

ΩΣΠΕΡ ΟΙ ΚΟΡΥΒΑΝΤΙΩΝΤΕΣ: THE CORYBANTIC RITES IN PLATO'S DIALOGUES*

1. INTRODUCTION

Plato makes explicit references to Corybantic rites in six of his dialogues, spanning from the so-called early *Crito* to the later *Laws*. In all but one of these an analogy is established between aspects of the Corybantic rites and some kind of λόγος: the words of the poets in the *Ion*, Lysias' speech in the *Phaedrus*, and the arguments of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, the personified Laws and Socrates in the *Euthydemus*, *Crito* and *Symposium* respectively. Plato's use of Corybantic analogies is thus quite extensive. Indeed, according to Ivan M. Linforth, whose 1946 article is still the most rigorous treatment of our sources on Corybantic rites in classical Athens, Plato is our 'principal witness concerning Corybantic rites and their function'.¹

My main concern here will be with the analogy drawn towards the end of the *Crito* between the sound made at Corybantic rites and the sound of the personified Laws' arguments. Both Verity Harte² and Roslyn Weiss³ have used this analogy as evidence that the reasons provided by the Laws are not endorsed by Socrates. In addition to the *Crito*, Harte discusses *Phaedrus* 228b6–c1, *Symposium* 215e1–4 and, in a footnote, *Euthydemus* 277d4–e2. She argues that these passages show that, for Plato, 'when someone is "Corybantically" affected by an argument, the argument is one they would not, or should not, endorse' (p. 230). Weiss does not discuss the *Phaedrus*, but mentions the *Laws* (7.790d–1b) and the *Ion* (533e8–4a7, 536c1–6), and argues that Socrates, at the end of the *Crito*, 'puts distance between himself and the Laws' (p. 134).

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¹ I.M. Linforth, 'The Corybantic rites in Plato', *University of California Publications in Classical Philology* 13(5) (1946), 121–162, at 160 (subsequently cited by author's name only). Other notable literary sources from classical Athens are Ar. *Lys.* 558 and *Vesp.* 8, 119, Eur. *Hipp.* 141–3 and *Bacch.* 120–34. For an overview of other sources on the Corybantes, see F. Schwenn, 'Korybanten', *RE* 11.2 (1922), 1441–6. Our epigraphic evidence derives mainly from Erythrae: for a treatment of recent discoveries unknown to Schwenn (*SEG* 52.1146 and *SEG* 47.1628), see P. Herrmann, 'Eine "pierre errante" in Samos: Kultgesetz der Korybanten', *Chiron* 32 (2002), 157–72 and B. Dignas, 'Priestly authority in the cult of the Corybantes at Erythrae', *EA* 34 (2002), 29–40. On Corybantism more generally, see Strabo 10.3.7–24, J. Pöerner, *De Curetibus et Corybantibus* (Halle, 1913) and, more recently, Y. Ustinova, 'Corybantism: the nature and role of an ecstatic cult in the Greek Polis', *Horos* 10–12 (1992–8), 503–20 (subsequently cited by author's name only) and M.B. Cosmopoulos (ed.), *Greek Mysteries: The Archaeology and Ritual of Ancient Greek Secret Cults* (London, 2003).

² V. Harte, 'Conflicting values in Plato's *Crito*', in R. Kamtekar (ed.), *Euthyphro, Apology, and Crito: Critical essays* (Lanham, MD, 2005), 229–59 (subsequently cited by author's name only).

³ R. Weiss, *Socrates Dissatisfied: An Analysis of Plato's Crito* (Lanham, MD, 2001) (subsequently cited by author's name only).

I will argue, to the contrary, that the overall function of Plato's analogies is to reflect well on the λόγοι involved. This is not to say that these λόγοι are always truthful or philosophical, but that, if likened to elements within the Corybantic rites, they will be beneficial within the context given by the analogy. This is possible because, although some elements of the rites might seem disturbing if seen in isolation, the rite as a whole would be of benefit to the participants. Thus my argument will depend on the following two claims about the Corybantic rites. First the generally accepted claim, presented further in Section 3, that the rites were considered beneficial or, more precisely, that they were employed as a cure against madness. Second, the claim, explored in Section 4, that the rites had at least three distinct parts: in addition to a sacrifice and the main, curative, part of the rite, a so-called 'chairing' (θρόνωσις) would have prepared the mad participant for the cure. I will show how this tripartite structure allows us to distinguish between different analogies depending on which part of the rite the λόγος is compared to. While λόγοι likened to the chairing part of the rites can be anything from entrancing speeches or eristic sophistry to elenctic questioning, I will argue that only philosophical λόγοι are likened by Plato to the curative part of the rite.

While my primary aim is to show that Harte and Weiss cannot use the end of the *Crito* as evidence that the Laws' arguments are not also Socrates', I hope that the wider discussion I offer of Plato's six references to Corybantic rites will have some independent value. Drawing on Plato's frequent comparisons between bodily health and the health of the soul, they further the thought that philosophy provides a remedy for the soul and suggest that the elenchus serves to prepare us for it.⁴

2. HALLUCINATIONS AND BUZZ

One of Harte and Weiss' reasons for interpreting the arguments of the *Crito*'s Laws as arguments that Socrates does not adhere to is the description Socrates gives, at the very end of the *Crito*, of his own experience of these arguments. The full passage runs as follows:

Socrates: ... ταῦτα, ὦ φίλε ἑταῖρε Κρίτων, εὖ ἴσθι ὅτι ἐγὼ δοκῶ ἀκούειν, ὡσπερ οἱ κορυβαντιῶντες τῶν αὐλῶν δοκοῦσιν ἀκούειν, καὶ ἐν ἐμοὶ αὐτῇ ἡ ἡχὴ τούτων τῶν λόγων βομβεῖ καὶ ποιεῖ μὴ δύνασθαι τῶν ἄλλων ἀκούειν· ἀλλὰ ἴσθι, ὅσα γε τὰ νῦν ἐμοὶ δοκοῦντα, ἐὰν λέγῃς παρὰ ταῦτα, μάτην ἐρεῖς. ὅμως μένου ἐῖ τι οἶε πλέον ποιήσῃς, λέγε. Crito: ἀλλ', ὦ Σώκρατες, οὐκ ἔχω λέγειν.

Socrates: ἔα τοίνυν, ὦ Κρίτων, καὶ πρᾶττωμεν ταύτη, ἐπειδὴ ταύτη ὁ θεὸς ὑφηγεῖται.

Socrates: ... Know well, my dear friend Crito, that this is what I think I hear, like the Corybantic revellers think they hear the flutes, and the very sound of these arguments rings (βομβεῖ) in me and makes it impossible to hear that of (the) others. And know that it certainly seems to me now that if you speak against them you will speak in vain. Yet, if you think you can accomplish anything, speak!

⁴ M.C. Stokes (*Dialectic in Action: An examination of Plato's Crito* [Swansea, 2005], 187–94) also argues explicitly against Weiss and Harte's pejorative reading of the Corybantic reference in the *Crito*. Maintaining that the associations attached to the Corybantēs vary too much between the *Phaedrus*, the *Symposium* and the *Laws* for us to make any 'sweeping statement as to the favourable or unfavourable implications for a passage of a mention of their rites' (p. 192), he concludes that we cannot safely use the reference in the *Crito* as evidence that Socrates discards the Laws' arguments. I go further and give an account of why the associations might vary, arguing that we do not have to suspend judgement on the *Crito*'s Corybantic reference, but have reason to see it as sign of Socrates' approval of the arguments involved.

