

Many commentators still take the Delphic speech (164d-165a) in the *Charmides* as Socrates' (or Plato's) opinion of *sôphrosunê*. I argue that this is a misreading. The speaker is Critias, a future tyrant, and close analysis reveals his conception of self-knowledge to be perverted by his tyrannical dispositions and views. His conception of *sôphrosunê* must be distinguished from Socrates' view, which is tied up with "knowledge of ignorance", and while the former conception is refuted in the dialogue, the latter is not. In examining Critias' speech carefully, I show that the dialogue brings into focus *two* distinct images of the nature of *sôphrosunê*. There are two views, call them the Critian and the Socratic, which are in tension with, and even diametrically opposed to, one another.

I begin to show this by analyzing the language of Critias' Delphic Speech (164d-165a). This analysis reveals that *sôphrosunê*, defined at this point in the dialogue as "self-knowledge", turns out to be only tenuously connected to, if not wholly separated from, knowledge of the good. And it is here that we further see Critias' radical view come to light. On further examination, Critias' view suggests that (1) *sôphrosunê* is somehow "value free", (2) *sôphrosunê* belongs only to superior, "godlike" human beings, (3) these superior, "godlike" human beings have replaced the gods.

This image cannot be Socrates' (or Plato's) conception of *sôphrosunê*. (Socrates shows in the dialogue that this Critian position is highly unstable, and at some points flatly inconsistent.) And in the remainder of the paper I go on to present Socrates' response to Critias' speech in the *Charmides* and its connection to his own discussion of the Delphic Oracle in the *Apology*. For Socrates' addition of "knowledge of ignorance" leads to a completely different account of *sôphrosunê*. In his view, the *sophron* individual is open to what is beyond his limits, in that there is some kind of recognition of what is beyond his knowledge. This calls for a very different orientation to the good than Critias' account called for, for the knowledge of limits removes the individual from the center of his world. Rather than being elevated to the godlike, as Critias suggests, human beings now properly stand in that in-between realm, the realm between beast and god. Consequently, the good is not gobbled up by "one's own things", as Critias would have it. For it is the neglect of the knowledge of ignorance, the elevation of ourselves to the gods, that seems to carry with it the confusions in Critias positions which Socrates ultimately exposes.

The two ideals on display thus seem to present opposed visions not only of the nature of *sôphrosunê*, but of human nature and, ultimately, the best human life. While the Critian standpoint transcends our human limits and in so doing leads to an incoherent mess, the Socratic view starts from a proper understanding of human beings and thus escapes the refutation launched against the Critian view.