

Plato for Psychotherapists (25,03.2017)

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¹ This is a rewriting of my chapter on Plato published in *Body Psychotherapy: history, concepts & methods*, W. W. Norton, 2012. It still needs some editing. Most references are in the volume.

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Part II. Philosophy, from Plato to Kant: Starting with the Certitudes of the Soul and Ending with the Ambivalences of the Mind

"According to the guiding ideal of the Renaissance, ancient man forms himself with insight through free reason. For this renewed "Platonism" this means not only that man should be changed ethically, but that the whole human surrounding world, the political and social existence of mankind, must be fashioned anew through free reason, through the insights of a universal philosophy." (Edmund Husserl, 1936, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, I.3, p. 8)

In the following chapters I highlight philosophical speculations that are still influential in the psychotherapeutic literature. Their impact is often camouflaged by recent refinements, but it remains timely as witnessed by the renowned personalities I discuss and the frequency with which they are referenced in specialized works currently under publication.

The influence on present day thinking of what is for me classical philosophy, developed before the incredible development of science during the 19th century, is often implicit. This is why I find it important to encourage colleagues who have not read philosophers to acquire a more explicit knowledge of their proposals.

I will begin with an Idealistic divine soul, gliding in a heavenly and pure world. These sections, organized around Plato, will be the longest, as I will use it to explore possible interactions between philosophy and psychotherapy. I will end this philosophical part with Hume's materialism where thoughts are managed like a computer or a prayer wheel that generates ideas arbitrarily. This last direction will be exploited by evolutionary psychology that developed from Lamarck onwards. Following Hume's intuition, the biologists stressed the variety of physical and psychological routines. For some, there are so many different types of mechanisms in the universe that they cannot be framed by a single philosophical theory (Bachelard, 1940). For the psychotherapists, this implies it is not necessary to forcefully assimilate all he observes in a single theoretical option. I hope that this book will help psychotherapists to use different theories for different models, when necessary. The need for this type of flexibility will be introduced in the sections on the pedagogy of Plato, and will then be illustrated in other parts of this book.

I will show, throughout, this book that various forms of Idealism are implicit in the teaching of many body psychotherapists. An example is the teachings of Wilhelm Reich, who is often considered to be the founder of body psychotherapy².

² A more detailed account of the historical roots of body psychotherapy will be presented in chapters 16 to 18.

3 ABOUT PLATO: IDEALISM AND BODY PSYCHOTHERAPY³

In the sections of this chapter, I hope I can reinforce in the reader's mind a need to grasp some of the implications of the explorations of Greek philosophers for psychotherapists. As I am not a specialist in philosophy or Greek thinkers, I will only explore issues on which I have something to say, as they wove their way into my practice. I leave to others to present philosophical themes they have found useful in their practice. There exists an abundance of good books on the subject, all written by major intellectual figures. I have mostly consulted *The Greek thinkers* of Gomperz (1905), which I have often found highly instructive. Another reason for this choice is that, as Gomperz taught in Vienna, he was in direct contact with Freud and Jung.

<H1> Philosophy, science and medicine in ancient Greece

When studying the birth of philosophy in ancient Greece, it is customary to begin with pre-Socratic philosophers (625-428 BCE) from Thales of Miletus (c. 624 - c. 546 BCE) to Democritus (c. 460 - c. 370 BCE). They first appeared in modern Turkey (called Ionia), developed to the south of Italy (sometimes referred to as *Great Greece*), and finally thrived in present day Greece. There is then a period of mostly Athenian classical philosophy, from Socrates (469-399 BCE) to Aristotle (428 to 322 BCE). The Greek civilization declined after it was included in the Macedonian empire of Alexander the Great (338 BCE), and then the Roman empire (146 BCE). The civilization of conquered Greece produced important schools such as those of Epicurus and Stoicism founded by Zeno. Both schools had a deep influence on the Roman civilization. These dates are reference points for periods which overlap in time and space. For example, Democritus and Socrates were contemporaries, but it is probable they did meet.

³ I relied on Wikipedia for most of the dates in this chapter. They often corresponded to the dates of others sources. Most dates on Greek philosophy are approximate. For example in some sources Democritus died when he was 90 years old, while others make him live up to a hundred and ten years. In all cases there is an agreement that the philosopher was exceptionally old when he died. Other figures also seem to vary in function of the sources that are referred to, such as the number of citizens who were in the jury for the trial of Socrates.

<H2> Pre-Socratic philosophy: separating the wheat from the chaff, to bake tasty philosophies

<H3> The pirates of Asian enlightenment

"They [the Greek] certainly received the substantial beginnings of their religion, culture, their common bonds of fellowship, more or less from Asia, Syria and Egypt; but they have so greatly obliterated the foreign nature of this origin, and it is so much changed, worked upon, turned around, and altogether made so different, that what they, as we prize, know, and love in it, is essentially their own." (Hegel, 1833, *History of Philosophy* vol. I: p. 150)

A quick way of framing the emergence of the Greek civilization, is to begin with its geography. Her back is made of mountains which form branches southwards towards the sea. They divide the land "in hilly cantons which are each a potential seat of culture. [...] Her seaboard was larger than Spain's, her mainland smaller than Portugal. (Gomperz, 1905, vol. 1, p. 4f)" It spreads at the north of highly civilized nations, like a hungry vulture flying over rich fields. Greek sailors probably began as pirates, taking whatever they could find on the smaller boats of Egypt and Phoenicia, which sometimes transported goods from Babylonia, Persia, India and China. To capture bigger prizes, Greek pirates needed to compete against cultures who had developed fast ships and highly efficient fighting skills. They gradually developed an enormous appetite for any form of know-how they could find in southern cultures, such as technology, astronomy, geometry, architecture, arts, law, ethics, agriculture, navigation, knowledge and so on. To amass all these treasures, they looked for ways of coordinating proficiencies that had been developed in highly varied contexts. This process transformed Greek sailors into well-disciplined soldiers and an army of brilliant philosophers. Their scholars focused on contents and techniques. They left aside the more folkloric lore that attempted to explain the origin and value of a skill. Once a notion had lost its original garments, the pre-Socratic philosophers used a pragmatic imagination and, as often as possible, logic and mathematics, to find ways of synthesizing these skills and transform them in a coherent and appropriate body of techniques and theories. Greek philosophers became masters in the improvement of formal disciplines.:

Writing Greek. Vignette on how Greeks used foreign techniques: The Phoenicians seem to have been the first to write letters that correspond to a sound, rather than using an ideogram to symbolize a term. The Greeks used this technic, but not to speak Phoenician. They transformed it so they could write their own language with their own characters and their own grammar.

<H3> Discovering What the Function of Philosophy Could Be

Today all we know of pre-Socratic thinkers is based on quotations that can be found in the works of a variety of authors from Plato onwards⁴. Most Greek philosophers, from Thales

⁴ I worked with the French edition of Jean-Paul Dumont, but there exists equivalent volumes in English, such as

to Plato, studied in Egypt at least, and beyond in some cases. Some went from Ionia to Egypt, and then to the Italian Greek provinces.

<H4> Pythagoras and Democritus: the great travelers

Famous travelers were Pythagoras and Democritus.

Pythagoras (c. 570 - c. 495 BCE) was born in the Ionic Island of Samos, may have traveled as far as India, and then created his school in the Italian town of Croton, before returning to Samos a decade later:

As a mathematician of brilliant parts, as the founder of acoustics and a guide in untrodden paths of astronomy, as the author of a religious sect and of a brotherhood which admits comparison with the orders of medieval chivalry, as a man of science, a theologian, and a moral reformer, Pythagoras commended a kingdom of talents of the most composite and sometimes of the least compatible kinds. (Gomperz, 1905, I, p. 99)

It is probably after having traveled abroad that Pythagoras believed in "the transmigration of souls into animals and plants and conversely. Aristotle tells us that, "according to the Pythagorean myths, any soul goes into any body". (Gomperz, 1905, I, pp. 124 and 99)

For David Boadella (1997c, 2012), Pythagoras has developed notions that remain important for the development of body psychotherapy. Alcmaeon (500- 450 BCE), Democritus and Plato have followed some of his ideas, but not all. For example, Democritus was a materialist, and Plato avoided spiritual rituals.

Democritus lived in Thrace, which is in northern Greece, close to present day Bulgaria and Turkey. He included, on his way to India, not only Egypt, but also Persia and Babylon. Then he returned home, where he lived close to his brother, and died blind when he was approximately a hundred years old.

Democritus⁵ is mostly known for his defense of a form of materialist atomism. According to him, the universe is a mix between atoms and void. Atoms are extremely varied but indestructible particles of matter that are constantly mobile. These particles were the material components of a world made of causal chains that have no aim or direction. They tend to momentarily cluster to form objects and thoughts. His *psyche*⁶ is made with the same atoms as those that form flames. They aggregate to form an animated body that has the capacity to perceive and think. These dynamics create conscious impressions, but atoms are too small to be perceived.

It appears, from some of his fragments, that Democritus preferred democracy to tyranny: it is preferable to be poor in a democracy than rich in a tyranny. He was portrayed by

⁵ I have found no good book on Democritus, although some may exist. My information comes mainly from edited fragments of pre-Socratic thinkers, Hegel 1833, Gomperz 1905; and, on the web, Wikipedia, and Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Although there exists a long list of writings attributed to Democritus, the fragments that remain prevent us from having a clear picture of what he thought.

⁶ This psychology is mentioned in Aristotle (on the Soul, I.2).

the young Rembrandt as the philosopher who laughed at human lunacy. It is possible that Plato did not mention Democritus because he disliked everything he stood for, while Aristotle often quoted him as the perfect example of what he does not agree with.

<H4>The Birth of Athenian Democracy

"The Sophists now gave, in place of a knowledge of the poets, an acquaintance with thought." (Hegel, 1833, *History of Philosophy* vol. I: p. 372)

Heraclitus of Iona and Democritus of northern Greece refused to be ordered about by people who are stupider than them. In this sense these two philosophers did not believe that all men are equal. All can feel what happens inside them, all can think, and - in the case of Democritus - the qualities of each mind are highly variable. The advantage of democracy, for them, seems to be its capacity to create general rules which can stabilize the extreme volatility of human interactions.

Although such discussions existed in the Greek nations, it is only in Athens that some of these philosophical developments were transformed to support the development of a first form of democracy. These notions were forged by philosophers such as Protagoras from Thrace, and Gorgias from Sicily. It is probably because Plato and Aristotle proposed philosophical positions which supported enlightened tyranny, that during the Middle Ages religious (Christian and Muslim) and political institutions paid clerks to transcribe most of their writings. If this is true, that explains why the manuscripts of the more materialist and democratic philosophers were left to rot. Some of these authors, such as Pythagoras and Socrates, preferred to teach than to write. But others wrote. Heraclitus wrote an important text *On Nature*, which was available until 100 AD in the Roman Empire; and Democritus may have written dozens of books available in Rome in 1 AD, according to the Roman Diogenes Laertius. His two most books seem to have been: *The Major Cosmic System* and *On the Nature of the World*. Copies of this legacy were probably available in the *Lyceum*, a first public library created in 334 BCE by Aristotle for his *Peripatetic* school of philosophy.

The strange thing about this manifest refusal to reproduce what the first philosophers of democracy wrote, is that the intellectuals of modern democracies do not even mention it. There are a few exceptions (Castoriadis 1984), but they are rare. Even on the internet, information on the philosophical options that support democracy is scanty. The world will have to wait until Spinoza's *Ethics* (1677a), before published and argued philosophical support for democracy becomes available. The cliché that Athens was not a true democracy, because it left out females and slaves is not irrelevant, but its main function seems to discourage any enquiry on what the early philosophers of democracy proposed. Its propensities to acquire an increasing number of tyrannized colonies is also a well-known critic. However, this propensity is also observed in most European democracies of the 20th century. In both cases colonialism led to shattering wars: the two World Wars in the 20th century, and the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BCE) for Athens. A bit more will be said on these political issues in other sections of this chapter.

I am one of those for whom the Athenian Democracy was a fascinating first attempt, which proposed highly innovating features that are still worth exploring. As an example of Athenian democratic customs that modern democracies would like to keep under the carpet, is their preference to choose their magistrates by lots rather than by elections (Castoriadis, 1984):

Vignette on a Democracy without elections. For Aristotle (Politics, IV.IX), democracy chooses its magistrates randomly, while elections inevitably lead to the ruling of an oligarchy. French democracy is an example of Aristotle's analysis, as most members of their governments were trained in a school designed to form an elite called in French the *énarques*: The National School of Administration (École Nationale d'Administration, ENA). In the U.S.A. the mechanisms are different, but President Trump's choice of billionaires and generals as members of the government can also be assimilated to an oligarchy. The idea defended by the democratic philosophers of ancient Greece is that if people are randomly elected for a few months, most citizens can learn what politics is about from experience, and thus improve their capacity of becoming active citizens. The people did not have "representatives", as they could speak directly during meetings. That was the meaning of direct democracy, which is a form of democracy that can only exist in small states. The idea of choosing randomly rather than by vote, could be used in modern democracies that include female and male citizens. It is sometimes still used to elect juries.

<H2>Greek Medecine; the embodied mind

"The fertile soil of Egypt is very rich in herbs, many of which are beneficial in solution, though many are poisonous. And in medical knowledge Egyptians are supreme among men." (Homer, *The Odyssey*, book 4. 229-230)

<H3> From Asia to enlightened empiricism

"The school of Croton (...) perceived [that] the human organism consists of an infinite number of humors. (...) Alcmaeon's argument that there is an infinite number of causes for a disease that cannot be simply organized into categories is the basic operating assumption of empirical medicine." (Adams, 1868, *Complete Works of Hippocrates, On ancient Medecine*, 70-77)

Among the goods that Greek philosophers borrowed from south Mediterranean, one finds Egyptian medicine and its considerations on the relation between body and soul. This blend of skills and notions led to a unique way of preserving mummies that have survived until today. The Greek medical tradition followed the basic assumptions of most contemporary Asian medicines. For them also, an individual is a global system in which mind, emotions, physiology and body are parts of the dynamics that form an individual, even if each of these dimensions have distinctive particularities. Climate, nutrition and physical exercise are important ingredients for a healthy life; but adequate social integration is also important. People need not

only a supportive social system, but also and education of one's body, affects, behavior and mind. This requires adequate ethical, spiritual and esthetical training.

For physicians such as *Alcmaeon* and *Hippocrates*, illness is seldom only physical or only mental. It is often produced by a combination of causes. In all these medical approaches, individuals are evolving complex systems. They need to find a *habitus* (a way of living) that is constructive for their physical, emotional, mental and social integration.

Discussions on mind and body were developed in a Greek civilization that created the Olympic games. Body technics were not only developed by gymnasts. They were also used by sailors (an important part of Greek economy) and the famous Greek soldiers who forged an empire under Alexander the Great that spread from Greece to India, including Egypt, Babylon and Persia.

In conformity with the spirit of Greek civilization, practitioners reevaluated everything they had learned elsewhere using incredibly detailed and sharp forms of observation (Velther and La Mothe, 1978, p. 72). They compensated the fact that, for religious reasons, dissection of cadavers could not be practiced on a regular basis, by looking closely for causal relations between a symptom, diet, movement, breathing and ways of perceiving one's environment. Medicine is yet another field in which Greek experts gave a new impetus to the current state of the art, by reevaluating the data with purely rational approaches.

<H3> Modern ethics of observation and treatment

"And besides,
If soul immortal is, and winds its way
Into the body at the birth of man,
Why can we not remember something, then,
Of life-time spent before? Why keep we not
Some footprints of the things we did of old?" (Lucretius, *Of The Nature of Things*, III. 670-674⁷)

Legends attribute the foundation of Greek medicine to the legendary Asclepius, son of Apollo. This discipline is at least as old as the Olympic games (probably 700 BCE). A well-known historical figure is *Alcmaeon*, who created a medical school in the Italian city of Croton. The most famous Greek physician is undoubtedly Hippocrates⁸. Born in the island of Kos, in Ionia, he was trained in medicine by his family. He then went to the north of Greece, where he became acquainted with Democritus⁹ and a materialist vision of life. His reputation grew as he visited patients and colleagues in various regions, and provided incredibly precise case descriptions. During the age of enlightenment of Pericles, he became a star, as well known as contemporaries as Euripides, Socrates, Sophocles and Thucydides. I do not know what he

⁷ English translation by W.E. Leonard found in September 2011 at <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/7/8/785/785.txt>.

⁸ For this paragraph, see Jouanna and Magdelaine, 1999, *Introduction*, pp. 11-12.

⁹ According to Gomperz (1905, 1, p. 316), Hippocrates had treated Democritus for mental instability. The therapeutic relationship transformed into friendship, mutual respect "which was continued by letters."

thought of democracy, but he was actively involved in limiting the imperialistic ambitions of Athens over his native island. He also, was also influenced by Egyptian approaches, Pythagoreans and Gorgias. Hippocrates is mostly known today for a text attributed to him, which is the oath taken by all medical practitioners once they have finished their training in an academic medical faculty. The oath remains a model for all the professions mobilized by a modern health system, including psychotherapists... even when particularities are required (Hillman, 1964). He clearly situates the mind or the soul within the organism when he analyzes how breathing interacts with the mind¹⁰. He assumes that the air contains a substance he refers to as *pneuma*, which brings to the organism a form of vitality which is close to the function attributed to oxygen in 21st century medicine:

Vignette on the medicine of Hippocrates: Psychological pain can be caused by physical malfunction such as a bad diet, or unfavorable circumstances (Hippocrates, *On Airs, Waters and Places*, 20-21). An originality of most medical schools in Greece, is that through careful anatomic and physiological analysis, they replaced the Egyptian hypothesis that rooted the mind in the heart, and became increasingly affirmative about the possibility that the mind is closely linked to dynamics situated in the brain. Even Plato integrates this analysis (Plato, *Phaedo*, 96-99). This discussion has a modern touch, as the newer methods of neurological analysis focus on how the blood nourishes cerebral activity to study how brain and impressions correlate.

