

*Socrates and Critias Debate the Technê Analogy
From 'Knowing Oneself' to 'the Knowledge of Itself'
(165c4–166e3)*

As might be expected, Socrates refuses to accept Critias' claim that temperance is knowing oneself for the reason that he believes himself to be ignorant about the topic (165b5–c1), and expresses the wish to consider that definition further in order to decide whether or not it seems acceptable (165c1–2).¹ At the very outset, then, Socrates distances himself from the notion of self-knowledge that Critias has in mind, whatever the latter may be. And he begins the investigation in typical fashion, by asking his interlocutor to clarify exactly what knowing oneself amounts to. To contribute to this task, Socrates will introduce one of the most familiar features of Plato's so-called Socratic dialogues, namely a set of analogies between virtue and *technê* or the *technai*, art or the arts. In the debate that will follow, he will use '*technê*' and '*epistêmê*' interchangeably² to refer to all sorts of first-order branches of expertise, including medicine, architecture, mathematics, geometry, and weaving.³ And assuming, as he often does in

¹ As in the *Laches* and the *Euthyphro*, so in the present instance, the search begins when one of the characters puts forward a definition of a virtue in the capacity of an expert, while Socrates denies having expertise regarding the virtue under discussion. Even though Critias does not explicitly state that he is an expert on *sôphrosynê*, his confidence regarding the temperance of his ward as well as his elaborate speech about the meaning of the Delphic inscription strongly suggest that he thinks of himself as one of the very few experts on the topic.

² Consider, e.g., the *Gorgias* (500b), where Socrates refers to medicine as a τέχνη, as compared to e.g. *Charm.* 165c, where he calls it an ἐπιστήμη. In the *Republic*, the one family of terms frequently substitutes for the other, especially in contexts involving the use of the art model for virtue: as a craftsman makes mistakes only insofar as he lacks ἐπιστήμη, so the strong ruler makes mistakes in pursuing his own interest only insofar as he lacks ἐπιστήμη (340e1–341a3). And like all other τέχνη (342c4–9) or ἐπιστήμῃ (342c11), the art or science of ruling looks after the good of the weaker, i.e. the rulers' subjects, and not the good of the stronger, i.e. the rulers themselves (342c11–12). In the *Statesman*, the Eleatic Stranger calls mathematics and other 'pure' sciences τέχνη (Plt. 258d; also *Rep.* 532c4 and elsewhere), whereas one might have expected them to be characterised as ἐπιστήμῃ. And while he initially labels the political art as an ἐπιστήμη (258b), he then classifies it as a τέχνη (258e, 259b). See also the next note.

³ As I mentioned (Chapter 1, 5 and note 8), I endorse the view that, although in many contexts Plato uses 'τέχνη', art, and ἐπιστήμη, science or (expert) knowledge, interchangeably (Roochnik 1996, 298–9; Woodruff 1992, 66), he does not consider them, strictly speaking, synonyms but treats the

other dialogues, that these forms of expertise are relevantly analogous to virtue (presently, *sôphrosynê*), he will attempt to draw certain implications concerning a particular aspect of *sôphrosynê*, namely what it is *of* and what it may be good *for*. And he will suggest that these implications also concern the people who possess *sôphrosynê* and are temperate. Nonetheless, for the first and only time in Plato's Socratic dialogues, Socrates' reliance on the *technê* analogy will be seriously challenged. Critias will deny that temperance is art-like in respect of its object and function, and eventually will appear to prevail: Socrates will back down and will assist Critias to fully articulate what he takes to be unique about temperance and submit it to dialectical scrutiny. At present, our aim will be to lay out in detail this methodological debate between the two interlocutors, highlight what is involved in their respective stances, and indicate what is at stake. To begin, it seems apposite to say a few things about the nature of the analogy and its philosophical importance.

I

While the Socratic dialogues are interspersed with analogies between the virtues and the *technai*, Socrates rarely suggests an argument in defence of the contention that virtue is a sort of *technê*.⁴ Rather, he usually appears to assume that the former is identical to or closely resembles the latter. And he often compares the possessor of virtue or of some particular virtue with an expert in the arts and sciences: a doctor, mathematician, geometer, architect, grammarian, and musical performer, but also a cobbler, weaver, carpenter, or some other lowly artisan. Typically, Socrates draws inferences about the virtuous person on the basis of features exhibited by first-order experts. For instance, he argues against Meletus that, as the horse-trainer is the only person who benefits horses while the many harm them, so he himself may be the only person who benefits the Athenians while the many

τέχνη-ἐπιστήμη relationship as a case of 'interchangeability by synecdoche' (Hulme Kozey 2018). While in many contexts (including the present one) the terms substitute for each other in virtue of their substantial semantic overlap, each term retains its own connotations and these two sets of connotations are not identical. One of the examples that Hulme Kozey discusses is found in *Rep.* I (332d2): there, justice is called a τέχνη analogous to medicine and cooking, presumably because the argument focuses on the notions of function and benefit. I suggest that something similar holds for the passage to be discussed in the present chapter, so long as the debate focuses on the object and function of each art. On the other hand, once the interlocutors agree that henceforth they will take temperance to be a form of knowledge that has the peculiarity of being oriented solely towards knowledge itself, they will consistently call temperance an ἐπιστήμη, not a τέχνη, for they will focus on the rational and cognitive connotations of the virtue.

