
Seth Benardete's Second Sailing: On the Spirit of Ideas

In twelve books, six translations, and over fifty scholarly articles Seth Benardete wrote with unsurpassed breadth and depth on Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, Herodotus, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Aristotle, Cicero, Horace, Apuleius, and twenty Platonic dialogues.¹ His thought comprehends the whole of antiquity, to which his writings provide a guide of incalculable worth. Still, of his books, six are commentaries on Platonic dialogues, one is a collection of twenty essays (eleven of which are on Plato), and another is an edition of a Leo Strauss's commentary on Plato's *Symposium*. And Benardete himself traces to Plato two of his other books—on Herodotus and on the *Odyssey*—and his influential interpretation of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Accordingly, it does not seem unjust to say of him what he said of Leo Strauss: that for Seth Benardete "what philosophy is seems to be inseparable from the question of how to read Plato."² And for Benardete, as for Plato, "[n]o matter how remote from philosophy a question may appear to be...the argument always turns around and points to philosophy,"³ for

[p]hilosophy comprehends the apparent manifold of things and the single truth of their meaning. More precisely the one thing needful for man is latent in everything men say, do, and experience. There is a coincidence in philosophy and only in philosophy of the understanding of all human things with the human good.⁴

To turn to Benardete's Plato, then, is to turn to his understanding of all human things and of the human good.

Now, the conventional opinion (never simply to be despised, for it is no mean part of philosophy) is that of Platonic dialogues the most comprehensive is the *Republic*; Books 5-7 are certainly the locus classicus for the discussion of the good and the idea of the good. It therefore may not be altogether arbitrary to approach Bernardete's thought *by way of* Socrates' *Second Sailing-On Plato's Republic*, especially given Bernardete's view that "political philosophy is the eccentric core of philosophy."⁵ It is the ec-centric core of philosophy because in making manifest the problem inherent in the surface of things, and only in the surface of things, it brings us to the heart of things.

I

To turn to Bernardete on the *Republic* means first to pass through Leo Strauss, for Bernardete himself tells us that *Socrates' Second Sailing* "began as a review of Leo Strauss's *The City and Man*" - a review in which there is no clear attempt to distinguish Strauss's understanding from Bernardete's own or to be narrowly critical of it. The review is an example of what Bernardete calls "hermeneutical moderation"; it involves "surrender[ing] to authority while fighting all the way." This means following your nose without losing your head and requires having the courage to "look before you leap" while at the same time bearing in mind that "he who hesitates is lost."⁸ Bernardete reads Strauss as he reads Plato, governed by the prudential hermeneutical principle (grounded in experience) that he will find nothing simply wrong and that, accordingly, it is always to the good not to presume fully to have understood where an argument is headed. Bernardete discovers the double movement of thought, either from or to first principles, in the "fundamental change in Strauss' way of approaching the ancients" who "are no longer the beginning from which, they are now the beginning to which [Strauss] goes."⁹ In the language of the *Republic*, in *The City and Man* the ancients are like eidee rather than ideai: they do not so much provide us with answers as lead us into certain questions.¹⁰

Like Strauss, Bernardete "calls one's attention to the resemblance between an `idea' [eidos] and the collection of Plato's dialogues, each of which looks like both an individual member and

a species of the same genus."¹¹ This, in turn, means that for Benardete, as for Strauss, understanding the ideas of the *Republic* is inseparable from understanding their presentation—a theme that Benardete argues becomes progressively more prominent in *The City and Man*.¹² Of course, this means that to understand the *Republic* one must understand the concrete situation in which its argument comes to be: this is the argument of its action.

The way to dialectic (*dialegethai*) runs through conversation (*dialegethai*).¹³ This, a common theme of Strauss and Benardete, guarantees, in turn, that every Platonic dialogue will leave something important out, for

[e]very Platonic dialogue is a whole; every Platonic dialogue deals with a part of the whole apart from the whole. The apartness of the part makes possible the appearance of its wholeness. It is through this abstraction from something essential to the understanding of the part as part that each dialogue can appear whole. That the impossible is the price for wholeness is less shocking than that it is the price for understanding as well; but it ceases to be shocking once one realizes that the wholeness of a dialogue is essentially a function of its being an instrument of communication, and that through the impossible Plato merely reproduces the conditions in which we stand initially in regard to anything.¹⁴

But the way we stand toward things is governed by what Socrates calls the good. In *Socrates' Second Sailing*, echoing what he had said about the dialogic form eleven years earlier in his review of Strauss, Benardete has this to say about the good:

No being...can come to light before us as something to be known unless it is detachable from the whole to which it belongs. The good, as our interest, makes for this detachability and hence for partial knowledge. This is obvious enough. Socrates, however, claims that the cause of the detachment of the beings from the whole is the cause of the attachment of the beings as parts to the whole. The good makes possible both the apartness of the beings from and the participation of the beings in the whole. (156)

That in the end the two questions-dialogic form and the good—are the same proves to be one of Bernardete's distinctive themes.

The question of presentation images the question of appearance; hermeneutics thus shadows phenomenology and prepares the way for another of the great themes of the *Republic*, the relation of poetry to philosophy. These questions lead both Bernardete and Strauss to thumos-spirit, for in human beings *thumos* shows itself in relation to the impossible—both in its construction of impossible ideals as "indispensable means for understanding"¹⁵ and in its inevitable resentment in the face of their impossibility. The artificial wholeness of the products of poetry is in its way willfully impossible: Oedipus is too good to be true. By unwittingly employing these products to guide us in our lives (Bernardete reminds us that "the poets are the *unacknowledged* legislators of mankind"¹⁶), we all but guarantee that we will experience a disproportion between their beautiful purity and the reality they claim to render. And when our *thumos* gets hold of this disproportion, even it will be rendered impossibly ideal. It may be that "the idea of justice is the delusion of *thumos*,"¹⁷ but so is the "polished statue" of the perfectly unjust man that Glaucon sets over against it in *Republic*, Book 2. The product of this poetizing is the world insofar as it is constituted by shadows or images: the *polis*. Hence, Socrates cannot defend perfect justice without placing it in a perfect city. But his real intent is to show that and why the city which would support such perfect justice is impossible. The *Republic* is thus the greatest critique of political idealism ever written. Were it not for its being narrated, it would have the form of a tragedy, an idealized version of the self-destruction of a pure ideal (and even if its actual form is more like the *Iliad*, Homer may well be the greatest of the tragic poets'). But Plato also means for us to see that what we come to see is absolutely dependent upon our having at first failed to see.

