

Livio Rossetti/Alessandro Stavru (eds.): *Socratica 2005. Studi sulla letteratura socratica antica presentati alle Giornate di studio di Senigallia*. Bari: Levante Editori 2008 (Collana di Studi e Testi “Le Rane” – Studi 52), 383 pp.

This book contains the proceedings of a meeting on ancient Socratic literature held in Senigallia (Pesaro, Italy) from 17 to 19 February 2005. The slogan chosen by the editors shows very well its finality: not only Plato! These words highlight a significant fault of the modern philosophical historiography. In the first section of the second part of *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (1885), E. Zeller devoted about 300 pages (42–336) to Socrates and “die unvollkommenen Sokratiker”, as L. Rossetti remembers (40, fn. 5). This latter describes in the introduction (11–36) the slow but progressive change of approach in the last fifty years. Precisely for that reason it is somewhat surprising to find that in the book the expression “the others” is adopted to denominate the so-called “minor” Socratics, as if they were once again, as commonly thought since a long time, non-authentic and untrustworthy witnesses in comparison with Plato. But because that does not correspond exactly to the current state of the question and does not appear to be the real intention of the editors, I will show the content of the book in the following order: first Xenophon [B1], then Antisthenes [B2] and Aristippus [B3] and, finally, Plato [B4]. The exposition of these subjects will be respectively preceded and followed by the discussion of the remarkable essays about the Socratic dialogue as a literary and as a historico-philosophical problem [A], and by the analysis of two papers that deal with Socrates’ fortunate *Wirkungsgeschichte* [C].

[A] In his essay “I Socratici della prima generazione”, L. Rossetti starts considering Socratism Athens’ hegemonic philosophy in the former half of the 4th century B.C. However, he refuses to consider this “hegemony” as a kind of “dictatorship” which may also have influenced Metrodorus of Chius’ *Peri physeōs*. In the *Academics* Cicero attests a preliminary “sceptic” claim of Metrodorus’ work, which does not certainly concord but, however, seems to elaborate and to “pyrrhonize” *ante litteram* the aporetic *agnoia* of Plato’s Socrates (Cic. *ac. pr.* II 23, 73 = DK70B1). This is confirmed by Eusebius of Caesarea, who associates Metrodorus’ sensism with that of Protagoras (Eus. *P.E.* XIV 19, 8 = DK70B1). Indeed the *Pan-socratism* of that philosophical period was the result of its *pan-sophistic* climate. Precisely for this reason the Platonic witness about Socrates has some limitations, and Rossetti is right in denouncing the scholars’ indifference for the things that Plato could have in common with the other Socratics of the first generation (41). Plato’s early philosophical production, the so-called ‘aporetic’ one, would find a specific expectation horizon represented by the *Sōkratikoī logoi*. Their disagreements, depending on the peculiarities of every Socratic, would be directed towards an ‘Austinian’

