Rereading Ancient Philosophy

Old Chestnuts and Sacred Cows

Edited by Verity Harte and Raphael Woolf

REREADING ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

This book revisits, and sheds fresh light on, some key texts and debates in ancient philosophy. Its twin targets are 'old chestnuts' – well-known passages in the works of ancient philosophers about which one might have thought everything there is to say has already been said – and 'sacred cows' – views about what ancient philosophers thought, on issues of philosophical importance, that have attained the status of near-unquestioned orthodoxy. Thirteen leading scholars respond to these challenges by offering new perspectives on familiar material and challenging some prevailing orthodoxies. On authors ranging from the Presocratics to Plotinus, this book represents a snapshot of contemporary scholarship in ancient philosophy, and a vigorous and illuminating affirmation of its continuing interest and power. This volume is dedicated to Professor MM McCabe, an inspiring scholar and teacher, colleague and friend to both the editors and the contributors.

VERITY HARTE is George A. Saden Professor of Philosophy and Classics at Yale University. She is the author of *Plato on Parts and Wholes: The Metaphysics of Structure* (2002) and co-editor (with M. M. McCabe, R.W. Sharples and Anne Sheppard) of *Aristotle and the Stoics Reading Plato* (2010) and (with Melissa Lane) of *Politeia in Greek and Roman Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2013).

RAPHAEL WOOLF is Professor of Philosophy at King's College London. He is author of *Cicero: The Philosophy of a Roman Sceptic* (2015), translator of Cicero's *De Finibus* (*On Moral Ends*, ed. Julia Annas, Cambridge, 2001) and (with Brad Inwood) translator and editor of Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics* (Cambridge, 2012). He has published articles on Plato, Aristotle and Hellenistic philosophy.

MM McCabe

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PHILOSOPHY

Old Chestnuts and Sacred Cows

EDITED BY

VERITY HARTE

Yale University

RAPHAEL WOOLF

King's College London

This volume is a tribute to MM McCabe, devoted friend, inspirational teacher and colleague, and superlative scholar, with a gift for philosophical conversation beyond compare.

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Contributors

PETER ADAMSON is Professor of Late Ancient and Arabic Philosophy at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. He is the author of two monographs on early Arabic philosophy, the book series *A History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps* and numerous articles on figures ranging from Plato and Aristotle to Averroes and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi. He has also edited and co-edited numerous books, including *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy* (2005) and *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays* (2013).

JOACHIM AUFDERHEIDE is Lecturer in Philosophy at King's College London. He has co-edited *The Highest Good in Aristotle and Kant* (with Ralf Bader, 2015) and is currently finishing a commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* 10. He has published articles on Plato and Aristotle.

TAD BRENNAN is Professor of Philosophy and Classics at Cornell University. He is the author of *Ethics and Epistemology in Sextus Empiricus* (1999) and *The Stoic Life* (2005), as well as various articles on ancient philosophy. He translated *Simplicius on Epictetus' Handbook* (with Charles Brittain, 2002) and co-edited (with Rachel Barney and Charles Brittain) *Plato and the Divided Self* (2012).

CHARLES BRITTAIN is Susan Linn Sage Professor of Philosophy and Humane Letters at Cornell University. He is the editor (with Tad Brennan and Rachel Barney) of *Plato and the Divided Self* (2012) and the author of *Philo of Larissa* (2001), of *Cicero: On Academic Scepticism* (2006) and of a number of articles on the Platonic tradition from Arcesilaus to Plotinus and Augustine. He is also the translator (with Tad Brennan) of *Simplicius: On Epictetus' Handbook* (2002).

AMBER CARPENTER is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Yale-NUS College. She has published several articles and chapters on Ancient

Greek philosophy, primarily on Plato's ethics, epistemology and metaphysics. Her book *Indian Buddhist Philosophy* appeared in 2014, and she has published several pieces on Indian Buddhist ethics and metaphysics. Occasionally, she brings the two traditions into conversation, as in 'Ethics of Substance' (*PASS* 2014) and a current Templeton-funded project on moral ideals and exemplars.