Materialist Greek Medicine became a dominant approach which spread through the Roman empire, as in this quote of the Roman Epicurean Lucretius:

"For soul is so entwined through the veins,
 The flesh, the thews, the bones, that even the teeth
 Share in sensation, as proven by dull ache,
 By twinge from icy water, or grating crunch
 Upon a stone that got in mouth with bread.
 Wherefore, again, again, souls must be thought
 Nor void of birth, nor free from law of death;
 Nor, if, from outward, in they wound their way,
 Could they be thought as able so to cleave
 To these our frames, nor, since so interwove,
 Appears it that they're able to go forth
 Unhurt and whole and loose themselves unscathed
 From all the thews, articulations, bones." (Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, Book III, 691-697)

<H2> Situating Plato (428-347 BCE)

"Highly as we admire the force of his [Plato] talent and the magnitude of his achievements, still greater astonishment is roused by their multiplicity. The poet in him was at least of an equal footing with the thinker. And in the thinker the most contradictory excellences balance each other. On the one hand, there is the power of constructing a massive edifice of

¹⁰ As I do not speak Greek, I depend on translations when I write that the soul of Hippocrates is close to the mind of the 21st century English.

thought; on the other is the piercing subtlety by which the edifice is again and again undermined." (Gomperz, 1905, 4, p. 249)

I will now present Plato's propositions in a particularly detailed way. His Idealism has had a lasting influence on European scientific and religious convictions, and on some body psychotherapists. I will focus on themes that are relevant for a discussion which includes certain ways of understanding how the soul and the body associate, ways of exploring the realm of representations, and ideological issues which had a strong impact on twentieth-century body psychotherapy.

Plato was born in the region of Athens. It was still the age of glory and enlightenment of the democratic Athens of Pericles (495 - 429 BCE). His parents came from important aristocratic families. His father, Ariston, died in 424. His mother's second husband, Pyrilampes, was a friend of Pericles. After Pericles's death, the Athenian democracy was attacked by a league of royalist states, led by Sparta. Athens lost most of its power during this Peloponnesian war (431-404 BCE).¹¹ When Athens was invaded, the Spartans and their allies put in power a group of thirty aristocrats (known as the *thirty tyrants*). They ruled Athens for a year. Most were corrupt and cruel. They were then chased by the old democrats in 405 BCE. But the return of the democrats was unstable, constantly challenged by those who had supported the thirty tyrants and the Greek royalist states. During these events, members of Plato's family, on his mother's side, became leading figures of the oligarchy that destroyed Athenian democracy, such as Charmides and Critias (Plato's uncle and cousin). Furthermore, Alcibiades, the Athenian general who betrayed Athens and helped the Spartans to destroy Athens, was also a friend of the family. Critias "attempted, when in exile in Thessaly, to excite the tributary peasants against their masters (Gomperz, 1905, IV, p. 251)." This second phase of Athenian democracy never recovered its previous splendor, creativity and power. With Plato, Aristophanes and Aristotle among others, it nevertheless remained a central reference for many.

One of Plato's first master was Cratylus, a disciple of Heraclitus. He then joined the School of Socrates, probably because friends of the family, like Alcibiades and Critias, were already members. Critias was a brilliant intellectual, for whom Gods are "an invention of prudent men [...] Posterity, however, has not preserved the memory of Critias the poet or Critias the thinker so much as Critias the statesman. The part he played in the Athenian faction fights which marked the close of the fourth century, his position at the head of the so-called Thirty Tyrants, have made him one of the best-hated characters in Greek history. And there can be no doubt that, as champion of the aristocracy, he shrank from no extremity of violence. (Gomperz, 1905, IV, p. 251)" My hunch is that, as a child, Plato loved and admired Critias, and was then shocked by his excesses. Everything happens as if Plato wanted to promote and idealized version of Critias:

"The very manner in which Aristotle (while spreading a veil, out of regard for Plato, over his political actions) couples his [Critias] personality with that of Achilles, shows clearly that he had been considerably impressed by it." (Gomperz, 1905, IV, p. 251)

¹¹ A contemporary classic description of that war is that of Thucydides: *The Peloponnesian war*.

The association between the tyrants and Socrates is probably one of the reasons why the Athenian democratic government condemned Socrates to death, in 399 BCE. In his two longest dialogues, *The Republic* and *The Laws*, Plato justifies a form of enlightened tyranny as the best possible form of governance. A powerful oligarchy is needed, but it must be composed of philosophers.

Plato was manifestly shocked by the condemnation of Socrates.¹² He left Athens, traveled to Egypt and Great Greece. There he studied with Pythagoreans. It is during this decade that he became familiar with Idealistic notions. There is an iconic image of Socrates as the defender of truth and the opponent of pseudo-arguments; and an iconic image of Plato who taught that traces of a transpersonal truth is hidden in every human soul. This soul can only find its full potential once it has left the material body in which it became trapped. The message of this idealized Plato is close to some Buddhists formulations that were then, independently, developed in Asia:

"And does not the purification consist in this which has been mentioned long ago in our discourse, in separating, so far as possible, the soul from the body and teaching the soul the habit of collecting and bringing itself together from all parts of the body, and living, so far as it can, both now and hereafter, alone by itself, freed from the body as from fetters?"
(Plato, 1937, *Phaedo*, 67c-d)

This iconic image is partially true, as one can find quotes to support it. After having discussed Plato's official vision of the soul, I will show that Plato was in fact one of the most complex, multifaceted and elusive genius of European culture. His thinking is a thick and deep mixture of forces that fascinate because they are easy to transform into clichés, while his intentions remain difficult to penetrate. Some dialogues seem to teach a set of arguments, while others different a different tale. Some themes can be found in most of his works, but their developments are constantly recalibrated, without any fear of contradiction¹³. In a dialogue entitled *Phaedo*, to which I will often refer, Plato talks of Gods who are perfect and good. This was a bizarre position in those days. Plato's Gods are manifestly different from those described by Homer in the *Odyssey*. Plato became the first philosopher who preferred dialogues to the presentation of a thesis.

The only writings that have reached us from Plato are his *dialogues*. I will follow a classical division of these texts into three phases¹⁴:

1. A first phase groups the "Socratic" dialogues, written by the young Plato, while Socrates was alive or just after his death. Socrates is one of the main characters in most of Plato's dialogues, but it is generally assumed that it is only in these earlier dialogues that Plato presents thoughts that are close to those of Socrates.

¹² Plato, 1937, *Letter VII*, complete works, II, p. 1185.

¹³ This trait is often associated with Heraclitus. Plato may have acquired this creative freedom from his first master, Cratylus. I will say more on Plato's fondness for coordinating points of views in the sections on Plato's pedagogy.

¹⁴ Others distinguish four or five phases. For example, *The Statement* is sometimes situated half way between *The Phaedo* and *The Laws*.

2. Later he Plato became an Idealist militant. He now puts in the mouth of Socrates ideas that are closer to Plato's new ideas than to those of Socrates.¹⁵

3. At the end of his life, when Plato was in his seventies, Socrates is less omnipresent, sometimes replaced by other charismatic figures (e.g., the stranger in *The Statesman*), or absent. Plato's Idealism softened. The last dialogues propose a milder vision of existing humans, but the quality of imagination and reasoning is also dimmer (Castoriadis, 1986, pp. 53ff), even if sparks can still enlighten humanity.

Plato's *Republic*, written during the second period, depicts a more extreme, totalitarian and violent image of the state than his *Laws* (Castoriadis, 1986, pp. 8-52), written at the end of his life. In *The Republic* the philosopher proposes laws that are based on absolute truths, while in *The Laws* rules are only attempts to be as close as possible to the true needs of the people.

<H1> Plato's vision of how soul and body¹⁶ form an individual system

"To praise the body was to praise the mind that ruled it. Aristotle had said this (...), for the mind was of the body and had no meaning without it. Plato was different, he conceded. Plato thought the mind was trapped in the body like a bird and only when it could shed that cage would it soar and be free." (Salman Rushdie, 2015, *Two years eight months & twenty-eight nights*, p. 144)

For many, until the Renaissance, Aristotle had become an absolute reference, as if everything he wrote was true. This spirit spread to Plato's philosophical formulations on the soul, which were treated as truths, rather than a philosophical enquiry on how human beings function. In this section I will follow this trend, and present Plato's metaphors on the soul and the body as if he imagined they could correspond to what happens. You will notice that, in Plato's dialogues, the relation between body and soul is similar to what tragedies and comedies describe, when they weave a tale in which a typical love relationship is a complex blend of love and hate, a search for dependence and a dream of independence. What the French call a *Vaudeville*.

Later in this chapter, I will show that Plato's aims are complex. I imagine he would probably have been bored by a quasi-religious belief in his metaphors on the body and the soul. I assume he wove them to provide an instructive and stimulating way to describe crucial dimensions of the psyche that no one really understands; but they served other purposes as well. In the second part of this book, I will show that most psychotherapeutic theories of

¹⁵ "Aristotle (...) reports that the doctrine of self-existent concepts or archetypes was an innovation of Plato, entirely foreign to Socrates. (Gomperz, 1905, 2: p. 288)"

¹⁶ In the forward of this book I showed that term body had several meanings. In Plato's case the body is clearly an organism with an embodied mind which is animated by a soul.

the 20th century are in fact metaphoric, even they are presented as quasi-scientific truths. Plato had the intellectual courage of openly presenting fables to give a sense of something nobody can define, but everybody experiences, like conscious thoughts. Psychotherapists of the twentieth century did not have that courage, as they presented personal speculations as if they already had the status of a scientific innovation. Freud often presented his model of the unconscious as a useful speculation (e.g. Freud, 1938, I.i, p. 144), but most psychoanalysts used the notion as if its relevance had been clinically demonstrated. Pierre Janet (1913, pp. 6 and 18; 1923, pp. 26, 60-61) had already criticized this attitude in 1913. For him it does not respect the ethics of knowledge required for a scientific approach of clinical psychology and what he called psychological analysis. A return to Janet's analysis (Heller, 2016) tries to correct the general trend of the 20th century psychotherapist, by distinguishing more explicitly useful and relevant metaphoric models from what can be presented as a robust scientific hypothesis. The notion of truth is avoided, as even Nobel price scientists do not yet fully understand psychophysiological dynamics. This is why using metaphors such as Plato's remains useful to convey subtle psychological experiences.

<H2>Presenting Idealism

"Ideas concern me less and less while I put all the emphasis on man's attitude toward the idea. An idea is and always will be a screen behind which are other and more important issues. An idea is a pretext, an auxiliary tool. Thought torn away from human reality is something majestic and splendid, but diluted in a mass of passionate and insufficient beings becomes nothing more than commotion." (Witold Gombrowicz, *Diary (I, 1953)*, I, III, Sunday: 29)

Idealism, as I understand it, is a vision that assumes that there exists Ideas which are key absolute truths: there is only one Truth, one Beauty, one Justice... and many ways of trying to grasp these notions. As these are considered fundamental, they are often written with a capital letter. Plato does not really explain the origins and actions of these truths, and why human rationality finds it so difficult to grasp their contour in a precise way. However Plato and Aristotle clearly present them as *dynamic* entities. They thrive to enter in the reality that structures human thoughts and their social organization, because they are the only notions that can lead to a constructive culture. They are necessarily coherent and harmonious.

Plato's proposition talks of a way of sensing what is True, but not of a way of sensing what is wrong or bad. There are no negative Ideas, no fundamental forces that want to lead us into destructive dynamics. One can describe events that can be experienced, but not what does not exist. However, ignorance - defined as a lack of contact with these Ideas - may lead to evil, contradictory, ugly, destructive and painful propensities. We will find a similar formulation in Reich's Orgonomy. He assumes that all humans have a constructive *chore* that may be ruined by socially constructed trauma. At the same period, in China, the sage Lao Tzu followed a different route, but nevertheless reached a similar conclusion:

"It is because everyone under Heaven recognizes beauty as beauty, that the idea of ugliness exists." (Lao Tzu, II)¹⁷

For Idealists there is no Manicheism, no Devil, no Eros and Thanatos. We are far from a cosmology in which Satan is as strong as God.

Influenced by what he had learned in Egypt, Pythagoras, described Ideas as a coherent and harmonious emanation of the cosmos. The music of the spheres (Gomperz, 1905, I. p. 118) is transformed by human souls into formalized knowledge such as geometry, mathematics and music: it promotes morality and civil order (Gomperz, 1905, I. p. 123). The association of a soul to a body could be close to the relation between a musical instrument and the music it produces.

"Simmias: Suppose a person to use the same argument about harmony and the lyre--might he not say that harmony is a thing invisible, incorporeal, perfect, divine, existing in the lyre which is harmonized, but that the lyre and the strings are matter and material, composite, earthy, and akin to mortality? And when someone breaks the lyre, or cuts and rends the strings, then he who takes this view would argue as you do, and on the same analogy, that the harmony survives and has not perished—you cannot imagine, he would say, that the lyre without the strings, and the broken strings themselves which are mortal remain, and yet that the harmony, which is of heavenly and immortal nature and kindred, has perished--perished before the mortal." (Plato, 1937, *Phaedo*, 86)

This argument distinguishes three levels:

1. The instrument made of wood and strings.
2. The laws that dictate how the strings should be tuned. This is sometimes referred to as temperament, as in Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. Temperament is, for Pythagoras, closer to mathematics than the atomic structure of the instrument.
3. The music that can be played on this instrument. This music is not composed for a specific instrument. It exists independently from whether it is played with this instrument or not.

This division can be taken, for Plato, as a metaphor for body, soul and Ideas.

<H2>The soul as a dynamic filter between Ideas and thoughts

"Simmias: When the body is in a manner strung and held together by the elements of hot and cold, wet and dry, then the soul is the harmony or due proportionate admixture of them. But if so, whenever the strings of the body are unduly loosened or overstrained through disease or other injury, then the soul, though most divine, like other harmonies of music or of works of art, of course perishes at once; although the material remains of the body may last for a considerable time, until they are either decayed or burnt." (Plato, 1937, *Phaedo*, 86, vol. I, p. 471)

¹⁷ Tous dans le monde reconnaissent le beau comme le beau ; ainsi est admis le laid. (Lao-Tsu, II).

<H3>The soul in ancient Egypt

Pythagoras and Plato were inspired by the Egyptian notion of an immortal soul (*Akh*) which may animate a body (*Khat*) for a while. It is this *Akh* which endows the body with a form of spiritual urge that may sometimes lead to wisdom. Without explicitly referring to the Egyptian belief system, these Greek philosophers used the term ψυχή (*psūkhé*) to import their understanding of the term *Akh*.¹⁸ *Psūkhé* had a wide range of meanings, such as being alive, wind (but not breath), cooling¹⁹, the immortal part of a person, the capacity to think, and less often a metaphoric butterfly. The semantic history of this notion is complicated by the fact that it gradually became what the English call a soul (*âme* in French). Although the term soul was used in a variety of contexts, it became a key Christian term, and thus reentered in the domain of religious vocabulary. This began a tradition which translated the Greek term *psyche* by soul for authors such as Plato and Aristotle. Then, in the 19th century, scientists who do not believe in what Christians call a soul, coined the term psychology to designate mental dynamics. This is a simplistic summary of a complex semantic history which partially explains why no one can explicitly define what psychology is about. The most precise definition of psychological dynamics is that they sometimes lead to conscious impressions and experiences, and to the capacity to think and reason. I would need the help of philosophers who can read ancient Greek to make a more precise summary of the semantics of terms such as soul and *psyche*. I just want the reader to be aware that this semantic area remains unclear. Plato does not define the soul. It is a metaphor, not a treatise on what really happens. Plato assumes that his readers are familiar with this mythological and poetical entity.

<H3> A Hypothesis on the Psychological Roots of Idealism

Plato's Idealism is, for me, a first attempt to describe the fundamental need, experienced by certain individual conscious dynamics, to share *common* notions: a part of me has to assume that when I pronounce the word "green," others will perceive the same color, except if they are color blind. Parents hope they can assume that when they teach to their children what is good and true, they make relevant and acceptable distinctions, which correspond to a general cultural system of values. Some would feel even more comfortable if they could have the confirmation that their values are shared by all. This psychological propensity needs to assume that something like Plato's Ideas form the basic material of important values. There are at least three issues here:

1. *A need experienced by rational conscious routines.* Shared rational procedures require that words and notions have a chore content that can be shared with others. A part of each individual need to believe that certain notions are necessarily true, that they are grounded in the realm of Ideas. Otherwise they could not function. This requirement leads to an impression of comfort when one

¹⁸ <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/%CF%88%CF%85%CF%87%CE%AE>.

¹⁹ Associating anxious state to an overheated engine that needs to cool down, is a metaphor I often use in my sessions.

has the impression that it is fulfilled. For Jerome Kagan (1998, Prologue), *seductive ideas* fulfill the inner hope that there exists at least some notions that are generalizable and independent of context. When such formulations are found convincing, some parts of the rational conscious mind purr like a happy cat.

2. *Soul = mind?* There is the obvious observation that, although most people perceive the color green when I say "green," not everyone seems to agree with my definition of what is good or ugly. This has led to a distinction between a sort of computerized automatic mind and deeper truths hidden in the soul. At birth the mind is not necessarily in reliable direct contact with the truths of the soul. This contact requires constructive educative support to emerge. This led to the theory that a soul is an *immaterial* entity that is in contact with the realm (whatever it might be) that creates Ideas, and with a psychosomatic organism that is animated by a soul. We will see that theories on whether the mind is part of the soul or not varied considerably, From Plato to Descartes.

3. *An Idea is necessarily transpersonal.* It can be found within every individual, but it cannot be modified by the existence of this individual. Language is an example of a transpersonal phenomenon. Individuals use it, but its existence is not modified when that person dies. Later in this chapter, I will develop this notion.

Idealism has the advantage of proposing a vision that allows people to become aware of the intellectual and spiritual needs that are required, if they want to feel comfortable when they cooperate in a constructive common reality.

