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THE PHONOLOGICAL POLITICS OF PLATO AND
THE MYTH OF PROTAGORAS

Pierre Vidal-Naquet, in memoriam

Commenting on a passage from Timaeus, Theophrastus was quite right when he stated that Plato lacked a theory of sound worthy of being referred to as such. Sound does not present any problem in terms of the physics of perception. However, the way Plato deals with sound has an important political content.

It is possible to reach this conclusion by observing the way in which Plato used γλῶσσα. Like the passage from Timaeus, we find sporadic references to the physics of aural perception. Φωνή is also used in the


3. Laches, 192a-b; Meno, 76 d; Charmides, 167 d, 168 d; Gorgias, 474 d, 474 e; Theaetetus, 156 c, 185 a, 163 b; The Republic V, 480 a, VI, 493 b, VI, 507 c; Statesman, 306 d – 307 a; Minos, 314 a.
sense of a language, tongue or dialect, a synonym of γλῶσσα, although Plato reserves this term for the tongue as an organ. Neither is it surprising to find uses of φωνή concentrated in etymological analyses of Cratylus, or etymological and grammatical analyses of Sophist or Philebus. The same is true of the relationships between φωνή and mimesis in The Republic and other dialogues. The relationship between sound and musical education is also obvious in the Laws. Within this panorama we find the eighteen appearances of φωνή in Protagoras, a dialogue in which there is nothing to indicate that it deals with subjects such as « sound », or ideas such as mimesis, grammar, music or the physics of hearing, for which φωνή is used. Furthermore, φωνή is never defined and in every case is inserted as a normal usage in written Greek. We will cover these appearances of φωνή in Protagoras.

It first appears when the young Hippocrates cries out on arriving at the house of Socrates, who recognises his voice (Protagoras, 310 b). Later, in the house of Callias, Socrates notes peculiarities in the voice of Protagoras (Protagoras, 315 a-b) and Prodicus (Protagoras, 316a). In the discourse of Protagoras, the voice appears when explaining the evolution of the human race, and when writing is compared with orality (Protagoras, 322 a and 325 e). In the discussion of the poem of Simonides, φωνή indicates a Greek dialect or the barbarian tongue three times (Protagoras, 341 b, 341 c, 346 d). Then, φωνή is used five times in an important paragraph

4. On the tongue as an organ of taste or for phonation: Cratylus, 422 e, 423 b, 426 e, 427 a, 427 b; Theaetetus, 159 d-e, 185 c, 203 b; Timaeus, 65 c-d, 66 c, 67 e, 75 a, 75 d; The Republic, VIII, 565 e; Phaedrus 254 e. In Symposium, 199 a, and Theaetetus, 154 d, Plato quotes Euripides, Hippolytus, 612.

5. Where the normal meaning of φωνή is « dialect » or « tongue »: Cratylus, 383 a, 398 b, 398 d, 418 b, 418 c, 419 b, 426 c. However, Maurice Leroy, « Sur un emploi de φωνή chez Platon », Revue des Études Grecques 80, 1967, p. 234-41, explains παλαιὰν φωνήν in Cratylus 398 d (and in 410c) as a reference to writing prior to the introduction of the Ionian alphabet in Athens in 402/3 BC.

6. Cratylus, 422 e – 423 d, 423 d, 424 c, 427 c.

7. Sophist, 253 a, 261 e, 262 a, 262 d, 262 c.

8. Philebus, 17 b-c, 18 b-c.

9. The Republic, III, 393 c, 395 d, 397 a-b.

10. Cratylus, 422 e, 423 b, 423 d; Sophist, 267 a.

11. Laws, II, 653 d-e, 654 c, 664 e – 665 a, 666 d, 669 c-e, 672 e – 673 a. Furthermore, φωνή is the « voice » of Socrates’ daemon, Apology, 17 d, 31 d; Phaedrus, 242 c; Theages, 128 d, 128 e, 129 b-c. Cf. Herodotus I, 47, 159; VIII, 65.

12. I have tracked the uses of words composed with φωνή in the dialogues without them, except for errors on my part, altering the analysis that follows.
on types of discussion utilized at a banquet (infra part 3; another three mentions, 332 c, 356 c, 361 a, are inconsequential). None of these uses is exceptional, and at no time does Plato consider φωνή by itself. However, the appearances of φωνή are accompanied by social and political ideas, starting with the voices of the Sophists in the house of Callias.

1. The Sophists on the scene

The dialogue begins with a conversation between Socrates and an anonymous friend, where the first question concerns the legal status of the new arrival: whether he is a citizen of Athens, or a foreigner. Socrates then introduces Protagoras, and tells the story in the house of Callias. As a preamble there is Socrates’s conversation with Hippocrates on the definition of a Sophist, allowing us to discover more about the socio-political nature of these characters.


Socrates takes Hippocrates’s willingness to pay Protagoras for granted. The next step is to discover the type of teaching being paid for, establishing that the Sophist makes his students agile speakers. Later Socrates compares the Sophists to merchants – both peddling their wares from city to city (Protagoras, 313 d).

In the house of Callias, the Sophists are shown with a stage for each of them. The text describes the areas in the house where they are found, if they are still or in movement, their gestures and so forth, and also quotes two verses from Homer’s description of Hades. It is relevant to consider how evocative these verses were for the Hellenic reader or listener, as they describe the pleas of Tityos, Tantalus and Sysiphos, punished for challenging the gods and attempting to exceed the limits of the human condition. This allusion therefore presents the house of Callias as an ironic allomorph of Hades, with the three Sophists occupying the place of the three mythical delinquents. Finally, Socrates focuses on the type of voice and discourse they use and on their listeners, emphasising whether they are Athenian citizens or foreigners.

The theatrical image is explicit when Plato states that the group around Protagoras evolves like a choir (Protagoras, 315 b), with the Sophist as their choirmaster. However, he also stresses the special location and legal status of the members of this choir, where foreigners surround the Athenian citizens. Socrates mentions to Protagoras that he is being followed on one hand by Callias, son of Hipponicus, Paralus, son of Pericles, who shares the same mother as Callias, and Charmides, son of Glaucón, and on the other Xanthippus, the second son of Pericles, and Phillipides, son of Philomelus, five members of distinguished Athenian families. He balances this group and connects it with the following group, with Antimoerus, a foreigner from Mende and a disciple of Protagoras. In the case of this group:

The persons who followed in their rear, listening to what they could of the talk, seemed to be mostly strangers (ξένοι), brought by the great Protagoras from the several cities which he traverses, enchanting them with his voice like Orpheus, while

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15. The idea is reiterated: Protagoras, 310 d, 311 b, and all of 311 b-e.
16. Protagoras, 312 d-e: ποιεῖν δεινὸν λέγειν, the expression appears twice.
17. Protagoras, 315 b and 315 c, quoting Homer, Odyssey XI, 601 and 583.
19. Like all of the people found in the dialogues, Vidal-Naquet, « La société », art. cit., p. 110.
they follow where the voice sounds, enchanted; and some of our own inhabitants (ἐπιχώριοι) were also dancing attendance.

It is possible to make a graphic representation of the layout of this « choir », with the Athenians in capitals and the foreigners in small letters, showing the former surrounded by foreigners.

Protagoras

CALLIAS
PARALOS
CHARMIDES

XANTHIPEUS
PHILLIPIDES
Antimoerus

ἐξευτελεῖν attracted by the charisma of his voice

OTHERS ἐπιχώριοι

An important element here is the comparison made between the voice of the Sophist and that of Orpheus, with its legendary features. This reference to Orpheus is no coincidence. His voice, but also his « legal status (in loose terms) is similar to that of Protagoras. Abdera, the homeland of the Sophist, was considered as a land of barbarian tongues, and was situated in a territory populated by the same Thracians as those Orpheus

20. Protagoras, 315 a-b. The phrase is composed « in the round », highlighting its choral nature. Orpheus appears as a « chorister » in the spacial arrangement offered by the text: κηλῶν τῇ φωνῇ ὥσπερ Ορφεύς, οἱ δὲ κατὰ τὴν φωνὴν ἐποντα κεκηλημένοι. This capacity for enchantment is important, as Socrates again describes the effect of Protagoras’s discourse using the same verb κηλέω-ῶ in 328 d.


