Editor's Preface

It is a great pleasure to present this collection of papers to mark Myles Burnyeat's retirement. His professional career began in 1964, one year after he graduated in Classics and Philosophy from King's College Cambridge, with a Lectureship at University College London. After moving back to Cambridge in 1978, he went on to succeed G. E. L. Owen there as Laurence Professor of Ancient Philosophy in 1984. In 1995 he took up a Senior Research Fellowship at All Souls College Oxford, where he remained until his retirement in 2006. Over the years he has also held a large number of visiting positions, many in North America, but also in France, Germany, Hungary, Japan, and Russia.

Burnyeat's name has been closely associated with Plato's Theaetetus, on which he wrote a series of articles early on in his career before publishing his long-awaited (and modestly entitled) 'Introduction' to the translation of the dialogue by M. J. Levert, which instantly became the seminal analysis of the dialogue. More recently he has been producing a series of essays on Plato's Republic, which will prove to be no less influential. His work on Aristotle—evenly distributed between epistemology, ethics, metaphysics, physics, psychology, and rhetoric—has been equally seminal. He has also been at the forefront of research on Hellenistic philosophy, not only through his own papers but also through the edited collections that he has helped bring to press. But his interests spread well beyond the ancient world. Throughout his career, he has deepened our understanding of the relationship between ancient and modern philosophy; and the number of his reviews on purely contemporary philosophy further testifies to the breadth of his interests.

What helps to make his work sui generis is the way in which he combines a mastery of historical, philological, literary, and, above all, philosophical perspectives, often within the same essay. Like others of his generation, Burnyeat has maintained and enhanced the profile of the subject around the world. But, more than anyone else, he has enlarged our sense of what a specialist in ancient philosophy should be like. If we were to live up to the standards he has now set, our work would not just combine the best of contemporary philosophy—its insights as well as its rigour—with a deep sensitivity to ancient texts. We would also be able to move effortlessly between different periods in the history of philosophy; to show how literary readings of texts unite, rather than compete, with philosophical analysis; and to draw with ease upon other specialisms, such as the history of mathematics, that many scholars of ancient philosophy still view with phobia.

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Maius is partly because it resonates with the Theaetetus, but also to capture the sense that all of the contributors will share of Myles's role as teacher and colleague. As a reader and commentator, he has the ability to seize hold of the best in one's work, perhaps an idea one had ventured only tentatively in a footnote, and to make one bring it centre stage; then to nurture it, pit it against criticism, and so make it stronger. His beneficiaries also include his undergraduate students. At Cambridge, he was one of the few lecturers whose audience actually increased in size as the term went on. The reason was his peculiar ability to lecture in 'layers', giving initiates an immediate sense of the importance and depth of ancient texts, while at the same time giving more seasoned students (often experts in the field) nuggets to take away and treasure. One famous example is the series of lectures on the Republic that he gave in the mid-1980s to an audience that included second-year undergraduates, Jonathan Lear, Malcolm Schofield, David Sedley, and Gregory Vlastos. As Schofield testifies in his own contribution to this volume, those lectures have continued to cast their spell many years later.

This volume is an indication of the gratitude that so many owe to him. Some of the contributors are former students (Hankinson, Harte, Hobbs, Johansen, Lane, Notomi, and myself). Other were colleagues in London (Sorabji) or Cambridge (Denyer, Lloyd, McCabe, Schofield, Sedley, and Wardy). It was with this latter group that Burnyeat helped make Cambridge a mecca for ancient philosophy in the 1980s and 1990s. A third group includes friends and collaborators from other universities (Barnes, Bobzien, Broadie, Cooper, Nehamas). There are very many others in this category who would have liked to contribute; it is only to prevent the book from bulging at the seams that I have had to be so selective.

I have not tried to impose a theme upon the essays in this collection, but have instead allowed the contributors to write on whatever is their passion of the moment. The result, as I hope the reader will agree, is an appropriately wide range of styles and approaches, even though many of them converge (often in pairs) as far as their topic is concerned. Cooper and Lane focus on related themes concerning Socrates and the nature of philosophy; Nehamas and I discuss different aspects of ἀριτή in the Symposium, Republic, and Phaedrus; Denyer and Sedley come to the rescue of a pair of the Phaedo's arguments for immortality; Hobbs and Wardy write on war and warriors in Plato (and beyond); Harte and Schofield both discuss different aspects of the Cave allegory in the Republic.

My thanks go to all those at OUP who have helped make this possible, especially Peter Momtchiloff and Jean van Altena, to the anonymous readers, and, above all, to the contributors—not least for the alacrity with which they agreed to write, another tribute to the honoree.

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Virtue as the Love of Knowledge in Plato’s Symposium and Republic

Melissa Lane

I. INTRODUCTION

Socrates confronted Plato with a paradox. Convinced that Socrates was the best man of his generation (Plat. 118a15–17), perhaps the best man who had ever lived so far, Plato had to face the fact that, on his own admission, Socrates did not have what he himself considered necessary in order to be what he was. If knowledge of areté is required for having areté and so for living well, then Socratics, who lacked that knowledge, could not have been virtuous and could not have lived well. Yet he was, and he did.

So Alexander Nehamas states a central problem about Socrates (Nehamas 1998: 68). That this poses a problem is evident, not only to later commentators, but even within Plato’s Symposium. There, Alcibiades is sufficiently troubled by the problem to propound a solution at some length: that Socrates does possess knowledge, though he conceals it and feigns ignorance. Nehamas, for his part, tacitly rejects Alcibiades’ diagnosis in holding that no adequate solution is offered in Plato, because Plato was in fact unable to solve the problem: at bottom, he could not explain Socrates.

Nehamas is right to reject Alcibiades’ proposed solution, which is flawed. However, it is argued here that Plato does offer a viable solution, one which he actually proposes in the voice of Socrates in Republic VI (485a4–487a8). In this section of the Republic, we find a discussion of the qualities possessed by a nature most suited to philosophy (a ‘natural philosopher’): justice, temperance, courage, magnanimity, and many others. Such qualities are not virtues in the full sense: they are preconditions for acquiring philosophical knowledge and hence true virtue. Instead, I shall call them ‘natural virtues’, as they are the virtues of the philosopher’s nature before it is perfected by education.

On this account, natural virtues originate with a primitive version of temperance, which arises from a psychological, and even physiological, drive to learn. This drive is in fact a form of love, and it is so powerful as to exert what I call (following an image in Republic VI) a hydraulic effect: psychic energy flows into this love, depriving other desires of the energy to oppose or distract one from the desire to learn. Originating with this natural and dispositional form of temperance, the love of learning then develops in a complex interplay between disposition and evaluation, which we will trace below. Here, it suffices to observe that the natural virtues do not presuppose or require that the natural philosopher has already gained the knowledge that she or he seeks. On the contrary: natural virtues are preconditions for the acquisition of knowledge-based virtues because only someone who is naturally abstemious as a result of their love for philosophy could go on to develop the panoply of full virtues. Without the right natural predisposition, they would sooner or later become distracted from the correct path by bodily desires which were not yet controlled by governing knowledge.

Further, natural virtues remain part of the psychological make-up of those who

I am grateful to Dominic Scott for his acute editorial eye and pen, and to Amber Carpenter, Stephen Halliwell, Antony Hatzistavrou, Shimon Malin, Malcolm Schofield, Frisbee Sheffield, and participants in seminar discussions at Colgate University and the University of St Andrews, for discussion of earlier versions of this chapter. I owe a special debt to Malcolm for directing my attention to Republic VI, though he does not necessarily agree with what I have made of it. I am also grateful to Amy Price and the Centre for History and Economics, King’s College Cambridge, for investment in proofreadings to the Cambridge University Faculty of Classics for affording me special access to its Library, and to participants in its May Week/Laurance Seminar 2006 for discussion of the De Officio passage quoted herein. In this context I should also like to express a deep general gratitude to Myles Burnyeat, whose teaching (together with that of Malcolm Schofield) informs this chapter as it does everything that I have written about Plato.

