returns us to Socrates’ meditation on wholeness and his rejection of the compound. Socrates retorts: “as long as this thought of yours sticks around – that a tuning is a composite thing and soul a sort of tuning composed of bodily elements tensed like strings” (Ph.92a9-b2). For Socrates, harmony is more prior than sound.

Is not resonance, then, the remainder of Socratic dialectic, signaling its death knell by the force of submerged ground in admittance? The scene of philosophic transmission is exposed to that which it had to forfeit to become itself, to the temporality of sounding and then decay, expectation and memory. What makes it a scene if not borders and banishment, the trappings of the dialogue in dramaturgy, its body?

We are more familiar with Socrates’ condemnation and ultimate exile of music in the *Republic*. That account of *mimesis* pertains less to the problem of resonance than it does to the problem of the many voicedness of the bard in his capacity to pervert and distort what should be the single-voicedness of the soul of the good listener. Ultimately, the problem with music in the *Republic* is that it reveals that the soul is not unto itself. If the young soul is all too malleable, is it because *it has been made*, lending to the soul a human duration, porousness, and proneness; it is, at the same time, eternal. Music reveals a contradiction within the eternal. There is a fault line in the figure of music as it stands in for the ideal. Music announces that the soul is like an ear into

which adverse influence pours to shape its borders. Music is the primary and constitutive remainder of soul, undoing any claim to the eternal. Music, we might add, then, is the first sophisticated force. It desubstantiates, converts identity into the warning that things might be otherwise on the other side of its unfolding. Socrates, in a final gesture, banishes music again; philosophy is the only music he has made. As Nietzsche recalls of this moment of the daimon's imperative, "Where art was concerned, the despotic logician has the sense of a lacuna, a void, something of a reproach, of a possibly neglected duty."²⁴

²⁴ Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 170-171.

I return, then, to scene of Xanthippe's banishment. She is the reminder; she intrudes upon the space of dialogue; she beats her breast. She is a critic. If the daimon exudes the force of ambiguity that is then nullified by myth, Xanthippe cries out in ways that cannot be redeemed by thought. She cries out in the face of the unthinkable, but also against the object of thought. Socrates does in language what he will not allow the body, which is tantamount to suicide: he kills the voice of the daimon so that he may be released from its potential qua potential. In a final act, Socrates asserts the agency of thought over the force of ambiguity. It is also a voice that says that it might have been otherwise. The overarching rhetorical act of *Phaedo* is to assert that there are no second acts in philosophy, only primary acts that are passed on: one cannot only disclaim until the very end, but one can instill in one's receivers the charge of living on. His friends and listeners will live on, spreading the word of philosophy. It is a revisionist history posited in nearly the same breath that banishes her from the scene of dying. She is banished from the charge of transmitting dying, of being the one who can repeat the last words. These two expulsions are mutual. No one will be there to remember the alternative.

Again, however, Plato builds this witnessing into the dramaturgy as a framed scene. We hear Socrates' refusal of ambiguity and it cannot help but color the remaining discourse. Plato continually begins with these excisions, the places that should have been cut, that tarry from the side or remainder of a discourse. Xanthippe says more about the space of dialogue in leaving it then those who stay there to continue to erect it.

Are we to commend Socrates' unwillingness to die, his refusal to stop talking while putting his body in the attitude of death? The question of suicide remains open: in self-destruction, does one transcend the outrage as in the master/slave dialectic? Are we to mime Socrates' slow death, continuing to take the poison as

many times as made necessary by the continuity of talk, or is there an ethical imperative towards suicide, and what would that suicide look like? We learn from the Sirens of the unrepresentable. In our moment, do we simply receive the administered death? How does one, with agency, kill a bureaucratically embodied ideal? I am reading the death of Socrates as the birth of an institution of disembodied and autonomous thought. Socrates teaches not just institutionalized thought, but he teaches the politics of slow death.

