

# The *Dokounta* of the Platonic Dialectician. On Plato's distinction between the insufficient “present discussion” and a satisfactory future one

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Timaios, the statesman and philosopher from Locri, has been talking about two right-angled triangles, the isosceles right-angled triangle and the scalene right-angled triangle. Now he continues: “This, then, we presume to be the originating principle (*archē*) of fire and of the other bodies. (...) Principles yet more ultimate than these (*tas d’eti toutōn archās anōthen*) are known to god and to any man he may hold dear” (*Tim.* 53 d 4–7, transl. Zeyl.)

Right from the start, the process of analyzing sensible reality with a view to its intelligible principles is subject to a limitation. But Timaios asserts that there are “principles yet more ultimate” than those he is about to make use of in his construction of the elements, and he knows that they are knowable: by god and by a certain type of mortal.

As readers, we might ask:

1. How can Timaios know that these higher principles are known to god and the man dear to him? Is he himself a god or dear to god? If the latter is the case, what would him entitle to such a claim?
2. What kind of strange behaviour is it to assert that there are “principles yet more ultimate” and at the same time not to explain what might be meant?

This reticence concerning the principles is not new in the *Timaeus*. Only a few pages before, at the beginning of the chapter on *ananke*, the Locrian philosopher has said: “For the present I cannot state “the principle” or “principles” of all things, or however else I think about them, for the simple reason that it is difficult to show clearly what my view is if I follow my present manner of exposition” (*Tim.* 48 c 2–6, transl. Zeyl)

Three points are remarkable in this passage:

1. Timaios leaves it open whether there is *one* principle or *more than one* principle of all things (*tēn peri hapantōn eite archēn eite archas* (c 3)).
2. This *archē* or these *archai* are not to be ‘said’ for the present. The text does not say: *to nyn ou zētēteon*. What is being rejected is not a search for the principle or the principles, but their communication. For Timaios has already a view about them: his *dokounta* (c 6).
3. Communicating the principle(s) is rejected only because of the difficulty of making one’s views clear (*dēlōsai ta dokounta*) “if I follow my present manner of exposition” (c 5).

So there is a difference between what the philosopher can communicate (i.e. his *dokounta*) and what the present manner of exposition allows to communicate.

This passage too about the non-communication of the principle or principles does not come either as a total surprise in the *Timaeus*. Anything that comes into being, so we read at the beginning of Timaios’s monologue, must of necessity come to be through a cause (*Tim.* 28 a 4–5, c 2–3). “Now to find the maker and father of this universe (*toude tou pantos*) is a difficult task, and when one has found him, to declare him to everyone is impossible” (*Tim.* 28 c 3–5, transl. Zeyl, modified).

The *poiētēs kai patēr* of the universe is here understood as *aition*, and no doubt this passage deals with the ultimate cause, i.e. the *archē*, just like the other two passages mentioned so far. The principle is referred to in the singular, which need not be in contradiction to the *archai* (plur.) in 48 c and 53 d. The cause which is at the same time *poiētēs* can mean only the *poioun aition*, i. e. the efficient cause or *causa efficiens*. If it is spoken of in the singular, nothing follows from that about the total number of the *archai*.

Here too, critical questions remain:

1. How can Timaios know that the maker and father, once he is found, cannot be communicated to everybody (*eis pantas*)? Does he know him already, if he can make such a strong claim about his (restricted) communicability?

2. If Timaios really knows him – why should he not be communicable to all?

From these three passages we get the impression that the philosopher from Locri seems to claim for himself a particular status as to the knowledge of the principles – he

is possibly himself ‘dear to god’, *theōi philos* – and that he does not think it would make sense to communicate to everybody certain insights he gained, i.e. his *dokounta*.

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Let us now turn to another dialectician-figure, the visitor or guest (*xenos*) from Elea. By his Athenian hosts he is required to report the views of the Parmenidean philosophers in Elea about the sophist, the statesman and the philosopher (*Sph.* 216 d 2–217 b 3). He knows these views well, having heard them in their entirety and having retained them in his memory (*diakēkoenai ge phēsin hikanōs kai ouk amnēmonein*, *Sph.* 217 b 7–8). He too says that his task is neither unimportant nor easy, but he is ready to fulfill it (b 1–3). The sophist and the statesman are discussed in one whole dialogue each. The philosopher appears unexpectedly in *Sophist* 253 b 8–254 b 4, where he is treated in less than two pages in modern print. Is that all that Plato has to say on this topic? Many interpreters think so, but some points speak against this view:

