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PARADIGM AND *DIAIRESIS* : A RESPONSE TO M.L. GILL'S 'MODELS IN PLATO'S *SOPHIST* AND *STATESMAN*' [1]

In her interesting and stimulating paper, Mary-Louise Gill addresses one of the central issues in Plato's *Sophist* and *Statesman*: what is a model (*paradeigma*) and how does one become useful in a dialectical inquiry? Gill's main thesis is clear: a *paradeigma* becomes truly useful when not only the sameness between the example and the target but also their difference are recognized ("the inquirers need to recognize, not only the feature that is *the same* in the example and the target, but also the *difference* between the two embodiments and the procedural difference those different embodiments entail").

To make her point, Gill comments on the crucial passage of the *Statesman* devoted to the definition of a *paradeigma* (277D-278D) and develops a lengthy comparison between Plato's use of the model of angling in the *Sophist* and that of weaving in the *Statesman*. More precisely, after having laid stress on the importance of the dramatic link between the *Theaetetus* and the two dialogues that constitute its sequel (to quote Gill's own words: "One lesson of the *Theaetetus* is that we ought to think more seriously about definition and method, and these are main topics of the subsequent dialogues"), Gill draws a comparison between the way paradigms occur in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* respectively. This comparison is then developed at length in the two concluding parts of the paper.

At the start, I have to say I am sympathetic with most of the conclusions Gill has drawn from the important issues she tackles in this paper. So it will come as no surprise that my response to her will consist of a series of reflections on certain points she has singled out rather than a proper response built on an alternative interpretation.

I choose to focus on three distinct points, all of which I take to be crucial to Gill's argument as well as to our understanding of the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* in general.

First, I offer some further reflections on the two interpretations Gill has given of the key text on paradigms in the *Statesman*, i.e. 277D-279A.

Second, one might ask, following Gill's analysis, what the differences are between the uses made of paradigms in the *Sophist* and in the *Statesman*. Gill has produced some very convincing arguments to explain these differences, but I think there may be more to be said. In particular, I shall allude to a related question that the paper, to my knowledge, did not address, namely of how an adequate paradigm in a dialectical inquiry is to be chosen.

Finally, I will conclude by stressing what, to me, is a crucial methodological issue of the dialogue, i.e. the relation between *paradeigma* and *diairesis*. It is not a topic Gill deals with directly, but it seems to me to be in the background of her paper; and in any case, there is no doubt that this is a methodological issue Plato wanted his

readers to reflect upon, and that consequently it is one every reader concerned with the use of *paradeigmata* in the *Statesman* has to address.

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Commenting on *Statesman*, 277D1-278D6, Mary Louise Gill distinguishes two possible interpretations of the text. On the first interpretation, the Eleatic Visitor's model of a model is "a model of the upcoming model of the statesman—that is, a model of the model of weaving, which will be differentiated from the kindred arts [...]. Our task, as in the model of weaving, is to clarify our target by recognizing the essence of statecraft as distinct from the contributory and other subsidiary arts." On the second interpretation, the model of a model shows "*what it is to be a model* (both angling as a model for sophistry and weaving as a model for statecraft. On this interpretation, there is something *the same* in the example and the target, but whatever that is can also be called *different*, because it is related to different things in the two situations." In other words one can give either a narrow and contextual reading of the passage or a more general and methodological one. On the latter reading, the Eleatic Visitor would be explaining the procedure one ought to use in order to produce adequately any *paradeigma* whatsoever in any context whatsoever. Gill is perfectly right to stress that the text allows these two interpretations, although it is not clear to me if she thinks they are alternative or complementary readings of the text.

In any case I would like to take a step further and consider the text in more detail. As Gill writes, "The Stranger's model of a model concerns learning letters. Letters have content and no structure." But it seems to me that the difficulty in interpreting this passage lies also in the specific method used by the Eleatic Visitor. He affirms (without justification, one should add) that "an idea of the model itself in its turn also has need of a model to demonstrate it" (277D5-6, trans. Rowe). So if one wants to know what a *paradeigma* is, there is no other way than by producing a *paradeigma*. In fact, this specific twist in the argument I take to be Plato's way of indicating that a *paradeigma* is essentially a process and that anything can be a paradigm, provided the same process is followed, i.e. of drawing a parallel between two things and of recognizing the same elements in different contexts. With this point in mind, I claim one can do justice to the text by distinguishing not so much different interpretations as different references of the term *paradeigma* and involving therefore several "levels of paradigmatization," as it were.

