

# **Socrates, Counter-Education, and Diasporic Love in a Postmodern Era**

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Love is a precondition for the possibility of meaning and self-constitution. In other words, love makes transcending meaninglessness possible, transcending the given facts, truths, passions, and structural limitations. This possibility is realized, as we will show, within a counter-educational dialogical setting in which “the totally other” has a special role. We will show that transcendence as a possibility is opened by meeting the Other not as the actual or potential Same,<sup>1</sup> but as difference, in her otherness. Within such facing there is room for particular encounters on the way to infinity that we can call love. The visit we offer will heuristically separate Plato from the platonic Socrates.<sup>2</sup> We will show that in Socrates's philosophy it is impossible to separate the quest for meaning, overcoming false knowledge, and struggling for self-constitution as a redemptive dimension from the love of the Other and the commitment to the redemption of his/her own otherness. Addressing the possibility of counter-education, we will introduce Socrates as an alternative that might be extremely relevant for the current historical moment.

The Socratic counter-education tries to avoid the paradox that is so common in modernistic emancipatory endeavors, in which the other's “liberation”, “preparation”, and “development” are pre-conditioned by his/her colonization: it guarantees that the self-consciousness of the pupil will be nothing less than the liberators' self-consciousness manifested in extremely efficient internalized repression in the service of the hegemonic order or in the service of one of its alternatives. The Socratic counter-educational praxis, in contrast, is obligated to the Utopia of critical reconstruction, deconstruction, and transcendence of the self-evidence, which includes the

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<sup>1</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, “Philosophy and the idea of infinity”, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, Dordrecht 1987, p. 48.

self. This is a negative Utopia, yet it is a concrete Utopia. It is realizable presently, in microscopic settings, and sometimes even in the public sphere, even if only for the twinkling of an eye, and then it has to be struggled for all over again.

The struggle of the Socratic educator over the realization of counter-education is conditioned by practicing/concealing erotic games with his partners. They are loved ones, and as such at once also an extreme, dangerous challenge, rivals, who misunderstand him and his only way to enter the process of self-constitution, reflection, and transcendence. A Socratic emancipatory endeavor, we would argue, is conditioned by the deconstruction of monologic-narcissistic false self-consciousness, which in light of today's postmodern quest for nothingness is both problematic and vital, more than ever before. That is why both the postmodern and the modern educational endeavors will be here treated in light of the affluent coexistence between Eros and Thanatos.

Socrates is a teacher who redefines the pupil-teacher relationship. The starting point of his endeavor is acknowledgement of his being swallowed by meaninglessness, unless he commits himself to the otherness of the Other, addressing him as some-one and not as some-thing, as the one who acknowledges that he does not know. This is where Levinas sees Socrates's stance so important: "This impossibility of approaching the other (*autrui*) without speaking to him signifies that here thought is inseparable from expression. But such expression does not consist in decanting in some manner a thought relative to the other (*autrui*) into the other's mind. We know this not since Heidegger but since Socrates".<sup>3</sup> Socrates's awareness of his not-knowing opens the gate to a special quest for transcendence, where, in Levinas's words, "the other would not have alterity only as the reverse side of its identity, would not comply only with the Platonic law of participation where every term contains a sameness and through this sameness contains the

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<sup>2</sup> Simon Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction; Derrida and Levinas*, Oxford 1992, p. 247.

<sup>3</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, "Is ontology fundamental?" in Adriaan Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Eds.), *Emmanuel Levinas; Basic Philosophical Writings*, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1996, p. 7.

Other".<sup>4</sup> This is an alternative that opens new possibilities for dialogical self-constitution. Such an awareness does not alter Socrates's search for meaning; on the contrary, this essential awareness lends a special sensitivity to the search. It makes possible readiness for being addressed by the Other as "the totally other". And by the otherness of the self within the "I" as "the totally Other". It is both a pre-condition to love and a way to a permanent search for *aletheia* (truth). Heidegger's understanding of *aletheia* as unconcealment, as a way to the nearness of Being<sup>5</sup> might be relevant here as unconcealment in the light of the nearness to the otherness within the self. This nearness to the otherness of the self, which is normally concealed by normalizing education, which establishes the self-evidence, is conditioned by a dangerous meeting with the otherness of the Other.

At first glance it looks as though Socrates's dialogical stand is similar to the one held by the sophist, since both are detached from the truth. However, the sophist does not abandon the claim to have efficient, practical, knowledge, which makes a difference - even though he may give up the quest for transcending meaning in the "hard" sense of "transcendence". It is not that immanence (in the Nietzschean sense) replaces transcendence - it is one version of transcendence replacing another version. The sophist concept of difference which makes a difference, or transcendence with a small "t", is much closer to the way Deleuze presents transcendence in his work. The sophist actually claims to represent, reproduce, and transfer man's "self value", according to the traditional, monological teacher/pupil relationship. Within the framework of this model, the teacher is the locus of knowledge, or at least the authorized mediator of legitimate or relevant knowledge. Such a teacher is an irreplaceable element of normalizing education. He is committed to the reproduction of the social apparatuses of ensuring

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<sup>4</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, "Time and the other", in Sean Hand (ed.), *The Levinas Reader*, Oxford 1989, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The question concerning technology", in: *Basic Writings*, London 1996, p. 319.

the intellectual impotence and political conformity of those imprisoned within the horizons of the given realm of self-evidence: he is to act as an agent of transmission of the “legitimate” and “relevant” knowledge. He transmits it as the only knowledge valid and legitimate to those signified as authorized for its reproduction, activation, and development, as part of the protection and advancement of tradition, society, and hegemonic power apparatuses. The sophist is not a normal teacher. He questions some elements of “his” realm of self-evidence. However, because of his anti-utopian and anti-philosophical commitment, his work, as the one of the postmodern educators, is ultimately conservative and repressive. Presenting himself as a teacher and not as an educator he is actually an educator, yet not a counter-educator.<sup>6</sup>

The sophist might be considered the prototype of a postmodern teacher. This kind of teaching negates the quest for reflection and transcendence, and the arrogance, naivety, and violence of those who pretend to know the truth or to live according to values and aims which are not contingent. It presents as childish the philosophical Utopia and the quest for transcendence and meaning, hailing, instead, efficient manipulations and effects which can not only deconstruct the will to truth but can also guarantee success in the hegemonic power games. Protagoras, for example, was committed to teach the one who would pay enough to “produce in affairs private as well as public; he will learn to arrange his own house in the best manner, and he will be able to speak and act for the best in the affairs of the state”.<sup>7</sup>

Already the pupil’s knocking on the sophist’s door ready to pay dearly declares his successful normalization. The sophist’s pupil’s value system directs him to the pleasures of success in the public sphere, in politics, be it in court, in the army, or in the *agora*, where he strives to succeed as an orator that forces upon his listeners a consensus that suits his truths, interests, and psyche.

