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WHAT DID DIOTIMA SAY? PLATO AND INDIRECT DISCOURSE

> But now I will leave you in peace, and try to give the account of Love which I once heard from a woman of Mantinea, called Diotima.
> (Pl. *Smp*. 201d)

Table of Contents: *1. The Homeric Tradition; 2. Indirect Discourse; 3. Symposium, Socrates, and Diotima; 4. Theaetetus and Timaeus; 5. Conclusion.*

After multiple rounds of turn-taking with the guests present, Socrates is given the stage to speak in Plato's *Symposium*. However, based on the short preamble above, we as readers can perceive that the account proffered by Socrates is based on hearsay through and through. This account of hearsay poses some pressing research questions such as: From where does Socrates get his knowledge? How can we unpack the pragmatics of Socrates's accounts in the presence of other speakers? In terms of discourse, what is Plato suggesting about the nature of spoken accounts? What is Plato saying about language itself? Through an investigation into the spoken utterances of Socrates, particularly in the *Symposium*, this paper sets out to provide answers to the aforementioned inquiries. By paying special attention to the *language* Plato uses, I will then contextualize my findings within a few other works by Plato.

It should be noted that there is a linguistic tradition that precedes Plato. In fact, it is none other than Homer, a favorite source for Plato, who also utilizes the spoken accounts of others. In Plato's *Republic*, it is Homer who receives noteworthy attention from Plato in Book III. In

this section of *The Republic*, Plato uses Homer to expound on a special form of language: Indirect discourse. This form of discourse occurs when a speaker uses the discourse of any speaker within their own. Indirect discourse may only receive a few thoughts by Plato in the *Republic*; however, Plato's thoughts on indirect discourse have not only dire ramifications for the understanding of language, but also can be a valuable aid in the interpretation of Plato's texts.

1. The Homeric Tradition

Staying with Homer, we can consider the fact that *The Odyssey* draws from a rich oral tradition [Wilson 2018, 5]. This means that Homer's words come from other speakers. In the opening invocation to the muse, Homer also asks for a voice that is not his: «Tell me about a complicated man. / Muse, tell me how he wandered and was lost / When he had wrecked the holy town of Troy» [Homer 2018, 107]. Homer writes «tell me» two times in these opening words. His invocation suggests that the following account is based on words from the muse, not himself. Combined with the oral tradition, Homer uses indirect discourse from the beginning of *The Odyssey* to the end. Moreover, this trend of indirect discourse becomes multilayered in *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad* because Homer also voices the words of characters within his epic works. In such invocations, the reader can «immediately gather that the narrator's voice is not the only one that will be heard» [de Bakker & de Jong 2021, 1]. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that Plato selects Homer as his example for indirect discourse.

In Book III of *The Republic*, Plato, using Socrates, differentiates between *diegesis* and *mimesis* (Pl. *R*. 295d).[1] In other words, there is a narratological difference between narrating events (*diegesis*) and imitating the speech of other characters (*mimesis*). Plato refers to *diegesis* as narrative, and *mimesis* as imitation. Using Homer's *Iliad*, Socrates and Adeimantus hold the following dialogue:

[1] For more on the difference between *diegesis* and *mimesis*, see Halliwell 2013.

> "But it's all narrative – both the individual speeches he [Homer] delivers and the bits he says in between the speeches?"
> "Yes, of course."
> "And when he makes a speech in the character of someone else, can we say that he always makes his own style as close as possible to that of the person he tells us is speaking?"
> "No question of it."
> "In passages like this, apparently, Homer and the rest of the poets use imitation to construct their narrative."
> "Yes."
> "If there were no passages where the poet concealed his own person, then his whole work, his whole narrative, would have been created without using imitation. To save you telling me again that you don't understand how this can be, I will explain. Imagine Homer told us that Chryses came, bringing his daughter's ransom, as a suppliant to the Achaeans, and in particular to their kings, but still as Homer. You realise that would be simple narration, not imitation." (393b-d)