II

What does it mean that Bernardete calls his book *Socrates' Second Sailing-on Plato's Republic*? The title playfully calls our attention to the fact that Socrates makes a second sailing on Plato's *Republic*.

The *Republic* itself is a ship, but the ship is the idealized city.¹⁹ A book, a writing, like the city, involves idealizing.²⁰ Socrates' second sailing will be away at once to overcome and to make use of the poetic idealizing of *thumos*-a way not accidentally rendered in a poetic image.

In the first sentence Benardete tells us that "second sailing" is a phrase Plato has his teacher Socrates use in the *Phaedo*. Immediately thereafter in a footnote he refers us to his own student, Ronna Burger, for a "more detailed analysis."²¹ Her book, *The Phaedo: A Platonic Labyrinth*, has as its announced goal to call into question the status of the theory of ideas and the immortality of the soul as the "twin pillars of Platonic philosophy."²² For Benardete, something like this is true as well of the *Republic*. The cave image will "reveal Hades for what it really is"- "the city"²³-while at the same time revealing that "wisdom is an idol of the cave,"²⁴ the ideas are the shadows on the wall taken as predicates floating free from their subjects, and everyone but Socrates is a conventional Platonist. Benardete's second sailing, like that of Socrates, involves taking passage on a book written by a student. It involves understanding in general the consequences of the partiality of one's beginning-looking ahead so as to anticipate the future necessity to look back and correct what one is about to do. It means knowing one will not finish the job-there are always students. Of course Burger's book was written some five years earlier than *Socrates' Second Sailing*. This image, like all images, is something of a lie.

According to Benardete, Socrates' account in the *Phaedo* of his second sailing (his first second sailing) arises out of Cebes' unease at the tension between the good of the soul's separation from the body and the necessity of the soul's conjunction with the body. Socrates interprets the good of the soul in terms of the tension between teleological and mechanical causation. At first it seems as though the detachment of the soul required for knowledge may be at odds with the selfish longing of the soul to realize its own good. But then one sees that the detached precision, presumably characteristic of mathematics, cannot really provide an adequate causal account of things. It is not even very precise, for it cannot distinguish between the two

which is the effect of division and the two which is the effect of addition. To give an account of the world means to show how its separate things hang together. But Socrates sees that putting things together and separating them is really not a matter of mechanical causation; it is a matter of mind. On occasion hydrogen atoms, aces, and planets may all come in pairs. Pairing and parting are thus occasional-not a question of distance but of intent. Accordingly, if we are to say why things are as they are, we must make mind the cause that intends the separate parts of a whole. We need a teleology. Yet, if mind is at once the cause of the togetherness and of the apartness of the parts, it is the source of an "order" indifferent to whether they are together or apart. Such a mind will not assuage Cebes' fears, for

[m]ind now orders things but it does not order them for the good. Mind is now the sole cause, but it is not rational.... [Mind] splits between purposive and configurative rationality. The pattern of things is not the same as the goodness of things....²⁵

This tension between mechanical and teleological causation gets reproduced within mind. We *desire* to understand. Understanding itself demands disinterested detachment. Yet our interest is what singles out for us what we find interesting. Neither mind as configurative nor mind as purposive can think mind together. The one would keep the two functions of mind, order and goodness, simultaneously apart and together; the other does not put things together at all.²⁶

Socrates saw that mind cannot be the cause of the being apart and being together of things without also being the cause of the good.

But if the good is at the end of a series because it depends on nothing else, the series might, fall away with no loss to the good; and if the good is distributed along the series, it is necessary to know the entire series before the good can be ascribed to anything in the series. Final cause seems to be a necessary principle whose application is impossible.²⁷

A non-teleological account cannot make sense of why the convicted Socrates has not taken his muscles and bones to Megara rather than remaining in Athens to await execution. A teleological account founders on the fact that both Socrates and the Athenians have it in mind for him to remain, but *they* do so for opposite reasons. "The grounds for Socrates' being in prison seem to be over determined and incoherent."²⁸

The true and the good must be and cannot be together. This shows up, not accidentally, as a series of problematic dyads in the *Republic*: praying and seeing, paying back debts and truth-telling, Thrasymachus's art in the precise sense and Thrasymachus's anger, philosopher and king, to name only a few. Socrates' second sailing is meant to be a way to unify these dyads without forcing the issue. "Second sailing" means taking to the oars when the wind fails, turning to oneself rather than to something alien as a source of motion. In the *Phaedo* it means discovering that the tension between configurative reason and purposive reason, pattern and goodness, can be ameliorated once we learn how to resist the power of patterns to blind us to their own incompleteness and polish up our understanding of what is good. It is possible to understand the apparent conflict between the Athenians' good intention and Socrates' good intention once one sees that

[t]he bits and pieces of the good that show up in opinion are not as bits and pieces what they are in the whole truly articulated by mind. These bits and pieces are the speeches or opinions of things to which Socrates has recourse after the possibility of looking at things directly has foundered on the problem of causality. These fragmentary speeches parade as wholes or *eide*, and Socrates saw it as the proper task of philosophy to proceed from them to the true *eide*. I call this procedure eidetic analysis. It is designed to replace teleology without giving up on either mind or good.²⁹

Eidetic analysis involves first being taken in by a false whole, then discovering that it is a false whole, and finally coming to see what the hidden source of its attraction really is.³⁰ Were Plato always straight with us, the first stage would reveal to us a powerful pattern in a burst

of insight; in the second, we would unravel the thread of an argument that would take us somewhere we never expected to go; and in the third we would retrace our steps and discover why we ended up where we ended up. But Plato never lets Socrates play straight with us:

