

ΦΙΛ- NAMES AS CHARACTER DISPOSITION

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ABSTRACT: The ancient Greek language was once alive, with a creative use of terms and the free formation of neologisms. Since Mycenaean times, the prefix φίλ- was employed to generate new words: proper and common names, adjectives and verbs, such as Philip, philanthropy, philharmonic and philosophize. This article begins by outlining the contemporary debate on these words, which locates Plato as a game changer in the development of their meaning. Next, it briefly addresses the so-called platonic love according to the alleged linguistic transposition it would have operated in the sense of the prefix φίλ-. The third section focuses on Plato's account of the use and the formation of names in φίλ in the *Republic* and concludes that it is compatible with their traditional meaning. I show that these terms are neither norm-policing names referring to “wannabes”, nor do they designate a nostalgia towards an unreachable object. I conclude that φίλ- names have always denoted a type of obsession, and Plato's analysis both clarifies their logic and adds a psychological theory to explain their common reference, namely, a specific disposition of character.

Keywords: Plato, *philia*, *phil-* names, *philosophia*, disposition.

RESUMO: A língua grega antiga foi outrora viva, com um uso criativo dos termos e a livre formação de neologismos. Desde os tempos Micênicos, o prefixo φίλ- foi empregado para produzir novas palavras: nomes próprios e comuns, adjetivos e verbos, como Filipe, filantropia, filarmônica e filosofar. Esse artigo começa delineando a discussão contemporânea sobre esse grupo de palavras, que localiza Platão como um divisor de águas no desenvolvimento do seu sentido. A seguir ele trata brevemente do dito “amor platôni-

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co” segundo a suposta transposição linguística que ele teria operado no sentido do prefixo φιλ-. A terceira sessão se centra na justificativa platônica do uso e da formação dos nomes emφιλ- na *República* para concluir que ela é compatível com o sentido tradicional. Eu mostro que esses termos não são nomes de controle normativo, referindo-se a “pretenciosos”, e que tampouco eles designam uma nostalgia em relação a um objeto inalcançável. Eu concluo que nomes em φιλ- sempre denotaram um tipo de obsessão e que a análise de Platão esclarece a sua lógica, além de acrescentar uma teoria psicológica para explicar o seu referente comum, qual seja, uma disposição de caráter específica.

Palavras-chave: Platão, *philía*, nomes em *phil-*, *philosophía*, disposição.

The ancient Greek language was once alive, with a creative use of terms and the free formation of neologisms. Since the Mycenaean times, the prefix φιλ- was employed to generate new words: proper and common names, adjectives and verbs, such as Philip, philanthropy, philharmonic and philosophize. This article begins by outlining the contemporary debate on these words, which locates Plato as a game changer in the development of their meaning. Next, it briefly addresses the so-called “platonic love” according to the alleged linguistic transposition it would have operated in the sense of the prefix φιλ-. The third section focuses on Plato’s account of the use and the formation of names in φιλ in the *Republic* and concludes that it is compatible with their traditional meaning. I show that these terms are neither norm-policing names referring to “wannabes”², nor do they designate a nostalgia towards an unreachable object.³ I conclude that φιλ- names have always denoted a type of obsession, and Plato’s analysis both clarifies their logic and adds a psychological theory to explain their common reference, namely, a specific disposition of character.

² MOORE (2020: 1).

³ BURKERT (1960: 173).

1. BURKERT, MOORE AND THE DEBATE ON *PHILOSOPHOS*

In an influential 1960 article, Walter Burkert analyzes the passage in which Diogenes Laertius attests that Pythagoras was the first to use the terms *philosophia* and *philosophos*. The text reads as follows:

Φιλοσοφίαν δὲ πρῶτος ὠνόμασε Πυθαγόρας καὶ ἑαυτὸν φιλόσοφον, ἐν Σικυῶνι διαλεγόμενος Λέοντι τῷ Σικυωνίων τυράννῳ (ἢ Φλιασίων, καθὰ φησιν Ἡρακλείδης ὁ Ποντικός ἐν τῇ Περι τῆς ἄπνου)· μηδὲ ἀγὰρ εἶναι σοφὸν [ἄνθρωπον] ἀλλ' ἢ θεόν. θᾶπτον δὲ ἐκαλεῖτο σοφία, καὶ σοφὸς ὁ ταύτην ἐπαγγελλόμενος, ὃς εἶη ἄνκατ' ἀκρότητα ψυχῆς ἀπηκριβωμένος, φιλόσοφος δὲ ὁ σοφίαν ἀσπαζόμενος.

“The first to name philosophy and (to name) himself a philosopher was Pythagoras⁴, while in Sicily talking to Leon, tyrant of the Sicyonians (or of the Phliusians, according to Heraclides Ponticus in *On the breathless woman*⁵), because no one is a wise [human being], but a god. Hastily⁶ was it

⁴ Diogenes Laertius himself clarifies the situation in his book on Pythagoras. Quoting Sosicrates, he says: “Sosicrates, in the Successions, says that when asked by Leon, tyrant of Phlius, who he was, he (Pythagoras) replied: philosopher”. Σωσικράτης δ' ἐν Διαδοχαῖς φησιν αὐτὸν ἐρωτηθέντα ὑπὸ Λέοντος τοῦ Φλιασίων τυράννου τίς εἶη, φιλόσοφος εἶπεῖν. (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of eminent philosophers*, VIII, 8).

⁵ Note that, with Dorandi's punctuation, the only information attributed to Heraclides is the reference to Phlius, and not the whole story on Pythagoras. *On the breathless woman* is a lost dialogue, also known as *On diseases*. The former title refers to an episode told in the dialogue in which a woman returned to live after days without vital signs. The latter refers to the dialogue's broader scope of disease etiology. See MOORE (2020: 10 ss.)

