

Me Mnesikakein? Treating transmissional trauma in Plato's Apology of Socrates

The amnesty agreement of 403-401 BCE created a significant rupture in the Athenian civic body, bringing to surface a burden of emotional and political trauma that was always lying at the core of the *polis* (Loraux 2002). The amnesty agreement bears even more significance if Athens is envisioned as a community of interdependent political actors that needed to care for each other's epistemic standing to keep the *polis* alive. Indeed, accountability was one of the core features of Athens' democracy, which thrived on what has been termed "knowledge aggregation", a process of collecting multiple strands of expertise to resolve political issues (Ober 2012). In this perspective, accountability helped make aggregation consistent and beneficial to the community's affective and epistemic needs. However, the oath of "not to hold grudges" (*me mnesikakein*) created an emotional and juridical limitation to accountability and an issue of grief management, raising concerns over how treatment of the trauma of civil war would influence further developments of Athenian citizenry (Lanni 2016). This paper argues that Socrates is a key figure for exploring such issues, with his attention to *elenchos*, knowledge, and social engagement at the base of a philosophy that provokes vulnerability in his interlocutors (Sobak 2015). By following Plato's Apology, the paper proposes to read Socrates as not just someone trying to distance himself from discredited political actors, but as a critic of the amnesty who warns the polis of the long-term risks associated with grief repression, trauma transmission, and avoidance of epistemic care within a rebuilt democratic community. In this sense, Plato's Socrates becomes one of the most relevant sources to investigate the elaboration of trauma in the wake of the regime of the Thirty and, by extension, the identity of 4th cent. Athens.

Bibliography

Lanni, A. 2016. *Law and Order in Ancient Athens*. Cambridge University Press.

Loraux, N. 2002. *The Divided City: On Memory and Forgetting in Ancient Athens*. Zone Books.

Ober, J. 2012. Epistemic Democracy in Classical Athens: Sophistication, Diversity, and

Innovation. In H. Landemore & J. Elster, *Collective Wisdom* (pp. 118–147). Cambridge University Press.

Sobak, R. 2015. Sokrates among the Shoemakers. *Hesperia* 84(4), 669–712.