As observed in Lane 2001: 13–14, the problem was especially widely noticed in the late Renaissance and the subsequent Enlightenment debates about reason, virtue, and scepticism. For example, Montaigne argued that Socrates may have simply been naturally wise, and Rousseau that he was virtuous out of ignorance; while an opposing line taken by Diderot was that he actually did possess knowledge, perhaps even to the point of Chomskian pedantry.

Aristotle distinguishes the natural virtue or virtues which may be possessed as character traits from birth, from virtue 'in the strict sense' (Eth. Nic. 6.13, 1145a3–4). While this basic contrast is the same, the explanation and use of the idea of natural virtues differs significantly between the Republic and the Nicomachean Ethics. Aristotle suggests that people are likely to have one natural virtue but not another (e.g. to be naturally courageous but not naturally self-disciplined), echoing an idea also found elsewhere in Plato’s thought, in the contrasting courageous and moderate natures of Ph. 306a–308b, and even in Republic VI itself, where it is stressed that passion and quickness on the one hand and stability and reliability on the other are only found together in rare individuals (503c1–64). The burden of the Republic VI discussion in 485e4–487b5, which is recalled at 503b7–8 and which is the focus of the present chapter, is in contrast to show that the natural virtues of those few people who are natural philosophers will be all compatible and arise together. Plato’s emphasis there on the natural virtue not of the many, but of the few natural philosophers, caused by their natural drive to philosophize, contrasts strikingly with Aristotle’s association of natural virtue with ‘children and brutes [i.e. wild animals]’ (Eth. Nic. 6.13, 1145a8–9).

Hydraulic’ is used in the same context by Nails (2006: n.36) and Kahn (1987: 97–9). Kahn rejects the hydraulic reading of Rep. VI as incompatible with Platonic desire as rational. But his opposition is too drastic: on both sides of a contentious flow of psychic and physiological energy, and also oriented to reason. Compare Lear (1990: 39.41) on how Freudian psychic energy is expressed ‘sometimes mentally, sometimes physically’ and can be redirected.

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go on to develop full virtues. This plays a crucial role in the overall argument of the Republic, as the natural virtues of those with philosophical natures explain why the same people who are suited to do philosophy are also morally suited to rule. Nevertheless, as we shall see, the psychological structure of natural virtue differs from that of full virtue. The many virtues of the fully virtuous person pivot around her knowledge; those of the naturally virtuous person pivot around her temerity or self-discipline (sophronēn). These natural virtues explain how it is that Socrates appears virtuous; presented in Socrates' own voice in the Republic, they can be seen as his riposte to Alcibiades' flawed portrait of him in the Symposium. Crucial evidence for this is the fact that Socrates cites himself (496c), as well as Theages, as examples of those with philosophical natures. By implication, he attributes to himself the natural virtues listed at 485–7, and this is what gives us the solution to the Socratic problem that, according to Nehamas, Plato left unsolved. Socrates does not possess full knowledge, but due to his love of learning and the dispositional and then evaluative attitudes which it engenders, he has the natural virtues listed at 485–7. This enables us to explain why his contemporaries, like Alcibiades, thought he had true virtue, no less (remembering that Socrates was the person closest to full virtue whom they ever knew).

To bear out these claims, the chapter is framed by the Symposium, with its central portion being an account of Republic VI. We begin by considering, and rejecting, Alcibiades' proposed programmatic solution to the Socratic problem—that Socrates does have knowledge, and is concealing it. The alternative account which Socrates gives of himself in Republic VI, as one of the natural philosophers possessing the natural virtues, is then detailed, with an eye both to the light it sheds on Socrates and to its function in the context of the unfolding argument of the Republic. We then return to the Symposium to consider the detailed description which Alcibiades gives of Socrates' behaviour, the actions that allegedly manifest true virtue: for although his solution to the Socratic problem is flawed, his speech contains the materials needed for the correct solution. We will find that, in fact, what he describes is remarkably similar to the natural virtue of Republic VI, 485–7, conforming better to this account than to his own proposed explanation. We conclude by reflecting on the role of natural virtue and the nature of the philosophers in Plato's work.

II. ALCIBIADES’ SOLUTION: DIAGNOSING SOCRATIC CONCEALMENT

Our understanding of Alcibiades' interpretation of Socrates should be shaped ab initio by the fact that it is Alcibiades' interpretation. This is the Alcibiades who freely admits that he follows Socrates only reluctantly and intermittently, even blocking his ears against him; he who will be credited as a traitor to Athens, for pursuing personal ambition and thus showing that he has renounced the Socratic path of philosophy. Alcibiades' mesmerizing effect on Athens, which continued well into the fourth century, makes it reasonable to assume that Plato portrayed him expecting his audience to bring their knowledge of his bad character to bear in evaluating his assertions. As Andrea Wilson Nightingale counsels, 'Since Alcibiades' character distorts his perceptions'—and, we may add, since Plato would have expected readers to expect this—we must be especially wary when he claims to reveal the "inner" Socrates. Yet this does not mean that we must reject the content of the stories which he tells about Socrates. Plato's text encourages his readers to adopt a hermeneutic of suspicion towards Alcibiades' interpretation of Socrates, but not towards the veracity of the incidents that he recounts. For his intimacy with Socrates would lead the reader to expect him to know stories about Socrates which others do not, just as his flaws give reason to expect that he will misinterpret them.

According to Alcibiades, Socrates presents himself as being erotically affected by beautiful youth, and as ignorant. By feigning these outward appearances, he conceals his inner 'temperance' (Symp. 216d7): i.e. his contempt for physical beauty, wealth, and all other usual sources of honour (a contempt associated with a belief that the young men present are worth nothing), and his 'divine and golden and in every way beautiful and wonderful' inner images which constitute knowledge (Symp. 216e7–217a1, my translation). Notice, however, that erotic entanglement and ignorance are not the sum total of the outward appearances with which Alcibiades credits Socrates. Instead he goes on to credit him with temperance, courage and other virtues as exhibited in a sequence of remarkable stories to be reviewed in section IV below. The seduction scene apart, all the incidents that will be recounted would have been widely observed by those who served with Socrates in the army, if not by the sympoiaists whom Alcibiades remained.

4 Duff (1959: 222) discusses fourth-century lawsuits involving Alcibiades' son in which prosecutors and defendants argued over whether Alcibiades had been a would-be tyrant, includingLyias arguing in the affirmative and Socrates in the negative. This is indicative of how potent the figure of Alcibiades remained.

5 Nightingale 1993: 126; see also her comments on Alcibiades' bad character (p. 125). I am sympathetic to her argument that Socrates need not be either ignorant or wise, as Alcibiades' inner/outer dichotomy posits; he was rather a tertium quid, a philosopher who loves but lacks knowledge (p. 127). But for the reasons given in the text, her translation of eirênesomenos (Sym. 216e) as 'ironizing', and the concomitant centrality she gives to the notion of Socratic irony, is crucially flawed, even though she glosses the verb as 'wiful deception' and says that it expresses a flawed Alcibiadian interpretation of Socrates which Plato 'invites the reader' to reject (p. 120 n. 28).

6 What Gifford (2001: 38) says about characters such as Euthyphro and the characters of Republic I applies to Alcibiades as well. Plato has these characters, as well as Socrates himself, deliver lines which, while meant or taken in one sense by the self-ignorant interlocutor, serve the further function of exhibiting for intelligent readers of the dialogue the gulf that separates how things seem to that character and how they really are.