<H3> Scientific Idealism

Aristotle is often presented as the founders of scientific Idealism. In the days of Galileo and Newton's scientific formulations, most scientists hypothesized that all the mechanisms of the universe structure themselves according to a "natural logic"²⁰ that mathematicians attempt to express formally. In his Lecture on the Holy Father, given at the University of Regensburg in 2006, Pope Benedict XVI summarized the current epistemological status of classical science and idealism in a particularly clear way²¹:

"This modern concept of reason is based, to put it briefly, on a synthesis between Platonism (Cartesianism) and empiricism, a synthesis confirmed by the success of technology. On the one hand it presupposes the mathematical structure of matter, its intrinsic rationality, which makes it possible to understand how matter works and use it efficiently: this basic premise is, so to speak, the Platonic element in the modern understanding of nature. On the other hand, there is nature's capacity to be exploited for our purposes, and here only the possibility of verification or

²⁰ Jean Piaget developed the notion of natural logic in his works on logic and mathematics (Beth and Piaget, 1966; Piaget, 1972b).

²¹ 13.01.2017: https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg.html. Modern science has a more complex relation with various philosophical options (Bachelard, 1940). For example, it would be difficult to associate quantum physics or epigenetics with idealism.

falsification through experimentation can yield decisive certainty. The weight between the two poles can, depending on the circumstances, shift from one side to the other. As strongly positivistic a thinker as J. Monod has declared himself a convinced Platonist/Cartesian."²²

If parts of individual consciousness need to believe that the words it uses have a particular meaning for all, other parts of human intelligence are fully aware that terms are always polysemous. As a philologist, Nietzsche was an expert in the analysis of words.²³ He insists on the fact that human functioning is such that it is impossible for words not to have several meanings. For example, in the introduction of this volume, I have mentioned my observation that for body psychotherapists the term "body" is simultaneously associated by most body psychotherapist with three distinct meanings (organism, soma and physical body). Nietzsche shows that this polysemy extends to what Plato called Ideas, and to basic notions such as good and evil. For him, the idea that such terms could only have one meaning, one signifier, can only be imposed on a human population by tyrannies such as the Catholic Inquisition. Nietzsche's position, strengthened by research that I will discuss, demonstrates that there exist many ways of thinking inscribed in the architecture of the mind²⁴. Consequently, it is impossible to associate only one style of mental practice and knowledge to a term (or signifier). We may have a part of our intellect that needs to think "as if" Idealism was relevant, and other parts that need to believe that variety is a facet of the essence of humanity. The implication of theories that explore the use of polysemy and variation as a basic philosophical and scientific notion will be explored later in this volume, for example in the sections on Darwinism. For the moment, it is enough to discuss Idealism as a necessary option of human thinking, not as the whole truth.

<H2> The Soul and the Body

"The soul was simply fastened and glued to the body—until philosophy received her, she could only view real existence through the bars of a prison. (...) Each pleasure and pain is a sort of nail which nails and rivets the soul to the body. (...) Thus she seeks to live while she lives, and after death she hopes to go to her own kindred and to that which is like her, and to

²² Cette conception moderne de la raison, pour le dire en raccourci, repose sur une synthèse entre le platonisme (cartésianisme) et l'empirisme, confirmée par le progrès technique. D'une part, on présuppose la structure mathématique de la matière, pour ainsi dire, sa rationalité interne, qui permet de la comprendre et de l'utiliser dans sa forme efficiente. Ce présupposé est en quelque sorte l'élément platonicien de la compréhension moderne de la nature. D'autre part, pour nos intérêts, il y va de la fonctionnalité de la nature, où seule la possibilité de la vérification ou de la falsification par l'expérience décide de la certitude. Selon les cas, le poids entre les deux pôles peut se trouver davantage d'un côté ou de l'autre. Un penseur aussi rigoureusement positiviste que Jacques Monod s'est déclaré platonicien convaincu. (http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/fr/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg.html, mars 2015)

²³ Rey (1973).

²⁴ For example, to quote the authors mentioned in this book, Spinoza, Hume, Darwin, Cellérier, Minsky, Kagan, and Tronick.

be freed from human ills. Never fear, Simmias and Cebes, that a soul which has been thus nurtured and has had these pursuits, will at her departure from the body be scattered and blown away by the winds and be nowhere and nothing." (Plato, 1937, *Phaedo*, 83-84, vol. I, pp. 468-9)

<H3> Only the soul knows (Plato)

The Socrates of Plato imagines a scenario that has seduced many Idealists ²⁵:

Vignette. *The soul after death*: At the death of a body, the soul which it contained, flies toward a mysterious region, perfect and pure, and enters in contact with the *Ideas*. Liberated from the constraints imposed by the body, the soul can gather nectar in this garden of truths. Finally, at long last, sadly, it must be "enshrined" again in a body, where it is imprisoned like an oyster in its shell.²⁶ However, the soul retains the memory of the voyage and of what she has learned.²⁷

If, for the soul, entering a body is a form of imprisonment; for the body, it is a form of benediction: when a soul contacts matter, that matter becomes alive. When a soul enters into a body, the body becomes alive (*Phaedo*, 100c-d). The body, for Plato's translators, is the whole organism, except for the soul. This organism is close to that of Darwin²⁸, as it is a psycho-physiological entity which contains the mind, as it is defined by most researchers in experimental psychology:

"Then I will tell you, said Socrates. When I was young, Cebes, I had a prodigious desire to know that department of philosophy which is called the investigation of nature; (...) and I was always agitating myself with the considerations of such questions as these: (...) Is the blood the element with which we think, or the air, or the fire? or perhaps nothing of the kind - but the brain may be the originating power of the perceptions of hearing and sight and smell, and memory and opinion may come from them, and science may be based on memory and opinion. (...)

It may be said, indeed, that without bones and muscles and the other parts of the body I cannot execute my purposes. But to say that I do as I do because of them, and that this is the way in which mind acts, and not from the choice of the best, is a very careless and idle mode of speaking." (Plato, 1937, *Phaedo*, 96-99, vol. I, p. 480-83)

²⁵ Plato develops this fable in *The Phaedo*.

²⁶ Plato, *Phaedrus* (250c). This sort of expression attributed to Socrates is to be taken freely. It has a humorous, ironic, and at the same time, a sensual side. We have, in the choice of this metaphor, an example of Socrates's sense of humor.

²⁷ This tale, called *the anamnesis* (Droz, 1992, p. 79), is only suggested by Plato, never told as such. Its elements are in effect dispersed in three places (*Meno* 80d-86c, *Phaedo*16. The term *metaphor* is used in this volume in its wider sense, as a sort of symbol that represents a reality in ways that are comfortable for intuitive processes.

²⁸ The difference with Darwin (1871, II, *Natural Selection*, p. 43) is the following. For Darwin man is an organism with no soul, in which mind and body interact; while for Plato the soul is different from the body/mind entity. Darwin uses the term soul when he refers to deep feelings.

<H3> Only aliveness knows (Heraclitus and Hegel)

"What we see waking is dead, but what we see sleeping, a dream." (Heraclites quoted by Hegel, 1833, p. 294).

To approach a view that is opposite from Plato's, yet of ancient Greece, I will summarize certain aspects of Hegel's chapter on Heraclitus (Hegel, 1833, pp. 279 - 298). Hegel felt close to Heraclitus: "Here we see land; there is no proposition of Heraclitus which I have not adopted in my Logic." As you will see, some of his ideas on mind and body are quite close to some authors in the body psychotherapy field, include what I write in this book.

For Heraclites being is becoming. The mind is part of the organism, which is a part of a cosmos that has a particular dynamic mode of functioning: a dialectic systemic that is perpetually recalibrating itself in search of a more robust equilibrium (Hegel, 1828). Thus, for him, attempts to separate the mind from the logic it is embedded into only makes it blind. A dream contains more truth than an analysis of reality, because it is imposed on the mind by phenomena in which the mind is embodied. Similarly, when we think while we are attentive to our breath, our thinking becomes clearer, because it is more sensitive to the complex dynamics that animate our mind. If one accepts that consciousness is a propriety of some animal species, one also needs to accept that everything around us has an intelligence " - yet not therefore accompanied by consciousness. (Hegel, 1833, p. 294)". Therefore, "if we draw this universal reality through our breath, we shall be intelligent (Heraclites quoted by Hegel, 1833, p. 295)". In his analysis Hegel clearly separates the individual breath from a form of "universal breath". However my breath is for my mind something like a root that maintains an interactive connection between the flower of my reason and all that surrounds it. In this metaphor, as in his philosophical system, Hegel does not minimize the importance of clear thinking; but he grounds clear thinking in its connection to an ever-changing world, rather than in a static realm of Ideas. In both philosophies that exists something like a transpersonal realm that coordinates personal and inter-human dynamics; but for Hegel this transpersonal realm is the incredibly complex history of the Universe. Hegel believed that History is leading us somewhere, and this somewhere is a world of Ideas that will emerge as it is being consciously elaborated by human history. Thus individual thinking is not a neutral isolated form of understanding: it's growth is the ingredient that is required by Universal History. This Idealism integrates an *evolutionary theory that has a goal*; while the world of Democritus, Lamarck and Darwin has no goal.

The importance of being honest, clear-minded and of taking good care of one's body is a constant theme in Plato's work. Plato also stresses that mental and physical hygiene is important not only for oneself, but for all. But his Idealism only justifies this by assuming that the more philosophical citizens are, the happier a city can be. In the Heraclitus - Hegel tradition has more dynamic view of this necessity, because the contact an individual establishes between his reason and his nature is a part of Ideas in general. The general quality of nature and Ideas is influenced by individual reason, and the quality of Ideas depends on its parts. There is in this system yet another argument for being moral: the qualities of an individual interact with the global and influence it. The Heraclitus-Hegel axis highlights the

dynamic aspect of the Spinoza axis I have already associated with Reich's Idealism. Hegel sees himself as close to a Spinoza who would have added the time dimension to the essence of nature. One clearly sees the influence of early evolution theory on Hegel, but also Hegel's influence on Marx's philosophy of history. Even if Reich did not study Marx's philosophy, he was a communist and lived with Marxists during his adult formative years (1920-1933). These condensed remarks on the dialectic dynamics of mind and body, individual and whole, summarize crucial parts of Reichian and neo-Reichian body psychotherapeutic movements. The philosophical roots are implicit and fuzzy, but the message diffused itself in their minds clearly enough.

<H2>Soul and Thoughts

"Any meaning given to what happens comes from us. We are facing the difficult task of translating natural processes into psychological language." (Jung, 1940, *Children's dreams*, seminar 1, p. 2)

Idealist schools have presented a variety of theories on how body and mind associate. Here are a few examples that are discussed in this volume:

1. For *Pythagoras and Plato*, the life of the soul is independent from that of the body. The mind is situated in the body.

2. *Aristotle's* Idealism is particularly complex. Even though he was Plato's student, his doctrine is different: "the affections of soul are inseparable from the material substratum of animal life" (Aristotle, *Of the Soul*, I.1). The mind is now situated in the soul. "The mind is an independent substance implanted within the soul" (Aristotle, *Of the Soul*, I.1).

3. *Descartes's* Idealism also situates the mind in the soul. However, the mind seems to be, for our awareness, a central part of the soul. The soul, and therefore the mind, have been created by God. This guarantees that our thoughts and senses are relevant. Learning to use our mental capacities with finesse and rigor is therefore the only initiation that is needed (Descartes 1637 and 1641). Like Aristotle, he wanted to find a theory of the organism that could support the development of a Science. Descartes can be considered as one of the founders of a scientific psychology. He adopted a particularly nuanced and tolerant Idealistic position.

4. The Idealism that *Reich* introduced into body psychotherapy is above all intuitive and ideological. Reich is implicitly close to Spinoza's position (see chapter 5), when he assumes that truths are not concepts, but dynamics that an omnipotent nature breathes into each one of us. These dynamics are close to the Ideas. For these authors nature is totally good, coherent, and omnipresent. Evil emerges when conscious dynamics are not in contact with natural dynamics.

Plato is probably developed the most influential philosophic proposition in which the soul is not only distinct from the body, but also uncomfortable when it is involved in the life of an individual:

"The body introduces a turmoil and confusion and fear into the course of speculation, and hinders us from seeing the truth: and all experience shows that if we would have pure knowledge of anything we must be quit of the body. (Plato, 1937, *Phaedo*, 66)."

Isolation from crowds and detachment from needs is thus a first step towards clear thinking:

"Thought is best when the mind is gathered into herself and none of these things trouble her - neither sounds nor sighs nor pain nor pleasure - when she takes leave of the body, and has as little as possible to do with it, when she has no bodily sense or desire, but is aspiring after true being? (Plato, 1937, *Phaedo*, 65)

In recent books on Buddhist mindfulness, we still find similar preoccupations: inner sensory activity and body sensations are "a hindrance" for deep meditation. (Brahm, 2006, pp. 20-31)

In his allegories, the relationship between the soul and thoughts is complex. The soul animates the body and its thoughts²⁹; but she does not necessarily transmit her content to an individual consciousness. Most humans do not consciously know that they have a soul. Even if they believe they have one, they do not necessarily have the capacity to dialogue with their soul. Plato seems to distinguish a form of thinking that reacts to sensory data and attempts to organize it, using automatic procedures similar to those of animals; and a form of thinking that actively integrates the treasures of the soul.

In Plato's idealistic dialogues, Socrates helps his pupils to discover ways to self-explore, to apprehend the shape of the emanations of the soul, to reconstruct in the mind consciousness thoughts close to the ones contained in the soul:

"The soul when thinking appears to me to be just talking - asking questions of herself and answering them, affirming and denying. And when she has arrived at a decision, either gradually or by a sudden impulse, and has at last agreed, and does not doubt, this is called her opinion. I say, then, that to form an opinion is to speak, and opinion is a word spoken - I mean to oneself and in silence, not aloud or to another." (Plato, 1937, *Theaetetus*, 190, vol. II, p. 193)

This model implies three stages of knowing:

1. Perfect knowledge as contained in the world of Ideas.
2. The soul absorbs a little more of this knowledge every time that she visits the world of Ideas.
3. Conscious processes can acquire, at its own pace, in a more or less elaborate manner, a sketch of what is contained in the soul.

The reader may find it useful to distinguish between three forms of knowledge:

1. Plato's knowledge, which is close to *wisdom*, as in the famous formula of Socrates: "know thyself (Plato, 1997, *Philebus* 48c)". This knowledge leads to Virtue through a dialogue with the Ideas hidden in the Soul.
2. The other form is putting order in the information brought by the senses to the mind, as when "someone thinks himself richer than he in fact is (Plato, 1997, *Philebus* 48e)". Using this form of knowledge may, at best lead to

²⁹ Plato, 1937, *Phaedo*, 66, vol. I, p. 450.

empirical knowledge. This where psychotherapeutic *clinical knowledge* can be situated.

3. Combining these two forms is one way of creating *science*. For example, physicists combine a rigorous evaluation of empirical data with formal modes of thinking (e.g., mathematics).

Even though Plato does not broach this problem explicitly, he probably thinks that the soul does not have as many resources as the world of Ideas, and that the mind does not have as many resources as the soul (Ideas > Soul > Mind). This implies that no philosopher has the means to describe exactly what emanates from the world of Ideas. The human faculty to think does not have the tools to really comprehend the Truths of the soul and give them an explicit expression.

<H3>Differences Between Mind and Soul

"But if the self-moving is proved to be immortal, he who affirms that self-motion is the very idea and essence of the soul will not be put in confusion. For the body which is moved from without is soulless; but that which is moved from within has a soul, for such is the nature of the soul. But if this be true, must not the soul be the self-moving, and therefore of necessity unbegotten and immortal?" (Plato, 1937, *Phaedrus*, 245a, p. 250)

In this section,³⁰ I summarize certain aspects of Plato's thinking that influenced several schools of psychotherapy. The core argument is that as a mind needs to be trained to integrate elements of what Ideas have hidden in a soul. Teachers notice that individuals can only handle a limited amount of truth at once. Students have the impression of understanding, but if the teacher then reads their notes, he can often observe they are only partially close to what was taught. As a psychotherapist, I regularly make a similar observation. My patients regularly complain that psychotherapy is too slow; but every time I try to move at a faster pace, they soon become overwhelmed and disoriented. In my experience, psychotics can handle only a small number of heterogeneous truths, borderlines a bit more, while neurotics mostly avoid contradictions. One needs a strong mind to handle heterogeneous and contradictory thoughts without experiencing something like an explosion of fuses. In other terms, the weaker conscious mental force is, the more difficult it is to accept reality... even if, in some domains, one is a genius. What Freud called the defense system brings a deceleration of how much heteroclitic information one can deal with. There is a finesse here: some geniuses who suffer from psychopathological symptoms, can crunch an enormous amount of information when they do not awaken old wounds.³¹

For Idealists, the mind must transform itself before it can integrate richer and deeper information. The ordinary citizen who accidentally perceives a Truth may not notice the value of what he has just experienced. If, on the other hand, the defenses are too weak, the mind risks blowing a fuse when it perceives a dose of Truth that it cannot manage. In subsequent

³⁰ Jean-Marie Baron helped me to formulate, as clearly as possible, what is presented in this section.

³¹ See the discussion of Jacques Fradin in chapter 8.

pages, we shall see that Plato used his myth of the cave to show the importance of avoiding becoming blind when the mind enters into contact with Ideas.

<H3>The Signifier of an Idea

"A text is a text only if it hides, at first view, for any one, the law of its composition and the rules of its game. Besides, a text always remains imperceptible. The law and the rule do not shelter themselves in the inaccessibility of a secret. They simply never reveal themselves, in the present, to anything that we can rigorously call a perception." (Jacques Derrida 1972, *Plato's Pharmacy*, p. 79; translated by Marcel Duclos)

The recourse to fables shows that Plato does not have the intellectual means to explicitly define Beauty, but he trusts that he has an adequate intuition about what is beautiful and ugly. He has a difficult time translating what he feels into a structured discourse. I think his difficulty is part and parcel of the human condition. Plato experiences a celebratory inner itch every time someone says something that seems true and an almost hateful inner irritation when someone preaches something that seems manifestly false. The theory of the Ideas is there to tell us that in the human there is a capacity to reflect on what is perceived. Plato wanted, in this way, to support people like Aristotle, who were building the basis of an emerging science. His allegories convey a notion that something in us, which is rarely sufficiently developed, can allow us to sense in which direction truth lies.