The term *paradeigma* has, in the *Statesman* (from 277D onwards), three distinct references. It refers to the letter known by the pupils and used by the school master in order to extend their knowledge of different letters and more complex syllables (e.g. 278B4), as well as of the art of weaving, conceived of as a model for discovering what the statesman is (e.g. 287B2). But obviously *paradeigma* also refers to the process of learning to read, as a model for discovering what a paradigm is in general (see 278C3-4). Gill's second interpretation focuses on this last reference. One could then distinguish in the text the following levels of paradigmatization:

Level	Example	Target	Type of paradigm
1	Any letter in a simple syllable	The same letter in a complex syllable	Paradigm as a content

| 2 | The art of weaving | The art of statesmanship | Paradigm as a content : intertwining the warp and the woof |
| 3 | Learning *grammata* in general (i.e. repeating the procedure of 278A8-C2) | Producing adequate paradigms | Paradigm of the paradigm (paradigm as a structure) |

Yet, this threefold distinction is not sufficient, because it does not justify the application of the paradigm of weaving to the whole of the city that follows our passage (287B2 *sq.*). In fact, with the *paradeigma* of weaving, one has to distinguish the two distinct ways it bears upon its target. Weaving can be considered as "the intertwining of the warp and the woof," i.e. as a specific *tekhnè* relying on specific procedures, aiming at discovering what statesmanship is in itself, what its proper task is. But as an art among other arts, as an architectonic *tekhnè* in the structural collection of arts that constitutes cloth-making out of wool, weaving is a model inasmuch as it has an architectonic role in a *structure* one can compare to the one statesmanship belongs to (or rather, should belong to). Can we find no trace of this second conception of weaving in the passage? It seems to me one could make good the text's silence on this point insofar as the process of learning to read, as historians tell us,[2] is represented as consisting in a progressive learning of more and more complex syllables and more and more complex words. Given that the ordering of letters in syllables constitutes a more complex structure than a simple letter in itself, this stage in the process described at 278A8-C1 (learning not only letters, but simple syllables, and so on) would give an account of a *paradeigma* conceived not as a content but as a structure. I take this distinction to be important, for it accounts for the development of the argument in the second half of the dialogue: from 279A to 305E, the interrelations between weaving and its kindred, auxiliary and rival arts govern the *diairesis* of statesmanship and the ordering of the *tekhnai kata polin,* whereas the following pages to the end are devoted to the specific task of statesmanship, namely interweaving. So we could add the following to the previous parallel between single letters and weaving:

Level	Example	Target	Type of paradigm
1'	Any simple syllable (ordered letters)	The same syllable in a more complex syllable	Paradigm as a structure
2'	The art of weaving in relations to the other arts involved in cloth-making	The art of statesmanship in relation to the other arts *kata polin*	Paradigm as a structure (direct and contributory causes)

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The second point I wish to raise is also crucial to Gill's overall argument. She rightly observes that there are some important differences between the ways the

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[2] See H.-I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'Antiquité*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1958, p. 210-215.

paradigm of angling and that of weaving respectively are used in the two dialogues. I wish to reflect further on the reasons why angling and weaving do not function identically.

This is how the paradigm of angling is introduced in the *Sophist*:

E.V. - […] So that's my advice to us now, Theaetetus: since we think it's hard to hunt down and deal with the kind, *sophist*, we ought to practice our method on something easier first — unless you can tell us about another way that's somehow more promising.

T. - I can't.

E.V. - Do you want to focus on something trivial and try to use it as pattern for the more important issue?

T. - Yes.

E.V. - What might we propose that's unimportant and easy to understand but can have an account given of it just as much as more important things can? For example, an *angler*, isn't that recognisable to everybody, but not worth being too serious about?

T. - Yes.

E.V. - That, I expect, will provide an appropriate method and way of talking for what we want. (*Soph*., 218D-219A, trans. White)

One can compare this passage with the parallel one in the *Statesman*. Having shown what his model of a model is, the Eleatic Visitor affirms :

E.V. - So what model, involving the same activities as statesmanship, on a very small scale, could one compare with it, and so discover in a satisfactory way what we are looking for? By Zeus, Socrates, what do you think? If there isn't anything else to hand, well, what about weaving? Do you want us to choose that? Not all of it, if you agree, since perhaps the weaving of cloth from wool will suffice; maybe it is this part of it, if we choose it, which would provide the testimony we want. (*Polit.* 279A7-B6, trans. Rowe)

There are striking similarities between the two passages and more generally between the dialectical function of both paradigms. But more interestingly, there are also some salient differences. I will start by reflecting on the former, and conclude with the latter.