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<sup>6</sup> For an opposite view see: Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, London and New York 19982, p. 448-471.

<sup>7</sup> Plato, Protagoras, in *The Works of Plato*, Translated by Benjamin Jowett, New York 1928, p. 205.

The sophist does not exchange with his pupil the absolute truth for money, not even the quest for truth and meaning - since, according to his deconstruction, there is room only for pleasure, power, and salvage from pain/unfulfilled desires by opening the door to contingent production of response to the governing codes in the present discourse, and to fulfilled desires. This means that there is room only for suggestive rhetoric or pragmatic claims and not-yet-deconstructed truths. It is a great opportunity for ever more effective manipulation and de-territorialization of the will for truth and responsibility for “the good”. Within such a framework the sophist flourishes. He flourishes as a merchant in passions, fashions, and efficient information that is useful and standardized within the framework of the hegemonic ideologies. He does so, however, while disregarding their essence, their point of reference, and the power apparatuses which produce, represent, activate, and reproduce the hegemonic order, while marginalizing and destroying Others and their passions, memories, conceptual apparatuses, and bodies.

The Socratic educational endeavor is the diametrical opposite of normalizing education. It is worthy of the name counter-education. Within counter-education, in contrast to the inner logic of normalizing education,<sup>8</sup> it is impossible to decouple responsibility for “the totally other” from love as the impetus for self-constitution and its telos. Love as nearness to the otherness of the Other is determined also by the challenge of approaching the otherness within the self. This nearness to the otherness within the self is a unique moment in the sense that it is simultaneously a transformation of the self, so that it is always more than itself when true to itself. Responsibility towards otherness is fundamentally not a cognitive requirement, nor a mental dimension: it is an ethical imperative.

As counter-education the Socratic project is committed to transcend any realm of self-evidence within whose horizons it is imprisoned, without, on the one hand, claiming to have the truth, and without, on the other, abandoning the commitment to reflection and transcendence. It is

committed to the otherness of the self-evidence. Its imperative is to crack the self-evidence, to challenge its limits, and to elevate its participants through their dialogical coexistence. This critical spirit has followed western culture from the days of Socrates to high modernism; it is characterized by the sophistication of *mythos* in the constitution of ever new realms of self-evidence of the kind the Socratic Eros was committed to emancipating all human beings from.

In postmodernism, the tension between *nomos* and *physis*, as well as the stress between *logos* and *mythos*, which has characterized the history of western philosophy from its beginnings to the present, is today being solved by the overwhelming victory of *mythos* over *logos*, which in postmodern discourse has been completely dissolved. Within the framework of postmodern discourse there is no room for the quest for a rational discourse that culminates in a non-violent consensus and the termination of all questions by the proper answers. Under these conditions there is no room for a dialogue of the sort that might overcome the omnipotence of the meaningless, the kitsch, and the ugly. The quest for such a dialogue was deconstructed parallel to the change in its social-cultural and technological conditions, and within the framework of such a discourse it was presented as a manifestation of naivety, dogma, and manipulation.

This productive producer-consumer-distributor functions in centers of affluent current western societies as a mere sign that is treated according to its market value. Like ancient man in a society where myth governed human understanding, today's producer-consumer-distributor hopelessly confronts the one-dimensionality of the system within which he/she is nothing but a partial reflection and agent of powers which he/she cannot decipher, control, or change. The only "practical" choice opened to him/her is, by the logic of the system, adjusting himself/herself or being destroyed/marginalized.

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<sup>8</sup> Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, *Destroying the Other's Collective Memory*, New York 2003, p. 10.

The changing conditions for transcendence turn appeasement with the system and total integration within it into an inevitable “rational” act. However, this rational act is bound to the abandonment of the quest for dialogue and the utopian beautiful claim for the good, for the just, and for true meaning. This allows a kind of normalization offered by the traditional claim for objective truth. Both versions of normalization purify life from being a dangerous, meaningful, goal; a terrain of uncertainty and indecisiveness. They educate by the same token to avoiding the quest for positive "good", "truth", and beauty, or even to avoiding contingency as a serious challenge which deserves our responsible response. It manifests an alternative quest – the quest for “home returning” to meaninglessness, to nothingness.<sup>9</sup> Lyotard articulates this idea when he tries to defend the postmodern project as an alternative to the traditional way to the Same and to death in which Eros is conceived as will to the end of will. "By endeavoring to find an objectively first cause, like Oedipus, one forgets that the very will to identify the origin of the evil is made necessary by desire. For it is of the essence of desire to desire also to free itself of itself, because desire is intolerable. So one believes one can put an end to desire and one fulfills its end (this is the ambiguity of the word *end*, aim and cessation: the same ambiguity as with desire). One tries to remember, and this is probably a good way of forgetting again”.<sup>10</sup> Only within the framework of the utopian endeavor of overcoming the ethnocentrism, dogmatism, and immanent violence of the collective and its normalizing education is there room for community, dialogue, and counter-education. Love is the only possible gate to this endeavor, as Socrates can show us even today, in face of the current postmodern deconstruction of love.

For Socrates, philosophy is essentially an erotic dialogue; the soul’s conversation with the world, which is permanently, challenged, deciphered, and transformed as part of the human self-

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<sup>9</sup> Ilan Gur-Ze’ev, “Feminist postmodern critical pedagogy – toward a Diasporic philosophy of counter-education” in Ilan Gur-Ze’ev (ed.), *Toward a New Critical Language in Education* (forthcoming).

constitution and an ongoing dialogue. Thought is here revealed as “the conversation, which the soul holds with herself”,<sup>11</sup> which is essentially negative. The Socratic critique emancipates a special dimension; it confiscates for man an autonomous space in which there is no room for hegemonic social power apparatuses. They are inherited by the Erotic of an autonomous *logos*, to whose impetus Socrates commits himself totally, yet not without addressing its otherness, relating to myth, to tradition, and to the positive law. In the dialogue *Laches*, when questioning with his friends the issue of learning and teaching<sup>12</sup> he does not relate to the impetus of the dialogue, which has vital importance for the question of learning and teaching that is at issue. This question, however, lies at the heart of the *Symposium*. Yet in both cases, for Socrates - in contrast to the sophists - the *logos* manifests itself through the critique of the foundations and basic assumptions of the culture within whose framework the philosophical endeavor is practiced; a critique that is at the same time a merciless self-critique. This self-critique is but a dimension of self-constitution while practicing solidarity with the Other, which ideally becomes a partner for a dialogue.