Disinterest will always take the first discovery for the final discovery; interest will shape the discovery itself. If the smugness of disinterest is to be avoided no less than the reinforcement of prejudice, discovery, it seems, must involve a displacement of what one starts out to discover.³¹

Accordingly, "a burstlike argument...rarely decides an issue," and in a filament-like argument "new premises are being smuggled in or terms are being continually deformed until...we feel trapped rather than convinced."³² It is this very feeling of being trapped that turns *us* around; our surprise at where *we* are makes us wonder how we could have got there and gives us the incentive to learn why *we* had to. For example, truth-telling and paying back debts, which seem first quite arbitrarily joined, slowly reveal themselves to be a necessary pair. And the beautiful and the good break apart unexpectedly when we ask whether it is important for each of them to be real.

Parting and pairing...make it impossible for any argument to run smoothly, for it is the unexpected break and the unexpected join in arguments that constitute the way of eidetic analysis.³³

A final example: In the Introduction of *Socrates' Second Sailing*, after the general account of eidetic analysis (which presumably has something to do with the being of things), Benardete moves abruptly to the characteristics of Platonic argument (which presumably have to do with the presentation of the being of things). Benardete makes this break because "eidetic analysis does not lend itself to presentation apart from its dialogic practice."³⁴ Eidetic analysis reveals itself only in examples of itself. But, since as we already know Plato merely reproduces in his dialogues the way in which we stand toward things, Benardete's break shows itself unexpectedly to be a join, and his Introduction proves to be an example of what it is about.

III

The *Republic* surprises us by literally joining together in one word two things we expect to be very far apart. *Thumos* (anger or spirit) and *eidos* (form, look, or idea) are compounded in the word *thumoeides* (spirit-like, or having the form or look of spirit); on virtually any account it is a word at the heart of the political teaching of the *Republic*. Socrates makes spiritedness the cause of courage (375a), and the extended argument of Books 2-10 of the *Republic* begins when "Glaucou, being, in fact, always most courageous with regard to everything" (357a), demands that Socrates defend justice in itself as sufficient for human happiness, even though Socrates has just placed it among those things good for themselves and for their consequences.

The argument that *runs* from Books 2-4 gets its direction when Glaucou angrily intervenes to demand meat after Socrates has attempted to satisfy him with the "true city"-the city of pigs. Meat is, of course, only a symbol of his dissatisfaction; he also wants utensils, tables, and couches. Glaucou demands that eating provide him with ritual significance as well as animal satisfaction. This rebellion leads, in turn, to men like Glaucou being put into the army or police force-the guardian class-which is to be characterized by the strange combination of the gentleness of philosophy and the harshness of *thumos*. Their education is the story of Books 2-3. As it is finally not possible to police the police with other police, *the* issue of politics becomes the gentling of *thumos* through education. In Book 4 *thumos* proves to be the principle that accounts for the unity both of the city and of the soul. And in Books 8-9 it seems to be the principle underlying Socrates' account of the "history" of the falling away from the best regime-i.e. his account of defective regimes.

The principle of oligarchy is not so much love of wealth as the desire to be honored for wealth. Democracy is rooted not simply in a devotion to the freedom to do whatever one wishes but rather in a more moralistic attachment to permissiveness pursued not out of desire but out of *thumos*. The tyrant, Socrates informs us, does what we all dream about; yet when we dream we do not really get the

object of our desire-our hunger is not satisfied by dreams of eating a steak. Rather, the satisfaction of desire always has two objects: its immediate goal, and the satisfaction that comes from the fact of achieving the goal. The satisfaction of dreams has to be the latter, and upon inspection, it turns out to be *thumos*. The key to the tyrant is that he is eros *personified* (573b)-not the various particular desires but desire as such, a great winged drone. This eros is not a description of longing but of some *thing* to be longed for. Without any additional context eros simply turns into a desire not to have one's desires thwarted-a desire for victory or freedom. Eros personified is *thumos*. In all of these ways, *thumos* is central to the teaching of the *Republic*. What is not yet clear, and what is perhaps the most distinctive feature of Bernardete's interpretation in *Socrates' Second Sailing* is that, although the word itself is literally absent, *thumos* is equally central to understanding Books 5-7 of the *Republic*-the "theoretical" books. Bernardete has thought through what is only hinted at in *The City and Man* when Strauss uses the goddess Nike as an image for a Platonic idea.³⁵

Thumos, the thumoeidetic, and philosophy enter the *Republic* together in the middle of Book 2 (375a-c). The city Glaucon has just liberated from necessity needs men of a special nature to guard it-men with the nature of dogs, or perhaps puppies. Socrates characterizes the soul of the warrior as *thumoeides*-a word compounded from *thumos* and the suffix *eides*, which is cognate with *eidos*. In Homer *thumos* may mean anger, heart, or even soul, but by Plato's time it was dying out of the language and is normally applied to horses. As Plato seems to be reviving it here in order to label a part of the soul, the "part" it names must previously either have had no name or have been named differently. The label, then, must have seemed as strange to the Greeks as it does to us. The suffix *eides* everywhere else in Plato means "like" or "having the form" or *ομοειδής*-Bernardete cites as his example the sphere-like men of Aristophanes' speech in the *Symposium*. We perhaps ought to remember them as the creatures with "big ideas" who assaulted heaven. *Thumoeides* thus means having the form of *thumos* or thumos-like. The guardians will therefore have a nature that participates in *thumos* and is like

thumos but is not itself *thumos*. Socrates tells Glaucon "that *thumos* is unbeatable and unconquerable, and when it is present every soul is fearless and undefeatable in the face of everything" (375a-b). As Benardete points out,

[*t*]humos, it seems, never shows itself as itself in anyone; its presence in soul makes the soul like it but not the same as it. The language is surely the language of the "ideas"...."