In both passages, the unimportance of the paradigm is underlined. As Gill observes, angling, or weaving, are "uncontroversial." But I think maybe one ought to be more precise on the uncontroversial nature of the example in general. For sure, it is first of all a matter of the easiness or simplicity of the subject matter: something will be less controversial inasmuch as it is easy to grasp and uncomplicated. But it is not only a matter of complexity, it is also a question of *value*: something of no or less importance may be understood dispassionately and its proper nature displayed without prejudice. A paradigm needs to be *smikron* in those two ways.

This leads me to my second point. I think the two passages draw attention to another important feature of Plato's conception of what a paradigm is. As one can easily observe, consideration of the question of how a paradigm is chosen is totally absent from the two dialogues: in each case, the Eleatic Visitor proposes, as paradigms, angling or weaving, and both (especially the second) turn out to be excellent paradigms.[3] What would have suited the art of statesmanship better than the specific *tekhnè* of weaving and its relations with its coordinate arts? Still the question remains: why does Plato insist on the apparent randomness of the choices made? One could detect a fatal flaw in the argument here: if the Eleatic Visitor is able to give an example (a paradigm) either of what procedures produce a paradigm (the learning of *grammata*) or of statesmanship or sophistry, it is obvious that he already knows what he is (pretending to be) looking for.[4]

One could try to answer this objection in three different ways. First one might claim that the paradigmatic method is a genuinely heuristic one where the *paradeigmata* need to be verified and tested in order to see if they are fit for their purpose. Second, one might address the problem of how to find an adequate paradigm of X without knowing previously what X is as a species of the sophistic paradox met by the doctrine of *anamnesis* in the *Meno*. A third response would at once dismiss the previous two responses and the problem itself by arguing that no dialectical method in Plato can be dissociated from the *phronesis* of the dialectician, whose skills, among others, consist in discovering interesting and thoughtful resemblances between disconnected fields and realities.

I think nothing in the text allows one to consider the Platonic *paradeigmata* as genuinely heuristic, i.e. as chosen more or less at random and awaiting confirmation. Of course, as Victor Goldschmidt pointed out long ago in his classic study *Le paradigme dans la dialectique platonicienne*,[5] paradigms are in a sense verified when applied to the target for the sake of which they have been introduced, but this fact does not explain how in the *Sophist* and *Statesman* an adequate paradigm is chosen, since there is nothing in the text resembling a trial and error procedure.

The comparison with the puzzle in the *Meno* tends to be more suggestive. The enigmatic beginning of the passage seems even to refer to the *Meno*:

> E.V. - It's a hard thing, my fine friend, to demonstrate any of the more important subjects without using models. It looks as if each of us knows everything in a kind of dreamlike way, and then again is ignorant of everything when as it were awake. (*Polit.* 277D1-3, trans. Rowe)

Many commentators on the passage have understood this sentence as a clear reference to the doctrine of *anamnesis*, mainly because it seems to refer to the standard

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[3] *Contra*, see W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. V, Cambridge, University Press, 1975, p. 192: "He (Plato) could have chosen another —perhaps more suitable —art than weaving (…) but his fancy was caught by the idea of an inner affinity between weaving and statesmanship, just as in the *Sophist* he chuckled over the thought that the sophist was first cousin to the angler."

[4] H.R. Scodel, *Diairesis and Myth in Plato's* Statesman, Göttingen, Vandehhoeck & Ruprecht, p. 104: "In any case, the Stranger's procedure here is at least open to objection if he is understood to have known what a paradigm is prior to giving the example of learning the alphabet as an example of what a paradigm is."

[5] *Le paradigme dans la dialectique platonicienne*, Paris, Vrin, 1947, p. 48-53.

Platonic transition from partial ignorance, or belief, to knowledge.[6] The use of *paradeigmata* would then constitute a means of recollecting partially the global knowledge each and every soul possesses. Our passage would in this case parallel such passages as, e.g. *Meno* 85C6-D1, where the slave-boy's opinions are said to be *hôsper onar* and in the need of frequent interrogation in order to become *epistèmai*. But even though there are obvious connections between the two passages, one has to bear in mind that our text distinguishes no less than three epistemic states and not just two.[7] In fact, the Eleatic Visitor points out that the need for paradigms arises from our dreamlike way of knowing everything and from our being ignorant when we are *hosper upar*, *as it were* awake. There is no transition here from latent to active knowledge. The epistemic transition from a dreamlike to a waking state comes later:

> E.V. - Well, if that's the way it is, the two of us would not at all be in the wrong in having first attempted to see the nature of models as a whole in the specific case of a further insignificant model, with the intention then of bringing to the case of the king, which is of the greatest importance, something of the same form from less significant things somewhere, in an attempt once more through the use of a model to recognize in an expert, systematic way what looking after people in the city is, *so that it may be present to us in our waking state instead of in a dream*? (*Polit.* 278E4-10, trans. Rowe)