VERITY HARTE is George A. Saden Professor of Philosophy and Classics at Yale University. She is the author of *Plato on Parts and Wholes: The Metaphysics of Structure* (2002) and of various articles on ancient philosophy. She is co-editor (with M. M. McCabe, Robert W. Sharples and Anne Sheppard) of *Aristotle and the Stoics Reading Plato* (2010) and (with Melissa Lane) of *Politeia in Greek and Roman Philosophy* (2013).

ANGIE HOBBS is Professor of the Public Understanding of Philosophy at Sheffield University. She is the author of *Plato and the Hero* (2000) and various articles on ancient philosophy and literature. She is a regular broadcaster on television and radio, and contributor to newspaper articles, philosophy videos and podcasts. She has spoken at the World Economic Forum at Davos, the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey.

RICARDO SALLES is Researcher at the Institute of Philosophical Research, National Autonomous University of Mexico. He is the author of *The Stoics on Determinism and Compatibilism* (2005) and of various articles on ancient philosophy. He is the editor of *Metaphysics, Soul and Ethics in Ancient Thought: Themes from the Work of Richard Sorabji* (2005) and of *God and Cosmos in Stoicism* (2009).

MALCOLM SCHOFIELD is Emeritus Professor of Ancient Philosophy at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of St John's College. He is author and editor or co-editor of a number of books, most recently the edited collection *Aristotle, Plato and Pythagoreanism in the First Century BC* (2013), a new English edition of Plato's *Laws* (with Tom Griffith, 2016) and a special issue of the journal *Rhizomata* devoted to Heraclitus (with Catherine Rowett, 2015, 3.2). Many of his recent articles are concerned with ancient political thought or with the philosophy of Cicero.

DOMINIC SCOTT is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of Lady Margaret Hall. He is the author of *Recollection and Experience* (1995), *Plato's Meno* (2006) and *Levels of Argument: A Comparative Study of Plato's Republic and Aristotle's Nicomachean*

Ethics (2015). He co-authored *The Humanities World Report 2015*, and edited *Maieusis: Studies in Honour of M. F. Burnyeat* (2007) and *The Pseudo-Platonic Seventh Letter: A Seminar by Myles Burnyeat and Michael Frede* (2015).

SIR RICHARD SORABJI, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at King's College London and Honorary Fellow of Wolfson College, Oxford, is editor of over 100 translations of Philosophy in the Aristotelian tradition, with the aid of 300 collaborators in twenty countries. He is author of two biographies, three books on theories, starting in antiquity, of the physical universe, and eight on theories of mind, ethics and society. Recent books have increasingly looked at different cultures as well as different ages: *Gandhi and the Stoics: Modern Experiments on Ancient Values* (2012), *Opening Doors: The Untold Story of Cornelia Sorabji, Reformer, Lawyer and Champion of Women's Rights in India* (2010), and *Moral Conscience through the Ages: Fifth Century BCE to the Present* (2014), and an edited book, *Aristotle Re-Interpreted: New Findings on Seven Hundred Years of the Ancient Commentators* (2016).

SHAUL TOR is Lecturer in Ancient Philosophy at King's College London. He is the author of a forthcoming monograph, *Mortal and Divine in Early Greek Epistemology: A Study of Hesiod, Xenophanes and Parmenides*. He has published articles on Early Greek philosophy and Hellenistic scepticism.

RAPHAEL WOOLF is Professor of Philosophy at King's College London. He is the author of *Cicero: The Philosophy of a Roman Sceptic* (2015) and translator of Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics* (with Brad Inwood, 2013) and of Cicero's *De Finibus* (*Cicero: On Moral Ends*, edited by Julia Annas (2001)). He has published articles on Plato, Aristotle and Hellenistic philosophy.

