When we try to make sense of the intellectual milieu in which Plato grew up, we tend to think primarily in terms of the philosophers\(^1\) who influenced the development of his thought. Clearly it is impossible to come to terms with the philosophy of Plato without reading the dialogues as themselves part of a dialogue involving such antecedents as Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Parmenides and, of course, Socrates. But we do Plato a great disservice if we concentrate exclusively on the philosophical influences. In the first place, by doing so we are introducing an anachronistic categorization of intellectual pursuits: After all, Parmenides, Empedocles and Xenophanes were themselves poets as well as philosophers, and no Greek philosopher—indeed no Greek writer—can be imagined who was not influenced by the poems of Homer, Hesiod and Pindar. In the second place, Plato was himself a literary artist of the highest accomplishment, and we cannot doubt that his artistry—that is to say, in effect, his philosophy—has literary, as well as philosophical, roots. There has, it is true, been some important work done in which the influence of some of Plato’s literary predecessors has been fruitfully examined.\(^2\) And, in particular, the importance of the dramatists has been recognized and studied, especially in connection with Plato’s attacks on dramatic poetry and his use of the dialogue-form.\(^3\) But the virulence of those attacks, combined with the masterful adaptation of what is in effect a dramatic form, give clear evidence that Plato’s attitude toward his dramatic predecessors was complex, ambivalent, interesting and well worth further study.

\(^1\) “Philosophers” here should be taken to include figures like Protagoras and Gorgias, who are more often referred to as “Sophists.” But the fact that we are sometimes reluctant to think of them as philosophers is in part because of the influence of Plato himself.

\(^2\) See, for example, E. des Places, Pindare et Platon (Paris 1949); J. Labarbe, L’Homère de Platon (Liège 1949); P. Vicaire, Platon critique littéraire (Paris 1960). Particularly intriguing is A. W. Nightingale’s recent study, Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy (Cambridge 1995), in which Plato’s intertextual relationship with representatives of various genres, including both tragedy and comedy, is explored.

As far as we can tell, Plato was born, presumably in Athens, in 428/7 B.C. The family to which he belonged was one of the most distinguished in the city. He was descended on his father's side from Codrus, the last king of Athens. His mother traced her ancestry to the lawgiver (and poet) Solon, who, as G. C. Field puts it, "as an ancestor, if some centuries later than Codrus, had at least the advantage of having really existed." But distinction is conferred as much according to perception as according to reality, and we can be confident that Plato's maternal grandparents were every bit as satisfied as was his father's family with the marriage that was to produce Greece's greatest philosopher and foremost prose stylist. Plato's family also boasted (if that is the right word) Charmides and Critias, both of whom were members of the notorious Thirty, who established a short-lived tyranny at Athens in 404 B.C.

It is clear from the situation depicted in Plato's Symposium that the circles in which Plato travelled included people who regularly attended performances in the Theater of Dionysus. Indeed, two of the interlocutors in that dialogue, Agathon and Aristophanes, were themselves men of the theater. Further, Plato's own interest in and familiarity with the drama are apparent from the references in his works to the fifth-century tragedians and, more importantly, from his frequent use of images, similes and metaphors drawn from the stage. It is likely that this familiarity with the theater dates from quite early in Plato's life, for it seems to have been the regular custom in Athens for boys to attend dramatic performances. According to W. L. Newman, "It appears to be certain that boys were present at representations both of tragedy and of comedy at Athens," and Arthur Pickard-Cambridge says, "That there were boys [in the audience for tragedy and comedy], there can be no doubt at all." In fact, it seems even

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4 For the evidence for the date, see J. K. Davies, Athenian Propertied Families 600–300 B.C. (Oxford 1971) 333. The (less likely) alternative is a year or two earlier. According to Diogenes Laertius (3. 3), some authorities put Plato's place of birth in Aegina.


6 For the details of Plato's family, see Davies (above, note 4) 322–35. We may note that, in addition to his other talents, Critias was a tragic poet.

7 For the (generally high) social status of dramatic poets in the fifth century, see J. R. Green, Theatre in Ancient Greek Society (London 1994) 12–13. L. A. Stella, "Influssi di poesia e d'arte ellenica nell'opera di Platone: Platone ed il teatro greco II. Platone e la tragedia," Historia 7 (1933) 75–123, at 80 notes that the circle of Socrates' friends included Agathon, Alcibiades and Critias, who were in various ways connected with, or influenced by, Euripides.

8 See D. Tarrant, "Plato as Dramatist," JHS 75 (1955) 82–89, esp. 82–83. The only evidence that explicitly connects Plato with the theater is the report of his choregia, subsidized by Dion of Syracuse, for a performance of a boys' dithyramb; see Plut. Arist. 1. 4, Dion 17. 5, D.L. 3. 3.

to have been acceptable for boys to perform on the stage. So we have every reason to believe that Plato’s experiences during his impressionable and formative years included attendance at the tragedies and comedies that were performed regularly at Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.

And the figure who dominated the Athenian stage during this period was the controversial dramatist Euripides. Indeed, Plato’s lifetime falls entirely within the period during which the popularity of Euripides was unrivaled, as we can tell from the frequency with which his plays were performed, both in Athens and throughout the Greek world, from the influence that he exerted on contemporary literature and from the large number of representations of scenes from his plays in contemporary vase-painting. Under these circumstances, Plato cannot have helped but be familiar with Euripides’ dramas. And, indeed, we know from a number of references to and quotations from the plays of Euripides in Plato’s dialogues that the philosopher had considerable acquaintance with the works of the dramatist. This acquaintance presumably resulted both from familiarity with written texts and from witnessing performances of Euripides’ plays, either when the plays were first performed in the Theater of Dionysus or in their numerous revivals, both in Athens and in Magna Graecia, throughout Plato’s lifetime. But the greatest impression must have been made on Plato (as on the Attic audience in general) when these revolutionary works were produced for the first time. Plato’s earliest experiences with the theater are likely to have included attendance at the first production of Euripides’ disturbing Trojan trilogy—Alexandros, Palamedes and Trojan Women—


11 See G. Xanthakis-Karamanos, Studies in Fourth-Century Tragedy (Athens 1980) 28–34. As P. E. Easterling says (“The End of an Era? Tragedy in the Early Fourth Century,” in A. H. Sommerstein et al. [eds.], Tragedy, Comedy and the Polis [Bari 1993] 567): “The more open we are to the idea that intertextual reference is a major feature of all the Greek tragedy we know, and not a symptom of fin-de-siècle fatigue, the reader we should be to look at the extreme popularity of Euripides in the fourth century in the context of the formation of the repertoire. It was his plays, now, which formed the main body of works in the light of which, and in reaction to which, contemporary dramatists conducted their own experiments.”


13 Already in 405 B.C. Aristophanes (Ran. 52–53) could represent Dionysus as reading a text of one of Euripides’ plays. For the availability of books in the fifth and fourth centuries, see R. Pfeiffer, History of Classical Scholarship from the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age (Oxford 1968) 25 ff.

14 For the popularity of Attic tragedy and comedy in general in the Greek cities of Sicily and South Italy, particularly during the period from 425 to 325 B.C., see O. Taplin, Comic Angels and Other Approaches to Greek Drama through Vase-Paintings (Oxford 1993). For Plato’s visits to Sicily, see K. von Fritz, Platon in Sicilien und das Problem der Philosophenherrschaft (Berlin 1968).
when he was about twelve years old. Plato was already fifteen when the curious and memorable Andromeda and Helen were staged in 412 B.C. Ion, Heracles, Phoenissae and Iphigenia among the Taurians all belong to approximately the same period. We can only imagine the effect that the nihilistic Orestes had on the brilliant and sensitive nineteen-year-old. By the time Euripides’ last plays were performed—Bacchae and Iphigenia in Aulis—Plato was already in his twenties.

No one in his audience seems to have been able to remain indifferent to Euripides’ tragedies. The evidence of Aristophanes alone is sufficient to show that Euripides provoked strong reactions, one way and the other: In Thesmophoriazusae the women of Athens are plotting to murder him; in Frogs no less than the god of the theater himself feels such a passionate longing 15 for the deceased tragedian that he risks the dangers of a journey to the underworld in order to bring him back to life. There is a striking parallel to this phenomenon in the remarkable ambivalence that greeted the music-dramas of Richard Wagner in the second half of the nineteenth century. Wagner’s operas (and the composer’s personal behavior) outraged popular opinion, 16 in some cases for the same reasons that the plays of Euripides caused such a stir in fifth-century Athens. Nineteenth-century audiences, for example, were shocked by the sensuous chromaticism of the new music, as well as by the immorality of the blatant adultery of Tristan and Isolde and the titillating incest of Siegmund and Sieglinde. Likewise, Athenian audiences of the end of the fifth century were scandalized by the morally suspect new music of Euripides and Timotheus, 17 and by the sympathetic treatment of adulterous passion and incest in plays like Hippolytus and Aeolus. 18 But at the same time, both Wagner and Euripides attracted devoted admirers from among the leading artists and intellectuals of their day. We noted above Aristophanes’ depiction of Dionysus’ passionate reaction to Euripides, a reaction that is surely modeled on that of some of Aristophanes’ contemporaries. In remarkably similar terms, Bruno Walter describes in his autobiography his own introduction to Wagner’s music:

15 Ar. Ran. 53, 55, 66 (νόθος), 59 (ἀμήρος). Dionysus’ longing is provoked by reading Euripides’ Andromeda. Compare also the anecdote, recorded in Luc. Hist. Conscr. 1, according to which a mysterious ailment afflicted the citizens of Abdera as a result of a performance of Euripides’ Andromeda by the actor Archelaos, one symptom of which was the obsessive recitation of verses from that play.

16 See, for example, the caricatures, from the popular press and elsewhere, reproduced in H. Barth et al. (eds.), Wagner: A Documentary Study (New York 1975) plates 40, 149, 165, 227–29 and p. 228.


19 B. Walter, Theme and Variations: An Autobiography, trsl. by J. A. Galston (New York 1946) 39–40. The context makes it clear that Walter’s passion was in direct conflict with the
... another event pierced my soul with the rapidity and force of a bolt of lightning. It set me aflame and wholly revolutionized my inward life. The event was a performance of Tristam und Isolde, the consequence "heaven-born enravishment." ... There I sat in the topmost gallery of the Berlin Operahouse, and from the first sound of the cellos my heart contracted spasmodically. The magic, like the terrible potion that the deathly ill Tristam curses in the third act, "burst raging forth from heart to brain." Never before had my soul been so deluged with floods of sound and passion, never had my heart been consumed by such yearning and sublime blissfulness, never had I been transported from reality by such heavenly glory. I was no longer in this world. After the performance, I roamed the streets aimlessly.

In fact, in the case of Wagner, we can find both reactions, positive and negative, in the same person. Friedrich Nietzsche himself exemplifies the powerfully ambivalent feelings that this innovative and controversial figure could arouse: Nietzsche began as an ardent supporter of Wagner (and one of his closest friends), but he ended up by writing a pamphlet in which he accused the composer of destroying contemporary music, just as he had earlier accused Euripides of having destroyed Greek tragedy.\(^{20}\) I would not wish to press the parallel between Wagner and Euripides too far, and I do not wish to suggest too close a parallel in these terms between Nietzsche and Plato.\(^{21}\) But I would go so far as to say that, just as it is unthinkable for an intelligent artist growing up in late nineteenth-century Europe to be unaffected by the phenomenon of Richard Wagner, so it is unimaginable

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"deep-rooted antagonism to Wagner at the [Stern] Conservatory, at my parents’ house, and among the people with whom I associated" (39).

\(^{20}\) In Die Geburt der Tragödie, in which he had glorified Wagner for having revived the spirit of Greek tragedy; cf. M. S. Silk and J. P. Stern, Nietzsche on Tragedy (Cambridge 1981); A. Henrichs, "The Last of the Detractors: Nietzsche’s Condemnation of Euripides," GRBS 27 (1986) 369–97. R. Friedrich, "Euripidaristophanizein und Nietzscheoskratizein: Aristophanes, Nietzsche, and the Death of Tragedy," Dionysius 4 (1980) 5–36 notes the similarity between Nietzsche’s ambivalence toward Socrates and Aristophanes’ ambivalence toward Euripides. For the complex relationship between Nietzsche and Wagner, see D. Fischer-Dieskau, Wagner and Nietzsche, trsl. by J. Neugrochel (New York 1976). We can see a similarly ambivalent attitude toward Wagner somewhat later in the case of Claude Debussy. Debussy too started out as an ardent Wagnerite, describing Parsifal as "l’un des plus beaux monments sonores que l’on ait élevés à la gloire imperturbable de la musique" (quoted by F. Louise, Claude Debussy: Biographie critique [Paris 1994] 448), but by the time he came to compose Pelléas et Mélisande he intended it to be an anti-Wagnerian opera. (Of course, in the case of Debussy, in addition to the expected “anxiety of influence,” there is also a potent extra-musical factor, namely the antipathy of the French toward the Germans, especially in the early part of this century; note Debussy’s delight, expressed in a letter written in 1914, at the discovery of Beethoven’s Flemish ancestry: F. Louise [ed.], Claude Debussy, Lettres 1884–1918 [Paris 1980] 257.) But Pelléas, like most of Debussy’s oeuvre, is unimaginable without the influence of Parsifal and Tristan. Indeed, Robin Holloway says of Debussy—and he repeats his assertion—that “he must be recognized to be, within the limits of a subtle and specialized relationship, the most profoundly Wagnerian of all composers” (Debussy and Wagner [London 1979] 21, 235).