7 The 'divinity' of these images suffices to identify them as constituting knowledge. As Sheffield (2001: 197) observes, their 'divinity' and 'goldenness' also echoes Diotima's description of the Form of Beauty.
is regaling. They are as much a part of Socrates’ public persona as are erotic entanglement and ignorance.

According to Alcibiades, then, the outer shell of Socrates is actually complex. Part of it (erotic entanglement and ignorance) is feigned in order to conceal inner knowledge and virtue. But another, contradictory part of it manifests the putative inner virtues in actions where Socrates is perceived to act virtuously (hence, according to Alcibiades, to be acting on the basis of his hidden inner knowledge and virtues). Indeed, it is only this aspect of the outer shell that makes the diagnosis of hidden inner virtues and knowledge necessary at all. It is only if Alcibiades, his listeners, and Plato’s readers all perceive him as virtuous that they can be puzzled by the problem of how to explain this.8

Alcibiades’ explanation of the outer appearances of Socrates thus divides into two parts, corresponding to the two aspects of that outer shell. His outward manifestations of virtue are explained by his concealed inner virtues and knowledge; these are revealed in the stories which we will consider in section IV. Here, we are concerned with the other part of the shell: the profession of ignorance and the appearance of erotic interest in boys. How does Alcibiades explain this?

He is most often supposed to be accounting for Socrates’ outer appearance and action in terms of irony, perhaps playful irony. On such views, Socrates is using irony surreptitiously, so that when he professes his ignorance and denies any erotic interest in boys, he should not be taken to mean what he literally says. The irony explanation is based on the claim (or in some cases assumption) that the meaning of εἰρήνευμονε ἂν, which Alcibiades sums up the Silenus comparison, imports irony. In line with this explanation, for example, Nehamas and Woodruff (in Cooper 1997) translate 216e4–5 thus: ‘In public, I tell you, his whole life is one big game—a game of irony.’ However, as I have argued elsewhere,9 Alcibiades’ ascription of εἰρήνευμονε to Socrates cannot be understood to mean that Socrates is an illustrator who uses irony to announce his knowledge and temperance to the world.10 Rather, what Alcibiades would have

8 Rowe (1998: 206, n. to 215a5–222b7), suggests that scepticism about Alcibiades’ charge of Socratic ἄλλης should extend to Alcibiades’ claims about Socrates’ temperance, courage, and wisdom. I disagree, partly because the stories which will establish these are (except for the seduction scene) presented as public knowledge.

9 See Lane 2006, where this interpretation is derived from a general argument that everywhere else in Plato and Aristophanes εἰρήνευμονε and its cognates mean ‘concealing by feigning’, together with a detailed account of the Symposium showing that there is no reason to depart from the presumption that it has the same meaning in this text. This argument counters the many translators who have rendered εἰρήνευμονε as ‘irony’ in the Symposium, and those who have defended it, notably Vlastos (1991 [1987]) and Nehamas (1998: 46–69). See also Lane (forthcoming), for a more general discussion of ‘Socratic irony’.

10 The same is true of the other use of a word cognate with εἰρήνευμονε, when Alcibiades in recounting his failed attempt at seduction describes Socrates’ habitual manner as εἰρήνευμονε (Sympl. 218d6–7). This scene reveals just how systematically Alcibiades misunderstands Socrates, giving us further grounds to suspect that his interpretation of Socrates may be more generally

the symposiums believe is that Socrates conceals his knowledge and virtue by feigning ignorance and intemperance. So I would translate an expanded version of the same passage thus:

He [Socrates] believes all these possessions to be worth nothing and us to be nothing. I tell you; he spends his whole life in concealing [this] by feigning [in the ways described above, professing ignorance and denying erotic interest in boys], including toying with his fellow men. (216e2–5)11

If εἰρήνευμονε means here, as everywhere else in Plato, ‘concealing by feigning’, its ascription to Socrates imparts exactly the same structure of an external appearance concealing inner attributes as does the Silenus statue image. In using a version of this term twice, all that Alcibiades is saying is that Socrates is concealing his inner knowledge by feigning ignorance, and his inner temperance by feigning an erotic pursuit of boys. In other words, instead of εἰρήνευμονε serving to explain the inner/outer contrast (as the ‘irony’ interpretation would have us believe), it merely reinforces it.

Once Alcibiades’ solution is stripped of the unfounded imputation of irony to Socrates, we are forced to recognize that it offers no explanation of Socrates’ purported concealment of his knowledge and virtue. Socrates is alleged to conceal these for no apparent reason, a concealment that Alcibiades has been able to pierce only by happenstance (216e7). At least on the ‘ironic’ interpretation we can see why Socrates should feign ignorance; it is merely a playful way of revealing something important about himself. But if, as philological considerations strongly suggest, Alcibiades is attributing to Socrates something for which he has no obvious motive, and which is in tension with the disavowal of wisdom which Socrates makes in the Apology (20e3, 21b)—and we add to this Alcibiades’ signalled unreliability, especially in philosophical matters, with which this section began—we can take the further step of doubting whether Alcibiades is actually right.

Maybe Socrates is not concealing his knowledge: rather, he should be taken seriously when he aves in the Apology that he has none to conceal. This thought would be strengthened if it could be supported by an alternative explanation of the Socratic problem summed up by Nehamas at the outset of this chapter.
Fortunately, there is such an alternative explanation of Socrates' apparent virtue, and it is presented in the voice of Socrates himself, in Republic VI.

III. THE NATURAL PHILOSOPHER IN REPUBLIC VI

The hydraulic model of disposition and its development

Now, we surely know that, when someone's desires (epithumiai) incline strongly for one thing, they are thereby weakened (asthenesterei) for others, just like a stream that has been partly diverted into another channel... then, when someone's desires flow towards learning and everything of that sort, he'd be concerned. I suppose, with the pleasures of the soul itself by itself, and he'd abandon (ekleisthein) those pleasures that come through the body—that is, if he's a true philosopher (philosophos). (Socrates to Glauccon, Resp. VI, 485d6–8, d10–e1)

In the passage from 485a4–487a8 on the nature of the philosophers (henceforth 'NP'), and explained most succinctly in that part of it quoted above, Socrates explains the nature of philosophers by comparing their desire to a flowing stream of water: a comparison which leads me to call this a hydraulic model of desire (485d7–8). Philosophers are lovers (erōsin) of learning (485b1), whose psychic energy flows so strongly into a loving pursuit of the truth (485d3) that it saps the flow into bodily desires. This does not originate in a reasoned judgement that bodily desires and experiences are unimportant, or in a deliberate policy of asceticism by which they are forcibly suppressed. It originates rather in a hydraulic redirection of psycho-physiological energy effected by the sheer power of the love of learning in the soul of the natural philosopher.

That hydraulic effect, drastically canalizing desire, in turn generates a disposition to temperance. Socrates follows the introduction of the hydraulic effect by asserting this summarily: 'surely such a person is temperate and (kai) not at all a money-lover' (485e3), adding that it is appropriate for others to concern themselves with and 'take seriously' (spoudazein, 484e5; cf. e4) the things for which money is needed, but not for the natural philosopher to do so. The kai explains the attribution of temperance by giving an important example (which we will see recurring in the Symposium), but does not exhaust that attribution, which two sentences before was established as pertaining generally to the 'pleasures that come through the body' (485d12). The natural philosopher will divert as much energy as possible away from bodily desires; the inference is that he or she will invest none at all in the greedy or lustful desires that would lead to what are generally judged to be the paradigmatically incontinent actions.