⁶ I find Moore's argument (2020: 17) that θᾶπτον means “previously” syntactically problematic. The duplicated δὲ suggests that the second one refers to what precedes the first, so that both sentences explain the statement on “wise” having the same reference as “god” (See DENNISTON, 1954: 183). Moreover, according to Moore's reading, the text points out a change in the meaning of *sophia* –“previously people spoke of *sophia*”– which is hard to compre-

called wisdom, and wise was the one who conveyed it –he who would have obtained the perfection of the highest element of the soul; while philosopher is the one who eagerly welcomes wisdom.”⁷

Several are the questions relevant to a historian of philosophy in this excerpt: Is it true that Pythagoras was the first to use these words?⁸ Is Diogenes’ source reliable? Why would Pythagoras need a neologism? At this moment, however, we are more interested in the following points: (i) how does Pythagoras explain this neologism to Leon? (ii) what is the relationship between *philosophia* and *sophia*? (iii) what is the rationale for this neologism in particular and for neologisms with the prefix $\phi\lambda$ - in general?

Burkert claims (i) that there is no explanation of the neologism⁹, because the meanings of both *philosophia* and *Sophia* are taken for granted. As for (ii) the answer is well established in authors like Diodorus Siculus, Clement of Alexandria and Augustine of Hippo¹⁰, according to whom philosophers are those who stand between wisdom and ignorance. Consequently, “philosophizing and having wisdom are self-excluding”.¹¹ Therefore, (iii) in the neologism *philosophia*, the prefix $\phi\lambda$ - would operate a disjunction between Pythagoras and *sophia*, instead of a predication: he is not wise; he is something other than wise. According to Burkert, $\phi\lambda$ - must here mean “longing for something absent”, “effort for the unreached”.¹²

hend, for the meaning of *sophia* must be preserved in the apodosis “while philosopher is the one who eagerly welcomes wisdom”. My understanding is that *hastily* is the important contrast between “having obtained *sophia*” and “eagerly welcoming it”: those who too hastily think they have a certain state for granted are not real *sophoi*.

⁷ DIOGENES LAERTIUS, *Lives of eminent philosophers*, I, 12.

⁸ Both BURKERT and MOORE deny it. BURKERT (1960: 173) considers that one could not have made this argument before Plato and MOORE (2020: 18) claims that the word preceded Pythagoras.

⁹ BURKERT (1960: 161).

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ BURKERT (1960: 165-166).

¹² BURKERT (1960: 172).

One problem with this interpretation is that it is based on much later textual evidence. Another more serious problem is that the meaning of φίλ- here does not correspond to its general use in the time of Pythagoras. As Burkert argues¹³, names with the prefix φίλ- denote appreciation for what is proper to someone. For example, *philoptolemos* (φιλ + war) designates the warriors in Troy¹⁴, *philertmoi* (φιλ + oars) are the Phaeacians, who are sea experts¹⁵, *philommeides* (φιλ + smile) is Aphrodite¹⁶. Landfester’s etymological studies conclude that stating “z is φίλ-X” means that z is someone to whom X is *philon* (“dear”, “own”).¹⁷ Therefore, an actual predication takes place: z, the subject assigned by the name in φίλ-, has the predicate of considering X esteemed, dear, proper. If this is the case of every φίλ- term, the alleged disjunction in the coinage of *philosophia* is anomalous.

This is Burkert’s overview of the matter: if Diogenes is correct, Pythagoras formulates a neologism without any basis in the uses of language, and worse, he did it with explanatory purposes in a dialogue with Leon. Explanatory neologisms are expected to start with a familiar meaning in order to introduce a new one; in this case the former must be the prefix φίλ-.¹⁸ But if the novelty is the disjunctive sense of the prefix φίλ-, one should expect an argument for it.¹⁹ However this is not to be found in any testimony attributed to Pythagoras.²⁰ Burkert finds this kind of justification in Plato, specifically in the *Lysis*, the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*. In his view, this is where the famous disjunction between *philosophia* and *sophia* is introduced for the first time, and when φίλ- begins to denote “longing for the absent”.

¹³ BURKERT (1960: 172-173).

¹⁴ See HOMER, *Iliad*, 1. 122.

¹⁵ See HOMER, *Odyssey*, 5. 386.

¹⁶ See HOMER, *Iliad*, 3. 424

¹⁷ LANDFESTER (1966: 108 ss.). Landfester’s thesis is that *philos* is a general reflexive-possessive pronoun (*Idem*, p. 69), hence the translation for “proper to”. On the meaning of the adjective *philos* as “dear”, “proper” within dative, as opposed to the sense of “friend of”, with names in genitive, see KONSTAN (1997: 28-29, 56).

¹⁸ See MOORE (2020: 73).

¹⁹ See BURKERT (1960: 169); MOORE (2020: 5, 21-22).

²⁰ Because Burkert attributes the story to Heraclides Ponticus, instead of Diogenes Laertius himself or some other source, he claims that “academic” ideas were introduced in the story. See BURKERT (1960: 176).

Moore's recent contribution to this debate consists of denying that Pythagoras was introducing a neologism. According to him, *philosophos* was a regular $\phi\lambda$ - name that predated Pythagoras and was adopted by him.²¹ Its meaning was compatible with the ordinary use of the prefix $\phi\lambda$ -²², as follows. *Sophos* has a clear reference determined by the tradition of the Seven Sages of Greece, that is, it designates those who give political advice.²³ Moore claims that in every name such as $\phi\lambda + X$, X necessarily refers to an established social practice. The prefix $\phi\lambda$ - modifies X, operating, not a disjunction, but a predication with a pejorative sense: the subject is excessively or abnormally X; or is a wannabe X.²⁴ The prefix is defamatory and expresses a criticism of the subject of the predication. Therefore $\phi\lambda$ - terms are "name-calling", derogatory, applied to others in a tone of censure in the spirit of a certain policing in defense of conventions.²⁵