22. Orpheus’s voice enchants the dwellers of Hades (Ovid, Metamorphoses X, 40-41, Virgil, Georgics IV, 471-473, Pausanias IX, 30, 4-12), beasts, plants and even stones (Ovid, Metamorphoses X, 143-147, Apollodorus I, 3.2, Apollonius Rhodius I, 23-24, Euripides, Iphigenia at Aulis, 1211-1214; Bacchae, 561-564; Pausanias VI, 20, 18; IX, 17, 7; 30, 4). Orpheus as a « Barbarian » is represented in ceramics from the Fifth century B.C., François Lissarrague, « Orphée mis à mort », Musica e Storia 2, 1994, p. 269-307, in p. 272-7. Pausanias X, 30, 6, emphasises the « barbarian » image of Orpheus. From the Fourth century onwards Orpheus is commonly shown as a barbarian, this is taken up by Konon, FGrHist 26 F 1 LXV, Suidas O. 654, 656, 659.

seduced. Finally, Protagoras makes his affinity with Orpheus clear when he describes him as one of the crypto-Sophists who came before him in their profession *(Protagoras, 316 d)*. So, Protagoras is identified from the outset by his voice, at the same time « enchanting » and « foreign ». This is emphasised by highlighting the contrast between the « locals » and the « wanderers », with the latter occupying a dominant spatial position in the house of Callias with respect to the « locals ».

This may also be seen in the group of Hippias of Elis. The Sophist presides ἐν θρόνῳ: around him were Eryximachus, son of Acumenus, Phaedrus of Myrrhinous, and Andron, son of Androtion, who sat on simple benches (ἐπὶ βάθρων). There were also foreigners (ξένοι), some fellow citizens of Hippias, and others who would have been Athenians. The chart below reveals the similarity in situation with the previous group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hippias</th>
<th>ERYXIMACHUS</th>
<th>PHAEDRUS</th>
<th>ANDRON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ξένοι co-citizens of Hippias</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHERS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nothing is said about the voice of Hippias, who would have used the Elian dialect, familiar to those who were present at the Olympiads. The « besieged » position and inferiority of the Athenians with respect to the wise visitor is clear. Finally, Prodicus of Keos was still in bed, wrapped up in fleeces and rugs, with the neighbouring beds occupied by Pausanias, Agathon, the two Adeimantuses, sons of Cepis and Leucolophidas, and several others. Socrates was unable to grasp the subject of their conversation because « owing to the depth of his voice (διὰ τὴν βαρύτητα τῆς φωνῆς) the room was filled with a booming sound which made the talk indistinct » *(Protagoras, 315 d – 316 a)*, and we lack any information about the legal status of those present.

2. The ethnography of the Sophists

This presentation of the Sophists is literally ethnographic, and definitely forms part of a descriptive plan that belongs firmly to the world of « folk linguistics »\(^{24}\). In the prose of the historians – references for Plato – it is

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\(^{24}\) *I have used the expression by Gordon M. Messing, « Sound Symbolism in Greek and Some Modern Reverberations », *Arethusa* 4, 1971, p. 5-23, who writes (p. 10-1): « The Greeks... are based on observation, often fairly naive and unscientific, of a single language, their own;... some of their beliefs about language fell into the category which..."
usual to find the definition of a people or the presentation of a character, indicating their speech (frequently φωνή) and other customs. The explanations offered in the dialogue are analogous: Protagoras with his enchanting voice and eastern Ionic dialect, accompanied by a chorus of young men; Hippias with his Elian speech offering sentences sat on a high chair, or Prodicus, chilled to the bone and speaking in his central Ionic dialect. Indications are always made of their « foreignness » and the « otherness » of their voices, and therefore of the Attic dialect of the Athenians who were present.

H. Hoenigswald has recently named « folk-linguistics ». Similar conclusion in BARKER, « Words for Sounds », art. cit., p. 26: « What is perfectly clear is that the acoustic senses of these terms ( SetValue="oxys", betauros, leios, tressos, megas, mikros, ountos, anemenos) are not independent of their uses in other domains »; also Anna Morpurgo DAVIES, « The Greek Notion of Dialect », in Thomas HARRISON (ed.), Greeks and Barbarians, Edinburg, 2002, p. 153-171, in p. 165-167.

25. See Herodotus III, 23: the Argippeans have φωνὴν δὲ ἰδίην and wear Scythian clothing; IV, 111: the Scythians do not recognize the Amazons φωνή or their dress; VII, 70: Ethiopians are different only in φωνή and hair; VII 85: the Sagartians are Persian by ἔθνος... καὶ φωνῇ but their equipment is between the Persian and the Pactyan; VI, 138: Athenian women imprisoned taught their sons Attic γλῶσσα and Athenian manners; see Thomas HARRISON, « Herodotus' Conception of Foreign Languages », Histos 2, 1998, www.dur.ac.uk/Classics/histos/1998/. Thucyides I, 138: Themistocles have studied the Persian γλῶσσα and the customs; III, 94: the Eurytanians speak a difficult γλῶσσα and eat flesh raw; VI, 5: at Himera the φωνή was a mixture of Chalcidian and Doric but the institutions were the Chalcidian; VII, 57: Lemnians, Imbrians and Aeginetans where peoples with Attic φωνή and Athenian laws; VII, 63: Sailors (metics?) in Athenian fleet know Athenian φωνή, imitate Athenian manners and were considered as Athenians. Xenophon, Anabasis III, 1, 26, 31: Apollonides βοιωτιάζων τῇ φωνῇ but he has both his ears pierced, like a Lydian; Ps. Xenophon, Constitution of the Athenians, 2. 7-8: Athenians hearing every kind of φωναί they have taken something from each and by their naval power, they have mingled with various peoples; 2.8: the Greeks use their own φωνή, way of life, and type of dress.

26. For Greek dialects, I refer to Carl Darling BUCK, The Greek Dialects, Chicago-London, 1955, who stresses « the phonology and inflexion » to identify the dialects (p. 136); and the general use of local dialects in all kind of documents long after Attic had become the norm in literary prose (p. 173). The differences in linguistic competence in a complex city such as Athens, fall outside of our analysis, see Andreas WILLI, The Languages of Aristophanes, Oxford, 2003, in particular his analysis (p. 159-162) of Aristophanes fr. 706, where ἕξενα ὀνόματα are the words of dialects other than Attic. See also Emilio CRESPO, « The Attitude of the Athenian State towards the Attic Dialect in the Classical Era », in John H.W. PENNEY, Indo-European Perspectives. Studies in Honour of Anna Morpurgo Davies, Oxford, 2004, p. 108-118.
Ethnography may be described in many ways, but one certainly is as an analysis of identity. Even Odysseus in his wanderings constantly reaffirmed his human condition, but above all his Hellenic condition, for his relationship with specific habits and customs\textsuperscript{27}. Also in the work of Herodotus the Hellenic identity is reaffirmed in contrast with the languages and customs of the multitudes of peoples who appear in its pages. Another case is that of Thucydides, in which the rare mention made of differences in language or speech are adduced for the Greeks; Thucydides is concerned with Greek dialects and the uses of \textit{poleis} or \textit{ethne}\textsuperscript{28}.

The ethnography of the house of Callias is similar to the analysis made in Thucydides. The Sophists are Greeks, as are their companions, although Plato prefers to indicate their different \textit{phonai} and customs. This is due to the fact that the ethnographic perspective is convenient, as we shall see, for his dialectic purposes\textsuperscript{29}. We will leave references made in the discourse of Protagoras regarding the voice to one side for the moment, focusing instead on discussing the poem of Simonides.