⁴ Exceptions include *Prot.* 352a and *Men.* 86e–89a.

corrupt them (*Ap.* 24e1–25c4). Or he counters Thrasymachus' claim that the true ruler unfailingly operates in his own interest by arguing that, in fact, the true ruler acts like the experts in first-order arts: as doctors, sea-captains, horse-breeders, etc. direct their activities to the good of others, so the ruler, insofar as he is a ruler, seeks what is advantageous to his subjects rather than what is advantageous to himself (*Rep.* 340c–342e). There is vast disagreement about the nature and scope of such arguments and, generally, about what the craft model amounts to and what purpose it serves.⁵ But almost everyone agrees on this point: regardless of whether or to what extent the character Socrates is committed to the craft model in the so-called early dialogues of Plato, there comes a time when he subjects it to scrutiny, demonstrates its weaknesses, and abandons it altogether.⁶

Traditional readings frequently suggest the following outline. The early Socrates uses the *technê* model to elucidate the intellectualist thesis that virtue is a kind of knowledge and to lend support to a series of paradoxes related to that thesis: virtue or knowledge is sufficient for happiness, all error is due to ignorance, all desire is for the good, and weakness of the will is impossible. To achieve his goal, Socrates focuses on the intellectual and cognitive elements of *technê*⁷ to match his rationalistic conception of virtue. Namely, he suggests that, like every genuine expertise, virtue should be supposed to consist in the expert mastery of a body of knowledge that is governed by rules, uses a particular set of methods and tools, has

⁵ Scholars who believe that the Socrates of the so-called early Platonic dialogues seeks a model for moral knowledge patterned on the model of first-order *technai* include Gregory Vlastos, Terence Irwin, Paul Woodruff, Martha Nussbaum, Terry Penner, Rosamond Kent Sprague, and many others. However, they differ in their interpretations of what the Platonic Socrates takes a *technê* to be, and they also disagree as to whether Plato eventually abandons that model entirely or, alternatively, retains some variant of it in his middle or late works. Roochnik 1996, on the other hand, argues against all proponents of what he calls SAT (Standard Account of *Technê*), regardless of the differences between their positions. He contends that, in fact, the so-called early dialogues reject *technê* as a model of moral knowledge, in favour of the view that moral knowledge is non-technical knowledge. Here, I shall not discuss this matter in any general way. I shall focus exclusively on the *Charmides* and revisit the question of whether this dialogue does in fact reject the *technê* analogy, as it is commonly believed to do.

⁶ This assumption is shared by developmentalists and unitarians alike. See also the previous note.

⁷ This hypothesis readily explains Plato's interchangeable use of '*technê*' and '*epistêmê*'. According to Emily Hulme Kozey (see note 3 in this chapter), the synecdoche consists precisely in this: in virtue of the fact that *technê* and *epistêmê* overlap in part, i.e. in respect of their cognitive elements, the corresponding terms are frequently employed to substitute each other. Unlike synonyms, however, each of them has its own distinct set of connotations. The latter partially overlap but are not identical. Notably, '*technê*' preserves connotations related to manual work, whereas '*epistêmê*' has prominent connotations of a rule-governed, rationalised, and coherent body of beliefs constituting the cognitive part of an expertise. This fact will become especially important later, when the interlocutors will completely abandon the use of '*technê*' in favour of '*epistêmê*', which they will use to the end of the argument.

a distinctive function or work (*ergon*), and pursues in a systematic manner its own proprietary goal.⁸ Importantly, like every other *technê*, virtue is just the sort of knowledge susceptible to giving a *logos* – a rational explanation of its own practices. And because of the latter feature, one might expect that virtue, like every other *technê*, is transmissible from one person to another and can be taught.

Two further features of the *technê* analogy are significant. First, in the same way that every first-order *technê* is set over a distinct domain and governs whatever falls within it, virtue too must be set over a distinct if greatly extended sphere and must be taken to govern everything belonging to that sphere.⁹ In other words, just as medicine is *of* health, arithmetic *of* number, divination *of* foretelling the future, and carpentry *of* producing wooden artefacts, and these objects or subject-matters determine the function and goal of the corresponding forms of expertise and experts, so also virtue must be *of something* (*tinós*), i.e. it must govern a domain that determines the *ergon* of virtue and, consequently, of the virtuous agent. Second, in tandem with fifth-century attitudes towards the first-order arts and their products, Plato's Socrates underscores the beneficial character of the *technai* and the difference that they make to the preservation and quality of human life.¹⁰ And he repeatedly suggests that, likewise but much more so, insofar as virtue is an expertise directed towards a certain goal, its possession and achievement must be of the greatest benefit to us. Thus Plato's Socrates develops, many believe, a conception of virtue as the crowning achievement of human rationality and the essential component of the good life: virtue as an expertise whose distinct domain is the realm of value, whose function or work consists in the fulfilment of our peculiarly human capacities, and whose goal is nothing less than happiness for both the individual and society. Indeed, it seems plausible to infer that Plato's Socrates uses the *technê* analogy to pursue and reframe an aspiration initially expressed by the great sophists of the Classical era.¹¹ That is, he argues, in different dialogues and from different perspectives, that the pursuit of virtue coincides with the exercise of the true political art and that those devoting their lives to it are the only people fit to rule the state.

To complete this fairly traditional scenario of the trajectory of the *technê* model in Plato, we must turn to the dialogues that developmentalists and unitarians treat, for different reasons, as transitional. These dialogues are

⁸ The interrelations between the domain, object, *ergon* (function or work), and benefits of a *technê* or *epistêmê* will be clarified and investigated in the Argument from Benefit (see Chapter 11, *passim*).