Socrates implicitly invites his pupil to a special critique from which the knowledge of the possibility and the purpose of “the good” life might stream. “The good life” or worthy life is conceived as a special co-existence with the Other; as a partner in an ethical stance and philosophical adventure, which by the same token is also a political alternative to the present order of things. It is a mode of existence. For Socrates the most important knowledge is not that which results in the most efficient use of symbols and nature (including human nature) by private or social egoism. Basically the knowledge he refers to is moral knowledge, which aims at constituting the good life in this world, and in this sense the philosopher Socrates is revealed as

<sup>10</sup> Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, translated by Geoffrey Benington and Rachel Bowlby, Cambridge 1998, p. 29.

<sup>11</sup> Plato, “Theititus”, in *The Works of Plato*, p. 546.

<sup>12</sup> Plato, “Laches”, in *Early Socratic Dialogues*, translated by Iain Lane, London 1994.

what we call a counter-educator.<sup>13</sup> The whole project cannot be understood unless we conceive Levinas's concept of the ethical I, for whom the otherness of the Other is a pre-condition to self and reason.<sup>14</sup>

In the *Symposium* we can see a refined version of Socrates's claim "to understand nothing but matters of love",<sup>15</sup> while taking part in a speaking contest, addressing the issue of Eros, with Pausanias, Eryximachus, Aristophanes, Agathon, and Alcibiades. During the dialogue he formalizes a radicalized version: he knows nothing and in principle is unable to teach in a positivist or in a pragmatist orientation like his colleagues who are not yet partners for a dialogue. Accordingly he has to refuse the monolithic strategy of his friends, each of whom in turn delivers a speech on the nature of Eros.<sup>16</sup> In the *Symposium*, in contrast to other Platonic dialogues such as *The Republic*, escape from the hegemonic realm of self-evidence does not claim to provide the absolute. Namely, the endeavor is not committed to the replacement of false self-evidence with "authentic" evidence: the struggle is for transcendence, for the openness for the very possibility of struggling for worthier life. This is the issue at stake. This endeavor is a Utopian one. On the one hand, it might become a concrete Utopia only within the *logos* and against the *logos* as having universal and absolute validity, yet on the other hand it manifests the responsibility of the ethical I and infinite, universal, love, or, rather, the presence of love as enabling impetus for the infinite responsibility of the ethical I and the possibility of the nearness to the totally Other.

In contrast to many of today's postmodernists, for Socrates this universal and absolute validity does not exclude difference, but makes possible non-repressive differences and transcendence as a manifestation of a genuine dialogue. The Socratic dialogue actually deconstructs hegemonic power-relations and controlled human limitations. Here only through addressing the ethical

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, "Freedom and command", *Collected Philosophical Papers*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, Lancaster 1987, p. 21.

<sup>15</sup> Plato, "Symposium", 340.

stance toward the Other as absolute, as alterity, as infinitely different,<sup>17</sup> are self-constitution and critical dialogue an open possibility. Only then is there room for transcendence from the self-evident. And in the postmodern world, the world in which the dialogue itself becomes impossible even as a Utopia, knowledge might appear only in a negative way, through the possibility of criticizing its absence in the *doxai* of the hegemonic realm of self-evidence. Socrates is relevant to us even today since for him, as for today's Critical Theory, the absolute, and the infinite might manifest themselves - but only as an absolute hope: hope for the realization of possibilities which are always beyond our horizons, yet are part of the essence of becoming-human.

In the *Symposium* Socrates negates the quest for truth as well as the methodology of his colleagues, who essentially presented dogmatic speeches praising Eros as an important god. Yet he also develops themes raised by his friends; of special importance to him is the position of Aristophanes, who precedes Socrates, defining the relationship between Eros's characteristics and human essence and aims.

According to Aristophanes "...the original human nature was not like the present, but different. The sexes were not two as they are now, but originally three in number; there was man, woman, and the union of the two, having a name corresponding to this double nature, which had once a real existence, but is now lost, and the word 'androgynous' is only preserved as a term of reproach".<sup>18</sup> Like the story of the Tower of Babel, here too the story is told by their triumphant enemies. As in the Tower of Babel, at that time there was no total separation between heaven and earth, particular and universal. Thus, even according to the victorious enemies of pre-philosophically bounded humanity, in both narratives the human race had almost no limit to its powers: "Terrible was their might and strength" to the degree that, "they made an attack upon the

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 154-155.

<sup>17</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, "Philosophy and the idea of infinity", *Collected Philosophical Papers*, p. 50.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 113.

gods”.<sup>19</sup> Zeus found a way to foil their ambition to climb from earth to heaven and challenge the gods, and he cut each of them in two, so that “they will be diminished in strength”. Eros, then, according to Aristophanes, is nothing but the striving to be united with the lost totality, a quest for reconstruction of the deconstruction of the human’s perfection by Zeus. It is an ontological sign of the quest to be reunited with being, by making the two into one, transforming the unhappiness and loneliness of the deconstructed one into its completion. That is the driving force of each and the impetus for finding the missing part in each “half”, a search that terminates in copulation and birth.

In accord with his philosophy of counter-education, Socrates is prohibited from presenting a direct and positive position that would draw his friends to his realm of self-evidence while abolishing their autonomy. Doing that would amount to the kind of education that counter-education is determined to negate and deconstruct. Socrates, in contrast to the sophists of his times and our present-day teachers of the normalization educational systems, must insist on partners who will be autonomous, since only autonomous subjects might share such an Odyssey. The conflicting assumptions, which take part in a dialogue, are irreplaceable and unavoidable. They are of vital importance for the emancipatory project. This dialogue is made possible by the erotic power ever addressing the teacher-pupil coexistence in new forms and toward new goals decided/contested within the dialogue.

The Socratic *logos* dissolves the repressive dimension of the myth. And so, in the *Symposium*, Socrates reconstructs the story of Diotima of Mantinea, but he does so only after questioning Agathon’s claim that Eros is an important god, beauty in itself, which deserves every prize. As a representative of a Diasporic philosophy and negative Utopia Socrates introduces the possibility

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

that Eros is not “the beautiful” but the quest for the beautiful,<sup>20</sup> and at the same time represents “the good”.