The discussion has reached the point where it is necessary to establish if the word \textit{χαλεπόν}, used by Simonides, has a specific meaning in Keos, referring to the central Ionic dialect of the island. Socrates then turns to Prodicus, also from Keos, « for it is fair to question him on the \textit{Σιμωνίδου φωνή} (\textit{Protagoras}, 341 b). There then follows an intervention by Prodicus, according to which Simonides, in his poem, intends to criticise Pittacus, who did not correctly distinguish the meaning of each word as he was from Lesbos, « and nurtured in a foreign tongue (ἐν φωνῇ βαρβάρῳ) » (\textit{Protagoras}, 341 c), referring to the Aeolian dialect. Later on, towards the end of the long passage in which Socrates explains the poem of Simonides by using descriptions of the \textit{logos} of the Spartans\textsuperscript{30}, he affirms that in a specific passage Simonides « has used a Mytilenaean φωνή because he is speaking to Pittacus » (\textit{Protagoras}, 346 d-e).


\textsuperscript{28} Claudia \textsc{Antonetti}, \textit{Les Étoliens, image et religion}, Paris, 1990, 78-84. On communications between the Greeks and barbarians see a comprehensive volume by Maria Elena de \textsc{Luna}, \textit{La comunicazione linguistica fra alloglotti nel mondo Greco}, Pisa, 2003.

\textsuperscript{29} Henri \textsc{Joly}, \textit{La question des étrangers}, Paris, 1992, p. 21-38, 51-52, etc. emphasises the ethnographic nature of Plato’s work; \textsc{Weil}, \textit{L’archéologie, op. cit.}, p. 34-54 on the barbarian peoples in Plato.

In this way Plato contrasts two situations. On the one hand, he is indicating the pan-Hellenic scope of normal Greek perception and knowledge of the characters that are mentioned\(^{31}\). However, on the other he introduces ethnographic ideas to construct his argument, focusing on the phonetic differences of the dialects used by the people involved, whether historical or as present at the house of Callias\(^ {32}\). Perhaps we can propose another text to sustain our argument. Olimpiodorus in his Commentary of Plato’s Gorgias 450b (p. 51 Westerink), states that Plato puts in Gorgias’ mouth local expressions (λέξεις ἐγχώριοι) because he comes from Leontinoi\(^ {33}\).

2.1. Dialectology or epistemic diaphony

The ethnographic discourse allows Plato to establish and classify differences within an apparently homogenous reality. Put differently, Plato establishes a diaphony where others find a homophony\(^ {34}\). It is of little importance that these details have nothing to do with the explanation of Simonides’ poem. It is rather that the reader of or listener to the dialogue is aware of a new indication of the allophony of these characters, of the distant similarities in sound that they bring up to date (always from an Athenian point of view) and eventually interweave amongst themselves: between Prodicus or Simonides (who spoke the same dialect), between Pittacus and the barbarians (in the provocative sentence of Prodicus), between Simonides or Pittacus (as the poet uses the Lesbian dialect of Pittacus to talk to him).

Neither is it important that Greek dialectology recognizes that Athenians, Keians and Abderitans shared the Attic-Ionic group, as everything indicates that the differences found within this group were precisely the

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31. Pithacus is one of the Seven Wise Men in Protagoras, 343 a, and, then, a « hidden » Sophist for Protagoras.

32. In the dialogue all of the main Greek dialectic groups are present except Arcadian-Cypriot. The Attic-Ionic predominates, with the Attic variants, the central Ionic of Prodicus and Simonides, ironically, and the eastern Ionic of Protagoras. The Lesbian dialect of the Eolic group is in Pithacus and in the imitation of his speech by Simonides. The western dialects are in the Elian speech of Hippias, while the Spartans would spread their logos through Doric.

33. Also Plato, Gorgias, 450 b-c with some rare words used by the Sophist and their ironical reappraisal by Socrates in 450 d-e. See Monique CANTO, Platon, Gorgias, Paris, 1993, p. 315, n. 9.

34. « Diaphonous » used in its etymological sense: the « division » or « separation » of « sounds » and by restrictive analogy with diaeresis. Plato uses διαφωνία 10 times with the normal meaning of « disagreement ». He also uses ὁμόφωνος twice, see below n. 36.
most important. More specifically, clear testimony exists that reveals how the Athenians maintained a clear consciousness of the « identity » of the Attic dialect. In this case, when Plato highlights the dialectical identity of Prodicus and Simonides, the barbarian affinities of Orpheus and, through him, of Protagoras, while the Elian dialect of Hippias would be so evident to him as to not warrant further comment. He is emphasizing the Attican dialect of the Athenians present as an implicit reference contrasted with the diverse φωναί of the foreign interlocutors.

It is important to note that Plato does not limit this procedure to Protagoras. The political diaphony revealed in this dialogue reappears as a scientific – or epistemic – diaphony, relevant in order to understand the uses of φωνή in other dialogues. In Philebus, grammar and music involve sound; first the sounds issued by the mouth, which are unique to each individual, in the same way that the sound in the music is distinctive. The specific task of the grammaist, who knows the diversity of verbal sounds, and the musician, who knows the intervals that make a sound sharp or flat, is the setting of intervals or stops (Philebus, 17 b-c).

Therefore so there is an analogy between the ethnographic environment of Protagoras and the scientific environment of Philebus. In Protagoras the contrast is made between the pan-Hellenic, homophonic milieu, in which the Sophists seek to establish a niche, and a political and diaphonous milieu, where Plato situates them. In Philebus, however, the starting point, as laymen understand it, is of a single or homogenous milieu of sounds, vocal or musical, while there is another scientific milieu, more appropriate for grammaticists or musicians, who distinguishes between words and tones as compared to the undifferentiated continuum perceived by the uninformed. Finally, Plato brings together the question of the

35. For Solon fr. 24, 13: the Athenians sold as slaves who where γλῶσσαν οὐκέτ’ Ἀττικήν. The Attic dialect is taught by captured Athenians (Herodotus VI, 138), spoken by the Athenian priesthood (Thucydides VII, 57), and used by outsiders as a result of living in contact with the Athenians (Thucydides VII, 63). Herodotus I, 142 recognizes four Ionic dialects, not known in any other source.

36. Joly, La question, op. cit., p. 81-89 on Plato, Stateman, 262 c-d, an example of Platonic reservations where others find similarities. Further on (262 e) it is specified that Lidiens, Phrygians and others would oppose the rest only when they were not able to find their place by divisions. Plato thereby systematises the procedure which in Protagoras had led him to consider the hellenophonoi as diverse individuals. In Menexenus, 242a, the traditional barbarian/Hellene opposition, presented as καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὁμοφώνων, is brought up by Aspasia: a Milesian and a foreigner in Athens (249 d). Cf. Vidal-Naquet, « La société », art. cit., p. 103-5.

37. This scientific perception is ridiculed in Plato, The Republic VII, 531 a.
scientific perception of sound with his political proposal in dissecting the problem of mimesis. Plato reveals in several passages the special mimetic ability of sounds\textsuperscript{38}, although in the \textit{Republic} this statement serves as the foundations for a diatribe against the arts based on the concept of imitation (see \textit{infra}).

3. Phonological Politics

After the debate on the poem of Simonides, there is a final interlude. Here we find a reflection by Socrates on the political phonology that gives meaning to the episodes explored, and which offers one of the keys to the dialogue as a whole. The passage reads thus:

\begin{quote}
(347c) For it seems to me that arguing about poetry is comparable to the wine-parties of common market-folk (τοῖς συμποσίοις τοῖς τῶν φαύλων καὶ ἀγοραίων ἄνθρωπων). These people, owing to their inability to carry on a normal conversation over their wine (μὴ δύνασθαι ἀλλήλως συνεῖναι) by means of their own voices and words (διὰ τῆς ἑαυτῶν φωνῆς καὶ τῶν λόγων τῶν ἑαυτῶν), – such is their lack of education – give precedence to flute-girls by hiring the (d) extraneous voice of the flute at a high price, and carry on their exchange by way of its sounds (πολλοῦ μισθούμενοι ἄλλοτροι φωνῆς τὴν τῶν αὐλῶν, καί διὰ τῆς ἑκείνων φωνῆς ἄλληλοι σύνεισιν). But where the party consists of true gentlemen who have had a proper education (ὅπου δὲ καλοὶ κἀγαθοὶ πεπαιδευμένοι εἰσίν), you will see neither flute-girls nor dancing-girls nor harp-girls, but only the company contenting themselves with their own conversation (διὰ τῆς αὐτῶν φωνῆς), and none of these fooleries and frolics – each speaking and listening decently in his turn, even though they may drink a great deal of wine. (e) And so a gathering like this one of ours, when it includes such men (ἀνδρεῖς) as most of us claim to be, requires no extraneous voices, not even of the poets, (οὐδὲν δέονται ἄλλοτροις φωνῆς οὐδὲ ποιητῶν), whom one cannot question on the sense of what they say; when they are introduced into a discussion we are generally told by some that the poet thought so and so, and by others, something different, and they go on arguing about a matter which they are powerless to finally determine. (348a) No, that sort of meeting is avoided by men of culture, who prefer to converse directly with each other, and to use their own way of speech in putting one another by turns to the test. (αὐτοὶ δὲ ἑαυτοῖς σύνεισιν διὰ ἑαυτῶν, ἐν τοῖς ἑαυτῶν λόγοις πεῖραν ἄλληλον λαμβάνοντες καὶ διδόντες).
\end{quote}