\(^{21}\) Note, however, the brief article by L. Chamberlain, “Why Nietzsche Banished Wagner,” TLS (4 Nov. 1994) 20, with its title drawn from the subtitle of Iris Murdoch’s The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists (Oxford 1977).
that the young Plato can have been indifferent to the dramas of Euripides. And yet, this has only rarely been pointed out. The most valuable discussion known to me of the formative influences on the young Plato is to be found in the opening pages of Wilamowitz’s *Platon*. Wilamowitz, almost alone among scholars, recognized the importance of Euripides in this connection, and he devoted a couple of penetrating and suggestive pages to the influence of Euripides on Plato, concluding with the remark: “Wer den Bildungsgang eines athenischen Jünglings jener Jahre schildern will, darf über den gewerbsmäßigen Lehrern [i.e. the Sophists] den Philosophen der Bühne nicht vergessen.”

It is surprising, given the influence of Wilamowitz and the importance of his book on Plato, that Euripides, “The Philosopher of the Stage,” has been largely forgotten by those who have tried to describe the development of Plato’s art and thought. In fact, the standard literature (of which there is a great deal) on Plato, on Euripides and on the history of Greek literature either ignores completely or merely mentions in passing the influence of Euripides on Plato. For example, W. K. C. Guthrie’s *History of Greek Philosophy*, which devotes two large volumes to Plato and which discusses in detail the background to Plato’s thought and writing, barely mentions Euripides. The same is true of G. M. A. Grube’s *Plato’s Thought*, which is all the more surprising given the fact that Grube was also an expert in the works of the playwright and is the author of a book entitled *The Drama of Euripides*. Euripides is not even listed in the General Index to G. C. Field’s *Plato and his Contemporaries*, which is specifically concerned to define the social and intellectual milieu which Plato inhabited. F. L. Lucas devotes an unsatisfactory page and a half to Plato in his *Euripides and his Influence*. And Helmut Kuhn, in a ninety-page article that stretches over two issues of *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* and is promisingly entitled “The True Tragedy: On the Relationship between Greek Tragedy and Plato,” confines himself almost entirely to Aeschylus and Sophocles.

22 U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Platon* (Berlin 1919) I 89. “Der Philosoph der Bühne” is a quotation from Athenaeus 561a, where Euripides is referred to as ὁ σκηνικός φιλόσοφος.

23 But note the valuable discussion by F. Solmsen, *Plato’s Theology* (Ithaca 1942) 15–59. (Solmsen had been a pupil, in Berlin, of Wilamowitz and of Wilamowitz’s pupil and successor, Werner Jaeger.) His sensitive and subtle treatment is, however, concerned solely with the development of Plato’s thought concerning religion, and he takes Euripides, not so much as a direct influence on the young Plato, but as a representative of the intellectual turmoil that characterized the period of Plato’s youth; cf. the comment (58 n. 12): “In matters of religion, no less than in political and social questions, Euripides’ mind was open to any and every new theory, but his work as a whole reflects not a new religion or a new philosophy, but rather the desire for one.”

24 Field does, however, quote from Eur. *Hec.* on p. 82 and mentions Euripides, along with Sophocles and Aristophanes, on p. 107.

25 Lucas (above, note 12).

26 *HSCP* 52 (1941) 1–40 and 53 (1942) 37–88. (The quotation in the text is taken from p. 5.) Cf. also M. Nussbaum’s *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge 1986), where the discussion of Plato and tragedy follows chapters on Aeschylus and Sophocles, while Euripides is reserved for the final chapter.
on the grounds that Euripidean tragedy "raises special problems which, for our present purpose, may be disregarded!"

There is, in fact, a good deal of evidence for the influence of Euripides on Plato. For one thing, there are several places in the dialogues where Plato alludes to, or explicitly quotes from the works of Euripides. Indeed, Plato cites Euripides as often as he cites Aeschylus and Sophocles combined, and he cites Euripides more often than any author except Homer and Simonides. But there is more to this influence than the occasional ornamentation of polite conversation with poetic tags from a popular dramatist. Jacqueline de Romilly, in an oral presentation given in 1983, the text of which has only recently been published, suggestively sketched some ways in which the thinking of Plato, concerning such matters as psychology, ethics and politics, can be seen as taking shape under the influence of the drama of Euripides. At about the same time, Mme de Romilly also published a brief article in which she showed that some of the issues raised in Euripides' Phoenissae were taken up subsequently by Plato and treated in various dialogues in an appropriately "philosophical" and theoretical manner. Implicit in the former, however, and explicit in the latter is the assumption that Euripides is representative of the Athenian intelligentsia of the waning years of the fifth century. It is interesting to note how far scholarly opinion has changed from the early 1940s: Euripides had to be excluded from Helmut Kuhn's study of Plato and Greek tragedy because of his eccentricity; by the early 1980s he had become the spokesman for his age. But the issue is not the extent of Euripides' originality, or the degree to which he reflects the concerns of his generation. Rather, the question we are here concerned with is whether we can find direct evidence of the influence of Euripides' dramas on the writings of Plato, regardless of the specific characteristics of those dramas. In fact, Andrea Nightingale has recently shown, for example, that the relationship between Plato's Gorgias

27 For a list of Plato's citations, see Brandwood (above, note 12), as well as the Appendix below. D. Tarrant's figures for Plato's "identifiable quotations from the dramatists" ("Plato's Use of Quotations and other Illustrative Material," CQ 1 [1951] 59-67, at 61) are seriously deficient. That the largest number of citations is from Homer is, of course, only to be expected; cf. Labarbe (above, note 2). The frequency of citations from Simonides is accounted for by the extended citations in the Protagoras.

28 J. de Romilly, "Euripide et les philosophes du IVe siècle," in Tragedies grecques au fil des ans (Paris 1995) 191-205. The oral presentation, delivered on 17 October 1983 at the Institut des Hautes Études de Belgique, was entitled "Des réflexions d'Euripide à la pensée de Platon." Independently of Mme de Romilly, and at about the same time, I myself wrote, "One can almost read Plato's dialogues as an attempt to answer the metaphysical, epistemological and ethical questions raised by Euripides' dramas" ("Language, Meaning and Reality in Euripides," Ultimate Reality and Meaning 8 [1985] 101).


30 See de Romilly (previous note) 263: "Naturellement—et j'insiste sur ce point—je ne prétends nullement que Platon se soit ici, en fait, inspiré d'Euripide. D'autres avaient à coup sûr exprimé des idées voisines (Aristophane et Thucydide en sont la preuve)."

31 But note what is said above (note 23) concerning Solmsen's book of 1942.
and Euripides’ *Antiope*, which the dialogue quotes and refers to on several occasions, is much more far-reaching than had previously been thought. She argues convincingly that, in composing the *Gorgias*, “Plato deliberately appropriated fundamental thematic and structural elements from the *Antiope*” (122) and she uses the relationship between Plato’s dialogue and Euripides’ drama as the basis for a sensitive examination of the way in which Plato constitutes the dialogue as a genre. This is a more satisfactory and, I think, a more valuable pursuit. In what follows, I should like to furnish some further examples of the ways in which the influence of Euripides seems to have made itself felt at crucial points in the dialogues and consequently, perhaps, at crucial points in Plato’s thinking.

Our first example comes from the *Theaetetus*. A good deal of that dialogue is taken up with arguing against Protagoras’ doctrine that man is the measure of all things, a doctrine that appears to exclude the possibility of false opinion. Socrates and his interlocutor, Theaetetus, attempt at considerable length to demonstrate the proposition that false opinion is possible, a proposition that is surprisingly difficult to substantiate, despite the ready appeal to common experience. Theaetetus offers a helpful suggestion and says (191b) that it occasionally happens that he sees a person at a distance whom he takes to be Socrates but who, it turns out, is in fact someone whom he does not know at all. In order to account for what exactly is going on in a case like this, Socrates comes up with an image that has since become quite famous, the image of the Wax-Tablet. Let us imagine, suggests Socrates, that our mind contains a block of wax, and that memory is in effect the retention of the impressions made in this block of wax by perceptions and other phenomena that impinge upon our consciousness. Individual recollections vary depending upon the strength of the impressions made and also upon the quality of the specific memory-apparatus involved, inasmuch as different people have more or less retentive waxen blocks. The virtue of this image is that it makes it possible to account for false opinion—or, at least, for certain types of false opinion. Socrates goes on to give an example of what he means:

32 A. W. Nightingale, “Plato’s *Gorgias* and Euripides’ *Antiope*: A Study in Generic Transformation,” *CA* 11 (1992) 121–41; cf. also R. B. Rutherford, *The Art of Plato: Ten Essays in Platonic Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA 1995) 166–68. A “substantially revised” version of Nightingale’s article appears as part of chapter 2 of her *Genres in Dialogue* (above, note 2). Nightingale (121 n. 2; also 69 n. 27 and p. 73 of *Genres in Dialogue*) approves the dating of Euripides’ play to approximately 408 B.C. But this dating cannot be upheld in light of M. Cropp and G. Fick, *Resolutions and Chronology in Euripides: The Fragmentary Tragedies*, BICS Suppl. 43 (London 1985) 75–76, who provide good reason to believe that *Antiope* cannot be as late as 408 and who argue for some time between 427 and 419. It is likely, therefore, that Plato’s acquaintance with Euripides’ play derives not from his having been present at its first performance but either from subsequent stage productions or from the written text of the play.


34 *Tht.* 193bl0–c6. The translation is that of M. J. Levett, as revised by M. Burnyeat, reprinted in Burnyeat (previous note).
I know both you and Theodorus; I have your signs upon that block of wax, like the imprints of rings. Then I see you both in the distance, but cannot see you well enough; but I am in a hurry to refer the proper sign to the proper visual perception, and so get this fitted into the trace of itself (ἐμβιβάσας προσαρμόσαι εἰς τὸ ἑαυτῆς ἵχνος), that recognition (ἀναγνώρισις) may take place. This I fail to do; I get them out of line, applying the visual perception of the one to the sign of the other.

Now, the word ἀναγνώρισις is by no means common in classical Greek. In fact, it occurs in the surviving work of only two authors from before the time of Philo of Alexandria, namely Plato and Aristotle. This is the only place in Plato where it occurs. In Aristotle it occurs some eighteen times, once in the Eudemian Ethics (1237a25) and seventeen times in the Poetics. Aristotle’s use of this word in the Poetics is, of course, familiar. He uses it to refer to the recognition of one person in a tragedy by another.35 And this, along with the words ἐμβιβάσας προσαρμόσαι εἰς τὸ ἑαυτῆς ἵχνος, led Lewis Campbell, in his commentary on the Theaetetus, to say: “These words . . . suggest an allusion to Choeph. 203–210.” And Francis Comford agrees. In his translation of the dialogue, he appends a footnote to this passage in which he says: “An allusion to the recognition of Orestes by his footmark tallying with his sister Electa’s, Aeschylus, Choephoroi, 205 ff.”36 And we would be justified in seeing an allusion here to Aeschylus’ recognition-scene if there were verbal parallels between this passage and the passage in Choephoroi—there are none—and if there were not a similar recognition-scene in Euripides’ Electra.37 In fact, the scene in Euripides’ play, which has some fun with the old-fashioned naïveté of Aeschylus’ version, is a much more likely candidate for allusion in Plato’s dialogue.