We might think instead of Antigone's redoubled act of burial, she buries and then reburies the corpse that has been unburied by the state: the corpse of her brother is to remain exposed. Something in the space of politics is not being granted burial, and with it, forgetting. If the corpse can't be buried, it can't be forgotten – if it cannot be forgotten, it cannot be remembered. As Loraux writes, "Between dying and being dead, rituals took place, and no one had the right to be called dead unless the funerary rites had been performed in his honor, authorizing his *psuche* to enter the misty kingdom of the underworld."²⁵ In unburying Polynices and preventing his divine rites, Creon in fact divests Polynices of the right to be called dead. He is still dying, the process of dying slowed and repeated. There is, then, between Xanthippe and Antigone, not a politics of refusal – Antigone's claim being to "refuse to deny" – but a politics of avowal in the face of disavowal. There is a rhetorical castration that announces the fetish concealing lack. To avow lack.

Again, Socrates' sleight of hand. At the end of the dialogue, when Xanthippe and other women return, Socrates again ushers them away. He denies women "their traditional intervention" of being the ones to prepare the body for death (Loraux 18). "[H]is companions in thought take the place of the women" (Loraux 19). The speaking subject emerges from the displacement of woman as the primary other. The disciples then begin to cry. "What are you doing, you wonders! Surely this wasn't the least of my reasons for sending the women away – so they wouldn't strike such false notes!" (Ph.117d7-e1). There is a form of memory that Socrates' account will not and cannot allow for, a sound that makes no mark on the eternal. Xanthippe is the sounding out of the scene as scene. The women are taken from the scene and with them, their cries. Their fears must be stifled along with their sounds as the practice of philosophical talk asserts itself towards institutionalization.

We are not to regard the argument as Socrates' last words,

25 Loraux, "Therefore, Socrates is Immortal," 18.

but rather a request issued to Crito as acting body. What are Socrates' last words? "Crito," he said, "we owe a cock to Asclepius. So pay the debt and don't be careless" (Ph.118a4-6). This is a religious gesture and a gesture of friendship. He ends with prayer and the divine, religion and philosophy being bound. But there is another submerged movement here that, as in the *Poetics*, disavows the ritualistic, making the *Phaedo* a divided or split text in need of recuperation. In the last words, mnemonics and patrimony are united in a single utterance; they are united as *logos* and the truth of speech. "Only that which never ceases to hurt stays in the memory," writes Nietzsche. Socrates' last argument asserts the immortality of the soul in the theory of knowledge as recollection. This recollection, however, is a form of memory that takes the shape of debt and indebtedness. Here, debt is as foundational as the last argument. It is the primary gesture of the institution founded upon the practice of dialectical discourse, as a debt to a prior claim upon time. So, too, disembodied harmony will always have its claim in advance before resonance. Crito takes on the debt while Phaedo takes on the voice. But the meaning of *telos* is not goal, but end as already implied by the beginning. For Phaedo to embody the voice of the master, he must also embody his debt. Something of Socrates' material burden is preserved after death and passed on even as the corpse pose merges with its reality in death.

It is unclear, however, if it is a kind of personal debt or a plural debt, one that is simply a fundament of Greek religion. I am suggesting that the *Phaedo*, in the interiorization of the ear, stands as the very split between the personal and the plural; Socrates' final request is religious and ritualistic, to be sure, but as given to us in the text, it *now* signals a new and submerged movement that will only be embodied by the disciples after his death: the birth of the individual whose voice, above all, passes on debt to itself. "The debt shall be paid," answers Crito. But it is the remainder of Socrates' body after he consigns it to oblivion in the discourse on the soul: "I'm not persuading Crito, gentlemen, that I am this Socrates – the one who is now conversing and marshaling each of our arguments. Instead, he thinks I'm that one he'll see a little later as a corpse and so asks how he should bury me" (Ph.115c6-d4). But the real question is *how shall he bury me while also trying to repay me?* An ordinary split and double movement. If debt and indebtedness are integrated into the foundation of the Academy, the answer is that he cannot. The dead will remain unburied.

To know is to remember a debt owed and payable upon death.
Socrates does not leave the scene without bequeathing something
of lack, the primacy of owing in advance of speech, just as Socratic
harmony is eternally owed its due before resonance and discord.

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We seem to hear Addie's laughing rebuke.