

## SOCRATIC IGNORANCE AS COMPLEX IRONY: A CRITIQUE OF GREGORY VLASTOS

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Socrates, according to Gregory Vlastos, practices complex irony, a mode of speaking, indeed of living, that can be defined as follows: "In 'complex' irony what is said both is and isn't what is meant: its surface content is *meant to be true in one sense, false in another*" (Vlastos 1991.31).<sup>1</sup> When, for example, Socrates says to Alcibiades, "I love you," he both means it and does not mean it. He does not intend this sentence to convey the message of a typical Greek pederast. Instead, he means it in his own, uniquely Socratic sense, namely that he loves Alcibiades' soul (Vlastos 1991.41).

For Vlastos, Socratic irony is free from the intention to deceive; it is educational, for it is riddling and forces the interlocutor to think. Perhaps the most significant instance of complex irony is Socrates' "disavowal of knowledge." Socrates asserts that he has no knowledge, "no wisdom, great or small" (*Apology* 21b). Nevertheless, "he speaks and lives, serenely confident that he has a goodly stock of [knowledge]. . . . And he implies as much in what he says" (Vlastos 1991.3).

This apparent paradox is at the heart of Socratic "strangeness" and Vlastos rightly says, "To keep faith with Socrates' strangeness some way has to be found to save both the assertion of his ignorance and the implied negation" (Vlastos 1991.3).

The way Vlastos has found is a distinction between two kinds of

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<sup>1</sup> Independently of Vlastos, Hyland has also developed the notion of "complex irony." See Hyland 1988.

knowledge. When Socrates states, "I do not know," he both means and does not mean what he says. Socrates does not have certain, infallible "knowledgeC," whose rigor is on a par with that attained in mathematics. But he does have the radically weaker "knowledgeE," elenctic knowledge whose content is true moral propositions and which is supported by Socrates' analyses of the beliefs held by his various interlocutors. Since the supporting reasons for elenctic knowledge are provided only by the arguments Socrates actually holds with his interlocutors, and of course these are contingent occurrences, and since elenchus "is a human process, a contest, whose outcome is drastically affected by the skill and drive of the contestants," there is always a "security gap between the Socratic thesis and its supporting reasons." As a result, Socratic knowledge "is full of gaps, unanswered questions; it is surrounded and invaded by unresolved perplexity" (Vlastos 1985.18–19).

Vlastos' distinction allows him to reconcile Socrates' disavowal of knowledge with his several direct claims to having knowledge. In short (Vlastos 1985.20),

When [Socrates] says he knows something he is referring to knowledgeE; when he says he knows nothing—absolutely nothing, "great or small"—he refers to knowledgeC.

Vlastos' notion of complex irony and his explication of the two meanings of "knowledge" operative in the early dialogues is, I believe, an effective strategy with which to address the problem of Socratic ignorance; indeed, Vlastos has clearly identified a cluster of textual and philosophical issues that lead to the heart of Socrates' strangeness. What I will discuss in this paper is something that Vlastos himself does not discuss. Throughout his works, Vlastos is strangely silent about a term, and an accompanying theme, that regularly surfaces in the early dialogues and is, I believe, pivotal in shaping Socrates' conception of knowledge: *technē*. Why does Vlastos not systematically take up the *technē* question when it so clearly relates to matters that are obviously vital to him? And what has been lost by his not doing so?

"*Technē*" occurs with great frequency in those dialogues with which Vlastos is most concerned. For example, during Socrates' argument with Gorgias in the first section of the *Gorgias* (447b–61a), the word occurs 45 times in only 14 Stephanus pages. But the index of *Socrates: Ironist and*

*Moral Philosopher* lists only two items under the heading "*technē*," and in both cases the comments on it are passing (Vlastos 1991.174 and 240). Even in his extended criticism of Terence Irwin, whose instrumentalist interpretation of Socrates' moral theory largely depends on a specific reading of the "craft (*technē*) analogy," Vlastos only says this (Vlastos 1978.233):

Consider the "craft analogy" to which Irwin appeals again and again in support of the instrumentalist thesis. I would argue that his confidence that the analogy has this implication is misplaced. For though Socrates certainly wants moral knowledge to be in some respect like that of carpenters . . . he knows that it is radically different in others.