1. The dramatic fiction – as established in the frame dialogue at the beginning of the *Sophist* – makes the interlocutors (and thus also the reader) expect one whole dialogue for each of the three professions (*Sph.* 217 a 1–218 c 1; esp. 217 b 2).
2. The dramatic fiction outlined in the *Sophist* is corroborated at the beginning of the next dialogue, the *Politicus* (*Plt.* 257 a 1–c 4): The participants (and thus also the reader) continue to reckon with three separate dialogues.
3. The short passage *Sophist* 253 b 8–254 b 4 certainly contains important points concerning the method of dialectics, yet does not say much about the figure of the philosopher. Essential points that are missing include the turning around (*periagōgē*) of the whole soul, the necessity of extended mathematical studies, the idea of an ascent in rising steps (*epanabasmōis chrōmenon*, *Smp.* 211 c 3), the final goal of cognition, i.e. the *megiston mathēma*, becoming as like God as possible and the greatest possible happiness (*eudaimonia*) for man. It is clear that the guest from Elea would deliver, if he were to touch all these topics (with their philosophical background), another dialogue at least of the length of the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*.
4. What he actually says confirms this. “We’ll talk about the philosopher more clearly soon if we want to” (*Sph.* 254 b 3–4, transl. White, modified). “*Tacha episkepsometha saphesteron*” – that means that what has been said about the philosopher so far does not display the necessary philosophic *saphēneia* (which cannot be achieved in a few lines).
5. The Eleatic guest selects some of the highest genera (*megista genē*): “let’s choose some of the most important ones” (*proelomenoi tōn megistōn legomenōn (sc. eidōn) atta*; *Sph.* 254 c 3, transl. White). So he knows of further *megista eidē*.

For a complete picture of the philosopher one would request not a selection but a comprehensive exposition of his highest concepts.

6. By investigating the *koinōnia* of the *megista genē* selected we will not be able to grasp being and not being (*to te on kai mē on*) with all clarity (*pasēi saphēneiai*) (*Sph.* 254 c 5–6). What does it mean to grasp being and not being “with all clarity”? Obviously, the man from Elea has an idea what it would mean and does not explain it. Presumably what is meant is the dialectical procedure of tracing back all *onta* to the principles of being and non-being. In any case, he contrasts the philosophically more rewarding investigation, which would lead to “full clarity”, with the inadequate *tropos tēs nyn skepseōs* (*Sph.* 254 c 8), just as Timaios had done, when he spoke of the *parōn tropos tēs diexodou* (*Tim.* 48 c 5), with which it would be hard to make clear his *dokounta* on the *archai*.

The very same picture emerges from the way the Eleatic visitor leads the discussion in the *Politicus*.

1. How can we decide, asks Young Socrates, whether a given division of a concept hits upon a real *eidōs* or *idea* (*Plt.* 262 b 1, 7), or whether it just cuts off arbitrarily (*Plt.* 263 a 2–4) and without an *eidōs* (*eidōs chōris*, *Plt.* 262 b1) a part of the whole (a *meros* or *morion*, *Plt.* 262 a 8, 263 a 3)? No doubt this is, from the gnoseological point of view, the most important question of the method of *diairesis*. But the man from Elea postpones the treatment of this question “for another occasion” (*eis authis*, *Plt.* 263 b 1). For it is impossible in the present situation (*en tōi parestēkōti ta nyn*, *Plt.* 262 c 4) to set forth the difference at issue in a wholly satisfactory way (*dēlōsai mēden endeōs adynaton*, c 5). Again we encounter the opposition of the present occasion and a future one, which would take us further. But the dialogues nowhere realize these promised future occasions.
2. In another passage the Eleatic guest sets forth the difference between a relative and an absolute measure. It has to be shown that the more and the less must “become measurable not only in relation to each other but also in relation to the coming into being of what is in due measure” (*Plt.* 284 b 9–c 1, trans. Rowe; *to pleon kai elatton metrēta prosanankasteon gignesthai mē pros allēla monon alla kai pros tēn tou metriou genesin*). Young Socrates wants this to be shown right now (*nyn*), but the Eleatic philosopher refuses to do so: it would be even more work (*pleon ergon*) than it was to show that non-being exists in the *Sophist* (*Plt.* 284 c 4, with b 7–8). But what has been said now will be necessary for the demonstration concerning the exact itself: *hōs pote deēsai tou nyn lechthentos pros tēn peri auto takribes apodeixin*, *Plt.* 284 d 1–2. Again the opposition of a future investigation (*pote deēsei*) and the present one (*ta nyn*, d 2), which cannot yield the decisive argument. But what is “the exact itself”? *Panton gar akribestaton metron tagathon estin*. This is a verbatim quotation of Syrianus (in his commentary on the *Metaphysics*) from Aristotle’s lost *Politikos* (Ar. fr. 79 Rose<sup>3</sup> = Ar. *Politicus* fr. 2 Ross). That this coincides perfectly with *Republic* 504 c 1–4 – nothing imperfect is the measure of anything, i.e. only the Good itself, the only thing *teleion*, is the abso-