⁹ This feature is rarely discussed in the secondary literature. A notable exception is Barney 2021.

¹⁰ See, for instance, Nussbaum 1986. ¹¹ See Barney 2021.

taken to show Socrates challenging central features of the *technê* analogy and drastically undermining the idea that virtue is relevantly art-like. The main reason given is that Plato gradually comes to acknowledge that human beings are motivated by non-rational as well as rational forces and that, therefore, virtue cannot be merely a matter of knowledge but also depends on natural inclination, training, and habit. Thus, it has been claimed that the arguments for and against the teachability of virtue in the *Protagoras* and the *Meno*, and the refutation of the hypothesis of a kingly art in the *Euthydemus*, mark Plato's decisive turn away from the Socratic craft analogy and towards his own substantive ethics.¹² The same conclusion has been drawn, with even greater confidence,¹³ with regard to the central argument of the *Charmides*. The reason lies in the passage that we shall now discuss: a rare instance of explicit and sustained criticism against a particular aspect of the analogy between the virtue of *sôphrosynê* and various branches of technical expertise. As mentioned, the almost unanimous consensus is that the criticisms exercised by Critias against Socrates' use of the *technê* model are successful¹⁴ and reveal Plato's readiness to shake off the spell of Socrates and open his own wings.¹⁵

While we must bear in mind that hypothesis, we shan't be able to fully assess its merits until we reach the end of the search. In this chapter, we shall take the first step towards that goal. We shall closely follow the moves that the two interlocutors make in debating the *technê* analogy and determine their respective dialectical positions at the end of this exchange.¹⁶ But, first, let me briefly explain why I believe that it is important to set the record straight regarding the stance of the *Charmides* vis-à-vis the analogy between virtue and the arts. Historically, this question bears on one's overall interpretation of the *Charmides* and its position in the Platonic corpus. If the *Charmides* is a transitional dialogue, it should be classified as such for the right reasons and not for the wrong ones. Exegetically, the

¹² The argument advanced by Jones 2013 against the standard reading of *Euthydemus* 279c4–282d3 implies, I believe, that Socrates modifies his attitude with regard to the *technê* analogy without, however, completely abandoning it.

¹³ J. I. Beare was perhaps the first to declare that the *Charmides* more than any other early dialogue of Plato distances itself from the Socratic idea that virtue is equivalent to *epistêmê* (see Beare 1914, 43, and also Tuckey 1951, 33 and n. 2).

¹⁴ See e.g. the account of Guthrie 1975, 168, and the reference of the latter to Stenzel 1940, 36.

¹⁵ According to unitarian accounts, the *Charmides* marks a point at which Plato judges it appropriate to represent Socrates as leaving behind the *technê* analogy and coming up with a new set of conceptual tools.

¹⁶ From now on, the threads of Plato's argument become ever more tightly interlaced. Every detail has philosophical significance. To facilitate the reader's task, I shall quote in full each passage under discussion.

widespread assumption that, in the passage to be discussed, Socrates abandons the *technê* analogy is largely responsible for the tendency of many scholars to interpret the elenchus occupying roughly the second half of the dialogue, and notably the Argument from Relatives, in a subversive manner: while the ostensible point of the latter is that there probably cannot be a science that, unlike all other sciences, is orientated solely towards itself, the examples that Socrates brings up in order to defend that contention do in fact undermine it. As I have indicated,¹⁷ I reject that reading because it misconstrues Socrates' own position, violates the principle of charity, and disregards the say-what-you-believe rule of the Socratic method. Therefore, in my view, there is strong motivation for us to reconsider whether it is true that the *Charmides* does imply or strongly suggest the rejection of the *technê* model of virtue.

Philosophically, the ethical intellectualism inherent in that model has, in fact, its own attractions. Not only does it highlight certain structural features of virtue as a sort of knowledge or understanding, but it can also have important implications for politics and society. However, the power and appeal of the *technê* model cannot be properly measured if we do not explore further the issue of what virtue as a *technê* might be really like. In the *Charmides*, Plato's Socrates makes some moves in that direction. He intimates that the *technê* of virtue, if one may call it that, is not merely a matter of cognitive mastery, but also entails that the virtuous people will dedicate themselves to the single-minded, disinterested, and life-long pursuit of their goal in much the same way as that in which the best experts endeavour to fulfil their respective tasks.¹⁸ If we consider virtue in such terms, we need to think about rationality and cognition, functions and norms, systematicity and method, success and failure, and the price-tags attached to each of them. Let us keep these reflections alive as we walk from this point onwards, together with Socrates and Critias, from one passage to another and from one argument to the next until we reach the end of the search.

2

For if in fact temperance is knowing something, then it is obvious that it would be a sort of knowledge or science and, moreover, a science of something. Or not? – Indeed it is, he replied, of oneself. – And isn't medicine the science of health? – Very much so. – So, I said, if you asked

¹⁷ Chapter I, 34–6, 38–40. ¹⁸ Barney 2021 develops this point.

me what use medicine is to us, being the science of health, and what work it achieves, I would answer that it achieves no small benefit. For it produces health, a fine work for us, if you are willing to accept as much. – I am. – And likewise, if you asked me what work is achieved by housebuilding, since it is the science of how to build, I would say houses. And the same holds for the other arts as well. Therefore you too, on behalf of temperance, since you claim that it is a science of oneself, should be able to tell us the answer, if asked ‘Critias, given that temperance is the science of oneself, what fine work worthy of the name does it achieve for us? Come, do tell us’.