Things then change in the fifth and early fourth century. The meaning shifts to "acting, repetitively, to become like political-advising and maxim-spouting *sophoi*",²⁶ the pejorative sense fades out, and the meaning undergoes fissures. Finally, Plato understands *philosophia* as a conversational practice that leads to virtue. However, this meaning was not transparent to ancient Greek speakers, who would still see it as a derogatory term, which is the reason why Plato feels the need to redeem it.²⁷

A first objection to Moore's thesis is a tradition, going back to the Mycenaean age²⁸, of proper names in $\phi\lambda$ -, such as Philoctetes, son of Achilles, or Philoitios, Odysseus's herdsman. Since it is hard to accept that parents would give derogatory names to their children, Moore posits a ground-zero stage in the development $\phi\lambda$ - terms. Originally $\phi\lambda$ - was used to form proper names without pejorative sense, these would thence become identifiers instead of descriptions, and "this would make *phil*- prefixing now appropriate

²¹ See MOORE (2020: 18).

²² MOORE (2020: 117).

²³ MOORE (2020: 93-96).

²⁴ MOORE (2020: 87-88, 107).

²⁵ MOORE (2020: 6, 66).

²⁶ MOORE (2020: 128).

²⁷ MOORE (2020: 222).

²⁸ MOORE (2020: 88-89).

for name-calling labels.”²⁹ It is unclear to me how this follows. I believe that here, as previously mentioned regarding the change in the meaning of the prefix, an argument would be required about how φιλ- became defamatory. Moore thinks that the rationale for creating proper names is different than the one for common terms; in the first case φιλ- can sound positive, and in the second it means the opposite.

A second weak point of Moore’s thesis is that Pythagoras uses *philosophos* neither in a derogatory sense, nor in support of certain established social practices. It is employed to describe himself, in defense of a practice which requires further explanation. Moore’s argument is that Pythagoras uses *philosophos* in a reversal of its meaning, “accommodating a name-calling name and consolidating a structured group around it”, just like a queer activist.³⁰ However, in order to do it, Moore must suppose that in the 6th century BC the term was used in a pejorative way, even if as refereeing to the Pythagoreans themselves, but there is no evidence for this.³¹

A third delicate point is the emphasis on Aristotle’s text, which Moore considers to be the first sustained analysis of φιλ- prefixed names.³² In *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 1099a7-12, we read that terms in φιλ- means “desire for” and “pleasure in” the object designated by the word that follows the prefix. In *Rhetoric*, 1363a37-b3, Aristotle says that these names refer to people whose desire determines who they are. It is not simply the case that this object pleases them, it seems to them to be the best. Moore, however, emphasizes *Nicomachean Ethics*, III, 11, 1118b21-27, in which Aristotle states that those characterized by φιλ- names desire what they shouldn’t, or desire more than most people do, or do not desire as they ought. Here he finds the derog-

²⁹ MOORE (2020: 90).

³⁰ MOORE (2020: 1).

³¹ I understand that, even if we grant Moore’s reading of Heraclitus B35 as pejoratively referring to the Pythagoreans (see MOORE, 2020: 57, 62), it would still refer to the sense in which Pythagoras uses it. In other words, if Heraclitus did not coin a neologism, and simply refers to the Pythagoreans with the term they used to refer to themselves, *philosophos* is a word with positive meaning to the Pythagoreans and negative meaning to Heraclitus.

³² MOORE (2020: 73), as opposed to Plato’s “etymologies or quasi-etymologies of *philosophia*” (MOORE, 2020: 222).

atory and normative sense,³³ but he downplays the context. Chapter 11 introduces a discussion on peculiar desires in contradistinction to natural ones. While in the latter case there is no error, except for quantity, in the former the errors are many and varied. It is the emphasis on error that makes the interpretation of the prefix names φιλ- pejorative, and not vice versa. This is supported by *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV, 1125b14-18, in which Aristotle says that terms in φιλ- have more than one meaning, which can be used for praise or blame. It seems to me that Moore's conclusion that Aristotle's analysis supports his thesis on the derogatory sense depends on including commendable behaviors in those which break the norm and defy established conventions.³⁴ I find this too much of a conceptual stretch.

A more sensible thesis, I submit, is that of a gradual development of the meaning of the names in φιλ-. In what follows I intend to show how Plato, instead of changing the meaning of the prefix, conserves it. I submit that φιλ- designates a form of obsession, a repeated behavior, a strong personality trait. This explains the formation of names such as *philoptolemos* (φιλ + war) or *philoxenos* (φιλ + stranger), which have no pejorative tone. These names indicate objects dear to someone, and the positive or negative meaning comes from the context. These do not need to be objects of a conscious desire, such as in "philatelist", yet they denote a character. Thus, although I agree with Moore in the emphasis on behavioral repetition³⁵, there is no necessary derogatory sense. Of course, in a culture guided by maxims like *meden agan*, obsessions and repetitions tend to refer to vices more often than to virtues, but, again, this is said according to the context. What is most important in my proposal is that the prefix φιλ- designates an outstanding trait of character.

In this proposal, there is no radical transformation in the meaning of the prefix φιλ- from Pythagoras to Aristotle. Instead, we can see how philosophical analysis contributes to the understanding of its logic and the psychology to which it refers. Philosophy employs terms in technical and unusual ways, but that does not mean that they have a completely different

³³ MOORE (2020: 76).

³⁴ MOORE (2020: 79).