In the *Timaeus* (21-26) he proposes a fable on the origin of writing. This fable would have been told by Plato's ancestor Solon, the well-known politician, who was one of his mother's ancestor. Since then the story was transmitted from generation to generation:

Vignette on Atlantis (The Timaeus 22-26). One day in Egypt, Solon enters a city allied to Athens. He tells the Greek legend about the origin of the world to an assembled group. A listener politely laughs. He is one of the Egyptian High Priests. He explains that one of the traumas of Greece is to have been often devastated by natural catastrophes and by war that, each time, destroyed everything that they wrote. In contrast, peaceful Egypt possesses manuscripts that exist since the origin of writing. According to the priest, the Egyptian texts recount events that the Greeks ignore, like the history of the city Atlantis, founded 9,000 years before Athens. When this city was destroyed by ocean waves, some survivors fled to Greece and founded Athens.

In this fable, Plato shows that writing adds capacities to individual memory that do not exist in the brain. However, in *Phaedrus*, he shows that writing can just as easily transmit fables, lies, jokes or truths. Writing and speech are therefore tools that can be used, with more or less reliability, to support propaganda, distractions or by the seekers of truth. Tools are thus mostly strategies of the mind, not of the soul. The French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1972) points out that for Plato, writing and medication have the same status, in that they both have an undeniable utility, but can also inhibit the desire to explore and use the forces of the soul. While Plato was writing his dialogues, the Chinese sage Chuang Tzu expressed an analogous distrust:

"But until the sage is dead, great thieves will never cease to appear, and if you pile on more sages in hopes of bringing the world to order, you will only be pilling up more profit for Robber

Chih. Fashion pecks and bushels for people to measure by and they will steal by peck and bushel.³² Fashion scales and balances for people to weigh by and they will steal by scales and balance. Fashion tallies and seals to insure trustworthiness and people will steal with tallies and seals. Fashion benevolence and righteousness to reform people and they will steal with benevolence and righteousness. How do I know this is so? He who steals a belt buckle pays with his life; he who steals a state gets to be the feudal lord—and we all know that benevolence and righteousness are to be found at the gates of the feudal lords." (Chuang Tzu, ~319 X, p. 109f)

The parallelism between these two nearly contemporary points of view, as well as others I have already mentioned, makes me think that in China as well as in Greece, the introduction of new technologies posed the same kind of philosophical problems, even if the cultures were profoundly different. For the Taoists, people knew how to estimate the weight of a commodity by holding it in their hands. After the invention of weights, people had such confidence in the system of measures that they no longer bothered to develop their capacity to estimate weight with their hands. It then became easy to steal by falsifying the instruments of measure. It is the same with written laws. People end up not learning how to evaluate for themselves what is good and just. This is what makes it possible for villains who take over a state to manage the justice system at will, and for dishonest religious authorities to use the few saints that exist to justify doubtful religious practices. When people lose contact with their own profound resources, they become subject to manipulation because they easily notice the existence of petty thieves, but they are not capable of experiencing as pernicious and dangerous those who rob them blind through the manipulation of social rituals and political power.

<H3>The Transpersonal Dimension

Mental operations are transpersonal when they exist for several persons who have never met. The theories on how these transpersonal routines travel from mind to mind are varied (Sperber, 1996, chapter 3). For Plato, such conceptual procedures are Ideas acquired by the soul when it traveled in the world of Ideas. Sometimes people meet, and have the experience that some of the persons they interact with share similar deep intuitions. This may occur between people who are not manifestly alike.

The platonic soul conveys a body of knowledge developed beyond the human species. It cannot be created by individuals. These Truths have been set before an individual's birth, and the individual's thoughts have no impact on their content. For a number of psychotherapists who are Idealists, Plato's interpretation of the soul is a metaphor that has permitted humans to become more conscious of the fact that their mind has *transpersonal*³³ or *supra-*

³² Viscount T'ien Ch'eng of Ch'i "was said to have won the support of the people of Ch'I by using a larger-than-standard measure in doling out grains to people, but the standard measure when collecting taxes in grain" (Chuang Tzu, ~319 X, p. 109).

³³ Jansen (1989), Rosenberg and Rand (1985, 9, p. 331f).

*ordinate*³⁴ content. Some psychotherapists integrate this notion when they refer to Jung's *collective unconscious and archetypes*.³⁵

A more academic vision of the transpersonal mechanisms defines them as elaborations that influence an individual psyche, but have not been created or elaborated by it. At most, a person can only add a nuance to the general structure. Once this definition is accepted, one can distinguish several forms of "transpersonal" contents:

1. The *innate mechanisms*, like the way that the eyes transform light to create the perception of the color red. <The main personal dynamics that influence the transpersonal frame are those that influence the genetic pool of a population.

2. The systems created by *culture* (esthetics, language, morality, religions, science, etc.). This system is close to Hegel's notion that ideas are in development, as individual creativity is in constant interaction with transpersonal formulations.

3. The academic disciplines suggest the construction of transpersonal truths. *Scientific research* is perhaps influenced in a prominent way by particular personalities (like Aristotle and Newton), but it is built on themes studied by thousands of research teams over the centuries. 36

4. These days, the term transpersonal is mostly used by authors who propose spiritual theories, like Ken Wilber³⁷, to designate the forces that enliven an individual without his understanding of it, which are experienced as a profound form of transcendence, such as the Buddhist state of illumination. Some body psychotherapists are fond of that literature, which is why I include this section on transpersonal phenomena in this chapter. Once again, as in Hegel's Idealism, the general system interacts with individual maturation.

What I retain from the term *transpersonal* is the experience that a similar force animates our intimate experience as well as that of others. That sentiment is dynamic, as individuals who share such experiences often have the impression of participating in the animation of what animates him. For example, I am formed by the social world that surrounds me, but I also actively participate in what this social life becomes. It is therefore possible to distinguish at least two types of transpersonal thoughts:

1. The *anthropological dimension*. There would be transpersonal regulation systems and mechanisms brought about by biological and social history that animate each individual in multiple ways. These mechanisms generate forms of universal multicausal regulation mechanisms, which do not necessarily contain a

³⁴ Jung (1931, p. 182).

³⁵ Heisler (1973), Jung (1954).

³⁶ The point of view that social dynamics can construct ideas that no individual can create is, for example, defended in anthropology by Boyd and Richerson (1996, 2005).

³⁷ Wilber (2000, p. 96f) is a philosopher often mentioned in body psychotherapy conferences. He is particularly appreciated by those psychotherapists who think that their work has an important spiritual dimension, for example, Aalberse (2001) or Marlock and Weiss (2001).

truth. They only allow for the reproduction of a common procedure that is sometimes experienced as meaningful.³⁸

2. The *anthropological and spiritual dimension*. There would be transpersonal systems of regulation and mechanisms brought about by biological and social history, which motivate each individual in multiple ways. Among these systems, some are in contact with some absolute Truths, capable of engendering self-healing. These theories often postulate a total coherence of the universe, a coherent dynamic relationship between the elements and the system that contain them (as in the phrase "everything is linked to everything"). In that case the term *transpersonal* does not only designate a psychological impression, but also a unique force that structures the multiple mechanisms enlivening human history.

<H3>The Allegory of the Cave: Blinding Truths and the Creative Shadows of the Psyche

Plato's Socrates, in *The Republic*, teaches that most citizens, even those who are educated, do not achieve an integration of their intuition of what is Good; but they are often responsive to examples of what is Good.³⁹ It is the same for Truth and Knowledge. Plato uses the image of a cave⁴⁰ to illustrate the difficulty that most citizens experience when they try to contact the Ideas:

Vignette on the allegory of the cave: Socrates describes persons facing the inner wall of a cave, like spectators facing the screen in a cinema. On that wall, they see moving shadows. As at the cinema, the citizen quickly forgets that these shadows come from a projector situated behind him. He forgets that what he perceives is produced by mechanisms situated outside of his consciousness. Plato's projector is the sun. It casts as a shadow that which is happening behind the spectators. If a spectator suddenly turns around to see what is going on at the entrance of the cave, he is immediately blinded by the sun. This explains why the spectators content themselves with what they see on the screen, and end up believing that what they perceive is the reality. Occasionally, passers-by enter the cave and explain to the spectators, who are prisoners of their fears, that once outside, the sun becomes less blinding, and reality directly perceptible. A spectator cannot directly go from the obscurity of the cave to the light of day without becoming blind. However, proceeding with a method, he can gradually get accustomed to the increasing intensity of the light. He will first perceive the real starry night, then the dawn and the sunrise, and finally everything that exists.

In the first part of the myth of the cave, Plato explains why he cannot be more explicit when he communicates with persons who have not learned how to get out of the cave, and he presents himself as one of those who know how to get out. Having said that, he concedes that we can only perceive a fraction of what is.

³⁸ See Atran (2010), Sperber (1996).

³⁹ Plato, *The Republic*, V, 506e.

⁴⁰ Plato, *The Republic*, VII, 507-522.

A psychotherapist does not hold such a black and white Manichaeian view of the dynamics of human nature. Jung suggests that the shadows projected on the cave's rock wall are more than a simple reflection of reality ⁴¹: They form another reality that merits as much consideration—that is, the psyche and the impressions it produces. The portrait proposed by a painter is never the exact copy of a face; it is also a creative act that seeks to produce a vision. Art is a domain unto itself. It has its own relevance. So do the shadows on Plato's cave! For Jung, the fact that the psychic elaborations are not conforming copies of Plato's reality takes nothing away from the wonder he feels when he studies the extraordinary construction that is the human capacity to think and to dream. To hope that the mind can capture Ideas, such as they exist, is to expect of the human spirit that it be transparent and neutral: a kind of leech that has, as its only task, that of stuffing itself with celestial nourishment. If an organism develops systems of defense and of protection, like the immune system, it is because it wants to survive. To seek to know whether one's life is good or bad, useful or not, pertinent or not, is a luxury that is not one of the priorities of the dynamics of life, notably of human organisms.

Religious people would like it if God became each person's highest goal; a philosopher like Plato would like it if Truth became the highest goal of every human organism. The psychotherapist is content to support a person for whom life is far too uncomfortable, and help him find the type of understanding that he needs to improve his life. The Jungian psychotherapist has a deep respect for all the productions of the mind. He understands the necessity that humans have to transform their environment into digestible shadows, projected onto the screen of the interior cinema. To seek to modify a person's internal cinema inevitably passes through a deconstruction that aims at a reconstruction: one that is more able to defend what is at stake in one's life. He would like to transform the black and white film of a depressed patient into one containing the full array of colors and the saturated colors of neurotic thoughts into vivid film full of contrasts. The psychotherapist is endlessly confronted by individuals who are blinded by their unshakable faith in the perception they have about what happened to them.

<H1>Idealism and Absolute Truths in Body Psychotherapy

"Some people, to whom we always feel strangely attracted, seem to live out of a greater inner richness. Basically everyone has it; the problem is that most of us don't know about it. The practical work of gradually discovering this inner richness is the substance of our teaching." (Charlotte Selver & Charles V. W. Brooks, 1980, *Sensory Awareness*, p. 117)

In these sections of Idealism and psychotherapy, I mostly mention highly efficient approaches. As Pierre Janet (1923, p. 9) noted, cure is not a proof that a treatment has solid bases. My analysis of how some forms of psychotherapy use Idealist stances does not imply that they are less efficient or less scientific than psychotherapies which avoid using Idealist

⁴¹ Jung (1960, II.7.417, note 123).

positions. This chapter has the aim of making implicit issues more explicit, but it does not attempt to answer the questions it raises.

<H2> Neo-Reichian Idealism

"One must note the widespread practice of interrupting children's play as though it were of no importance. Through this, children come to feel that there is no natural rhythm in things, and that it is right for activities to be cut off in mid-air [...] When children have been interrupted often enough, their innate sense of rhythm becomes confused; as well as their sense of the social value of their own experience." (Charlotte Selver & Charles V. W. Brooks, 1980, *Sensory Awareness*, p. 117)

Idealism admits only one form of relativism: that an individual consciousness can be more or less intensely in contact with the traces of Truths of the soul, and consequently be more or less rational and have more or less good taste. The diverse forms of Idealism that we encounter in body psychotherapy are often related to diverse forms of spirituality. Biosynthesis, Biodynamic Psychology, and Core Energetics are influential examples.⁴² Their brand of Idealism leads them to propose expressions such as "the unconscious knows," "the body never lies," or "the body knows." The body, the organism, and the unconscious are then equivalent terms to designate the nonconscious dynamics that animate our thoughts.

These schools (notably David Boadella, Gerda Boyesen, and John Pierrakos) postulate that each organism contains a soul, defined here as a nucleus of natural forces, of cosmic vitality. According to them, there exists in everyone a part of their being that knows, what is true, what is good, what is incapable of lying. There is in each a core that yearns for a harmonious way of connecting profound needs with one's behavior and with others. The universe is conceived as a perfect entity, without any malice, seeking a coherence that harmonizes everything it contains. The soul is thus this part of nature that animates the organism. These authors, who defend positions close to those of Spinoza, then develop their arguments to show that a being's center is often inhibited by social factors that pervert the rapport that an individual entertains with the depth of his nature. Psychotherapy would then have the goal of restoring this profound link with the primary nature of the organism. In Biosynthesis, for example, the goal of a psychotherapy is to connect "three fundamental areas of our humanness:

our bodily, somatic existence,
our psychological experience,
our fundamental essence." (Boadella, 2017⁴³)

What is difficult to understand in the writings of these authors, as well as in Plato, is how this nature could have brought about this destructive influence of societies. We find, in this, the same questions that children ask themselves about why an all-powerful God authorized the existence of the devil and of so much pain. How come nature and individuals are

⁴² Boadella (1987), Boyesen (1985), and Pierrakos (1990).

⁴³ No date is given for this text on: http://www.biosynthesis-institute.com/article_1.htm, January 2017)

perfect, and society so perverted? This discussion reminds me that I once read, but I do not know where, that Karl Marx asked the following question: if society is not a natural phenomenon, what is it? People who praise honey as being natural and therefore particularly healthy, despise Aspirins because they have been produced a human factory. They often forget that it is a society of bees that makes honey.

<H2>A Passionate and Profoundly Emotional Experience Is a Way to Taste the World of Ideas

"Now the best of the motions is one that occurs within oneself and is caused by oneself. This is the motion that bears the greatest kingship to understanding and to the motion of the universe. Motion that is caused by the agency of something else is less good. Worst of all is the motion that moves, part by part, a passive body in a state of rest, and does so by means of other things. That, then, is why the motion induced by physical exercise is the best of those that purify and restore the body. Second is that induced by the rocking motion of sea travel or travel in any other kind of conveyance that doesn't tire one out. The third type of motion is useful in an occasional instance of dire need; barring that, however, no man in his right mind should tolerate it. This is medical purging by means of drugs. We should avoid aggravating with drugs diseases that aren't particularly dangerous. Every disease has a certain makeup that in a way resembles the natural makeup of living things. In fact, the constitution of such beings goes through an ordered series of stages throughout their life. This is true of the species as a whole, and also of its individual members, each of which is born with allotted span of life, barring unavoidable accidents. [...] When you try to wipe them out with drugs before they have run their due course, the mild diseases are liable to get severe, and the occasional ones frequent." (Plato, 1997, *Timaeus*, III, 89a, p. 65)

Idealism places in the depths of the world of Ideas, not only Truths but also a power to heal. We could probably find statements close to this quote from *The Timaeus* in several texts on natural medicine, homeopathy. Holistic body psychotherapies often use Reich's notion of autoregulation. There would be in each one of us a restorative given that knows what we ought to do to get better. This vision is close to that of Jung, for whom "the general function of dreams is to attempt to reestablish our psychological equilibrium with the help of an oneiric material that, in a subtle way, reconstitutes the total equilibrium of our psyche" (Jung 1961, p. 75, my translation).

This way of thinking on the self-healing potential of organisms, has often activated in the psychotherapeutic community a reaction akin to that of the Athenians in the face of Socrates: a mixture of admiration for an undeniable gift which can sometimes be observed, and a refusal to accept that such a power really exists. However, some psychotherapists think that when a person renders the unconscious conscious, not only the psyche functions better, but so do all the other dynamics of the organism... as in a chimney that just been swept. The body psychotherapists who adopt this point of view sometimes have the ability to lead persons into near trance-like states that mobilize the total organism. After such an intense emotional discharge, when it is experienced as appropriate, some often have the impression of having clean tissues that fill their organism with pleasant, quieting and healing

sensations. Their mind experiences a form of decompression which renders thoughts as clear as the air after a storm. They may even have the impression of having found a serene vitality that may accompany them for the rest of their lives.

Plato's position on medication is close to the one I have already summarized in a section on writing: these are tools of the mind, not of the soul. Using such external help may divert one's attention on the necessity of contacting the resources of one's soul.

<H2>Must a Treatment Create Harmony in the Organism?

"What is that the inherence of which will render the body alive?
The soul, he replied." (Plato, 1937, *Phaedo*, 66, vol. I, p. 13109)

H3> *The Symposium*: Eros Heals

Plato's *Symposium* describes a banquet that is the second in a series of celebrations organized by the rich Athenian poet Agathon, to celebrate the literary prize that he recently won. What is at hand is a prestigious prize given for the best tragedy of the year 416 BCE. This banquet gathers illustrious Athenians, such as Socrates, general Alcibiades, the physician Eryximachus and the author Aristophanes. The first banquet has been so sumptuous that, this time, the guests prefer to drink and eat less, and spend more time presenting their homage to the god of love, Eros.