(165c4–e2)

Even though Socrates calls temperance an *epistêmê*,¹⁹ the terms in which he argues belong unmistakably to the *technê* analogy. If temperance is knowing something, then it is an *epistêmê*. And if it is an *epistêmê*, like every other *epistêmê* or *technê* (*kai tôn allôn technôn*: 165d6), it will have a work or function (*ergon*) and a domain²⁰ distinct and different from itself.²¹ To put it a different way, assuming that temperance is a science and also that it is a relative, it follows that, like all the other sciences and arts, temperance too will be aliorelative: it will be *of* something – i.e., as Socrates seems to think, a correlative other than itself.²² Socrates takes it that what a science is *of* constitutes the object or subject-matter²³ of that science and determines its own domain and the benefit that it brings.²⁴ As medicine is *of health* and its beneficial function consists in making us healthy, so temperance must be *of something* other than itself and its beneficial work must be determined by reference to that *something*. On these grounds, Socrates now asks Critias what the proprietary object of temperance might be. The question is far more difficult than it might initially appear. For, according to Critias’ definition, temperance is knowing oneself, and the relation between the *epistêmê* responsible for the knowing and the thing known is tricky. Grammatically and

¹⁹ Here, the expertise of building is characterised as an *epistêmê*, whereas soon afterwards it will be a *technê* (165e7). On the suggestion that *epistêmê* and *technê* are used interchangeably by *synecdochê* and their use depends largely on their immediate context, i.e. the terms and notions surrounding them, see nn. 2 and 3 in this chapter. Given that the interlocutors never characterise the knowledge of oneself as a *technê* but always as an *epistêmê*, it is natural to expect that first-order forms of expertise mentioned in that context will be frequently (but not always) called *epistêmatai* as well. As we shall see, Critias’ notion of temperance as a strictly reflexive form of knowledge will always be called an *epistêmê* (not a *technê*), and it will be claimed to govern the other *epistêmatai* (not the other *technatai*). As mentioned, the interlocutors’ choice of terms appears determined by the fact that they focus on the predominantly intellectual and cognitive nature of this expertise.

²⁰ See note 8 in this chapter.

²¹ Note Socrates’ use of conditionals: he is appropriately cautious with regard to the identification of, generally, knowing something (*γινώσκειν*: 165c4) with having an *epistêmê* of something.

²² The object need not be a corresponding *relative*, but Plato seems to think that it is.

²³ A relevant distinction between object and subject-matter will be drawn later (165e3–166a2).

²⁴ Compare *Rep.* I 341c–342e, 346a–347a.

syntactically, the *epistêmê* under consideration appears to be aliorelative: the phrase ‘*epistêmê heautou*’ appears to imply that this *epistêmê* is of something distinct from itself, namely oneself. Philosophically, however, it would seem that the science doing the knowing and the object of knowledge occur in one and the same person: the temperate knower both is the subject of knowing himself/herself and constitutes the object of that capacity, or, on an alternative reading, it both engages in the activity of knowing himself/herself and constitutes the object of that activity.

Even so, Socrates contends that a distinction needs to be drawn between the science equivalent to temperance and what that science is of. An obvious move would be to claim that temperance is knowledge of the self. For although the self is a notoriously elusive item, it is arguably distinct from the *epistêmê* that knows it. Thus, in the terms of the *technê* analogy, as health is the correlative of medicine and buildings the correlative of the building art, so the self could be posited as the correlative of temperance.²⁵ It is important to note that Socrates has high expectations regarding the work of temperance and the benefits that it yields. Whatever its *ergon* is, he says that it must be ‘worthy of the name’ (165e2) – an expectation that Critias probably shares. At present, however, neither interlocutor gives us information about the sorts of benefits he may have in mind.

Critias responds to Socrates as follows:

But Socrates, he said, you are not conducting the enquiry in the right manner. For this science is not like the other sciences [*epistêmai*], nor indeed are the other sciences like each other. Yet you are conducting the investigation as if they were alike. For tell me, he said, what is the work [*ergon*] of the art [*technê*] of calculation or the art of geometry, comparable to the way a house is the work of the art of building, or a coat is the work of the art of weaving, or many other such works are those of many arts that one might be able to point to? Can you, in your turn, point out to me some work of that kind in those [two] cases? But you cannot. (165e3–166a2)

Dialectically, Critias’ move is squarely within the rules. For, as Aristotle would remark (*Top* VIII 157b34–6),²⁶ in his role as questioner Socrates has every right to demand that Critias should accept the inductive generalisation that every art and science has a distinct object, unless Critias can bring

²⁵ Already at this stage of the debate, the interlocutors appear to rely on a constitutive view of relatives and relations, including the sciences or arts and their relations to their respective proprietary objects. See Duncombe 2012a and 2020 *passim*.

²⁶ I am grateful to Paul Kalligas for drawing my attention to this passage. According to Aristotle’s analysis, when the answerer cannot adduce counterexamples against the questioner’s inductive generalisations, then the latter count as a dialectical proof.

some counterexample. And Critias does bring quite effective counterexamples: calculation and geometry are arts which do not have distinct products in the sense in which housebuilding and weaving do. Again, Critias is portrayed as having consummate dialectical skills that find no close parallel in any other character of Plato's Socratic dialogues other than Socrates himself.²⁷ Also, from an intuitive point of view, Critias' criticism seems eminently plausible.²⁸ Not all arts and sciences seem to be alike in respect of their function and outcome. The arts of building and weaving aim at the production of ontologically self-standing products, whereas the arts of mathematics and geometry do not have such an aim. Nonetheless, the latter do not for that reason qualify any less as arts or sciences. Critias suggests that temperance is more similar to mathematics and geometry than it is to building and weaving: like the former pair, but unlike the latter, it is not *of* something distinct and separate from itself, such as a cloak or a house. All the same, it qualifies as an expertise at least as much as the so-called productive arts do.