³⁵ MOORE (2020: 88).

sense. Although I agree with Moore about the exaggeration of reading some philosophical concept into every φίλ- name;³⁶ I think it is necessary neither to assume a strong change in the meaning, nor to reject some attitudinal component in the archaic uses.³⁷

Before moving on to Plato, I would like to conclude this session by justifying my translation of the passage quoted at the beginning. According to my proposal, the term *philosophos* would have been used by Pythagoras as a form of obsession for *sophia* (φιλόσοφος δὲ ὁ σοφίαν ἀσπαζόμενος). This means that the prefix does modify the noun *sophos*, as Moore intends it to, and the ending *-os* is simply gender designation agreeing with the subject, Pythagoras. *Sophia*, in its turn, is an achievement, the perfection of the highest element of the soul. Pythagoras opposes to this character the one who eagerly welcomes this state. The disjunction is not because *sophia* is unattainable; every human being that acquires it becomes a god, as is said of Empedocles, for instance. The difference is modal: one simply has it, the other eagerly welcomes it. Obsessively wishing for something does not imply not having it: the philatelist has several stamps, but he still eagerly welcomes each new one he gets.

2. EROS PHILOSOPHOS

The previous session dealt with the debate around the term *philosophos* in particular and the φίλ- names in general. Burkert thought Plato had a key role in transforming the meaning of the prefix φίλ-, implying the absence of the object of desire. Moore moderates this claim: he acknowledges that Plato introduces a new concept of philosophy, but still must seek to redeem the word from its derogatory past.³⁸ My purpose now is to show that Plato did not change the meaning for the prefix φίλ-, as both Burkert and Moore assume. In his dialogues we find an analysis of the character to which these

³⁶ MOORE (2020: 83).

³⁷ MOORE (2020: 83).

³⁸ MOORE (2020: 222).

names refer, providing a psychological theory or, to use Halperin's expression, a metaphysics of desire. In this session, I briefly review the three passages that, for Burkert, are central to establishing the transformation in the meaning of the prefix. To me Halperin's understanding of Eros is enough to refute the thesis that they amount to a love for an unreachable object. Instead, they refer to the obdurate desire that characterizes eros. I begin with the *Lysis*:

Διὰ ταῦτα δὴ φαίμεν ἂν καὶ τοὺς ἤδη σοφοὺς
μηκέτι φιλοσοφεῖν, εἴτε θεοὶ εἴτε ἄνθρωποι εἰσιν
οὗτοι· οὐδ' αὖ ἐκείνους φιλοσοφεῖν τοὺς οὕτως
ἄγνοιαν ἔχοντας ὥστε κακοὺς εἶναι· κακὸν γὰρ καὶ
ἀμαθῆ οὐδένα φιλοσοφεῖν. λείπονται δὲ οἱ ἔχοντες
μὲν τὸ κακὸν τοῦτο, τὴν ἄγνοιαν, μήπω δὲ ὑπ'
αὐτοῦ ὄντες ἀγνώμονες μηδὲ ἀμαθεῖς, ἀλλ' ἔτι
ἠγούμενοι μὴ εἰδέναι ἃ μὴ ἴσασιν. διὸ δὴ καὶ
φιλοσοφοῦσιν οἱ οὔτε ἀγαθοὶ οὔτε κακοὶ πω ὄντες,
ὅσοι δὲ κακοὶ οὐ φιλοσοφοῦσιν, οὐ δὲ οἱ ἀγαθοί·
οὔτε γὰρ τὸ ἐναντίον τοῦ ἐναντίου οὔτε τὸ ὅμοιον
τοῦ ὁμοίου φίλον ἡμῖν ἐφάνη ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν
λόγοις.

“For this reason we would say that those who are already wise no longer philosophize, whether they are gods or human beings. Nor do those philosophize who lack knowledge to the point of being bad, for no one who is bad and ignorant philosophizes. There remain those who have this evil, ignorance, and yet are neither ignorant nor stupid; instead they are aware that they do not know what they do not know. In sum, those who philosophize are neither good nor bad, since neither the bad ones philosophize nor the good ones, for our previous

argument made it clear that one loves neither the opposite nor the like.”³⁹

This passage mirrors Diogenes Laertius’s when it comes to the disjunction between wisdom and philosophy, but it explicitly affirms that it is valid to both human beings and gods. It also shows that the difference cannot be determined by the presence or absence of knowledge, since that would be just the distinction between wisdom and ignorance. The disjunction must regard a certain disposition towards one’s cognitive state, which is the opposite of what is common to the good and the bad people. The disposition of good people is satisfaction, thence not desiring what is good.⁴⁰ The disposition of bad people is to desire what is bad⁴¹, which therefore is also not desiring what is good. So the philosopher’s disposition is the opposite of what they have in common; she desires the good. Unfortunately, the *Lysis* does not develop this point. We should look further for it.

εἰ μὲν εἰδὼς ἢ τὸ ἀληθὲς ἔχει συνέθηκε ταῦτα, καὶ ἔχων βοηθεῖν, εἰς ἔλεγχον ἰὼν περὶ ὧν ἔγραψε, καὶ λέγων αὐτὸς δυνατὸς τὰ γεγραμμένα φαῦλα ἀποδείξει, οὐ τι τῶνδε ἐπωνυμίαν ἔχοντα δεῖ λέγεσθαι τὸν τοιοῦτον, ἀλλ’ ἐφ’ οἷς ἐσπούδακεν ἐκείνων.

{ΦΑΙ.} Τίνας οὖν τὰς ἐπωνυμίας αὐτῶ νέμεις;

{ΣΩ.} Τὸ μὲν σοφόν, ὃ Φαῖδρε, καλεῖν ἔμοιγε μέγα εἶναι δοκεῖ καὶ θεῶ μόνῳ πρέπειν· τὸ δὲ ἢ φιλόσοφον ἢ τοιοῦτόν τι μᾶλλον τε ἂν αὐτῶ καὶ ἀρμόττοι καὶ ἐμμελεστέρωσ ἔχοι.

“- If they composed them [their writings] with knowledge of what is true; can rescue what is written when it is cross-examined, and are capable of showing with arguments that what is written is

³⁹ PLATO, *Lysis* 218a2-b5.

⁴⁰ *Lysis* 214e2-215c1.