performativity. This methodology would be based on the equivalence between *legein* and *prattein/poiein* (*Euthyd.* 284c1f.) and would aim at puzzling, embarrassing, attacking (but with a good purpose) the interlocutors. According to Rossetti, there are two kinds of evidence of this dynamic: a) at a first level, a series of texts where the “psychagogic” tension of Plato’s Socrates and the “intellectualism” of Xenophon’s Socrates may be found, among which are some fragments of Aeschines (*SSR* VI A I. 41–54; III. 59–72; V. 76–81), Phaedo (Theon. *progymn.* 3 p. 74, 21–75, 9 = *SSR* III A 11, supplemented with Cassian. *conlat.* XIII 5, 3) and Euclid (Gnom. Paris. Lat. n. 8 = *SSR* II A 21); b) at a second level, there are other passages in which a certain behaviour is described or imitated, as the practice of *elenchos*, for instance Plat. *ap.* 23c5f.; 29d-e; and Xen. *mem.* III 8. It is clear that the doctrinal exploitations make it difficult to mark a clear-cut division between the “true” Socrates and the viewpoint of his disciples. Difficult but not impossible. In this connection Rossetti lists three manners of writing by philosophizing in Greece in the 6–5th century B.C.: the treatises *Peri physeōs*, whose aim (merely cognitive) would be the knowledge transmission from a *sophos* to his audience; the sophistic pamphlet, where the speculative activation of the paradox, not limited to a “to know that *p*”, would have a metacognitive approach to that knowledge; finally, the Socratic dialogue, a totally unexpected turning point in the history of philosophy for the simple reason that up to that moment nobody had tried to advance new ideas by means of texts simulating conversations (58). Maybe, in this suggestive picture the sharp separation among the mentioned philosophical genres is a bit oversimplified. Zeno too, author of a *Peri physeōs*, was in a certain sense a “sophist” and, similarly, an oratorical tradition defined in this way Aeschines of Sphettus and Plato himself (Ael. Aristid. *de quatt.* 677 [= *orat.* XLVI, II, 407 D.] = *SSR* VI A 19). Furthermore, Metrodorus still wrote a *Peri physeōs* in the 4th century B.C., in any case after the appearance of the *Sōkratikoī logoi*. Rossetti’s contextless historical consideration of the “oral” propaganda in Alcidas’ *Peri tōn tous graptous logous graphontōn* seems to forget the latter’s polemic against Isocrates and their common Gorgian pupillage. That would make Socrates’ oral and aporetic teaching a phenomenon produced by the rifts arisen in the different sophistic schools rather than something ‘miraculous’. Rossetti’s interpretation is not unlikely to raise some confusion, because in this way it would be easy to make Socrates’ oral dialogues a prefiguration of the Hellenistic *diatribai*, particularly of those produced by Bion of Boristhenes. But leaving out these possible objections and also on the light of the short but significant paper of M. Vegetti contained in the book (85–87), it might be useful to think of the Socratic dialogue as an *unicum* in the Athens of that period. An *unicum* independent from the contemporary performances (tragedy or comedy), i.e. something *in fieri*, deliberately aporetic, teleologically metacognitive, consistent with the praxis of the “author’s moving back” well attested already before Plato. The conclusion of the essay (the dialogues written by the Socratics of the first generation would be a creative alternative to the treatise, be that serious or paradoxical) imposes to examine now the contribution of F. Dinapoli (343–354). This scholar analyses the status of the Socratic dialog as a ‘literarische Gattung’, and takes into account three authoritative testimonies: a) Athen. *Deipn.* XI 505c, an anti-Platonic text, where a passage of Aristotle’s *De poētis* is quoted. That would place Alexamenus of Theus’ dialogues before the Socratic ones (fr. 3a-3b Laurenti = fr. 14–15 Gigon); b) Diog. Laert. III 48, which assigns to Plato the dialogue’s invention and its stylistic improvement; c) *POxy* 2319 (= *CPF* I 21 T), which is in agreement with Diogenes about the thesis of a Plato *Erfinder* and is inclined to justify Aristotle’s contrary opinion by means of the latter’s *baskania* toward the old master and the typical *dramatikon* of the Platonic dialogues by means of its derivation from that of

Sophon's mimes. To conclude that Plato's originality consists in the creation of a genre similar to the theatre as for the mimetic/dramatic form, and antagonistic to the theatre as for the pedagogical and philosophical content, would signify to make it theoretically admissible in the ideal city as well.