First, note that there is a change in the tone of Socrates’ intervention. He now reveals a seriousness that contrasts with the irony he used during the discussion of Simonides, including the speech by Socrates himself. Everything, Socrates now tells us, lacks any sense. The interruption

\textsuperscript{38}. \textit{Cratylus}, 422 e, 423 b, 423d; \textit{Sophist}, 267 a.
by Hippias — quickly cut short by Alcibiades — between the end of Socrates’s speech and before these words (Protagoras, 347 a-b), reveals how far it is possible to repeatedly multiply opinions on the poem without increasing its comprehension.

But the serious question is to establish which is the type of discourse, or rather the sound, which is suitable for social life (syneimi appears in the passage six times) focusing on banquets. There are two concordant attitudes with two well-differentiated human types:

On the one hand some are clearly inferior men — anthropoi — both vulgar and common. They are incapable of being authentically themselves, incapable of coexisting in an environment at once autophonous and autologous. They require an external source or « sound », and so pay for professionals to produce different sounds in order them to be « in harmony ». The allophones are occasionally women, prostitutes or slaves (or both), who provide the necessary phonic environment so that these individuals may meet. Furthermore, the mention made of misthos inevitably recalls the prior comparison between the Sophists, as sellers of speeches, and merchants. Neither Sophists nor tinkers are citizens of the places where they do their business as part of their nomadic lifestyle, similarly as the women at the banquet who are never citizens and, in particular, because the flute players in this case are in legal terms either outsiders or slaves. And so, the voices of the Sophists, as clearly presented in the first part of the dialogue, are now implicitly compared with those of the prostitutes because they are for sale, because they belong to foreigners, because they are irredeemably allophonic. Those who listen to sounds of this type are the very dregs of society.

Socrates, on the other, presents the educated nobles — andres —, as those who are present at the house of Callias. They have no need for entertainers and take sufficient pleasure in his own company, are expressly and literally autophonous, each being capable to maintain their own speech whilst respecting and listening to the discourse of each of his colleagues, also strictly


40. However, in Athens after the citizenship law of 451, Athenians had to be the children of Athenian fathers and mothers, cf. Cynthia Patterson, Pericles’ Citizenship Law of 451-50 B.C., New York, 1981; ἀστή the feminine form of ἀστός is almost a synonym of πολίτης, Aristotle, Politics III, 1278 a 34.
autophonous. These men do without the allophony of the instrument players and poets with whom they are expressly compared (and the intentional omission of the Sophists in this passage is even more evident). The passage ends by firmly driving home the autophony and autology that characterises these « true » men (autos appears four times in a single sentence).

Finally, we must explore a theme whose relevance partly depends on the uncertainties regarding the date when the action of the dialogue took place\textsuperscript{41}, with this date being most relevant if the proposal is accepted that situates it in the lifetime of Pericles. So, Plutarch says that Pericles ordered a decree calling for the celebration of a musical \textit{agon} at the Panathenaic Festival, with Pericles, as \textit{ἀθλοθέτης}, himself sitting the rules governing \textit{τοὺς ἀγωνιζομένους κύλειν ἢ ἄδειν ἢ μιθὸς ἔζευν}, and theatre spectators attending these competitions in the Odeon\textsuperscript{42}. A connection is therefore proposed, marked by the resonance of the same distant voices (as also proposed by the \textit{Ion}), between the political festival (established by Pericles) in the democratic city and the customs of the vulgar men at the banquet. What Socrates does, at least implicitly, is to separate his ideal of autophonous men from this musical model, both democratic and pan-Hellenic.

4. Allophony or autophony in the myth of Protagoras

The analyses presented up to this point may be seen as a contextualisation of a key episode from the dialogue that is the narration offered by Protagoras of the myth of Prometheus and the associated \textit{logos} or explanation. Here, C. Calame explains that:

Chaque version ou formulation de ce que nous appelons un \textit{mythe} doit être considérée comme le résultat d’une mise en discours singulière et spécifique, en relation avec une situation d’énonciation précise, une situation dans laquelle la narration fictionnelle réalise sa dimension pragmatique\textsuperscript{43}.


Focusing on the « situation d’énonciation » of the discourse of Protagoras, we are now only interested in seeing how a phonological perception is integrated within it, and also how this aspect at least partly explains the strange treatment that the myth/logos is given by Plato/Socrates and which, in a collateral manner for our discussion, constitutes another argument in favour of attributing to Protagoras the fundamental points of this discourse.

Φωνή appears directly on two occasions and, indirectly, at least once more in a way that is of special interest to us, as it includes a meaning of the term, « language » or « dialect », that ties in with other uses of φωνή in the dialogues we already detected.

Φωνή appears for the first time after Prometheus had stolen the art of fire from Athene and Hephaestus, and before the gift of techne politike:

(322a) And since anthropos was the partaker of a divine portion, he, first, by his kinship to deity, was the only creature who worshipped gods, and set himself to establish altars and holy images; and secondly, he soon was enabled by his skill (τέχνη) to articulate speech and words (φωνήν καὶ ὀνόματα), and to invent dwellings, clothes, sandals, beds, and the foods that are products of the earth. Thus far provided, anthropoi dwelt separately in the beginning, and cities there were none; (b)... and although their skill in handiwork was a sufficient aid in respect of food, in their warfare with the beasts it was defective; for as yet they had no techne politike, which includes the art of war. So they sought to band themselves together and secure their lives by founding cities (κτίζοντες πόλεις). Now as often as they were banded together they did wrong to one another through the lack art of politics (οὐκ ἔχοντες τὴν πολιτικὴν τέχνην) and thus they began to be scattered again, and to perish.

This passage belongs to a series of testimonies, studied by W.K.C. Guthrie, which reveal an idea of human evolution conditioned by technical knowledge. We may also cite the passage by Diodorus of Sicily, with ideas normally attributed to Democritus, in which he indicates the role of the voice in the genesis of social life. The text describes the origin of the cosmos and then of mankind’s place within it — who once lived there scattered, gathering what they could and suffering the attacks of

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wild beasts, but gradually came together, explaining their achievements, 
by means of their voices, and capacity for communication:

Their voice (φωνή) was at first indistinct and confused; then, little by little, they 
began to articulate words, converting them into symbols agreed upon amongst them, 
suitable for designating each object; in this way they obtained a general method 
for communicating meaning. The presence of similar communities throughout the 
inhabited lands led to the appearance of completely different dialects (οὐχ ὁμόφωνον 
πάντας ἔχειν τὴν διάλεκτον), each one forming its own vocabulary at random. This 
is what explains the presence of such a large number of dialects, and the fact that it is 
from these first communities that all other races are descended.

Then we can observe in both sociogeneses how language appears at 
a very early stage, although it is not sufficient for an adequate human 
existence. Other techniques are necessary for a social life worthy of 
such a name, and perhaps specifically, in the passage from Protagoras, 
the mention of techne opens up at this moment in the dawn of humanity, 
suggesting the existence of a place for the intervention of the Sophist. This 
said, for Protagoras, and probably for his fellow citizen Democritus, the 
fullness of life in society was inextricably linked to a Greek way of life. 
This is an idea, which I recognise as uncommon, but the evidence is based 
on the analytical foundations of a text such as this. In fact, the myth of 
Prometheus as told by Protagoras reveals a progressive restriction in the 
number of humans involved.