Socrates goes on to lament that they need a nature at once gentle and with a great *thumos*, but since the mixture of the gentle and the thumoeidetic seems impossible, the good guardian seems impossible. However, Socrates immediately chides himself for having too easily given up on their previous image (*eikon*)-the dog. This chiding is itself playfully rooted in a thumoeidetic unwillingness to acknowledge necessity and admit defeat. That their whole mode of inquiry is saturated with the thumoeidetic is borne out by the remarkably forced argument that follows. This argument turns on the identification of the philosophic with loving what one knows and hating what one does not know, which, in turn, requires that we perversely take philosophy as love of learning (*philomathes*) to be equivalent to knowing what is dear or loved (*mathein to phila*). As Benardete points out, "It seems that *thumos* itself, in its refusal to admit defeat, has taken part in this evidently forced solution."³⁷

The solution is even more problematic than we have indicated. All of the privatives that characterize *thumos* in Socrates' account are ambiguous in their meanings. *Aphobos*, for example, may mean fearless in the sense of not having fear or in the sense of not causing fear. *Amachos* may mean "against whom no one fights," but it may also mean "without fight." *Thumos* thus already contains within itself the problematic double nature that Socrates will claim to discover when he seeks to join it to philosophy. And even were this not the case, since Socrates' forced argument has just supposedly proven that philosophy itself means being harsh to enemies and loving friends, it remains unclear why he needs the *thumoeidetic* nature at all. To establish the necessity to mix the two, Socrates has to ignore the fact that they are each already mixed. In the case of *thumos*, this

means ignoring the fact that a privative may point not only to opposition but to a certain indifference as well, and therefore may be itself compatible with gentleness. Being without fear need not mean being ferocious. Aristotle, after all, makes *thumos* the part of the soul responsible for *philia*-friendship.³⁸

Philosophy and *thumos* enter the argument of the *Republic* at the same time and each in a particularly equivocal way that requires Socrates to force them into univocal forms before he can do anything with them. Underneath this example of a filament-like argument that doesn't play straight with us lies a real double suggestion: first, that there is something more willful about philosophy and thinking generally than we are initially inclined to think, and second, that there is something more philosophic about *the* political passion. In addition, just prior to a discussion of the relation between poetry and truth, we are told that the philosophic willfulness of *thumos* has something to do with making and holding on to images. In compounding *thumos* and *eidos* to form *thumoeides*, Socrates has shown us in a single burst the double problem of the whole dialogue, for the *Republic* is concerned not only with philosophy as a condition for politics but also with politics as a condition for philosophy.

IV

The most extended explicit treatment of *thumos* in the *Republic* is in Book 4. The argument after Book 2 is generated from Glaucon's self-hatred; he "who is most courageous in everything" cannot help despising himself for being so slavish as to desire to rule absolutely unopposed. Accordingly he angrily demands that Socrates praise justice so extravagantly as to redirect his desire and dissipate his anger at himself. This demand takes the form of a challenge. Glaucon creates poetic representations of the goodness of the life of injustice and the badness of the life of justice and dares Socrates to gainsay them. Socrates' response takes three books in which he first establishes a city with a tripartite class structure and virtues appropriate to the parts and then must read off *eide* in the soul parallel to these classes and with parallel virtues. Since everything depends on the success of the parallelism, it is something of a surprise that

Socrates begins by admitting that their way of handling the matter will guarantee imprecision (435d). This is especially puzzling since almost immediately thereafter he calls for them to agree more precisely in order to avoid disputes in their argument (436c). In pursuit of this precision, Socrates introduces a version of the principle of non-contradiction that allows him to distinguish three elements of soul: the calculating, the desiring, and the thumoeidetic.

Now, as Benardete points out the minimal condition for establishing a parallel between the classes (*gene*) of the city and the *eide* of soul is that "*eidōs* must have the rare meaning of part."³⁹ A division of the soul in thought thus becomes a division of the soul in fact. Socrates goes so far in his precision that the unity of the "I" that desires with the "I" that thinks and the "I" that gets angry is utterly obscured and "threatens at any moment to disintegrate the self."⁴⁰

An analysis of soul, if done imprecisely, leads to a proliferation of ideas, for it takes its bearings by language. Speech, because it admits of greater precision than fact, produces greater imprecision about facts.⁴¹

Socrates' use of the principle of non-contradiction to establish the separation of a desiring part and a calculating part of soul is an ideal example of this loss of precision through overprecision. The argument is complicated, but in general it involves the successive purification of thirst until it is not thirst for any particular drink but "thirst itself neither of much or little, nor good or bad, nor *in a word* [emphasis mine] of any sort but thirst itself alone for drink itself" (439a). The language is the language of Platonic *eide*, and the argument here is in its way a paradigm for their generation. Once Socrates has distilled thirst into its pure eidetic form (that is, into the form: in which it appears in *logos* and only in *logos*), given the law of non-contradiction, he can say that whenever something opposes it, it must be other than it. And since calculation often opposes desires it must itself be other than desires. (We note in passing that with this move Socrates seems to have defined *philo-sophia* out of existence). One also notices that had Socrates not tacitly pushed the argument to *desire* itself, it would be hard to see why thirst itself might not be

opposed by another desire-someone overcome by sexual desire might well forego quenching his thirst.