For many reasons I think that this comment is entirely right.<sup>2</sup> But I wonder why Vlastos never develops a full-blown interpretation of the role *technē* plays in the early dialogues. This is all the more puzzling because, as Woodruff has shown, Vlastos' own analysis of Socrates' disavowal of knowledge can be helpfully formulated in terms of *technē*. Briefly put, Woodruff's thesis is that "expert knowledge"—Woodruff's rendition of *technē*—"is what Socrates means to disavow" and "non-expert knowledge" is what Socrates in fact has (Woodruff 1989.66). The latter includes "the knowledge that he, Socrates, is not an expert . . . the moral truth that it is bad to disobey one's superior" and, finally, the results of his elenctic examinations. "The elenchus thus exposes what you believe in the last analysis, and simply treats this sort of belief, without apology, as non-expert knowledge" (Woodruff 1989.78).<sup>3</sup>

When Socrates says, "I am not wise," he means he does not have a *technē*. He does, however, have knowledge, what I will term "non-technical" knowledge. To explain, consider the following passages from the *Laches*.<sup>4</sup>

Lysimachus asks Socrates, Nicias, and Laches how he can best educate his son in "excellence," in *aretē*. Socrates explains that they need

<sup>2</sup> See Roochnik 1989.

<sup>3</sup> Vlastos responds to Woodruff in 1991, p. 238, but he does not seriously address the argument.

<sup>4</sup> The Greek text is Burnet's Oxford edition. Translations are my own.

to know what *aretē* is before they can adequately determine how to teach it or to find a teacher of it. Since answering that question would be too big a job, Socrates suggests that they first define what a part of *aretē*, namely courage, is (190c–d).

In response to Socrates' demand for a definition of courage, Laches says, "If someone is willing to defend against his enemies and stay in formation and not run away, you'd better believe that he would be courageous" (190e). Socrates points out that this statement is not sufficiently general and that it is thus easily dismissed by a counterexample: someone can be courageous while retreating (191c). Laches quickly revises the definition: courage, he says, is "endurance of the soul" (192b). This definition turns out to be too general, for "endurance of the soul" would include foolish endurance, which the participants agree is not good. Since they agree that courage is good (192c), the definition must be revised once more.

Laches' third definition is "intelligent (*phronimos*) endurance" (192e). This is very promising. As Kahn and others have pointed out, evidence of its promise is the fact that it is "never directly refuted" (Kahn 1987.5). Instead, Socrates demands only that the meaning of "intelligent" be specified. He uses examples to explain: "If someone shows intelligent endurance in the spending of money, knowing that if he spends more he will possess more, would you call this man courageous?" (192e). In other words, if a man has the moneymaking *technē*, and can calculate correctly that a certain investment will be profitable, it takes no courage to make that investment. Other examples are the doctor who does not relent when a sick patient demands water which the doctor knows would harm him, a general who knows his troops are superior in battle, those who enter battle knowing horsemanship or archery, and a well-diver. Each is an example of a *technē* (193b10) that significantly reduces the ill effects of chance for its possessor. Diving into wells is risky to most of us, but not to one who has mastered the *technē* of well-diving.

This series of examples seems to show that if *technē* is the model of intelligence, and if courage requires some risk to be taken, then courage (as "intelligent endurance") implies the absence of intelligence; it would seem to be "foolish endurance." But it has already been decided that this is shameful. The quest for a definition has reached an impasse.

Nicias takes over the conversation from Laches, but fares no better. Nicias, who admits that he is echoing something that he has heard from Socrates, defines courage as "a kind of wisdom" (*sophia*, 194d). Socrates, with Laches' encouragement, demands that he specify what he means. He

asks, "surely it would not be the *technē* of playing the flute (*aulētikē*, 194e)?"<sup>5</sup> In other words, Socrates asks whether the wisdom mentioned by Nicias is analogous to the knowledge contained in a typical *technē* such as flute-playing. Nicias says it is not. Courage, he says, "is knowledge (*epistēmē*) of what is to be feared and what is to be dared in war and in everything else" (195a).