Socrates speaks of a clear demarcation between simple narration and imitation as «two styles of storytelling» (397b). However, there is also a mixed form of speech, according to Plato, that blends these two forms: «The way he tells stories will combine both styles, imitation and the other kind of narrative» (396e). The demarcation between the two can be corrupted, and it should be kept in mind that even direct discourse can contain indirect discourse [Morgan 2021, 549]. As Kathryn Morgan notes, «the implication of such distinctions for Plato's own work» is «less clear» [*ibid*., 539]. What is the function of this «mixed form», and how is it important to the study of Plato?

2. Indirect Discourse

Plato uses Homer to make his claim about the nature of narrative. However, millennia later, the study of the mixed form of which Plato speaks receives attention from the Russian thinker Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975). Moving temporarily aside from the study of narrative, I will show how Bakhtin's comments on *everyday language* are pertinent

to my investigation of Plato's dramatic language. For Bakhtin, the concept of indirect discourse is vital to his understanding of speech and narrative, especially in the novel. In his essay, «From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse», Bakhtin writes the following:

> Indirect discourse, however, the representation of another's word, another's language in intonational quotation marks, was known in the most ancient times; we encounter it in the earliest stages of verbal culture. What is more, long before the appearance of the novel we find a rich world of diverse forms that transmit, mimic and represent from various vantage points another's word, another's speech and language, including also the languages of the direct genres. These diverse forms prepared the ground for the novel long before its actual appearance [Bakhtin 2006b, 50].

Bakhtin notes how indirect discourse «was known in the most ancient times». It is a cornerstone of narrative and speech and sets the stage for the rise of the novel. Spoken narratives, such as Homer's works, rely heavily on the employment of indirect discourse. It is precisely the mixed form of which Socrates speaks that is indirect discourse. Despite using «intonational quotation marks», which would be *mimesis* according to Plato, the speaker is using the words of another speaker in their own discourse – indirect discourse. Socrates as a speaker reuses and retransmits the words of others.

Moving away from the novel, Bakhtin even attempts to quantify how much indirect discourse is used by everyday speakers. However, I maintain that the *representation* of speaking characters in literary works, even in the case of Plato, exemplifies similar features of the indirect discourse of everyday speakers. Bakhtin estimates that it is half of a speaker's utterances that occur as indirect discourse:

> [I]n the everyday speech of any person living in society, no less than half (on the average) of all the words uttered by him will be someone else's words (consciously someone else's words), transmitted with varying degrees of precision and impartiality (or more precisely, partiality) [Bakhtin 2006a, 339].

It should be noted that Bakhtin's estimation is a case of armchair linguistics. How he arrives at such a number – «no less than half» – is unknown. Nonetheless, he cleverly marks how the use of indirect discourse comes with a forewarning: There can be moments of «varying degrees of precision and impartiality (or more precisely, *partiality*)» (emphasis mine). Here, the imitation to which Plato refers is jeopardized. How faithful is an account of someone else's words? Even if a speaker, such as Socrates, cites another speaker, which is the case of his relation to Diotima in the *Symposium*, the account can be tainted, embellished, or unfaithful. Here is a danger for Plato. He writes in *The Republic* that «we shall allow only the pure imitator of the good man» (Pl. *R*. 397d). This assessment of poets leads Plato to the conclusion that poets who are not «pure imitator[s]» should be banned from his republic. Yet, even imitation comes with adjustments, or, using Bakhtin's words, *partiality*. If indirect discourse accounts for half of our language, then there is a pressing issue of the fidelity of a speaker's words.

Bakhtin uses a special verb in his estimation: «[T]ransmitted». The concept of transmission, for Bakhtin, then goes on to refer to indirect discourse as understood nongrammatically. I write nongrammatically because of the phenomenon of reported speech. Reported speech is a grammatical concept that evinces transmission and indirect discourse. For Bakhtin, indirect discourse and transmission can be understood synonymously in «Discourse in the Novel». Beyond having such a high quantity in everyday speech, indirect discourse reveals much about the nature of language.