The extremely wilful character of the argument becomes clearer in the sequel-the Leontius story-where Socrates claims to separate *thumos* from the other parts of soul. Ironically, precisely where he appears to part *thumos* from thinking, he pairs them. Bernardete cites the story in full; here is his translation:

Leontius the son of Aglaion was going up from the Piraeus near the North Wall on the outside; he noticed corpses lying by the place of the public executioner; and simultaneously he desired to see and in turn was disgusted and turned himself away, and for a while he fought and covered his face, but finally, overcome by his desire, he dragged open his eyes, ran toward the corpses, and said, "Here they are for you, O miserable wretches, get your fill of the beautiful sight," (439e7-440a3)

The story is supposedly meant to prove that the thumoeidetic, in opposing desire, must necessarily be other than and apart from desire. But it is a strange proof. Isn't the desire to see the corpses of executed criminals already a rather peculiar desire? One might understand it as a species of antinomian curiosity, or perhaps it is fueled by the spirit of righteous indignation, but the thirst for knowledge and bloodthirst seem only metaphorically akin to thirst. This is the only part of his proof of the separate parts of soul that Socrates presents as a story-a poetic image. Even granting that we are dealing with a desire, Leontius behaves strangely. He speaks with contempt to his eyes and attributes the desire to them. And then he claims to punish them by giving in to them. If, as Socrates says here, "the *logos* signifies that anger (*orge*) opposes the desires," it does so by creating a scapegoat; it personifies the eyes-gives them a will of their own-so that it can then go on to • attribute guilt to them.⁴²

The Leontius story is meant to show us *how thumos*, by imposing a structure on a situation, interprets as simple something really much more complex; in this regard it is like a burst-like argument. *Thumos* generates a pattern having to do with desire that justifies itself as the

opponent of desire. This, in turn, has some bearing on the previous argument separating desire and calculation. It too was *thumos* at work. In making the shorter, simpler way of dividing the soul possible, *thumos* is the reason for the imprecision of the argument even as it makes the argument possible in the first place. Benardete puts it this way:

Anger generates syntax; it needs to understand things eidetically, for it knows nothing of nature or the body. It would thus find no difficulty if the soul were thirsty (cf. 621a3), for it is hungry for revenge and satiable without its feeding on any other food than that which it supplies for itself. *Thumoeides*, then, means not only that anger is always angerlike, but that it is the spirit of eideticization.⁴³

Close to the end of Part II of *Socrates' Second Sailing*, Benardete says that "the thumoeidetic analysis of soul attends only to the labels of things."⁴⁴ Eidetic analysis has become thumoeidetic analysis. But "the thumoeidetic, which is the driving force behind eidetic analysis, does not let itself be understood eidetically. Access to it lies through experience and anecdote."⁴⁵

There is, therefore, an alliance between *thumos* and *logismos*-calculation, But it is not the one Socrates first seems to indicate. It cannot be the case. that *thumos* never sides with desire-the behavior of any two-year-old child is sufficient proof to the contrary, as one of Glaucon's own examples even suggests (441a). Rather, *thumos* rationalizes; it imposes an order or structure. Accordingly, it cannot simply side with desire because as soon as it does, desire is no longer simply natural desire. Rather than being aimed at something particular, its object now takes on the character of an *eidos*. *Thumos* is in a way the desire of nouns rather than things; it is appropriately accompanied by oaths (440c). The connection between *thumos* and thinking is confirmed when Socrates first tells Glaucon that he has beautifully understood the necessity of the separation of *thumos* from desire but wonders whether he is also aware of how different it must be from the calculating part. The verb that Allan Bloom translates here as "to be aware" and which could be rendered as

"take to heart" or "ponder" is *enthumeomai*-literally, "to have in one's *thumos*" (440d-e). *Thumos* here must mean something like "mind."

Socrates has shown two things: the role of *thumos* in generating *eide* and the moralism and anti-desire character of *thumos*. "Morality," says Bernardete, "is the animation of the mathematician's abstractions."⁴⁶ *Thumos* is the common root of morality and abstraction and, accordingly, in its way, also a common root of politics and philosophy. "The coincidence of philosophy and political power thus seems to represent the coincidence of philosophy and political philosophy in Socrates' thinking."⁴⁷

The purpose of the overly precise division of soul was to match its three *eide* with the three *gene* of the city; this was to be the means to finally answer Glaucon's question about the goodness of justice. The problem with Socrates' explicit procedure is that justice did not appear *within* the city they constructed but was rather "rolling around at [their] feet" (432d); it belongs to them as members of their community, the dialogic city, in their act of founding a city in speech. For it to be of the same sort *in* the soul, justice would have to be *outside* the soul. Accordingly, it would require that we separate ourselves from ourselves and treat ourselves as objects to be admired or condemned-but this is just the moralistic movement of *thumos* in the Leontius story. Justice depends on our ability to project ourselves beyond ourselves. Whether it is Socrates' twice-used example of Odysseus smiting his breast and personifying his heart so as to exhort it (390d, 441b), Leontius's blame of his eyes, or, most importantly, Glaucon's imaginative projection of the souls of the just man and the unjust man, every such projection in the *Republic* depends, in turn, on something like poetry. Polemarchus virtually begins the dialogue by sending his slave to order Socrates and Glaucon to stop-thwarting their ascent to Athens-and, in what must be a playful spirit, threatens them with force if they disobey. Thrasymachus is the next to threaten Socrates; he bursts into the argument of Book 1 "just as though he were a wild beast" (336b). *Thumos* always seems to involve play-acting, poetic projection, or personification. Bernardete remarks of it that the "word *thumoeides*

itself...to say nothing of Thrasy-machus, implies that it is always pretending more or less."⁴⁸

Socrates' real project in Books 2-4 is not to answer Glaucon's question so much *as* to show why he asked it as he did. Glaucon's understanding of the soul as a thing wholly independent of and detachable from the body and of which it makes sense to say it can have a being totally apart from any seeming is already a product of the *thumos* that he demands be satisfied. Glaucon does in his question what Leontius does when he addresses his eyes. Glaucon had to make the "real self" into an invisible thing beyond the body in order to make his appeal to pure satisfaction plausible, an appeal that bears the thumoeidetic stamp of implacable insistence on purity. Without his realizing it then, Glaucon's rejection of justice is rooted in justice; he *has* a tyrannical longing for justice.

Socrates shows that it is the way of *thumos* to satisfy itself by projecting itself outside of itself. In doing so it has two allies: the city and poetry. Glaucon purifies the city in speech to satisfy a longing not really for unlimited pleasures but to be in control. His longing shows itself as the demand for the isolated purity of the just soul that is simply the extension of the ordinary political understanding of the soul as a fully responsible agent answerable to the law. The vehicle for this purification is poetry, the way of which Benardete once described as follows:

Poetics: the other is the same only through the other, i.e., *mimesis*, and hence *katharsis*. It is poetry that keeps the other away from the same and hence washes it away. I.e., *diaeresis is* dialectics is the philosopher's way."