Up to this point, Critias' criticism of the *technê* analogy has a narrow focus. On the one hand, he takes Socrates' use of the *technê* analogy to suggest that temperance must produce some ontologically independent thing and retorts that not all arts and sciences aim at such things. On the other, he has given no indication as yet that he objects to what we may call the requirement of aliorelativity: the idea lying at the core of the *technê* analogy, that every art or science is related to a proprietary object distinct from the art or science itself. Nor does Critias yet challenge an assumption that Socrates builds into the *technê* analogy, namely that whatever benefit derives from the exercise of an art or science has to do with the aliorelative object of this latter. Because medicine has health as its own object, it is beneficial in just that regard. And because the art of weaving aims to produce cloth, it is profitable in exactly that respect. In sum, Critias' initial moves do not affect the art model at its core. Consider Socrates' answer:

What you say is true, I replied. But what I can point out to you is what thing, different from the science itself, each of these sciences is *of*. For instance, the science of calculation is presumably the science of the even and the odd, how they are quantitatively related to themselves and to each other. Is that right? – Of course, he said. – The odd and the even being different from the art of calculation itself? – How could they not be? – And again, the art of weighing is concerned with weighing heavier and lighter

²⁷ Regarding the mastery of dialectical rules, Protagoras is the only character comparable to Critias.

²⁸ See Guthrie 1975, 168–9.

weight, and the heavy and the light are different from the art of weighing itself. Do you agree? – I do. – Tell me, then, what is that of which temperance is a science and which is different from temperance itself? (166a3–b6)

Socrates is not concerned with the distinction that Critias introduced between productive and non-productive arts, for it is irrelevant to his point. Clearly, he intends the contention that every form of expertise has an object or governs a domain distinct from itself to be applicable to arts or sciences as different as medicine, housebuilding, weaving, arithmetic, measurement, dancing, boxing, and lyre-playing.²⁹ And his commitment to the *technê* model of virtue inclines him to infer that temperance too, if it is a kind of knowledge, must have, likewise, an object other than itself and extend over the domain determined by that object. Having thus clarified his meaning, Socrates puts his question to Critias again in clearer terms: assuming, on the grounds of the analogy with the first-order arts, that temperance is of something other than itself, what is this? It does not make any difference whether the latter is an ontologically independent product or a distinct subject-matter. What Socrates is asking Critias to do is identify what temperance is a science *of/in* terms that do not comprise reference to that science itself. The following reply by Critias provides the main textual basis for the virtually unanimous agreement that, here, Plato parts company with Socrates by denouncing the flaws of the *technê* model and by suggesting that it should be completely abandoned.

There it is, Socrates, he said. You have reached the real issue of the investigation, namely in what respect temperance differs from all the other sciences. But you are trying to find some similarity between it and them and that is not how things stand. Rather, while all the others are sciences of something other than themselves and not of themselves, this one alone is the science both of all the other sciences and of itself [*epistêmê autê heautês*]. And these matters are far from having escaped your attention. In fact, I believe that you are doing precisely what you just said that you were not doing. For you are trying to refute me, abandoning the topic that the argument is about. (166b7–c6)

At first glance, Critias appears to be on the right track when he contends that Socrates' methodological procedure is at odds with the purpose of the search. His argument is this: since they want to examine what temperance is,

²⁹ Contrast e.g. the view advanced by Nussbaum 1986 and her criticisms of Irwin 1977 (Nussbaum 1986, 73–4) and compare with the cautionary remarks by Vlastos 1978. My own approach is indebted to Vlastos 1978 and implies that Socrates' observation cuts across the distinction between productive and performative arts or other kinds of arts (notably, acquisitive).

they should focus on what is distinctive about it, not on what it shares in common with other sciences; but the *technê* model relies on commonalities, not differences between virtue and the first-order arts; hence, it impedes rather than advances the investigation underway. Worse, Critias appears to think that Socrates' misguided application of the *technê* model is deliberate on his part (166c3–4) and accuses him of intellectual dishonesty: even though Socrates knows that the art model is misleading in this context, he is using it merely in order to win the debate (166c4–6). Critias therefore steers the argument onto what he believes to be the right track, by specifying what he takes to be distinct about temperance in relation to all the other sciences or arts: 'while all the others are sciences of something other than themselves and not of themselves, this one alone is the science both of all the other sciences and of itself (*epistêmê autê heautês*)' (166c1–3).

In the important passage quoted immediately below, Socrates rejects summarily the accusation of contentiousness and explains why he wishes to pursue the investigation. He throws new light on the nature of the elenchus and on his conception of his own self-knowledge.