lute measure – needs no further demonstration. Needless to say, the *peri auto to akribes apodeixis* is not to be found in the dialogues.

Timaios of Locri and the philosopher from Elea, two figures in Plato's dramatic fiction, let their interlocutors (and thereby also the reader) feel clearly that they could say more, and further more important things on the topic they are discussing than they actually do. They both state firmly, that a sufficient 'making evident' or 'making clear' (*dēlōsai*, *Tim.* 48 c 5, *Plt.* 262 c 5) of their views is presently (*nyn*) not possible because of the *parōn tropos tou diexodou* (*Tim.* 48 c 5) or the *tropos tēs nyn skepseōs* (*Sph.* 254 c 8). If this were not the case, they would talk about the *eti toutōn archas anōthen*, i.e. the 'higher principles' of the things under discussion – something that is expressed by Timaios with the greatest possible explicitness, whereas the Eleatic guest chooses to paraphrase what he means. Timaios does not promise anything for future occasions. The Eleatic philosopher announces a third dialogue (after the *Sophist* and the *Politicus*) on the philosopher. But this dialogue *Philosophos* remained unwritten.

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Let us look briefly at two further dialectician-figures. Parmenides and Zeno smile kindly as Socrates – here portrayed as a very young man – expounds his own theory of ideas existing by themselves (*meidian hōs agamenous ton Sokratē*, *Prm.* 130 a 6–7). Then Parmenides shows him in all kindness that he is unable to defend his theory against any serious objections (*Parm.* 130 b–135 b). Yet without the ideas philosophy is not possible, says Parmenides – Socrates has begun to define ideas too early, namely before he has been trained (*prin gymnasthēnai*, *Prm.* 135 c 8). Socrates remarks critically that the programme for exercising or training (*gymnasia*, *Prm.* 136 a 4–5) outlined by Parmenides implies an immense amount of study and work (*amēchanon (...) pragmateian*, *Prm.* 136 b 6), and asks him to go through just one hypothesis. Zeno supports Socrates's request. If we were a larger group, he says, it would not be proper to ask him; for it is not fitting to expound these things in the presence of many, especially for somebody of Parmenides' age. For the multitude does not know that it is impossible to hit upon the truth and to gain insight "without this comprehensive and circuitous treatment" (trans. Gill & Ryan) (*Prm.* 136 d 6–e 3). Obviously, for Zeno it is possible *entychonta tōi alēthēi noun schein*, though a *dia panton diexodos*, a going through all concepts and problems, is necessary. Parmenides himself had expressed the same view in stronger words: whatever you hypothesize as being or as not being, it is necessary to investigate all consequences, the consequences for the relationship of a thing both to itself as to all other things, "if you want, having been trained to perfection, to get an exact view of the truth" (*Prm.* 136 b 7–c 5). It should be clear that according to this concept of philosophy the 'going through everything', *hē dia pantōn diexodos* – and 'everything' must be taken literally, if we follow Parmenides' description of his programme – is achievable, and

that there is a *teleōs gymnasthēnai*, at the end of which a full view of the truth becomes possible.

Aren't these two thinkers from Elea, Parmenides and Zeno, promising a bit too much? What if a full view of truth, a *kyriōs dioran to alēthes*, is not achievable for humans? If Parmenides were convinced that there is no such thing as a full recognition of the truth for humans, his offer to give a *gymnasia* (which allegedly would lead, some time, to the truth) would be mere cynicism. If Plato himself believes that the goal is achievable in the sense expounded by his fictitious interlocutor Parmenides, he would be giving a portrait of a dialectician as he should be. If, however, Plato believes that the goal envisaged by Parmenides is unrealizable, what then is the point of his exposition? A *historical* portrait? A mere satire? Is he talking of pseudo-philosophers, who fatally misjudge the cognitive capabilities of mankind?