[B1] A. Stavru, H.-O. Ney, S. Schorn and A. Alderman dwell upon Xenophon. Stavru's essay ("Il ti esti negli scritti socratici di Senofonte", 137–158) stands out for the originality of the solutions proposed about what is one of the most important Socratic subjects in the English-speaking scholarship. Beginning from a careful examination of the previous literature on this subject – from a famous essay of Robinson (1953) about the What-Is-X? question to the studies of Vlastos (1973) and Benson (2000) about the What-Is-F? question – Stavru points out its incapacity to make a clear distinction of the theoretical differences existing between Socrates and Plato. Since, as Patzer has claimed, the Platonic *ti esti* is strictly connected with the theory of the *eidē*, in Stavru's opinion only Xenophon's *Socratica* could give us an authentically Socratic concept of *horismos*. As a matter of fact, in these works there are no traces of *Ideenlehre* and the few appearances of the term *eidos* possess the non-speculative meaning of "outward appearance". According to Xenophon (particularly *Mem.* I 1, 6 and IV 6), Socrates is more interested in the *ut definiendum* than in the *definiendum* in itself. The structure of the dialogue (questions and answers) could also have not the purpose of an *horismos* but only the method of an *episkepsis*, including of a potentially aporetic kind. Ney's paper about "L'expressivité de l'invisible chez le Socrate de Xénophon" (159–175) concentrates also on the *Memorabilia*, *inter alia* under an aesthetic viewpoint. The conversations of Socrates with the *zōgraphos* Parrasius, the *andriantopoios* Cliton and the *thōrakopoios* Pistias would determine a different assessment of the artistic *mimēsis* present in Plato and in Xenophon. The beautiful imitation sees the soul: Ney links the paradox of a visible representation of the invisible to the "tragic" semantic of the *proseikazein* and opposes Xenophon's ethic *ana*-physics to Plato's ontological *meta*-physics. S. Schorn (177–203), on his part, speaks about the *Ieron* and the *Erziehungsprogramm* planned for the statesman: only the acquisition of particular *Herrscher tugenden* (*enkrateia* and *karteria*) allows the attainment of happiness for the sovereign and his subjects. To the *Oeconomicus* is finally devoted Alderman's paper (205–213), which shows analogies and differences between Iscomacus' speech and some passages of Plato's *Menon* and *Statesman*.

[B2] Maybe the essays that consider Antisthenes' figure and his debated relationship to Plato open up the widest philosophical horizons. In particular, in his contribution about "Isocrate storico del pensiero" (91–105), M. Tulli tries to understand how the reflection of the Greeks about Antisthenes and Plato began. According to Tulli, the rivalry of the philosophical schools in Athens in the 4th century B.C. is a legend and Isocrates' proem in the *Encomium of Helen* forms part of the allusive nature of the relation between literary text and its context. As already in the *Iliad's* proem, the incipit of Isocrates presents deliberately the scheme of the *Priamel* previously used in Gorgias' *Helen* and above all in the famous *recusatio* of the Sappho's ode to Anactorias (fr. 16 V.). Indeed in Isocrates' text there are three *Foils* (X 1: *hoi men [...] hoi de [...] alloi de*) and the *Cap* (X 2: *egō de*). These three *Foils* – Tulli observes – refer to "three production spheres" which were common in Athens in that period: a) the *ou phaskontes hoion t' einai pseudē legein oud' antilegein oude dyō logō peri tōn autōn pragmatōn anteipein* would belong to the figure of Antisthenes, also according to the witness of Aristotle (*Metaph.* Δ 29. 1024b26–34 = *SSR V A* 152); b) Plato, in the light of the cognitive identity of the virtues in *Prot.* 316a–328d and 348c–351b, would probably be the symbol of the *diexiontes hōs andreia kai sophia kai*

*dikaiosynē tauton esti kai physei men ouden autōn echomen, mia d' epistēmē kath' hapantōn estin*; c) finally the eristics, collocated in the group of the *peri tas eridas diatribontes tas ouden men ōphelousas, pragmata de parechein tois plēsiazousi dynamenas*, would be confused by Isocrates with Antisthenes and even with Plato because of their common interest in elaborating *paradoxa*. In this way, the anachronistic approach would be the biggest fault of Isocrates as a historian of philosophy. F. Trabattoni (235–262) compares the Platonic and Antisthenic interpretations of Socrates about the “usage of pleasures”. Starting from the numerous quotations of Antisthenes’ name in the useful *Appendix* printed in Giannantoni’s *Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquiae* (I H), about the *Loci Platonici qui ad Socraticos philosophos pertinere visi sunt*, Trabattoni tries to go over the scholarly studies about the polemics existed among Socrates’ disciples. In particular, he tackles the crucial problem of Plato’s possible intention to build a philosophical alternative to the Socratism of the other Socratics and especially of Antisthenes. Trabattoni disagrees thoroughly with Vlastos’ thesis of Socrates’ “double presence” in the Platonic dialogues and, following the traces of the *Phaedo*-related *loci* in Giannantoni’s collection (*SSR I H app.* 23. 2; 4; 5), remarks Plato’s constant and consistent intention of being a Socratic philosopher. A philosopher, however, intent on pointing out the tacit metaphysical context of the Socratic teaching and also on fighting against the hedonistic interpretations of the master, as that of Antisthenes.