Given the way poetry and politics conspire to maintain the reality of the projections of *thumos-the* shadows on the cave wall-it is not surprising that poetry should be treated so harshly in the city in speech of the *Republic*. For if poetry is to wash away the distinctions between its version of the world and the reality of the world, its power will have to be invisible. If the founders of the best city are the "poets of the best and most beautiful tragedy possible" (*Laws* 817b), there can be no poets in the city to compete with the reality they

project.⁵⁰ Sealing off the cave so that there is no reality to compete with the images on the wall requires that there be no hint within the cave of what it means to make an image. Thumoeidetic analysis attends only to the labels of things."

V

Why thumoeidetic analysis is both a necessity for philosophy and a danger for philosophy becomes clear in Socrates' account in Book 10 of the ancient quarrel, or difference, between philosophy and poetry (607b). To oversimplify considerably, complete human happiness requires perfect justice, understood as the reality of the Greek compound that denotes a gentleman-kalos *k'agathos*. Justice is the coincidence of the beautiful (the most powerful and yet least visible version of which is the conventionally moral) and the real good. This would require the obliteration of the difference between philosophy and poetry, which the whole of the *Republic* shows to be impossible. For philosophers to become kings-that philosophers have rule (*arche*) would require that they be idealized or poeticized-presented as though their activity could stand by itself. But philosophy is never a beginning (*arche*). It never comes first, because it exists only as a reflection on the errors of one's way.⁵² It is always a second sailing, in which what seemed to be a source of power altogether outside of us is seen in fact to originate within us. For philosophy to rule would mean for something essentially parasitical or second to be transformed into something independent or first. But the distorted version of philosophy in the city in speech of the *Republic* is what philosophy looks like when such a transformation is effected. Real philosophy is at least three steps removed from this idealized version. It is not even represented in the dialogue of Socrates and the others in the Piraeus as they construct a city in speech. Whether it may be found in Socrates' narration remains a question.

That Book 10 of the *Republic* begins with a critique of poetry and ends with a poem suggests that either the critique is not simply what it seems or the myth of Er is meant to be a new kind of poetry. In a way both are true. Socrates cannot simply dispense with poetry. He

repeatedly mentions its charm and his examples of the ancient quarrel always involve poets deprecating philosophy, never the reverse. In criticizing it for the unreality of its images, he seems to leave open the possibility of making images while knowing them to be images. Also, the structure of the myth of Er has two distinctive features (the column of light and the whorls) that are very hard to put together. In the middle of the myth Socrates provides an interpretation of the choice of lives by which he makes clear that poetry requires *sullogizein* and he praises this "thinking together" as the best life. Accordingly, Socratic poetry seems to have a double nature: it presents a puzzling surface that provokes thought (in this way it is like the city in speech), and, as much as possible, it presents the life of thought as the best life (in this way it is like the dialogic city).

Socrates' critical account of poetry itself has the problematic unity of Socratic poetry, for Socrates begins by telling Glaucon that, upon reflection *enthumethis=they* were right in the way they treated poetry in founding the city. His choice of words reminds us that the underlying issue is *thumos*. There follows a complicated passage based on a pun.⁵³ Socrates hesitates to attack Homer but says they must honor the truth more. Glaucon agrees. Socrates then says "Listen, or rather, answer," and Glaucon says "Ask" (595c). This "ask" is the imperative *erota*; if the accent is shifted from the penult to the antepenult (and of course accents were not yet written in Plato's Greek), it becomes the accusative of *er^ss*. It would then be not simply an innocuous response on Glaucon's part but an answer to the question asked at 595b. There, Socrates announces that the poets' imitations maim the thoughts of those who hear them unless they possess as a drug knowledge of what these imitations really are, and Glaucon then asks what Socrates means. Glaucon's *erota* at 595c then becomes his answer to his own question at 595b-er^ss is the source of the maiming of which we require knowledge as a cure. Poetry will prove to be its result. The erotic is therefore not simply at odds with the thumoeidetic.

The meaning of this reading becomes clearer in the sequel. Socrates asserts that all imitation *wants to be* is what it imitates: the

real. He then chastens Glaucon and invites him to answer. Then he says that in answering they will use their usual method of setting an *eidōs* over a many that they know to be a one but without knowing how they know. *Eidōs* here thus grounds a question. Socrates then changes terminology; artisans are said to look to the *idea* to know what to imitate, signaling that by a combination of habit and unconscious longing what was first meant to be a tool of analysis (an *eidōs*) has been turned into a being in its own right (an *idea*).

That the posited *eidōs* could be the same as the *idea* of the craftsman seems impossible, for the *eidōs* is initially a question—"What is that which makes every couch a couch?"—and the *idea* is an answer to which the couchmaker has complete access."

This, then, is the truth of Glaucon's *erōta*. Behind our own backs, out of a longing we do not even acknowledge, we all make types of the true reality. This process is at the heart of Socrates' critique of poetry and the poets—not that we do it, but that we do not know we do it.

Socrates attacks the poets as makers in ways that are manifestly inadequate. They are placed at a remove of three from the truth—a painter imitates a couch made by an artisan, who, in turn, imitates the *idea* of a couch made by god. Poets are like men who use mirrors to make images of the things of our world, things themselves mere images of the true world. What it means that the objects of poetic imitation are treated as artifacts and how one is to make sense of the traditional subjects of the poets—the gods, Heaven, Hades—as objects mirrored by the poets are two problems by themselves sufficient to make us wonder about this account of poetry. What then might Socrates have in mind by attacking the poets as imitators of artifacts? An artifact is always linked to some need. Couches are for reclining, tables for eating. But in the hands of the poets something happens to these artifacts. Not accidentally, Socrates uses images of couches and tables, the very examples Glaucon had used in Book 2 to register his contempt for life in the city of pigs.