Crito: But Socrates, I have nothing to say.

Socrates: Well then let it be, Crito, and let us act in this way, since this is the way the God leads us. (54d2–e2)

The fact that Socrates merely *thinks* he hears the sound of the arguments, his use of the word βουβῆι and the explicit reference to Corybantic rites are all taken to indicate that Socrates distances himself from the arguments in question. Let us look at each claim in turn.

Harte argues that the sound referred to, being hallucinatory, ought to be treated with suspicion: ‘hearing voices’ (Harte, p. 230) is not a good thing. But these are not just any auditory hallucinations. The casual way in which Socrates refers to them suggests that they were commonly known to occur among the Corybantic revellers, and there are several ways of making sense of this without making the sounds look suspicious. The rites were clearly noisy affairs,⁵ and Weiss adopts Burnet’s interpretation,⁶ suggesting that the music of the rite’s din would continue to ring in the participants’ ears even after the instruments had stopped playing (Weiss, p. 135). Linforth, who dismisses this interpretation on the grounds that it ‘suggests, awkwardly, that Socrates too had first actually heard the voices of the laws and then imagined that he still heard them’ (p. 136), argues that Socrates refers to a sound imagined by someone longing for and dreaming themselves back to a Corybantic rite (pp. 136–7). According to this interpretation, the arguments resound within Socrates as he goes over them with Crito, just like the adherents of the Corybantic rites, or at least the most devoted and/or ‘emotionally unstable’ amongst them, would think they heard the sounds of the rites when raving about them.

It is also possible, however, that the participants would hear imaginary flute music during the actual rite, either if the real flutes ever stopped playing or at the same time as hearing them. Seeing that what is likened to the imagined flute music is the imagined conversation with the personified Laws, this would fit well with the fact that the imagined conversation with the personified Laws occurs within an actual conversation between Socrates and Crito. Linforth attributes this reading to Maurice Croiset⁷ (who suggests that the sound heard would be that of the mythical ‘cortège divin’ of the Corybantes), but dismisses it because ‘a heavy strain is put on the reader if he is expected to discern this curious meaning in a few simple words’ (p. 136). But Plato seems not to expect the reader to extract the meaning as much as he expects him to be, unlike us modern readers, so familiar with the Corybantic context as to find the meaning of the reference already clear.

We might not be able to determine whether Socrates refers to hallucinatory revelling outside of or during the rites, but in either case we do not have to interpret Socrates’ ‘hearing voices’ as evidence of something being wrong, either with Socrates or with what the voices say. We might also note that Crito seems to be expected to understand the reference without being alarmed by it.

However, Harte does not merely argue that the sound of the arguments is ominous because it is imaginary; she argues that it is bad because it βουβῆι: it buzzes. Referring to Aristophanes’ *Plutus* and Plato’s *Republic*, she argues that ‘[i]n Greek things that buzz are not good things at all ... bees, wasps, mosquitoes, etc.’ (p. 231). The connotation is ‘of dangerous irritants’ that nevertheless have power over you because they sting. Thus ‘[f]or Socrates to say ... that the sound of the Laws’ arguments is buzzing within him, is to acknowledge their power, but not ... to endorse them’ (p. 231).

⁵ See e.g. Strabo 10.3 and Pl. *Euthyd.* 277d4–e2.

⁶ J. Burnet (ed.), *Plato’s Euthyphro, Apology of Socrates, and Crito* (Oxford, 1924).

⁷ M. Croiset, *Œuvres complètes: Platon 1* (Paris, 1920).

Βομβέω is certainly used both by Aristophanes and Plato to denote harmful buzzing. Yet Aristophanes uses it only once, and Plato only three times across his dialogues. In the *Republic* βομβέω is used twice, but although it certainly has an ominous ring in these passages, we might be wary of inferring from only two instances that the same must be the case in the third.⁸ We might note that the five times Homer employs βομβέω, it denotes the imposing sound of heavy objects flying through the air, hitting water or falling to the ground with clangs and rings.⁹ Hence Socrates might be hearing disconcerting buzzing, or he might hear arguments of adamant and steel hitting the ground with a final ring.

However, it might be preferable still to interpret βομβεῖ not in isolation, but as a direct reference to the sounds made during Corybantic rites. Linforth identifies the instruments used in the main part of the ritual as ‘the Phrygian reed pipe, drums, tambourines and cymbals ... much shouting [and] scraps of song’ (p. 156).¹⁰ These instruments could well be imagined to create a noisy, ringing, rhythmic buzz. Linforth does not discuss the appearance of the word βομβεῖ in the *Crito*, but he does refer (p. 124) to the second-century authors Celsus and Lucian,¹¹ who both use the word περιβομβούντες to describe the creation of a ‘din’ around the participants in the Corybantic rites. Interpreting βομβεῖ as describing what the music at Corybantic rites typically sounds like has the further advantage of making Socrates’ analogy more cohesive. Socrates thinks he hears the Laws’ arguments just as the Corybantic revellers think they hear the sounds of flutes. Thus, if the instruments in the Corybantic rites βομβεῦσιν, it makes sense that the arguments in the *Crito* do the same.¹²

As long as βομβεῖ does not clearly denote irritating buzzing, and especially as it could be a direct reference to Corybantic rites, we must look more closely at Plato’s view on these rites if we are to determine the status of the Laws’ arguments. Before discussing the evidence these passages provide, however, let us look closer at two features we might safely assume about the Corybantic rites.

3. THE CURATIVE FUNCTION OF THE CORYBANTIC RITES

Plato and Aristophanes are our main sources on the curative function of the Corybantic rites. In the *Wasps* (119–20) we learn that Bdelycleon has attempted to cure his father Philocleon of his court case obsession by submitting him to a Corybantic rite. Plato provides us with more detailed information about the rites’ remedial function in the *Laws*.

Athenian stranger: ... ἐξ ἐμπειρίας αὐτὸ εἰλήφασι καὶ ἐγνώκασιν ὃν χρήσιμον αἶ τε τροφοὶ τῶν σμικρῶν καὶ αἱ περὶ τὰ τῶν Κορυβάντων ἰάματα τελοῦσαι· ἠνίκα γὰρ ἂν που βουλευθῶσιν κατακομίζειν τὰ δυσσυνούντα τῶν παιδίων αἱ μητέρες, οὐχ ἡσυχίαν αὐτοῖς προσφέρουσιν ἀλλὰ τοῦναντίον κίνησιν, ἐν ταῖς ἀγκάλαις ἀεὶ σεῖοῦσαι, καὶ οὐ σιγῆν

⁸ See *Resp.* 564d10 and 573a4. He also uses the corresponding noun (ὁ βόμβος) once, to the same effect, in the *Prt.* 316a1–2.