> The transmission and assessment of the speech of others, the discourse of another, is one of the most widespread fundamental topics of human speech. In all areas of life and ideological activity, our speech is filled to overflowing with other people's words, which are transmitted with highly varied degrees of accuracy and impartiality. The more intensive, differentiated and highly developed the social life of a speaking collective, the greater is the importance attaching, among other possible subjects of talk, to another's word, another's utterance, since another's word will be the subject of passionate communication, an object of

> interpretation, discussion, evaluation, rebuttal, support, further development and so on [Bakhtin 2006a, 337].

Bakhtin is still in the quotidian realm of speakers, not works of literature. Yet, as we have seen with Homer and Plato, the above also holds true for many literary works, if not all. Everyday and literary speakers often concern themselves with the speech of others to such a degree that Bakhtin's ultimate claim is that «it is not, after all, out a dictionary that a speaker gets his words!» [Bakhtin 2006a, 294]. Words are sourced from other speakers.

The extent of the usage of other speakers' words led Bakhtin to succinctly write, «I live in a world of others' words» [Bakhtin 1986, 143]. In this late essay by Bakhtin, he revisits his assessment of how much discourse is indirect discourse:

> I understand the others' word (utterance, speech work) to mean any word of any other person that is spoken or written in his own (i.e., my own native) or in any other language, that is, any word that is *not mine*. In this sense, all words (utterances, speech, and literary works) except my own are the other's words. I live in a world of others' words. And my entire life is an orientation in this world, a reaction to others' words (an infinitely diverse reaction), beginning with my assimilation of them (in the process of initial mastery of speech) and ending with assimilation of the wealth of human culture (expressed in the word of in other semiotic materials) [*ibid*., emphasis in original].

Bakhtin is undoubtedly focused on the words of other speakers within one's own discourse. However, there is some vagueness in what can be described as one's own words. In terms of transmission, Bakhtin writes that he assimilates the words of other speakers, but it remains unclear to what «all words […] *except my own*» (emphasis mine) refers. This will be taken up momentarily. For now, and more saliently for my study, Bakhtin attempts to bridge the gap between the everyday and literary realms in the above quote and in his general philosophy

by introducing «utterances, speech, and literary works» contiguously.[2] Therefore, for the purposes of my study, Bakhtin's remarks on everyday speech will be viewed as applicable to the literary realm.

After Bakhtin, Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) and Félix Guattari (1930-1992) produced their collaborative work *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [Deleuze & Guattari 2016]. Although *A Thousand Plateaus* is not completely devoted to the study of indirect discourse, the two French thinkers in this work shed some light on the phenomenon of transmission. Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari cite Bakhtin in their work «for his emphasis on voice and indirect discourse» [Evans 2008, 179]. The two begin by writing in response to the supposedly informational and communicational functions of language [Deleuze & Guattari 2016, 88-99]. In doing so, Deleuze and Guattari almost immediately announce the importance of indirect discourse in language.

> We believe that narrative consists not in communicating what one has seen but in transmitting what one has heard, what someone else said to you. Hearsay […]. The «first» language, or rather the first determination of language, is not the trope or metaphor but *indirect discourse*. The importance some have accorded metaphor and metonymy proves disastrous for the study of language. Metaphors and metonymies are merely effects; they are a part of language only when they presuppose indirect discourse. There are many passions in a passion, all manner of voices in a voice, murmurings, speaking in tongues [*ibid*., 89, emphasis in original].