⁴¹ *Lysis* 216a6-b10.

trivial, then they must be called not according to them [their writings] but according to what is most worthy for them.

- What name would you give them?

- To call them wise, Phaedrus, seems to me to be too much, and proper only to a god. Philosopher, on the other hand, or something like it, would fit better and be more suitable.”⁴²

The passage claims that *sophia* is proper only to gods, and is not as ambiguous as Pythagoras on the possibility of a human being becoming a god. It does not explain the distinction between the two terms; nonetheless, it depicts the attitude of a philosopher. First, a philosopher must know what is true about the topic she writes on.⁴³ Therefore, being a philosopher implies a character disposition not only towards one’s own ignorance, as stated in the *Lysis*, *but also* towards one’s own knowledge. Secondly, a philosopher is always ready to defend her arguments in cross-examinations; she eagerly welcomes again and again what she knows.⁴⁴ This means that *philosophia* involves pleasure in constantly verifying one’s own cognitive states. Finally, what a philosopher knows matters to her more than what she wrote: texts are trivial, knowledge is more important and desirable. I think Diotima pursues this point further in the *Symposium*.

θεῶν οὐδείς φιλοσοφεῖ οὐδ' ἐπιθυμεῖ σοφὸς γενέσθαι – ἔστι γάρ– οὐδ' εἴ τις ἄλλος σοφός, οὐ φιλοσοφεῖ. οὐδ' αὖ οἱ ἀμαθεῖς φιλοσοφοῦσιν οὐδ' ἐπιθυμοῦσι σοφοὶ γενέσθαι· αὐτὸ γὰρ τοῦτό ἐστι χαλεπὸν ἀμαθία, τὸ μὴ ὄντα καλὸν καγαθὸν μηδὲ φρόνιμον δοκεῖν αὐτῷ εἶναι ἰκανόν. οὐκ οὐκ ἐπιθυμεῖ ὁ μὴ οἰόμενος ἐνδεής εἶναι οὗ ἂν μὴ οἴηται ἐπιδεῖσθαι.

⁴² PLATO, *Phaedrus* 278c4-d6.

⁴³ See also *Phaedrus* 261a3-262c4.

⁴⁴ See also *Phaedrus* 275d4-276a7.

Τίνες οὖν, ἔφην ἐγώ, ὃ Διοτίμα, οἱ φιλοσοφοῦντες, εἰμὴ τε οἱ σοφοὶ μήτε οἱ ἀμαθεῖς;

Δῆλον δὴ, ἔφη, τοῦτό γε ἤδη καὶ παιδί, ὅτι οἱ μεταξὺ τούτων ἀμφοτέρων, ὧν ἂν εἴη καὶ ὁ Ἔρως. ἔστιν γὰρ δὴ τῶν καλλίστων ἡ σοφία, Ἔρως δ' ἔστιν ἔρως περὶ τὸ καλόν, ὥστε ἀναγκαῖον Ἔρωτα φιλόσοφον εἶναι, φιλόσοφον δὲ ὄντα μεταξὺ εἶναι σοφοῦ καὶ ἀμαθοῦς.

“- None of the gods philosophizes or desires to become wise –for he is (wise)– and if there is someone who is wise, he does not philosophize. On the other hand, ignorant people do not philosophize, nor do they desire to become wise, for what is difficult about ignorance is to believe that you are satisfied, even if you are neither noble, good nor sensible. Whoever thinks he does not lack something does not desire what he does not think he lacks.

- Who then, I said, Diotima, are those who philosophize, if they are neither the wise nor the ignorant?

- It is evident, she said, even to a child that they are in between both, and that Eros is one of them. This is so because wisdom is one of the most beautiful things, and Eros is love for the beautiful; therefore, Eros is necessarily a philosopher, and the philosopher is in between the wise and the ignorant.”⁴⁵

Diotima explains to Socrates that Eros is what distinguishes the *philosophos* from the *sophos*.⁴⁶ She also makes explicit what seems to be a hidden premise of Pythagoras: if *sophia* is necessary and sufficient for being a god – which is technically compatible with the text in the *Lysis* –, gods cannot philosophize. Like Socrates in the *Lysis*, Diotima shows that it is not the pres-

⁴⁵ PLATO, *Symposium* 204a1-b5.

⁴⁶ See *Symposium* 203d7.

ence or absence of knowledge that differs *philosophia* from *Sophia* (and ignorance for that matter); it is rather a certain disposition of character: satisfaction. Both ignorant and wise are satisfied, they neither desire nor eagerly welcome wisdom. If Eros marks this distinction, it does not imply that the desired object is unattainable. Eros desires the objects it has⁴⁷; for it is an obdurate desire that never finds satisfaction. Eros is a desire that does not cease when the object is obtained; for the desire is for some value in the object; and one can never own a value.⁴⁸ Eros is not simply an expression of intentionality; it is a constant attitude of desire and dissatisfaction that describes a specific personality.⁴⁹

This is a peculiar Platonic concept of Eros; in its ordinary meaning, Eros is an appeasable desire.⁵⁰ On the other hand, this is the traditional meaning of $\phi\lambda$ - names. When Plato links Eros with $\phi\lambda$ - names he offers us two important things: a) a psychological explanation for the traditional use of names in $\phi\lambda$ - in general, i.e., the disposition of character of the obdurate desire; b) the case for a rational obsession: one in which the agent is aware of her dissatisfaction and understands what causes it: her desire is not for particular objects, but for a form present in them.⁵¹ The complexity of Diotima's speech lies in overlapping these two theses. She wants Socrates to understand what Eros is and to devote himself to the philosophical practice. This exhortative tone overshadows the descriptive nature of the thesis (a), which is an analysis valid for $\phi\lambda$ - names in general. All erotic desire is for a form, even when the agent is not aware of this fact.⁵² So the *Symposium* gives us bases to distinguish both between *philosophia* and *sophia* (and ignorance), and between *philosophia* and other kinds of obdurate desires that neglect wisdom.