⁹ ‘The stone hummed as it flew’ (*Od.* 8.165); ‘oars flew, and splashed’ (*Od.* 12.192); ‘the wine-jug fell to the ground with a clang’ (*Od.* 18.394); ‘the crested helm fell to the ground with a clang’ (*Il.* 13.526); ‘the head of bronze fell ringing to the ground’ (*Il.* 16.112).

¹⁰ See also Schwenn (n. 1), at 1442, who provides a number of ancient sources for there being wild screams, cymbals, tambourines and flutes.

¹¹ See Origen, *C. Cels.* 3, and Lucian, *Lexiphanes* 16 respectively.

¹² I will return to the question of what the buzzing prevents Socrates from hearing when discussing the Corybantic analogy in the *Crito*.

ἀλλά τινα μελωδίαν, καὶ ἀτεχνῶς οἶον καταυλοῦσι τῶν παιδίων, καθάπερ αἱ¹³ τῶν ἐκφρόνων βακχειῶν ἰάσεις, ταῦτη τῇ τῆς κινήσεως ἅμα χορεία καὶ μούσῃ χρώμεναι.

...

δειμαίνεῖν ἐστὶν που ταῦτ' ἀμφοτέρω τὰ πάθη, καὶ ἔστι δειμάτα δι' ἔξιν φαύλην τῆς ψυχῆς τινα. ὅταν οὖν ἔξωθὲν τις προσφέρῃ τοῖς τοιούτοις πάθεσι σεισμόν, ἢ τῶν ἔξωθεν κρατεῖ κίνησις προσφερομένη τὴν ἐντὸς φοβεράν οὔσαν καὶ μανικὴν κίνησιν, κρατήσασα δέ, γαλήνην ἡσυχίαν τε ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ φαίνεσθαι ἀπεργασαμένη τῆς περὶ τὰ τῆς καρδίας χαλεπῆς γενομένης ἐκάστων πηδήσεως, παντάπασιν ἀγαπητόν τι, τοὺς μὲν ὕπνου λαγχάνειν ποιεῖ, τοὺς δ' ἐγγρηγόρατας ὀρχουμένους τε καὶ αὐλουμένους μετὰ θεῶν, οἷς ἂν καλλιερῶντες ἕκαστοι θύωσι, κατηργάσατο ἀντὶ μανικῶν ἡμῖν διαθέσεων ἔξεις ἔμφονας ἔχειν.

Athenian stranger: ... from experience the nurses of infants as well as the women performing the curative rites of the Corybantes¹⁴ have adopted this procedure and recognized its value. For when the mothers of wakeful children want to lull them to sleep, they do not bring them to rest but, on the contrary, apply motion. They constantly rock them in their arms, not in silence but with singing, and they simply charm their children, just like the cures of the mad Bacchic revelry, using the movement together with the dance and music.

...

Both these afflictions are kinds of fright, and the fear results from having a soul in poor condition. So whenever someone applies external motion to these afflictions, this external motion, being applied to the internal fear and mad motion, overpowers it, inducing calm and rest in the soul and putting an end to the trying pounding in their hearts. Altogether pleasing, it puts the children to sleep while, through dancing and playing the flute, and with the help of the gods, from whom they have obtained favours through sacrifices, it brings the mind of the roused ones to order after their derangement. (*Laws*, 7.790d–1b)¹⁵

According to Plato, then, Corybantic rites offer a way of curing fear arising from having an unhealthy soul (δειμάτα δι' ἔξιν φαύλην τῆς ψυχῆς τινα).

The internal fear, 'mad motion' and pounding of the heart explicitly referred to in the *Laws* are, I think, best interpreted as something fully roused only in and by the actual rite, as these were noisy, bewildering and plausibly quite frightening affairs.¹⁶ Still, the bad condition of the soul would likely be an underlying affliction of the patient. The precise nature of this affliction is not further specified. Linforth shows that although the Corybantes were thought to 'produce on occasion emotional disorders akin to

¹³ Reading αἱ instead of ἡ, following the Aldine edition. See Linforth, pp. 131–2 for a discussion of the emendation.

¹⁴ Saunders (in J.M. Cooper [ed.], *Plato: Complete Works* [Indianapolis, 1997]) translates this clause as 'the women who cure Corybantic conditions'. Linforth, pp. 130–1, however, argues that the above is the better translation because it does not make the unwarranted assumption that the illness cured is inflicted by the Corybantes and because it is the Corybantes and not the women that actually bestow the cure. While granting this second point, it might be worth noting that the cure is not presented as a mere favour. Socrates offers something like a physiological explanation as well; the motion applied through the dance is said to overpower the internal disturbance so that harmony is restored.

¹⁵ Harte does not refer to this passage, presumably because it does not contain a direct comparison between some λόγοι and Corybantic rites. But since it tells us something about how Plato understood and judged the rites, it is important in helping us understand his analogies.

¹⁶ The myths relating to the Corybantes, frequently either identified or confused with the Couretes, involved some frightful elements that might well have translated into the rites. The Corybantes were said to have helped hide the infant Zeus from Cronus at Mount Ida (to where, incidentally, the *Laws*' conversation partners are headed) by creating a noisy din around him, but they were also said to have facilitated the dismemberment of the infant Dionysius by the same means. For an outline and discussion of these myths, see R.G. Edmonds, 'To sit in solemn silence? "Thronosis" in ritual, myth, and iconography', *AJPh* 127.3 (2006), 347–66, at 353–8.

madness' (p. 122) both in and outside of the Corybantic ritual (p. 147),¹⁷ there is no real evidence for what he takes to be the prevailing view, namely that the ancient Greeks operated with a notion of one specific 'Corybantic disease', or that disorders caused by the Corybantes were the only ones cured in the rites. Ustinova too dismisses the idea of a specific Corybantic disease (p. 514). Rather, the Corybantic rites might very well have been used to cure a range of different mental and emotional disorders.

Moreover, both Ustinova and Linforth argue that since the rites seem to have been widely attended in classical Athens,¹⁸ most of the attendants would not have participated in order to be cured of an already manifest disorder, like that exhibited by Philocleon. Ustinova concludes that 'only a minority of the initiates were introduced into the Corybantic ceremonies in order to cure their original mental disorder; the majority sought the state of possession because of its intrinsic psychological and religious value' (p. 520), and Linforth argues that most of those partaking in the Athenian Corybantic rites might well have done so merely because of the joy and excitement of the experience itself (p. 159). Yet both stress the rites' remedial function; they were considered to be of direct benefit to the participants.¹⁹

The description in the *Laws* makes us see why an analogy between Corybantic τελεταί and philosophical λόγοι would fit well within a Platonic framework.²⁰ The image of virtue as having a healthy soul recurs throughout the dialogues, and in so far as engaging in philosophy helps us become virtuous, philosophy too could be said to be a remedy for unhealthy souls. In what follows I will argue that Plato's analogies with Corybantic rites draw on this similarity and that philosophy makes the soul virtuous in a way resembling the way Corybantic rites help cure the soul from madness.

At this point someone might object that the λόγοι involved in Socrates' comparisons are often sophistic, un-philosophical and irrational. Surely, listening to Lysias' seductive speech or being trapped in Euthydemus and Dionysodorus' sinister game is not likely to make anyone virtuous. We can, however, provide a satisfactory account of these analogies as well if we take account of another feature of the Corybantic rite.