In Euripides’ Electra, the Old Man arrives on the scene in an excited state. He has been to Agamemnon’s tomb and has seen that offerings, including a lock of hair, have been left for the dead king. He hopes that Orestes has returned from exile, and he suggests that Electra go and

35 See especially Poet. 1452a29 ff. It is curious that, in his commentary on this passage, Robortello gives the following hypothetical example of what Aristotle means by “recognition” (F. Robortello, In librum Aristotelis de arte poetica explicationes [Florence 1548; repr. Munich 1968] 108): “Sciembam ego Socratem habere naevum in pectore, & cicatricem in crure, sed tamen ignorabam hunc esse Socratem, quo cum loquebar, antequam vidisset naevum, & cicatricem.” The scar on the leg is clearly a reminiscence of the Homeric Odysseus (mentioned by Aristotle at Poet. 1454b26–27), and the birthmark on the chest is, I think, from Boccaccio’s Decameron (the seventh story of the fifth day). But where did “Socrates” come from? I wonder if Robortello was thinking of our passage in the Theaetetus. Note that the young man who is recognized by the birthmark on his chest in Boccaccio is named Teodorico, and Socrates is here speaking of mistaking Theaetetus for Theodorus.

37 Tarrant (above, note 8) 83 notes that this passage in Tht. “clearly implies reference to an actual incident in an identifiable play” and compares both A. Cho. 203–10 and Eur. El. 532–33. This is unsatisfactory: Either there is “reference to an actual incident in an identifiable play,” in which case we must identify the incident and the play, or there is merely a general reference to drama, in which case we must assume (most improbably) that recognitions were routinely carried out in the theater by having one character step into the footprints of another.
compare the hair left at the tomb with her own. Electra ridicules the suggestion, saying that there is no reason to suppose that the hair of a brother and a sister will match. After all, the man’s hair will be coarse and dry from exercise in the open air, while the woman’s will be delicate as a result of the woman’s indoor life and from frequent combing. Undaunted, and blinded by hope, the Old Man next proposes that Electra compare her footprints with those of the person who has left the offerings (532–37):

Πρ. σὺ δ’ εἰς ἵχνος βάσιν ἀρβύλης σκέψασθαι βάσιν εἰ σύμμετρος σὺ ποδὶ γενήσεται, τέκνον.

Ηλ. πῶς δ’ ἂν γένοιτ' ἂν ἐν κραταιλίῳ πέδῳ γαῖας ποδῶν ἐκμακτρον; εἰ δ’ ἐστὶν τόδε, δυοίν ἀδελφοῖν ποὺς ἂν ὑμεῖς ἀν ὑμεῖς ἴσος ἀνδρός τε καὶ γυναικός, ἀλλ’ ὑφαιν κρατεῖ.

To begin with, there is here a verbal echo that is missing from the Aeschylean recognition-scene. Compare Socrates’ ἐμβιβάσασας προσαρμόσαν εἰς τὸ ἑαυτῆς ἵχνος with the Old Man’s σὺ δ’ εἰς ἵχνος βάσιν. But of greater importance is the fact that the passage in the Theaetetus is concerned with the problem of false opinion. Plato’s purpose in introducing the wax-tablet image was to suggest a model for the mechanism of misperception. And an important aspect of that model had to do with the degree to which the individual wax-tablet is capable of receiving impressions. Here is how Socrates had introduced the image, two pages before the passage quoted above: 38

Now I want you to suppose, for the sake of argument, that we have in our souls a block of wax,39 larger in one person, smaller in another, and of purer wax in one case, dirtier in another; in some men rather hard, in others rather soft... We may look upon it, then, as a gift of Memory, the mother of the Muses. We make impressions upon this of everything we wish to remember among the things we have seen or heard or thought of ourselves; we hold the wax under our perceptions and thoughts and take a stamp from them, in the way in which we take the imprints of signet rings.40 Whatever is impressed upon the wax we remember and know so long as the image remains in the wax; whatever is obliterated or cannot be impressed (ὅ δ’ ἂν... μὴ οἶδον τε γενήται ἐκμαγηγναί), we forget and do not know.

And this is just the point that the sceptical Electra is making, in criticizing the Old Man and, through him, Euripides’ predecessor, Aeschylus. The ground in the vicinity of Agamemnon’s tomb, she implies,

38 Thht. 191c8–e1. Again, the translation is that of M. J. Levett (see above, note 34).
39 Thht. 191c9 κήριον ἐκμαγεῖον; compare ἐκμακτρόν, Eur. El. 535.
40 ὁσπερ δακτυλίων σημεῖα; cf. 193c1 (translated above) ὁσπερ δακτυλίων... τὰ σημεῖα. I wonder if Plato’s repeated reference to signet rings in this context was prompted, in part, by a recollection of the recognition-scene in the Electra-play of Sophocles; cf. Soph. El. 1222–23 τὴν δὲ προσβλέψαμα μου / σφραγίδα πατρὸς ἐκμαθ’ εἰ σφή λέγω.
is hard and rocky. She even uses an Aeschylean word (κραταίλεως) to describe it.\textsuperscript{41} Therefore, even if there are footprints (which Electra doubts) the chances of mistaken identification are great.\textsuperscript{42} In Aeschylus’ \textit{Choephoroi}, on the contrary, Electra actually \textit{sees} the footprints, and affirms that they are similar (206 ὁμοῖοι) to her own. She makes the match that Euripides’ Electra, and Plato’s Socrates, think is difficult, if not impossible. And it is for this reason clear that Plato had in mind Euripides’ play, rather than Aeschylus’, when he devised his striking image of the wax-tablet. I should point out that, as usual, the last laugh is had by Euripides, the ποιήσας σοφός. For Electra is wrong: Regardless of whether there are clear and distinct footprints in the rocky ground, and regardless of whether any such footprints match Electra’s own feet, Orestes \textit{has} in fact returned and has left an offering at the tomb.\textsuperscript{43} But this, of course, only serves to confirm the view expressed by Socrates, that false opinion is possible, perhaps even inevitable.

Let me append here a very tentative and speculative suggestion. It is clear from \textit{Apology} 19c and \textit{Symposium} 221b that Plato was quite familiar with Aristophanes’ \textit{Clouds}.\textsuperscript{44} In that play, “Socrates” is said (149–52) to measure the distance of a flea’s jump by making an impression in wax of the flea’s feet. The combination of Socrates, wax and footprints both here and in the passage from \textit{Theaetetus} seems too much to be coincidental. When we add to this the fact that elsewhere in \textit{Clouds} Electra’s recognition of her brother is mentioned,\textsuperscript{45} the possibility suggests itself that Aristophanes’ comedy should join the inventory of literary influences on Plato’s image of the wax-tablet. One can imagine that Plato, wishing to defend his beloved teacher against Aristophanes’ imputations of silliness and triviality, has deliberately transmuted the comic Socrates’ bathetic use of waxen impressions into an impressively profound metaphor for intellectual activity. And we may catch sight of Plato doing the same sort of

\textsuperscript{41}It has been suggested that the word κραταίλεως, which is attested only here and in Aeschylus (Ag. 666 and fr. 167 Radt, although the latter is not certainly Aeschylean), probably occurred in that portion of the prologue to \textit{Choephoroi} that has not survived: J. Jouanna, in \textit{Mélanges offerts à Léopold Sédar Senghor} (Dakar 1977) 198, and M. L. West, \textit{BICS} 27 (1980) 20–21. I continue to find the suggestion attractive, despite the objections expressed by V. Di Benedetto, \textit{Hermes} 121 (1993) 30–31.

\textsuperscript{42}I wonder if it is possible that, in addition to the intertextual relationship that this passage has with the \textit{Choephoroi}, Euripides is also alluding to Hdt. 4. 82, in which reference is made to a marvelous footprint of Heracles, two cubits in length, ἐν πέντε ἑβαίον. (The Herodotean passage is also subjected to some gentle mockery in Lucian, \textit{VHist.} 1. 7.) For the likelihood that Book 4 of Herodotus antedates Eur. \textit{El.}, see \textit{ICS} 10 (1985) 8–9.

\textsuperscript{43}S. Goldhill, \textit{Reading Greek Tragedy} (Cambridge 1986) 247: “The scene does not merely mock the Aeschylean passage . . . but also mocks the mocker for the false conclusions her logic induces.”


\textsuperscript{45}Ar. \textit{Nub.} 534–36. H. J. Newiger, “Elektra in Aristophanes’ Wolken,” \textit{Hermes} 89 (1961) 422–30 argues that Aristophanes is here defending Aeschylus against the criticism of his \textit{Choephoroi} that Euripides includes in his \textit{Electra}, which could have been produced before Aristophanes composed these lines of his parabasis.
thing elsewhere in this dialogue, as well. In speaking of the philosopher, Socrates says:

His mind, having come to the conclusion that all these things are of little or no account, spurns them and pursues its winged way, as Pindar says, throughout the universe, "in the deeps below the earth" and "in the heights above the heaven"; geometrizing upon earth, measuring its surfaces, astronomising in the heavens . . .

This is surely an elevated and intellectualized version of Aristophanes' ludicrous portrayal of "Socrates" on his first appearance in Clouds (225–34), aloft in a basket so as to avoid having his intellect weighed down by the gross and moist emanations from the earth. And it may be that the famous image of Socrates as midwife (Th. 149a, with frequent references elsewhere in the dialogue as well) was inspired by the incident in the Clouds where the disciple of "Socrates" reproaches Strepsiades for causing the miscarriage of an idea. It is, however, equally possible, and in some instances perhaps even more likely, that we are dealing here not with the influence of Aristophanes on Plato but with genuine features of the historical Socrates that are reflected in Plato and satirized by Aristophanes. This has frequently been maintained in the case of the midwife-image, and could perhaps be the case with the air-borne Socrates and the metaphor of the wax-tablet as well.

But let us turn now to another Platonic passage where, I am convinced, Euripidean influence can be detected. Again, this is no ordinary Platonic passage. It is the end of the Phaedo, where Socrates' preparations for drinking the fatal hemlock are described. The lengthy conversation that forms the subject of this dialogue is concluded when Socrates says (115a 3–8):

"ομείς μέν ὄν, ἔφη, ὡ Συμμία τε καὶ Κέβης καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι, εἰς αὐθίς ἐν τινὶ χρόνῳ ἕκαστοι περεύσεσθε· ἐμὲ δὲ νῦν ἥδη καλεὶ, φαίν ἂν ἀνήρ"

46 Th. 173e, in Levett's translation (above, note 34).

47 Nub. 137 ἔξημβλωκας; cf. Th. 150e5 ἔξημβλοσαν. That Plato was inspired by Aristophanes here is mentioned as a (remote) possibility by Tarrant (above, note 44) 122.

48 M. F. Burnyeat, "Socratic Midwifery, Platonic Inspiration," BICS 24 (1977) 7–16 has issued a serious challenge to the view that Socrates himself used the comparison with a midwife. See, however, J. Tomin, "Socratic Midwifery," CQ 37 (1987) 97–102 and, most recently, D. Sider, "Did Socrates Call himself a Midwife? The Evidence of the Clouds," in K. J. Boudouris (ed.), The Philosophy of Socrates (Athens 1991) 333–38. I am inclined to agree with Sider in seeing the scene beginning at Nub. 633 as a birthing scene, and I think that his case can be strengthened by noting the occurrence of the very rare verb ἀνείλλαο in the Symposium (206d6; cf. ἐλλε Nub. 761), in the passage concerned with τόκος ἐν καλῷ (206b7–8), perhaps with word-play on the name of Ἐλείθυια (206d2).

49 Compare the myth at Phd. 109e ff. Nor is it Socrates alone who is represented as being capable of taking wing. Socrates' disciple Chaerephon owed his nickname The Bat not, I think, to "his sallow, unhealthy-looking complexion" (so Dunbar on Ar. Av. 1294–95), but to his fanatical emulation of Socrates in allowing his psyche to take wing and to flutter aloft, away from his body. (This seems to be the point of the joke at Ar. Av. 1553–64; for souls compared to bats, see H. Od. 24. 6.)
tragicōς, ἡ εἰμαρμένη, καὶ σχεδόν τί μοι ἄρα τραπέσθαι πρὸς τὸ λουτρόν· δοκεῖ γὰρ δὴ βέλτιον εἶναι λουσάμενον πειν τὸ φάρμακον καὶ μὴ πράγματα ταῖς γυναιξὶ παρέχειν νεκρὸν λουσέν.