If my chief effort is to refute you, I said, how can you possibly think that I do it for any other reason than that for the sake of which I would also investigate what I am saying, i.e. the fear of inadvertently supposing at any time that I knew something while I didn't know it? And so this is what I am now doing: I am examining the argument first and foremost for my own sake, but perhaps also for the sake of my other companions. Or do you not think that the discovery of the nature of each being is a common good for almost all humans? (166c7–d7)

The first thing to note is Socrates' implicit admission that he sometimes thinks he knows something. But he also realises that he has to check again, and he wishes to continue the enquiry precisely because he fears that he might suppose that he knows (*eidēnai*: 166d2) something that he doesn't know. Furthermore, he makes the significant remark that he wishes to conduct an investigation primarily for his own sake, but also 'perhaps' (*isôs*: 166d4) for the sake of his friends. This confirms that, although Socratic cross-examinations are typically *ad hominem* and proceed on premises conceded by the interlocutor, they somehow benefit the questioner as well as the answerer: Socrates engages in them primarily in order to gain self-knowledge and only secondarily in order to help his interlocutor scrutinise his own beliefs. Presumably, the converse holds true of the interlocutor, if the latter is a right-thinking person. In this sense, the Socratic elenchus is genuinely a joint search: each of the two participants has something important to gain, even though, formally speaking,

the contention under scrutiny as well as the premises of the argument belong to the answerer and not to Socrates himself. Yet another comment by Socrates is revelatory about his own view of the goal of the elenchus, and may tell us something about his relation to Critias as well: he asks Critias, rhetorically, whether he doesn't share with him the conviction that 'the discovery of the truth about everything there is is a common good for almost all men' (166d4–6). His tone seems to me to suggest that he is merely reminding Critias of something that has been commonplace in their conversations, much as in the *Crito* he reminds Crito of their 'serious discussions' regarding the principle of justice and the rejection of retaliation (*Crit.* 49a–b). Socrates appears confident that Critias will readily acknowledge the value of discovering the truth about each of the things there are³⁰ and, consequently, will withdraw his accusations and agree to continue the conversation. This is exactly what happens (166d7).

On the other hand, Critias appears to have gained the upper hand in the debate. For, as it seems at present, he has successfully met the challenge issued by Socrates that, if temperance is an *epistêmê*, then, like every other science or art, it must be of something other than itself. Critias contends that, on the contrary, temperance differs from the other sciences in just this respect: while these latter are of something other than themselves and not of themselves, temperance alone is of itself and the other sciences and not of any other object. As we shall see later, this amounts to the claim that temperance alone is a science of science (and of its privation) and of nothing else, with the consequence that temperance alone governs the other sciences, whereas each of them governs only its own specific domain. In sum, Critias' position implies that the *technê* model for virtue is misleading: there is really no similarity between temperance and the first-order sciences or arts in respect of their corresponding correlative objects. For his own part, Socrates chooses to put an end to that dispute by conceding his interlocutor's claim and inviting him to attend to its investigation (166e1–2). At this early point, we simply do not have enough information to decide whether Socrates makes this move in earnest, tacitly acknowledging that the *technê* model is flawed and that Critias is right to insist that temperance alone, unlike every other science or art, is directed towards science itself and no other object distinct from itself. I urge that we keep an open mind about this matter and monitor it in the chapters that follow.

Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning at the outset that the *Republic* arguably offers grounds for being cautious about accepting too readily the traditional view according to which, in the *Charmides*, Socrates pushes

³⁰ ἕκαστον τῶν ὄντων ὅπῃ ἔχει: 166d6.

the craft model aside and, in particular, abandons the assumption that virtue has an object or governs a domain distinct from itself. In order to undermine Thrasymachus' claims that justice is the advantage of the stronger (*Rep.* 340c) and, moreover, that the stronger or the ruler, insofar as he is a ruler, does not err about his own advantage (340d–341a), Socrates argues that in fact every *technê* (342c4–6) or *epistêmê* (342c11) is orientated towards the good of the object that it governs and not towards its own good. The doctor's art entails that he governs and seeks the good of his patients and not his own (341c), the art of seamanship entails that the captain rules over and looks after the good of his sailors and not his own (341c–d), and the same holds for all other arts and sciences. No art or science needs the help of another art in order to determine the good of its own proprietary object and no art or science is orientated towards itself (342a–b). Medicine does not judge its own interest but the interest of the human body (342c), the equestrian art does not seek its own interest but the interest of the horses (342c), and, generally, no art aims at its own interest (because it is complete and does not need to) but rather at the interest of what it is an art of (342c). And since each science (*epistêmê*: 342c11) rules over its own object and is stronger in that respect, it follows that the ruler, who possesses the art of ruling and is stronger, looks after the interest of the objects of his art, i.e. his subjects, who are weaker, and not after his own interest (342c).

Notwithstanding the considerable differences between the two dialogues, it is striking that in the *Republic* as well as in the *Charmides* Socrates argues for a very similar view: all the sciences or arts have as their object something distinct from themselves, not (or perhaps not mainly) themselves.³¹ Besides, as in the former dialogue, so in the latter (*Rep.* 346a), Socrates argues that every art or science is individuated precisely by reference to its own distinct object. Every time we judge that an art is different from others, we make this judgement in virtue of the fact that it has a different power (*dynamis*). And this power is typically related to the distinct object, work, and benefit peculiar to the art in question and not to any other art (346a).³² To summarise this point, I suggest that, in the first book of the *Republic* (as well as later in that work) Plato's Socrates argues for a cluster of views about the *technai*, including the *technê* of ruling, which are closely similar to the position that he initially defends vis-à-vis Critias (*Charm.* 165c4–166b6) but eventually appears to give up. In both

³¹ At *Rep.* 342a–b Socrates goes as far as suggesting that reflexivity implies regress.