4. THE TRIPARTITION OF THE RITES

As Linforth shows, it would seem that in Athens '[t]he Corybantic ceremonies included at least three stages' (p. 156): the sacrifices, the chairing (θρόνωσις) and the main, curative part of the rite.²¹ During the chairing, the candidate (or candidates) to be initiated

¹⁷ Linforth also shows that while the Corybantes sometimes had a bad effect on people (Linforth, p. 151), 'the most characteristic thing about Corybantic madness, in the rites or elsewhere, was emotional excitement' (Linforth, p. 129) and enthusiasm. In Euripides' *Hippolytus*, for instance, the chorus mistake passionate love for frenzy caused by Corybantes (*Hipp.* 141–4).

¹⁸ The main evidence for this is Socrates' assumption in the *Euthydemus* (277d4–e2) that the youth Ciniias would be familiar with the rites. Socrates seems to make the same assumption concerning Crito at the end of the *Crito*.

¹⁹ E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951), 78 discusses the continuity between 'the old Dionysiac cure' and that of the Corybantes. See also H. Jeanmaire, *Dionysos: histoire du culte de Bacchus* (Paris, 1970), 131–6 and C. Gill, 'Ancient psychotherapy', *JHI* 46(3) (1985), 307–25, for an analysis of how the Corybantic cure might have worked.

²⁰ Edmonds (n. 16) argues that Aristophanes' *Clouds* parodies the Corybantic rather than the Eleusinian chairing. If this is the case, there might even have been a Socratic precedent for Plato's analogies.

²¹ Both epigraphic evidence from Erythrae (see Dignas [n. 1], 30) and archaeological evidence from Toumba (see E. Voutiras, 'Un culte domestique des corybantes', *Kernos* 9 (1996) 243–56)

and/or cured in the τελετή would be seated while the ministrants of the rite danced around him, raising a great din:²² ‘The effect of this was to rouse his excitement and stir his emotions, so that he gradually lost consciousness of all but the whirling rhythm of the dance’ (p. 156). The chairing seems to have functioned as a preliminary phase to prepare the candidate for the cure that followed in the main part of the rite, perhaps by fully rousing the madness within him or by putting him under the spell of the Corybantes.²³ In the curative part of the rite the candidate previously seated might have joined in the dance with the rest; as the *Laws* shows, it is the vigorous movement and music of this dance that ‘overpowers the internal fear’ and cures the madness.²⁴ Throughout, the participants would be in a sort of divine frenzy, possessed by the gods and out of their sober senses.

The tripartition of the rites helps us argue against Harte’s interpretation because it allows us to distinguish between λόγοι that serve in the counterpart to the chairing and λόγοι that serve in the counterpart to the curative part of the rite, the τελετή proper. While the chairing prepares us for the cure and brings out our madness, the dance restores our souls to sanity and peace. If the analogy holds, some λόγοι will be thought by Plato to bring out the deficiencies of our souls and prepare us for the cure. Other λόγοι would then, as suggested above, help cure us. If sophistry and speech recitals are compared only with what goes on in the chairing, we would have a good argument against Harte’s general denouncement of all things Corybantic. Let us therefore look more closely at these analogies.

5. THE *EUTHYDEMUS*

Let us look at the *Euthydemus* first, since the first round of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus’ sophistry is explicitly compared only with the chairing. Socrates says to Clinias:

... ποιῆτον δέ ταῦτόν ὅπερ οἱ ἐν τῇ τελετῇ τῶν Κορυβάντων, ὅταν τὴν θρόνωσιν ποιῶσιν περὶ τοῦτον ὃν ἄν μέλλωσι τελεῖν.

... they are doing just what those in the Corybantic rites do when performing the chairing of the one they will submit to the τελετή. (277d6–8)

Harte claims that when Plato likens the effect of the brothers’ arguments to that of the chairing ‘the invitation is to suspicion of the argument concerned’ (p. 253, n. 5).

But this does not sit well with the passage as a whole. Socrates’ explicit intention when making the comparison is to encourage Clinias to continue his discussion with

suggest that ritual bathing would be a feature of Corybantic rites in these areas. There might also have been something called a κροτηρισμός of which we know little except that it involved a κρατήρ (see F. Graf, *Nordionische Kulte* [Rome, 1985], 319–34). Both Graf and Linforth stress, however, that we cannot use this to make inferences about the Athenian rites, as these seem to have been ‘purged of the Oriental extravagances from which they sprang’ (Linforth, p. 161).

²² According to Linforth, p. 160, ‘[t]he common translation of τελεῖν by the English “initiate” is fundamentally misleading’ as there is no reason to suppose submitting to the rites was a one-off event. Still, the chairing might have been reserved for those participating in the rites for the first time.

²³ The *Euthydemus* (277d6–e2) is our main source on the Corybantic chairing. For a discussion of the practice of chairing, see Edmonds (n. 16).

²⁴ Weiss, based on Burnet (n. 6), understands the participants to fall asleep and wake up cured, but there is no mention of this within Plato’s account of the cure.

the brothers.²⁵ The sophists' arguments are likened to the preliminary exercise of the chairing and, like the Corybantic chairing, they have overwhelmed and unsettled Clinias. But Socrates' point is that if the brothers' arguments are like a chairing, they will be followed by a beneficial τελετή. And that is why Clinias should not lose heart:

τούτω οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ χορεύετον περὶ σὲ καὶ οἶον ὀρχεῖσθον παίζοντε, ὡς μετὰ τοῦτο τελοῦντε. νῦν οὖν νόμισον τὰ πρῶτα τῶν ἱερῶν ἀκούειν τῶν σοφιστικῶν.

These two are but dancing around you and performing their sports, with a view to performing the τελετή subsequently. So you must now consider yourself to be listening to the first part of the sophistic mysteries. (277e1–3)

ταῦτα μὲν οὖν σοι παρὰ τούτων νόμιζε παιδιὰν γεγονέναι: τὸ δὲ μετὰ ταῦτα δῆλον ὅτι τούτω γέ σοι αὐτῶ τὰ σπουδαία ἐνδείξεσθον ...

So think of their treatment of you as having been mere play. But after this they will undoubtedly show you the serious things ... (278c1–4)

On the face of it at least (and here the face value is what interests us), Socrates is not trying to make Clinias suspicious, either of the sophists or their arguments. In fact, he is doing quite the opposite: the benefit of Corybantic rites is meant to reflect well on what the sophists do. Likening what the sophists have been doing to what goes on in the first part of Corybantic rites is Socrates' way of persuading Clinias to keep going, to make him think that the discussion so far is a confusing but necessary (278c6) preparation for an ensuing τελετή. After all, the sophists claimed to be able to teach virtue (273d8–9) and *promised* (274a10–b1) to display their skill in exhortation. It is hard to make good sense of Socrates' explicit intention to encourage Clinias (277d2–4) if we think that Socrates refers to Corybantic rites as something generally damaging.