Given Plato’s thoroughgoing denunciation of tragedy in the Republic, it is surprising to find him invoking tragedy in so memorable a context. And yet the allusion to tragedy is explicit, and it is an allusion to Euripides. Wilamowitz50 considers that this may be an allusion to Alcestis 254–55, where Alcestis, imagining that she sees the ferryman of the dead, says ἔχων χέρ’ ἐπὶ κοντῷ Χάρων μ’ ἡδὴ καλεῖ· Τί μὲλλετι;51 As we can see, the verbal parallel is not terribly strong, being confined to the words ἡδὴ καλεῖ, and some scholars have even doubted that there is an allusion to any surviving tragedy. In his note on 115a5 φοίη ἄν ἄνθρωπος, for example, John Burnet says, “The phrase does not occur in any extant tragedy.”52 But Burnet does not indicate what phrase he means. As we have seen, the phrase ἡδὴ καλεῖ does occur in Euripides’ Alcestis. If Burnet means, however, the phrase ἡδὴ καλεῖ ἡ εἰμαρμένη, it is true that it does not occur in any extant tragedy. And, indeed, Kannicht and Snell include the words ἐμὲ δὲ νῦν ἡδὴ καλεῖ . . . ἡ εἰμαρμένη in Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta as fr. adesp. 348d, with a note in the apparatus recording Snell’s suggestion that the original text read e.g. ἡδὴ καλεῖ με ←—→ εἰμαρμένη. In fact, though, the noun εἰμαρμένη is not a tragic word.53 It is introduced here and at fr. adesp. 348b, on the strength of a suggestion made by E. R. Dodds:54 “Though the word [εἰμαρμένη] is not found as a noun before Plato, it seems to be drawn from the language of poetry: this is the most natural interpretation of Phaedo 115a5 ἐμὲ δὲ νῦν ἡδὴ καλεῖ, φοίη ἄν ἄνθρωπος, ἡ εἰμαρμένη. And it may be that there is a reminiscence here of some tragic line which has become proverbial, such as εἰμαρμένην <γὰρ> οὐδ’ ἄν εἶξ <πτὸ> ἕκφυγοι.” But it is not correct to say that the word is not found as a noun before Plato. Robert

50 U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (ed.), Euripides, Herakles, 4th ed. (Berlin 1959) I 25 n. 44; cf. Lucas (above, note 12) 48; Funke (above, note 12) 236. For Plato’s familiarity with Eur. Anc., see my comments at C&M 36 (1985) 56. That the references to Alcestis in Plato’s Symposium are indeed allusions to Euripides’ play, rather than to some other version of the myth, is supported by the discussion of the play by R. Garner, From Homer to Tragedy: The Art of Allusion in Greek Poetry (London 1990) 64–78.

51 Note that ἄνθρωπος is not necessarily incompatible with a reference to the character of Alcestis. S. Halliwell (PCPhS 30 [1984] 69 n. 31) aptly comments: “ἄνθρωπος ἡ εἰμαρμένη is taken by Burnet and Hackforth to mean a character in tragedy, but it could equally well mean a tragedian or someone using tragic language.” He further notes that “Hegelochus, a tragic actor, is called ὁ τραγικός in Sannyrion fr. 8.”

52 J. Burnet, Plato’s Phaedo (Oxford 1911) 143.

53 Even the participle εἰμαρμένον is surprisingly rare in tragedy, not being attested for either Euripides or Aeschylus (Ag. 913 is corrupt), and occurring only once in Sophocles (Tr. 169; note, however, that Dawes follows Bergk in deleting 169–70). The only secure attestation is in fr. adesp. 352, although Martin West has suggested that that fragment belongs to the Prometheus Pyrrhoros, adding, “I suspect that the gnomological tradition has substituted εἰμαρμένον for περισσόν” (JHS 99 [1979] 134 n. 20).

Renehan, in taking issue with Dodds’ formulation,\(^{55}\) points to the occurrence at Antiphon 1. 21 of the expression πρὸ τῆς εἰμιριμένης, which also calls into question Dodds’ assertion that it is “drawn from the language of poetry.” Indeed, the noun εἰμιριμένη occurs elsewhere in Plato (Th. 169c5, Tim. 89c5, Lg. 873c4, 904c8), so that we appear to be dealing with a Platonic, rather than a tragic, location.\(^{56}\) The passage at Gorgias 512e may be nothing more than a reminiscence of Prometheus 518 ὦκουν ἀν ἐκφύγοι γε τὴν πεπρωμένην, with the (Platonic) τὴν εἰμιριμένην substituted for τὴν πεπρωμένην (which word is not found in Plato). Likewise, the appearance of ἥ εἰμιριμένη in Phaedo 115a is more reasonably attributed to Plato himself than to his tragic source. And that tragic source, as Wilamowitz correctly suggested, is Euripides’ Alcestis.\(^{57}\)

An examination of the context in Plato’s dialogue will bear this out.

In his translation of the Phaedo, Reginald Hackforth renders the relevant portion of the above passage as follows: “but now ‘tis I am called,’ as a tragic hero might say, by destiny; and it is just about time I made my way to the bath.”\(^{58}\) Hackforth’s translation appears to go out of its way to point a contrast between the “tragic” tone of the call of destiny and the routine mention of the bath. And that impression is confirmed by a footnote, which reads: “The abrupt way in which Socrates ‘comes down to earth’ is perhaps intended to suggest his characteristic avoidance of pomposity and staginess.” And this view of the situation is shared by Christopher Rowe, who says in his recent commentary on this passage:\(^{59}\)

“...And now it’s me that fate calls, [as] a man in a tragic play would say,” which suggests that he himself is in a “tragic” or serious plight; but on his account, of course, he is not—and so he goes on, “and now I think it’s just about time for me to make for the bath” (a6), as if nothing out of the ordinary were happening.

But, for Socrates, a bath is something out of the ordinary. As Rowe himself points out, Aristodemus in the Symposium (174a) comments on the unusual appearance of Socrates at Agathon’s banquet, bathed and shod. And the


\(^{56}\) I have been unable to see W. Gundel, Beiträge zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Begriffe “Ananke” und “Heimarmene” (Giessen 1914).

\(^{57}\) It may be objected that, in Ael. 254–55, the subject of καλεῖ is the ferryman Charon, whereas in Phd. 115a5 it is “fate.” But Charon has no place in a Platonic dialogue, and the substitution of a more impersonal agent, particularly at this juncture, is entirely appropriate. (Compare the unspecified θεός at Soph. OC 1626–28 who summons—καλεῖ—Oedipus and says, like Euripides’ Charon, τί μελλόμεν χωρεῖν.) In any case, a fragment of Timotheus’ Niobe (PMG 786 Page) indicates how easy is the transition from the ferryman of the dead to an impersonal “fate”: Χάρων σχολάζειν ὕπε ἔγα ... καλεῖ δὲ μοῖρα νύχιος; cf. also C. Sourvinou-Inwood, “Reading” Greek Death: To the End of the Classical Period (Oxford 1995) 319–21.

\(^{58}\) R. Hackforth, Plato’s Phaedo (Cambridge 1955) 184–85.

epithet applied to Socrates by the chorus in Aristophanes’ *Birds* is ἀλοῦτος. Plato is most emphatically not portraying Socrates as saying: “Well, time for my execution. I think I’ll just go wash up first.” Rather, the passing allusion to Euripides’ *Alcestis* helps to put the matter of Socrates’ personal hygiene in a very different, and more serious, light.

For Alcestis, too, bathed herself before she went to meet her death. In the first episode of Euripides’ play, Alcestis’ serving-woman responds to the chorus’ comment that Alcestis is by far the most admirable (ἄριστη 151) woman on the face of the earth by saying πῶς δ’ οὐκ ἄριστη; And she goes on to describe in detail the preparations that Alcestis made behind closed doors when it came time for her death. First (159–61) she bathed and put on fresh clothes. Then (162–69) she stood in front of the hearth and addressed a prayer to Hestia, begging the goddess to look after the children she was leaving behind. Next (170–73), she went about the palace, praying at each of the altars, without tears and without lamentation. The magnitude of the impending disaster did not even cause a change in her noble complexion (173–74 οὐδὲ τούτων / κακὸν μεθίστη χρωτός εὔειδή φῶςιν). In contrast to Alcestis’ remarkable composure, all the other members of the household wept piteously and copiously (192–93). Precisely the same picture is painted by Plato in the last few pages of the *Phaedo*. Socrates bathed (116a3, 8, b7), then gave directions concerning the arrangements for his children’s future (116b3; cf. 115b1–4). When he was given the hemlock to drink, he took it with no change of complexion or expression (117b3–5 οὐδὲν τρέσας οὐδὲ διαφθείρας οὐτε τοῦ χρώματος οὔτε τοῦ προσώπου), and then prayed to the gods (117c1–3). Everyone present, however, broke down in tears. All these similarities, along with the explicit reference to the tragic stage, make it certain that Plato has modeled his description of Socrates’ final moments on Euripides’ portrayal of Alcestis. Lest anyone object that Plato is accurately recounting the details of an actual event, let us not forget that Plato tells us explicitly in the *Phaedo* (59b10) that he was not himself an eye-witness to Socrates’ death.

Plato gives us Socrates’ motive in bathing before drinking the poison. He has Socrates say (115a7–9), “it is better to have a bath before drinking the poison rather than give the women the trouble of washing a dead body.” And we are entitled to assume that this is Alcestis’ motive as well: The serving-woman’s account, which includes the reference to the bath, is all designed to substantiate her assertion that Alcestis is the finest (152 ἄριστη)

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61 For what follows, see Stella (above, note 7) 96, who was the first, as far as I am aware, to have pointed out the similarities between these two passages. Unfortunately, her discussion seems to have remained virtually unread.

62 Phd. 117c5–d6; cf. Stella (above, note 7) 99. Socrates immediately instructed them, however, to stop their lamentation, as it was necessary for him to die év εὐφημίας. Compare Soph. *Trach.* 1199–1202, with the observations of R. Fowler (reviewing M. Davies’ commentary), *BMCR* 2 (1991) 342.
of women. And we may recall the famous closing words of the Phaedo: ἡδὲ ἡ τελευτή, ὦ Ἐχέκρατες, τοῦ ἔταιρου ἠμῖν ἐγένετο, ἀνδρός, ὡς ἠμεῖς φαίμεν ἀν, τῶν τότε ὄν ἐπειράθημεν ἥριστον καὶ ἄλλως φρονιμιστάτου καὶ δικαιοτάτου. 63 Alcestis and Socrates did not bathe in order to demonstrate their sang-froid in the face of death. Their bath was an indication of their virtue. They did it to spare others the trouble of having to bathe their corpses. 64 For the ritual bathing of the corpse was an invariable element of the last rites for the dead in ancient Greece. 65 I am aware of only three occasions on which this bathing was carried out prospectively, that is to say, before death: the two instances that we have been considering and the case of Oedipus, in Sophocles’ Oedipus at Colonus. Toward the end of that play, the messenger tells us that the cranky old Oedipus, sensing that death was near, ordered his two daughters to fetch water for a bath. Obediently, they brought water and they bathed their father and dressed him in preparation for his death (1598–1603). This is as it should be, as it is normally up to the female relatives of the deceased to carry out this rite. In the case of Oedipus, however, there is one reason and one reason alone that the bath takes place before, rather than after, death. For the messenger tells us (1648–49) that, after he received his divine summons, Oedipus simply disappeared. There was to be no corpse to prepare for burial, so the ritual bath needed to be performed, by Oedipus’ daughters, while he was still alive. Thus, Plato’s Socrates and Euripides’ Alcestis appear to be the only characters who bathe themselves in anticipation of their death. 66 And it is clear that the one account is dependent upon the other.

But it is not sufficient merely to point out the connection between these two texts. We must ask ourselves why Plato used Euripides’ drama in this way. Once the question is asked, the answer is immediately apparent. The entire conversation of the Phaedo was concerned with the demonstration of the immortality of the soul. Socrates has just spent the previous fifty pages

63 The vocative (ὡ Ἐχέκρατες) reminds us that the Phaedo is itself, like Alc. 152–98, in effect a “messenger speech”; cf. Stella (above, note 7) 93–95.
64 D. J. Stewart, “Socrates’ Last Bath,” Journal of the History of Philosophy 10 (1972) 253–59, assumes that this motive is inadequate. He asks (253), “Why does Socrates take a bath in the Phaedo (116α)? Not, why does he say he is going to take one—to save the women trouble after he is dead—but why does Plato bother to mention this seemingly trivial incident?” Stewart notes the parallel between Socrates’ bath and that of Alcestis, but he mentions the parallel only because he seems to think that Eur. Alc. provides evidence for a ritual bath as an element of Orphic ritual (256). It is, of course, not Orphic, but general Greek custom; see the following note.
66 In Sophocles’ Ajax the hero bathes himself before committing suicide (654–56). But he explains that this is a matter of purifying himself from the stains of the slaughter that he has committed (cf. line 10 and R. Parker, Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion (Oxford 1983) 216–17, 317), so that he can evade the wrath of Athena. And, in any case, the proper ritual bathing will in fact take place for Ajax after his death (1404–06).
trying to persuade his companions that death is not the end. By alluding to Alcestis just before he drinks the hemlock, Socrates invokes the most—indeed, the only—appropriate mythological exemplum. For, in Euripides’ play, Alcestis does not in fact die (or, at least, her death is not permanent); she is rescued from the underworld by the hero Heracles. As John Heath, reminds us: “There is no well-known individual in all Greek mythology except Alcestis who dies and is returned to human life without cosmic repercussions which are soon remedied. There are plenty of symbolic and metaphorical rebirths . . . , but simple and unconditional resurrection to a second earthly life is limited to Alcestis.” And so the association of Socrates with Alcestis enhances our recognition that Socrates will not in fact die. As so often in the dialogues, Plato relies on literary means, as well as on reasoned argument, to convey his message.