⁴⁷ *Symposium* 200c5-d10.

⁴⁸ As HALPERIN (1985: 170) puts it, Plato is the first philosopher to distinguish between appetite, which is gratified by the possession of the object, and desire, which cannot be satisfied in acquiring the object.

⁴⁹ HALPERIN (1985: 164).

⁵⁰ HALPERIN (1985: 164-165); CALAME (2013: 26-29).

⁵¹ HALPERIN (1985: 174).

⁵² HALPERIN (1985: 179). See also HALPERIN (1985: 182).

3. ΦΙΛ- NAMES IN PLATO’S *REPUBLIC*

In the previous session, we saw that *philosophia* in Plato’s *Lysis*, *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* does not imply an unattainable object. Instead, the φιλ- prefix and its connection to Eros indicates a kind of desire that does not cease at the acquisition of its object. Plato is faithful to the traditional sense of “obsession” designated by prefix φιλ-. This section is dedicated to Plato’s *Republic* not only because this dialogue presents an extraordinary number of names in φιλ-⁵³, but also because it details the rationale for their coinage and use. At 474c, we find Socrates in a situation similar to that of Pythagoras: he needs to explain what a *philosophos* is. To do it, he spells out what it means to love something (*philein ti*) when using φιλ- names, i.e., a desire for all items of a certain kind (πᾶν στέργοντα - 474c10), which is properly called eros.⁵⁴

Ἀναμνησκειν οὖν σε, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, δεήσει, ἢ μέμνησαι ὅτι ὄν ἄν φῶμεν φιλεῖν τι, δεῖ φανῆναι αὐτόν, ἐὰν ὀρθῶς λέγεται, οὐτὸ μὲν φιλοῦντα ἐκείνου, τὸ δὲ μή, ἀλλὰ πᾶν στέργοντα;

Ἀναμνησκειν, ἔφη, ὡς ἔοικεν, δεῖ· οὐ γὰρ πάνυ γεένοῶ.

[...]

Οὐκοῦν καὶ τὸν φιλόσοφον σοφίας φήσομεν ἐπιθυμητὴν εἶναι, οὐ τῆς μὲν, τῆς δ' οὐ, ἀλλὰ πάσης;

Ἀληθῆ.

Τὸν ἄρα περὶ τὰ μαθήματα δυσχεραίνοντα, ἄλλως τε καὶ νέον ὄντα καὶ μήπω λόγον ἔχοντα τί τε χρηστὸν καὶ μή, οὐ φήσομεν φιλομαθῆ οὐδὲ

⁵³ Some φιλ- names in the *Republic* that I cannot discuss here, but for which I submit that the rationale is the same are *philogelos* (388e4), *philopaismon* (452e4-5), *philopolis* (470d8, 503a1), *philellen* (470e8), *philapekthemon* (500b4), *philanalotes* (548b5), *philopragmosune* (549c4), *philopoietes* (607d8).

⁵⁴ See PLATO, *Republic*, 474d2, 3, 475a3.

φιλόσοφον εἶναι, ὥσπερ τὸν περὶ τὰ σιτία δυσχερῆ οὔτε πεινῆν φαμεν οὔτ' ἐπιθυμεῖν σιτίων, οὐδὲ φιλόσιτον ἀλλὰ κακόσιτον εἶναι.

Καὶ ὀρθῶς γε φήσομεν.

“- Do you remember, I asked, or do you need to be reminded that, if we say that someone loves something and if it is rightly stated, it must not mean that he loves part of it, and not another part; but instead that he loves everything?

It seems that you will have to remind me, for I do not have it very clear in mind. [...]

- Didn't we say that the philosopher is the one who desires wisdom; not only this one and not that other one, but all of it?

- It is true.

- Then someone who has restrictions about learning some topics, especially if he is young and has no justification about whether they are useful or not, we shall say that he is neither a lover of learning, nor a philosopher; just as we shall say of someone who rejects food neither that he is hungry, nor that he desires to eat, nor that he is a glutton, but rather that he is actually a bad eater.

- This is right.”⁵⁵

In the interval between the two cited passages, Socrates explains a series of *φιλ*-names. The *philopaidos* (474d3) who desires every youth, the *philoinos* (475a5) who desires every wine, the *philotimos*⁵⁶ who desires every honor (475a9), *philositos* who desires every food, the *philomathes*, who

⁵⁵ PLATO, *Republic* 474c8-11; 475b8-c5

⁵⁶ The *philotimos* is key to the argument of the *Republic* and it is generally associated with *philonikos* and *thumos* (cf. 548c6, 550b6, 581b3, 582e4, 586c9). Thrasymachus uses the term to describe Socrates (336c4), claiming that his habitual procedure of cross-examination (337e1-3) is based on constant desire of honor. It also describes the personality of Odysseus (620c5).

desires every learning, and the *philosophos* who desires every wisdom (474c8-475c8).⁵⁷ This is the Platonic rationale for composing names in φιλ-, and it coincides with the tradition. First, these names express a desire for X, as opposed to any kind of surfeit or rejection. This is clear in the contrariety of *philositos*, glutton, and *kakositos*, bad eater (475c2-4); also in the previous distinction between the *philosophos* and the *misosophos* (456a4). Secondly, this is not an occasional desire; it is reiterated to the point of constituting a character, the mark of someone’s personality: the *philopaidos* is an erotic man (ἄνερ ἐρωτικός - 474d1-2) and not someone who had sparse episodes of passion. In another example, later on the *philotimos* is described as someone in whom *philotimia* and *thumoeides* occupy the throne of the soul (553b7-c1). Third, the object of desire is the series of individuals: haecceity does not matter. Individuals are replaceable⁵⁸, just like one glass of wine is easily exchanged for another. The same goes for learning: a content may replace another. A φιλ- person desires all the items that fall into one form (475b5), even if the agent ignores that they do, as we saw regarding the passage in the *Symposium*.