Because the attribution of temperance immediately follows the introduction of the hydraulic effect, which itself is offered to explain the fact that lovers of the pleasures of the soul abandon the pleasures of the body, it is described initially in dispositional terms. Natural philosophers, pulled by the love of learning, simply do not desire the pleasures of the body (note that this does not deny that they will have to meet the body's needs). But spoudazein is ambiguous between mere dispositional description and evaluative content. With their desires patterned as they naturally are, the natural philosophers become aware of the contrast between the pleasures of the soul that they pursue and those of the body; and they come to evaluate the former as matters that they care about in contrast with the latter. While Socrates presents the philosopher's nature as originating in sheer hydraulics, one kind of attraction (to the pleasures of the soul) which deprives another kind (to the pleasures of the body) of psychic energy, he soon begins to speak in terms which suggest an interplay between this original disposition and an evaluative attitude which arises from and confirms it.13 The natural philosophers become aware of what it is they love, and reflect on why, and although they do not yet have knowledge, they endorse the value of the truth which is the object of their loving pursuit (485c4).

It is this evaluative attitude to the value of the object, or content, of their love (i.e., truth and learning), which is primarily responsible for generating the next quality ascribed to the natural philosophers: that of courage. Socrates excludes slavishness and small-mindedness (analetheiria... smikrologia, 486a4–6) as incompatible with the striving for the whole, both divine and human, which characterizes the natural philosophers. He then asks rhetorically: 'And will a thinker high-minded enough (megetolupreptes, contrasting with smikrologia above) to study all time and all being consider human life to be something important?' (486a8–10). When Glauccon replies that this is impossible, Socrates infers that such a person will not consider death to be a terrible thing (486b1), and then concludes that a cowardly and slavish (analetheiria) nature will take no part in true philosophy (486b3–4). Here, the emphasis is placed not on the hydraulic canalizing of desire alone, but on the qualitative nature of what that desire seeks — although the natural philosopher does not yet have knowledge, she or he is attracted to a certain kind of knowledge: namely, knowledge of the whole, and with this as object, other objects pale by comparison. What pales in particular is the value of human life and the

13 Compare the identification in Woolf 2004: 98–110 and paiein of two different ways of interpreting the Phaedo: an 'ascetic' interpretation of the philosopher's practising of death (such as that given in Borock (2000 (1986)) and an 'evaluative' interpretation. Woolf argues that while both are present in the Phaedo, the bulk of the text favours the latter. The distinction is helpful for our analysis of Republic VI (which Woolf does not discuss), which is certainly not to be read as giving an ascetic account of forcible suppression of the desires of the natural philosophers. But nor does it content itself with a solely evaluative account: as we have seen, Republic VI explains the evolution of such evaluative attitudes in terms of an original dispositional genesis in the hydraulic model, and traces the interaction between them.

12 The Greek uses the masculine throughout NP, but as the possibility of philosopher-queens has already been vindicated in Book V, I will use gender-inclusive language for the philosophical natures discussed in book VI.
concomitant fear of death—and so there is no investment of energy in avoiding death.

The subsequent attribution of justice—strictly, the exclusion of injustice—is presented as a concomitant of the possessing of temperance and courage, and so as arising from a combination of dispositional and evaluative qualities. Socrates asks (again rhetorically) whether someone with the nature established so far—of not being money-loving, slavish, or cowardly; now adding to this list not being a boaster and being orderly (kosmios: a close ally of temperance)—could possibly become unreliable or unjust (adikos) (486b6–8). The natural philosophers will not be unjust, but their justice, such as it is, has no root or origin separate from their temperance and courage.

Temperance, courage, justice: it can be no accident that these are the qualities focused on in Passage NP, though they are joined in 486b–e by a range of qualities such as orderliness, reliability, quickness in learning, good memory, measuredness, and grace. Yet temperance is the only one to be named by the unequivocal invocation of the name of a virtue (the philosopher is by nature sophron, 485e3), while Socrates subsequently seems to backpedal from an attribution of the full virtues simpliciter to the natural philosopher by remarking that he (or she) will be ‘a friend and relative of truth, justice, courage, and temperance’ (philos te kai suggenes athekias, diakainas, andreas, sophrones, 487a4–5, my modification of the Grube–Reeve translation in Cooper (1997)).

Do the philosophers by nature possess the (full) virtues (apart from wisdom), or are these some other sort of qualities which sometimes go under the name of full virtue, and sometimes don’t? And if the latter, what sort of qualities are they?

So far in section III, I have taken care to use only terms used by Socrates in Passage NP. However, these terms are problematic, as Socrates slides between the names of the virtues and their intimation by exclusion of their opposites, and between the names of the virtues and the designation of these qualities as ‘friend and relative’ rather than identical to full virtues. While he does not introduce any consistent vocabulary to distinguish the qualities of the natural philosophers from the full virtues, I will now advert to the term introduced at the outset of this chapter—‘natural virtues’ and, considered collectively, ‘natural virtue’—in order to do so, using these terms for the qualities of temperance, not-cowardliness, and not-injustice which are ascribed to the natural philosophers in Passage NP. In short, I will say that the philosophers by nature possess the natural virtues of temperance, courage, and justice. This vocabulary can intimate the same closeness, and yet absence of identity, between the virtues of the natural philosophers and full virtues as does Socrates’ chosen device of semantic slippage. Natural virtues very often appear to be full virtues, because both are commonly manifest in similar actions; because they share a dispositional and evaluative preference for activities and pleasures of the soul over those of the body; and because the former are also a precondition for development of the latter. (Thus the relationship is stronger than a family resemblance, because the one is necessary to allow development of the other, and because they share an explicable underlying structure.) Whereas Socrates speaks of the ‘natural philosopher’ but not of the ‘natural virtues’, it is helpful to introduce the distinction between natural virtues and full virtues as terms of art, as all the points which Socrates makes can be consistently interpreted along the lines of that distinction. Moreover, it aligns with a distinction which he does draw at the end of NP, in making clear that his account therein has been carefully restricted to a consideration of the nature of philosophers before they have ‘reached maturity’ [literally, ‘been perfected’] in age and education’ (487a7–8).

This contrast between ‘nature’ and completion by ‘age and education’ evinces the ‘implicit distinction’ between two senses of the ‘nature of man (heton anthropou phain, 395b4)’ which Antony Hatzistavrou has identified in the Republic. The first sense, corresponding to Socrates’ use of the term ‘nature’ in NP, is that of ‘a cluster of a particular person’s natural capacities which are to be developed by a process of education’; the second, corresponding to Socrates’ contrasting reference to ‘completion’ by ‘age and education’, is that of ‘the developed personality of a particular person, i.e. basic character-traits this person has acquired after a process of education’. Socrates is thus in NP talking about ‘nature’ in the sense of natural qualities before they have been developed and perfected by education, without any corruption having set in. (The possibility

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15 Hatzistavrou (2006), who himself uses the distinction to argue that the philosopher-kings can be shown not to sacrifice their happiness when assuming the task of ruling so long as that happiness is correctly understood in relation to their nature in the latter sense of ‘developed personality’. On ‘nature’ (phýma) in ancient Greek culture, see more generally Lloyd 1996, the remark on its normative character (p. 6) and on its role in demarcating the sorts of explanations given by the phusikoi (p. 109).