Or is he talking of a philosophical goal achievable only by life-long dialectical investigation, but never in a (written) dialogue, no matter how long it may be?

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Some interpreters think that Socrates is the only genuine Platonic dialectician. Before we have a look at the way he treats his interlocutors in the *Republic*, it will be useful to see what Socrates himself, i.e. the Platonic figure 'Socrates', has to say about the correct behaviour of the dialectician in a discussion. The most important points are to be found in the *Phaedrus*.

Generally speaking, it is essential for any art (*technē*) that the one who practises it knows to whom, when and up to which point he has to apply the techniques of his art (*Phdr.* 268 b 7). This means for the philosophical art of rhetoric that the philosophical speaker (1) must know the truth about the things he is going to talk about, that he (2) must have knowledge of the souls and must be able to judge correctly the nature (*physis*) of the addressee or addressees, that he (3) must know which kind of speech (*logos*) is fitting for which *physis*, and that he (4) must recognize when he should speak and when he should not (*Phdr.* 271 c 10–272 b 2, 277 b 5–c 6; *proslabonti kairous tou pote lekteen kai epischepton*, *Phdr.* 272 a 4). Socrates says explicitly that these requirements are valid for speaking, teaching and writing (*Phdr.* 272 b 1).

Do Socrates as a partner in dialogue and Plato as author of writings satisfy these requirements?

Let us take first *Republic* 506 d 8–e 3: "But, you blessed men, let's leave aside for the time being what the good itself is – for it looks to me as though it's out of range of our present thrust to attain now the opinion I hold about it" (trans. Bloom, modified in e 2–3).

This much is clear: Socrates does have an opinion (*to dokoun emoi*) on the *ti estin* of the Good, but he does not communicate it. The *parousa hormē*, the 'present thrust' (Bloom) or 'the discussion we are now started on' (Grube) is not apt to lead us as far as

that. Instead of his view on the *ti estin* of the Good Socrates offers the simile of the sun, the last sentence of which – the Good is beyond being in rank and power (*R.* 509 b 9) – causes astonishment with Glaucon: “*Apollon, daimonias hyperbolēs*” (c 1–2) is all he can say. Socrates’s answer is that it is Glaucon’s fault, since he has compelled him to tell his opinions about it (c 3–4). So did Socrates nevertheless tell his *dokounta* about the Good after all? Yes, he did, but only a part of them and in any case not his *dokoun* on the *ti estin*. Even the simile of the sun leaves a lot aside: “But of course”, I said, “I am leaving out a throng of things.” “Well”, he said, “don’t leave even the slightest thing aside.” “I suppose I will leave out quite a bit”, I said. “But all the same, insofar as it’s possible at present, I’ll not leave anything out willingly” (*R.* 509 c 7–10, transl. Bloom). “*sychna apoleipō*” and “*poly*” are clear enough. Only what is possible at present will be said in full (c 9–10). The limitation expressed by *en tōi paronti* takes up the earlier one concerning “our present thrust”, the *parousa hormē* of 506 e 2.

What is Socrates doing here? *Sigāi pros hous dei*, he remains silent towards those to whom it is necessary to remain silent. According to the *Phaedrus*, this is precisely one of the abilities of the *logos* of the dialectician, which is *epistēmōn legein te kai sigān pros hous dei* (*Phdr.* 276 a 6–7). Obviously, Socrates is able to behave in the manner of a true dialectician. He knows the natures (*physeis*) of his friends Glaucon and Adeimantos and talks to them in a way fitting to their degree of understanding. He is able to recognize the *kairous tou pote lektoon kai epischeteon*, and when it comes to the question of the *ti estin* of the Good and to the request to give further explanations concerning the simile of the sun, he sees that this is the *kairos tou epechein*. So he puts a limit on the philosophical discussion he is engaged in.

He is forced to do that a second time in this dialogue, and this time his motives become even clearer. Glaucon asks for a sketch of the general character, the kinds and the ways of dialectics, to which request Socrates answers: “You will no longer be able to follow, my dear Glaucon, although there wouldn’t be any lack of eagerness on my part. But you would no longer be seeing an image of what we are saying, but rather the truth itself, at least as it looks to me” (*R.* 533 a 1–4, transl. Bloom). If Socrates were to fulfill Glaucon’s request, he would be going beyond a mere image (i.e. the image of the sun) and discussing the object of his talks itself (i.e. the Idea of the Good itself). Socrates could say more than he actually says.