The first orator, *Phaedrus*, had presented Eros as one of the most ancient and powerful gods of the universe. To believe that he only occupies himself with the amorous sentiments of individual humans is not, consequently, doing him justice. The amorous sentiments are but a human expression of the fundamental forces that regulate the relations between all that exists in the universe: galaxies, stars, plants, animals, organs, atoms, and so on. Eros is therefore a force of the universe. The second orator, *Pausanias*, had shown how Eros creates intense and creative links between elements of the cosmos, whereas Chaos, born just before Eros, creates destructive links between all that exist. *Phaedrus* has already shown how the birth of Eros repaired the damage caused by his older brother, Chaos. In medicine, Eros is the force that regulates a constructive attraction between the elements of a body and what allows for a healthy life; whereas Chaos deregulates the attractions and the pleasures of the body and renders everything unwell. This perspective shows that the constructive and destructive forces of human love are animated by such powerful universal forces, that we can now understand the importance of Eros, who is one of the principal gods of medicine. Eros is therefore not only the god of love, of the attraction between atoms, but also of healing. I find it impossible to read Reich's 1951 *Cosmic Superimposition* without thinking of this beautiful speech on how Eros inserts itself in cosmic dynamics. It is possible that Freud had this very discussion in mind when he distinguished the forces of Eros and Thanatos in the libido. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud (1920, p. 57) quotes what Aristophanes recounts on Plato's *Symposium*. Heinrich Gomperz, specialist on the Greek thought of this period, has drawn his attention to this passage.

The homage delivered by the third orator, the physician Eryximachus (185d-188e), is the one that interests us here. For him, a therapeutic act is a way of supporting the influence of Eros. The duty of the physician is to reinforce the harmony between the elements of the body and foster the birth of a state of love and harmony in an organism torn apart by discordant forces. This task is difficult to the extent that there exists numerous elements that have contradictory functions in an organism, like cold and hot, bitter and sweet, wet and dry. It is not possible to contemplate that blood could become as dry as a bone, or bones fluid like blood. That is why it requires enormous experience before a physician can become able to restore all of the dissimilar elements of the organism into lovers of one another.

<H3> The Rite of Spring

"Harmony needs low and high, as progeny needs man and woman. (43)

From the strain of binding opposites comes harmony. (46)

The cosmos works by harmony of tensions, like the lyre and bow. Therefore, good and ill are one. (56)" (Heraclitus, 2001, *Fragments*)

For Eryximachus, the power of Eros manifests itself in the same manner in music and medicine. According to this thesis, a composer has the mission to harmonize the high and low notes, and to create a musical event by overcoming an initial opposition.⁴⁴ The creation of a musical chord is thus another way to honor Eros. Eryximachus is so intent on finding harmony between all things, that he attempts to include Heraclitus's thought into his own:

"For he [Heraclitus] says that The One is united by disunion, like the harmony of the bow and the lyre. Now there is an absurdity in saying that harmony is discord or is composed of elements which are still in a state of discord. But what he probably meant was, that harmony is composed of differing notes of higher and lower pitch which disagreed once, but are now reconciled by the art of music; for if the higher and lower notes still disagreed, there could be no harmony." (Plato, *The Symposium*, 187a and b, p. 314)

Like Plato, Heraclitus also uses a dialectical approach toward reality (thesis, antithesis, synthesis). He thinks that man is but a pale reflection of the potential that animates the universe. However, for Heraclitus, managing disharmony is often even more creative (even healthier) than reaching a harmonious state. He could also have said that a conflict can become a particularly creative dynamic. He thus announces a form of reasoning that became a theme on which Hume and Darwin composed interesting variations. For Heraclitus, Chaos's work (the antithesis) is as important and crucial for the evolution of the universe (the synthesis) than that of Eros (the thesis). The conflicting dialectic dynamic between Eros and Chaos allows for the emergence of the emotion of love, desire, creativity, and music. This unceasing battle structures the organism and reinforces it. Briefly, if Heraclitus had been a therapist, he sometimes would have put oil on the inner conflicts of a soul, so that she might strengthen herself and learn to manage the conflicts of existence with greater ease. Plato's

⁴⁴ This development announces the notion of emergence, as particular ways to organize high and low notes can give birth to a musical *chord*. The organization of the elements allows for the creation of an acoustic event that presents to the ear something that goes beyond what is contained in neither the high nor the low note. For a modern definition see Capra and Luisi, 2014, p. 319.

dialectic is slightly different (Plato *Phaedo*, 102-3). He thinks that opposites generate each other: good generates bad, life generates death and death generates life... hence Plato's theory on reincarnation. However, these polarities do not exist at the same moment, otherwise they would lead to contradictions and oppositions.

Before becoming a student of Socrates, Plato had studied with Cratylus, a student of Heraclitus. Later, Plato wrote a dialogue in which he imagines Socrates trying to explain to Cratylus why Heraclitus is wrong and he, Socrates, is right. In this dialogue, titled *Cratylus*, Socrates and Cratylus discuss the meaning of words. Socrates thinks that words have a meaning, or that at least certain words like *goodness* or *beauty* have a precise meaning, that is not immediately accessible to comprehension but can be discovered. Plato's Socrates attacks the idea that Heraclitus expresses when he writes that one cannot step twice into the same river (fragment 91). If everything changes and is in a perpetual flux, it is impossible to have words that have a meaning:

"Socrates: Nor can we reasonably say, Cratylus, that there is knowledge at all, if everything is in a state of transition and there is nothing abiding; for knowledge too cannot continue to be knowledge unless always continuing to abide and exist. But if the very nature of knowledge changes, at the time when the change occurs there will be no knowledge; and if the transition is always going on, there will always be no knowledge, and, according to this view, there will be no one to know and nothing to be known." (Plato, 1937, *Cratylus*, 440a and b)

This is the dilemma. Eryximachus certainly speaks of dialectics, but of dialectics that envisages only two types of organizations: harmonious and disharmonious. Harmonious organizations favor the emergence of a state of health, happiness, pleasure, and love that leads to the most sacred dimensions of life. Contraries such as warmth and cold *alternate*. Disharmonious organizations lead to hatred, illness, chaos, and the destruction of all that humans have tried to create. There is then a state that includes contradictory states at the same moment, as when cold and warmth appear *simultaneously*. For Heraclitus, on the other hand, elements can be organized in multiple ways, notably harmonious and conflicted. Each type of organization can be creative or harmful:

1. A conflicting organization can be creative.
2. A creative organization is not necessarily constructive (an illness also constructs itself).
3. This implies that a harmonious or a creative organization can be destructive.

The difficulty lies in knowing when each possibility can be used therapeutically. In music, for example, I adore the seeking for harmony that I hear in Johann Sebastian Bach's *The Art of the Fugue*, and I am fascinated by Igor Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* that contains nothing other than dissonance.

<H3>Patients Who Suffer from Too Much Harmony

Eryximachus's discourse raises a long list of questions for psychotherapists, notably these:

1. Does a healthy spirit function coherently?

2. Must we harmonize the conflicting elements of an experience?
3. Must we live like La Fontaine's cicada or his ant?
4. Does the clarification of a conflict aim at the harmonization of the elements in conflict?

On these questions, it is possible for me to sketch the outlines of a few positions that have accompanied me over the years, and have been useful in my practice of psychotherapy.

<H4>The Difference of Potential and Interaction

Paul Boyesen (1993) taught the following model when I was studying with him in the 1970s. I am reconstructing it for you as I remember it, and in the way I use it in my work.

The basic idea is as follows. An electric current exists only if there is a difference of potential between two poles of opposite charges (+ and -). If the two poles have an identical charge, no current exists between them. If the two poles are too strongly opposed, an explosion can possibly destroy them both, and consequently cancel the difference of potential that created the energy. If two individuals fall madly in love with each other, something very powerful has happened between them. Something that facilitated the emergence of this love. In the case of love at first sight, two people fall in love with each other without really knowing each other. From what they were at this moment, love emerged.

This model is particularly relevant with regard to enmeshed couples,⁴⁵ where each one looks for a harmonious form of love, with no conflicts, no disagreements, and no disillusionments. They both try to change each other to render their relationship increasingly harmonious. One of the problems with such a couple can be that the more they manipulate each other, the less they look like who they were when they fell in love. They progressively move away from who they really are to obtain a relationship that they imagine to be harmonious. The difference in the potential energy of their original identity lessens as they fashion themselves to look more alike. They develop a common ideology and common esthetic, and gradually become a caricature of each other. This leveling of differences often leads to a loss of sexual activity. The moral of this story is that to want to blend water and soil is to transform a region into an ocean of mud. To create harmony between water and fire is a difficult art, according to Eryximachus, because it requires the creation of an entity that maintains the nature of both water and fire. Such a harmonious accord can only exist if the identity of each remains intact.

<H4>Relaxation as a Haven

In the course of my training, I learned a great many massage, meditation, and relaxation techniques that intend to create a sense of inner harmony. I have myself been able to appreciate the restorative pleasure that these states can bring about. They often relate to a sense of profound psychophysiological relaxation, like being cleansed from the inside, like

⁴⁵ French psychotherapists sometimes talk of "fusional couples."

being at peace with oneself and with what surrounds us, and finally offer a powerful impression of inner unity. When I practice one of these exercises, I am like a ship's pilot navigating out of life's storms and finding a quiet port where I can rest and regain strength. I try to help my patients discover such havens in the course of therapy; not only because such peaceful moments are pleasant, but also because they have a powerful healing effect on the soul's wounds. Sometimes they foster the rediscovery of the will to live, and to feel anew, from within, the flowing vigor of life.

For most people, a port is a stopover and not a goal. It is a place to load and unload merchandise. These states of inner harmony nurse consciousness and calm psychological turbulence, but they are not states that satisfactorily support the confrontation of life's complexities. People who would like to spend their life in such a state protect themselves not only from anxiety, but also from all the creative impulses that promote their existence.⁴⁶

In general, a psychotherapist chooses a type of psychotherapy with which his conscious and nonconscious potential finds a form of resonance which may have a beneficial effect on most of his patients. This criterion is not one of truth but of convenience. Some work well when they seek a harmony between the elements presented, as Eryximachus suggests; others are more effective when they support the tensions that keep an organism alive, according to Heraclitus. Some patients sometimes have the need of one style of therapy more than another; for others, in other situations, this distinction is irrelevant. A skillful psychotherapist uses clinical relevance to evaluate which of these states is relevant for a patient at a given moment. As soon as one accepts that different approaches require different philosophies (Bachelard, 1940), one can enlarge one's repertoire with other modes of intervention. This capacity to use several modes of intervention is often a key aspect of psychotherapeutic virtuosity.

Chinese and Japanese physicians also developed a form of dialectics that is close to that of Heraclitus, based on their understanding of the dynamics that balanced by the Ying and the Yang⁴⁷. My teacher of Chinese massage and acupuncture during the 1980s, Hiroshi Nozaki, taught us the theory of the elements used in Japanese medicine. He gave us the following example:

Vignette on metal in acupuncture. If you place metal between water and fire, the antagonism between the two elements can be mastered usefully. The metal permits the regulation of the tension that naturally exists between fire and water. Through the mastery of this possibility, humans have been able to develop, for example, the culinary arts or the steam engine.

For Hiroshi Nozaki, a medicine like metal does not harmonize fire and water, but creates new constructive possibilities between elements that remain antagonists.

⁴⁶ In his account of Ulysses' sojourn with the Calypso, Homer (Odyssey, 5) provides a good example of what can happen when someone lingers forever in a port.

⁴⁷ The Ying and Yang is discussed in chapter II, on Chinese modes of intervention.

<H1> Finding ways of digging for argued Truths

"People want something seemingly marvelous and uplifting like beauty, transcendence, cosmic consciousness, or the essence of being. But that's why they can't find the real treasures. They do not know what they are looking for." (Ajahn Brahm, 2006, *Mindfulness, Bliss, and Beyond*, p. 64)⁴⁸

Until now I have tried to convey how I understand Plato's Idealist vision, and its deep implicit impact on European culture in general, and on body psychotherapy in particular. I will now discuss a second aspect of Plato: his *pedagogy*. If his description of the soul was all that mattered, it is probable that we would only have fragments of how he and Pythagoras revisited the Egyptian metaphors on Ideas, the soul and the body. It is the combination of Plato the Idealist and Plato the teacher that makes Plato such a crucial figure. One could say that this combination of skills shaped what philosophy and science became: ways of exploring how humans can improve their way of thinking on the environment they are a part of. Plato mostly focused on opening a discussion on how humans can improve their moral sentiment, while Aristotle focuses on structuring a scientific approach.

I have the impression that Plato's pedagogy has had a deeper and wider influence on psychotherapy than his Idealism. Most psychotherapists have a clearer image of Socratic technic of enquiry, then of Plato's allegories on the soul. I will begin by a discussion of Plato's creation of a first academic institution, at the end of life. In his *Academia*, students could study with different teachers; while in traditional philosophical schools, students flocked around a single charismatic founding figure... which is the structure of most psychotherapy schools during the 20th century.

I will then pass to Plato in his forties. He had become an militant Idealist. To describe his position and its uncertainties, he developed a talent for philosophical fables that can convey a sense of notions he finds important, but that cannot yet be given a precise contour. Contrarily to some psychotherapists, he prefers to use *variants* of a myth to help the reader to intuitively grasp a notion, rather than focus on a single meaning and understanding of what is being explored. In this, he has a lot to teach to psychoanalysts who have defended a vision of Freud's unconscious in an unrelenting way during the 20th century; or Orgonomists who fanatically defended the reality of Wilhelm Reich's single-minded vision of cosmic energy and of "total" orgasm, as the only possible sign of mental health. Plato shows that if there exists nonnegotiable Truths, no one knows their exact contour, as the human mind does not have the capacity to create an exact representation of what they are.⁴⁹ He therefore required that his students should be able to explore different roads, and see if they all lead to the same place. Managing options was a key feature of Plato's pedagogy: optional metaphors, alternative forms of reasoning and the whole repertoire of psychological resources.

⁴⁸ Certains « veulent quelque chose qui leur paraisse merveilleux et élevé : le Beau, la transcendance, la conscience cosmique, ou l'essence de l'Être. Mais voilà pourquoi ils ne parviennent pas à trouver les véritables trésors : ils n'ont aucune idée de ce qu'ils recherchent. (Brahm, 2006, p. 92) »

⁴⁹ This theme will be explored in more detail in the sections on Hume and Kant.

Finally, I will pass to the young revolted Plato, often biased when he admires Socrates's way of coming "to grips with" an issue (Phaedo, 95b), of fighting against poor thinking of those who teach useless theories to gain power and money over a population. His strategies against intellectual crooks Plato calls sophists, are sometimes close to strategies used by some therapists to tackle "resistances" which defend a pathological state against any attempt to modify it. At the beginning of his psychoanalytic career, Freud already discovered that he "had to overcome a psychic force in the patients which was opposed to pathogenic ideas becoming conscious. (Breuer & Freud, 1895, IV, p. 352)" The need to tackle resistance to change in psychotherapy is a notion that has spread to a variety of psychotherapeutic modalities ever since (Young et al., 2003, chapter I; Watzlawick, 1978).

<H2> Creating an academia in which experts explore the foundations of human knowledge by sharing their resources

"Philosophers before Plato, and even after, presented their opinions. They seldom, like Heraclites, manifested their contempt for their opponents. From Plato onwards, philosophers discussed the ideas of their opponents; and Aristotle did likewise. But Plato is the first, and maybe the last, who transformed such a discussion in a real battle. [...] He would try to polarize the readers, and force them to choose between us and them, between the good and the bad. The bad guys are those who are wrong and who want to fool the readers; while we are those who follow justice towards truth and goodness. [...] You say what you say because you're an enemy of the proletariat (Marx); you say what you say because your neurosis makes you think in this way (Freud)." (Castoriadis 1986, *Sur Le Politique de Platon*, p. 26)⁵⁰

I have already begun to suggest that Socrates, Plato's idealized teacher, was a man who preferred questions to preaching. According to Plato's early dialogues, what Socrates mostly taught was not theories and visions, but ways of sharing thoughts and battling against the traps that lure a person's thoughts. I have the impression that Plato remained faithful to the notion that the heart of philosophy is *enquiring*. A philosopher uses a theme to explore all the resources of the mind, to discover how it can resonate as adequately as possible with one's mind and one's soul.

⁵⁰ "Les philosophes avant Platon, et même après, exposent leurs opinions. Rarement, comme Héraclite ils ont une remarque méprisante pour les autres. À partir de Platon, ils discutent les idées de leurs adversaires ; et Aristote le fera aussi. Mais Platon est le premier et peut-être le dernier philosophe à transformer cette discussion en véritable combat. (...) À vouloir vraiment polariser les lecteurs, les sommer de choisir entre eux et nous, entre les méchants et les bons. Les méchants sont ceux qui se trompent et qui veulent tromper le monde ; et nous autres qui sommes dans la vérité et le bien, dans la justice. Quitte parfois à cesser d'argumenter pour simplement ridiculiser dans les cas extrêmes (...) : Vous dites ce que vous dites parce que vous êtes un ennemi du prolétariat (Marx) ; vous dites ce que vous dites parce que votre névrose vous amène à le dire (Freud). » (Castoriadis 1986, *Sur Le Politique de Platon*, p.26)

After Socrates's death, Plato fled from Athens. He was utterly distressed, upset, disenchanted and disillusioned by Athens, its democracy and its inhabitants⁵¹. As he visited various parts of the Mediterranean, he met other important masters and schools. Some aspects of what they taught influenced him deeply, but his critical mind saw limits in everything he learned. Even the Idealism of the Egyptians and the Pythagoreans remained an unfinished thesis for him.

When he returned to Athens, he founded his most important achievement: an institution called the *Academy*, which is the name of the gardens that surrounded the building. There a pupil was trained by a variety of experts in their fields. The Academy contained a library, lecture halls, and rooms for particularly gifted students.⁵²This institution has inspired all the universities of the world.

This creation has fundamentally transformed the dynamics of research, as it forced great minds to confront each other publicly, in front of their students. This ritual requires that even the greatest masters master accept that they are necessarily the heroes of a *common* adventure that will help humanity to come closer to Truth... during the following centuries. From now on it become official that no one can teach everything. Plato's homage to Socrates is to present him as the last master... the one who demonstrated that solitary thinkers could not develop the tools of philosophy further, if they remain solitary charismatic explorers. In *The Phaedo*, Plato shows how useful disciples can be when a great master is confronted with his own death. With his Academy, he gives birth to a new intellectual resource: dignified uncompromising collaboration. His later dialogues teach how such discussions can become constructive. Hence the importance of presenting philosophy as a series of eclectic dialogues.