Eros is revealed as a demon, as an intermediate essence, which, like the gods, is immortal yet like humans must die. He is characterized most of all by what he lacks: beauty that is synonymous with wisdom. Socrates’s presentation finally sets forth the equation between Eros and the Philosopher, not only between Eros and Philosophy, and both are in a mean between wisdom and folly.<sup>21</sup> For Socrates, philosophy is exposed as a restless, indeterminate, and limitless Erotic, as a process, not an act, of love. The philosopher is revealed as the true lover, and his pursuit is not for something material, individual and given fact, but for the eternal, universal, and concrete-abstract. For “the beautiful” that is revealed also as “the good”; for “wisdom is a most beautiful thing, and Love is of the beautiful; and therefore love is also a philosopher or lover of wisdom, and being a lover of wisdom is in a median between the wise and the ignorant”.<sup>22</sup>

Socrates distinguishes true love, which is defined as the love of the good,<sup>23</sup> from another kind of love; in his speech Pausanias called this “common love”.<sup>24</sup> In a sense Socrates only improves this concept of love. It is a concept that implicitly negates Instrumental Rationality, since it is committed to denote and reject “this love which desires only to gain an end, but never thinks of accomplishing the end nobly, and therefore does good and evil quite indiscriminately”.<sup>25</sup>

Following Pausanias, Socrates does not neglect the counter-quest of the striving for the good, a coexistence that constitutes the development of the entire human culture, as a manifestation of the Principle of Individuation that Anaximander already understood as the source of life and/as

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 158.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 164

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 133.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

evil.<sup>26</sup> These two trends might be formulated as “political Eros” and “philosophical Eros”: “political Eros” strives for power and pleasure, and is in contrast to the “philosophical Eros”. In reality they are not easily divided and they invade each other, like Eros and Thanatos in Freudian theory. Freud acknowledges his debt to the concept of Eros in the Platonic *Symposium* when formulating his theory of sexuality.<sup>27</sup>

Freud presumed that “there existed in the mind - whether in the ego or in the id - a displaceable energy, which, neutral in itself, can be added to a qualitatively differentiated destructive impulse”.<sup>28</sup> Eros might be transformed, then, and be manifested in what Freud called “the reality principle”. Eros is far more suited to this transformation than the death and the destruction urges are to the cause of “the philosophical Eros”. According to Freud, “Eros”, life instinct, stands at the center of every culture, but so does Thanatos, the death instinct,<sup>29</sup> which integrates easily with “the reality principle”. “It is in sadism, where the death instinct twists the erotic aim in its own sense and yet at the same time fully satisfies the erotic urge”.<sup>30</sup> Within the framework of “the pleasure principle” Eros stands as a founding dimension of culture,<sup>31</sup> while on the other hand, “love comes into opposition to the interests of civilization”.<sup>32</sup> Accordingly, Freud concludes that there is no way to avoid this separation, and “this rift between them seems unavoidable”.<sup>33</sup> It is important for us to denote the centrality of the sublimating presence of “the pleasure principle” as the “philosophical Eros”, which appears as one of the highest manifestations of culture, while being praised by “the reality principle”, its arch enemy. The

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<sup>26</sup> Eduard Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy*, translated by L. R. Palmer, New York 1955, p. 43.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 57-58.

<sup>28</sup> Sigmund Freud, “The Ego and the Id”, in *Sigmund Freud*, 19, p. 44.

<sup>29</sup> Sigmund Freud, “Civilization and its discontent”, in *Sigmund Freud*, 21, translated by James Strachey, London 1961, p. 121.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 122.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, . 103.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

genealogical presentation of the Eros by Socrates creates the identification of “the philosophical Eros” as a sublime revolt of “the pleasure principle” against “the reality principle”. This revolt claims to be a total alternative to the violent political reality of the day. However, it is not only that a simplistic separation between the two neglects the problem already identified by Socrates; “the philosophical Eros” positions the philosopher as a Diasporic challenge in the midst of the sub-mundane power games, part of the actuality – yet a transcending element.

In the *Phaedo*<sup>34</sup> this issue is conceptualized in terms of body-soul. What we call the “philosophical Eros” is conceived as a position in which the soul leads the body, while what we call the “political Eros” is conceived as a position in which the body dictates the soul.<sup>35</sup> “...In every one of us there are two guiding and ruling principles which lead us...one is the natural desire of pleasure, the other is an acquired opinion which aspires after the best”.<sup>36</sup> Here, as elsewhere, Socrates continues the traditional Greek conception of the Eros, a conception that conceived the Eros as having a special status not only for its special commitment, but also for the sake of its object.<sup>37</sup>

According to Socrates, the philosopher is the one in whom the Erotic power is active. He is a true lover in the sense that he seeks true, absolute, beauty, which he has to meet in order to practice worthy life even before this meeting takes place, and even if it is never fulfilled. For Socrates there is no separation between philosophy and the philosopher’s concrete way of life. In order to become a true lover of beauty and of wisdom, which is the key to *arete*, the true lover himself must be beautiful, in a certain sense. Otherwise the heavenly Eros will not call upon him

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<sup>34</sup> Plato, “Phaedo”, 246.

<sup>35</sup> Plato, “Phaedrus”, 159.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 275-276.

<sup>37</sup> H. Diels - W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Dublin 1964.

or will not make him open to infinity.<sup>38</sup> The Eros enables readiness for eternal good and beautiful, a condition that is described as happiness. But this “happiness” is not of the “pleasure principle”<sup>39</sup> sort nor is it the presence of the absolute or the given. Socrates fails to answer Diotima’s question about how one realizes the true erotic quest, so she answers for him: “I will teach you: - The object which they have in view is birth in beauty, whether of body or soul”.<sup>40</sup> This is the dividing line between the philosophical Eros and the political Eros.

This is the starting point to understand the special place counter-education has in Socratic philosophy: “the beautiful” that is synonymous with “the good”, which *philo-sophia* (love-of-wisdom) longs for in the Socratic Erotic, is revealed both as a quest and as an act, a concrete Utopia. This is so to the degree that it is true love. Here it is impossible to differentiate the philosopher’s love of wisdom from the philosopher’s love of his pupil and his responsibility for saving him from normalizing education. This act of love at its peak is in the eternal implant of “the beautiful”, an act that within the framework of counter-education is supposed to be a constant spontaneous explosion in an ideal speech situation. This ideal speech situation is conceived by Socrates as a potential part of the current reality – a unique part of it: the moment of transcendence.

The Socratic *philo-sophia*, like the Eros, is conceived as evolving, blooming, and dying, yet, it will always rise and bloom again.<sup>41</sup> This is not a positive but a negative utopia, very different from that presented by Juergen Habermas and attacked by today’s postmodernists.<sup>42</sup>

The counter-educational act, the implantation here described, is not phallogentric, an aggressive intercourse, but the opposite: it reflects the dialogical deciphering of the realm of self-

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<sup>38</sup> Plato, “Symposium”, 162.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 164.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* 165.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 162.

evidence, which must take the pupil as a partner, as an aim in itself, and not as an instrument for others or higher ends. Here the pupil is not an object of normalization, or an object for redemption, but a fellow human being without being “authentic” or immanently “true to himself”.

The Socratic counter-educational endeavor is presented as conditioned by the implementation in worthy pupils, who are acknowledged, in Levinas's words, as "beings qua beings...independent of the perception which discovers and grasps them",<sup>43</sup> as an uncolonized otherness, as some-one, and only as such admitted to the philosophical endeavor. This is a Diasporic concept of dialogue, a religious self-positioning as a way of life.