Much like Bakhtin, Deleuze and Guattari focus on language's transmissible function. More polemical than Bakhtin, as can be discerned from the above quote, the two, nonetheless, have a similar goal for the study of language [Evans 2008, 179]. All three thinkers emphasize the indirect dimension of language «as the central structure of language» [*ibid*.]. Deleuze and Guattari, moreover, argue that indirect discourse

[2] Another such attempt by Bakhtin to bridge the everyday and literary realms can be found in his concept of the *ideologue*. See Bakhtin 2006a, 333.

does not only occur from using the words of one other speaker, but can be viewed as «all the voices present within a single voice» [Deleuze & Guattari 2016, 93]. They call for a language in which there are «collective assemblages of enunciation» [*ibid.*]. Because these enunciations are «collective» and intrinsically social [*ibid.*], «[t]here are no individual statements, there never are» [*ibid.*, 42]. By writing this, Deleuze and Guattari sidestep the vagueness surrounding Bakhtin's words regarding one's own discourse. In doing so, they redirect the focus of the study of language from the individual to the collective in its social milieu and on language's «multi-voiced nature» [de Bakker & de Jong 2021, 1]. This is how there can be multiple voices in one voice, such as when indirect discourse is present within direct discourse.

Regarding the quantity of indirect discourse in language, Deleuze and Guattari one-up Bakhtin's assessment that it is «no less than half» when they write that «all discourse is indirect, and the translative movement proper to language is that of indirect discourse» [Deleuze & Guattari 2016, 89]. It would appear that Deleuze and Guattari foresaw the conundrum of quantification confronting Bakhtin. By positing that «all discourse is indirect», the two thinkers push Bakhtin's philosophy of language to a new level of urgency for the study of language. As was suggested above, the findings of Bakhtin and Deleuze and Guattari are relevant for the study of literature and writings of philosophy because even literary and philosophical authors employ indirect discourse in their works. Yet, how such employments affect the interpretations of these works, is what concerns me in my investigation of Plato.

3. Symposium, Socrates, and Diotima

With a grasp of the theoretical fundamentals of indirect discourse, we can now turn our attention to Plato's *Symposium*, particularly, when Socrates is allowed his turn to speak. To contextualize this work, we are in the realm of written speech, i.e., the *Symposium* is a collection of sayings by multiple speakers. By the time Plato depicts Socrates giving his monologue, the reader has already been confronted by multiple theories on the nature of love. I will not focus so much on the *content* of what Socrates says, but on the *form* of his discourse. With Socrates, as

was noted above, his account of love is based entirely on hearsay as he draws exclusively from a woman he met named Diotima. In other words, Socrates employs indirect discourse for the whole of his philosophy of love. Diotima is, however, one of a very few number of female speakers in Plato's oeuvre and stands out despite being «ventriloquized through Socrates» [Morgan 2021, 542].[3]

Socrates makes no effort to conceal the fact that he is borrowing the words of Diotima. In fact, he even refers to her as his «instructress» (Pl. *Smp.* 201d). Avowedly, Socrates «give[s] the best consecutive account I [Socrates] can of what she told me» (201d). Formally, Socrates does not only merely summarize his account, but extensively employs direct speech as well, which, for Plato, would be *mimesis*. This can be found in the initial dialogic exchanges between Socrates and Diotima:

> "What do you mean, Diotima?" I said. "Is Love ugly and bad?" "Don't say such things", she answered; "do you think that anything that is not beautiful is necessarily ugly?" "Of course I do". "And that anything that is not wisdom is ignorance? Don't you know that there is a state of mind half-way between wisdom and ignorance?" (201e-202a)

Thus far, ostensibly, Socrates has purportedly remained faithful to Diotima's words because he is using direct discourse, or, *mimesis*. Therefore, according to Plato, his own mouthpiece for his philosophy, Socrates, would be allowed in Plato's republic because he does not use the mixed form of indirect discourse. Yet, was it really what Diotima said originally? Has Socrates embellished or remained 100% faithful to her thoughts? What is important to bear in mind is that Socrates attempts to *appear* faithful to Diotima's philosophy of love by citing her and claiming that his philosophy originates from her. Whether or not this is true, can only be conjectured.