Plato did not write on the Academy. It is the institution and its development that implemented what Plato wanted to convey. Institutional thinking, like fables, have an independent life of their own, which is more complex and pervasive than what can be conveyed by a text. It can be said that with the Academy, the development of an institution can generate forms of intellectual creativity that would be spoiled if they were assimilated to a personal theory which can be written and preached. Manifestly, Plato protected his school from explicit written theorizing.

To appreciate the fundamental innovation proposed by the Academia, it is useful to consider that until then students were trained in the school founded by a charismatic teacher and his team. They were asked to become experts in what was taught in that school. Pupils would defend the ideas of these masters. They acquired a virtuosity in developing the points of view of Heraclitus, Pythagoras or Socrates. The advantage of this strategy is that students acquired an in-depth virtuosity on how to use the tools that were developed by their school. Some of these students developed a more eclectic training by studying in several

⁵¹ Again, the parallel with Reichians is striking. They also were shocked by the U.S.A. democracy that condemned their master to a prison in which he died, because of his theories.

⁵² For more on this Academy, and on idealism, see Sloterdijk (1998, preliminary remarks, pp. 11-15).

schools. Today's psychotherapists are still trained in such a system. Most are psychoanalysts, systemic therapists, cognitive, behavioral therapists, Gestalt and/or body psychotherapists, and so on. The rules of health systems in Europe and North America leave little room for more eclectic forms of training. I have repeatedly mentioned that, for Plato and Aristotle, Ideas are not negotiable (Aristotle, *Politics*, III.XI). This position is well represented by a school, as it is structured around a coherent approach.

After leaving Athens, Plato experienced the benefit of having met a variety of masters. It helped him to heal, at least partially, the wound generated by his dependence on Socrates. He could now clearly see that each approach had its strengths and weaknesses. This process helped him to create his own web of opinions, analysis and biases. He wanted to teach. He needed to teach. Teaching seems to have a part of his genius. But he was aware of his limits. He did not want his students to become as dependent on him as he was of Socrates. He had also learned that discussions between masters were at least as instructive as discussions with a master. By creating his *Academia*, Plato proposed an alternative to schools, to masters and to dependence on a single approach. Socrates's pedagogical genius was transformed into a particularly efficient pedagogical tool: an institution that defends no specific theory, but promotes perpetual constructive dialogues. Plato hoped that, in the future, a student could be a witness of what emerges when he participates in discussions between equally competent masters; and he hoped that this experience would help these students to discover their own experience of Truth. To achieve this aim, it is crucial that a student studies with several masters *simultaneously*. This is the crucial different between the eclectic student who studies in one school, and then, later, in another. Being simultaneously in contact with different masters is a key element of Plato's institutional proposal.

In the *Academia*, all students are trained by different equally competent and charismatic teachers, who present competing forms of knowledge. All are experts in their domains, and all present a synthesis which is theirs. The requirement of presenting a nonnegotiable knowledge is thus met. Water and earth are not mixed to become mud. Their Students are asked to understand and integrate what is taught, and then to blend what they learn to create an equally nonnegotiable personal synthesis⁵³. What is not said in this idealized vision of *Academia*, is that since then the history of academia has shown that these combinations of strong personalities often lead to political and financial competitions. This often introduces a bias in the synthesis the student attempts to integrate, and in the creativity of some researchers.

The Academy was designed to teach how students can create their own blend of what was known and thought at the time. This implied listening to the most important teachers of each science and each philosophical stance, and then learning to discuss with pairs and masters how to manage what they had acquired during their courses. Like Socrates, Plato wanted us - the pupil and/or the reader - to passionately ponder on how to use our capacity to think in the most constructive way as possible, using the best possible contemporary formulation

⁵³ This is a core traditional function of a doctoral thesis in the 20th century.

as our mind sharpener. This aim only makes sense if one accepts that hot debates, not agreement, are necessary ingredients of human knowledge. *The Apology of Socrates*, written by Plato, is a plea for the necessity that such deliberations require utter freedom of thought and speech, and a plea against the obligation of following the preconceived consensus of a majority. Plato, and then Aristotle, proceeded from the conviction that we all have the same truths within each of us. Therefore, all can learn to increase their contact with universal truths.

Since then, academic institutions have explored all sorts of possibilities, and went far beyond what the enlightened minds of Plato and Aristotle imagined. They left aside, as often as possible, solitary thinkers who teach an individually constructed message, however brilliant it may be. They continued to focus on formulations that go beyond what a single mind can conceive. History has shown that the pooling of solitary and academic research is the safest bet. Galileo, Darwin, Freud, Jung and Reich have produced approaches outside of academia that remain invaluable. As we shall see in my chapter on Darwin, variety is the solution for human endeavors. Kant, Hegel and Husserl are example of university professors of philosophy who presented highly original philosophical system. Before Kant, most philosophers were nonacademic independent persons, who often refused to take the responsibility of founding a school. There never will be only one solution, however efficient it may be. Presently psychotherapists are looking for ways of combining what is produced by schools and academia. As they explore this possibility, they discover the inherent difficulties of such an association (Pauli and Jung, 2014).

Academic history has shown that science, wisdom and philosophy will need thousands of years before the small, fuzzy, slow and heteroclitic brains of even the most brilliant humans can weave something that comes close to what is needed: a vision that can enforce peace and respect between humans and what surrounds them. Hoping that their proposal would involve generations of researchers, Plato and Aristotle wrote passionately, so as to transmit their visions and hopes to colleagues. Their pedagogy shows that they hoped that these colleagues would create a philosophical and scientific tradition that would last.

<H2> Learning to Speculate With Rigor and Imagination

"To describe what the soul actually is would require a very long account, altogether a task for a god in every way; but to say what it is like is humanly possible and takes less time."
(Introduction to Plato by Cooper, *Phaedrus*, 246a, p. 524)

<H3> Playing around with different intellectual tools is one of the basic tools of intellectual creativity

In the world of popular computers, most users use either Windows or Apple operating systems. These operating systems, as well as others, are well differentiated, even if they have influenced each other. Yet, nearly every year, they need to be upgraded. Each upgrade is a new version of how to solve a set of issues in a given approach of computing. There is something similar in Plato's way of teaching Idealism and the body/soul metaphor. Every time

Plato writes about it, he proposes new fables and new arguments which helps him to sharpen his perception of what is a deep intuition explored by generations of masters. And, each time, he conveys to his readers that they should never be satisfied by a single set of representations or a favorite fable. As explicit reasoning and imagination have limited powers, a pupil needs to discover ways of playing with multiple variations of a single theme. *The Phaedo* is particularly poignant dialogue that demonstrates the need to explore and enjoy different versions of a theme, so as to become able to zoom on the essential impressions that allows us approach a relevant intuitive preconscious sensing of what the philosopher explores. There is, up to today, no simpler way of conveying what truth is about... even when no capital letters are used.

<H3>The Phaedo: sorting intuitions of truth

I will later say more on the condemnation of Socrates. Plato wrote three dialogues on the death of Socrates. In the first, *The Apology of Socrates*, he seems to remain close to what his master said at his trial. Socrates ends his defense by envisioning two forms of death. He does not know which one awaits him, but both seem liberating to him:

1. The first type of death is a death where only one thing happens: the fact of no longer existing, no longer thinking, no longer feeling. This scenario is already perceived as a relief for Socrates who is seventy years old, and tired of having to bear the whips and scorns of decadent Athens.

2. The second type of death is a death where the soul, freed from its bodily constraints, can fly to the kingdom of Hades. There, Socrates will be judged by a god who is much more competent in the matter than an assembly of citizens who cast their votes motivated by personal political inclinations. Socrates sees himself on the way to rejoin Homer and Ulysses and a host of people that he has long admired. He hopes that this will be the future life of his soul.

In the last of these dialogues, *The Phaedo*, Plato lets visit Socrates in prison, when he is about to drink the hemlock - the poison the Athenians have prepared for him. He puts words in his teacher's mouth, and has him tell the fable that establishes not only his own Idealism, but also his way of exploring this perspective.

The first outstanding feature of *The Phaedo* is its poignancy. To explore a philosophical theme such as the function of the soul you need to be as passionate as a poet. Only a fervent interest for a theme can mobilize all your resources, emotional and cognitive, and focus them on a theme you want to explore as thoroughly as possible. Seductive arguments, comfortable logical beauty and the clarity of a representation, are not enough to ensure that you are getting closer to the core of your subject in a relevant way. All these tools are required, but more is needed before something like a form of conviction can emerge.

In *The Phaedo*, the poignancy is the suspense that the situation conveys. The protagonists are friends and pupils. They enter the cell for a last meeting with the great master. Socrates does not feel resentful of having to die. He even appears to be glad, as he has "good hope that some future awaits men after death, as we have been told for years, a much better future" for good men (*Phaedo*, 1997, 63c). His soul will probably be able to eternally dialogue

with Gods and great men such as Homer. However, drama emerges as soon as some of the protagonists ask Socrates to explain how he can be so sure that this will happen. Serenely Socrates accepts the discussion. He refuses to compromise, and encourages a thorough exploration of all possible ways he can imagine of finding out if he has a soul, and if it will indeed be able to meet other souls.⁵⁴ The reader enters into this discussion, asking himself if Socrates will remain convinced and serene when the discussion ends.

During this discussion, Plato's Socrates even discusses the possibility that his body/soul theory could just be an ingenious and seductive⁵⁵ metaphor invented to face death as optimistically as possible (*Phaedo*, 87a-89a). Some of the protagonists, probably trained in the Pythagorean school of Thrace, accept that it cannot be doubted that a body has a soul, but do not see how it can survive without a body. Others assume that a soul may live several lives, but not for eternity. The reader may sympathies with Socrates's hope that he will soon be able to spend endless time discussing with the Homer, Aesop who wrote such wonderful fables, and the Greek sage Solon, the famous statesman of the ancient Athenian aristocracy. But he is also given enough tools to generate his own impressions on those hopes, and even to invent optional arguments that are sometimes indirectly suggested by Plato.

<H3>The Statesman: learning to live with a labyrinth of arguments

In *The Phaedo* Socrates also explores the relevance of different modes of argumentation. He even uses sophisms to create a new turn in a discussion. For instance, he shows that opposites are often dialectically related (*The Phaedo*, 71b-e). He begins his argumentation by reminding his friends that a cold object may become warmer, and a warm object may become colder. He then generalizes from such examples, and assumes that all opposites are dialectically related. Thus life leads to death, and death to life: therefore there must be souls who can create that dynamic link.

At the end of his life Plato explored this strategy in a particularly relentless way in *The Statesman* (Castoriadis, 1986). A "visitor"⁵⁶ is asked to help the young Socrates to find a robust definition of what a statesman should be. This visitor drills the young Socrates through a maze of different forms of argumentation that, each time, lead nowhere. The student is asked to explore how a variety of modes of reasoning and metaphors could help him to define the duties and functions of a statesman, exploring each strategy to its ultimate conclusion... even if at the end the young Socrates cannot feel satisfied by a conclusive argument. The mind of the reader becomes something like a rat in a maze who looks for clues that could lead to a more satisfying environment.

Learning to play with arguments has now become more important than hoping to conclude. The old Plato has learned that finding an easy solution to important issues is nearly

⁵⁴ Some of these comments have been quoted or mentioned in the sections on Idealism.

⁵⁵ "Ingenious" is the term used by Jowett and "seductive" by Monique Dixsaut, in her French translation edited by Luc Brisson. The term "elegance" is used in Cooper's volume of the Dialogues.

⁵⁶ In his last dialogues, Plato sometimes used masters that framed a discussion using different strategies than those of Socrates.

impossible. It will probably take several centuries. This slow discovery process may have been experienced as deeply irritating. In the meantime, philosopher needs to explore the maze of possible solutions as thoroughly as possible, with the desperate energy of someone who is fully aware of the crucial importance of finding a way to heal the blindness of human imagination.

<H3>It Is More Comfortable to Think with Fables than with Baseless Speculations

During the fifth century before our common area, philosophical allegories were used in India, China, Persia and Egypt. This was yet another Asian tool that ancient Greeks learned to develop in a spectacular way, since Homer at least. But it is probably in Plato's Idealistic dialogue that fables became a particularly efficient way of exploring a philosophical theme⁵⁷. Plato associated striking images and allegories with invented legends, myths and gods. I have already mentioned his invention of Atlantis as a legendary ancient city, and mentioned the allegory of the cave. I also showed how this allegory could be inserted in comments that allows other authors to illustrate their thoughts. Thus, 2000 years later, Jung used Plato's cave allegory to describe certain aspects of what he called the psyche, by contrasting his psychology with Plato's philosophy. In *The Phaedrus* (246a-b, 250d-252b), he introduces the allegory of the charioteer, and refers to the Orphic myth of love as a winged creature. The use of this striking imagery is probably one of the factors that popularized Plato's exploration of what Idealism tries to describe.

Aristotle tried to transform Idealism into an explicit system.⁵⁸ That obliged him to make pronouncements on a number of questions that could not yield any useful answers at that time. His way of thinking remains an enlightening reference, but it sometimes becomes an entanglement of arguments as vain as the ones by Byzantine theologians as to the sex of angels. Plato's fables have the benefit of not proposing a plausible explanation on the origin and the functioning of transpersonal forces. It contents itself to make people attentive to the phenomenon, and to draw their attention on its massive impact on how individual thinks. Those that use the term *transpersonal* often have the tendency to suggest "explanations" of this phenomenon that are finally more fanciful than Plato's fables. He was thus able to convey how important it was for most humans that some general Ideas grow on firm ground. There is for him a need to convey solid stable meanings. He does not know what this firm ground is made of, where it can be found... but he at least hopes that a way to ground our thoughts exists. If this hope is shattered, Plato can only foresee endless chaos in humanity's future.

The same can be said of Plato's metaphoric distinction between soul and body. The terms are not properly defined, and there is not proof that the distinctions correspond to a reality. Yet his fables on the subject has had an immense impact on crowds and some of the most brilliant minds for at least two thousand years. The allegory could be used as a common basis to explore a wide diversity of interesting aspects of human nature. The danger of using such

⁵⁷ Droz (1992), Veyne (1983).

⁵⁸ Plato, Letter VII, 1950, II, p. 1185.

metaphoric tools is that it makes it difficult to differentiate between reasoning and an emotional commitment. This partly explains the confusion between forms of thinking (knowledge, ideology, beliefs, etc.) that characterizes Idealism.⁵⁹ For the same reasons, using allegories in psychotherapy can be helpful. There is still not enough data on the stuff impressions are made of to produce a detailed reliable psychological theory. This will be illustrated in the second half of this book.

The Phaedo as well as *The Phaedrus* and *The Symposium*, were written when Plato returned to Athens as a convinced Idealist. They are beautiful examples of this way of blending poetry, imagination, poignancy, beauty, seductive ideas, beliefs, invented mythology. This genre was manifestly a highly efficient pedagogical tool, as they remain gems in the history or European literature.

<H2>Socratic dentistry, or how drill in the thoughts of others to clean the cavities of their thoughts from decay

Plato's *dialoguing* is a method designed for research and teaching. Plato does not believe in neutral form of collaboration between philosophers. The games played by intellectuals is tough. Plato may use his dialoguing techniques to ridicule somebody he disagrees with, to teach pupils ways of detecting what he calls sophists and charlatans, or to help a pupil to improve his intuition of a deep truth.

Plato presents Socrates as a master of how to enter in debates between intellectuals, and how to clean what is often a territory of nice smiles that hide land mines.

<H3>Absolute and relative scientific objectivity.

Those who refer to Plato's Idealism as a well-defined proposition, tend to distinguish an objective reality from a subjective reality. A non-objective truth is one which depends on personal interests (beliefs, financial, ideological, sensorial, and so on). One then assumes two types of objective truths:

1. *Psychological objectivity.* Ways of thinking and perceiving that have been scientifically observed by psychologists.
2. *Objective reality.* A reality that exists independently from how humans perceive it.

This distinction is useful, but I have the impression that it is insufficient for scientists who have a long history of theories, methods of measurement, mathematical models, and a partial apprehension of "objective" phenomena. For example there is a history of how the speed of light can be measured. A history of instruments which have allowed humans to measure the movements of planets, and discover the existence of electrons, cells and galaxies. There are reasons to assume that, in a hundred years, scientists will describe a universe

⁵⁹ I am grateful to Nic Minden for this remark at the occasion of a meeting in Lausanne in June 2007.

that is at least partially different from what they imagine today (Capra and Luisi, 2014, p. 2).

Objectivity is no more an absolute notion. A fact can only be more or less objective. It has become a relative notion which depends on the variety of people, ways of measuring and scientific methods of research that confirm a hypothesis. A scientific fact becomes increasingly robust if all available scientific methods replicate its contours. This brings us back to Plato, but the Plato who taught us to use all available relevant metaphors, facts and modes of reasoning, to explore a particular aspect of reality. It is mostly this Plato that has had a lasting influence on scientific methodology. Since then scientists have always required a disciplined and virtuoso mobilization of all the resources of the scientific community. A scientist which has this type of demand is not just an academic or a believer in science: his heart is involved in the ethics of science and research, which implies a mistrust of what is appreciated as an absolute truth at a given moment of history.

This pedagogical Plato is not a skeptic. He believes that psychological and objective reality exist. But he acknowledges that humanity is in the process of sharpening its intellectual agility and its capacity to sense what reality is about. He has not yet found a niche in current psychotherapeutic theorization. Psychotherapists need to learn a way developing professional skills that can help them to earn a living and to help patients who suffer from difficulties science cannot yet describe and explain in a reliable way. They therefore still need to go to schools which teach approaches based on empirical trial and error procedures, developed by charismatic masters, that can at least sometimes help. I have already quoted Pierre Janet (1923), considered to be the founder of psychotherapy, on the idea that the capacity to cure is independent from the scientific robustness of a therapeutic approach. To illustrate the validity of his analysis, he mentions that successful healing methods already existed in the Egyptian antiquity (p. 9). He also mentions contemporary "mind cures" of the Christian scientists "Mrs. Eddy" (p. 13), and "the psycho-analysis of M. le Dr S. Freud (de Vienne)" (p. 26). From Plato the pedagogue, psychotherapists mostly use his way of using allegories to explore the deeper layers of a mind that academic experimental psychology cannot yet describe in a usable way. One of the skills developed by psychoanalysts and their pupils, such as Reich and Perls, is a way of neutralizing the mental automatisms that tend to maintain patients in a psychopathological way of adapting to who they, who they live with and their ecological niche. It is this Socratic approach that I will now examine.