Before leaving the subject of the Phaedo and its indebtedness to Euripides’ Alcestis, let me note briefly that this relationship may help us to shed some light on the mysterious last words of Socrates (Phd. 118a7–8), “Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius; don’t neglect to pay off this debt.” For Alcestis opens with a conspicuous mention of Asclepius (3–4), and there are two further references to him in the course of the play (124, 970). Clearly there is a thematic significance to Asclepius in this play, as he is supposed to have been responsible for restoring the dead to life. And surely this is the reason for his presence on Socrates’ lips and mind in his very last moments. It will be clear that I am not sympathetic to the recent attempt by Glenn Most to argue that Socrates’ final words are an indication of his clairvoyant vision regarding Plato’s recovery from illness. But, at the same time, I find that there is much of value in Most’s discussion. Particularly cogent are Most’s criticisms (101) of the view that sees the words as expressing Socrates’ gratitude to Asclepius for curing him of the sickness that is life, his insistence (103–04) that the obligation referred to by Socrates reflects something that occurred in the past rather than something hoped for in the future and his emphasis (105–06) on the plurals in Socrates’ statement: ὅψείλομεν, ἀπόδοτε, ἀμελήσπτε. Most is also right to call our attention (104–05) to the importance of the sequence of events: Socrates mentions the debt to Asclepius after he has drunk the hemlock; either, therefore, he has only now, rather carelessly, remembered a debt that has been owed for some time or the debt has only now been incurred. But

Most’s own solution does not adequately take account of this. Most refers (108–09) to “those about to die,” to “the point of death” and to “proximity to death.” But at the same time he reminds us of Socrates’ prophetic utterance at his trial, which took place some thirty days (see Xen. Mem. 4. 8. 2) earlier. And he neglects to mention Socrates’ prophetic dream (Crito 43d–44b), two days before the events described in the Phaedo. Thus, “the point of death,” at which time one is supposed to possess a special prophetic ability, must be extended to include a period of at least a month. In speaking of the prophecy recorded at Apology 39c–d, Most says, apparently anticipating this objection, that Socrates’ “death is indeed certain but not yet imminent” (109). But the wording at Theaetetus 142c4–5 (not mentioned by Most), where Eucleides says ἔθαύμασα Σακράτους ὡς μαντικῶς ἄλλα τε δὴ εἶπε καὶ περὶ τούτου, clearly indicates that Plato wishes to represent Socrates as having been generally and genuinely prescient. And, in any case, the prophetic occurrences documented in Apology, Crito and Theaetetus all precede Socrates’ drinking of the hemlock. If he could have a clairvoyant vision, before drinking the hemlock, of the fate in store for those who voted for his condemnation, of the time of arrival of the sacred ship from Delos and of the important contribution that Theaetetus would make in the field of mathematics, he could equally well have had an inspiration before drinking the hemlock concerning Plato’s health. “The sequence,” as Most himself (108) puts it, “first the draught, then the words, remains unintelligible.”

But the sequence, indeed the fact that the words were not uttered until the numbness reached Socrates’ abdomen, is perfectly intelligible if, as I am convinced, the debt to Asclepius could not be incurred until the very moment of death. Earlier in the dialogue, Socrates had provided an argument, known as the “cyclical” or the “antapodosis” argument, for the immortality of the soul. In conversation with Cebes, Socrates secures agreement that there must be a process that balances (71ε8 ἀνταποδώσομεν) the process of dying, namely the process of being restored to life (ε13 τὸ ἀναβιώσκεσθαι; cf. 72a1–2, c8, d8). Socrates goes on to give additional arguments, but Simmias indicates (85b–d) that he and Cebes do not feel quite certain that the soul is indeed immortal; further discussion is required in order to eliminate all possible objections. Needless to say, this is perfectly acceptable to Socrates, who is always willing to investigate and to discuss. He asks the two Thebans to articulate their concerns, which they do with such cogency that a pall of depression and scepticism shrouds the entire company (88c). At this point, there is a brief interlude, as Phaedo breaks off his narrative and Echecrates urges him to continue his report of Socrates’ final conversation right through to the end. We are, I think, intended to recall the similar interlude in Book 11 of the Odyssey, where Odysseus breaks off the account of his journey to the underworld and Alcinous urges him to continue and to relate fully his return from the land of the dead. Phaedo continues by telling Echecrates how Socrates healed
cock the expression Philosophy one of here composition Socrates' the dead (1) thank-offering the famous the brought well so (89a6 ἵσωστο) their despondency. Socrates began, according to Phaedo, by turning attention away from the death of an individual man and toward the (apparent) death of the argument itself. They would truly have cause to go into mourning, Socrates said, if the argument expired and could not be brought back to life (89b10 ἀναβιώσασθαι). Socrates' attempts to revive the moribund argument are entirely successful, and both Simmias and Cebes find that they are fully persuaded that the soul is, indeed, immortal and imperishable. And yet, Simmias, Cebes and Socrates agree (107a–b) that it is essential to continue subjecting the argument to further scrutiny and to pursue the inquiry to the utmost degree of which human nature is capable. As long, in other words, as we can humanly do so, we are obligated to test the argument to see if, indeed, it still holds. When we can no longer do so—and this is the point that Socrates has reached when he utters his famous last words—we are entitled to conclude that the argument has been well and truly resurrected, and that the inevitable consequence of death is the restoration of life. The attainment of this conclusion is at least as worthy of a thank-offering as the discovery of the theorem of the square on the hypotenuse, in gratitude for which Pythagoras is reported to have sacrificed an ox. It is probable that the tradition regarding Pythagoras' thank-offering is as old as the fourth century B.C. If it antedates the composition of the Phaedo, it may be that Plato is deliberately alluding to it here and representing Socrates as surpassing his philosophical forebear by (1) making an even more momentous discovery, (2) offering a more modest sacrificial victim, and one more in keeping with the simplicity demanded of the philosophical life, and (3) specifying a particularly appropriate recipient of the sacrifice, inasmuch as Asclepius was noted for having restored the dead to life.

To return, then, to the matter of the influence of Euripides on Plato, one final example will illustrate the profound indebtedness of the philosopher to the dramatist. Books 2–10 of the Republic take as their point of departure one of the most striking, and one of the earliest, "thought-experiments" in the history of philosophy. In order to examine the question of whether

71 P. C. Santilli, "Socrates and Asclepius: The Final Words," International Studies in Philosophy 22.3 (1990) 29–39, is right to see the importance of this passage in connection with Socrates' last words (35). But his discussion is vitiated by (among other things) his conviction that "we cannot seriously believe that Plato would have wanted us to think that Socrates had contracted a real debt to the demi-god of a vulgar cult or had concluded his life with this as an expression of his religious devotion" (36). For the Platonic Socrates, it is most certainly not the case (as Santilli believes) that philosophical investigation supersedes religious devotion.


73 In addition, the sacrificial victim is itself particularly appropriate to the discovery, if the cock was considered to be a symbol of resurrection in Plato's day, as it manifestly was at a later time; cf. F. Cumont, "A propos des dernières paroles de Socrate," CRAI (1943) 112–26, at 124–25. It should be noted that, as Cumont (122) well points out, the text does not state explicitly that the cock is to be a sacrificial victim, but that does seem the most natural inference.
justice is really preferable to injustice, Glauccon requires Socrates to respond to a hypothetical scenario: Let us imagine two men, one completely unjust, but with a reputation for utmost uprightness, and the other a model of justice, but with the greatest reputation for wickedness; then let us see which of them is better off. It is essential that the just man have a reputation for injustice; for, if he were reputed to be just, it would not be clear whether he was acting justly in order to reap the rewards that come of a reputation for justice or was acting justly for the sake of justice itself. And so, says Glauccon (361c3–d1, in Cornford's translation):

He must be stripped of everything but justice, and denied every advantage the other [that is, the unjust man] enjoyed. Doing no wrong, he must have the worst reputation for wrong-doing (μηδὲν γὰρ ἄδικων δοξαν ἐχέτω τὴν μεγίστην ἄδικιας), to test whether his virtue is proof against all that comes of having a bad name; and under this lifelong imputation of wickedness, let him hold on his course of justice unwavering to the point of death (ἔτω ἀμετάστατος μέχρι θανάτου, δοκῶν μὲν έίναι ἄδικος διὰ βίου, ὅν δὲ δίκαιος).

To a certain extent, of course, Socrates is himself the obvious representative of the just man; he was, as Phaedo puts it, in reality "the best and wisest and most just of men," yet his conviction and execution, as well as his portrayal in the Clouds as an unscrupulous charlatan, provide a clear indication that many in Athens regarded him as a danger to the community.

But there is another representative, one which, I am convinced, also served as Plato's model. In 412 B.C., when Plato was in all probability fifteen years old, Euripides' Helen was first performed in Athens. In this play it is revealed that, contrary to all accounts, Helen was not in fact abducted by Paris, nor did she ever go to Troy. Instead, she has maintained her chastity and her uprightness despite trials and deprivations that have lasted for some years. The gods have wafted her away to Egypt, where she is besieged by a barbarian king who wishes to marry her and to cause her to be in fact what she already is by reputation, namely a wanton and adulterous woman. For, meanwhile, the gods have created a phantom in Helen's likeness, and it is the phantom that has gone off with Paris and has caused the Trojan War, making "Helen" the object of universal reprobation. In the first episode of Euripides' play, Helen explains to the chorus the situation she is in. She says (269–70) ἥμεις δὲ πολλαῖς συμφοραῖς ἐγκεκριμένα / πρῶτον μὲν οὐκ οὖς ἀδίκος, εἰμὶ δυσκληνής κτλ. Indeed, her circumstances could not be worse: The exiled Teucer had earlier arrived from Troy and told Helen (131–42) that her husband Menelaus is reported

74 Compare Callicles' admonition to Socrates of what would be likely to happen to him if someone were to bring charges against him in court, φάσκων ἄδικεν μηδὲν ἄδικοντα (Gorg. 486a9); cf. Dodds (above, note 54) 370, on Gorg. 521e6–522a3.

75 For the likelihood of Plato's familiarity with this play, see my comments at SO 60 (1985) 18, 31 n. 12.
to have died, that her mother Leda has hanged herself out of shame at Helen’s disgraceful reputation and that her brothers, the Dioscuri, also are no longer alive, they too having perhaps committed suicide on account of their sister’s infamy.

This is, then, precisely one half of the “thought-experiment” that we see envisioned in Book 2 of Plato’s Republic, and the outcome of the experiment is exactly the one that Plato approves in Book 10. Just as the Myth of Er shows that the just man is ultimately rewarded and attains a blessed state regardless of the reputation he has among men, so Euripides’ Helen ends with the assurance that the much-reviled heroine will be rewarded after her death for her virtue by achieving, like her brothers the Dioscuri, divine status (1666–67). But it is not the hope of rewards that motivates Helen’s virtue. She has no reason to maintain her chastity and her faithfulness to her lawful husband Menelaus—especially once she is convinced that he is dead—except her innate goodness. And yet her virtue is so strong that she is prepared to resist the advances of the barbaric Theoclymenus even to the death.