However, even in Socrates's monologue he *is* using indirect discourse because Diotima is not present. He is voicing her words and philosophy in her absence. In narratological terms, what we encounter

[3] For more on the significance of Diotima's femininity, Morgan refers to the work of David M. Halperin. See Halperin 1990.

is a framed narrative, or, hypodiegesis, in Socrates's account of the dialogue with Diotima, which is presented analeptically. Hypodiegesis, according to Gerald Prince, is defined as a «narrative embedded within another narrative» [Prince 2003, 50], or, a story within a story. Gérard Genette, in his work *Narrative Discourse*, refers to such narratives as «metadiegetic». Genette describes such embedded narratives in terms of diegetic levels [Genette 1983, 227-231].[4]

Returning to Plato's *Symposium*, we can step back to the larger narrative structure of the *Symposium*. Socrates's account is indeed an embedded narrative. Yet, this is not where the diegetic levels end. By referring to Socrates's account as hypodiegetic and analeptic, we can see how vital it is to an interpretation of the work in terms of indirect discourse. The whole of the *Symposium*, like Plato's *Republic*, is an account based on what others have said, i.e., the whole of the work is written in indirect discourse, a form that as it stands leads to Dorothy Tarrant labeling it as «a *tour-de-force*» [Tarrant 1955, 222]. Plato begins his *Symposium* with Apollodorus, the narrator, by referring to Aristodemus when Plato writes that it was *not* Socrates himself who gave the account of the evening to Apollodorus, but «a man called Aristodemus from Cydathenaeum» (Pl. *Smp.* 173b). Apollorus goes on to say that Socrates confirmed the account as offered by Aristodemus (173b). This confirmation of the account bespeaks an attempt at appearing purely faithful to another's discourse, a pragmatic move that tries to appeal to the author of an account in order to appear as authentic. Nonetheless, Socrates's account in the *Symposium* is multiple times removed. There is what Diotima said, what Socrates said Diotima said, what Aristodemus said Socrates said, and what Apollodorus said Aristodemus said. Lastly, Apollodorus's account, the whole of Plato's *Symposium*, is directed at the implied reader.[5] Within the voice of the narrator Apollodorus, or even the philosopher Plato, there are many voices within a single voice.

With all of these voices present within one speaker in the *Symposium*, we can characterize the language in Plato's work in terms of how Diotima characterized the nature of love above: Halfway. Indirect discourse

[4] For more on embedded narratives in Plato's works, see Collins 2015, 45-52.

[5] For more on the implied reader, see Schmid 2014.

in the *Symposium*, especially Socrates's account, is halfway between Diotima's words and his own words. I believe that this halfway form of philosophy of which Diotima speaks can be transferred linguistically to the employment of indirect discourse. The passage from the *Symposium* can be interpreted on multiple levels with philosophical consequences. Namely, the nature of love, and the nature of indirect discourse. In Plato's terminology, indirect discourse and its employment in the *Symposium*, is halfway between pure *mimesis* and pure *diegesis*.

4. Theaetetus and Timaeus

Theaetetus may appear to be written as a dramatic dialogue. Unlike the *Symposium*, *Theaetetus* is not composed by indirect discourse on its larger diegetic level. If so, it is pure dialogue, or, pure *mimesis*. If we follow Plato's insistence that *mimesis* is more reliable than a mixture of *diegesis* and *mimesis*, then it would be that the accounts offered in *Theaetetus* are more authentic than those in the *Symposium*. However, upon closer reading, we can bear witness to how one of the interlocutors, Eucleidus, actually composed a written account of a previous dialogue:

> TERPSION: Well, that seems to have been true. But how did the discussion go? Could you repeat it?
> EUCLEIDUS: Good heavens, no – anyway, not just out of my head. But I made notes on that occasion, as soon as I got home, and later, when I had time, I used to recollect it and write it down. And whenever I went to Athens, I used to ask Socrates again about what I didn't remember, and make corrections when I came back here. So I've got just about all of what they said written down (Pl. *Tht.* 142d-143a).