Thus we have the same situation again: Socrates *does* have an opinion on the topic under discussion. But he holds it back. Why? He does not believe that Glaucon would understand him. Glaucon does not have the necessary preparation or training. What has not been prepared properly should not be communicated. The ‘Athenian’ in the *Laws* puts it thus: “So it would be a false description to call all these things ‘secret’ (*aporrhēta*), but it would be correct to call them ‘not communicable before the (right) time’ (*aporrhēta*), because, if communicated before the (right) time, they do not make clear anything of what is meant” (*Lg.* 968 e2–5). This is relevant for our passage: the sketch of dialectics required by Glaucon would be, for this one interlocutor (who stands for the reader of the written dialogue), an *aporrhēton*. But *aporrhēta* are not *aporrhēta*.

The Athenian will communicate and explain his educational programme at a future occasion: *hymín synkindyneusō tōi phrazein te kai exēgeisthai ta ge dedogmena emoi peri tēs paideias* (Lg. 969 a 1–2). So he does have *dedogmena emoi* on these things. Likewise, Socrates has *emoi dokounta* on the *megiston mathema*, and Timaios has *dokounta* on the *archē* or the *archai* (Tim. 48 c 6). But as these three dialecticians do not communicate their *dedogmena* or *dokounta*, it would be a correct description (in Plato's words: *orthōs an legoito*), if one would call them *ta ou kekoinōmena dokounta*, 'the not communicated views', or the *dokounta/dedogmena ta ou lechthenta*.

Now – if Plato undertakes to produce a written image (*eidolon*, Phdr. 276 a 9) of the oral discussions of these dialecticians, what happens to the *dedogmena ta ou lechthenta*? In writing, they must necessarily become *dokounta/dedogmena ou gegrammena*. Clearly, Plato cannot write down Socrates's opinion on the *ti estin* of the Good and on the kinds and ways of dialectics, if and as long as he makes his figure 'Socrates' say that he is not going to communicate them.

Now we can see that we do not even need Aristotle to answer the question whether unwritten teachings or doctrines existed in Plato's Academy. The dialogues themselves confront us with (fictitious) figures of dialecticians, who hold opinions on certain topics which remain unsaid in the dramatic framework of the dialogue and are therefore unwritten in the dialogue book which is the written presentation of the (fictitious) oral dialogue. And these opinions remain unwritten not by chance but totally on purpose.

It is precisely this that Aristotle says about their author. He uses a somewhat different wording, talking of *agrapha dogmata* (Phys. 209 b 14–15), which anybody who knows a little bit of ancient Greek takes as equivalent to *dedogmena/dokounta ou gegrammena*, which in turn is, as we have seen, an appropriate description of what we find in the *Republic*, the *Laws* or the *Timaeus*. (By the way, Aristotle does not speak of Plato's "so-called unwritten doctrines", since *legomena* in ancient Greek does not have the ironic and pejorative meaning that the expressions 'so-called', 'sogenannt', 'cosi detto', 'soi-disant', 'úgy nevezett', 'tak zwany', 'llamado (= pretendido)' 'sákalt' have in our modern languages.<sup>1</sup>)

Aristotle's evidence about the existence of Platonic *agrapha dogmata* can now be disposed of like a Wittgensteinian ladder, which was useful in the beginning but is not needed any more – the dialogues themselves bear witness to the correctness of Aristotle's information.

What philosophical concepts do the *dedogmena ta ou gegrammena* of Plato's dialecticians point to? They always point towards the 'higher principles', the *eti toutōn archas anōthen*, in the last resort to the *ultimate* principles of everything. Thus the two main

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<sup>1</sup> I've shown this, with ample use of examples taken from Aristotle and Plato, in Szlezák (1993). Translations of this article have been meanwhile published in English, Spanish, Danish, Rumanian and Polish (Szlezák 2010). Perhaps one day a majority of Platonists will realize that the standard translation of "*ta legomena agrapha dogmata*" as "the so-called unwritten doctrines" is linguistically not tenable. Aristotle speaks of "what is being called (Plato's) unwritten doctrines". Far from being a witness for the questionable credibility and worth of these views (*dogmata*), Aristotle's wording witnesses that they have been called (generally and objectively) "Plato's unwritten views".

skeptical doubts raised against the Platonic *agrapha dogmata* – apart from questioning their very existence –, namely doubts whether they could have formed a coherent body of arguments and whether they were philosophically relevant at all, are answered by one and the same assessment of the texts.