Nor is she alone in exhibiting perfect moral uprightness in the face of outrageous tribulations. Theoclymenus’ sister, the remarkable character Theonoe, who was undoubtedly invented by Euripides, agrees to assist the virtuous Helen, despite her brother’s threats. She has, so she tells us, a great shrine of justice (μέγα ἱερὸν τῆς δίκης 1002) that abides in her character, and nothing can induce her to act contrary to what is right. She will in fact be conferring a benefit on her wicked brother, even though he will not think it a benefit, by requiring him to act in accordance with justice (1020–21): εὐφρεγετῶ γὰρ κεῖνον οὐ δοκοῦσ’ ὀμοὶ, ἔκ δυσσεβείας ὀσιον εἰ τιθημὶ νῦν. It is difficult not to think in this connection of the Socrates of Plato’s Apology. After the judges have cast their votes and have found Socrates guilty as charged, the prosecution asks for the death penalty, and it is incumbent upon the defendant to propose an alternative penalty. Despite the guilty verdict, Socrates proposes as the penalty that which is an appropriate reward for someone who has conferred the greatest benefit on the city (εὐφρεγετῶν τῆς μεγίστην εὐφρεγεσίαν 36c4), namely maintenance at public expense in the prytaneion. And the benefit that Socrates has conferred upon the citizens of Athens is that, like Euripides’ Theonoe, he has attempted to persuade each of them, against their will, to strive to become as virtuous and as sensible as possible (ὅπως ὡς βέλτιστος καὶ φρονιμοῖτατος ἔσοιτο 36c7–8). It is surprising that the connection between Theonoe and Socrates has not been more generally emphasized. After all,

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76 So M. Pohlenz, Die griechische Tragödie, 2nd ed. (Göttingen 1954) I 387: “Sokrates glauben wir hier zu vernehmen, dem das Vorteilhafte und das Sittlichgute, Gutes tun und sittlich fördern gleichbedeutend ist.”

she is introduced in Euripides’ play as someone who possesses complete and perfect knowledge (τὰ θεία γὰρ / τὰ τ’ ὄντα καὶ μέλλοντα πάντ’ ἡπίστατο 13–14; cf. 317, 922–23), and she ought therefore to stand as the ideal test-case for the Socratic paradox whereby knowledge and virtue are identified. And indeed, in true Socratic fashion, the omniscient Theonoe does act virtuously.

The ancients saw a connection between Socrates and Euripides. That Stories even circulated to the effect that the philosopher helped the dramatist to write his tragedies. That, of course, is pure fantasy. But it is a fact that Socrates and Euripides were contemporaries. And they were highly visible figures in Athens at the time when Plato’s sensibilities were being formed. The influence that Socrates exercised on Plato is obvious. I have tried to suggest, by looking at a small number of specific instances, that Euripides too played an important role in influencing the intellectual development of the young Plato.

Let me conclude by moving from specifics to the more dangerous and speculative level of generalization. It is clear that Plato had a profoundly ambivalent attitude toward tragedy: On the one hand, his suspicion of its imitative character prompted him to eliminate it from the ideal state constructed in the Republic; on the other hand, he adopted that very imitative character in the genre he chose to employ for his philosophical writings. Even the ancients recognized, and attempted to account for, the strikingly dramatic form of the Platonic dialogues. Diogenes Laertius quotes Dicaearchus, who lived as early as the fourth century B.C., to the effect that, before he met Socrates and turned to philosophy, Plato wrote poetry, at first dithyrambs, then lyric poetry and tragedy. This, too, is likely to be pure fantasy, just like the story, attributed also to Dicaearchus, that Plato wrestled in his youth, and even that he competed at the Isthmian Games. But stories like this about ancient authors are generally not created out of thin air. There is usually something, especially something in the writings of the author in question, that prompts the story. And in the case

78 See V. Martin, “EURIPIDE et Ménandre face à leur publique,” in Euripide, Entretiens Fond. Hardt 6 (Vandoeuvres–Genève 1960) 266–69, for evidence that this perception had already begun to take hold in the time of their contemporary, Aristophanes.


80 D.L. 3. 4–5 = Dicaearchus, fr. 40 Wehlri. Diogenes Laertius continues with an absurd account (3. 6, not from Dicaearchus), according to which Euripides accompanied Plato on his supposed journey to Egypt.

of Plato it is fairly obvious what that something was. In the first place, as we have noted, Plato’s writings are in the dramatic form of the dialogue. But, beyond that, there are two sequences of dialogues, one that survives and one that was only projected, that are in the form of trilogies. The one that survives is the sequence Theaetetus, Sophist, Statesman. These three dialogues are explicitly connected with one another, and are obviously intended to be read as a trilogy:82

In both Theaetetus (183e) and Sophist (217c) Socrates mentions his long-past meeting with the aged Parmenides. In the Sophist the three speakers of the Theaetetus meet again “according to yesterday’s agreement” and introduce the visitor who is asked to explain the nature and mutual relations of three types: Sophist, Statesman and Philosopher; and the Statesman begins with explicit references to the Sophist, and includes others at 258b, 266d, 284b and 286b. Theaetetus talks to Socrates in the Theaetetus, to the visitor in the Sophist, and is present but “let off” in the Statesman, where his place is taken by the younger Socrates, who has been silently present at the two earlier discussions.

It makes little difference whether these three dialogues were conceived as a unity from the start or, as seems more likely, Sophist and Statesman were added on to an already existing Theaetetus.83 What matters is that, when Sophist and Statesman were completed, they formed a connected trilogy, with Theaetetus as the first of the group. At the end of his life, Plato planned a second trilogy, Timaeus, Critias, Hermocrates, of which only the Timaeus and part of the Critias, which breaks off in the middle of a sentence, were completed.84 Also at the end of his life Plato composed his forbidding dialogue, The Laws, in which the Athenian says that the lawgivers are the true poets, who have composed the best and most beautiful tragedy (817b), making it clear that the inferior sort of tragedy, that composed by the likes of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, has a questionable status in the city that the Stranger envisions. Thus there is evidence available in the Platonic dialogues themselves that Plato thought of himself as in some peculiar sense continuing—and transcending—the tradition of which Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides were a part.

82 W. K. C. Guthrie, A History of Greek Philosophy V (Cambridge 1978) 33. Guthrie, however, includes also the Parmenides, to make up a group of “four dialogues to be read in conjunction.” But, as he himself indicates, the discussion represented in Parm., which is referred to in both Thl. and Sph., belongs to the distant past, whereas the discussion that takes place in Thl., Sph. and Plt. is continuous and occupies a period of only two days. The relationship, therefore, between Parm. on the one hand and Thl., Sph. and Plt. on the other is very much the same as that between the Republic on the one hand and the trilogy Timaeus, Critias, Hermocrates (for which, see Cornford [below, note 84]) on the other. Guthrie is here influenced by the two-millennium-old habit (for which, see below) of thinking of the Platonic corpus as being composed of “tetralogies.”


84 See F. M. Cornford, Plato’s Cosmology (London 1937) 1–8.
And so the ancient editors of the Platonic corpus, who organized the dialogues variously into tetralogies—an organization that is still adopted in the most recent Oxford text of Plato—and trilogies, were merely following up a lead that Plato himself had provided. Hartmut Erbse has recognized this, but he goes on to make the suggestion that the Platonic practice of arranging four self-contained dialogues in a single grouping inspired Plato’s students to coin the term “tetralogy,” which was subsequently taken over by the Alexandrian scholars to designate the four dramas composed by a tragedian for a single competition. There are good reasons for rejecting this suggestion. To begin with, the groups of four related dialogues that Erbse relies on (Theaetetus, Sophist, Statesman and Philosopher; Republic, Timaeus, Critias and Hermocrates) are chimeras: Lynette Reid has convinced me (and she will, I hope, soon convince others) that Plato never intended to write a dialogue called The Philosopher, and The Republic is only very tenuously connected with its three supposed companions (see above, note 82). In the second place, even if there were groupings of four dialogues, there is no reason to believe that these were referred to as “tetralogies” before the time of the Alexandrian scholars. Indeed, Friedrich Solmsen has well argued that the testimony of Diogenes Laertius (3. 61: ἐνιοί δε, ὅν ἐστὶ καὶ Ἀριστοφάνης ὁ γραμματικός, εἰς τριλογίας ἐλκουσι τοὺς διάλογους) “must not be read as implying the existence of the tetralogical arrangement prior to Aristophanes” at the end of the third century B.C. It would appear, then, that the evidence available to us indicates that a scheme whereby the dialogues of Plato were arranged in groups of three originated closer to the time of Plato than that whereby they were arranged in groups of four. Aristophanes of Byzantium, then, and perhaps other Alexandrian grammarians as well, responding to the dramatic form of Plato’s works, but having little or no guidance regarding the date of


86 Pickard-Cambridge (above, note 9) 80 makes the more plausible suggestion that the name “tetralogy” arose, not in connection with either drama or the Platonic dialogues, but “in reference to oratory and denoted a group of four λόγοι (speeches) concerned with the same case, like those of Antiphon.”

87 F. Solmsen, “The Academic and the Alexandrian Editions of Plato’s Works,” ICS 6 (1981) 102–11, at 106. Solmsen continues: “It is hard to imagine why of all men just he, the great cataloguer, should depart from the standard grouping with the deplorable result of leaving a good number of the dialogues ἄττακτα, i.e. outside the groups he put together. In fact, his unfortunate experiment makes far more sense if there was no standard grouping yet.” It should be noted, further, that the wording of D.L. does not oblige us to believe that Aristophanes himself used the expression “trilogy” to refer to each of his groups of three dialogues.

88 This view is supported by the arguments of Chroust (above, note 85) 43–46; cf. also G. Pasquali, Storia della tradizione e critica del testo (Florence 1952) 265–66 and A. Carlini, Studi sulla tradizione antica e medievale del Fedone (Rome 1972) 24–25. Pfeiffer (above, note 13) 196–97 and J. A. Philip, “The Platonic Corpus,” Phoenix 24 (1970) 296–308, however, follow Wilamowitz (above, note 22) II 324 in believing that Aristophanes was rejecting an earlier arrangement according to tetralogies.
composition of the various dialogues and needing to make some kind of arrangement of the works in the Platonic corpus, chose to organize them in "dramatic" groups. (That those groups consisted of three, rather than four, dialogues each, by the way, eliminates the unwelcome introduction of a comparison of every fourth Platonic dialogue with a satyr-play.) Aristophanes was undoubtedly influenced also by the biographical tradition, which included an account, already over a century old, according to which Plato turned to the writing of philosophical dialogues after abandoning his youthful attempts at composing tragedies.  

But why did Plato consider himself to belong in this dramatic, rather than philosophical, tradition? We must remember that the character of philosophy changed with the career of Socrates. The Pre-Socratic philosophers were primarily concerned with what we are more likely to call "natural science," whereas Socrates, as Cicero puts it in the Tusculan Disputations (5. 4. 10; cf. D.L. 2. 21), was the first to bring philosophy down from the heavens and to concentrate instead on ethics. And the literary genre in which ethical concerns were most thoroughly explored and examined in the fifth century was the tragic genre. It is the virtue of Martha Nussbaum's book The Fragility of Goodness that it recognizes that tragedy is essentially philosophical, in the sense that it explores moral issues in the same way as the Platonic dialogues. But there is a peculiarity in the organization of Nussbaum's book: She begins by discussing ethics in Aeschylus and Sophocles, then in Plato and Aristotle, relegating Euripides, or rather Euripides' Hecuba, to an Epilogue. And it almost looks as though the inclusion of Euripides in her book was in fact an afterthought, for, in the final footnote to The Fragility of Goodness (511 n. 58) Nussbaum expresses gratitude to Kenneth Reckford, "who first urged me to include a discussion of the Hecuba in this book." One wonders if, like Helmut Kuhn (see above, pages 40-41), Nussbaum would have felt more comfortable excluding consideration of Euripides altogether.

And yet, when Plato thought of tragedy—as he often did—he surely thought of it in terms of the Euripidean type of tragedy that dominated the stage during his childhood and, indeed, for the entire course of his life. There is, in fact, a feature of Euripidean drama that makes it, rather than the tragedies of Aeschylus or Sophocles, a proper analogue to the Platonic dialogue. In his new book, Tragedy's End, Francis Dunn shows in very skillful fashion the way in which Euripides' dramas reject closure: In

90 See E. A. Havelock, "The Evidence for the Teaching of Socrates," TAPA 65 (1934) 283: "Acted drama, or dramatized conversations, was the traditional Greek method of discussing and analysing moral ideas."
contrast to his predecessors, Euripides uses the traditional dramatic closing gestures to shed an ironic light on the course of the play's action, in order to render the ending of the play problematic and unsettling. While Dunn does not express himself in precisely these terms, he might well have spoken of Euripidean drama as being “aporetic,” like the early dialogues of Plato.\(^93\) We see a characteristic feature of Euripidean dramaturgy in his Medea. At the beginning of the play we are presented with a Medea who has been shamelessly abandoned by her ruthless husband Jason. Our sympathies are enlisted for this unfortunate and helpless woman, who finds herself in a foreign country, bereft of friends and allies, through no fault of her own. But, in the course of the play, we watch as Medea deftly manipulates those around her in order to take justified vengeance upon her unfaithful husband. We are, however, horrified when we realize the form that her vengeance is to take. And, when the play ends, we are left with far more questions than answers. We see a similar pattern in the Bacchae, written a quarter of a century later. We recognize that Dionysus is a god, and we acknowledge that he is entitled to the respect and worship due to a god. At the same time, Pentheus is unreasonable in his opposition to the god, and we take a certain comfortable satisfaction in seeing things put right—to a degree. But at some point before the end of the play we recognize that the conventional morality espoused by the chorus, to which we have given our ready sympathy, is, to put it mildly, problematic. Similarly unsettling are, for example, the early Hecuba and the late Orestes.