What this means is that in *Theaetetus* there is a *written* account by Plato's Eucleidus, versus a *spoken* account by Plato's Apollodorus in the *Symposium*. Moreover, Eucledius admits omitting the «tedious […] bits of narration between the speeches» (143c), in a move of «narrative economy» [de Bakker & de Jong 2021, 11]. Why is this? What is Plato up to? Lesley Brown writes an explanatory footnote to this passage:

> Plato's fictional explanation of the provenance of the dialogue stresses the careful and lengthy task Eucleidus undertook to record the conversation, including several visits to Athens checking drafts with Socrates. This contrasts with other dialogue frames, such as that for the *Symposium*, which emphasize the distance in time between the supposed conversations and the reporting of them, as well as the lack of first-hand testimony [Brown 2014, 111].

Brown's usage of terms such as «careful and lengthy» would suggest that this particular dialogue by Plato is diligently faithful. Yet, we must also always remember that the dialogue is «fictional» and carefully constructed by Plato. A framed narrative, such as in *Theaetetus*, is structured as it is in order to assert and simultaneously draw attention or lay bare its authenticity to the original spoken words.

Brown's term «provenance», on the other hand, indicates a tendency to believe that there are such original utterances. According to Bakhtin, though, this is simply not the case. He refers back to the biblical Adam to make his point:

> But as we have already said, every extra-artistic prose discourse – in any of its forms, quotidian, rhetorical, scholarly – cannot fail to be oriented toward the «already uttered», the «already known», the «common opinion» and so forth. The dialogic orientation of discourse is a phenomenon that is, of course, a property of *any* discourse. It is the natural orientation of any living discourse. On all its various routes toward the object, in all its directions, the word encounters an alien word and cannot help encountering it in a living, tension-filled interaction. Only the mythical Adam, who approached a virginal and as yet verbally unqualified world with the first word, could really have escaped from start to finish this dialogic inter-orientation with the alien word that occurs in the object. Concrete historical human discourse does not have this privilege: it can deviate from such inter-orientation only on a conditional basis and only to a certain degree [Bakhtin 2006a, 279].

Bakhtin argues that in a world of words belonging to other speakers, there is no possible way to sidestep directing an utterance toward

something already uttered. In the explanatory note to *Theaetetus*, Brown assumes there is such a virginal utterance. Philosophically, this is not conceivable, according to Bakhtin. Where does a dialogue truly begin and end? How can we ascertain who originally said what? Evidence of such theoretical dimensions in *Theaetetus* would be when Socrates and Theodorus are speaking about Protagoras, who is not present in the dialogue. Yet, the words that Protagoras uttered in the past are what dialogically direct the conversation held by Socrates and Theodorus in Protagoras's absence.

By comparing *Theaetetus* to the *Symposium*, Brown, perhaps inadvertently, is deconstructing Plato's philosophy of the differences between speech and writing.[6] What I mean, is that in such a note, the *Symposium*'s dialogic account, in contradistinction to the professed authenticity of the *written* account in *Theaetetus*, is revealed as hearsay arising after a temporal «distance» and without a «first-hand testimony». However, considering how Socrates, according to Eucleidus, was consulted to make amendments to the dialogue, invites scrutiny of its authenticity. Socrates is solely relied upon to account for not only his words, but the words of his interlocutors as well. Nonetheless, the account offered by Plato is still a literary account that can be read and interpreted. My aim is not to investigate the authenticity of *Theaetetus* or other dialogues, but to show that such attempts at appearing more authentic within the dialogues can undermine Plato's distinctions between speech and writing.