As prayer this way of life gazes at infinity while having no evident foundations, dogma, or “home”. In contrast to present postmodern discourse, here the only evidence is the stance of the ethical I who is committed to transcending meaninglessness by total responsibility to the otherness of the Other and within him-self. This transcendence is realized in the Socratic endeavor by active deconstruction of the realm of self-evidence, by the impetus of love. Love in the heavenly *Symposium* is not merely passion for the beautiful and the good - it is a passion for transcendence, a passion for otherness. In the *Symposium* the dimension of responsibility is not emphasized, and explicitly it is the erotic impetus that makes transcendence possible. However, implicitly there is here unbridged tension between the responsibility of the subject for his soul (which includes responsibility for the good pupil), and the accident, the miracle of finding the good pupil or the Other who has not abandoned the quest for his stolen otherness on the one hand, and of being chosen for this erotic way of life on the other.

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<sup>42</sup> Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, *The Frankfurt School and the History of Pessimism*, Jerusalem 1996, p. 274 (in Hebrew).

<sup>43</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, "Is ontology fundamental?" in *Emmanuel Levinas; Basic Philosophical Writing*, p. 6.

Within this framework the acknowledgment and the challenging of the Other's different desires, conceptions, identity, and interests are immanently necessary. It is a precondition for the progress of the dialogue, which involves arguing and reaching agreements about the rules of the dialogue, its aims, and its relation to its context. This is the reason for the Socratic commitment for living, spoken, dialogue and its precedence over written texts, which are conceived as a manipulative, frozen version of live dialogues; these are, in principle, open to all, who are invited to a journey of self-constitution and transcendence. The danger in this project is double: not solely the peril of falling into the depths of Diaspora as nihilism, but also of holding on to Eros as responsibility, thereby only replacing the hegemonic self-evidence with an alternative one.

Counter-education is presented in the *Symposium* as improvement of the homosexual narcissistic quest for the manly; from a desire for the beloved boy to the quest for the finite abstract, and from the quest for the finite abstract to that for the infinite and the eternal.<sup>44</sup> The homosexual educational dimension of Socrates's time is transformed here into a philosophical practice in which Socrates introduces his pupils to counter-education. He does so to the degree that dialectically they have become his teachers and he their pupil. The total negation of woman is vital to this philosophy of education, and the homosexuality presented is part of its problematic humanistic position. On the one hand, this endeavor has a clear universalistic attitude, but on the other it refuses real humanistic emancipation, and the search/constitution of the worthy pupil is built on bold hierarchies and on practical exploitation of the other "others": women, children, and slaves, and on Greek nations. As such its Diasporic philosophical foundations manifest a positive dimension when abandoning the inner tension between woman and man and within the concepts of freedom and religiousness.

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<sup>44</sup> Jerom Neu, "Plato's homoerotic Symposium" in Robert Solomon and Kathleen Higgins (eds.), *The Philosophy of (Erotic) Love*, Kansas 1991, p. 323.

Derrida finds special interest in Plato's understanding that even an intelligent speech comes out of "words graven in the soul".<sup>45</sup> He deconstructs the traditional interpretation of Plato's thought, according to which "the writing in the soul" (which is the foundation of philosophical discourse) is practically transformed by preaching, education, or at most revelation, as the writing of *aletheia* (truth). For Derrida, the relation between education and "truth" does not culminate in a supposed grasp of the absolute, the objective, and the eternal, but as the deconstruction of traditional naivete and arrogance toward "the truth". The live Eleatic discourse, or the pedagogical writing in the soul, is represented by him as internal, compared with the godly *logos*. Internally, from the perspective of the godly *logos*, there is room for political, not for meaningful theological differentiation. This deconstruction is very important for Derrida within the framework of the traditional division of dialectics between subject and object, reality and appearance, ignorance and knowledge. It is of vital importance for him to deconstruct the transcendental dimension in which traditionally it was claimed that "truth" or "the idea" was located. It is the locus of the transcendental educational endeavor of Socrates, within the framework of live discourse, that deconstructs the realm of self-evidence. To many pupils of Derrida his deconstruction destroys the educational erotic, its ideals and telos, which makes possible the Socratic Utopia and what we call counter-education.

Within this framework, in contrast to our interpretation of the Socratic quest for "the totally Other", Derrida's position presents the Platonic idea as the product of differance. According to Derrida, the referent is absent. The signifier has no referent in any world that it signifies, and it can only refer to another signifier. Within the framework of this endeavor the cultural world and the games of Eros and Thanatos appear at the very end, as what we can call the cunning of the metaphoric system. Implicit in this postmodern position is the understanding that the only possible world to be referred to is a fiction. Not a social-cultural arena that has roles, history, and

aims, which might be reconstructed and resisted as in the Marxian ideology critique, but as an aimless signifiers' phantom. Ironically, these constitute within themselves their referents as well as their "subjects", who function as dehumanized subjects, as objects for power apparatuses, and as such fight for the realization of their autonomy by searching, naively, in vain, for "the true meaning" of the objects in the world. However, as constructs of an aimless game these subjects have no autonomy and no likelihood of being freed from this Platonic cave.<sup>46</sup>

In the Foucaultian framework there is room for resistance but not for emancipation from repression.<sup>47</sup> This is because ultimately resistance itself is nothing but another manifestation of the omnipotence and the meaninglessness of the system. Life has no "meaning" to be discovered, no "beings" in the strict sense of the word, and no genuine "subjects" of the kind that might take part in an emancipating dialogue.<sup>48</sup> In Derrida's endeavor the erotic of the logocentric dialogue is to be understood ultimately as a *mythos* among other myths that the metaphoric system produces with no aim or meaning. It is a construct of a realm of self-evidence, and its systems, in which all binary hierarchies of western culture, such as *Eros* and *thanatos*, *mythos* and *logos*, subject and object, temporal and eternal, center and margins, are to be understood as the game of being. In this sense there is no room for a Diasporic philosophy nor for counter-education. From a postmodern stance, such a position might be charged with being a new version of western metaphysics, which it pretends to deconstruct. But is there no complementary dimension in the work of Derrida? We think there is another, Diasporic, dimension in Derrida, which saves his work from being another version of normalizing education. Not only does Derrida declare

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<sup>45</sup> Plato, "Phaedrus", 324.

<sup>46</sup> Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, *The Frankfurt School and the History of Pessimism*, Jerusalem 1996 (in Hebrew).

<sup>47</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge; Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, translated by Colin Gordon and others, New York 1980, p. 119.

<sup>48</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, translated by Sheridan Smith, Bristol 1995, p. 210.

himself as a philosopher, he even denotes the importance of the transcendental or "the secret".<sup>49</sup> He emphasizes that a messianic structure belongs to language,<sup>50</sup> and in contrast to Foucault, while referring to Levinas, sees the Other as "the origin of my responsibility without it being determinable in terms of an identity".<sup>51</sup> In this sense the Socratic project and counter-education are not defeated within the better parts of the postmodern discourse.