Preface

In July 2014, twelve former students and colleagues of Mary Margaret McCabe gathered for a surprise 'live Festschrift' in her honour, held in the beautiful town of Figeac, in the Lot in Southwest France. They were Peter Adamson, Joachim Aufderheide, Tad Brennan, Charles Brittain, Amber Carpenter, Verity Harte, Angela Hobbs, Fiona Leigh, Nicole Ooms, Ricardo Salles, Sir Richard Sorabji and Raphael Woolf. The theme of the Figeac Festschrift, as of this volume, was Old Chestnuts and Sacred Cows. We are delighted to include as chapters in this volume many papers that were offered as talks in Figeac and to add contributions from three other scholars: former student Dominic Scott, former colleague Shaul Tor, and former teacher and colleague Malcolm Schofield. It is with enormous pleasure that we present this volume to MM.

Maintaining secrecy regarding a five-day international event requires quite the conspiracy. We would like to thank our co-conspirators, Martin Beddoe, Iain Petrie and Margaret Whittaker, for their tactical support in putting the event on and pulling off the surprise, the participants in Figeac for their self-discipline in maintaining radio silence and the contributors to this volume for keeping its existence in turn secret until the eleventh hour. Last, but not least, we thank MM herself, who, in addition to her many other virtues, is the most wonderfully appreciative person to surprise in this way and who is the inspiration for it all.

Additional thanks are due to Michael Sharp, who has been indefatigable in his support and encouragement of the volume; two anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press; Allison Piñeros Glasscock, for editorial assistance with the volume and preparation of its bibliographies and indices; to Jane Dixon for pointing us to the Franz Marc image that graces the cover of our volume and to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation for permission to use it.

Introduction

Verity Harte and Raphael Woolf

Many of us privileged to study and teach ancient philosophy for a living will at some point have encountered, within or outside the academic environment, an interlocutor who asks, often in incredulous tones, some form of the following question: how do you find anything new to say about material that is so old?

Now there are various replies one could give. One might, for example, mutter words to the effect that the study of ancient philosophy did not really take off as an academic subject until the work of nineteenth-century German philologists, and that the discipline is therefore rather 'younger' than it may seem. But if a response of this sort does not strike our interlocutor, or even us, as particularly compelling – after all, that surely leaves considerably more than a century for scholars to have delivered the goods! – that may be because of a nagging suspicion that the questioner is onto something. Certainly, when it comes to the foremost philosophical figures of the ancient world, Plato and Aristotle, though not only to them, it can sometimes be hard to resist the thought that, just maybe, everything that might usefully be said about their work has already been uttered.

The present volume is intended as an antidote to that pessimistic thought. It seeks to address the idea that when dealing with at least some of the best-known works, authors or schools in the ancient philosophical tradition, we are inevitably faced at times with texts that have previously been mined by scholars with great thoroughness and skill. But it does so by embracing, rather than despairing at, that state of affairs. Its collective response to our sceptical interlocutor is that, when looked at with fresh eyes, the most well-worn texts can yield new insights, and the hoariest received opinions about them can prove to be less of a solid edifice than may appear.

No doubt much of contemporary scholarship on ancient philosophy can be read, at least implicitly, as joining in with such a response. The distinctiveness of this volume is that it aspires to do so in an explicit and

self-conscious way. It identifies two particular categories – the 'old chestnut' and the 'sacred cow' – that may be taken to encapsulate the potential problem of reading texts that have long been the subject of scholarly scrutiny, and encourages contributors to select examples of such categories, reflect on them, and, we hope, demonstrate in practice how fruitful it can be to engage with ancient philosophy under those headings.

To elaborate a little, then, on our two main categories: 'old chestnuts' are pieces of ancient philosophical text that, for the most part, have received a large and sustained amount of scholarly attention, been subject to a number of competing (sometimes fiercely debated) readings, but are now at a stage where debate seems to be flagging, if not exhausted: Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*, to take a text covered (from different viewpoints) by two of the papers in this volume, may serve as an example.

'Sacred cows', on the other hand, are not specific texts, but views about what some ancient school or thinker may have held on a question of philosophical importance – views which have come to be sufficiently entrenched as to represent something like an orthodoxy and to be taken to be so obvious as to need no argument: 'Plato's Socrates was a eudaimonist' would be an example, again taken from this volume. What the different categories of old chestnut and sacred cow are in danger of sharing is the supposition that, for significant portions of the ancient philosophical corpus, the wellsprings of interpretation may be close to running dry.