It is still possible, of course, to interpret Socrates as being ironic in his encouragement. But on my reading Socrates' irony and insincerity would consist not in saying that Corybantic chairing is beneficial when it is really not, but in saying that the brothers' questioning is like Corybantic chairing, when it is really not. The sophists have boasted of being able to teach virtue, and have started off by bewildering Clinias, making him reach absurd conclusions in a manner looking suspiciously like a (crude) version of the Socratic elenchus.²⁶ Thus the sophists have made it seem as if their 'sophistic mysteries' function like the Corybantic rites (and Socratic questioning), by first revealing someone's psychic deficiencies in a chairing before curing them in the main part of the rite. It may well be that the 'sophistic mysteries' turn out to be nothing like either philosophy or Corybantic rites, and Socrates probably suspects as much even in 277d, but this reflects badly on the brothers' art, not on the Corybantic rites, and does not therefore threaten the analogy between Corybantic rites and philosophy.

This interpretation is, I think, preferable to the view that Socrates intends the comparison with Corybantic chairing to be a slight in itself. Clinias is not meant to see it as such, nor will the reader do so unless she already assumes Socrates to disapprove of the rites. But as we will see, there are no clear signs of such disapproval elsewhere. Linforth sums up his reading of Plato's six references to the Corybantic rites claiming that 'no single note of disapproval can be discovered' (p. 161). Even if we suspend

²⁵ καὶ ἐγὼ γνοὺς βαπτίζομενον τὸ μειράκιον, βουλόμενος ἀναπαύσαι αὐτό, μὴ ἡμῖν ἀποδειλιάσειε, παραμυθούμενος εἶπον ... (277d2–4).

²⁶ This is one of many examples in the *Euthydemus* of the two brothers being oddly familiar with some of the central questions and themes in Plato's philosophy.

judgement concerning the more contentious passages of the other dialogues, we have already seen how the rites are presented as beneficial in the *Laws*. Further, the fact that not even Crito, one of Socrates' closest associates, is disquieted by Socrates asking him to endorse arguments likened to Corybantic music suggests that any personal disapproval of the rites on Socrates' part was not widely known. All this counts against seeing the Corybantic reference as in itself a sign of caution on Socrates' part.

Moreover, Socrates might be taken to continue the discussion in a way that draws his own philosophical activity into the Corybantic analogy, thus supporting the analogy between Corybantic rites and philosophy suggested above and challenging Harte's devaluating interpretation of the analogy.²⁷ Having seen that Euthydemus and Dionysodorus have been able to produce only something resembling the chairing, Socrates goes on to explain what he expects from that which ought to follow, presumably the counterpart to the *τελετή* proper, namely the real exhortation (*τὴν προτροπικὴν*, 278c5). He says he expects nothing less than that it will serve to persuade Clinias that he should devote himself to wisdom and virtue (278d1–3). He even goes on to give a demonstration (*παράδειγμα*, 282d4–5) of the kind of thing he expects (278e3–282d3), by the end of which he has made Clinias commit wholeheartedly to the pursuit of wisdom.

Now, Linforth (p. 160) is careful to point out that we do not have any reason for thinking that one Corybantic *τελετή* was supposed to provide sufficient treatment of the affliction addressed. Thus we should not expect this *one παράδειγμα* of Socratic exhortation to be sufficient for making Clinias virtuous. Indeed, if, as I argue, *philosophy* is the counterpart to the Corybantic cure, we might reasonably question whether we can ever *complete* it. Maybe a perpetual practice of philosophy is what is required in order either to be, or to have hope of becoming, virtuous.²⁸ This could help explain why Socrates (282d7–e4), having completed his example of an exhortation, asks the brothers to either give a more professional demonstration of the same thing or to carry on where Socrates left off, suggesting that he has not really reached an end to his *τελετή*. When the brothers fail to be serious (*σπουδάζειν*), Socrates carries on himself (288d5–293a6), showing us 'what kind of person' we should be by starting an inquiry into what kind of wisdom one must have to be happy and good.

We will return both to the claim that the elenchus functions as the counterpart to the Corybantic chairing and that philosophy resembles a perpetual *τελετή* as we look at the analogies in the *Symposium* and *Crito*. But let us first look at the *Phaedrus*, the other dialogue in which the *λόγος* involved in the Corybantic analogy is clearly dubious.

6. THE PHAEDRUS

In the *Phaedrus* Phaedrus, who has been bedazzled by Lysias' seduction, and Socrates, presented as a perpetual lover of *λόγοι*, are the ones likened to Corybantic revellers.

²⁷ The *Euthydemus* is full of puzzling features and bewildering imagery, and the intricacies of the Corybantic rites are so little known that we might not be in a position to uncover the full extent of the analogy. Carl Levenson (*Socrates Among the Corybantes: Being, Reality, and the Gods* [Woodstock, 1999]) points to several possible (and more sinister) references to Corybantic rites throughout the dialogue, and offers an interpretation according to which the whole dialogue acts as a Corybantic rite administered by the brothers, through which Socrates is transformed from the unhelpful sceptic of the early dialogues to the bold Platonist of the middle.

²⁸ In this context it might be worth noting that the *Laws*' description of the benefit of movement, both for children and in the Corybantic rites, is preceded by the Athenian claiming that children would be best served by being kept in perpetual motion, as if permanently on board a ship (790c5–9).

Since Lysias' seduction has taken the form of a speech, a kind of λόγος, Socrates assumes that Phaedrus (228b6–c1) wants him to 'join in the Corybantic rite' (συγκορυβαντιῶντα) that the recital of the speech presents. After the recital, Socrates praises the speech and describes how he followed Phaedrus and 'joined him in the Bacchic rite' (συνεβόαχευσα) (234d1–6). Socrates does this, however, in a way that makes Phaedrus accuse him of mocking Lysias' speech: '[e]ven Phaedrus thinks that Socrates is being ironic' (Harte, p. 230). Harte argues that since this speech is later condemned as an offence against the God, 'it should be clear that the frenzy which Lysias' speech induces is not an indication that Socrates believes it to be true' (p. 230).

It is certainly true that the frenzy induced is no sign of truth, but we can still argue against Harte's overall conclusion. I would like to suggest that the two first speeches of the dialogue, those that are condemned as offences against the God, bear resemblance to and are likened only to the din of the chairing, and not to the entire rite. This would fit well because these two speeches function, presumably like the chairing, to arouse the madness Phaedrus already suffers from by being infatuated by Lysias. Further, Phaedrus does not here participate actively in the λόγοι. Although he recites the first speech, and is said to speak through Socrates in the second, he is the intended audience of both. And since Socrates is ironic when making the comparison, there is room for allowing both that the *effect* of Lysias' speech resembles that of a proper chairing, and that its content makes it, presumably *unlike* Corybantic chairing, an offence against the gods.

It is further possible that the analogy with Corybantic rites does not stop here and that, as in the *Euthydemus*, philosophy emerges as the teletic answer to an eristic chairing. Let us look at how the *Phaedrus* continues. The two maddening speeches are followed by a truthful third (244a3–57b6) described as an offering to Love (257a3–b6). In offering this speech, Socrates asks that his love and expertise on love be not taken away from him and that Phaedrus be turned towards philosophy, to 'devote his life wholly to love joined with philosophical arguments (λόγων)' (257b5–6). Phaedrus joins in this prayer before he and Socrates start the philosophical *discussion* of the *Phaedrus*. At the end of this discussion Phaedrus is no longer possessed by admiration for Lysias, and as 'the stifling heat has grown milder' (279b4–5), he agrees to return to Lysias and turn him towards philosophy.