Let us then take these as the three basic factors involved in Socrates’ coinage of φιλ- names: desire (as opposed to satisfaction), disposition of character and love of forms. Together they denote a personality of constant desire, because she actually desires a form and not an individual. This is the case of the *philotheamones*⁵⁹ and *philekoos*⁶⁰, they do not miss a single festival, be it urban or rural, always ready for yet another spectacle; and for that very reason never find a “final show” that would put an end to their desire, making them satisfied. The same seems to be true for the *philotekhnos* (476a11), who would be interested in all products of a particular art. Common ground for all φιλ- names lies on a psychological theory:

⁵⁷ The *philosophos* appears in book II (375e9, 376c4) already associated with *philomathes* (376b6, 9, c2).

⁵⁸ See NUSSBAUM (1986: 181), my position about it in ARAÚJO (2017: 232-233).

⁵⁹ See *Republic* 475d2, e4, 476a11, b4, 479a3.

⁶⁰ See *Republic* 475d3 and 476b4. See also 535d3 (below) and 548e5, in which *philekoos* is associated to *philomousos*.

Τὸν ἄρα τῷ ὄντι φιλομαθῆ πάσης ἀληθείας δεῖ
εὐθὺς ἐκ νέου ὅτι μάλιστα ὀρέγεσθαι.

Παντελῶς γε.

Ἀλλὰ μὴν ὅτῳ γε εἰς ἓν τι αἰ ἐπιθυμίαι σφόδρα
ρέπουσιν, ἴσμεν ποῦ ὅτι εἰς τᾶλλα τούτῳ
ἀσθενέστεραι, ὥσπερ ῥεῦμα ἐκεῖσε
ἀπωχετευμένον.

Τί μὴν;

Ἵτι δὴ πρὸς τὰ μαθήματα καὶ πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτον
ἐρρυήκασιν, περὶ τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς οἶμαι ἡδονὴν
αὐτῆς καθ' αὐτὴν εἶεν ἄν, τὰς δὲ διὰ τοῦ σώματος
ἐκλείπειεν, εἰ μὴ πεπλασμένως ἀλλ' ἀληθῶς
φιλόσοφος τις εἴη.

“- The true lover of learning must straightforwardly pursue the whole truth to the fullest from a young age.

- Absolutely.

- But when in someone desires flow strongly in one direction, we know that they will be somehow weakened in the other directions, like a flow of water that is channeled.

- And so what?

- So when in this person [the desires] flow towards learning and everything related to it, they will be [directed] to the pleasure of the soul itself and according to itself, abandoning the bodily pleasures, if he is not a fake but true philosopher.”⁶¹

According to Kahn,⁶² this passage claims that Eros is an undifferentiated psychic energy that can be channeled, that is, it can change its objects. In his view, this contradicts the theory of desire presented in book IV of the *Republic*, in which each part of the soul has a desire for a peculiar object. It

⁶¹ *Republic* 485d3-e1.

⁶² KAHN (1997: 97-99).

would also be inconsistent with the *Symposium*, in which Eros is a rational desire and therefore cannot be channeled to irrational appetites. Kahn doubts that this thesis on the channeling of eros could be actually attributed to Plato; even if it happens to be mentioned in such a crucial argument as the deduction of the philosopher’s virtue from the definition of philosophy.

A first point to note against Kahn is that Eros is the channeling of desire (*epithumia*), and not what is channeled.⁶³ Because the philosopher organizes her life and time so she can learn more, her interest in other types of objects diminishes. My second argument against Kahn is that the channeling metaphor does not require something as “basic matter” or “psychic energy”. It is perfectly intelligible as a theory that supposes different types of desire, which eventually conflict with each other. Solutions to these conflicts are choices that can become habits and finally describe a personality in a stable way.⁶⁴ If, for example, Alice loves to read and thence neglects going to beauty parlors, we do not need to posit that there is some energy that is displaced from one activity to the other; we can simply assume that this is how she uses her time. This is not the occasion to discuss the alleged contradiction with the argument of book IV, but I submit that this line of thought is sufficient to make the two passages compatible.

An important element in explaining the channeling thesis *a contrario-sensu* is *philoponia*, a welcoming attitude to effort (535d1-7).⁶⁵ Socrates’s point is that someone who is obsessed with specific objects is eager to commit herself to the most extreme labor they might involve. A *philogumnastes*⁶⁶ or *philotheros* would gladly submit themselves to physically strenuous activities; the *philekoos* and *zetetikos* do the same with the mentally exhaustive ones.⁶⁷ It is not only *philosophia* that implies fully *philoponia*, all erotic personalities do. The reason is that Eros is structural to their character in such a way that what would otherwise be a painful activity becomes

⁶³ See SCOTT (2007: 136).

⁶⁴ See PLATO, *Republic* 581b6- 8.

⁶⁵ This is not a Platonic neologism, see Isocrates, *Ad Demonicum* 45, 8; Pseudo-Demostenes, *Eroticus* 24. 7.

⁶⁶ For those obsessed for gymnastics, see PLATO, *Republic* 452b3, 456a2.

⁶⁷ See *Republic* 548e4-549a7 for the contrast between *philomousos* and *philekoos*, on one hand, and *philogumnastes* and *philotheros*, on the other.

agreeable. The reverse of this thesis, i.e., that someone would find no interest in activities that are generally considered pleasant, is an evidence for the channeling function of Eros.