³² See Duncombe 2020, *passim*. Compare Harte 2017.

cases the central idea is that every *technê*,³³ including temperance and ruling, is typically or exclusively³⁴ related to and directed towards a proprietary object distinct from the art or science itself. This parallel should give us pause regarding the concession that Socrates makes to Critias about temperance, i.e. the concession that the latter is a science directed only towards science (i.e. towards itself and the other sciences) and no other object. We should not assume, without further examination, that the concession in question represents Socrates' better judgement rather than a strategic move on the chessboard.

Moving on, I shall briefly address the vexed issue of the transition effected by Critias from the fairly innocuous claims that temperance is knowing oneself (*gignôskein heauton*: 165b4) and that it is knowledge or science of oneself (*epistêmê heautou*: 165e1) to the peculiar contention that temperance alone is a science of itself (*epistêmê autê heautês*: 166c3), as well as of the other sciences. There is extensive literature on this topic and I shall therefore restrict my comments to the origins of the notion of a 'science of science', the hypothesis that it may reflect a view held by the historical Critias, and some speculations as to how it may be related to Socrates' conception of virtue.

T. G. Tuckey's useful survey of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholarship³⁵ gives a sense of the range and quality of interpretations that have been on offer. For example, according to Grube, Critias posits that temperance is knowledge of the self and problematises the question of how the knowing subject can be the object of his/her own knowledge. Hence, the question of whether a knowledge of itself is possible amounts to the query whether self-knowledge is possible, and Critias' inability to establish the former entails his inability to defend the latter. In a similar vein, von Arnim maintains that the transition under discussion proves that Critias is entirely confused. Worse, Bonitz believes that this transition marks the beginning of a long digression, since, in his view, the investigation concerning the 'science of science' has no relation to the main goal of the dialogue, which is to define *sôphrosynê*. On the other hand, Schirlitz argues that the 'knowledge of oneself' is closely connected with the 'knowledge of knowledge' so that the former notion entails the latter. Likewise, Susemihl suggests that the 'knowledge of itself and everything else that is knowledge' constitutes an explanation of what it is to know oneself. In his view, 'knowledge of knowledge' is equivalent to 'knowledge of oneself', because

³³ The point could be extended, generally, to every power, but this is controversial (see previous note).

³⁴ Accounts of the *Republic* differ widely regarding this point. The same holds regarding the Argument from Relatives in the *Charmides*: see Chapter 10.

³⁵ Tuckey 1951, 33–7, who also gives the relevant references.

the true self just *is* knowledge. In sharp contrast, Pohlenz argues that the transition in question is a fallacy and Plato flags that fact. In reality, according to Pohlenz, there are no conceptual links between the ‘knowledge of oneself’ and the ‘knowledge or science of itself and the other sciences’. The latter is merely a theory that Plato wishes to shoot down, whereas the former conception remains intact. On an entirely different wavelength, Taylor maintains that Critias’ identification of self-knowledge with the ‘science of itself and the other sciences’ is an effort to turn moral psychology into epistemology.

Such views have been developed by recent interpretations as well. These dwell also on the question of where the notion of ‘a science of itself and all the other sciences’ may derive from, and the answer differs according to each author’s negative or positive view about Plato’s portrayal of Critias. For instance, according to one approach, the ‘science of itself and the other sciences’ has a sophistic ring³⁶ and corroborates the picture of Critias as a representative of the new learning taught by the sophists.³⁷ According to another, the notion of a ‘science of itself and the other sciences’ derives from the intellectualism detected in the extant remains of Critias’ writings and alluded to in the *Charmides* as well.³⁸ A group of interpretations propose that Critias’ final definition of temperance is a competent response to the ‘what is X?’ question, but also conveys Critias’ aristocratic values and attachments – especially, Critias’ deep-seated belief that temperance essentially consists in doing noble deeds including, first and foremost, deeds related to the successful governance of the city.³⁹ Each of these positions

³⁶ For example, Tuckey 1951, 39, claims that Critias proposes ‘knowledge of itself and the other sciences’ as the definition of temperance because of his sophistic love for antitheses.

³⁷ As Tuozzo 2011, 66–7, mentions, there are different interpretations of the historical Critias as a sophist. An older strand attributes to him an egoistic hedonism related to the conviction that might is right and to his deeds as the leader of the Thirty, whereas a more recent strand argues that Critias represents a kind of sophistry which professes to have a craftlike knowledge of moral and political matters and which, in virtue of that (so to speak) technological knowledge, claims the right to supreme power. (A notable proponent of this latter view is Schmid 1998: see, for instance, 47–8.) Yet another strand of interpretation, I suggest, adopts a more neutral tone and attempts to draw a connection between the techniques of Critias in the *Charmides* and the sophistic training of his historical counterpart: see, for example, Tuckey 1951.

³⁸ See Notomi 2000 and 2003, and also Tsouna 1998.