Based (with some additions) on a conference held in July 2014 in Figeac (France) in honour of Professor Mary Margaret McCabe, this volume begs to differ. One of its major inspirations is the work of McCabe, Emeritus Professor of Ancient Philosophy at King's College London, Fellow of the British Academy, 2014–17 Keeling Scholar-in-Residence at UCL, and the 2016–17 Sather Professor at Berkeley (the first female scholar of ancient philosophy to be appointed to that office). Known to all with more than a passing acquaintance with her as 'MM', her influence permeates each of this volume's contributions, exerted not just by means of her powerful and original publications on ancient philosophy,[1] but also through her gifts as teacher and discussant.

Her published work, to be sure, sets the standard for the bold revisiting of familiar texts. To take an example, McCabe's paper 'Escaping One's

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[1] For a comprehensive bibliography of her published work to date, see the *Mary Margaret McCabe Bibliography* in this volume.

Own Notice Knowing: Meno's Paradox Again'[2] begins its interpretation of Meno's Paradox (an old chestnut if ever there was one) by asking whether one 'should apologize for coming back yet again . . . to Meno's paradox.'[3] McCabe offers due homage to two of the paradox's most stalwart recent interpreters – Gail Fine and Dominic Scott (a contributor to this volume) – before succinctly indicating what she still finds unsatisfying about their readings, and going on to offer her own distinctive and persuasive interpretation of that much analysed passage.

This is not the place to dwell on the details of that interpretation. Instead let us return to McCabe's question about whether apology is needed for returning to a particular old chestnut, and fill in the ellipsis. McCabe speaks of coming back to the paradox as 'to something that has puzzled me for forty years';[4] and in this phrase one hears something of what, for those of us fortunate enough to have had philosophical conversations with MM over an extended period of time, makes her approach to philosophy, and to the ancients' way of doing philosophy, such a rewarding and invigorating one. MM has the Socratic knack not just of feeling the force of a philosophical puzzle herself, but of being able to communicate its force to others, in such a way as to implant the idea that nothing could be more urgent, here and now, than trying to get to the bottom of it.

It is this aspect of MM's relation with philosophy – of being constantly open to philosophical puzzlement, however venerable the puzzles may be, and of helping others to be so too – that gives this volume an indispensable part of its orientation. About any substantial piece of philosophy, there is always something fresh to say, because it is always possible to feel the problems afresh, and by doing so on one's own terms, to seek new ways of understanding them: a lesson that has been put into practice for some years now in the King's College London 'Old Chestnuts' seminar, initiated by MM and Verity Harte in 2000 and still running today as a graduate ancient philosophy summer seminar. We here pay tribute to its participants, past and present, for helping continue to infuse the old chestnuts concept with ever new and unexpected flavours.

MM's gift for communicating philosophical ideas, and for enabling others to think them through for themselves, is related to the view – one that she strongly holds and whose credentials in ancient philosophy hardly need stating – that philosophy at its best is carried out through the medium of dialogue and conversation. This is no mere slogan. As her recently published collection, *Platonic Conversations*,[5] amply attests, seeing ancient

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[2] McCabe 2009.   [3] McCabe 2009: 233.   [4] McCabe 2009: 233.   [5] McCabe 2015.

philosophical authors as engaged in dialogue – direct or indirect – with their readers, with themselves and with one another, offers tremendous scope for enhancing our understanding of many difficult passages. Prominent here is the thesis that much light is to be shed on Aristotle if we regard him as being in more or less continuous dialogue with Plato, not just with general aspects of Plato's thought (as all might agree) but closely and sensitively with individual passages of his work, a thesis corroborated by McCabe with reference to some choice Aristotelian chestnuts such as *De Anima* 3.2[6] and *Metaphysics* 7.13–16.[7]

MM's output is not confined, however, to Plato and Aristotle. She has done pioneering work in elucidating the structure of Presocratic thought and has also made significant contributions to the study of Hellenistic philosophy. This volume reflects that breadth of interest. While the majority of papers are on Plato, who represents – via several books and numerous articles – the largest component of MM's scholarly production, philosophers discussed in the following pages range widely, from Heraclitus to the Stoics to Plotinus. What the papers presented here have in common is the aim of stimulating, by example, new thinking about texts and ideas whose very status as old chestnuts or sacred cows is evidence, as we believe this volume's contents will confirm, of their continuing ability to puzzle and provoke.