16 That NP is explicitly and solely concerned with the first sense, that of the natural capacities which are to be developed by a process of education, is confirmed by a capacious back-reference in Book VII (535a–536b), when Socrates concludes his account of the education designed for the philosophers and returns to the question of to whom such education should be allotted. There he refers to the ‘sort of people we chose in our earlier selection of rulers’ (535a6–7), referring to those who are ‘the most stable, the most courageous, and as far as possible the most grateful’ (535a10–b1). In this list, courage and gratefulness come from NP (gratefulness as an additional aspect of the philosopher’s nature having been highlighted at 486d4–10), while the reference to maximum stability (peiratesis) picks up on a point which had been added at 503b–c, when Socrates made the point that it is rare to find people who combine the set of (in effect) NP qualities with the requisite ‘stability’ (versions of peirates, 503c, c5, c8). The Book VII passage goes on to class having a good memory and being keen on study and hard work (535c6–c8), which are also natural virtues from Passage NP (486c2–d3), as qualities specifically conducive to education. These Passage NP natural qualities conducive to education; they cannot therefore be its fruits. The relationship between Passage NP and 535a is noted by Arlam (1992: vol. ii) in his note to 485a–487a (NP), but he blur the issue by also adumbrating 375a–c (which makes a much more general claim about the need to combine gentleness and spiritedness) and 377b–391e (which

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14 Does ‘would [not] become’ (ate... geneiro, as a rhetorical question) signal that the virtue depends on further education? As argued below, our passage is expressly insulated from the effects of education. The phrase must therefore refer simply to how this quality will unfold in action.
of corruption arises, as we will see below, from a certain instability in the natural virtues, which is a further way in which they differ from full virtues.)

When a natural philosopher is well educated, she will continue to display the same basic pattern of acts and omissions in her action, the explanation of which will become overdetermined. She would anyway refrain due to hydraulic causes (as it were, the genetic reason for her refraining) but she is also now able to give a reasoned basis for refraining (as it were, a motivating reason, which when based on knowledge will also qualify as normative reason). Because such omissions, in particular, are the most striking feature of virtuous characters, natural philosophers will appear virtuous to most observers. It may be that at the margins, the acts and omissions of the natural philosopher and those of the knowledgeable and fully virtuous person will diverge. The lover of a beautiful boy in the *Phaedrus*, for example, who is moved by beauty to ascend toward philosophy, and shares the indifference of the natural philosopher to money, "forgets mother and brother and friends entirely" (*Phdr. 252a2–3*), while the fully virtuous person presumably would not. Yet they share significantly in disposition and evaluation despite the issue of knowledge which divides them. The natural philosopher who is not corrupted by education would never rob a bank, commit adultery, desecrate a temple, or commit any of the other paradigmatic wrongs of greed in which injustice and impenitence unite.* Natural philosophers would have no motive to abuse power.

The hydraulic model in the context of the Republic’s argument

It might seem a retrograde step in the Republic’s argumentative strategy to return to consideration of the philosophers’ nature before education, when that education has already been introduced (if not yet fully detailed). Why should Socrates not at this point be eager to expound further the philosopher with true knowledge introduced at the end of book V and the beginning (before NP) of book VI, rather than retreating temporarily to delineation of the natural philosopher who as yet lacks knowledge? In other words, why is the nature of the philosophers so carefully isolated here from their education?

Textually, the appeal to the nature of the philosopher picks up the second half [b] of the two-part procedure outlined at 474b3–c5 to justify the claim that philosophers must rule:

If we’re to escape from the people you mention [i.e., the people whom Glaucon imagines rushing to attack them on hearing the claim that philosophers should rule], I think [a] we need to define for them who the philosophers are that we dare to say must rule. And once that’s clear, [b] we should be able to defend ourselves [in claiming that philosophers must rule] by showing that the people we mean are fitted by nature both to engage in philosophy and to rule in a city, while the rest are naturally fitted to leave philosophy alone and follow their leader.

[a] is established by introducing the philosophers as full knowers at end of book V and that part of book VI preceding NP. [a], in other words, focuses on the philosophers’ knowledge. But [b]— their fitness by nature both to doing philosophy and to ruling—is explained in NP by an appeal to the moral character of those naturally attracted to philosophizing. The reasoning in NP runs thus:

(i) Natural philosophers are those who love to do philosophy.

(ii) Loving to do philosophy is what fits people for doing philosophy, because:

(iii) loving to do philosophy subjects them to the hydraulic effect, from which arise the natural virtues of:

(a) temperance, primarily as a disposition;

(b) courage, primarily as an evaluative judgment following on the causes and establishment of the temperate disposition;

(c) justice, as a result of (a) and (b); and

(d) other good moral and temperamental qualities, also arising from the same sources.

(iv) These natural virtues fit them for doing philosophy by ensuring that they will pursue it wholeheartedly and undistractedly.

(v) These natural virtues also fit them morally for ruling others by ensuring that they will not have any psychological temptation to abuse their power.

Thus (i)—(v) collectively establish [b]. And in an extended passage which we may call ‘NP-max’ (beginning with NP and extending through 497b), we find two conjoined implications of [b]:

(vi) Natural virtue explains the fact that most of those who now study philosophy become corrupted, for it is due to the strength of their natural virtues that in a corrupt society they become corrupted (example, implicit: Alcibiades);

(vii) It also explains why philosophy is now useless, because it is either

(a) studied by those who are not naturally fitted to study it; or

(b) studied by natural philosophers who, each for a peculiar cause, are unable to be useful to existing cities (examples named: Theagenses and Socrates, together with other unnamed hypothetical types).
Finally, outside the scope of NP-max, we make the final inference linking [a] and [b]:

(viii) The other condition for rule—having knowledge [a]—will also be a result of their being fitted for philosophy, since it is only through pursuing philosophy that one can gain the requisite knowledge (the education of the philosophers in the remainder of book VI, after NP-max).

So, in summary:

(ix) the natural philosophers are naturally fitted for philosophy, and are therefore—through their hydraulically generated natural virtues,—also morally fitted for ruling; they are also those who can become epistemically fitted for ruling, by gaining knowledge through philosophy.

As we have already considered (i)–(v), and (viii) is outside the scope of this chapter, it remains to examine (vi) and (vii). At the end of NP, Adeimantus objects:

someone might well say now that he’s unable to oppose you as you ask each of your questions [i.e. the questions that have been asked in NP], yet he sees that of all those who take up philosophy... the greatest number become cranks, not to say completely vicious, while those who seem completely decent are rendered useless to the city because of the studies you recommend. (487c4–d5)

It is well known that to answer this objection, Socrates introduces the ship of state simile. Less noticed is that the moral he draws from the simile, including the attempt to explain why most natural philosophers become either vicious or useless, harks back to NP: let’s begin our dialogue by reminding ourselves of the point at which we began to discuss the nature that someone must have if he is to become a fine and good person (489c4–490a1), a nature which is ‘completely contrary to the opinions currently held about him’ (490a5–6). Socrates will conclude that the ‘shame’ and ‘reproaches’ which are currently brought against philosophy (495c3–4) are the result of its being pursued by those who are naturally unfitted to do so, and who begot ‘sophistries’ rather than ‘true wisdom’ when they do pursue it (496a7–9). The focus on [b] now serves to explain the current corruption of philosophy by its unsuitable adherents, as well as to justify the claim that it should instead be restricted to the province of the naturally suited (because naturally philosophical) few.

Socrates then illustrates each of these implications—the corruption which has made most natural philosophers vicious, and the causes which make the rest useless, in existing cities—by appealing to recognizable existing types of people

in each case. That is, he gives an explanation of the likes of Alcibiades (a paradigm of corruption), and then gives an explanation of the likes of Socrates himself (a paradigm of civic uselessness to Athens as it now is). As for Alcibiades: the description of someone with a philosophical nature, born in a large city, who is ‘rich and well-born, in addition to being tall and good-looking’, who becomes filled with ‘impossible ambitions... empty pride and vain display’ (494c–d) has long been recognized as evoking if not naming Alcibiades. Socrates argues here that it is those with philosophical natures who are most prone to the fullest corruption. This is because the natural virtues themselves—although initially generated by the love of knowledge, which imparts a high-mindedness and disdain for petty material desires—may as character traits pull against the tendency to philosophize.