The ideal of the Socratic dialogical discourse relies on the commitment to transcend the hegemonic realm of self-evidence. However as far as it is true to its Diasporic essence it is not dependent on actual success in this endless struggle. In this sense, this philosophical commitment is utopian but not optimistic, and certainly it is not naive or dogmatic. The negation of reality is not founded, yet it is ontologically an endless possibility. It is an essential part of being and it is symbolized by what Ernst Bloch called "the hope principle".<sup>52</sup> This position is a mode of existence that might become heroic, tragic, and absurd, as it is positioned today in western society.

Nowadays, this endeavor has to take seriously its commitment to deconstruct traditional Platonic and Kantian arrogance, as present in scientific institutions and symbolic power centers. Yet at the same time it must resist its much stronger opponents' dominating current culture industry and education practices in their broadest meaning; they are much more dangerous in the public sphere generally, and particularly in educational institutions. The presence of the Socratic Eros in such institutions is impossible today, unless it is struggled for as an underground counter-education that strives to realize humanistic education in prevailing anti-humanistic conditions that hinder any positive realization of a humanistic interpretation of the *Symposium*.

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<sup>49</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Remarks on deconstruction and pragmatism", in Chantal Mouffe (ed.), London and New York 1996, p. 80.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85

<sup>52</sup> Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a.M. 1959, S. 271.

The encounter with the worthy pupil, which enables the Socratic teacher to become his midwife, is committed to the legitimation and preservation of the otherness of the Other. However, this condition for the ethical I is also a danger to the formation of the worthy partners to the dialogue. This is because worthy pupils who might realize the Utopia of the dialogue are either not to be found in reality or are present yet are committed to the destruction of the dialogue, the ethical I and her otherness. This possibility challenges the optimism of many of today's postmodernists that the oppressed are more ready for dialogue than their oppressors. It also conflicts with a naive post-colonialist concept of "difference" which is so popular today in introducing ethnocentric-oriented versions of normalizing education of the oppressed.<sup>53</sup>

However negative Utopia and the rejection of dogmatism does not necessarily culminate in the avoidance of social responsibility and retreat from existential struggle, as in the case of many "hard" postmodernists. For Socrates the recognition of the absence of the worthy pupil and the true educational road manifests itself in the dialogical struggle for its constitution as a Diasporic responsibility - never as successful collectivism and true dogma of emancipation.

The worthy pupil is manifested in his *arete*, which enables him to constitute beautifully a way of life. In the Socratic endeavor, this way of life is the one in which the meaning, the aim, and the difficulties/possibilities of life are sought in order to question the self-evidence. Such an estranged, Diasporic, beautiful way of life includes, immanently, the search for partners and the commitment to others' well being or their endless struggle for the possibility of a struggle over redemption from meaningless life. This brings the worthy pupil to Socrates in principle, but not in reality, since as a Diasporic philosopher in fact he can never meet the beautiful but only the ugly, the unworthy, the claim for having the truth yet not "the truth". However, the worthy pupil is worthy in his essence as present-absence, as an unfulfilled potential. Yet it is a potential and it manifests hope: the worthy partner is present, even when behaving like the unworthy, living an

anti-philosophical life, uninterested in the possibilities of critical knowledge about the world, about human beings (and himself) and about knowledge. So when we say that Socratic education is the realization of the hope for meeting the worthy pupil,<sup>54</sup> we mean that implicitly it should be an "elitist" response to responsibility.

Subjectively, Socrates might be a worthy teacher to the degree he is capable of being the pupil of his pupil while living the presence of the absence of the worthy partner. This means that he abandons the archetypal pose of the teacher to be the locus of knowledge, or to be the legitimate mediator and transmitter. From the point of view of the absent pupil who has become "Socratic" and cannot bear children – can only invite his partners to the dialogue, Socrates becomes a pupil to the degree that he can teach his pupil something and thus be pregnant. And so, in this ideal speech situation, within the space-time framework that was emancipated from the Greek realm of self-evidence and its power apparatuses of the time, all the partners turn into teachers and pupils, as they "give birth" and "beget" through the erotic quest. This quest activates them all and, as it were, compels them to meet each other, since only together, as lovers, are they able individually to transcend, each in his own way and for his purposes (ideally), to his supreme object of quest, "the beautiful". In this theme the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* are very close. But there are three main differences: first, in the *Phaedrus* the pupil, in his supreme stage of development, is presented as "soul".<sup>55</sup> Secondly, in the ideal speech situation in the *Phaedrus* there is a complete identity between Eros and logos.<sup>56</sup> Thirdly, the dividing lines between the pupil and his educator are even more obscure than those found in the *Symposium*.<sup>57</sup> Both dialogues have in common the conviction that education is a struggle; a struggle over the soul's redemption or its defeat inflicted by the common Eros. In this sense counter-education is revealed as a permanent struggle for

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<sup>53</sup> Gur-Ze'ev, "Destroying the Other's collective memory", pp. 25-50.

<sup>54</sup> Plato, "Symposium", 173.

<sup>55</sup> Plato, "Phaedrus", , p. 291.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* 298.

man's overcoming his finitude, transcending to real happiness,<sup>58</sup> which is conditioned in the improvement and the implementation of the soul.<sup>59</sup> In this sense, philosophical education is the only possibility for protecting, cultivating, and saving the soul.<sup>60</sup>

In the *Symposium* it is said of the philosophers that they are “souls which are pregnant - for there are certainly men who are more creative in their souls than in their bodies - conceive that which is proper for the soul to conceive or contain. And what are these conceptions? – wisdom and virtue in general”.<sup>61</sup> What we call counter-education is presented as a Socratic endeavor that only the philosopher undertakes to fulfill. This mission is both his duty and his faith. In the Platonic text Socrates does not develop this important issue of the tension, or contradiction, between the moral obligation of the philosopher on the one hand, and his affirmation of it, or erotic entrance into the educational Odyssey as faith and responsibility, on the other. Nietzsche was very much aware of this tension in his counter-educational project, and he transforms Eros into heroic love of faith.

Like the philosopher, the Other has to be “beautiful” even before encountering the philosophical Eros of Socrates, the counter-educator. In case of an encounter with “deformity”, namely the unworthy pupil, Socrates would not be able to implement knowledge or a quest for wisdom and, after all, his redemption, his salvation from a futile life of not knowing, is dependent on the fate of his encounter with the worthy pupil.

Those enemies of “phallogentrism” and “western arrogant ethnocentricity” would be quick to address this point and argue that Socrates's relation to his pupil is no less repressive than that of the sophists to their pupils. According to this interpretation, basically, Socrates does not realize a

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Plato, “Symposium”, 371.

<sup>59</sup> Plato, “Phaedrus”, 327.