While philosophers of the archaic period have left us plenty of chestnuts, none is so obviously fruitful in this regard as the provocateur Heraclitus. Shaul Tor (Chapter 1) opens our collection with a focus on Heraclitus B123 ('nature likes to hide'), whose very translation, tellingly, is up for dispute. Arguing against recent rejections of the personifying force of the verb *philein* (as 'to like' or 'to love'), he detects therein the influence of a sacred cow, itself fostered by Heraclitus' ancient readers. Heraclitus' nod to the intentional forces at work in nature, reflected and reinforced for the reader who comes back to B123 from other Heraclitean fragments, sits ill with an influential narrative, originating with passages of Plato and Aristotle, which finds their predecessors engaged in a pre-Weberian 'disenchant-ment' of the world.

Aristotle and, above all, Plato are, of course, the principal purveyors in the ancient philosophy chestnut business, also thereby providing interpre-tive fuel for many sacred cows. Thus, it is no surprise that the remaining

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[6] '"Perceiving that We See and Hear": Aristotle on Plato on Judgement and Reflection', Chapter 14 of McCabe 2015.

[7] 'Some Conversations with Plato: Aristotle *Metaphysics* Z.13–16', Chapter 15 of McCabe 2015.

papers in our volume are focused on the writings and thought of these two, in particular Plato; and that this is so even when our authors take up responses to them in the work of later authors. Six contributors take on a Platonic old chestnut directly, adopting different strategies for striking at it. Charles Brittain (Chapter 2) focuses on exposing the precise structure of Socrates' parodic interpretation of Simonides' *Ode to Scopas* in the *Protagoras*, arguing that Plato has Socrates play a skilful game exploiting late fifth-century interpretive gambits collected in *Poetics* 25, while offering, through his Socrates' misadventures, the makings of a positive Platonic theory of interpretation. An upshot of this reading is defence of the heretical view that Plato's Socrates is not always averse to the deliberate use of fallacy in constructing his arguments.

Raphael Woolf and Angela Hobbs (Chapters 4 and 5, respectively) each take a swing at the speech of Diotima in the *Symposium*. Woolf picks up the famous objection by Gregory Vlastos that the speech does not properly value the role of the individual in interpersonal love. Holding, against recent detractors, that Vlastos's charge was not misplaced he argues that it has nevertheless been misdiagnosed and that, with its proper basis in mind, we should not simply dismiss Diotima's position. Where Woolf opts for a strike on an already notorious feature of Diotima's famous speech, Hobbs argues that, even in a hoary old nut of this kind, there are new veins to be mined, often obscured by contemporary prejudices. Such, she argues, is the claim that *Erōs* is a *daimōn*, some kind of magical figure (in the non-debunking sense), with the corollary implications for Socrates, insofar as Diotima's description of *Erōs* is widely recognized as featuring traits resonant of Socrates. The idea of a magical aspect to Socrates, and to the philosophy he represents, should not, she insists, be dismissed or downplayed because of the negative associations that magic also has elsewhere in Plato. Instead, an understanding of magic as radically transformative can explain both its Platonic use and its connotations therein for bad and good.

Verity Harte and Dominic Scott (Chapters 7 and 8) both come at chestnuts, in the fertile branches of the *Republic*, that involve the distinction between knowledge and (true) belief. Each takes aim by arguing that the nut is best attacked with the aid of passages from elsewhere in the work. Harte argues that material on powers hidden in the conversation between Socrates and Thrasymachus in *Republic* 1 sheds light on the individuation conditions for powers subsequently exploited in the famous argument to distinguish philosophers from 'philodoxers' at the end of *Republic* 5. Scott argues that when, in *Republic* 10's discussion of mimetic poetry, Socrates descends from the apparently heady metaphysics of his opening discussion

to a more workaday view of knowledge drawn from 'experience' (*empeiria*) and thence to an opaque contrast between the knowledge of users and the true belief of makers, not only is this not inconsistent with the rest of the work, but its consistency, both in its local context and in the work as a whole, comes into focus through careful attention to the work's recurring double focus on the situation of legislators both actual and ideal.