The channeling theory shows that an erotic personality has a variety of opposites. A *philosophos* is opposed to (i) the *misosophos* (456a4); (ii) the *philopseudes* (485c12-d1), (iii) the *philotimos* or the *philokhrematos* (580d6-581b11), (iv) the *philodoxos* (480a6-13). (i) is based on the contrariety of desire and aversion and (ii) on the contrariety of the peculiar object. (iii) involves the “channeling” system, i.e., eros is exclusivist, it is not a desire for multiple kinds. In book IX, we see that the three parts of the soul introduced in book IV generate three types of pleasure. Depending on the habit and the education, the objects of these pleasures may become structural values in someone’s life. The *philosophos*; *philotimos* and *philokhrematos* result therefore from these channeling processes as wholly distinct and incompatible personalities.⁶⁸ Finally, (iv) the *philodoxos* is someone obsessed by being well informed about a series of items, expanding her capacity for judgement. A philosopher cannot be a *philodoxos* because (i) she knows that she desires a form, instead of individuals, and (ii) she has knowledge and is able to give an account of this form.⁶⁹ A philosopher is both someone who knows and an *aletheias erastes*⁷⁰; they are consistent with each other, because to know forms does not generate satisfaction, quite the opposite, it causes desire to learn more.

Φιλ- names designate very peculiar personalities; the way Eros structures their life and routine makes them queer (ἀτοπώτατοι - 475d4).⁷¹ Notwithstanding, this weirdness is not enough to ascribe them an abnormal social conduct, as Moore claims. Socrates makes the case for the philosophers (489d11-e2), to the point of arguing that the obsession with knowledge is not

⁶⁸ The *philosophos* is also described as *philologos* at 582e8; the *philotimos* as *philonikos* and the *philokhrematos* as *philokerdes*. The contrast between these three personality types is established since the first book of the *Republic*, in which *philotimos* and *philarguron* are contrasted with the best people (347b1-4); for this pattern of opposition, see also 551a7-8.

⁶⁹ See *Republic* 476d4-480a13.

⁷⁰ *Republic* 501d2; see also 475e4; 484b4-5; 485a10-b3, c3-d4.

⁷¹ See also Adeimantus’s thesis about philosophers in 487c4-d5 and Socrates’ agreement with it in 489b3-4.

only virtuous, but responsible for a happier life (587d12-e4). The philosopher, however, does not offer an objection to Moore, for he claims that this is exactly the term whose pejorative sense Plato is trying to reverse. My claim demands a broader argument about φιλ- names in general. I think it can be made after some evidence on how these personalities account for whole social organizations. The passage is the following:

Ἄρ' οὖν ἡμῖν, ἣν δ' ἐγώ, πολλή ἀνάγκη ὁμολογεῖν ὅτι γε τὰ αὐτὰ ἐν ἐκάστῳ ἔνεστιν ἡμῶν εἶδη τε καὶ ἦθη ἄπερ ἐν τῇ πόλει; οὐ γάρ που ἄλλοθεν ἐκεῖσε ἀφίκται. γελοῖον γάρ ἂν εἶη εἴ τις οἰηθεῖ τὸ θυμοειδὲς μὴ ἐκτῶν ἰδιωτῶν ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἐγγεγονέναι, οἳ δὴ καὶ ἔχουσι ταύτην τὴν αἰτίαν, οἷον οἱ κατὰ τὴν Θράκην τε καὶ Σκυθικὴν καὶ σχεδόν τι κατὰ τὸν ἄνω τόπον, ἢ τὸ φιλομαθές, ὃ δὴ τὸν παρ' ἡμῖν μάλιστ' ἄντις αἰτιάσαιτο τόπον, ἢ τὸ φιλοχρήματον τὸ περὶ τοὺς τε Φοίνικας εἶναι καὶ τοὺς κατὰ Αἴγυπτον φαίη τις ἂν οὐχ ἥκιστα. Καὶ μάλα, ἔφη.

“- Well, I asked, is it really necessary to agree that, in each of us, there are the same types and characters as in the city? After all, there is nowhere else they would come from to get there. It would be ridiculous for anyone to think that the spirited type had not arisen in the cities from people who actually have such a principle; for example those who are like Thracia or the Scythians or some other northern region, or the love of learning attributed mainly to this region of ours, or the love for riches, that someone would say exists mainly among the Phoenicians or in those who are like Egypt. - It is necessary, he said.”⁷²

⁷² Republic 435d9-436a4.

According to Socrates, names in $\phi\lambda$ - describe political groups, *politeiai* (see 545b6), such as the Phoenicians, Egyptians and Athenians. Lacedemonians are *philonikoi* and *philotimoi* (545a1-2), likely also the Cretans (544c3). Cultural practices in these groups stimulate citizens to act aiming at some kind of objects, while discouraging others. In this sense, these terms do not work simply as name-calling names, they are descriptive and self-descriptive. As Aristotle puts it, they function for both blame and praise. It is quite possible that there are excesses in these single-centered options, and that Socrates' statement is not devoid of criticism. Nonetheless, I see no reason why the Athenians would not be proud of their love for learning⁷³, Phoenicians of their bravery and Egyptians of their wealth.

4. CONCLUSION

My purpose in this text was to show that it is possible to explain the development of $\phi\lambda$ - names without supposing that Plato operates a great rupture in it. I tried to argue that such names designate personalities structured around a single object of desire. These people devote a considerable part of their time to an object X, so that their character can be properly described by reference to X. This is an obdurate desire, which is not relieved by acquiring an object; quite the opposite, the object is cause for further desire and the recurrence of longing for their whole series. I claimed that in different passages Plato offered a psychological account of these personalities, identifying Eros as their key dispositional element, leading to a description of the lover as this kind of character. Nothing here indicates that such erotic desire implies an unreachable, absent object, as suggested by Burkert. Having argued that names in $\phi\lambda$ - denote these obsessive attitudes, I submitted that they do not necessarily imply, as Moore defends, attitudes deviating from social practices. On the contrary, these attitudes can designate behaviors of whole social groups.

⁷³ THUCYDIDES, *History of the Peloponnesian War* 2. 40 1-3.

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