There is no doubt that the awakening the Eleatic Visitor has in mind here does not involve solely the use of *paradigms* but rather the progress of the diairetic method towards a definition of statesmanship by means of the paradigm of weaving. As Mary Louise Gill rightly observes, "The Stranger's model of a model shows us both how any good model should operate and alerts us to the dangers of over-dependence on the particular example that serves as the model. Models fall short: the relevant procedure is sufficient to yield the essence of the example, but it does not take us all the way to the essence of the target." Indeed, the most powerful argument preventing commentators from seeing any explicit connection between recollection and paradigmatization is simply that the only epistemic state the use of a paradigm, in itself, can produce is true opinion (see 278A9, B3, C5, C6,D4):

> E.V. - Well then, have we grasped this point adequately, that we come to be using a *model* when a given thing, which is the same in something different and distinct, is correctly identified (*doxazomenôn orthôs*) there, and having been brought together with the original thing, brings about a single true judgement (*mia alèthè doxan*) about each separately and both together? (*Polit.*, 278C3-6, trans. Rowe)

Paradeigmata constitute secure starting-points in a dialectical inquiry, but they cannot achieve knowledge if the inquiry is not conducted by the rigorous *diairesis* that the paradigm allows the dialectician to pursue.

There is no other answer, so it seems, to the problem I have raised previously (i.e. how one can choose a correct paradigm without already knowing the target) except

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[6] See R. Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2nd ed., 1953, p. 214, and the discussion in Scodel, *Diairesis and Myth*, *op. cit.*, p. 109-11.

[7] See M. Dixsaut, *Métamorphoses de la dialectique dans les Dialogues de Platon*, Paris, Vrin, 2001, p. 247-53.

to point out that there is no dialectical method that would supply the lack of the dialectical skills a good philosopher cannot but have if he, precisely, is a good philosopher. Among these skills, the *Statesman* particularly, and rather unsurprisingly, insists on the ability to perceive real resemblances and real differences between realities, as an indispensable skill for division and dialectic in general:

> E.V. - [. . .] the rule is that when one perceives first the community between the members of a group of many things, one should not desist until one sees in it all those differences that are located in classes, and conversely, with the various unlikenesses, when they are seen in multitudes, one should be incapable of pulling a face and stopping before one has penned all the related things within one likeness and actually surrounded them in some real class. (*Polit.*, 285B1-6, trans. Rowe)

Finally I would like to stress two significant differences between the two *paradeigmata* of angling and weaving that Gill has not mentioned. Firstly, I take the paradigm of angling to correspond more adequately to what Victor Goldschmidt (in the study mentioned above) has named "*la fonction d'exercice du paradigme*," whereas the paradigm of weaving corresponds more or less to what he called "*la découverte des ressemblances*." To put it differently, there are more affinities between the statesman and the weaver than between the sophist and the angler. Of course, this is not, in any case, an objection to Gill's point, just a reminder of the slight difference of tone in which each paradigm is introduced. I claim that this difference can be partly explained by the argumentative order of the two dialogues. In the *Sophist*, the ontological status of the "slippery genus" of resemblance is questioned in order to hunt down the sophist. And it is well-known that one of the major achievements of the dialogue is the distinction between, as it were, real and fake resemblances, or resemblances that are explicitly resemblances of a specific model and those that pretend to be that model. The analysis of the *Sophist* is the necessary and preparatory step that had to be taken in order to allow the *Statesman* to develop methodological rules based upon a proper grasp of resemblances.

The second main difference between the dialectical inquiries conducted in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* is that the *Sophist* starts with six different divisions and ends with a seventh, whereas the *Statesman*, as I take it,[8] is unified by the development of a single *diairesis*. How should one explain this difference? Let's take a look at the final, and allegedly true, definition of the sophist:

> E.V. - […] But since he imitates the wise man he'll obviously have a name derived from the wise man's name. And now at last I see that we have to call him the person who is really and truly a *sophist*. (*Soph.* 268C, trans. White)

It is worth noting that this is the only definition among the seven in the dialogue labelled as being *alèthôs* and *ontôs* and that a few lines below at 268D the conclusion is *hos an phèi ton ontôs sophistèn einai*. It is striking to compare the ending of the dialogue in this respect with the ways the definitions are concluded at 223A, 224C,

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[8] In D. El Murr, "La division et l'unité du *Politique* de Platon," *Les études philosophiques*, 3, 2005, 295-324, I argue that the *Statesman* is unified by the progress of a single division.