Specifically, Socrates contends that the natural virtues such as ‘courage, temperance, and the other things we mentioned [e.g. in Passage NP]’ (491b9–10) themselves ‘tend to corrupt the soul... and... drag it away from philosophy’ (Rep. 491b8–9). The high-mindedness, vigour, and even self-discipline which they impart to their possessor make him liable to attract other forms of gratification (e.g., political success) and in turn to become attracted by them. For this argument to work, the natural philosophers have to have possessed the natural virtues despite then undergoing a corruptive process which is the opposite of true education. And indeed, Alcibiades admits in the Symposium that when he hears Socrates speak, he is overwhelmed and transfixed, as if drunk, becoming more frenzied than the Corybants (Sym. 215d6–e4). Alcibiades is a natural philosopher in the sense that he is naturally and passionately moved by Socrates’ words. But having turned in the wrong direction, away from philosophy and toward the corrupting attractions of political leadership, he violently disrupts that natural affinity to philosophy: ‘I refuse to listen to him; I stop my ears and tear myself away from him’ (Sym. 216a6–7).

The Symposium gives us Alcibiades’ developed self-portrait of the sketch drawn in Republic VI: the corruption of a natural philosopher by his very natural virtues. The hydraulic effect in natural philosophers will initiate the formation of the natural virtues, but these may not continue to harmonize with or reinforce the passion for philosophy which initially generates them. The natural virtues are unstable in relation to philosophy, liable to become diverted from the love of learning and harnessed instead to other sources of more immediate and sensual satisfaction. The very vigour, tenacity, and high-mindedness which they involve can be turned and corrupted to serve unvirtuous, unphilosophical ends.

As for cases like those of Socrates, he includes himself and Theages among those ‘who spend their time on philosophy as of right’ (496b). For different reasons in each case, no one in the group of those born to date with philosophical

19 Admittedly, Socrates then briefly dilutes on the goal which such lovers of learning seek (attainment of knowledge), but his invocation of their virtues clearly recalls the terms in which the nature of the philosopher was described in NP ('[r]emember that courage, high-mindedness, ease in learning, and a good memory all belong to it; ', 490a9–10).

20 Although in the Apology Socrates articulates a way in which he is useful to Athens (serving as its gadfly), the criterion of usefulness in the Republic is focused on usefulness as ruler.
natures has actually persisted in seeking political power in cities as they now are (a process that inevitably leads to corruption: witness the likes of Alcibiades), and so each has been able to preserve his passion for philosophy uncorrupted. The message about avoiding politics in existing cities has long been recognized in this section of the text, which is part of NP-max. What has not been recognized is that, in including himself among the small group of natural philosophers, Socrates is also applying to himself the natural virtues listed earlier in Passage NP. Having identified himself as a natural philosopher, he is thereby also endowing himself with the natural virtues of temperance, courage, and justice, as well as the host of other qualities he had identified as qualities of the natural philosopher in NP. Now, as we saw above, Nehamas holds that Plato nowhere gives a solution to the problem of how Socrates can be virtuous while still lacking knowledge. But we have seen that in fact Plato does give a solution, by explaining Socrates' character in terms of natural virtue in Republic VI. And as we shall see in the next section, this explanation fits perfectly with the way in which Alcibiades describes Socrates' virtues in the stories of the Symposium.

We can go further. For the person with natural virtues is the only person able to set out on the road to full virtue. As Republic VI specifies, it is only someone with a philosophical nature—hence only someone who possesses the natural virtues—who is fitted to pursue a philosophical education. Thus one must have the natural virtues before being able to acquire the full, cognitively based virtues. This makes sense at a psychological level. By being undistracted by excessive physical desires, the natural philosopher clears crucial psychic space for the cultivation of reason. Without natural virtue, a person would lack the eros for knowledge that can guide him to knowledge of the Forms, and he would be assailed by strong bodily desires without yet having the knowledge and trained reasoning power to subdue them. Being a natural philosopher clears the soul of excessive desires and enables the soul to focus on the pursuit of knowledge before gaining the knowledge that could then tame the desires.

It remains true that, as John Cooper states, the Republic centers on the view that 'no one is just, strictly speaking, who does not have knowledge of what is best to do',21 Yet no one can gain such knowledge who is not a philosopher by nature, while being a philosopher by nature leads one to act and refrain from acting in distinctive ways (if not necessarily all the ways) in which fully just and virtuous people will also distinctively act and refrain. As a result, it is reasonable for Socrates to talk of natural philosophers as having (natural) virtues (just as Alcibiades' calling Socrates virtuous is accepted by the symposiasts without demur), even though he insists that they do not have the full virtue which would come with education. Were it not so, no philosophical rule could be established. For it is only the natural philosopher who can escape the vicious circle of needing someone else (a philosopher-ruler) to tame one's desires for one, and so who would be available to establish a virtuous circle of philosophical rule if the other conditions for doing so (including gaining full knowledge, and overcoming their natural reluctance to rule) were met.

IV. ALCIBIADES' STORIES OF SOCRATIC VIRTUES:
AN ALTERNATIVE READING

We return now to the Symposium, to see whether the Republic's account of natural virtues can illuminate the problem of Socrates portrayed by Alcibiades there, albeit being contrary to Alcibiades' own flawed solution to that problem. Although Alcibiades initially calls Socrates' inner temperance hidden, he subsequently recounts stories of his virtues which have been manifest and (except for the seduction scene) widely observed by others. In these stories, beginning with the seduction scene and continuing through the accounts of Socrates on military campaign, Alcibiades switches from insisting that Socrates' virtues are hidden to insisting that they have been (in the military scenes) or can now be (in recounting the seduction scene) put on display for everyone to perceive.

Alcibiades glosses the stories as examples of Socratic virtues. He programmatically introduces the virtues as he sums up the seduction scene by saying that in its aftermath, he recognized Socrates to be an exemplar of temperance and courage (sóphrosune and andreia, Symp. 219d5). But the conventionality of this ascription of the virtues is undercut in two ways. First, because the ascription of temperance is mixed with the claim that it was justifiably to be resented: Alcibiades at once admires the temperance displayed by Socrates' resistance to seduction and claims that it displayed contempt and hubris which deserve to be judged by the symposiasts as if they were court jurors (Symp. 219e2–6).22 Second, because instead of completing an ascription of the four cardinal virtues, Alcibiades says that he would not have thought it possible to 'happen' to meet a man who 'happened' to go further toward phronësis and karteria (endurance) (219d6–7).23 This repition of the verb 'happen' (entuchtein) underscores the usual association of phronësis with predictability, explicability, and the absence of (and contrast with) chance, while the strange pairing of phronësis and karteria—as if endurance were the fourth cardinal virtue instead of justice, which Alcibiades

21 Cooper 1999 (1977), 140, emphasis original; he remarks likewise that 'one sees that Plato consistently restricts justice, as a virtue of individuals, to those who possess within themselves knowledge of what it is best to do and be' (p. 141, emphasis original). Cooper's essay seeks to comprehend the views of both book IV and books V–VII on the subject, but does not mention Passage NP.

22 The accusation that Socratic virtue is actually an expression of contempt is repeated in the tale of the soldier who found his indifference to the cold a sign of contempt for them (Alk kuriophronuntos, Symp. 220c1), though in that case Alcibiades seems to reject their accusation.

23 He then remarks on Socrates' indifference to money (Symp. 219e), parallel to the illustration of temperance in terms of money in Passage NP (Resp. 485c5; cf. 486b6) and the Phaedrus passage discussed above, n. 17.
never mentions—demonstrates that whatever Alcibiades may believe himself to be doing, he is not in fact describing Socrates in the orthodox terms of full virtue.