At first the myth distinguishes between the gods, who already existed, 
and mortal races that did not. Once the mortals had been born, Epimetheus 
distinguishes between animals with their attributes, and helpless humans. 
This is when Prometheus steals fire and technical skills from the gods, 
Protagoras (324 d). Yet under these conditions the human race barely 
differs from animals, for with speech and the knowledge of fire mankind 
is limited to surviving.

In order for mankind to progress, Zeus sends Hermes to them « to bring 
respect and right among men, to the end that there should be regulation 
of cities and friendly ties to draw them together » (Protagoras, 322 c). 
And Zeus declares that all must receive these gifts « for cities cannot be 
formed if only a few have a share of these as of other arts » (Protagoras, 
322 d). At this moment all men receive the qualities that allow them to live 
in poleis and only there, as Zeus orders « that he who cannot partake of 


respect and right shall die the death as a public pest »48. No consideration is given to the existence of the human condition outside of the city. The next step taken by Protagoras, in the logos that follows, which consists in establishing the identity between the condition of being a citizen and being a Hellene or, in other words, between legal status and ethnic identity. To do so he starts by indicating, as a conclusion to the myth, that the Athenians do the right thing when dealing with πολιτικὴ ἀφετή:

they naturally take advice from all men (ἀνδρός), since it is held that everyone (παντὶ) should partake of this arete, or else cities cannot exists (ἵππη εἶναι πόλεις) (Protagoras, 323 a).

From now on it will only be a question of cities and citizens, and any mention made of « all mankind » really indicates a restrictive reference to « all citizens ». The text emphasises this in a way that is difficult to translate, as it plays with the superimposition of the semantic fields of ἄνθρωπος, the common man, and ἀνήρ, the « excellent » man, and highlights the identity between man as a species and man as a citizen with a formula that makes it impossible to imagine the existence of humanity beyond the political (civic) condition: ἡγοῦνται πάντες ἄνθρωπος πάντα ἄνδρα μετέχειν δικαιοσύνης τε καὶ τῆς ἄλλης πολιτικῆς ἀφετής49. He drives this idea home when he insists on how absurd it is that good men do not teach their children about those issues susceptible to the severest penalties, detailing the components of Athens’ « civic death »50. So that he does not fall victim to this error, the education of a young Athenian from a good family must be completed with learning the laws of the city (Protagoras, 325 a-e).

In effect, the passage that defines how to be a good citizen fuses together the notion of humanity with that of citizenship. Only the mention of expulsion from the city and the allusion made to atimia implies the recognition of an existence that is external to the polis. This may be seen at the end of the logos, where Protagoras identifies the status as a citizen and the condition as a Hellene, a legal condition and an ethnic ascription. To do so he juxtaposes the worst citizen imaginable (« any man who appears to

48. Protagoras, 322 d, later in the logos (325a) he insists on the idea that those incapable of political life should be expelled or killed: ἐκβάλλειν ἐκ τῶν πολέων ἢ ἀποκτείνειν.
49. Protagoras, 323 a, and 323 a-c, if someone does not participate in justice and other political virtues, « they cease to exist amongst human kind ». Cf. Protagoras, 324 d: πότερον ἐστίν τι ἐν, ἢ οὐκ ἐστιν, οὐ ἀναγκαίον πάντας τοὺς πολίτας μετέχειν, εἴπερ μέλλει πόλεις εἶναι.
you the most unjust person ever reared among human laws », *Protagoras*, 327 c) with barbarians without a city (« people who lacked education and law courts and laws », *Protagoras*, 327 d). The members of both groups are ἄνθρωποι, distinguished by those qualities that identify the citizen as compared to the barbarian. Men without law are as wild (ἄγριοι) as those represented in a play by Pherecrates, yet the μισάνθρωποι who could meet them would prefer the worst citizens.

This happens because in the city everyone teaches virtue, although no one in a specific manner, in the same way that it is also impossible to find a Greek teacher there, as everyone knows the language (Protagoras, 327 e – 328 a). The legal identity of a citizen of a polis is therefore fused with the Hellenic ethnic condition, and both conditions distinguish those that hold them from the Barbarians, allophones without a city — once again we find the dual characterisation of ethnographic description with an identification by means of sound, and another customs. The task of the Sophist is therefore defined as that of improving the virtue of the Greeks who live in cities, by means of his technical ability to transform the insufficient phone of the beginnings of human life into a discourse — that defined by the Sophist — that was essential for the mature city.

In a famous passage from his *Archaeology*, Thucydides (I, 5) refers to the ancient custom shared by Greeks and Barbarians of surviving by means of piracy, as they lived κατὰ κώμας. Like the Spartans in their time, the inhabitants of villages in the ancient Hellenic manner and, as Thucydides (I, 6) emphasises, the primitive Greeks, had customs similar to those of the Barbarians. So we have seen how an equivalence was made first between the human condition with the legal condition of a citizen integrated within the polis, and then how this dual condition has been made equivalent to the Hellenic condition. However, it is obvious that the premise is false and Protagoras knew it, for he knew of men who did not live in cities, such as the Thracian neighbours of his homeland in Abdera, and other neighbouring barbarian towns near the Italian cities he visited. His conceptual trap consists of identifying a term of restricted or partial scope, « Greek », with another, more universal term, « mankind ».


Here sound occupies a privileged position at the beginning and end of this historical and conceptual « evolution ». From the first use of the voice at the dawn of human existence, when cities were still ephemeral, up to the actual situation of Athens, where « you might as well ask who is a teacher of Greek; you would find none anywhere » due to the fact that all of the citizens teach it, in the same way as they teach civic virtue.

In this way Protagoras is again situated in the forefront of a position whose relevance is rejected by Plato. The Sophist says that the Athenians teach what we call « Greek ». But in reality, as Plato would make clear in the passages where he mentions φωνή, what the Athenians actually taught is what we call the « Attic dialect ». Once more, both Herodotus and Thucydides reveal that the linguistic identity of the Greek speakers was not « Greek », but instead the specific dialect of each city or region, and it does not matter if this idea was pure folk-linguistics, the important thing is that it made for the self-perception of the Greeks and of their differences.

This ethnographic point of view, which as we have seen was adopted by Plato in order to differentiate between sounds, accents or tones spoken by his characters, implies the establishment of a diaphony, a series of distinctions within a continuum. This said, Protagoras looks at the aspect of language from a perspective that highlights the common elements of Hellenic speech, establishing an indistinct and general homophony that closely agrees with the social and political terms of his stated myth and his explanatory logos: in the same way that all men live in cities and are virtuous to different degrees, they also all speak Greek, without being bothered by the different types of speech, accents or dialectic forms.

Before continuing with exploring the differences between the homophony of Protagoras and the diaphony of Socrates, we will see another use of φωνή, simply for the purpose of completing the study and to highlight how it fits in with what we have just discussed.

Palamedes against the barbarians with whom he is accused of scheming. Aristote, Politics I, 1253a 2-3, in defining man as politikon zoon, establishes that the apolis, such as the Cyclops or barbarian, is not a true human.

53. Protagoras, 327e – 328a: ὥσπερ ἂν εἰ ζητοῖς τίς διδάσκαλος τοῦ ἑλληνίζειν, οὐδὲν εἶς φονεῖ. This sentence must be connected with others showing the acknowledgment of a common Greek language in the Fifth Century BC, compared with the prevalent idea that the sole languages truly existing are the « dialects » of the modern scholars; see Davies, « The Greek Notion », art. cit., p. 165-6.

54. Protagoras is presented as the spokesman for common Athenian ideas, cf. Protagoras, 328 c.
\(\Phi\omega\nu\eta\) appears at the start of the description Protagoras makes of children’s education, an education that can only really be for high-status citizens. Protagoras states that as soon as the child starts to know how to speak a series of individuals (nurse, mother, pedagogue, father) teach him the best in both actions and in words (Protagoras, 325 c-d). Then with his teacher he learns good behaviour, literature and music. When they understand written words as well as they had \(\Phi\omega\nu\eta\) (Protagoras, 325 e), the teacher makes the school class read the verses of the great poets and the teachings derived from them (Protagoras, 325e). Others then become involved in the education of the young men, culminating with the inherent function of the city itself, inculcating its laws.