224D, 225D and 230E. In each case the Eleatic Visitor concludes his remark by noting that the *name* (sophist) corresponds adequately to the genus described.[9]

Whereas at the end of the dialogue the sophist is really defined, none of the first six definitions seem to aim at saying what the sophist is, nor at giving a definition of the genus the sophist belongs to. Rather each definition intends to give *one of the several names* that are adequate to the sophist. Each one of the first six definitions is therefore a definite description, as it were, of the sophist. In other words, when one says (a) a hired hunter of rich young men is a sophist or (b) an ironical / insincere imitator is a sophist, the verb "is" does not have the same sense. In (a) the formula cannot be symmetrical, whereas (b) is obviously symmetrical, "is" expressing identity. The reason why I stress this difference is mainly because it allows us to understand what is going on with the first divisions in the *Sophist*: the problem is not that the sophist is viewed as such and such or our misconceptions of him; the problem is that every one of the names of the sophist is a mere image of him and, as such, says something about him. In other words, in the case of each one of the six definitions, the sophist is what he is but always also "other than" what he is. He is and is not each of his images. This is why Non-Being, as we are told at 258B, is where the sophist dwells.

In the *Statesman*, the situation is totally different: whereas the sophist, located in the slippery genus of resemblance, is literally everywhere (hence the several divisions), the statesman, as Plato conceives him, is literally nowhere. Still, a lot of *tekhnai* claim his title and prerogatives, many claim to be legitimately named *politikai*, but none truly is (hence the sole division aiming at defining what a real statesman should be).

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It appears then that the respective, and rather different, joint use of *paradeigma* and *diairesis* in the *Sophist* and *Statesman* can be explained by the specific nature of the subject of each inquiry. This brings me to the final point of this response. What are the relationships between the use of a *paradeigma* and that of *diairesis*? I have already named a few, but I think more can be said. As Gill observes in her paper, the partial failure of the myth has something to do with using *megala paradeigmata*, disproportionate models. But I think it is noteworthy that the first divisions partially mislead the protagonists (on this, see M.L. Gill's paper, n. 10) because they explicitly use an inadequate paradigm, for reasons that are explained after the myth.

> E.V. - It was just for these reasons that we introduced our story, in order that it might demonstrate, in relation to herd-rearing, not only that as things now stand everyone disputes this function with the person we are looking for, but also in order that we might see more plainly that very person whom alone, in accordance with the example (*paradeigma*) of shepherds and cowherds, because he has charge of human rearing, it is appropriate to think worthy of this name, and this name alone. (*Polit.*, 275B1-6, trans. Rowe)

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[9] See 223A τοῦτ᾽ οὖν ἔγωγε εἰπὼν τὸ προσῆκον ὄνομ᾽ ἂν ἡγοῦμαι καλεῖν αὐτόν ; 224C Καὶ τί τις ἂν ἄλλο ὄνομα εἰπὼν οὐκ ἂν πλημμελοίη πλὴν τὸ νῦν ζητούμενον αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ σοφιστικὸν γένος; 225D Τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν τοίνυν ἣν ἑκάτερον δεῖ καλεῖν αὐτῶν πειραθῶμεν εἰπεῖν; 230E Τί δέ; τοὺς ταύτῃ χρωμένους τῇ τέχνῃ τίνας φήσομεν.

To the three applications of the word *paradeigma* we singled out above, one must add a fourth, i.e. to the cowherds and shepherds that have led most of the first divisions. It is no surprise then that the two partial failures of the first *diaireseis* and the myth bring in the definition of what a paradigm should be. This definition, precisely, makes up for the deficiency of the two preceding methods. In other words, a *paradeigma* has to be precise enough (so as not to exclude its target, as in 261B *sq.*) but still *smikron* enough to be proportionate to it (and thus to make the discovery of resemblances possible).

Thus, the relation between *diairesis* and *paradeigma* seems to me to be twofold. As we have seen, a correct division is a proper paradigm both in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*: the structural relation between definite *tekhnai* is a model for the definition of similar relations between other *tekhnai*. But there seems to be a second relation between the two methods: can one divide a very general *genus* without a *paradeigma* allowing one to select the pertinent differences that will reveal what is sought? The *Statesman* is surely full of independent *paradeigmata* that conduct, at one stage or another, the progress of the *diairesis*: arithmetic, architecture, shepherding, weaving can all be considered as simple and straightforward examples, but since some give names to some genus which in turn is divided, we could as well assume that, for very general genuses, paradigms are essential to the very process of dividing.

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