And this is the same pattern we find in Plato’s early, “aporetic,” dialogues. We are initially inclined to agree, for example, with Laches, in the dialogue of the same name, that the brave man is the man who is willing to maintain his place in the line of battle and to ward off the enemy’s assault without running away. And, similarly, Euthyphro’s definition of holiness, that it is that which is loved by the gods, comes close enough to conveying what we loosely think of as holiness that we are willing to approve it—at least until Socrates begins to demonstrate its inadequacy. But by the end of the Euthyphro, and by the end of the Laches, we are not at all sure we know

\(^93\) The term “aporia” is, however, used and the connection between Euripides and Plato (or, rather, Socrates) is drawn on just these grounds, by L. K. Haight, Socratic Elenchos and Maieutis in Euripides’ Medea (diss. Loyola University of Chicago 1993) 250–51, 285, 476–77 and passim. At 250 n. 42 Haight refers to C. A. E. Luschnig, Tragic Aporia: A Study of Euripides’ Iphigenia at Aulis, Ramus Monographs 3 (Berwick 1988), but notes that no comparison is there made with the Socratic elenchos. This point has been anticipated in curious, indeed almost perverse, fashion by J. J. Chapman, Lucian, Plato and Greek Morals (Boston 1931) 141–42, by whom Euripides and Plato are compared on the grounds that the former “generally manages to cast a doubt on what his play is intended to signify,” while the latter “makes appeal to that passion for mystification which Euripides shows in his plays.” Few will agree, however, with Chapman’s views, that “Euripides himself did not know” what his plays were all about, that Plato’s dialogues “are drawing-room diversions,” that (166) Plato’s “function was that of the entertainer” and that, in Athens, “conversation, like the Drama in Euripides’ time, had become a sort of game.” The Greeks took their “games” seriously, as seriously, in fact, as we now take irony and ambiguity.
what bravery and holiness are. And yet we thought we knew. Just as we thought we knew that Medea was justified in avenging herself on Jason, and Dionysus was justified in insisting on Pentheus’ worship.

The similarities between Euripides and Socrates that led to the fantastic story of the philosopher collaborating with the dramatist on his tragedies, and that later provoked Nietzsche to implicate Socrates in the demise of tragedy, \(^{94}\) must have struck the young Plato as well. Just as Socrates had lowered the tone of philosophy and had begun to annoy his interlocutors by discussing such trivial matters as cloggers and cooks, \(^{95}\) so Euripides was criticized by Aristophanes for introducing όικεία πράγματα (Frogs 959, with 980–88) into the noble art of tragedy. \(^{96}\) And so, when Plato decided, apparently rather early in his career, to present the philosophy of Socrates in literary form, it was perhaps inevitable that he should turn for inspiration to the Philosopher of the Stage, and that his Socratic dialogues should earn him in turn the title of Dramatist of the Life of Reason. \(^{97}\)

Appendix

I give below all the quotations from and allusions to Euripides in the Platonic corpus that are known to me. (I omit, as certainly spurious, Epistle 1, which quotes fr. 956 N at 309d, and Axiochus, which quotes Cresphontes fr. 449 N at 368a.) Most of these have been pointed out before (see the works cited above, note 12), but a number are new. In each instance I indicate between parentheses the name of the interlocutor; it will be clear that Plato has put the majority of the references to Euripides (25 out of 42) into the mouth of Socrates. It is therefore not the case that Plato is merely using Euripidean allusions as a means of characterizing, say, Agathon or Phaedrus as the type of smart young man who enlivens his conversation with tags from contemporary poetry.

(1) Apol. 20e5–6 (Socrates): οὗ γὰρ ἐμὸν ἐρῶ τὸν λόγον ὡν ἐν λέγω, ἄλλῳ εἰς ἀξιόχρεον ὑμῖν τὸν λέγοντα ἀνοίσω; cf. Melanippe fr. 484.1 Ν κοῦκ ἐμὸς ὁ μῦθος, ἄλλῳ ἐμὴς μητρὸς πάρος (cited also at Symp. 177a).

What is at issue is Socrates’ sophia and the allusion is to Euripides’ Melanippe the Wise. Even if the play was not known by that title in Plato’s day (see O. Taplin, JHS 95 [1975] 184–86; M. L. West, JHS 99 [1979] 131; A. L. Brown, CQ 34 [1984] 268–69), the heroine of the play was

95 See, e.g. Pl. Gorg. 490c–91a, 494e, Hipp. mai. 288d, Symp. 221e, Xen. Mem. 1. 2. 37, 4. 4. 5–6.
96 See Haight (above, note 93) 219–20; Rutherford (above, note 32) 204.
97 See J. H. Randall, Jr., Plato: Dramatist of the Life of Reason (New York 1970). I should like to thank The Center for Advanced Study of the University of Illinois, as well as the university’s Campus Research Board, for enabling me to complete the present study.
notorious for her *sophia*; see Aristophanes’ quotation and parody, *Lys.* 1124–27.

(2) *Cri.* 44b3 (Socrates): The woman in Socrates’ dream quotes the Homeric line ἦμωτι κεν τριτάτω Φθίνην ἐρίβωλον ἵκιοι (II. 9. 363, spoken by Achilles). Adam notes that there is a word-play here on Φθίνη and φθίω (or φθίσεις), and notes that the same word-play occurs in *Eur.*. *El.* 836. (Burnet, however, is not convinced that any word-play is present.) But there is a more significant instance of this word-play elsewhere in Euripides, namely at *IA* 713 (note the ominous ἐκείσ’ ἀπάξει 714), where what is at issue is precisely the fabrication whereby Iphigeneia is lured to her death with promise of marriage to Achilles. (Of course, it is possible that this word-play was current—Edmonds detects it also in Strattis, fr. 18—and that Plato is not specifically thinking of Euripides’ use of it. But Plato does seem to have Euripides in mind in this passage; see the following.)

(3) *Cri.* 44b6–c5 (Crito): The speech in which Crito tries to persuade Socrates to allow him to effect his escape from prison seems to contain a reminiscence of Pylades’ speech at *IT* 674–86, in which Pylades affirms that he will not abandon Orestes. Crito gives two reasons: his friendship for Socrates and his desire to avoid disgrace (cf. *IT* 686 φίλον γεγώτα καὶ φοβούμενον ψόγον). In both instances the disgrace is highlighted (44c2 τίς ἀισχίων, 674 ἀισχρόν), and in both there is appeal to the general reputation the speaker will have (44b9 πολλοῖς δόξω, 678 δόξω δὲ τοῖς πολλοῖσι). And, of course, in both the persuasion is ineffective, as both Socrates and Orestes refuse (for very different reasons) to allow their friends to endanger themselves.

(4) *Phd.* 115a5–6 (Socrates): For ἐμὲ δὲ νῦν ἦδη καλεῖ, φαίν ἂν ἀνήρ πραγκικός, ἤ ἐμφαμένη, see above, pages 46–51.

(5) *Crat.* 395c1 (Socrates): The etymology of Atreus’ name (κατὰ τὸ ἀτρεστὸν) is perhaps taken from *IA* 321, where Agamemnon says of himself, μῶν τρέσας οὐκ ἀνακαλύψῃ βλέφαρον, Ἀτρέως γεγὼς;

(6) *Tht.* 154d4–6 (Socrates): ἦν ἀποκρινὴ ὅτι ἔστιν, Ἐυριπίδειον τι συμβήσεται· ἢ μὲν γὰρ γλώττα ἀνέλεγκτος ἦμῖν ἔσται, ἢ δὲ φρήν οὐκ ἀνέλεγκτος. The reference here is to the famous line *Hipp.* 612 ἡ γλῶσσ’ ὄμωμοχ’, ἢ δὲ φρήν ἀνώμοτος (quoted also at *Symp.* 199a). The line, of course, was already notorious by Plato’s day (see Ar. *Thesm.* 275–76, Ran. 101–02, 1471, Arist. *Rhet.* 1416a31), and a reference to this line does not necessarily prove familiarity with the play itself, but cf. below on *Symp.* 189c, *Alc.* I 113c, *Prt.* 352b–d.

(7) *Tht.* 193c3–5 (Socrates): For ἐμβιβάσας προσαρμόσαι εἰς τὸ ἐσωτηρίς ἔνοχος, ἵνα γένηται ἀναγνώρισις, see above, pages 42–45.

(8) *Symp.* 177a2–4 (Eryximachus): ἢ μὲν μοι ἄρχη τοῦ λόγου ἔστι κατὰ τὴν Ἐυριπίδου Μελανίππην· οὐ γὰρ ἔμοι ὁ μύθος, ἀλλὰ Φαῖδρος τοῦδε. This is another explicit reference to *Melanippe* fr. 484. 1 Ν κούκ ἐμὸς ὁ μύθος, ἀλλ᾽ ἐμῆς μητρὸς πάρα (cited also at *Apol.* 20e).
(9) Symp. 179b–c (Phaedrus): Alcestis is given as an example of the sacrifices that Eros can inspire. Although Dover (on 179b6) claims that “Plato may be using an older and simpler form of the legend” than that presented in Euripides’ play, I have argued (C&M 36 [1985] 56; cf. also Vicaire [above, note 2] 172–73) that Phaedrus’ language makes it clear that he has the Euripidean version in mind.

(10) Symp. 180c–d (Pausanias): Like Eryximachus (see above, on 177a2–4), Pausanias opens his speech in praise of Eros with an apparent reference to Euripides, saying that there is not just one Eros, but rather two. Funke sees here an allusion to the prologue to Stheneboea. Cf. GLP III 16. 22–25 Page διπλοὶ γὰρ εἰς ἔρωτες ἑντροφοὶ χθονί: / ὁ μὲν γεγός ἐκθετέος εἰς "Αἰθήνη φέρει, / ὁ δὲ εἰς τὸ σώφρον ἐπ’ ἀρέτην τ’ ἀχων ἐρως / ζηλωτὸς ἀνθρώποισιν, ἄν εἰν ἐγώ. Bury ad loc. also compares fr. 550 and Funke (above, note 12) 236 compares IA 548 ff.

(11) Symp. 189c (Aristophanes): Aristophanes, too, seems to color the opening of his speech with a Euripidean reminiscence. He claims that men do not recognize the power of Eros, for, if they did, they would erect the most impressive temples and altars in his honor, and would make the greatest sacrifices to him, which in fact they do not now do. This takes its inspiration (so A. E. Taylor, A Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus [Oxford 1928] 653; cf. also Wilamowitz [above, note 50], Stella [above, note 7] 84) from the chorus’ statement at Hipp. 535–40 that it is absurd that the Greeks make great sacrifices at Olympia and Delphi but do not similarly honor Eros.

(12) Symp. 196c2–3 (Agathon): πάς γοῦν ποιητής γίγνεται, “κἂν ἄμουσος ἦ το πρίν,” οὐκ ἂν “Ερως ἁγησται. This is a direct quotation from Stheneboea fr. 663 N ποιητὴν ἄρα / "Ερως διδάσκει, κἂν ἄμουσος ἦ το πρίν. It was already a familiar tag (cf. Ar. Vesp. 1074, where, again, it is cited without attribution), but Plato’s familiarity with the play is indicated by the earlier allusion (see above) at 180c–d.

(13) Symp. 199a5–6 (Socrates): ἡ γλῶσσα οὖν ὑπέσχετο, ἡ δὲ φρῆν ὦτ· χαίρετο δή. The reference here is to Hipp. 612, as at Tht. 154d4–6 (see above). Further, as Dover notes ad loc.: “Given α7 οὐ γὰρ ἄν δυναίμην, Plato may have had Eur. Medea 1044 f. οὐκ ἄν δυναίμην: χαίρετο βουλεύομαι τὰ πρόσθεν at the back of his mind.”