Obviously this passage has a lesser scope than the previous design, seen in Protagoras’s speech on the myth and toward the end of the logos. However, it is also possible to observe a diachronic scheme inserted in the life of the individual. An initial phase in which only spoken language is known is followed by another in which the knowledge of letters and music is joined with the beginning of the political socialisation. And so, what in the global design of the myth and logos is a process of phylogenesis in which, as we have seen, there is an unconscious move from the precarious dawn of indistinct humanity to an exaltation the particular form of Greek institutional life, in this particular case moves on to a process of ontogenesis, in which the young pass from a precarious and limited knowledge of spoken language, to being able to integrate themselves fully within this institutional life of the city to which they belong.

4.1. The limits of pan-Hellenism

With his homophonic perception of Greek speech, Protagoras’s attitude coincides with that of other Sophists included in the dialogue as a whole. We have already seen how Prodicus ironically insinuates that Pythacus could be influenced by his barbarian tongue (Protagoras, 341 c). Obviously this use of the Greek/Barbarian opposition is not very important; its interest for our argument lies in that the three Sophists present at the house of Callias are situated within a pan-Hellenic frame. We now see Hippias making a particularly interesting intervention in the first and longest pause in the discussion, when Socrates attempts to leave the debate and some of attendants attempt to keep him there. Hippias then says:

\[(337c) \text{ Gentlemen (ἀνδρεῖς), he said, who are here present, I regard you all as kinsmen and intimates and fellow-citizens by nature, not by law (συγγενεῖς τε καὶ οἰκείους καὶ πολίτας ἁπάντας εἶναι φύσει, οὐ νόμῳ): (d) for like is akin to like by nature,}\]
whereas law, despot of mankind, often constrains us against nature. Hence it would be shameful if we, while knowing the nature of things, should yet – being the wisest of the Greeks, and having met together for the very purpose in the very sanctuary of the wisdom of Greece, and in this the greatest and most auspicious house of the city of cities – display no worthy sign of this dignity, (e) but should quarrel with each other like low churls (ὡσπερ τοὺς φαυλοτάτους τῶν ἀνθρώπων διαφέρεσθαι ἀλλήλοις).

We are not interested in the philosophical and literary allusions, but instead, in the fact that some of the motifs appear that Socrates will include in the political phonology he unveils later on in the dialogue, and which we have already explored. We see the juxtaposition of « excellent men » with « vile men », indicating that the latter are unable to understand each other, and the monopoly held by the former in terms of knowledge. However, elsewhere Hippias, in his reasoning, follows a path that runs parallel to that of Protagoras in his myth-logos, as he constructs a situation, with his words, that conflicts with the evidence.

In fact, in order for the dialogue to continue, it is necessary to establish a conventional framework in which the words of all of those present have identical value. However, this framework cannot be the city, as many of those present are not citizens. However Hippias, by considering all of those present as citizens, situates himself at the same time beyond the city, in a fictitious pan-Hellenic citizenship that makes an abstraction (although episodically for the purposes of the debate) of the real citizenship of each of them, and also within the city, in a situation that is domestic and pre-political, by stating that this supposed pan-Hellenic citizenship may only be detectable within a private home.

This may be said in other ways. Hippias places himself on the side of a pan-Hellenic ideal, which, without any institutional basis, only takes shape within private surroundings. In this way his discourse, much shorter than that of Protagoras, in a similar way plays with a progressive reduction of the scope of the proposals that have been formulated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protagoras</th>
<th>animals</th>
<th>men</th>
<th>Greeks (Citizens)</th>
<th>Athenians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hippias</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Greeks (Citizens)</td>
<td>Athens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>home of Callias</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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55. On physis/nomos see Felix Heinmann, Nomos und Physis, Basle, 1945, p. 42; on the indirect quote from Pindar, Marcello Gigante, Νόμος βασιλεύς, Naples, 1956, p. 146-149. Athens as « pritaneum of wisdom » reminds Athens as the school of the Greeks for Pericles, Thucydides II, 41.
However, Hippias also sets out by considering a pan-Hellenic horizon in which his suggestions make complete sense. This also becomes evident if we recall the wise men identified by Protagoras as crypto-Sophists and of whom he declares to be the successor (*Protagoras*, 316 d-e).

It is therefore possible to observe an underlying tension throughout the dialogue between the different areas of language, as well as in legal areas (or perhaps ethno-legal or etho-legal areas) in which the interlocutors are situated. A pan-Hellenic horizon is appropriate, one that highlights the solidarity and similarity among all of the Greeks, within which the Sophists are undoubtedly situated and to which they refer in one way or another with their words, a horizon that forms the basis for their way of existence, their very being. In contrast, Plato refers to Socrates as using differentiating ethnographic terms, establishing differences in terms of both sound (dialect) and legal status in the homogenous approach of the Sophists.

Friction appears between these two positions with regard to the suitable cultural model for life in society, according to the broadest proposals of the political phonology set up by Socrates, or in the city, fitted to the horizon within which the Sophists intend to locate themselves. For this reason the similarity and also the differences between the position of Hippias and Socrates are highlighted, with both juxtaposing « vile men » with « good men ». But while Hippias considers that the members of the pan-Hellenic community meeting at the house of Callias are « good », Socrates, by identifying the Sophists with prostitutes (because of their heterophony), and by rejecting a connection to the poets situated the group of foreign Sophists, with their lengthy speeches, irredeemably on the side of the « vile men ».

If the pan-Hellenic sounds of the Sophists are declared valid in all of the Greek cities, the Socratic dissection of their tones and dialects, on the other hand, links each sound with its specific city, each distant from the city of Athens where they (and the Sophists) come together. However, this democratic and real Athens is not the ideal city for Socrates/Plato. This is where the sense of the Spartan *logos* (here, knowledge) appears conditioned by the point of view of the Socratic/Platonic political phonology that unfolds throughout the dialogue.

In fact, the Spartans and Cretans, identified by their similar Doric dialect, are made to stand out for their cultivation of knowledge, not for their dedication to gymnastics and war. The fact is that even when the Spartans might wish to consult the Sophists they still expel the foreigners,

56. Mentioned twice together with the first in *Protagoras*, 342 a, 342 d.
and do not allow their young men to travel abroad\textsuperscript{57} — meaning that they are at once homologous and autophonous or autologous, like the « good men » seen in Socrates’ political phonology. Furthermore, the fundamental virtue of the Spartans’ discourse is its brevity (\textit{Protagoras}, 342 e) — concordant with the brevity that Socrates incessantly seeks, in contrast with the lengthy speeches of the Sophists.

The myth-logos of Protagoras is, under these conditions, radically distant from the proposal of Socrates, owing to its form, length and underlying pan-Hellenism, aspects that were radically rejected by Socrates/Plato. For this reason it is relatively unimportant that Socrates, at the end of the dialogue, partially accepts the position of Protagoras on the possibility of teaching virtue, as the radical heterophony of the Sophist’s dialogue has already received an inescapable checkmate before the final discussion, which only formally ends in a draw.

5. The Prolepsis of the phonological politics of \textit{Protagoras}

If we take now the chronological order of Plato’s writings related with the frequency with which φωνή appears we can see the how the term suddenly appears in \textit{Protagoras}. However, it is less apparent how ideas that first appear in this dialogue are reformulated or adapted, without changes in their essence, in subsequent dialogues. In this sense the phonological policy of \textit{Protagoras} announces or predicts, in its concentrated expression, developments that would be more finely adjusted at a later moment, in rhetorical terms this is a prolepsis\textsuperscript{58}. We have seen how this occurred with the diaphonic method used in \textit{Protagoras} and in \textit{Philebus} (\textit{supra} 2.1). However, parts of \textit{The Republic} and \textit{Laws} are more relevant, covering issues in detail that in \textit{Protagoras} are given no more than a passage or two.

5.1. \textit{The Republic}

Starting with the \textit{The Republic}, in that part of Book III that deals with the verbal content of music, and culminating with the expulsion of the poets (\textit{The Republic} III, 398 a -b), Plato emphasises on three occasions the ease with which sound is imitated, and the dangers this involves (\textit{The Republic} III, 393c). After this general statement he explores the sociology of the phonic types that the guardians of Kalipolis must avoid imitating.