Indeed, neither phronēsis nor sōphrosunē nor andreia is mentioned by name in the rest of the stories. Where we would expect mention of temperance or sōphrosunē, Alcibiades uses the physiologically tinged karteria (for references, see below); where we would expect mention of andreia, Alcibiades uses the physiologically tinged adverb erōmenos (Symp. 221b6). These naturalistic Socratic virtues do not, as named or portrayed in the stories, appear to be full knowledge-based virtues. Rather, they are depicted in terms which closely resemble the natural virtues delineated in Republic Passage NP.

Karteria in verbal form plays a striking role in the first three post-seduction-scene examples of Socratic temperance, featuring in Socrates’ unusual ability to withstand hunger (219e8–220a1), cold (220a6–c1), exhaustion and immobility (220c1–d4). Alcibiades emphasizes the exceptional ways in which Socratic karteria is displayed: he stood up to hunger better than anyone, yet could also enjoy a feast better than anyone; he could drink anyone under the table, but never become drunk; he walked barefoot on winter ice with only a light cloak. The karteria actions are never described as being based on the giving of reasons based on knowledge; indeed, it’s hard to see how reasoned decision could prevent one from becoming intoxicated upon drinking, or from feeling cold when walking barefoot on ice. Socratic temperance does not arise—as would a full virtue—from a cognitive judgement in which reason is deliberately governing desire. Rather, it arises—as would a natural virtue—from a hydraulic absorption of energy which is continuous between psychic and physiological. Socrates’ immunity to erection, despite physical stimulus, in the seduction scene, is continuous with his immunity to intoxication, despite the effects of drink, while on campaign (and again at the symposium of the eponymous dialogue itself), and with his immunity to fatigue, as we shall shortly see. His failure to display these physiological responses demonstrates the extent to which his energy has been diverted away from investment in normal bodily desires and responses.

We tend to consider moral virtue as distinct from any physiological responses. But for the Greeks, sōphrosunē was at its core about the control of physical pains and pleasures; and karteria functions here the same way, except that it stresses instinctive physiological hardihood in place of reasoned judgement. So it cannot be right to describe Alcibiades’ Socrates as ‘a picture of complete (and unnerving) rational control;’ the emphasis here is on physiological reactions, in which no work is done by the mention of phronēsis and its associated inner/outer split in the earlier part of Alcibiades’ speech. Not only does the hydraulic pull overwhelm the attraction of other desires, it even overwhelms the physiological effects of drink, overeating, and (we will now see) sleep deprivation. That physiological hardihood is not merely a quirk of physique. Instead, as the most important story of Socratic karteria shows, it is the result of a hydraulic attraction to philosophy. In that story, Alcibiades recounts an episode of philosophical absorption which led Socrates to stand motionless and sleepless, from dawn to dawn. (It is implied that he then went off to spend an ordinary twelve-or-so-hour day before finally sleeping, just as will happen at the end of the Symposium itself, when after a sleepless night Socrates goes about his ordinary business.) This story is framed by reference to karteria by means of a quotation from the Odyssey (iv. 242). Whereas in the earlier stories we saw only indifference to pain and pleasure, here for the first time we hear of a positive desire acted upon by Socrates. It is because he was visibly absorbed in thinking (Alcibiades calls it amēmos; the other soldiers recognized it as phronētikon) that he was indifferent to the ordinary need for movement and for sleep, and to all the other cares and objects which he might otherwise have pursued that day. In short, although Alcibiades does not call it philosophy, it is Socrates’ philosophical nature—his overpowering desire to search for knowledge—which in this case explains his karteria (perceived also as his temperance) as a natural virtue. In this story, it is the commitment to doing philosophy which itself succeeds in enfeebling his ordinary physical needs and desires, in both dispositional and evaluative ways: they are ‘weakened’ (Resp. 485d7) in that they are hydraulically starved, and partly independently, partly as a result, in that they do not appear to him compelling or important. Dominic Scott puts it well in speaking of the Symposium: it is ‘his absorption in philosophy which underlies his [i.e. Socrates’] indifference to physical pleasure or pain.’

When Alcibiades turns to what we normally regard as questions of Socrates’ courage—while studiously avoiding that word—we find that Socrates’ courage, as registered by Alcibiades, is a more conventional matter than his temperance. He exhibits it alongside and not incommensurably with the courage displayed by other brave men in battle. It is the extent and nature of his temperance that is truly remarkable about him (remember that it is temperance, not virtue

24 In the course of discussing the Phaedo, Woolf (2004: 105) offers an insightful brief account of Alcibiades’ portrait of Socrates (p. 105) which is broadly compatible with mine: ‘What is striking about Socrates is that he never indulged, or (contrary) was never exposed to material hardship, but that it seemed to have so little effect on him ... Rather than being immune or even especially abstemious, it seems best to read Socrates as fundamentally indifferent to his bodily pleasures and pains, in the sense of regarding neither as of great significance in his life. What matters is the quest for wisdom.’ However, Woolf emphasizes the evaluative over the dispositional in explaining this indifference, whereas the Symposium stories about Socrates stress his sheer psychological and physiological dispositions, an emphasis which accords with the origins of the hydraulic model in Republic VI.

25 As suggested by Rowe (1998, 211, n. to 220a5–6).

26 Scott 2000: 31, a point with which I agree, although my overall interpretation of the relationship between Alcibiades’ and Dioptia’s speeches diverges from his.
in general, which Alcibiades originally posits Socrates to be concealing inside himself: endother... siphro" (Syrp. 216d–7)). Saving Alcibiades' life at Potidea is not an unheard-of act for a warrior, though it is undoubtedly brave; the only characteristic Socratic touch here is his refusing an award for valour and urging that Alcibiades should have it, which is better described as temperance than courage. Similarly, what is striking in the retreat from Delium is not so much bravery as the fact that Socrates remains mindful, collected (emphrón, Symp. 221b1), more so even than the famous general Laches.

On the natural virtue model (but not on the standard virtue as knowledge model), as we saw in the previous section, this predominance of temperance over courage makes perfect sense. For courage, as we saw in our Republican passage, is an effect of what one loves, while temperance is an effect of the fact that one loves— it manifests directly the hydraulic reshaping of desire. The hydraulic effect generates temperance as the psychic core, in the sense of origin, of courage (and, though Alcibiades does not recount it, justice). That Socrates is, of all his virtues, most characteristically temperate, underscores the unconsciously intimated effects of the hydraulic model in Alcibiades’ speech. The love of knowledge is a better explanation for the nature of the Socratic virtues Alcibiades recounts than is his own attempt to explain them by imputing concealed knowledge to Socrates.

Alcibiades concludes these stories by asserting that Socrates is unique: ‘there is no man similar to him’ (221c4–5). How are we to understand this? For his part, Alcibiades characteristically muddies the waters in trying to explain his claim. First, he asserts that whereas Achilles was comparable to others such as Brasidas as a (great) warrior, and Pericles to others such as Nestor as a (great) orator, Socrates is not comparable to any other human being. Initially the point of this contrast would seem to be that Socrates has no identifiable or conventional role within the city. But Alcibiades then adds that the only viable comparison for Socrates is his own earlier comparison of him to the non-human Silenus and satyrs, a reference which implies that the point of the contrast is that Socrates has an inner/outer split, as do the Silenus figures, and a daimonic aspect, as do the satyrs. As in his initial outburst, Alcibiades here insists on seeing Socrates as unique in virtue of his inner/outer split, which explains his external virtues by reference to hidden internal virtue and knowledge. Socrates ‘is such an atypical

man (atopian), both in himself and in his arguments (logoi), that the attempt to search for a comparison either among people today or in the past would not come close’ (my translation, to emphasize the atypicality of his strangeness).