<sup>60</sup> Plato, “Phaedo”, 226.

<sup>61</sup> Plato, “Symposium”, 376.

Kantian moral either, and he treats his pupils not as ends in themselves but as means to his ends. Following the jargon of the current postmodern discourse of identity, Socrates could be attacked as refusing to recognize his pupils' various identities, interests, and "voices". One could add that Socrates does not represent a model of counter-education; or the opposite: following the postmodern power/knowledge category, one could say that the Socratic case is paradigmatic to all counter-education or "non-repressive education". It is repressive no less than any dogmatic or hegemonic education attacked by "critical" or "counter-education". We would argue that the Socratic position is very different from the sophist or the manipulative-repressive one.

Socrates confronts his pupils (pupils in the Socratic sense) with the challenge of the existential decision facing both of them. His very existence as a Diasporic philosopher manifests to the pupil that he, as well as the pupil, cannot live worthwhile life without real love. A true lover has no dogma or "home". Therefore, he has to struggle to escape the meaningless life and join the struggle for transcendence where there is no "home returning" in face of the impossibility of absolute truth within the given horizons on the one hand, and avoiding being thrown into destroying his (potential) autonomy in the face of his beloved teacher's Erotic on the other. Socrates tries, at all costs, to stop his pupil becoming "a pupil", who avoids or exchanges his freedom for the secure "home" provided by the "teacher's" authority.

Today we can largely understand "the teacher" and his authority not in the personified sense. It is much more relevant to understand it in terms of the systems' power apparatuses and their production through educational violence of collective or private self-consciousness, ensuring and reproducing the realm of self-evidence. Accordingly, "Socrates" is to be understood as a paradigm for counter-education. This is why it is of vital importance to emphasize that Socrates's commitment to counter-education is opposed to the "pragmatic" and instrumentalist-oriented "critical" education of the sophists, the pragmatists of his day, who added their share to the normalization practices of hegemonic education. His endeavor is explicitly described as madness:

“a madness, a divine gift, and the source of the cheapest blessing granted to me”. This divine madness is to be understood as the presence of “heavenly Eros” as constituting the ground of the utopian axis of the Socratic educational endeavor. This is the dimension present in the emancipation of the prisoner “suddenly” released from the cave in Book 7 of *The Republic*.

This characterizes the essence of the only possible non-repressive emancipatory education as an elitist one. Counter-education that pretends to “liberate” those “jailed” in the hegemonic ideology, even against their will, is ultimately a repressive endeavor. This is true of the history of mainstream modernistic education in both its liberal and socialist versions. A postmodern critique that does not challenge the realm of self-evidence and abandons the utopian commitment to transcendence and human improvement and “implementation” in the worthy pupil is ultimately anti-emancipatory too. Emancipatory counter-education is Diasporic and anti-collectivist, yet as Diasporic it refuses to abandon its obligation to universal validity and emancipation.

The Erotic engagement with the Other, the challenging and cracking of the Other’s realm of self-evidence that brings him into despair and the great pain of abandoning his safeguards, is the first stage in the Socratic counter-education. It is a manifestation of true love, as a paradigm for any non-repressive counter-education. It characterizes a dialogue of mutual recognition of differences, as the sterilization of the Eros is the characteristic of every normalization practice in today’s Western hegemonic education. However we have to remember that repression is far too often successful while cultivating the (common) Erotic power and destroying one realm of self-evidence only to replace it with another. Sometimes it is difficult to differentiate it from the Socratic endeavor. Yet the Socratic Eros is unique in opening opportunities for the self-constitution of the antagonist Other, which is transformed not into an enlargement of the educator’s self-consciousness, but into an autonomous fellow human being, a partner to a philosophical dialogue that is nothing less than political activism.

This transformation refers only to the form. This is because the worthy one is essentially suited to the implementation of the philosophical seed and was born (at least potentially) as a “beautiful” human being. This is inevitable, since in any other case the heavenly Eros would not have attracted him. In the second stage, the erotic transformation transforms the “other” into a true human being, in the Socratic sense. As such he becomes a teacher of Socrates, a teacher who is committed to learn from his pupil (Socrates), responsible for the transcendence to “the beautiful” and to “the good”. He has become a partner for the ultimate human adventure, the philosophical struggle. However, while going on this way the participants are all disillusioned and accept absolute truth to stay enriched, glancing beyond their horizons. All the participants on this journey accept the Erotic stand on any body of knowledge to be based on their refusal to forget being and their place in it as human beings, as the seekers of their essence and their partners on this journey. They are in quest of the unreachable beloved. Yet Nietzsche, Heidegger, and their postmodern pupils are wrong in claiming that the Socratic endeavor disconnects human beings from themselves and from the local, the unique, and the non-formalized. This is love, and not only is it possible on earth, it is the only impetus for emancipation from inhuman conditions of repressed individuality and resistance to systematic non-acknowledgment of human difference and identity.

In contrast to current hegemonic western education, especially in computerized pedagogy, the Socratic dialogue is fertilized by the absence of both its addressee and true knowledge. The presence of the absence of love of truth and of the Other are here manifested. Here the real pupil/teacher travels dialectically always on the edge, endangered by the endless depth created by the earlier stages of the dialogue. As in the endeavors of Heraclitus and Nietzsche, the danger is essential for the Socratic educator, who is committed ever to enlarge and deepen the conflict between himself and the *eromenos*, his beloved pupil.

Ultimately, the Socratic Erotic aims at refusing to abandon infinity, challenging meaninglessness. Infinity is revealed both in the absence of the absolute and in the Other, the pupil/teacher. This absolute or the truth in the sublunary world is determined to be hard and fugitive in its nature, since it will always exist in exile, beyond our horizons, and will not fit in with a pleasurable and successful life in this world. But this endeavor is Diasporic also in the sense that making sense of this struggle - and its potentialities - is conceived as a determined failure. There is no Messiah or positive redemption, it is Messianism with no Messiah. Socrates tried his best to enlighten Alcibiades with this hard Diasporic lesson.

Alcibiades might be seen as the worthy pupil since to Socrates alone he could say, “of all the lovers whom I have ever had you are the only one who is worthy of me”.<sup>62</sup> But the Socratic Eros has no heavenly effect on Alcibiades. “For when I leave his presence the love of popularity gets the better of me. And therefore I run away and fly from him, and when I see him I am ashamed of what I have confessed to him. Many a time have I wished that he were dead...”.<sup>63</sup> But confronted with the heavenly Eros of Socrates, the “common Eros” is powerless, and Alcibiades feels something he could not feel anywhere else: he feels ashamed.<sup>64</sup>

In a sense Socrates is in the same position, since he too cannot resist looking, with each person and every moment anew, for the worthy pupil who will teach him. He “wanders about seeking beauty that he may beget offspring” and “when he finds a fair and noble and well-nurtured soul, he embraces the two in one person, and to such a one he is full of speech about virtue and the nature and pursuits of good men”.<sup>65</sup> As manifested by Alcibiades confronted by Socrates, who makes him feel “ashamed” without giving him an alternative dogma or guru, it is right (from the Instrumental Rationality of the prisoners in the cave) to dismantle the threat that entered their

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 178

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* 177

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* 169.

stable world via the appearance of the philosopher. Well aware of this danger, the philosopher still has to enter the “cave”, again and again, like Socrates when he continued to teach philosophy, even when ordered to stop, at all costs.