Socrates therefore suggests that the poets altogether conven-

tionalize what is natural; they are like the oligarchs "third from the king" (597e), for both are concerned with nomisma-conventional value or money. The poets are like shadow painters and puppeteers (602d-compare 514b); they are the ones who hold up the artifacts that cast shadows on the walls of the cave. Poetry is dangerous because it attaches us to the cave-to the conventions of our world. It paints images based on the way we always polish up reality-images that become so perfect as to threaten to replace the reality they imitate. Poetry is especially dangerous, for it could seal off the cave from the light of nature precisely because it seems so powerfully anti-conventional. "Poetry stands outside the city but not outside the cave."⁵⁵ *The* example of such a danger in the *Republic* is Glaucon's demand of Socrates at the beginning of Book 2. Here in Book 10 we are given a more general example; the movement from *eidōs* to *idea* is a movement into the cave disguised as a movement out of the cave.

All poetry attaches us to the cave without our realizing that it does so; tragedy goes yet one step further. Tragic poetry takes a conventional virtue like courage and shows that when you try to be fully courageous you turn into a monster. In showing us how the shadows that we believe to be real are self-contradictory, tragedy threatens us with despair. This is what Glaucon has experienced before the *Republic* begins. If what the poet praises were really praiseworthy, he would do it and not simply talk about it. Tragedy shows us why the poet does not do it, but without diminishing our sense that it is *the* thing worth doing. The tragic poet presents the action of the tragic figure as kalon-beautiful or noble. All poetry thus threatens to seal the cave; tragedy threatens to seal the cave and then tell us that living in it is unbearable: "Not to be born surpasses every *logos*..." say the chorus of *Oedipus at Colonus* (1224-25). Socrates means us to see that tragedy can do this only because it is still using the standards of the cave/city to find the cave/city wanting. By not making their own activity thematic, the tragic poets let stand the view that the idealizing of human life that we are witnessing is the only reality there is. The *Republic* itself has something of this character (when he turns from the painter to

draw conclusions about the poet at 605a, Socrates calls it an *antistrophe*) but not simply, for Socrates indicates that the proper use of their argument against poetry is as an epode—a song to be sung after the rest of the poem to remind us of the dangers of falling in love. Socratic poetry has as its purpose to present an idealized second sailing.

Socrates uses as an example of the danger of poetry the man in mourning for his son who wails in private but not in public. His suppression of grief is the *kalon* acting to overrule his connection to the real. Like a table or a fork it enables him to put a natural feeling at a distance. This is somehow what it means to be human. That grief is felt at all is a sign that education to the *kalon* is never completely successful. (Earlier, it was pleasure, strangely enough, that provided a natural access to the good—a sure sense of the discrepancy between what we are told is good and what we somehow cannot deny to be good that allows us to begin to ascend from what is conventionally held to be good to what is really good.) We all distinguish between what we do in public and what we do when alone by ourselves. This is morality; it is perhaps hypocritical but not for that reason altogether bad.

Poetry-idealizing—in some sense makes this possible; it gives us an image of our best selves to which we can strive to live up.⁵⁶ But it also reveals to 'us our inner selves and so brings out what morality, *engendered by poetry*, has been at great pains to suppress. Given what it is, poetry cannot help idealizing this too. It shows us Achilles weeping and makes us admire him for it. This is simply a version of what we all do when, for example, we rehearse to ourselves perceived slights and injustices to ourselves. Repeatedly going over them in our minds, we generate dramas with ourselves starring as victims. This process gradually pushes us further and further from reality as we polish ourselves up as heroes of our personal tragedies. Losing ourselves in this way is particularly dangerous, for it leads us to think we are no longer under the influence of conventional behavior when in fact we are becoming progressively more conventional with each celebration of the injury to ourselves. Socrates is surely not simply serious about

being able to dispense with poetry; on the other hand he is deadly serious about the way it tends to displace reality and the good in the name of the *kalon*.

The family resemblance between the experience of tragedy and the Leontius story suggests that poetry tends to establish the spurious alliance between reason and spiritedness. Imitation transforms the cannibalistic eye of Leontius into the innocent eye of the spectator, so that he believes he is taking in through reason what he is absorbing into his heart.... The lovers of poetry are enchanted by the poetry and praise the poet. They split the pleasant from the good (cf. 607e1-2). Through this dissociation they believe they are with the poet and are with the poem. Philosophy does not dissociate; there is for it no artifact apart from the artificer. Socrates tells his own story.⁵⁷

VI

Socrates' Second Sailing is an extraordinary dissection of the structure of Plato's *Republic* into its proper parts. The problem is established in Book 1. Books 2-4 are concerned with the *kalon* (the beautiful) in its connection to the idealizing impulse of *thumos* that is at the heart of political life but also at the heart of human thought. Books 5-7 are concerned with the good and are meant to make clear that the perfect is at odds with the good, for the good is what is beyond being and serves to make us dissatisfied with our idea of the good which is in fact one version or another of the beautiful. Elsewhere Benardete calls this the "teleology of evil." "The *Republic* begins as a story of a thwarted ascent"⁵⁸ because philosophy must always have the character of a thwarted ascent (or, since Benardete surely intends the pun, a thwarted assent-i.e. affirmation); the whole plot of the *Republic* imitates this movement. The last part of the dialogue, Books 8-10, is concerned with justice. The just is always experienced as the unjust-what is unfair. It is the felt discrepancy between the beautiful and the good-here induced by the experience of the movement from Books 2-4 to Books 5-7. Properly understood, this is our privileged access to the good. "Political philosophy is the eccentric core of philosophy."