(14) Phdr. 244d6 (Socrates): παλαιῶν ἐκ μηνιμάτων; cf. Phoen. 934 παλαιῶν “Ἀρεος ἐκ μηνιμάτων. Mastronarde ad loc. comments, “the use of the same words in Pl. Phdr. 244d6 is either a reminiscence of Tir.’s speech or evidence that the phrase was traditional in religious or oracular language connected with expiation.” But these same words are found only in these two places and in authors (Aelius Aristides and Iamblichus) who quote from or allude to Plato.

(15) Phdr. 268c5 (Socrates): Euripides and Sophocles are named as representatives of the class of tragic poets.
(16) Phdr. 274e6 and 275a5 (Socrates): μνήμης ... φάρμακον. I. Rutherford (Hermes 118 [1990] 377–79) suggests that the use of this image for writing is an imitation of Palamedes fr. 578. 1 N τὰ τῆς γε λήθης φάρμακα’. (The same suggestion had been made more briefly by G. R. F. Ferrari, Listening to the Cicadas: A Study of Plato’s Phaedrus [Cambridge 1987] 281 n. 21.) It is interesting to note that the phonological terminology that Euripides uses in the following line, fr. 578. 2 ἄφωνα φωνήντα (Nauck: ἄφωνα καὶ φωνόντα mss: ἄφωνα καὶ φωνήντα Hemsterhuis), is not attested again until Pl. Crat. 393ε1 φωνήσει τε καὶ ἄφωνοι. Cf. Nightingale (above, note 2) 149–54 for a detailed discussion of the way in which Plato uses the story of Palamedes (and, in particular, Euripides’ version of it) in the Phaedrus.


(18) Alc. II 146a5–6 (Socrates): τούτῳ μέρος, / ἵνα αὐτὸ τοῦτο τυχανέας κράτιστος ὄν. This is an unattributed quotation of Antiope fr. 183. 3–4 N (cited also at Gorg. 484e, with βέλτιστος for κράτιστος). For text and commentary, see J. Kambitsis, L’Antiope d’Euripide (Athens 1972) fr. XXIII.

(19) Alc. II 151b–c (Socrates): The dialogue comes to a close with Socrates comparing himself with Euripides’ Creon and quoting Phoen. 858–59 οἰονὸν ἐθέμην καλλίνικα σὰ στέφῃ· / ἐν γὰρ κλύδωνι κεὶμεθ’, ὡσπερ οἶσθα σύ.

(20) Theag. 125b–d (Socrates): The line σοφοί τύραννοι τῶν σοφῶν συνοισία, attributed to Euripides, is quoted (twice) and discussed at length. See below, on Resp. 568a.

(21) Prt. 352b–d (Socrates): There has been a prolonged debate among scholars over the question of whether Euripides, in composing Phaedra’s speech at Hipp. 373–430, was engaging in polemics against the Socratic paradox whereby knowledge and virtue are identified. But regardless of whether this is the case (for the opposing views, see e.g. J. Moline, Plato’s Theory of Understanding [Madison 1981] 22–25 and T. H. Irwin, “Euripides and Socrates,” CP 78 [1983] 183–97) there seems to be little doubt that Plato’s formulation here recalls the Euripidean passage (so Wilamowitz [above, note 50]).

(22) Gorg. 484e3–7 (Callicles): συμβαίνει γὰρ τὸ τοῦ Εὐριπίδου· λαμπρός τε ἐστὶν ἐκαστός ἐν τούτῳ, καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦτο ἐπείγεται, νέων τὸ πλείστον ἡμέρας τοῦτο μέρος, ἵνα τὸν ἑαυτὸν τυχάνει βέλτιστος ὄν (quoted also at Alc. II 146a, with κράτιστος for βέλτιστος). This is the first of the quotations from Euripides’ Antiope (fr. 183. 3–4 N = XXIII Kambitsis) in Gorgias. For this and the following, in addition to the commentaries by Dodds and Kambitsis, see the detailed discussion by Nightingale (above, note 2).

(23) Gorg. 485e6–86a3 (Callicles): Antiope fr. 185 N = IX Kambitsis.
(25) Gorg. 486c4–8 (Callicles): Antiope fr. 188 N = X Kambitsis (quoted also at 521e).
(26) Gorg. 492e10–11 (Socrates): ού γάρ το θαυμάξουμεν εϊ Ἐνριπίδης ἀλήθη ἐν τοίοσε λέγει, λέγον τις δ' οἶδεν, εϊ το ζήν μὲν ἔστι καθάναιεν, / το καθάναιεν δε ζήν (Polyeides fr. 638 N). These lines were already notorious (cf. Ar. Ran. 1082, 1477), so Plato’s quotation does not necessarily imply familiarity with the play.
(27) Gorg. 508a6 (Socrates): Wilamowitz (above, note 22) I 216 considers it likely that Plato’s introduction here of the concept of ἱσότης (cf. also Lg. 757a) is a deliberate allusion to Jocasta’s speech in Euripides’ Phoenissae, where ἱσότης is mentioned prominently, in lines 536 and 542.
(28) Gorg. 521b2 (Callicles): εϊ σοι Μυσόν γε ήδιον καλεῖν. According to Olympiodorus (in Pl. Gorg. 45. 4 = 235. 1–2 Westerink), this is a reference to Euripides’ Telephus (fr. 704 N).
(29) Gorg. 521e1–2 (Socrates): See Dodds ad loc.: “τά κομψά ταῦτα echoes Callicles’ quotation from Euripides at 486c6, but with an opposite application.”
(30) Meno 76d4–5 (Socrates): ἔστιν γάρ χρόν ἀπορρόη χρημάτων ὑπει σύμμετρο καὶ αἰσθητός. This definition of color is described as “tragic” (76e3), and I argue in “Socrates’ ‘Tragic’ Definition of Color (Pl. Meno 76D–E),” CP 91 (1996) 339–45 that this refers to a theory of perception that was mentioned in the work, now lost, of some tragic poet, most likely Euripides.
(32) Ion 533d3–4 (Socrates): ὀσπερ ἐν τῇ λίθῳ ἥν Ἐνριπίδης μὲν Μαγνήτην ὁμόμοιαν, οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ Ἡρακλείαν; cf. Oeneus fr. 567 N τὰς βροτῶν / γνώμας σκοπῶν ὡστε Μαγνήτης λίθος / τὴν δόξαν ἔλει καὶ μεθήσαν πάλιν. Plato has taken from Euripides not only the name of the Magnesian stone but its figurative use, for he is here employing it as an analogue for the θεία δύναμις of divine inspiration.
(34) Resp. 522d1–2 (Socrates): παγγέλλοιον γοῦν, ἐφην, στρατηγὸν Ἀγαμέμνονα ἐν ταῖς τραγῳδίαις Παλαμήδης ἐκάστοτε ἀποφαίνει. Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides all wrote plays concerned with Palamedes. For Plato’s familiarity with Euripides’ treatment, see above on Phdr. 274e. Here he may have in mind Eur. fr. 581 στρατηλάται τὰν μυρίοι γενοίμεθα, / σοφὸς δ’ ἐν εἰς τις ἥ δό’ ἐν μακρῷ χρόνῳ. In what follows there is a clear reference to Aesch. fr. 181a Radt = fr. adesp. 470 K–S, which fragment, however, has been ascribed to Euripides’ Palamedes by F. Jouan, Euripide et les légendes des Chants Cypriens (Paris 1966) 350 n. 2.
(35) Resp. 568a8–b1 (Socrates): Όυκ ἐτός, ἢν δ' ἐγώ, ἢ τε τραγῳδία ὠλας σοφόν δοκεῖ εἶναι καὶ ὁ Εὔρυπνίδης διαφέρειν ἐν αὐτῇ. Τί δη; "Ὅτι καὶ τούτῳ πυκνῆς διανοίας ἐχόμενον ἐφθέγξατο, ὡς ἄρα σοφοὶ τύραννοι εἰσὶ τῶν σοφῶν συνουσία. (The expression πυκνῆς διανοίας appears to be poetic, perhaps even Euripidean; cf. W. Stockert on Eur. IA 66 f. At any rate, this seems to be the only place in prose where the word πυκνός is used in this particular metaphorical sense; see LSJ s.v. A.V, with the new Revised Supplement, which removes D.H. Th. 24 to its proper place.) According to the Ravennas schol. to Ar. Thesm. 21 (οὖν γέ ποιν 'στιν αἱ σοφαὶ ἕννουσίαι, addressed to "Euripides"), Aristophanes here “appears to consider the line σοφοὶ τύραννοι τῶν σοφῶν συνουσία to be by Euripides; but it is by Sophocles, from Ajax the Locrian (fr. 14 Radt)." The scholiast goes on to say that Aristophanes made the same mistake also in his Heroes (fr. 323 K–A), as did Plato and Antisthenes (fr. 59 Decleva Caizzi). Rather than believe that Aristophanes, Plato and Antisthenes were all mistaken on such a matter, we should assume that the same, or a similar, line appeared both in Euripides and in Sophocles; see P. Rau, Paratragodia: Untersuchung einer komischen Form des Aristophanes, Zetemata 45 (Munich 1967) 160. (See also above, on Theag. 125b–d, where Socrates again quotes this line and attributes it to Euripides.)

(36) Resp. 568b3 (Adelimantus): καὶ ὃς ἵσοθεν γ', ἔφη, τὴν τυραννίδα ἐγκωμιάζει (sc. Εὐρυπίδης); cf. Tro. 1169 τῆς ἰσοθέου τυραννίδος, Phoen. 506 τὴν θεόν μεγίστην ... τυραννίδα.

(37) Resp. 607c1 (Socrates): ὁ τῶν λίαν σοφῶν (Herwerden: δίᾳ σοφῶν vel διὰ σοφῶν vel διασοφῶν mss) ὄχλος κρατῶν (κράτων Adam). This “looks like a tragic fragment, and a comparison with Med. 305 εἰμί δ' οὐκ ἄγαν σοφή and Hipp. 518, El. 296 γνώμην ἐνείναι τοῖς σοφοῖς λίαν σοφήν, suggests that the author is Euripides” (Adam ad loc.; cf. Funke [above note 12] 235).

(38) Resp. 620c (Socrates): Wilamowitz (above, note 50) was surely correct to see in the portrayal of Odysseus in afterlife, remembering his earlier tribulations and relinquishing all ambition, searching for βίον ἄνδρος ἰδιώτου ἀπράγμονος, a reminiscence of Euripides, Philoctetes fr. 787 (spoken by Odysseus) πῶς δ' ἄν φρονοίν, ὃ παρῆν ἀπραγμόνως ἐν τοῖς πολλοῖς ἡρτημενῶς στρατοῖ/ ἵνα μετασχεῖν τῷ σοφοτάτῳ τύχῃ:

(39) Tim. 47b3–5 (Timaeus): τάλλα δὲ ὁσα ἐλάττω τι ἄν ὕμνοιμεν, ὅν ἡ μὴ φιλόσοφος τυφλωθεὶς ὀδύρομενος ἄν ἡθεῖνοι μάτην; The connection between this and Phoen. 1762 τι ταῦτα θηρνά καί μάτην ὀδύρομαι; (spoken by the blind Oedipus) is manifest. But the real question is whether this line is Euripidean (or, more importantly, was thought to be Euripidean by the aged Plato). Unfortunately, that is a question that seems impossible to resolve. It is clear that the line was not written by Euripides as part of his Phoenissae, but whether the line appeared in the text of that play by the time the Timaeus was written we cannot say.
(40) Lg. 757a5–6 (The Athenian): παλαιός γὰρ λόγος ἀληθής ὄν, ὡς ἰσότης φιλότητα ἀπεργάζεται; cf. Phoen. 536–38 ἰσότητα τιμᾶν, ἥ φίλος δὲι φίλος . . . συνδεῖ (alluded to also at Gorg. 508a).


(42) Lg. 836b7–8 (The Athenian): περὶ δὲ τῶν ἐρώτων—αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἐσμὲν—ἐναντιοῦνται παντάπασιν. The collocation αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἐσμὲν is surprisingly rare. Before the time of Plutarch (see Mor. 755c) it occurs only here and in two passages of Aristophanes. (In addition, A. Oguse apud J.-M. Jacques [ed.], Ménandre I.1: La Samienne [Paris 1971] ad loc., has proposed reading αὐτοὶ] γὰρ ἐσμὲν at Men. Samia 13.) Those passages are Ach. 504 and (in the form αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἐσμὲν) Thesm. 472. Now, since both of those passages are parodies of Euripides’ Telephus, it is reasonable to assume that the expression αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἐσμὲν occurred in that play and that Plato is here quoting from it.

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