This time it is Laches who leads the attack, and he does so in a very Socratic fashion. Doctors, says Laches, know what is to be feared and dared in the case of disease. Farmers know what is to be feared and dared in the case of agriculture. In general, those who have a *technē* know what is to be feared and dared in their specific field, but this surely does not make them courageous (195b). Just as Socrates had done to him, Laches has attacked Nicias with the *technē*-analogy. In other words, he has identified the *epistēmē* mentioned by Nicias with *technē*, and then on the basis of this identification shown the weakness of the definition. The argument concludes that if the knowledge that is courage is analogous to a *technē*, then courage cannot be knowledge. Nicias, however, successfully rebuts. Laches, he says (195c),

believes that doctors know more about those who are sick than being able to explain what health and sickness are. But doctors know only this much. Do you think, Laches, that when a man's recovery is more fearful than his being sick, doctors know this? Or don't you think that for many people it is better not to recover from a disease than to recover from it?

Nicias argues that a *technē* such as medicine is "value-neutral"; that is, the doctor only knows what health and sickness are, and can thereby intervene in order to produce one or the other. He does not, however, know whether he *should* apply or withhold his knowledge. He does not know, for example, whether it is better or worse for a given patient to die. Laches and Nicias agree that in some cases it is better for a given patient to die. But the doctor, *qua* doctor, does not know in what cases this would be so. Only a

<sup>5</sup> *Aulētikē* may be translated as "*technē* of playing the flute" because, as Lyons puts it, "the form in *ikē* may be used indifferently with or without *technē*, and in either case it will be picked up by *technē* with equal readiness." See Lyons 1967.143.

man courageous, i.e., knowledgeable about what should be feared and what dared, would know this.

Laches attacks again: Nicias thinks courageous men are prophets. No, says Nicias, for prophecy is a typical, i.e., value-neutral, *technē*. It knows something about the future, but not whether what is coming is good or bad and therefore should be welcomed or feared (195e). The dialogue again reaches an impasse. Nicias successfully has shown that the knowledge that is courage cannot be a *technē*. But he has failed to describe positively what it is. The problem with Nicias' definitions, "courage is wisdom" and "courage is knowledge of what is to be feared and what dared," is that the key terms in each—"wisdom" and "knowledge"—are not explicated. In this sense, the situation closely resembles the rejection of Laches' third definition, "intelligent endurance," which was based on the failure to explicate "intelligent."

The *Laches* ends in an *aporia*, for the attempt to define courage does not succeed. It does not, however, entirely fail.<sup>6</sup> By using the parts of the definitions that were not directly refuted by Socrates we can extract a rough outline of what courage is. It is "a kind of wisdom." If (and this is a controversial move) we want to include an emotional component, we can say it is "intelligent (or wise) endurance." (This is controversial because Socratic ethics are typically understood to be purely "intellectualistic.")<sup>7</sup> Griswold performs this extraction nicely: "courage is an endurance of the soul, in a situation containing risk to oneself, endurance accompanied by knowledge (which is not a *technē*), of goods and evils hoped for and feared" (Griswold 1986.189).

As Griswold's formulation makes clear, the *aporia* of the *Laches* is generated by the failure of the participants to specify successfully the knowledge or wisdom that is courage. The best that can be extracted is thus negative: it is not a *technē*. It is non-technical knowledge.

This brief interpretation of the *Laches* is hardly self-evident. Irwin, for one, would disagree with it. He argues that in the *Laches* Socrates "demands an expert craftsman in moral training" (Irwin 1976.78). In other words, he claims that when Socrates uses the *technē*-analogy against Laches' or Nicias' definition of courage, he holds strictly to its terms and that, consequently, "he has good reasons for thinking that real virtue . . .

<sup>6</sup> See Kahn 1987, Santas 1969.433-54, and Devereux 1977.129-41.

<sup>7</sup> See Gould 1987.

will be a craft" (Irwin 1976.75). As mentioned above, this reading of the analogy leads Irwin directly into his instrumentalist thesis: if virtue is a craft, and if craft is productive, then virtue is productive.<sup>8</sup> Its product is happiness to which it provides the means.

Vlastos is quite right when he disagrees with Irwin and says that Socrates wants moral knowledge to be like *technē* only in *some* respects. The brief interpretation of the *Laches* offered above is meant to show that all that can be legitimately inferred from Socrates' use of the *technē*-analogy is that moral knowledge is like a *technē*, but only to the extent that it is knowledge. Irwin's reading, while possible, is hardly necessary and the above indicates some reasons against it. At the least, we should consider the possibility that Plato has his Socrates use the analogy in a negative fashion and for protreptic reasons: he wants to *point* to a non-technical conception of moral knowledge and urge his readers to consider what it would be. This view is in keeping with Woodruff's thesis and, implicitly at least, with Vlastos' as well.