Philosophy is necessarily a second sailing. All thinking involves pairing and parting-putting things together and separating them. At first this seems to be dialectics-what Benardete calls the way of eidetic analysis-and, while his extended account of it in *Socrates' Second Sailing* is certainly rich and complex, if this were all there were to it, it would remain fairly conventional. But Benardete sees that when the way of eidetic analysis is altogether smooth, it is really thumoeidetic analysis, and we unwittingly discover in the world only what we have put there. It is therefore the "unexpected break and the unexpected join in arguments that constitutes the way of eidetic analysis."⁵⁹ This means that it is not really possible to give a structural account of the *Republic*, for this would require taming the unpredictable so as to make it altogether conventional. One could give such an account of the *Republic* only if the city in speech it presents were itself possible. And for that we would have to be able to make philosophers. But as Benardete liked to say, philosophers are like mushrooms; it is their nature to pop up unexpectedly. To give an account of this popping up would be like illustrating a misprint. Thinking may begin thumoeidetically by imposing a purified structure on the world in an unexpected burst of insight, but it must then follow the equally unpredictable ways in which this structure unravels: This is the reason why Aristotle makes *muthos*, plot or story, the most important part of tragedy.⁶⁰ Genuine thinking is a second sailing that we must make repeatedly whenever we are tempted think we have found our way straight through a problem. In the end philosophy must be a self-consciously playful version of the thumoeidetic, which is itself always only a playful version of *thumos*. If philosophy once gives in to the temptation to take itself so seriously that upon seeing itself "undeservedly spattered with mud" (536c) it becomes indignant, it will have substituted the *idea* of philosophy for philosophy; and because "[p]hilosophy is not an *idea* to which one looks and in light of which one makes oneself,"⁶¹ it will have ceased to be philosophy. A philosophic argument must then finally be an argument of the action. In a concluding note to a reprinting of his doctoral dissertation Benardete indicated that he did not always know of this relation between plot and structure.

[U]nder the influence of modern poetry, I believed that the discernment of a symbolic pattern was enough to show the poet's hand, even though the pattern could not be grounded in any plausible sequence of actions. ... By reading Homer too poetically,⁶² I did not read him poetically enough.

Benardete made similarly self-critical remarks about the development of his interpretation of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, and his revisions of his understandings of Herodotus and of Plato's *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman*. All of this suggests that, like Socrates, he underwent a second sailing in his own thought. Lest we too quickly poeticize this Benardetean "turn," however, it must be said that early Benardete does not always look so different from late Benardete in this regard. No doubt he changed his mind about things, but he was playful from the beginning. He seemed always to have had an uncanny sense for the unexpected break and the unexpected join. This makes one suspect that, although Benardete may have playfully submitted to the necessity to present it otherwise, second sailing is not so much an event in the life of thought as the way of thought itself.

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NOTES

1. A bibliography of his work maybe found in *The Argument of the Action*, a collection of twenty of his essays (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

2. "Strauss on Plato," in *The Argument of the Action*, 407.

3. *Socrates and Plato: The Dialectics of Eros* (Munich: Carl Friedrich von Siemens Stiftung, 1999), 32.

4. *Ibid.*, 33.

5. "Leo Strauss' *The City and Man*," *Political Science Reviewer* 8 (1978), 5.

6. *Socrates' Second Sailing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), ix.

7. "Interpreting Plato's *Charmides*" in *The Argument of the Action*, 243.

8. See "Plato's *Lathes*: A Question of Definition" in *The Argument of the Action*, 266.

9. *Natural Right and History* "goes forward from the pre-Socratics to Burke"; *The City and Man* "goes back from Aristotle through Plato to Thucydides." "Leo Strauss' *The City and Man*," *Political Science Reviewer* 8 (1978), 1.

10. See *Republic* 595a-c and *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 215-16.

11. "Leo Strauss' *The City and Man*," 5, as well as *Socrates and Plato: The Dialectics of Eros*, 83-85.

12. See "Leo Strauss' *The City and Man*," 4.

13. See *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 155 and *Socrates and Plato: The Dialectics of Eros* (Munich: Carl Friedrich von Siemens Stiftung, 1999), 49-51.

14. "Leo Strauss' *The City and Man*," 6.

15. "Leo Strauss' *The City and Man*," 8.

16. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 223.

17. "Leo Strauss' *The City and Man*," 11.

18. See *Republic* 595b-c as well as Aristotle, *On Poetics* 1451a23 and 1460a5, 19.

19. See *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 145

20. See *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy*, 155-160.

21. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 1.

22. Ronna Burger, *The Phaedo: A Platonic Labyrinth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 1-2.

23. *Socrates and Plato: The Dialectics of Eros*, 35.

24. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 179.

25. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 2.

26. Compare *The Tragedy and Comedy of Life: Plato's Philebus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 92-93.

27. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 2.

28. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 3.

29. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 4.

30. Compare with "On Plato's *Symposium*," 180-181, and "On Plato's *Phaedo*," 281-284, both in *The Argument of the Action*.

31. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 44.

32. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 4-5.

33. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 5. See also "Leo Strauss' *The City and Man*," 20.

34. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 4.

35. Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 120.

36. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 56.

37. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 57.

38. See *Politics* 1327b35-41.

39. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 91.

40. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 94.

41. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 96.

42. For interesting parallels to this account of anger see Benardete's *The Bow and the Lyre: A Platonic Reading of the Odyssey* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), 124-128, and "Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*" (77-78) and "On Greek Tragedy" (126-135) in *The Argument of the Action*.

43. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 100.

44. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 104.

45. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 101.

46. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 11.

47. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 152.

48. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 102.

49. Private correspondence, August 10, 2001.

50. See Benardete's *Plato's Laws: The Discovery of Being* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 216-223.

51. See *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 104

52. See *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 105.

53. See also *Cratylus* 398c-d and *Socrates and Plato: The Dialectics of Eros*, 79.

54. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 216.

55. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 218.

56. See *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy*, 132-154.

57. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 222.
58. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 9.
59. Emphasis mine. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 5
60. See *On Poetics* 1450a
61. *Socrates' Second Sailing*, 222.
62. Seth Benardete, *Achilles and Hector: The Homeric Hero* (Part II), *The St. John's Review* (Summer, 1985), 111.