[B3] Annie Hourcade deals with Aristippus of Cyrene (215–233) and faces the question of the relationship between the proverbial *philochrēmata* of the philosopher and the control over the pleasures. This latter cannot be assimilated to a limitation of the desires, because for the philosopher “ne s’agit pas de vivre de peu, mais de savoir utiliser les richesses à bon escient, de sorte qu’elles produisent une grande quantité de plaisirs”. Strictly linked to the Cyrenaics’ concept of pleasure (corporeal, kinetic, *in actu*) and to the practical wisdom capable to tell the difference between *desideranda* and *fugienda*, Aristippus’ instrumental approach to money does not contradict, according to Hourcade, Socrates’ eudaimonism. So, at least, the Alcibiades’ words in Plato’s *Symposium* (220a) seem to show.

[B4] The concise paper of G. Casertano (“Due aspetti della figura di Socrate”, 77–83) – for whom Socrates represents the one who correctly philosophizes in front of the men who seem to philosophize and the one who lives philosophically – is a good introduction to the Platonic Socrates. This problem is connected with the question of Plato’s dialogic strategies. According to K. Sharp (“Three Inside Views”, 265–286), for example, the “author’s moving back” in the dialogues is not respected by the three inside views that, with a complex “scenic” simulation, Nicias, Terpsion and Alcibiades respectively would let emerge in some passages of *Laches* (187e–188c), *Theaetetus* (172a–174a) and *Symposium* (215d). Just this famous passage of the *Symposium* is the specific subject of M. Narcy’s essay (“Socrate nel discorso di Alcibiade”, 287–304). According to this scholar, the *epainos* of the young, in love with a Socrates compared to the Silens and to Marsias, gives a picture of the philosopher which is far from the real Platonic perspective. This would be attested by the apologetic vision of the master that we find in the *Corpus Platonicum*. For Narcy through Alcibiades’ speech Plato hands us down the witness of a tradition which considered Socrates a *Superhuman Being*. And this tradition is also present in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* (I 6, 5–10). However, the real Plato would admire Socrates not because of the “divine” qualities that Alcibiades’ suspicious character refers to him, but only because of the “human” ones. This section of the book is concluded by two papers: E. Grasso’s “Socrate dans le *Sophiste*” (305–325), an analysis of the dialogue’s *incipit* and of the allusive “judgement” of the Foreigner from Elea on the Socratic *logoi*, and L. Bargeliotis’

study titled “Dramatic Scenes of Socrates” (327–339). The latter points out the parallel roles played by Plato and Sophocles in bringing to perfection philosophy and tragedy following the dialectical process typical of Plato’s Socrates. This would be a stratagem to transform him in a real “tragic hero”.

[C] Finally, E. Spinelli’s and N. Notomi’s essays focus on the incredible *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Socrates’ figure. Spinelli (“La parabola del Socrate senofonteo”, 107–135), in particular, examines it on the light of the neglected studies written on this subject by A. Labriola and R. Mondolfo. Notomi is known as the author of the first comprehensive study on the Socratics published in Japan (*The Birth of the Philosopher: People around Socrates*, Tokyo 2005). This scholar (currently President of the *International Plato Society*) extends the analysis to the Empire of the Rising Sun remarking the Confucian inspiration of Socrates’ first Japanese biographies in the 19th century and the astonishing affinity between the *Muchi-no-chi* of the Buddhist mysticism and the *ha mē oida oude oiomai eidenai* of Plato’s Socrates (*Ap.* 21d7). These two contributions increase further the value of this precious miscellany. To that the results of the last conference held in Naples from the 11 to the 13 December 2008 are now to be added. A third meeting is foreseen in 2011. In this way, the discussion is certainly destined to continue in the next future for many years.

Naples

Christian Vassallo