Moving onto my final example of *Timaeus*, unlike the *Symposium* and *Theaetetus*, there is no framed narrative. Despite this, there is still a reliance upon previous statements. To begin with, the narrative form in which Critias's account is delivered is entirely indirect discourse. However, Tarrant concludes that the form of indirect discourse in *Timaeus* indicates how «its grace and elasticity are gone, and Plato's style has settled into the weight and formalism of a later period» [Tarrant 1955, 224]. As Critias begins, Hermocrates says how «Critias then produced an account he had heard long ago» (Pl. *Tim*. 20d). Critias then says to Socrates that, «The account is a very strange one, but Solon,

[6] For a deconstruction of Plato's privileging of speech over writing, see Derrida 1981.

the wisest of the seven wise men, once vouched its complete truth» (20d-e). Once again, Plato's speakers are concerned with the veracity of spoken accounts, especially when they occurred «long ago». The authenticity of Critias's/Solon's account is further complicated when taking into consideration Plato's views of poets, because it comes to light that it was none other than a *poet* who told the story: «Solon was not only the wisest of men but also the most free-spirited of poets» (21c). After delivering his account, Critias then goes on to defend it:

> You have heard in brief, Socrates, the story which Critias told when he was an old man, and which he had heard from Solon. […] I was not willing to speak at once, for after so long a time my recollection was imperfect; I decided therefore that I must I first rehearse the whole story to myself before telling it. […] and when I got back I managed to recall pretty well all of it by thinking it over at night. It is amazing, as is often said, how what we learn as children sticks in the memory. I'm not at all sure whether I could remember again all I heard yesterday; yet, I should be surprised if any detail of this story I heard so long ago has escaped me (25d-26c).

Critias's defense invites critique of the authenticity of spoken accounts. Simultaneously, Critias also *appeals* to previously uttered sayings—«as is often said». The titular Timaeus, in his monologue, also makes the same appeal when he says, «[W]e must rely on those who have told the story before» (40d).

5. Conclusion

What I have thus far described is a tendency by Plato's characters to rely on hearsay and, at times, to assert the authenticity of spoken accounts by either appealing to writings or the words of others regarding their accounts. Diotima's role in the *Symposium* is not an isolated incident because she speaks *indirectly*. Socrates, and Plato's other characters, apparently get their words from other speakers. They even get their *knowledge* from other speakers. Pragmatically, the painstaking efforts

to ensure the authenticity of recounted statements are emphasized by Plato through his characters. Accordingly, with such a heavy reliance upon previous accounts, Plato is suggesting that such spoken accounts are based on hearsay. Regarding language itself, the ubiquity of indirect discourse in Plato's works is unavoidable and inevitable.

These findings in Plato's works also hold true for writings in philosophy in general. Even in writing this academic paper, I myself must resort to indirect discourse as understood by Bakhtin and Deleuze and Guattari. My citations and paraphrasing of Plato, the three aforementioned thinkers, and others show that the tradition of writing philosophy heavily relies on the words of others. What qualifies as a philosophical text can be characterized as how and why an author employs and reacts to indirect discourse. Unlike Bakhtin's Adam, we are in a discourse-laden world and tradition that must be taken into account when using language.

As for Socrates, perhaps he relies too often on hearsay. There are various ways in which his reliance on the spoken words of others can be deemed as unreliable. For instance, such unreliable factors that need to be taken into consideration are the roles of memory or personal agendas either for or against a speaker. Like the children's game of telephone, or, Chinese whispers, where one message is whispered to another person and so on until the final message is unintelligible to the original one, spoken accounts have their fallacies. Socrates's dependence on the words of others does, however, strengthen his claim that «I knew quite well that I had practically no understanding myself» (Pl. *Ap.* 22c-d). With this, in the *Symposium*, Socrates does, in Plato's terms, speak purely mimetically in his account of Diotima's words through his indirect discourse. Therefore, it would seem that Socrates would not be banned from Plato's republic. Yet, what about *Plato* himself? Should he be banned from his own republic? Despite Socrates's proclivity to speak mimetically, Plato does not always write mimetically. Instead, such as in his framed narratives, his writings can be multiple times removed from their original sources with multiple voices voiced by a single character. Furthermore, according to de Bakker and de Jong, this type of «[d]iscourse with a plurality of voices is to be rejected as it threatens the unity of the soul that is such a fundamental principle of