<H3>Initiating a scientific quest for truth: hard science and psychotherapeutic sophistries

In his early dialogues, Plato describes a Socrates at war against false theories, preached by people who used them to gain money and power. Those he called Sophists.

Sophists were popular figures in Greece. They are often charismatic itinerant professional teachers, who provided advice in matters that ranged from philosophy and morality to rhetoric. Like the coaches of today, they proposed ways helping people to deal more efficiently with the matters of life. Before a discussion and a vote in democratic debates, citizens sought their help to present their ideas in an appealing even convincing way (Kolb, 1990,

ch. 3; Lyotard, 1983, pp. 16-55). Some of them were highly interesting and influent teachers, like Protagoras, close to Democritus, who wrote a famous book called *Refutations*, on the notion that there exist no absolute truths. Earning money by wanting others to think as one does is, for Idealists, a crookery. As some sophists were not only wonderful rhetoricians, but also highly gifted persons, most citizens followed one of these masters in function of what appealed to them.

A vision or an analysis is, for Socrates and Plato, a point of view. Using opinions in mundane meetings, like in a Ping-Pong game, leads nowhere. Hoping that you can vote on truth in a general assembly is just as misleading⁶⁰. This position is developed in a fable showing that a ship and its crew could not survive if a skilled captain was democratically replaced by sailors chosen in a lottery every morning. "They don't understand that a true captain must pay attention to the seasons of the year, the sky, the stars, the winds, and all that pertains to his craft. (Plato, 1997, *The Republic*, VI, 487-490)"

The search for Truth is a serious debate, as it is the only way of learning how to manage oneself and societies in a constructive way (Phaedo 97-98). This passion for Truth is one of the core strengths of Idealism. It supported the need to discover methods which could allow humanity to construct an increasingly robust sense of what is true. I have noticed that a similar form of contempt can be observed among "hard scientists" such as mathematicians and physicists, when they meet a psychologist. For them human sciences cannot be seriously called a science. Even biological engineering is, for them, already based on "softer" sciences⁶¹.

Plato's philosophy is, of course, not scientific in a modern sense; but most present day hard scientists have deep respect for Greek philosophers, such as Pythagoras, who fought for truths argued with mathematical and logical tools. These philosophers were, for twentieth century hard scientists, the first to take a step in the right direction, and to actively fight against theories based on attractiveness, faith, ideology, conformity with power or a dominant form of wisdom. Ancient Greek idealists like Thales, Pythagoras and Aristotle were the first who realized the power of assuming that mathematics could correspond to the structure of the universe, and that improving mathematical formulations was the most important way of approaching truth. This general attitude does not often include Plato, who is for them a more complicated figure.

<H3>A war against automatic ways of thinking, and a fight to discover new options

In *The Phaedo*, Socrates is described as one of the grand masters of history; while in *The Symposium* he is only a genius. In the dialogues of young Plato, Socrates becomes a sort

⁶⁰ This preoccupation is also a founding principle in contemporary democracies. In France, "the nineteenth-century reformers expected above all" that education could "ensure the proper function of universal suffrage by producing citizens capable of voting" (Pierre Bourdieu, 1979, 8, p. 414).

⁶¹ The difficulty of creating a constructive dialogue between a physicist and a psychiatrist is beautifully illustrated in the correspondence of Wolfgang Pauli, the Nobel prize quantum physicist, and Karl Gustav Jung.

of witch hunter and shaman, whose mission it was to help people to go beyond the illusions sold in the market of truths. He wanted his fellow citizens to become hungry for more reliable and deeper truths. Every time a sophist came to town, he would beat on his drum, gather his troops of young admirers, and confront the rascal. Socrates did not use physical torture, like the inquisitors with Gnostics; but some of his interventions were a form of polite intellectual sadism that could destroy his opponent's reputation as a thinker.

In most Socratic dialogues, Plato describes his master using intellectual guerilla tactics to outwit an opponent, using irony⁶², jest, or confusing questioning. Socrates most frequent tactic was to "requires that his counterpart use brief phrases and even that he only contents himself with an assent. That puts the interlocutor in a position of dependence or submission. He is definitely manipulated by the first speaker. If there were the possibility to hold a longer dialogue with the first speaker, the counterpart would find his proper ground. Thus, *the intent, before anything else, is to disconcert.*" (Roustang, 2009, *Avant-propos*, p. 13, translated by Marcel Duclos). For Gaskin (1993, p. xxiii) Socrates "backed up by yes-men and opposed by the philosophically naïve who are doomed to confusion".

Socrates's most devastating attacks were often preceded by a fit of seductive polite submissive formulas, or a fatherly protective concern which attempts to transform all interlocutors in pupils. Similar strategies are sometimes used by psychotherapists like Fritz Perls⁶³. The aim is then to help a patient to perceive explicitly automatic adaptive schemas. These schemas are used since such a long time that the patient does not even realize that options she or he finds inevitable could be replaced by a wider variety of options. The psychotherapist mostly uses these Socratic strategies to help the patient to become aware of these unproductive automatic reactions, and to discover options are available.

Plato sometimes acknowledged the manipulative strategies of his master. For example, in *The Protagoras* dialogue, Socrates has in front of him an admirable "sophist," one who was respected by most Athenians, and Greeks in general. The dialogue shows how Socrates tries to make him fall in all the traps he imagines, and how cleverly, and kindly, Protagoras avoids them all⁶⁴. In the history of Athenian philosophy, Protagoras was a star. He was an impressive and elegant thinker who defended positions that were not Plato's. It is probable that given his stature and reputation, the young Plato did not dare to caricature him.

The seductions and violence of oratorical arts are beautifully described in *The Symposium*. Eminent Athenian intellectual personalities gathered to deliver speeches on love. When Socrates finally intervenes (193 onwards) he begins by praising everything he had heard. His immediate predecessor, Agathon, gave such an "amazing speech" that he could only remain "tong tied" (Symposium, 1997, 198a). And then, suddenly, instead of stating his point of view like all the others did before, he uses his question and answer technic on Aga-

⁶² See Gomperz (1905, II.II.4., p. 49).

⁶³ A filmed example is Fritz Perls's session with Gloria, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8y5tuJ3Sojc>. Other examples can be found in Fritz Perls' 1969 *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim*.

⁶⁴ Like Socrates, Protagoras's defiance of official religion caused his downfall.

thon to show that his predecessors had followed the wrong track, and that only he can discover which questions should be answered before a proper statement on love can be made. He also insists that no one really knows what love is, but one can describe some of its manifestations and form a relevant description that allows us to come close to sensing the underlying truths of this phenomenon. Once again, this intervention is a manifestation of how Plato's Socrates could be, and of why he was often experienced as obnoxious. This is yet another example that shows he preferred questions to answers, inquiring on interesting and enlightening point of views to visions used to conclude. It also shows how surprising and skillful, seductive and convincing, Socrates's oratorical art can become.

<H3>The Socratic Therapist

"I am wiser than this man; it is likely that neither of us knows anything worthwhile, but he thinks he knows something when does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know; so I am likely to be wiser than he to this small extent, that I do not think I know what O do not know." (Plato, 1997, *The Apology*, 21d)

Socrates gradually became an emblematic figure in psychotherapy; a sort of precursor and model for many psychotherapists.⁶⁵ This Socrates is presented to us as a sort of hygienist of the mind, like a hunter of false truths, a demand to think as honestly as possible. What he tries to encourage is to avoid needing to believe one knows, and to accept that one's inner theories are inevitably an incomplete formulation of something we deeply sense. Even if Socrates did not have certainties, he is described by Plato as a master who has a keen and reliable sense that some paths are more constructive than others. Socratic questioning is used by psychotherapists to open curtains that hide windows and doors from a patient's imagination, so that he can at last envisage a new realm of possibilities. As already mentioned in the previous section, the psychotherapist who uses Socratic methods may be kind and supportive, but he knows that he is playing rough games with defense systems that may create pain, violence and even perverse manipulative strategies.

Roustang (2009) was a Jesuit who trained in Lacanian psychoanalysis and hypnotherapy. He distinguished a Socratic therapy from a Platonic therapy in the following manner. Plato wants to treat the being (or the subject or the soul), whereas Socrates is content to reach that in which a person "excels, his quality, his particular virtue, where his activity attains its perfection, its fulness" (Roustang, 2009, 2, p. 50, translated by Marcel Duclos).

In the writings of Plato, Socrates's strategy can be broken down into three phases:

1. *The torpedo*. This is probably Socrates's most famous technique. The Socrates who asks questions lays bare the ready-made thoughts of the other.

⁶⁵ Freud sometimes refers both to Socrates and to Plato. Jung often refers to Plato. But neither proposes Socrates as the archetype of the psychotherapist. Because they both had a solid philosophical education, they knew that Socrates and psychotherapists did not work on the same material. I do not know how the relationship between Socrates and the image of the psychotherapist became so intimately linked (Quétier, 2010; Roustang, 2009; Stein, 1991; Lageman, 1989; Chessick, 1982), but I do notice it is firmly rooted in the discussions with colleagues.

Socrates the torpedo chooses to use irony and skepticism to unmask the falsehood of certain forms of reasoning and fashionable beliefs. Often irritating, Socrates does not disqualify a logical argument. He prefers to deconstruct it, like a watch maker who tries to understand how a clock has been assembled.

2. *The midwife*. Socrates, whose mother is said to have been a midwife, perceives his work as the midwifery of the Truths in an individual's soul, when these are born in the mind. In psychotherapy, this function is often taken up in what Jung calls a "process of individuation"; that is, "the process by which a person becomes a psychological 'individual,' that is a separate, indivisible unity or 'whole'" (Jung, 1939, p. 275). This notion does not presuppose some general truths but an idea that an individual can be more or less himself, more or less conformed to his essence. The midwife metaphor is often used in the "humanistic" psychotherapies, such as the Gestalt therapy of Fritz Perls or the Biodynamic psychology of Gerda Boyesen.

3. *Self-knowledge*. Socrates's "know thyself" is mostly defined by Plato as a necessity of self-exploration to discover the Truths contained in one's soul. The imperative to know oneself has little to do with what psychotherapists ask their patients to discover relative to the history of their drives.⁶⁶

Only the first strategy—that of the torpedo—can be associated with the Socrates who hunts down prejudice (that which is judged even before the start of the conversation). The second strategy is taken up by the psychotherapists who assume that there exists a fundamental self, a human being's authentic center.

In the *Meno*, written during Plato's Idealist period, Socrates helps a young, uneducated slave discover in himself the rules of geometry and mathematics.⁶⁷ At first, the questions reveal the young adolescent's vague intuition of the properties of a triangle and the square root. The adolescent is able to intuitively respond correctly with a yes or a no to Socrates's questions without any explicit understanding of the rules of mathematics known to Meno and to Socrates. Yet gradually, these rules begin to rise up out of the haze, like a volcano out of the ocean, to create an island. With this demonstration, Plato wants to suggest that after an advanced education, it is not one or two islands that break the surface of consciousness, but entire continents of truths. Knowledge is therefore a form of *reminiscence*:⁶⁸ I remember what my soul acquired in the world of Ideas.

This strategy is used in psychotherapy to help a person become conscious of what is within, what is repressed, or one's intimate wishes. Socrates serves as a model that inspires

⁶⁶ Quétier (2010).

⁶⁷ Technically, mathematics and geometry describe conceptual entities that are not Ideas. In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle (1991, A.6.15, p. 13) writes that, for Plato, numbers are somewhere between sensate things and Ideas. They are different, on the one hand, from sensate objects, in that they are eternal and immobile; and, on the other hand, from Ideas, in that they are a plurality of similar examples, while the Idea is, in and of itself, a one, individual, and singular reality.

⁶⁸ See also Plato, *Phaedrus* 249.

certain psychotherapists to question a patient in great detail until he becomes more conscious, more explicit with regard to one of his organismal practices. The psychotherapist proposes to the patient that he comprehends, in as a detailed a manner as possible, an aspect of his negative impulses, his needs, and his resources.

This early portrait of Socrates was the first great philosophical myth that Plato proposed to humanity. What Plato offers us is a representation of the philosophical inquiry, of the searching philosopher. There is nonetheless a commonality between psychotherapists and young Plato's Socrates: the necessity to destabilize the mind, to cleanse it from its prejudices, so that it can at last perceive, with enlightened clarity and benevolence, what is really happening around and within oneself. This fundamental overture remains young Plato's essential message. To then decide that this overture ought to focus on the messages of the unconscious mind or of the soul's hidden wisdom, is already the beginning of a closure. Such closure is sometimes necessary. An individual cannot open himself up to everything, and assimilate it. Thus there is a necessity to choose what is important at a given moment: a choice that differentiates the exploration in psychotherapy, the exploration in philosophy, or the exploration in meditation. If an individual goes from the exploration of his mind to that of his soul, he must first clean his mental glasses. Each form of self-exploration creates automatic ways of focusing in a virtuoso way on certain inner dynamics. Thus, being able to free associate, as Freud would propose 2'300 years later, is to try to eliminate all forms of mental prejudices, and let spring forth in words all that takes shape in the mind. I notice that often those who subject themselves to this discipline rarely become sensitive to what opens up in meditation. The inverse is equally true. To open oneself by following one method inevitably leads to the establishment of a way of thinking and perceiving. The mind becomes particularly sensitive to certain inner dynamics and develops intellectual structures better able to appreciate them. All of this is put in place, thanks to a regular practice. Plato, who believes in only one kind of true thought, does not pay attention to the formation of these mental habits. All the same, his Socrates is a startling example that is it impossible not to become, with experience, a heap of mannerisms that sometimes resemble tics. There is a Socratic style, a Socratic way to perplex the other, and a Socratic form of inquiry that is found in almost all of Plato's early dialogues. Only later does Plato present a Socrates who will sometimes have a healing and hospitable voice. However, this version, we are told, would be more Plato than Socrates.

<H1>The Dangers of Idealism⁶⁹

"Now I want to prophesy to those who convicted me, for I am at the point when men prophesy most, when they are about to die. I say gentlemen, to those who voted to kill me, that vengeance will come upon you immediately after my death, a vengeance much harder to bear than that which you took in killing me. You did this in the belief that you would avoid

⁶⁹ See also Popper (2013). *The Open Society and Its Enemies*.

giving an account of your life, but I maintain that quite the opposite will happen to you. There will be people to test you, whom I now held back, but you did not notice it. They will be more difficult to deal with as they will be younger and you will resent them more⁷⁰." (Plato, 1997, *Apology*, III.39c, p. 421)

In the preceding chapters, I have described Idealistic propositions that are often considered good reasons to become an Idealist. I now discuss some implications of this stance that may explain the violent reactions that Idealism has aroused. I have already mentioned a few in passing, but it is now time to put them together. My main motivation for including these sections in a book of body psychotherapy, is that will help us to understand the trial of Wilhelm Reich, in the U.S.A. of 1956. As Reich was an important figure of early body psychotherapy, what I will say may be of interest to understand the Idealistic traits of some body psychotherapy schools. The trial, Reich's death in prison, had a deep influence on the development of body psychotherapy during the second half of the twentieth century, as Reich became the devil in disguise for most academics. I say more on this theme when I will discuss Reichian and neo-reichian body psychotherapies.

<H2>The Political, Moral, and Sexual Implications of Idealism

"Bodily delight is a sensory experience, not any different from pure looking or the pure feeling with which a beautiful fruit fills the tongue; it is a great, an infinite learning that is given to us, a knowledge of the world, the fullness and the splendor of all knowledge." (Rainer-Marie Rilke, 1908, *Letters to a Young Poet*, IV, p. 36f)

Idealism has never been a pure speculation. It opens almost automatically on a global and militant vision. Those who have the impression of having entered into contact with the Truth often think that they are authorized to make pronouncements on everything that goes on in the world. They assume that their deep intuition about what is Just and False gives them permission to judge everything.

"But when the souls we call immortal reach the top, they move outward and take their stand on the high ridge of heaven, where its circular motion carries them around as they stand while they gaze upon what is outside heaven." (Plato 1997, *Phaedrus*, 247-248, p. 525)

They give the impression that their wisdom guarantees the relevance of their delusions and their thirst for power. In their way of thinking, their judgment necessarily trumps the examination of those who have not learned to integrate the Truths of the soul into their consciousness.

Let us take the case of an imagined Idealist chemist, who discovers a new and important fact in the course of his research. That discovery becomes an international truth when he receives a Nobel prize for his findings. He becomes convinced that his capacity to find a scientific truth is a sign that he is a particularly intelligent man who has access to global Truth. He then believes that he knows more about politics than the politician, more about

⁷⁰ This sentence can be taken as a premonition of how Alexander the Great will conquer all of Greece and a part of Asia.

morality than the moralist and more about beauty than artists. He accepts television interviews in which he can voice his opinions on matters that have nothing to do with chemistry. This is the current practice for all those who are a star in their domain, but not all present their ideas as a manifestation of Truth. It is thus that a school that extols an Idealist theory often does not limit the propagation of its teaching to the expertise of its teachers. It will use its reputation for a particular expertise as a platform to defuse a much larger understanding. Students that come to such a school to acquire a professional competence will be submitted to requirements relative to what they think about beauty, love, justice, and so on. Wilhelm Reich's school of Orgonomy is an example of what I have just described. There are, of course, many other examples, but it is the only one I will discuss in the second half of this book.

A curious but frequent aspect of this way of thinking, that I cannot explain to my satisfaction, is that it often leads to a form of sexual militancy: a militant homosexuality with Plato;⁷¹ chastity with some Christians, or at least an absolute separation of sexual pleasure and the necessity to procreate; and the insistence on a full heterosexual orgasm with Reich. In all of these theories, sexuality is part of the world of Ideas or can give access to it. A wrong use of sexuality leads necessarily to an impoverished contact with the Ideas, God, or Nature. There are numerous ethical problems in this form of contagion from one truth to another. Here are a few:

1. The one who knows is critical only of others.
2. An Idealist teacher (or therapist) wants to influence his students in domains other than those that define his expertise.
3. This teaching is necessarily disrespectful of all forms of collective decisions, because collective decisions are often taken by people who do not have real knowledge. Collegiality is therefore not possible, or even hoped for, between a specific group of Idealists and other colleagues and citizens.