Socrates’s love of truth is mediated by his love for the worthy pupil, and it forces on him a permanent solidaritarian movement towards the utopian “beautiful” and “good” within the framework that recognizes, challenges, and overcomes the finitude of its participants.<sup>66</sup> In the Socratic endeavor, counter-education as struggle for a “good” life is a “beautiful” form that at its best integrates into the *logos* that governs the entire cosmos, into “life” that includes both the transfiguration of the soul and life on earth, both heavenly life and life in the *Tartarus*.<sup>67</sup> Within the framework of this concept there is even a lively picture of the “dead” standing trial.<sup>68</sup>

The point is that Socrates does not regard these myths with a naive conviction. Socrates did not know if these myths were totally wrong. He used them as meaningful, not as absolute truths or opium for the people. This opens an important dimension of the Socratic educational endeavor, beyond the simple division of false-true that Derrida is quick to deconstruct in his attack on western logocentrism. The Socratic endeavor and its “heavenly madness” is able to contain the utopian impetus amid its pessimistic acknowledgment, according to which there is no safe, valid, evident, or absolute foundation. However the Socratic endeavor is Diasporic, not postmodern: first of all because it is an erotic process, and postmodernism abandons of Eros.<sup>69</sup> The Socratic project is committed to transcendence and challenges the realm of self-evidence, while

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<sup>66</sup> Plato, “The Republic”, 696.

<sup>67</sup> Plato, “Phaido”, 271.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

<sup>69</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, translated by Iain Hamilton Grant, London and New Delhi 1993, p. 4.

postmodernism manifests the abandonment of the utopian tradition, abandoning even utopian pessimism, towards a new stage in the history of pessimism.<sup>70</sup>

The Socratic endeavor is absurd, and in its acknowledgment the Socratic educator makes what we can call today an existential decision that enables him to treat seriously the myths and the world of *doxa*. This decisionism makes possible the entire endeavor. As such, it presents the erotic education that Socrates offers us not as a mere manifestation of *Moirai*, irresistible faith, but as the fruit of human Diasporic free will. These contrasting poles of the Socratic endeavor are dialectical and do not exclude each other. They constitute the pessimistic dimension of this education on the one hand, and its utopianism on the other. The dialectics between the two constitutes his Diasporic existence, even if it was a limited, problematic, version, that did not meet itself beyond the walls of Athens and beyond its historical moment.

The current postmodern cynicism is sometimes explicitly clothed in irony, as in the case of Richard Rorty. As there is no homogeneous “postmodern” position, its cynicism as well as its ironic pose are diverse and rich. Yet all the different trends within the postmodern framework are of an important educational potential, which in many cases might be similar to the Socratic one as here presented. However, for all its critical potential, postmodern discourse is first of all the manifestation of the absence of Eros, an absence whose post-industrial or postmodern social-cultural context leaves no room for a new, postmodern Socrates.

The postmodern educational potential is planted in this soil, in the conscious abandonment of the Socratic Utopia. In the centers of affluent western society, rationality shows that the Utopia of the Socratic dialogue as a counter-education cannot and should not be abandoned or forgotten. Only absurdity still might justify the Socratic imperative to resist the hegemonic representation of facts, and maintain the counter-educator’s responsibility to the possibility of transcendence. It is

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<sup>70</sup> Ilan Gur-Ze’ev, *The Frankfurt School and the History of Pessimism*, pp. 273-278.

hard to differentiate between the irony such a counter-educator must today adopt and postmodern cynicism.

Counter-education today will easily be misunderstood as “postmodern”, as Socrates in Athens was misunderstood and conceived as a sophist, and as such was convicted and executed. However, as in Socrates's days, the counter-educator today has no other way, and he/she prays at all costs for the ability to pray, not for the fulfillment of the prayer. Yet the ending or transformation of modernism and the end of the idea of an autonomous subject, which postmodernists are so proud to declare time and again, might become an arena for a new erotic pessimist utopianism, and like the Socratic one have a decisive influence for two millennia.

However, as shown in the Alcibiades case, there is no Socratic way of reproducing Socrates and his utopian counter-education. The new era must find its new concepts and values, even while its subjects are absent. This creation is nothing to be taught and distributed, as the ideologues of “empowerment” and the businessmen of “skills” and “critical thinking” exhort. According to the *Symposium*, the Eros by its nature will arise from its ashes and bloom again; therefore we will be noticed when the day comes. This Hope Principle does not ensure us that the return of the “heavenly” Eros will not be appropriated by the “common” Eros in the way paved by the Thanatos striving. However, this does not imply that as exiles all we can do is sit and wait passively. The irony of today’s “Socratic” or “critical” education is manifested in the synthesis between “critical” or “emancipatory” commitment and pragmatist-instrumentalist trends.

As a realization of Diasporic philosophy counter-education struggles against the prevailing power apparatuses, against anti-intellectual and anti-“elitist” education, from the right to the left, and must develop critical reconstructions which are part of the human totality in the private, existential, as well as in the public pragmatic dimensions. It should preserve the Socratic tradition while transforming it. This is a Diasporic endeavor in the sense that it is transcendent, negative, and committed to the deconstruction of any realm of self-evidence and manipulations of its

systems. As such, it is committed to the partnership between the worthy ones: those who are erotically empowered to look for the worthy teacher-pupil in each woman and man, across and through differences. However, in this endeavor there is no privileged status for the self-evidence of the marginalized and their ethnocentrism over the self-evidence and the manipulation apparatuses of hegemonic education. As counter-education, it deconstructs the totality of any realm of self-evidence. This is not an “intellectual” project. As a Socratic endeavor it is a way of life. While challenging the power of apparatuses that construct the human psyche, the conceptual apparatus, the self-consciousness and social function, it is immanently a total alternative existence. However, such a counter-education, in contrast to hegemonic “Critical Pedagogy”, “Postmodern education”, and neo-conservative education, should not claim to establish a positive alternative to the present order. The new concepts will not be generated out of this counter-education. Yet the longing for “the totally different” and transcendence, the Messianism without a messiah, might be struggled for even today. Such work and such self-constituted subjects will be very important when the current realm of self-evidence and its systems is demolished and a new alternative can rise. Out of the coming catastrophe everything is possible.