Thus the analogy with Corybantic rites holds good throughout the *Phaedrus*. The theme of health is present from the outset, where Phaedrus tells Socrates he is out taking a walk on the advice of Acumenus, the physician. We also have parallels to all of the known components of the rites: the chairing (the two first speeches), the sacrifice (the palinode to Love) and the curative art of the rite (philosophical conversation, through which Phaedrus is cured of his mad infatuation for Lysias' flattery and persuaded to continue the pursuit of philosophy).²⁹

But Socrates is by no means always able to cure his interlocutors. Socrates' most famous failed case is Alcibiades, and the fact that he likens himself to the Corybantes in the *Symposium* might seem proof of the bad influence of their rites.

²⁹ Unfortunately we do not know enough about the Corybantic rites to be able to safely judge whether any of the peculiar incidents in the *Phaedrus* (such as their feet getting soaked, Socrates' veiling himself before his first speech or the two-part chairing) are references to Corybantic rites that Plato's initial audience could be expected to pick up.

7. THE SYMPOSIUM

In the *Symposium* Alcibiades recounts how his heart leaps and his tears pour and he becomes worse than the Corybantic revellers (πολύ μοι μάλλον ἢ τῶν κορυβαντιώντων, 215e1–2) when he hears Socrates speak. Harte argues that Alcibiades' reaction to Socrates' conversations is a bad thing since 'once away from the influence of Socrates, he does not endorse the principles of which Socrates speaks' (p. 231), and that being 'Corybantically affected' by arguments is therefore a bad thing.

We have seen, however, that the Corybantes can affect us in two opposite ways: they can make us manic and/or cure our souls. The same duality is found in the Corybantic rite: while the chairing drives us out of our senses, the dance restores our souls to sanity and peace. I will argue that Alcibiades refuses to engage properly in the Socratic counterpart to the Corybantic τελετή and is therefore 'Corybantically affected' only, or at least mainly, by Socrates' 'chairing'. He is roused to frenzy and fear and made to see his own deficiency in virtue, but without then being cured of his vice. If this is correct, Alcibiades' tragedy would not lie in the Corybantic effect of Socrates' arguments, but in the fact that by refusing to pursue philosophy he does not respond appropriately to being thus affected.

Let us look more closely at Alcibiades' analogy. Early in his speech Alcibiades likens Socrates to the satyr Marsyas, the Phrygian master of the reed pipe. With the Phrygian reed pipe occupying a central part in the Corybantic rites, and being, along with the tambourine, the main instrument of the Corybantes (Linforth, pp. 122, 124), the analogy between Socrates and the ministrants of the Corybantic rites is established already here. Alcibiades further claims that Socrates' λόγοι are like Marsyas' melodies, which,

ἐάντε ἀγαθὸς ἀύλητὴς ἀύλῃ ἐάντε φαύλῃ ἀύλητρίς, μόνᾳ κατέχεσθαι ποιεῖ καὶ δηλοῖ τοὺς τῶν θεῶν τε καὶ τελετῶν δεομένους διὰ τὸ θεῖα εἶναι.

whether played by a good flutist or a simple flute-girl, can by themselves (μόνα), through being divine, spell-bind and reveal those who stand in need of (δεομένους)³⁰ the gods and τελεταί. (*Symp.* 215c5–6)

Here, the thought that those in need of the Corybantic cure can be revealed to be so merely by hearing Phrygian reed pipes is introduced for the first (and to my knowledge only) time. And according to Alcibiades, the same goes for Socrates' λόγοι. Alcibiades claims that everyone, whether a 'man, woman or child' (215d5) is 'transported and possessed' (215d5–6) by reports of Socrates' words, however simple the speaker (215d4). The analogy implies that Socrates' words, even when distorted by bad reports, or, perhaps, written down in Plato's works, have the power to reveal those whose soul stands in need of a cure.

The reference to the 'simple flute-girl' suggests that this effect can occur outside of the rite since, presumably, no simple flute-girl would be allowed to perform in one. The same is indicated by Alcibiades' claim that the melodies are able *on their own* (μόνα)³¹ to reveal someone's need for a cure, assuming that the melodies would not work on their

³⁰ I have translated δεομένους as 'standing in need of' rather than 'being apt/ready for'. This fits better with an interpretation of τῶν τελετῶν as referring to curative τελεταί.

³¹ I follow Linforth, p. 142 in translating μόνα as 'by themselves' rather than 'only'. The claim that only Marsyas' melodies could make people manic would, as Linforth argues, plainly be false.

own during the rite. Alcibiades is certainly among those revealed by Socrates to be deficient in virtue, yet I would suggest that he is not – or at least not only – affected outside of the rite, but that he has had first-hand experience of the Socratic counterpart to the actual Corybantic rites.

This is made plausible by Alcibiades' next reference to the Corybantes. He explains how, upon hearing Socrates, he becomes 'worse than the Corybantic revellers' (215e1–2). His heart leaps (πηδῶ), his tears pour: in short, he reacts just like the Corybantic revellers described in the *Laws*, who are said to experience a 'pounding (πηδήσεως) ... of their hearts' (*Laws*, 7.790d–1b). As Linforth writes, Alcibiades' description of his racing heart and pouring tears fits 'the moment when [the Corybantic revellers] are under the fullest stress of emotional excitement ... when they actually take part in the full rites' (p. 144). Thus, when Alcibiades says that he becomes worse than the Corybantic revellers, we should take him to refer to the participants in an actual Corybantic rite.

Alcibiades' forceful reaction to hearing Socrates speak, he goes on to explain, is due to his intimate experience with the Socratic elenchus. Socrates' conversations have made him see that his life is no better than a slave's; they have made him feel shame and think that his life is not worth living. Even now, at Agathon's symposium, he feels the effect of these conversations (215d8–e1), knowing that if he would be 'willing to lend ear' to Socrates, the latter would again make him admit to being deficient and neglectful of himself (216a2–6).

It is clear, then, that Alcibiades is familiar with the Socratic rite to the extent that his madness has been aroused through the elenchus: he realizes his own deficiency in virtue, agrees that he should pursue virtue, and even feels the urgency and importance of this demand. But if Alcibiades has participated in the Socratic counterpart to the Corybantic rites, why does he liken himself to someone *in need* of the Corybantic τελετή rather than to someone who has already obtained it?

One could answer this question by arguing that whatever Alcibiades' experience with Socratic τελεταί, it has not been sufficient to cure his soul: perhaps Alcibiades' soul is too corrupt, perhaps he is the victim of particularly great enticements to vice, which less handsome, rich and powerful people are luckily spared, or perhaps Alcibiades has not participated in sufficiently many rites. Although all the above would answer the question, I prefer to argue that Alcibiades is like someone who pulls out of the rite too early and refuses to engage properly in the curative dance. This would make sense of the fact that Alcibiades never describes any soothing or calming effect of his conversations with Socrates. The interpretation also finds support in Alcibiades' account of how he repeatedly breaks free from these conversations just at the moment when he has committed himself, in theory, to changing his ways, and how he continues to shun Socrates' company:

ἀναγκάζει γάρ με ὁμολογεῖν ὅτι πολλοῦ ἐνδεῆς ὢν αὐτὸς ἔτι ἔμαυτοῦ μὲν ἄμελῶ, τὰ δ' Ἀθηναίων πράττω. βία οὖν ὡσπερ ἀπὸ τῶν Σειρήνων ἐπισχόμενος τὰ ὅτα οἴχομαι φεύγων, ἵνα μὴ αὐτοῦ καθήμενος παρὰ τούτου καταγῆρασθω.