If I am right when I assume that Idealism describes the requirements of an innate mode of functioning of human conscious reasoning. This formulation implies that there are other cognitive procedures that have other modes of functioning that are well described by other philosophical frames. I have for example mentioned that Nietzsche's frame is more useful as soon as one wants to analyze the polysemy of notions and terms. These considerations can be useful to clinicians who treat a patient in whom Idealism has become omnipresent. This implies that he only develops those psychological resources that are compatible with his form of Idealism, and ignores other intellectual resources which may remain underdeveloped. This analysis supports the experience that some people can seem to be particularly brilliant when they use certain mental capacities, and seem intellectually underdeveloped when other forms of thinking is required. Furthermore, most of the time, the mobilization of a cognitive strategy cooccurs with associated affective and physiological mobilizations:

"Perhaps the most important aspect of his [Kuhn] definition of a scientific paradigm is the fact that it includes not only concepts and concepts and techniques but also values. According to

⁷¹ As in the first part of *Phaedrus*.

Kuhn, values are not peripheral to science, not to its applications to technology, but constitute their very basis and driving force." (Capra and Luisi, 2014, p. 5)

A psychotherapist who is unaware of these issues can find it difficult to come face to face with a series of similar mental mechanisms and constraints that exist in his own mind. The student or the patient who faces an authority that believes it can rise above any limits, often does not have a sufficient education to defend himself against this type of intrusion. Such a person will often adhere to what is presented or will drown in a revolt against something he does not understand.

<H2>Are Those Who Condemn Socrates Necessarily Ignorant and Wicked Citizens?

Socrates, whose piety, continence and obedience to the laws has no equal, is presented to us at the same time as one who criticizes the rules instituted by the State, who insults the governing class and ridicules them in public. (François Roustang, 2009, *Le secret de Socrate pour changer la vie*, 9, p. 173 ; translated by Marcel Duclos)

Over the centuries, the myth of Socrates has been the myth of the Christ of the philosophers: he died for having tried to improve the way other citizens think, by asking disturbing questions. Having had enough of being continually brought up short, they wanted to assassinate the very one who showed them how lazy they were in their thinking. According to Plato, Socrates's worst enemies were the sophists, those who know how to make convincing arguments in favor of any opinion to influence those who cast votes within a democracy.

<H3>Political Context

"Protagoras: Hermes asked Zeus how he should impart justice and reverence among men: -Should he distribute them as the arts are distributed; that is to say, to a favored few only, one skilled individuals having enough of medicine or of any other art for many unskilled ones? 'Shall this be the manner in which I am to distribute justice and reverence among men, or shall I give them to all?' 'To all,' said Zeus; 'I should like them all to have a share; for cities cannot exist, if a few only share in the virtues, as in the arts. And further, make a law by my order, that he who has no part in reverence and justice shall be put to death, for he is a plague of the state.'" (Plato, 1937, *Protagoras*, 322c-d)

To understand the trial of Socrates, it is useful to situate it in its political context. In 508 BCE Athenians, under the guidance of Cleisthenes, instituted what was a first form of democratic mode of functioning, based on a "sortition" procedure: a random selection of citizens for official positions⁷². Among the aims of this way of choosing magistrates was to avoid power games, corruption and helping an important part of the citizens to become familiar with practical politics. Socrates was judged and condemned following the rules of this democracy, by an assembly of a few hundred randomly chosen citizens (Castoriadis, 1984). The history of Athenian democracy was not continuous. Its government was overthrown

⁷² This system is elegantly detailed by Paul Cartledge on March 31st 2016: <https://blog.oup.com/2016/03/sortition-ancient-greece-democracy/>. See also Castoriadis, 1984.

twice, by aristocrats that were qualified as being tyrannical. Once by Peisistratos (in 510 BCE), and once at the end of the Peloponnesian war.

<H4>Socrates, Plato, and the Oligarchs

Plato belonged to a special conservative group of people, who dreamed of a future return of aristocratic power, in the form of enlightened tyranny. This utopia had, as a reference, Plato's ancestor Solon, who had tried to save Athenian royal power from decadence, by introducing a form of election of the city's magistrates (Aristotle, *Politics*, III.XI).

Socrates was, at that time, the head of a renowned school that educated the golden youth of Athens. Among the students were sons of families who had close ties to the anti-democratic oligarchy. The school had a questionable reputation because it seemed to be, in the eyes of some, like Aristophanes, what we would today call a sect: "It is a Thinkery for intellectual souls. That's where people live who try to prove that the sky is like a baking-pot all around us, and we're the charcoal inside it. And if you pay them well, they can teach you how to win a case whether you're right or not"⁷³ (Aristophanes, 2002, *The Clouds*, p. 78).

<H4>Enlightened Tyranny and Idealistic Morality

"For the wise man must not be ordered but must order, and must not obey another, but the less wise must obey him." (Aristotle, 1885, *Metaphysics*, I.2, 26913)

After the death of Socrates, Plato details, in *The Republic*, a political proposition that still influences various forms of totalitarian powers. His first argument against democratic regimes is that a citizen rarely has the expertise to evaluate the implications at stake in a vote. Only a philosopher—that is to say, only a person in contact with the Ideas contained in his soul—has the capacity to know what should be undertaken for the common good. The philosopher may have to lie, rig the votes, and manipulate the opinions of the citizens, if he does so to defend a position necessary for the survival of the city.

Hegel (1833, p. 279) mentions that before Heraclitus Greek philosophers had theories on how involved in the affairs of the city philosophers should be. Some believed that the community of philosophers could provide seven sages who could become "statesmen, regents and lawgivers". The Pythagoreans proposed an "aristocratic league. While Heraclitus "began the separation and the withdrawal of philosophers from public affairs, and devoted himself in his isolation entirely to philosophy." Similar debates exist in twentieth century science and psychotherapy. In the sections on psychotherapy we will see that that psychoanalysts were often highly engaged persons, and that it is only to attempt to survive under the tyranny of Hitler that Freud decided to separate (at least officially) psychoanalysis from politics (Makari, 2008). Wilhelm Reich was probably the one who refused this change of perspective.

⁷³ It is interesting to see Aristophanes criticize in Socrates what Plato criticizes in the Sophists.

It is during his refusal to split psychotherapy from politics that he became an ardent Idealist, for whom nothing can be separated from nothing. For example, he developed Freud's epidemiology, according to which the psychotherapist can only partially repair the damage caused by social phenomena like war, rape and religious attacks on independent well-being. He thus continued to publish on individual cases for whom specific forms of social support and transformation are required. If one looks at this contextual frame, one again see a certain continuity in the Idealism of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle and Reich. It is possible that there is something in the original myth of a soul, that is somehow inseparable from that of a spiritually oriented pharaoh.

Plato's philosopher is the expert who decides what others ought to know, think, and do. This discussion also takes place in some therapeutic milieus of the twenty-first century. For example when a therapist believes that he is in a position to decide what a patient has the right to know concerning his own health. The actual position, clearly in opposition to Idealistic propositions, is that the patient always has the right to know what one knows about him. Yet the Idealist stance is still employed in all of the world's democracies,⁷⁴ if only in their way of carrying out secret services. Some people sometimes relate the government of the European Union to a platonic oligarchy of experts, instead of a democracy such as it is defined and practiced in countries such as Switzerland.

Plato touches on practices that are even more difficult to accept when, always for the good of the state, he proposes solutions that are close to eugenicists⁷⁵. He would like the government to make it such that the most gifted would mate with each other, and that individuals who are gifted for particular professions would marry each other (Plato, *The Republic*, V, 459):

"The offspring of the inferior, or of the better when they chance to be deformed, will be put away in some mysterious, unknown place, as they should be.

Yes, he said, that must be done if the breed of the guardians is to be kept pure." (Plato, 1937, *The Republic*, V, 460c)

Vignette on the right to falsify elections. To achieve this aim, the Socrates of *The Republic* proposes to manipulate the democratic ritual of electing by lottery. The state officially declared that each year there will be a marriage festival, during which couples will be drawn randomly in a lottery. But this lottery will be biased so that, for example, the guardians of the Republic will marry women with whom they can breed even more healthy, strong and clever guardians. Thanks to this stratagem, when the other citizens will be allotted less alluring wives, "they will accuse their own ill-luck and not the rulers. (Plato, 1937, *The Republic*, V, 460a)"

While waiting for the development of philosophers able to govern in an oligarchy, united by the one and only Truth, Plato became involved in various forms of coaching tyrants in Sicily.

⁷⁴ A recent example is the one of the government of the United States led by President George W. Bush, when he lied about the existence of weapons of mass destruction so that the citizens of his country would accept military involvement against Iraq.

⁷⁵ Strictly speaking, one cannot use the term eugenics for Plato's arguments on such matters, because genes had not been discovered. But Plato's analysis in *The Republic* clearly defends the need to breed in function of natural qualities.

Although what precedes speaks against an Idealistic vision of morality and politics, we remained face with the psychological fact that most people require an impression of Truth to guide their life (Rochat, 2009). There exists in many humans an Idealist hope that humanity will be able to discover not only how to govern the world, but also how to establish morality. For Plato, it is not possible to vote, even in a democracy, on what is advantageous, Beautiful, Good, Just and True. A person who is in contact with these values spontaneously grants himself the right to be beyond voted social directives.

During World War II, it became evident for many that following the laws instituted by the Nazis and the Communists were incompatible with moral behavior. An individual saw fit to protect Jewish refugees who were pursued by the state. In France, although the government had signed a peace treaty with the invading Germans, many people decided, in the name of an individual and interpersonal (religious, existentialist, humanistic, etc.) conviction, to form pockets of resistance against the invader. For these people, it was moral to disobey the law. A similar analysis applies for professional ethics, when they reflect the state's ideology, as in Nazi Germany and Communist Russia. At such moments, an ethical therapist refers by what appears to her or him as real professional ethics. The difficulty in such a situation is to determine what is moral and who decides what is moral.

The seductive side of the Idealist analysis of moral responsibility is that it allows one to foresee the possibility of differentiating enforced moral and ethics from real sensed values. This approach remains, in the final analysis, the only one that the conscious mind of individual humans can accept, even if it remains problematic. It is difficult to solicit the responsibility of citizens without giving the impression that each one can have a sense of responsibility, an intuition about what is just. But, again, these arguments have their flip sides: tyrants also believe they are entitled to a personal sense of morality they justify by assuming that they are probably in closer contact with ideas than most. It is to solve such issues that international institutions are trying to create a universal ethical system such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is probably a constructive move in the right direction, but it is nevertheless also problematic.

Having word for years in an ethics committee within the European Association of Body Psychotherapy, I can only recommend a Socratic attitude by avoiding to assume that one is more ethical than others. One can then avoid to practice unethical forms of ethics. However, this still leaves unexplained the impression that most people can learn to discern more or less moral behaviors and attitudes. It also leaves unexplained the extreme variability, within the human species, of how much an individual cares for moral issues, and in what way.

<H4> An Extreme Homosexual Militancy

"Those who are inspired by this love turn to the male, and delight in him who is the more valiant and intelligent nature; any one may recognize the pure enthusiasts in the very character of their attachments. For they love not boys, but intelligent beings whose reason is beginning to be developed, much about the time at which their beards begin to grow." (Plato, 1937, *The Symposium*, 181c-d, p. 309)

"But when it [the soul of an initiate] looks upon the beauty of the boy and takes the stream of particles flowing into it from his beauty (that is what is called "desire"), when it is watered and warmed by this, then all its pain subsides and is replaced by joy." (Plato, 1997, *Phaedrus*, 251c-d, p. 528f)

In *The Symposium*, it is not only a milieu close to the oligarchs that is described, but also a milieu in which homosexuality is considered the only way love can become so intense and profound that it can allow one to enter into contact with the world of Ideas. There is no platonic love unless two united bodies permit two souls to love each other (181 a-b). Men are the only persons capable of enough maturity to love this way. "The love who is the offspring of the common Aphrodite is essentially common, and has no discrimination, being such as the meaner sort of men feel and is apt to be of women as well as of youths, and is of the body rather than of the soul" (Plato, 1937, *The Symposium*, 181 a-b, p. 309).

In this milieu, homosexuality was only part-time, as even Socrates was a married father. He had also had, as a teacher, a woman named Aspasia. She was no ordinary woman: she was a foreigner and a courtesan. Exceptionally beautiful and intelligent, she initiated Socrates to the pleasures of the soul by introducing him to sexuality (Nicole Loraux, 2001). Plato also admitted that a relatively strong love could exist between women and men, like Alcestis who accepted dying in the place of her husband (*The Symposium*, 179b). There are two texts on *The Symposium*: one by Plato and one by Xenophon. Both agreed that Socrates did not make love with his students.

Both Xenophon and Plato needed to become explicit on this point, because it was probably discussed during Plato's trial. But I must admit that I am not convinced that these legal formulations are necessarily true, historically. Both mention that Socrates used the eroticism that could exist in his relationship with his students to help them sense the Truth and Beauty that surpasses what most citizens could experience. In *Phaedrus*, an aging Plato dares to describe, in one of his most beautiful texts, the orgasmic pleasure of an adolescent who loses his virginity to a philosopher. This ecstasy is depicted as a moment of extreme intensity, during which the adolescent is initiated not only to Love but also to Poetry, to the most absolute Beauty, and to the Truth that he holds in the depths of his being.⁷⁶

These texts are often presented as hardly reprehensible, to the extent that homosexuality would have been common in ancient Greece,⁷⁷ and the age of marriage was then that of puberty. Such arguments are only partially relevant. It suffices to read Homer and the Athenian tragedians (Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles), to see the importance of heterosexual relations in Greece, as is evident in the rapport of Hector and Ulysses with their wives. Nicole Loraux⁷⁸ shows that the Athenians, at the time of *The Symposium*, spoke mostly of the virility of the warrior. Warriors were becoming rare, because many died at war. The homosexual militancy of Socrates's school was not unknown in some kingdoms, but was not an

⁷⁶ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 250-257. The inclusion of loving a young man in the love of beauty or of being loved as a young man is not explicit and can be more or less hidden by translators such as Jowett.

⁷⁷ Calame (1992).

⁷⁸ Loriaux (2001, 3.4, p. 75f).

integrated part of the Greek civilization. For many it was a deviance.⁷⁹ Later we discuss Reich, who develops similar arguments when he speaks of heterosexual orgasm. Reich's idealized heterosexuality was as far removed from the heterosexual practices of his time as the homosexuality of Plato was from the homosexual practices of his epoch.

<H3>The Trial of a Great Master

Sometime around 399 BCE, Socrates was accused of "corrupting the young and of not believing in the gods to whom the City believes and to be substituting new divinities" (Plato, 1937, *Apology of Socrates*, 24b, p. 407).-The trial unfolded in two phases:

Phase I. Decide whether Socrates was innocent or guilty.

Phase II. Decide the punishment.

This distinction is also relevant when I shall discuss the trial of Wilhelm Reich.

<H4>Is Socrates Guilty?

We now know enough to understand that the wording of the accusation was relevant, given Socrates's reputation.

1. *Socrates does not believe in the gods in whom the City believes, and he replaces them with new divinities.* As a good Idealist, he had a personal understanding of the Gods and the relationship he can have with them. He claimed to be in a personal relationship with some secondary gods and sometimes ignored the ritual that were not required out of politeness, such as invoking the appropriate god when pouring a small amount of wine in sacrifice. Plato went even further, for at the end of his life he invented gods for the needs of a fable.

2. *He corrupts the youth.* This is the most serious accusation. We have seen that Socrates could have been accused of (a) having an excessive hold on students that he seemed to mesmerize into an admiring attitude; (b) teaching his students an ideology dangerous to the republic; (c) teaching a morality that led them to disdain other citizens and the authorities; (d) teaching them a morality that encouraged them to prefer their own interest in philosophy to their responsibilities toward their families; and (e) holding homosexual love as sacred at the expense of heterosexual love.

The impression that Socrates represented a danger to the republic by being an activist in political movements that threatened its existence was well founded. Alcibiades has helped the Spartans to momentarily destroy the Athenian democracy, and Aristotle became the tutor of the boy who became Alexander the Great. As a symbol of enlightened tyranny (and probably homosexual), Alexander represents Plato's hopes and dreams. Aristotle was the pupil of a Plato who had been an active student of Socrates. Although this trial occurred decades before the advent of Alexander the Great, it is manifest that Athenians were not just being paranoiacs.

⁷⁹ Lacan (1961), *Séminaire VIII*, p. 42-55.

Having arrived at the end of the first phase of the trial, the majority of the citizens thought Socrates guilty as charged; however, they waited for him to present his defense before deciding on his punishment. I do not think that most of them were thinking of condemning him to death.

<H4>How to Condemn Socrates?

If one accepts that the rendition of the *Apology of Socrates* by Plato is close to what was said, the death sentence is suggested and promoted by Socrates. He accuses his fellow citizens of incompetence and stupidity. He absolves himself of any and all errors. Only the gods have the competence to judge a man as righteous as he. Socrates is now seventy years old; he deems himself ill equipped to suffer the disapproval of his co-citizens or even a gilded exile.

In the discussions he has with his students while in prison (in Plato's *Euthyphro*, *Crito* and *Phaedo*) awaiting the day of his execution, Socrates speaks to them of the grief and sorrow he feels having been condemned for a life that he totally claims as his own—he had wanted it to be as close to his personal convictions as possible. For him and for those who admire him, this condemnation is also a condemnation of all attempts to develop and publicly display personal convictions. For this, Socrates is often held up as the martyr of free thinkers.

It is for his disdain of the court, and not for what he did, that his Athenian co-citizens condemned Socrates to death, obliging him to drink poisonous hemlock. We will find the same chain of events when we speak of Wilhelm Reich's trial, in the United States of America, in 1956. He was condemned to prison for contempt of court, not because of his treatments based on his orgone theory, judged as quackery or a delusion. He also died in prison, but in a less dignified setting.