Plato's philosophy» [de Bakker and de Jong 2021, 3]. By questioning such framed narratives that are formed by indirect discourse, or, in Latin *oratio obliqua*,[7] Plato is rhetorically playing with the possibility of unreliable narrators.[8]

This leads me to my final question: According to Plato, what makes a text philosophical? As Timaeus says, «[W]e must rely on those who have told the story before». Plato is indicating part of a philosophical reality. Be it based on spoken or written utterances, the past words of others in many ways dictate and shape the forms of philosophical discourse in the present. Socrates is aware of this when he says, «I am far too well aware of my own ignorance to suppose that any of these ideas can be my own» (Pl. *Phdr.* 235c). As such, the philosophies offered by Socrates in such secondhand accounts in Plato's works are inextricably tied to the employment of indirect discourse.

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[7] See the etymological significance of the Latin translation in de Bakker and de Jong 2021, 5 n. 12.

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Keywords

Plato; indirect discourse; language; Bakhtin; Deleuze and Guattari

Abstract

In Plato's *Symposium*, there is the familiar setting of speakers taking turns discoursing on the nature of love, and among these speakers is Socrates. What is salient about Socrates's discourse is not the usual discredit of epistemology, but the source of his language: Diotima. It is through hearsay, or, indirect discourse, that Socrates's tale unfolds.

Indirect discourse has a long tradition. Beginning, in fact, with Plato in his *Republic*, the phenomenon of discoursing through the use of the others' language received special attention in the twentieth century. The Russian thinker Mikhail Bakhtin understood indirect discourse as a form of transmission. Decades later, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who cited Bakhtin in their collaboration *A Thousand Plateaus*, further developed the concept of indirect discourse to be a ubiquitous form of language. These thinkers argue that we as humans get our language from other speakers by retransmitting what we have already heard and discussed.

How does indirect discourse factor into the structure of *Symposium*? Moreover, does indirect discourse play a role in other Socratic works? If so, what is the nature of indirect discourse in Plato's oeuvre? This paper sets out to investigate these questions and argues that indirect discourse is a part of human language in not just Plato's works, but everyday existence as well.

Nel *Simposio* di Platone, all'interno dell'ambiente familiare degli oratori che si alternano nel discorso sulla natura dell'amore, figura Socrate. Il contenuto saliente del discorso di Socrate non è il consueto discredito dell'epistemologia, bensì la fonte del suo linguaggio: Diotima. È attraverso il sentito dire, o il discorso indiretto, che si svolge il racconto di Socrate.
Il discorso indiretto vanta lunga tradizione. Il fenomeno del discorrere attraverso l'uso della lingua degli altri ha ricevuto un'attenzione particolare nel XX secolo, concentrandosi inizialmente sulla *Repubblica* di Platone. Il pensatore russo Mikhail Bakhtin ha inteso il discorso indiretto come una forma di trasmissione. Decenni più tardi, Gilles Deleuze e Félix Guattari, rifacendosi a Bakhtin nel loro volume Mille Piani, hanno ulteriormente sviluppato il concetto di discorso indiretto come forma onnipresente di linguaggio. Questi pensatori sostengono che noi esseri umani otteniamo il nostro linguaggio da altri parlanti, ritrasmettendo ciò che abbiamo già sentito e discusso.
In che modo il discorso indiretto entra nella struttura del *Simposio*? Inoltre, il discorso indiretto ha un ruolo in altre opere socratiche? Se sì, qual è la natura del discorso indiretto nell'opera di Platone? Questo articolo si propone di indagare tali interrogativi e di sostenere che il discorso indiretto fa parte del linguaggio umano non solo nelle opere di Platone, ma anche nell'esistenza quotidiana.

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