For he [Socrates] forces me to agree that I neglect myself despite my great shortcomings, while attending instead to the affairs of Athens. And as from the Sirens I close my ears by force and flee, so as not to grow old sitting there beside him. (216a4–8)

and

σύνοιδα γάρ ἐμαυτῶ ἀντιλέγειν μὲν οὐ δυναμένῳ ὡς οὐ δεῖ ποιεῖν ἃ οὗτος κελεύει, ἐπειδὴν δὲ ἀπέλθω, ἠττημένῳ τῆς τιμῆς τῆς ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν. δραπετεύω οὖν αὐτὸν καὶ φεύγω, καὶ ὅταν ἴδω, αἰσχύνομαι τὰ ὁμολογημένα.

For I know that it is not in my power to prove him wrong when he tells me what I ought to do, but whenever I leave him, I succumb to the honours that the crowd bestows. So I run away from him and flee, and whenever I see him, our former agreements put me to shame. (216b3–6)

As Alcibiades continues his analogy we might even get a glimpse of this cure that he fails to submit to. And if this is right, it would again seem to consist in the continuous pursuit of philosophy. Alcibiades continues the analogy by telling us what happened when he was most fully possessed of the ‘madness and Bacchic frenzy of philosophy’ (218b3–4). Having glimpsed and been utterly bewitched by Socrates’ inner beauty, he is determined to pursue virtue, and believing that Socrates will be the one best able to help him, he decides to take him as his lover. Alone with Socrates at night, Alcibiades then declares his intentions. But although Socrates applauds Alcibiades’ ability to recognize the immense worth of someone able to make others better, he warns him against thinking that he, Socrates, has this ability, and rebukes him for trying to obtain virtue by unfair trade. But when Alcibiades casually, and possibly somewhat affronted, replies that Socrates must consider (σὺ δὲ αὐτὸς οὕτω βουλευόμενος, 219a7) what it will be best for them to do, Socrates responds:

τοὔτῳ γ’ εὖ λέγεις· ἐν γὰρ τῷ ἐπιόντι χρόνῳ βουλευόμενοι πράξομεν ὃ ἂν φαίνηται νῶν περὶ τε τούτων καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἄριστον.

In this you speak well! And in the future, let us consider (βουλευόμενοι) and do what seems best, concerning this matter and all others. (219a8–b2)

Does Socrates here tell Alcibiades what it would require to enter from the ‘madness and Bacchic frenzy’ of the ‘chaining’ into the τελετή proper? The demand to ‘consider and do what seems best’ fits the Corybantic analogy in so far as the latter leads us to expect the cure to be something, like the dance, that we have to engage in actively. Reading Socratic dialogues or applauding Socrates in the market place will not suffice. Nor, it would seem, will being reduced to *aporia* through a Socratic elenchus. Rather, Socrates asks Alcibiades to engage in deliberation and follow wherever deliberation leads, that is, to practice and live by philosophy. And this is what Alcibiades, shunning Socrates, fails to do.

Whether or not we go along with this reading of what the Socratic cure would consist in, we can easily read Alcibiades as someone who is ‘Corybantically affected’ only to the extent that he realizes the deficiencies of his soul. This makes better sense of Alcibiades’ error. He goes wrong not so much in being ‘Corybantically affected’ by Socrates’ conversations – after all, to be shown that the life you currently lead is not worth living (216a1) could be a rather terrifying experience – as in reacting to this by running away and shunning both Socrates and philosophy. And we have no reason to think that this evasive behaviour would resemble that typically displayed by the Corybantic revellers towards the Corybantic rites and their music. Thus the *Symposium* does not, as Harte claims, show that being ‘Corybantically affected’ by arguments is necessarily bad. Indeed, it might well have been of considerable value to Alcibiades had he been ‘Corybantically affected’ also by the cure of philosophy that Socrates bears proof of, for instance at the end of the *Phaedo*, where all fear of death is absent, or in the *Apology*, when his certainty of having lived well is surprisingly strong.³²

³² Linforth, p. 143 calls the analogy between Alcibiades and those shown to be mad when hearing Marsyas’ music (outside of the rites) but unwilling to submit to the τελετή ‘clear and striking’. Yet he concludes that we do not have enough textual evidence to exclude the possibility that all that is

8. THE *ION*

Before returning to the *Crito*, let us look briefly at the last passage in which the Corybantes appear. In *Ion* 533c9–5a2 good lyrical poets are compared to the Corybantic revellers (οἱ κορυβαντιῶντες).³³ Just as the poets are divinely inspired, while lacking knowledge, to write their beautiful works, the Corybantes are ‘out of their mind when they dance’ (534a1). Whether the reference is to the dance surrounding the candidates during the chairing or, perhaps more likely, to the curative dance in which everyone presumably took part, the analogy suggests that something of beauty results from the divine possession. Harte does not discuss the *Ion* at all, but as Linforth writes, ‘the beneficent effects of enthusiasm are eloquently portrayed’ (p. 150) in it. We will return briefly to the *Ion* when discussing the *Crito* but for now the important thing is to note that the *Ion* gives us no reason for thinking that Socrates disapproved of the rites. To the contrary: although Socrates might be dismissive of poetry elsewhere, in the *Ion* the reference to Corybantic rites is embedded within a positive framework of divine inspiration and benefit.

9. THE *CRITO*

We have seen the *Euthydemus* compare sophistic arguments to the din of the chairing and the *Laws* describe the benefits of the curative dance. Where should we place the *Laws*’ arguments in the *Crito*? If they are compared with what goes on in the chairing part of the Corybantic rite, we would have reason to think of them as at most a preliminary exercise. If, however, we can interpret Socrates as referring to the curative part of the Corybantic rite, we would have no reason for thinking that the *Laws* present arguments with which Socrates disagrees. On the contrary, we would then have reason to see the *Laws*’ arguments as alleviating fear and bringing health to Socrates’ soul. I will argue that the end of the *Crito* is indeed best interpreted in this way.

First of all there is no sign of agitation or distress at the end of the *Crito*. Both Socrates and Crito seem calm, just as the participants in Corybantic rites are calm towards the end of, or after, the rite. The ‘chairing’, on the other hand, rouses the participants to mad frenzy, and Crito and Socrates’ calmness thus makes most sense if we interpret the *Laws*’ argument as analogous to what goes on in the main part of the rite rather than in the chairing.