To explain further the notion of non-technical knowledge, consider also *Charmides* 165c-66b. In the most promising move of the dialogue, Critias defines *sōphrosunē* ("moderation") as self-knowledge. Socrates then asks, "if *sōphrosunē* is a knowing something (*gignōskein ti*), obviously it must be a knowledge (*epistēmē*) of something (*tinōs*). Or is this not so?" (165c3-5). Critias agrees. Socrates then offers him two examples of "knowing": medicine and carpentry. Both are typical *technai* ("*technē*" and "*epistēmē*" are used interchangeably throughout this and other early dialogues). Each produces a specific *ergon*: in the one case health, in the other houses. If *sōphrosunē* is indeed a kind of knowledge, then it too should have an analogously specific *ergon*. And what is that?, Socrates asks Critias.

Socrates' questions assume that self-knowledge is analogous to, or is best modelled by, *technē*. Critias immediately challenges this assumption. He accuses Socrates of falsely homogenizing the *technai*. After all, he says, geometry and calculation are both *technai*, but they are neither productive nor do they have overt *erga*. Socrates agrees. But then he goes on to say that, even if they are not productive, these two mathematical *technai*

<sup>8</sup> It is clear that, *pace* Irwin, in Greek literature in general, *technē* can mean both productive knowledge, i.e., craft, but also "theoretical" knowledge like arithmetic. See Roochnik 1986.

nonetheless have determinate subject matters that differ from the *technē* itself. Calculation, for example, is about, and is not identical to, the relationships that obtain between even and odd numbers. If *technē* is to be used as the model for self-knowledge, then an analogously determinate subject matter, one that is distinct from the subject that knows it, should be located for self-knowledge.

There is, however, a problem: no such subject matter can be located, and for two reasons. First (and most explicitly), self-knowledge implies that the self can somehow know itself. As such, it stands in clear violation of the stricture implied by the *technē*-analogy, namely, that the subject matter be distinct from the subject. The very notion of self-knowledge is problematic because it violates the "normal" subject-object structure established by the series of examples that Socrates gives of "normal" human activities such as perception, desire, wishing, loving, fearing, and opining (167c-68a). Each is of an object distinct from itself: vision is of the visible, not of vision itself; desire is for pleasure, not for desire; love is a love of what is beautiful, not of love itself.

As Socrates later admits, this list, apparently intended to refute the possibility of any self-reflexive human activity, is hardly persuasive. It seems possible, for example, to have an opinion about the nature of opining. Some "great man" is thus needed who can actually sort out which of the activities (or faculties) on the list is self-reflexive and which is not (169a). But even if it cannot be proven to be impossible, self-knowledge, because of its self-reflexive character, is thrice (167b, 168a, 172c) described by Socrates as *atopos*, "strange" (which, quite strikingly, is the very word Alcibiades, and Vlastos, use to describe Socrates).

The second (and less explicit) reason that a proper subject matter of self-knowledge, conceived as a *technē*, cannot be located, is that the self is not a determinate object. Instead, it is a capacity for entering into relationships with objects that, in turn, give shape to the otherwise shapeless self. The self is not itself an object. As a result, it cannot function as a stable subject matter of a *technē*.

If I am correct, then Socrates' refutation of Critias can be formulated as a complex irony. When Socrates is forced to conclude that *sōphrosunē* is not self-knowledge, he both means and does not mean what he says. It is not, if "knowledge" means *technē*. It is, if "knowledge" refers to some sort of "non-technical knowledge."

What might this non-technical knowledge be? This is an extremely difficult question: *sōphrosunē* (as self-knowledge) is, after all,

*atopos*. To begin, it has features that are quite similar to those Vlastos attributes to elenctic knowledge: it is not epistemically certain, for it is fallible and its support comes from the contingent occurrence of actual arguments between Socrates and his interlocutors. It is moral knowledge that issues in practical results (see 1985.13-19 and 1991.269-71). Needless to say, this description has to be spelled out further. Here I simply note that Vlastos' strategy of bifurcating knowledge in order to decipher Socrates' complexly ironic disavowal of knowledge can be pursued by focusing on the role that *technē* plays in early dialogues like the *Charmides* and the *Laches*. Furthermore, there are (at least) two distinct benefits that follow from doing this.