Typically, a Platonic old chestnut will be a specific passage of a work. Sometimes, however, a work as a whole is so puzzling in its overall construction that it constitutes a chestnut in itself. Such is the situation of the *Cratylus*, Malcolm Schofield's target (Chapter 9). The *Cratylus* is famous for the worry that a perfect image of Cratylus would be another Cratylus. Schofield argues that the dialogue presents us with a puzzle in its own two portraits of Cratylus: an enigmatic figure at its opening, whose views are its stimulant, but who is silent for the bulk of the dialogue, only to emerge a regular discussant at its close. The solution, Schofield argues, and an insight into the project of the dialogue as a whole, is to see that Cratylus, reportedly a teacher of Plato, is used as a figure to enable the working through of some of the deepest paradoxes that Plato sees as arising from contemporary naturalist theories of naming.

Three further contributors, Amber Carpenter (Chapter 3), Tad Brennan (Chapter 6) and Joachim Aufderheide (Chapter 10), tackle passages with old chestnut status, two Platonic, one Aristotelian: Socrates' argument in the *Gorgias* that the tyrant who does what he wants is not thereby powerful or happy; the proposals regarding women as guardians in *Republic* 5, the first of the three waves that Socrates is there faced with; and Aristotle's definition of virtue in *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.6. Each, however, aims thereby to bring down a sacred cow. Carpenter argues that the orthodox view that Socrates is a eudaimonist misses the way in which, both in this argument and elsewhere, he carefully distinguishes the (human) good from happiness and uses constraints on the former to undermine conventions regarding the latter: Socrates should thus be more correctly regarded as an 'agathist' than a eudaimonist. Brennan argues that not only are Socrates' (and Plato's) attitudes to women consistent, they can be used to critique the conventional wisdom that, in the central books of the *Republic*, Plato sets to one side the work's governing city-soul analogy. The endorsement of the selection of *some* women against the backdrop of a general anti-feminist stance towards women is a figure for the rational selection of some pleasures against the backdrop of rational suppression of the majority of appetites. Aufderheide argues that a careful scrutiny of Aristotle's defini-tion of virtue, in conjunction with his account of the good person as a

measure (*EN* 3.4), shows that Aristotle does not accord virtue priority in definition over right action. Accordingly, despite the obvious centrality of virtue to his ethical theory, Aristotle was no virtue ethicist: proponents of twentieth- and twenty-first-century virtue ethics, taken as defenders of a distinct normative theory, are wrong to revere Aristotle as its founder.

Three final contributors remind us that ancient readers of Plato and Aristotle (and others) had their chestnuts too: some still in fruit, others that have receded from view. Ricardo Salles (Chapter 11) argues that the harmony theory of soul in Plato's *Phaedo*, a recurring old chestnut, had a decisive influence on the Stoic theory of soul as *pneuma* tensed in a particular way. In turn, tracing the contours of the Stoic reading of the passage and their parallel theory brings out what is distinctive of the *Phaedo* theory as compared with apparently similar accounts of material powers in the *Timaeus*. In the background of Richard Sorabji's contribution (Chapter 12) are two Aristotelian chestnuts, the famous Sea Battle argument of *De Interpretatione* 9 and his theory of causes succinctly presented in *Physics* 2.3, in particular the way they figure, in later ancient authors, as a backdrop of perennial arguments about the requirements for actions being 'up to us' and thus morally accountable. Sorabji argues that the great second-century (AD) Aristotelian, Alexander of Aphrodisias, can be rescued from a current consensus as to the nature (and weakness) of his response to the Stoics, by recognition that his argumentative focus is on denying necessitation, right up to the moment of action, not causation and that he does not suppose that the cause must be divorced from the agent's beliefs, desires or in general their character.