Firstly, as andres they must not imitate women (The Republic III, 395 d-e). Neither are they to imitate slaves, « vile men » or cowards who insult each other and blaspheme (ἄνδρας κακούς... δειλούς... κακηγοροῦντας... καὶ αἰσχρολογοῦντας), and neither should their words or actions be those of the insane or of mere artisans craftsmen (ἄλλο δημιουργοῦντας), who are classified together with the « lower » crewmen of the triremes Finally, neither they may not imitate animals or natural sounds (The Republic III, 395 d - 396 b).

There are therefore two types of discourse. There is that of the καλὸς κἀγαθός, which must be literally autologous (ὁπότε τι δέοι αὐτὸν λέγειν), and there is the type of tales opposed to those fitted to this sort of men59. Referring to the preceding lists of noise-producing elements that the guardians must not imitate, which are expressed as a formless and mimetic heterophony, high-pitched and harmful to the ear. Like the φαυλότερος of Protagoras, their whole second sort of discourse will be nothing more than an imitation of voices and gestures, practically void of personal (autologous) narration (The Republic III, 397 b).

This distinction between two types of discourse is similar to that seen in Protagoras, although slightly altered by the introduction of the subject of mimesis, which in the former may only be considered as implicit. The « good » men continue to be characterised here by their autology, the « vile » men by the inability to produce a discourse of their own, which in Protagoras was expressed by filling their social assemblies with foreign sounds, and in the Republic is expressed as they themselves imitate these foreign sounds.

5.2. Laws

Different passages here demonstrate how essential the control of sound is in the city of the Magnesians. From a socio-political point of view, it is necessary to start out from the dialectical homogeneity of the Peloponnesian colonists (Laws IV, 707e–708 a), and a little later on the Athenian speculates on the relative advantages of a colony formed by homophonoi or by colonists from different origins (Laws IV, 708 c-d). The homophony of the Magnesians also contrasts with the loud babble heard in the port of Atlantis (Critias, 117e) and is the correlative of the caution Plato expresses on the danger of revolts by slaves in the cities, when many

of them share the same foreign language (ἐκ μιᾶς φωνῆς, *Laws* VI, 777 c). Also, some laws are destined to control the « phonic level » in the city, such as the law prosecuting those who shout and insult others (*Laws* XI, 934 d-e), or against excessive noise at funerals (*Laws* XII, 960 a).

From this it may be deduced that Plato was seeking an element of sound that was coherent for a city’s foundation, probably using the model of the Lakedaimonoi as an antithesis. On the one hand Plato notes (without necessarily considering imitating) Spartan rules on the use of words but, warning against the rebellious and homophonous Helots, he recommends *heterophony* for the slaves.

In more specific terms, musical education is intended to dominate the uncontrolled movements and voices of children. The coverage given to performed music in book II of the *Laws* is contained in an argument on banquets and the conditions in which it is correct to consume wine, concluding by limiting it severely. However, banquets have a great educational power and are presided over by three deities: Apollo, Dionysus and the Muses, and it is via this path that he inserts the comment on music into the dialogue.

In the end it is clear that music controls the senses. The Athenian states that he has divided his treatment of the *choreia* in two, and recalls the two halves. He starts out with the premise that group dancing is all education (γορεία ὅλη παιδεύσις), in which it is possible to distinguish one half, corresponding to tempos and tones, that is part of the sound itself (τὸ κατὰ τὴν φωνὴν) that is different from the actual character of the movement of the body, in rhythmic relationship with sound, but which is specific in itself. However, « Now the φωνή which pertain to the training of the soul in excellence we ventured somehow to name « music » ; the other part, corresponding to the body and cultivated in particular by the young, would be gymnastics (*Laws* II, 672 e – 673 a).

Theme to which Plato does not return until book VII. These ideas regarding the value of music in education lead to it being considered as an instrument for teaching motor control in children. In two passages, symmetrical in the piece as a whole, Plato maintains that the young are incapable of maintaining a tranquil or balanced attitude either with their

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62. Plato announces the theme in II, 653 d-e and returns to it in II, 664 e – 665 a. He also indicates the disgraceful impact of the noisy public audience in the theatre in III, 701 a.

63. *Laws* II, 673 e, referring to II, 654 b where this part is the « song ».
bodies or their voices — (τοῖς τε σώμασι καὶ ταῖς φωναῖς ἡσυχίαν ἀγεῖν οὐ δύνασθαι), meaning that they move, talk, jump, speak πάσας φωνάς,
but they will be educated, precisely, by developing the two aspects of the choreia.

All of book II of the Laws may be examined from the point of view of political phonology, as banquets, education and music are the foundations for the personal development of the citizen. We will limit our exploration to one passage, in which Plato once again suggests theories about sounds and music that are familiar to us. The passage is continuous, although I have split it up and comment on it paragraph by paragraph.

(669b) Let us not hesitate, then, to mention the point wherein lies the difficulty of music. Just because it is more talked about than any other form of representation, it needs more caution than any. The man who blunders in this art will do himself the greatest harm, by welcoming base morals; (c) and, moreover, his blunder is very hard to discern, inasmuch as our poets are inferior, as poets, to the Muses themselves. (τὸ τοὺς ποιητὰς φαυλοτέρους εἶναι ποιητὰς αὐτῶν τῶν Μουσῶν).

The opposition/juxtaposition between phauloi and kalokagathoi found in Protagoras and Republic appears here between the sounds or music produced by the poets of the moment, and the ideal model offered by the Muses. It is understood implicitly that the musical forms inspired by the Muses are those proposed by the Athenian in book II. However, his discourse is now focused on explaining the phonic perversity of bad poets. Three arguments distinguish among their vices. The first, which most directly concerns us, is a negative argument explaining what the Muses would never do:

(669c) For the Muses would never blunder so far as to assign a feminine (γυναικῶν) tune and gesture to verses composed for men (ῥήματα ἀνδρῶν), or to fit the rhythms of captives and slaves (δούλων καὶ ἄνθρωπων) to gestures framed for free men (ἐλευθέρων), or conversely, after constructing the rhythms and gestures of free men (ἐλευθέριον), to assign to the rhythms (d) a tune or verses of an opposite style. Nor would the Muses ever combine in a single piece the cries of beasts and men, the clash of instruments, and noises of all kinds (ἔτι δὲ θηρίων φωνὰς καὶ ἀνθρώπων καὶ ὀργάνων καὶ πάντας ψόφους εἰς ταύτα ὡς ὁ δὲ ποιεῖν συνθεῖεν), in order to represent a single object.

The four sentences that explain the poetry of the Muses propose specific forms for the different species, according to the Greek modes of classification: 1) Words of men (andres)/melodies of women (gynaikes). 2) Gestures for free men (eleutheroi)/rhythms of slaves (douloi). 3)

Rhythmic background of free men (eleutheroi)/opposing melody or text [of slaves]. 4) Cries of animals (theria)/voices of men (anthropoi).

The passage therefore applies a table of opposites that was widely known in ancient times. Two testimonies of debatable authenticity reflect the diffusion of these ideas. In the first, Diogenes Laertius sees Thales of Miletus as having been grateful to fortune for « first, that I was born a human being and not a beast ; next that I was born a man and not a woman ; thirdly, a Greek and not a barbarian » (Diogenes Laertius I, 33 = DK 11 A 1). Another late source, Iamblichus, attributes similar ideas to Pythagoras (Iamblicus, Vita Pitagorica, 44). The relevance of these oppositions in classical Athens is present in Euripides' Medea, a woman, barbarian and slave[65], in the same way as the Amazons are another antithesis of masculine power in classical Athens, as women who are both warriors and barbarians[66]. The widespread nature of these ideas is reflected in some plastic vases used in banquets where heads of women, barbarians, Negroes, slaves and animals were combined and opposed to signify the « otherness » of the male citizen[67].