First, formulating Socrates' complexly ironic disavowal of knowledge in terms of *technē* can mitigate the severity of the transition from the early to the middle dialogues that is pivotal in Vlastos' account of the dialogues. Consider the comments that he makes about the *Euthydemus*, which he describes as a transitional dialogue (Vlastos 1991.116-17).

Here [in the *Euthydemus*] for the first time in Plato's corpus we see Socrates unloading his philosophizing on an interlocutor in the form of a protreptic discourse expounded in flagrantly non-elenctic fashion as a virtual monologue. . . . the elenchus has been jettisoned.

For so "drastic a departure . . . we must hypothesize a profound change in Plato himself" (Vlastos 1991.117). The principal cause of this change is Plato's advanced study of mathematics. It does seem that Socrates in the *Euthydemus* behaves differently than he does in the *Charmides*, *Laches*, or *Euthyphro*, for he does deliver what amounts to a protreptic monologue. As a result, if the elenchus is deemed the essential feature of Socratic philosophizing, then Plato *does* seem to have undergone a dramatic shift. However, if the *technē* question, and not the elenchus, is taken to be an essential Socratic concern, then the shift is not so drastic. This is because the same doctrine concerning *technē* is presented in the *Euthydemus* as in the *Charmides*.

In the first stage of his protreptic speech (280b-81b), Socrates argued that only knowledge can bring *eudaimonia* to human beings. In the second, he attempts to identify exactly what this knowledge, which he later calls the "kingly *technē*" (291d7), might be. It cannot be a typical *technē* that knows only how to make something, but not how to *use* what it makes,

for it is precisely knowledge of use (of value) that can make people happy. Even if someone were to possess a *technē* which could produce immortality (289b), such knowledge would not necessarily make its possessor "happy." An immortal life, even one supplied with infinite wealth, could still be wretched. One needs to know how to use immortality properly, that is, how to lead a good life, in order to be happy. In short, a typical *technē* is value-neutral.

This view of the value-neutrality of *technē* is a common theme in the early dialogues. A doctor, for example, knows how to heal a patient but does not know whether he *should* heal the patient or not (see *Laches* 195c). *Technē* provides mastery of a specific subject matter, but it does not afford its possessor any knowledge of how to use, or withhold, or in any way apply his technical knowledge. Again, it is only knowledge of how to use things correctly and to apply correctly the results of the other *technai* that can bring true happiness (281b). Since "using things correctly" would refer to virtually all human activities, the kingly *technē* would be genuine moral knowledge whose area of expertise would be the entirety of the ethical realm.

The kingly *technē* sounds marvelous, but there is a problem, precisely the same problem that occurred during the attempt to define *sōphrosunē* as self-knowledge in the *Charmides*: no determinate *ergon* can be identified as its proper subject matter. Someone who has a non-controversial example of knowledge, such as medicine (291e5) or farming (291e8), can identify that which results from his knowledge (health or food from the earth). If the "kingly *technē*" were truly analogous, its spokesman would be able to do the same. But this Crito (Socrates' interlocutor at the time) is unable to do (292a6).

In both the *Charmides* and the *Euthydemus*, moral knowledge is posited as the goal of the inquiry. In each, *technē* is then invoked as a plausible model of that knowledge. But in both dialogues it is precisely this assumption that causes the concluding *aporia*. Both dialogues thus present the reader with a dilemma: either there is no moral knowledge, or moral knowledge is not a *technē*. Since the first option cannot be seriously entertained, the result is that moral knowledge must be non-technical.

Even though there is no extended *elenchus* in the *Euthydemus* as there is in the *Charmides*, the similarities between the content of the two dialogues outweigh their differences. Both are designed to point their readers to non-technical knowledge. As a result, there is no need to postulate a drastic change in the mind of their author.

If the approach suggested above succeeds, then it mitigates the severity of the transition between the early and middle dialogues. But why is this an interpretive *benefit*? Because despite his careful marshalling of the evidence to document his thesis that Plato undergoes a radical change, Vlastos' thesis is irremediably speculative. His argument that purports to distinguish Socrates-E from Socrates-M claims that a man who lived 2,500 years ago went through a profound psychological transformation because (mainly) of his study of mathematics. This is, of course, possible: no one can deny that Vlastos' story is coherent. But even if it coheres beautifully, this is nonetheless a massive speculation. The alternative reading offered here, which begins by focusing more on the *technē* question than on the *elenchus*, and then concludes that the search for non-technical knowledge is the thread that unifies the content of various dialogues written at different periods, does not require the postulation of a Platonic psyche whose stages of evolution are accessible to a reader 2,500 years later.