But as to the precise details of the *contents* of these *dokounta*, we have to revert to Aristotle, whom we have just dismissed as the main witness for the *existence* of the *agrapha*. For it is Aristotle who informs us:

- ◀ that Plato's philosophy worked not with one, but two *archai* (Timaios leaves the question open),
- ◀ that the higher principles above the triangles were line, point and number,
- ◀ that the 'exact itself' was the Good itself,
- ◀ that a complete analysis of all being and non-being and a comprehensive deduction of beings from the principles would have to make use of the concepts of the Hen and the Aoristos Dyas,
- ◀ that Platonic dialectics used both 'generalising' and 'elementarising' methods
- ◀ that the *ti estin* of the Good itself was for Plato the One itself.

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Socrates, Timaios of Locri and the Guest from Elea stop short of communicating their views about the principles. If they were forced into an *elenchus*, they could come out with concepts and theories of higher philosophical importance and power, i.e. with *timiōtera* (*Phdr.* 278 d 8).<sup>2</sup> But as in the dialogues the dialecticians are nowhere confronted with interlocutors who could 'force' them to reveal their *dokounta* about the ultimate foundation of their insights<sup>3</sup>, their *timiōtera* remain unsaid throughout. Of course it is the free decision of Plato as a dramatist to avoid in his writings such a dialogical confrontation which would lead the reader further up towards the *archai*. He could have made Socrates ask in *Timaeus* 53 d: "What precisely do you mean, dear Timaios, by the higher *archai* known to God and the man dear to God?", and he could have made Timaios give a detailed answer. It is important to see that Plato's free decision to avoid such exchanges is a direct consequence of his conviction that writing can communicate truth but insufficiently (*Phdr.* 276 c 9).

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<sup>2</sup> That the concept of *timiōtera* in Plato's criticism of writing applies to philosophical contents (not to the "activity" of leading a live dialectical conversation, as once believed by Vlastos (1963: 654)) is admitted nowadays even by explicitly anti-esoteric interpreters, e.g. by Kühn (1998: 26; Anm. 6: *timiōtera* means according to him "(das) Wissen von bestimmten Inhalten" or "gewußte Inhalte").

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Szlezák (1988: 99–116) (with additions also in: Gabriel & Schildknecht (1990: 40–61); Polish translation Szlezák (2005: 3–30).

The passages analyzed above where a Platonic dialectician refuses to reveal his ‘higher principles’ (his *eti anōthen archas*) show that holding back one’s *timiōtera* is a Platonic pattern, which occurs in many dialogues. For detailed philological and philosophical interpretations of the passages considered, with full attention given to the dramatic structure, the character drawing and the action of each dialogue, the space available for an article in a periodical is not sufficient – but the reader may be referred to existing interpretations of this kind.<sup>4</sup> The purpose of the short sketches given on the preceding pages was not to supersede my earlier interpretations, but rather to make the recurring pattern visible by concentrating on the essential features.

The very idea that Plato the writer should point in his writings to Plato the oral dialectician in the Academy is hard to swallow for all those who either deny the existence of an oral teaching in the Academy or try to play down its importance. And it is unacceptable to all those who believe the dialogues to be self-contained, philosophically autarchic works. Thus there was in the scholarly efforts of the last few years a growing tendency to explain away Plato’s written references to his own unwritten philosophy. To give a refutation of these efforts was not my goal in this article. Readers interested in it may consult some essays which will be published shortly before or contemporaneously with this article.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Szlezák (1985) and Szlezák (2004). The first of these volumes was translated into Italian (1992), both volumes into Portuguese (2009; 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Szlezák (2015: 271–284; 2015 or 2016a; 2015 or 2016b).

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**The Dokounta of the Platonic Dialectician. On Plato's distinction between the insufficient "present discussion" and a satisfactory future one**

It is a recurring pattern in Plato's dialogues that the dialectician leads the discussion to a certain point where he identifies further, more fundamental problems, on which he claims to have his own view (*to emoi dokoun*, vel sim.), which he does not communicate. Such passages are briefly analyzed from five dialogues (*Timaeus*, *Sophist*, *Politicus*, *Parmenides*, *Republic*). It is shown that this seemingly strange behaviour of the dialectician corresponds exactly to the way a philosopher should behave

according to the *Phaedrus*. The recurring cases of reticence of the leading figure in dialogue have to be understood as Plato's written reference to his own unwritten philosophy.

**KEY WORDS**

*agrapha dogmata*; unwritten views (*dokounta*); written and oral philosophy in Plato; deliberately left gaps in Plato; references to Plato's oral philosophy.