Second, what the *Laws* and the *Ion* tell us about the rites supports this interpretation. In the *Laws* we are told that while the movement of the dance is what brings about the cure, this happens with the help of the gods. In the *Ion*, Corybantic enthusiasm is likened to the madness making ignorant poets write their beautiful works. In the *Crito*, Socrates is the ignorant one being led by the God: he ends the dialogue by encouraging Crito to act on the *Laws*’ arguments ‘since this is the way the God leads us’ (54e2).³⁴ If we follow the analogy all the way through, it suggests that the God is

revealed by listening to Marsyas’ music (outside of the rites) is a *craving* for the rites. Alcibiades, however, might seem a little too ambivalent towards Socrates’ company to be said to crave it.

³³ As my overall argument does not depend on making sense of the puzzling claim that the Corybantes are moved to frenzy by different tunes according to which god possesses them, I will not attempt to do so here. See Linforth, pp. 138–40 for a discussion.

³⁴ Weiss, p. 144 argues that ‘Socrates does nothing to tie “the god” to the speech of the *Laws* ...

able to lead Socrates to beautiful actions, even though Socrates lacks knowledge of virtue. Yet the God will not do this without Socrates' active participation. Just as the participants in the Corybantic rites probably had to engage actively in the curative dance, Socrates needs to perform his rational consideration. As he states (in line with *Symp.* 219a8–b2) at the beginning of the *Crito*, he is determined to act only according to the argument (λόγος) that seems best to him upon consideration (46b6).

Third, let us return to the question of the buzzing arguments. Harte argues that the buzzing Socrates hears is bad because it prevents him from hearing 'anything else' (p. 230).³⁵ However, if this is what Socrates means it seems strange that he goes on to urge Crito to speak, and that he merely *thinks* Crito can have nothing to say.³⁶ If the buzzing actually made Socrates unable to hear and consider any other arguments, nothing Crito would say *could* make a difference. But if not 'anything else', what is it Socrates cannot hear? The reading that most readily lends itself is that the arguments Socrates refers to as οἱ ἄλλοι are not just any others, but *the* others, namely those Crito offered at the beginning of the dialogue about Socrates' enemies triumphing, his friends being ruined, and his children orphaned.³⁷ If this is the case, and we think it not wholly unreasonable to worry about one's children being orphaned, the buzzing would provide a beneficial shield against the fear or worries Crito's arguments could inspire.

This leads us to the last reason why it seems fitting to compare the deliberation in the *Crito* with the curative part of the Corybantic rites. As is the case for the Corybantic cure, the professed purpose of the *Crito*'s discussion is to make Socrates do the right thing and act justly. And to be just is, if anything according to Plato, to have a healthy soul. Hence, the discussion with Crito and the Laws purports to help Socrates maintain the health of his soul. The discussion has also proved an efficient remedy against the fear of Socrates' death that Crito displayed at the outset of the dialogue. At the end of the *Crito*, both Crito and Socrates seem reconciled with the fact that the latter will die.³⁸ In maintaining the health of the soul and dispelling fear the deliberation of the *Crito* has functioned just like the Corybantic rite described in the *Laws*.

they give up on the plan to escape *not* because of what the Laws have said but because "the god" is leading this way'. I think this split is unwarranted: the reference to the God could very well be a continuation of the Corybantic analogy.

³⁵ M. Lane seems to share this view: 'The Laws' arguments ... seem to have blotted out his commitment to argument, at least in this moment of exertion to quiet Crito. They ring in Socrates' own ears. Crito has forced him to abandon the path of argument and take his stance ...' (M. Lane, 'Argument and agreement in Plato's *Crito*', *HPTH* 19[3] [1998], 313–30, at 330). Weiss, p. 141 claims that it 'is not that Socrates no longer wishes to converse with Crito; it is that, owing to the deafening loudness of the Laws' speech as it booms within him, he is unable to do so ... his intellect is temporarily impaired'. If we take the Laws' arguments to be recognized by Socrates we would not have to see him as abandoning the path of argument or having his intellect temporarily impaired at this crucial moment of his life.

³⁶ As Weiss, p. 140 points out, those who take the Laws to present an argument that Socrates does not endorse have difficulties explaining this claim of Socrates'.

³⁷ M. Miller, "'The arguments I seem to hear': argument and irony in the *Crito*", *Phronesis* 41(2) (1996), 121–37 argues against this interpretation based on the fact that Socrates has been able to respond to Crito's arguments. He therefore takes the arguments in question to be Socrates' own, unvoiced arguments. But the fact that Socrates *has* been able to hear Crito's arguments does not prove that he still is. Weiss, p. 136 and Stokes (n. 4), 188 also take the arguments to be Crito's. Harte's translation of τῶν ἄλλων as 'anything else' (Harte, p. 230) is, I think, too strong.

³⁸ K. Quandt also interprets the Corybantic reference as an indication that the Laws' arguments have served to calm and appease Socrates and Crito. (K. Quandt, 'Socratic consolation: rhetoric and philosophy in Plato's "*Crito*"', *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 15[4] [1982], 238–56.)

Weiss argues that Crito is the only one cured by the Laws' arguments, and that Socrates is clearly affected negatively by them since they 'boom' (another translation of βομβεῖ) and make him unable to hear Crito's arguments. She claims that '[f]or someone who is not ill, Corybantic music is no doubt painfully overwhelming, excruciatingly loud, deafeningly so' (p. 136). But we have no evidence to this effect and, as Linforth suggests, many Athenians might even have engaged in the rites for pleasure. We can also challenge Weiss' claim that Crito is the only one in need of the cure. As Weiss herself points out, the *Meno* gives us a Socrates of 'perpetual numbness' and 'unrelenting perplexity' (p. 138). Socrates' interlocutors need the elenchus in order to realize their ignorance and need for philosophy. But the fact that Socrates does not need to convince himself of his own deficiencies, does not show, as Weiss assumes (p. 138), that he is not deficient or that he does not need a cure to keep his soul from harm.

10. CONCLUSION

Plato's analogies between various λόγοι and elements within the Corybantic rites make good sense and prove consistent if we take account of the curative function and tripartite structure of the rites. They suggest a likeness between the rites and Socrates' philosophical activity: both remedy unhealthy souls, and both prepare the candidate for this in an unnerving way, in the Corybantic chairing and the Socratic elenchus respectively.

The dialogues I have considered admittedly liken other things too to the Corybantic chairing: while the Socratic elenchus was what brought out the deficiencies of Alcibiades' soul, elenchus-like sophistry serves the part in the *Euthydemus*, and in the *Phaedrus* two speeches reveal Phaedrus' madness and need for philosophy. Still, whatever the chairing, Socrates' exhortation remains the same. He urges his interlocutor to turn his soul towards philosophy, convincing him that, being deficient, he should pursue virtue and wisdom. Both in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, Socrates stresses the importance of *living* according to philosophy. In the *Euthydemus* Socrates follows up the chairing by showing us 'what kind of person' we should be, and in the *Crito* he pursues philosophy determined to follow only where the best argument leads. If these can be taken as examples of the Socratic counterpart to the Corybantic cure, Socrates' remedy would consist in the continuous practice of and commitment to philosophy.

Regardless of whether one accepts the full details of this account, I hope to have shown that the reference to buzzing λόγοι and Corybantic rites at the end of the *Crito* does not have to be taken as evidence that the Laws' arguments are not part of Socrates' genuine deliberation. Indeed Plato's analogies between various λόγοι and Corybantic rites fit well with a tripartite picture of these rites where at least one part was of significant benefit.

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