On the reading I propose, the early Plato need not be characterized as someone who "maintains epistemological innocence, methodological naivete" (Vlastos 1983.53). Instead, he is acutely aware of the epistemic character and, most important, the limits of *technē*, and deeply concerned with the most significant philosophical issue that attends the *technē* question, namely, the notion of determinacy.

This leads me to a second reason why a shift of focus, away from *elenchus* to *technē*, is useful for an understanding of Socrates. In "Socrates' Disavowal of Knowledge" (Vlastos 1985), Vlastos collects Socrates' several positive claims to knowledge and tries to figure out what they mean and how Socrates can maintain them while yet claiming to be ignorant. Again, this strategy proves to be fruitful. However, again Vlastos leaves something out. In the *Symposium*, Socrates straightforwardly professes to have knowledge: "I say that I know nothing other than the erotic things (*ta erotika*, 177e)."

This is an alluring statement, and quite in keeping with Vlastos' project, for it both asserts and denies the possession of knowledge: Socrates knows eros but nothing else. Of course, the *Symposium* is a middle dialogue and Vlastos thinks Plato's views on eros changed as he matured (see Vlastos 1991.38-40). Nevertheless, I would argue that this claim to know eros should be included on Vlastos' list of positive epistemic assertions, and that it will help sort out the complex irony of Socrates' disavowal of knowledge.

To be highly schematic: eros is what makes us human. As stated above in the context of discussing the *Charmides*, the self is not a determi-

nate, fixed and stable object, capable of being treated by a *technē*. Instead, it is a capacity to enter into relationships. This capacity is best described as "erotic"; as such, human beings are essentially erotic. Therefore, Socrates' assertion that he knows eros is equivalent to an assertion that he knows something fundamental about human beings. And given the indeterminate nature of eros, such knowledge cannot be a *technē*.<sup>9</sup>

Socrates can thus consistently say, (1) "I know nothing," and (2) "I have human wisdom (*anthrōpinē sophia*, *Apology* 20d)," knowledge of what it means to be human, if by "knowledge" he means a *technē* and by "wisdom" he means non-technical knowledge. Eros is not a stable determinate entity analogous to the human body (the subject matter of medicine) or number (the subject matter of calculation). But it can be known, albeit non-technically, and so I would argue that Socrates' knowledge of eros can be coherently and usefully included on Vlastos' list.

To conclude: Vlastos' use of complex irony as a means of understanding Socrates' disavowal of, as well as his claims to, knowledge is a rich and fruitful approach to the early dialogues. However, his singular identification of Socrates with the elenchus runs the risk of narrowing our view of Socratic strangeness. Many of Vlastos' best insights can be preserved if our view of Socrates is expanded, shifted away from exclusive concentration on the elenchus and to his use of the term and concept of *technē*. If that shift is made, there are two valuable consequences. There is less need to posit a radical transition between the early and middle dialogues, both of which are concerned with non-technical knowledge. And Socrates becomes a consistent character who, whether he appears in an early or a middle dialogue, is concerned with, and indeed knows, the erotic things, and who has human wisdom.

Vlastos, following Alcibiades, thinks Socrates is *atopos*, "strange" (Vlastos 1991.1). He is right. Socrates is *atopos* because what he knows, namely eros, the human soul, is without a *topos*, without a place. Eros is the potential to enter into relationships. It is nothing, i.e., not-a-determinate-thing, and so has no place. It can be known, but cannot be-

<sup>9</sup> In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates suggests that he has the "erotic *technē*" (257a8). In the *Theaetetus*, he claims to have an erotic *technē*, that of the midwife (149a). These passages, as well as Socrates' claim in the *Gorgias* to have the *politikē technē*, represent potential problems for my interpretation. Needless to say, I think they can be addressed.

come a subject matter of a proper *technē*. And so, as Vlastos has put it so well, there is indeed Socratic knowledge, but it is knowledge that is itself *atopos*, that is "full of gaps . . . that is surrounded and invaded by unresolved perplexity."

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