In contrast to Alcibiades’ emphasis on Socrates’ uniqueness and incomparability, Socrates in Republic VI (Passage NP) sees only the cause of his not having benefited the city as unique (that cause being his daimonion). On the more fundamental issue of his virtues, far from treating himself as incomparable or unique, we have seen that he includes himself in a small group of those with philosophical natures who manifest the natural virtues accordingly. Perhaps he is unusual in the strength and consistency of the hydraulic pull within him, and in the way that it permeates not only his psychological but also his physiological responses. But he is not unique in manifesting the hydraulic effect per se, as this is generated by his philosophical nature, a nature which he shares with those few other persons who are also natural philosophers. Neither is he unique in the natural virtues which originate in him as a hydraulic effect of that philosophical nature, though the forcefulness and consistency of his manifestation of those virtues may be unusual (and, since there are anyway not many natural philosophers around, may appear unique to many observers).

It is true, and important, that Socrates is the only natural philosopher who made a powerful impression on the Athenians, at least as Plato reports matters. In this sense, absent a full philosopher whom Plato does not claim that we have ever seen, Socrates’ example as a natural philosopher is the best and only example of virtue (albeit natural) which he and his contemporaries knew (hence the closing remark of Phaedo 118a16–17 that Socrates appeared to his friends as ‘of all those we have known the best, and also the wisest and most just’). Yet the Republic insists that Socrates is in principle (and in reality) comparable to other natural philosophers, as indeed it must if it is to have a pool of natural philosophers potentially available to rule. Alcibiades’ absorption in Socrates blinds him to the fact that what he admires in Socrates is not fundamentally unique to Socrates at all. (One might say that Alcibiades has gotten nowhere on Diorita’s ascent.) The Republic is, inter alia, Socrates’ rebuke to Alcibiades, for insisting so much on his uniqueness as to fail to understand its generic cause in his philosophical nature.

V. CONCLUSION

The Socrates described in the Symposium by Alcibiades is, when the latter’s biases and incomprehensions are discounted, compatible with the Socrates who describes himself as a natural philosopher in Republic VI. Moreover, we have seen that natural virtue engendered by the love of knowledge explains the virtues as possessed by the recognizably most virtuous (though not fully virtuous) person in Athens. That person, Plato’s Socrates, while displaying the natural virtues
to a degree which led his contemporaries to take him to be fully virtuous, nevertheless insists continuously from ‘early’ to ‘middle’ dialogues that only full virtue resting on knowledge could constitute either morality or happiness. For example, his argument in the Phaedo that only philosophers are courageous and temperate—which begins by contrasting lovers of wisdom with lovers of the body, wealth, and honours in terms seemingly congenial to the hydraulic model (Phad. 6b1–2)—ends by insisting that only wisdom makes the virtues true virtue (Phad. 6b1–3). But there is no inconsistency here, so long as we distinguish between natural virtues and true virtue, and recognize also that they fall on a continuum of which the latter is the teleological end.

On that continuum, the Phaedo is most interested in full virtue, and so would deny the names of courage and temperance to any but the philosophers (Phad. 6b1–6b4), while oscillating between explaining this as due to the philosophers’ being ‘lovers’ of knowledge (as in the passage just quoted) and as due to their actual possession of wisdom (e.g. Phad. 6b1–3). This emphasis on the possessing knowledge end of the spectrum reflects the Phaedo’s concern with the death of the philosopher who has pursued education and reflection throughout his life. By contrast, Passage NP of Republic VI emphasizes the loving knowledge end of the spectrum, reflecting its concern with the birth and growth of the philosopher, who begins as a natural philosopher before going on to be either educated properly or corrupted. Without, then, being able to make a wholesale break between them, we may still ask: what would full knowledge-based virtue add to natural virtue?

The answer is that it would add just what Plato’s Socrates (both ‘early’ and ‘middle’) insists it would: definition and understanding. For someone seeking a rational account of the world, natural virtue is unsatisfying: it rests on a psychophysical genetic or causal pull rather than on an explanation citing normative reasons. Knowledge explains why the natural virtues are virtues, making them not simply the result of innate dispositions or of evaluative beliefs, but grounded in an account of their value, of what makes them good, and so virtues indeed.³² Natural virtue, moreover, is incomplete from the standpoint of the cardinal virtues, for it cannot by definition include pòrēnēsis (pace Alcibiades’ introduction of this term as part of the inner/outer split which he claims to see in Socrates).

Nevertheless, accepting the transformative effects of definition and understanding, it does not follow that full virtue would result in wholly different actions, described extensionally, from natural virtue. While natural virtue may sometimes miss the mark, it will generate a cluster of temperance-driven actions which will be roughly coextensive with a cluster of the actions dictated by full virtue. And this is no accident. The person with full virtue must develop out of the natural philosopher, because only the latter will have the psychic space and energy to pursue knowledge. The higher value on the pleasures and objects of the soul, over those of the body, to which the natural philosopher initially dispositionally and then evaletically subscribes, will only be reinforced by the attainment of knowledge. And it is that preference for the soul, for truth and learning, over the bodily, which generates and eventually explains the philosopher’s consistent avoidance of the actions and attitudes most typical of intemperance, cowardice and injustice. Rooted in his or her temperance, the natural philosopher develops an evaluative attitude which supports the disposition to be courageous, and these qualities together mean that she or he will not act unjustly. This basic pattern of dispositions and evaluations will be reinforced by the attainment of knowledge, even if it is also corrected at the margins.

But we must take note of one thing that the person with full virtue can do, which the natural philosopher cannot do. This is to rule over other people. The hydraulic model of dispositions and its associated evaluative attitudes works only within one’s own soul, independently of whether one knows the good or not. To rule others, one needs knowledge of the good in order to prune their desires and shape their actions. Pruning must come from without, and so involve reasons or reason-based interventions to substitute for the absent hydraulic impulse in the soul of the person needing to be ruled. The hydraulic model and its development of the natural virtues served Socrates well in his own life, albeit leaving him intellectually dissatisfied and still seeking knowledge to attain full virtue. But those who are to become philosopher-rulers need to supplement and complete it with education leading to knowledge of the good.

Thus we see that in the Republic, Socrates is presented by Plato as the natural philosopher—he, or someone like him, would be the candidate for gaining full philosophical knowledge, but he does not yet possess it. And we see that the philosopher-rulers of the Republic will retain at their psychic core the hydraulic effects of the love of knowledge and its associated evaluative outlook, even when they have fully completed their education. Cicero remarks that Plato ‘says that they [the philosophers] are just because they are busy with the pursuit of truth and because they despise and count as naught that which most men eagerly seek and for which they are prone to do battle against each other to the death’ (Off. 1. 28). This diagnosis is strikingly akin to the account given in Republic VI of the natural philosophers. In offering this as an account of the Republic’s general argument, Cicero puts his finger on the indispensable role played by the nature of the philosopher in enabling him or her both to gain knowledge and to have the moral qualities necessary to rule.³³ Socrates was (naturally) virtuous.

³¹ This is part of a notoriously difficult sentence, for a plausibly anti-ascetic reading of which see Weiss 1987.

³² I am grateful to Amber Carpenter for helping me to clarify this point.

³³ Cicero’s further claim in this passage—that the philosophers would rule only by compulsion and so would fail to be just in so far as they did not voluntarily do what was right—is controversial, depending on the correct interpretation of why the philosophers rule, a question which has not been discussed here. But the point in the text holds independently.
even without a full philosophical education. Had he received one and become a philosopher-king, he would still have displayed the patterns of desire of a natural philosopher, even when possessing the full virtues and ability to rule of an educated one. Virtue as the love of knowledge explains both Plato's Socrates and the path from him to the philosopher-kings and -queens envisioned in the Republic.

REFERENCES