³⁹ So Tuozzo 2011, 199, who also adds: ‘such political management must in some sense control or oversee the activity of the crafts that take place in it, even if that is not its only, or even its most important, concern. Such control may well be expressed by the notion that *σωφροσύνη* knows these crafts, which neither know themselves nor are able to coordinate themselves toward a higher purpose. If indeed that is what *σωφροσύνη* does, it would also make sense to credit it with knowledge of itself. For it is not something to be controlled for some yet higher purpose but must itself possess the knowledge of the purpose to which it and the other sciences are to be put’ (199–200).

has merits, but none of them is founded on firm evidence. Whether or not Plato borrowed the expression ‘science of science’ or ‘science of itself and the other sciences’ from somewhere or simply invented it, it is a successful choice. Dramatically, it corroborates Socrates’ insinuation that Critias is a *sophos*, wise man or sophist (161b8–c1). Philosophically, there can be no doubt that the elaboration of the notion of a ‘science of science’ is Plato’s own. As has been shown, however, there is no agreement about the philosophical content and implication of the latter.⁴⁰ As a preamble to the argument that will soon follow, recall that, on one sort of view, Critias misunderstood Socrates’ contention that temperance must be an *epistēmē* of *something*, i.e. it must be a rule-governed form of expert knowledge, and instead took *epistēmē* to be equivalent to *gignôskein*: knowing in a non-expert manner or knowing how.⁴¹ Hence, ‘the science of itself and the other sciences’ is intended to coincide with Socratic self-knowledge, and the elenchus targets either the ‘scientific’ body of knowledge identical to temperance,⁴² or a ‘knowing how the mind knows itself’.⁴³ On the other hand, many other readings argue, in vastly divergent ways, that the ‘science of itself and the other sciences’ is different from or even incompatible with Socratic self-knowledge.⁴⁴ It should be clear by now that my own

⁴⁰ See Chapter 1, 17–23, 34–6, 38–40, and Tsouna 2017.

⁴¹ See Tuckey 1951, 38–9, and Wellman, 1964, who, however, differs from Tuckey in that he suggests that, in this context, the term ‘*epistēmē*’ refers to a knowing how.

⁴² So Tuckey 1951, 39 and onwards.

⁴³ See Wellman 1964, who contends that, here, Plato raises the problem of self-consciousness.

⁴⁴ Several interpretations of this sort take the ‘science of science’ to epitomise the theory of some pupil or colleague that Plato is attacking, and also take Socrates’ articulation of the ‘science of science’ at 167a to indicate Plato’s own reason for that attack: Plato believed that ‘the science of science’ could not explain Socrates’ peculiar ability to refute people who were supposed to be wise or clever (see Tuckey’s discussion of Polhenz’s thesis in Tuckey 1951, 40). Or, according to Schmid 1998, Socrates speaks in such a way as to create a twofold ambiguity: whether the temperate man distinguishes between what he knows about technical matters and what he knows about the good life; and whether the temperate man realises what Socrates himself, according to the *Apology*, came to realise, namely that no one possesses moral wisdom of the kind that several people make a claim to (Schmid 1998, 58). While Critias remains oblivious to this ambiguity, Socrates exploits it so as to question whether the alleged object of self-knowledge has in fact any content at all. In the face of Critias’ persistent blindness to his own moral condition, Socrates will eventually clarify matters by indicating that the object of self-knowledge is, in the end, the realisation of one’s own ignorance concerning the human good (Schmid 1998, 59). Or, on a different approach, Critias’ earlier definition of *sôphrosynē* as self-knowledge and Socrates’ own development of ‘knowledge of itself and the other knowledges’ have an important common point: neither contains explicit mention of the value of *sôphrosynē* and both indicate by the absence of any such mention that the issue of value will have to be explicitly addressed later in the dialogue (Tuozzo 2011, 206–7). A radically different interpretation that, nonetheless, still belongs to the present group is inspired by Heidegger: Socrates points to a mode of knowledge different from *epistēmē*, which represents an alternative to Critias’ mode of cognition and which makes coherent the possibility that there may exist a kind of knowledge which is ‘both of itself yet forces itself beyond itself’ (Hyland 1981, 106). In a more

interpretation lies closer to this latter camp, since, first, I distinguish the Socratic conception of self-knowledge from the counterpart developed by Critias and, second, I take it that, from this point of the debate onwards, the sole direct target of the elenchus is Critias' 'science of itself and the other sciences'. If the elenchus will also raise problems for Socratic self-knowledge, it will do so in some oblique if significant way.

Ending this chapter, I wish to stress again that what prompted Critias to define *sôphrosynê* in the way he did was his rejection of an assumption central to the *technê* analogy,⁴⁵ namely that every *epistêmê* or *technê*, including temperance, is relative to an object other than itself and governs a distinct domain determined by that object. Only because he refused to accept that temperance is thus analogous to the other sciences was he able to come up with the definition of the virtue as 'the only *epistêmê* that is both of the other *epistêmatai* and of itself' (166c2–3). Socrates, on the other hand, initially appeared entirely committed to that assumption and defended it, even though he eventually backed down. We cannot know for certain whether he did this for the sake of the argument or because he was persuaded by his interlocutor's criticisms. But we may suspect that he would not abandon his own position so easily. If his retreat is merely strategic, he can't be expected to find congenial the idea of temperance as a unique sort of science solely directed towards science (i.e. itself or any science). Be this as it may, from the moment that he has conceded to Critias his point, he will act as a well-intended, constructive, and superbly skilful debater. At the outset, however, he will take the liberty of articulating Critias' conception of temperance and of the temperate person in his own strikingly Socratic terms.

aporetic vein, Bruell (1977, 171) wonders whether Critias does truly accept Socrates' own elaboration of the 'science of science' at 167a. I do not intend to address each of these views (or many others) in detail, but I shall occasionally refer to them when I consider this especially relevant to my analysis.

⁴⁵ It is not clear whether Critias rejects the *technê* analogy altogether or maintains it while expunging the assumption of aliorelativity. Philosophically, it does not make much difference which one of these two alternatives one chooses. For if the assumption of aliorelativity is removed, the analogy between virtue and *technê* can do very little work.