The passage from Laws extends these ideas by illustrating heterogeneous notions of species, gender or legal status. But above all it extends the ideas of Plato’s political phonology, active since Protagoras though in an embryonic form. In fact, the classification of species is inserted as part of the myth narrated by the Sophist, while the passage on political phonology is spoken elsewhere by Socrates. L. Brisson proposes the following chart to explain the movement of the myth that he considers, legitimately in my opinion, to bear on the « origin of the city »[68]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gods</th>
<th>Animals</th>
<th>Mortals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Men (φωνή)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(φωνή)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Military and political arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Craftsmanihip</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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As we have indicated, Plato does not directly oppose the myth laid out by Protagoras. Later on, in a passage dealing with political phonology, he simply dissects the categories of citizens, differentiating between the heterophony of the φαῦλοι, who call for women who play with instruments (and implicitly with the heterophonous Sophists) and the autophonous capacity of the καλοὶ κἀγαθοί. However, when in the political phonology of *The Republic* the catalogue of types of vocality that the guardians should never utter is established, Plato fuses together the classification of the species with the indication of the sounds that belong to each of them.

Therefore, the presentations attributed to Thales or Pythagoras, the classifications that were operative in classical Athens and Platonic statements, share the creating of a criterion of excellence based on a polarisation that is progressively configured by the restricted group to which the « chosen » belong, male citizens in the traditional forms and eventually the philosophers in the expression of Plato and his predecessors. The novelty of Plato’s notion is the progressive introduction first of sound in general, whether as speeches or music (*Protagoras*), then of voices and sounds as attributes of specific beings (*Republic*) and finally of music in its literal sense, inspired by the Muses, as a criterion of classification (*Laws*). These types of sound serve as determining factors in a general classification of beings. Antithetically, the music of « bad poets » breaks down the differences that exist between species, genders and legal categories. By using these formulae Plato repeatedly expresses, although with different degrees of sophistication, a stable model in which each human category (and beyond the human) would have its own specific and incommunicable sonorous universe. The finest men would enjoy the privileges of autophony, while the commoners would have to make do with inferior types of entertainment, commercial or ordinary and definitively allophonous.

Within this context, it seems opportune to mention a historical parallel that supports this analysis from the time of Plato. When the Thebans took prisoner Spartan-owned Helots in 369 BC, they refused to sing the works of the Laconian poets Terpandrus, Alcman or Spendon before their new masters, alleging that their old masters did not allow it 69. We therefore see the presence in Sparta of solidly defined sonorous universes set according to legal and social categories, a situation comparable to the Platonic design.

Plato himself also noted in *Laws* the traditional positions of some cities, perhaps Cretan, according to which those who may perform grotesque parodies are slaves and paid foreigners, who should be ignored and who no free man or woman should copy under any circumstances\(^{70}\).

We do not know if Plato consciously used these models to construct his political phonology, or if they were just common ideas in his time, also attributed to Damon of Oe\(^{71}\). In any case it is possible to observe in the political phonology of Plato the same gusto for establishing differences, fitted to the ethnographic model, which in the *Laws* upholds the criticism of the music of his time, differences that imply a diaphony: distinguishing between the languages of the Sophists, or between different vocal or musical styles of humans in the *Republic* or the *Laws*. Within this context, the pan-Hellenic homophony – which Plato thought false – as adopted by the Sophists, is equal to the mixophony of the «bad poets» from the *Laws*. And so, any legitimate attempt to approach the ideal art of the Muses implies the construction of a specific, closed sonorous universe for each legal and social category. However, this is not what the poets normally do, as the text continues:

\[(669d)\] Whereas human poets, by their senselessness in mixing such things and jumbling them up together, would furnish a theme for laughter to all the men (γέλωτ' ἂν παρασκευάζοιεν τῶν ἄνθρωπων) who, in Orpheus’s phrase, «have attained the full flower of joyousness. For they behold all these things jumbled together…

In opposition to the manner proposed by the Muses, bad poets pervert musical modes by jumbling them together. Criticism through laughter has an illustrious precedent as in the passage from Hecateus of Mileitus\(^{72}\). In both cases, this hilarity is the expression of someone coming face to face with a multiform something in many guises, mixed together and disorganised, whether in the case of the genealogical tales of the Greeks who attempt to systematise Hecateus, or, for Plato, the mixed, unintelligible and heterophonic sounds of the «fashionable» poets.

\(^{70}\) *Laws* VII, 816 d-e. Plutarch says (in the passage just quoted) that the Helots were forced to get drunk and to sing rude songs and perform vulgar dances that were forbidden to free men.


In this laughter there is something of the logocentric prejudice expressed by wise men faced with the diversity of a reality that does not allow itself to be reduced to the modes of an intellectual scheme projected upon it, particularly because this same logocentric prejudice has little time for foreign methods of producing knowledge, for example in the theatre. There can therefore be no doubt that this laughter was answered by the same people whom Plato was laughing at; as the philosopher and his ideas formed part of the characters and motifs of Athenian comedy, which used the theme of the philosopher made the butt of jokes as in Aristophanes’ *Clouds*. These expressions of critical hilarity, also mixed together with the question of mimesis, constitute a specific problem of ethnographic praxis. However, the Athenian progresses from humour to irritation to express his dislike of this music:

(669d)... And how, also, the poets rudely sunder rhythm and gesture from tune, putting tuneless words into meter, or leaving time and rhythm, without words, (e) and using the bare sound of harp or flute, wherein it is almost impossible to understand what is intended by this wordless rhythm and harmony, or what noteworthy original it represents. Such methods, as one ought to realize, are clownish in the extreme in so far as they exhibit an excessive craving for speed, mechanical accuracy, and the imitation of animals’ sounds (καὶ φωνῆς θηριώδους), and consequently employ the pipe and the harp without the accompaniment of dance and song; (670a) for the use of either of these instruments by itself is the mark of the mountebank or the boor.

This final argument reverses the tone of the former, yet returns to and complements the statements of the first argument. There Plato protested about the mixing of the musical modes tied to different social and legal categories, but now he shows his displeasure at the separation made by the poets of his time between the different components of music (the unity of which he would establish at the end of Book II), composing verses without music and music without words which he simply and directly compared to the sounds of animals or rather, to the final category of beings shown in the tables at the end of the text, which appear at the end of the passage to express to which existential sphere these musical forms belong.

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73. Diogenes Laertius II, 27-28, with comic fragments referring to Socrates or (Diogenes Laertius III, 26-28), to Plato himself.
Let us look back at the main conclusions we have reached. First, Plato’s political phonology explains how the myth of Protagoras is treated in the dialogue; it is never refuted through argument. However, by examining the political phonology used it is possible to see how Plato’s operation involves the demonstration of the radical allophony of the myth, unsuitable for the city and for the andres within it.

This rejection of the proposal of Protagoras is not due to a rejection of aidos and dike as a basis for human relations, but instead of its pan-Hellenic dimension, which Plato likens to an unacceptable polyphony. The final concession to Protagoras is unimportant when Socrates has previously destroyed any possible validity of the foreign words of Protagoras.

Therefore, in Protagoras the rejection of all foreign languages or myths is, in reality, a rejection of the multiple discourses aviable in the Greek cities, and particularly in Athens. A whole range of Platonic themes, such as the expulsion of the poets in the Republic, or the Doric origins of the inhabitants of Magnesia, or questions regarding mimesis or poetic representation, as well as the definition of new methods and contexts for representing knowledge, may also be seen through the prism of Plato’s political phonology.

However, in Protagoras this phonological policy is not developed in formal terms. Plato would develop the theme particularly in the political project of the Laws, in which he proposes to control the « sound of the city », and therefore a « phonological politics » in the strictest sense. This proposal also prefigures other developments in The Republic and has historical antecedents in Damon of Oe, in Pericles when he regulates the musical agones in Athens, and in the more-or-less theoretical « sound-control » instituted in Sparta.

And so we consider the treatment of the phonological theme in Protagoras as proleptic in the work of Plato. Actually, the arguments contained in the dialogue on political phonology anticipate treatments on mimesis and the educational function of music that Plato develops at a later stage. The aspect of Protagoras presented here is without doubt anything but a minor theme in the writings of Plato.

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75. In this sense Plato prolongs Ps. Xenophon, Constitution of the Athenians 2, 8.