Peter Adamson (Chapter 13) concludes our collection with an account of how Plotinus aims to crack one aspect of a truly old, old chestnut, much chewed over by late ancient Platonists, the Myth of Er: specifically the role it accords to a *daimōn* in connection with each human life. Showing the careful way in which Plotinus makes sense of the relations between three apparently inconsistent passages on a human's *daimōn*, from the *Republic*'s myth, the *Phaedo* and the *Timaeus*, Adamson offers a case study of Plotinus 'reading Plato from Plato' in *Enneads* 3.4 [15]. Plotinus emerges not only more cautiously optimistic about the prospects for human development than other, Gnostically inclined late ancient Platonists, but also as a non-dogmatic and subtle interpreter of Plato whose reading of his own and our old chestnuts still deserves serious attention: a fitting paradigm, we hope, with which to end the volume.

On Second Thoughts, Does Nature Like to Hide?
Heraclitus B123 Reconsidered

Shaul Tor

I   Introduction

MM McCabe opens her recent collection of essays, *Platonic Conversations*, by arguing that Heraclitus' sayings have a way of implicating their reader in a kind of evolving conversational process. A Heraclitean statement provokes a puzzle and a first response as well as reflection on the puzzle, on the response and on the nature of this dialectical exchange itself. This process recurs repeatedly with other Heraclitean sayings. And when we return to that initial saying in light of all these encounters with Heraclitus' texts and the subsequent reflection which they have provoked, then – despite what we might read in the *Phaedrus* – the same written words, repeated, may no longer be telling us the same thing in the same way. We will consider this dynamic of reading and rereading, of thinking and rethinking, in relation to Heraclitus' puzzling and provocative statement: φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ (DK22 B123).[1]

I provisionally translate: 'nature likes to hide.' This traditional rendering has come under stimulating criticism by Daniel Graham. In his paper 'Does Nature Love to Hide? Heraclitus B123' (2003), Graham surveys near-contemporary uses of the construction *philein* + infinitive. He argues that this construction never has a personalising force: '*there is not a single documented case in which* φιλεῖν + *infinitive means "loves to" in ancient*

As anyone with experience of this will know, a philosophy seminar that has MM McCabe in it is nothing like a philosophy seminar that does not have MM McCabe in it. Being MM's colleague in KCL was an exhilarating intellectual experience, and it is a pleasure to offer to this volume something on Heraclitus – a thinker about whom I learned a great deal from speaking with as well as reading MM.

[1] See Mackenzie 1988 (=McCabe 2015: 36–54) for a sustained analysis of Heraclitean paradoxes along these lines. While McCabe is preoccupied in particular with the logic of opposition, unity, contradiction and qualification in Heraclitus, whereas my own focus here will be on other (but related) aspects of his thought, similar questions will recur concerning the ways in which Heraclitus' sayings provoke, orient and frame philosophical reflection. Kahn 1979 throughout emphasises and demonstrates that our understanding of a single Heraclitean fragment may be altered and enriched in light of our growing awareness of, and reflection on, other Heraclitean sayings in relation to which that fragment may be read and *re*read (what he calls 'resonance', 1979: 89–90).

Greek.'[2] He maintains that, in the context of this construction, the verb *philein* always carries a different, non-personalising sense, merely indicating, with the infinitive, some regular pattern of action or events or some general truth. This leads Graham to the strong conclusion that 'we are not justified in positing the idiom [sc. "loves to"] as even a secondary meaning for the Greek phrase.'[3] Graham thus rejects what he describes as the traditional, literal translation.[4] He initially renders 'nature hides'. Arguing further, however, that his analysis of *philei* has removed any reason for thinking of this hiding as an action performed by a personified nature, he suggests – despite the fact that *phusis* is a noun in the nominative case and *philei* an active verb – the renderings 'nature is hidden' or 'nature is ever hidden'.[5]

If any ancient philosopher systematically generates hard chestnuts, which perpetually demand and reward fresh questions and new answers even when it appears that all that could be asked and said has been, then Heraclitus does so. Although B123 is undoubtedly one of Heraclitus' most celebrated and oft-quoted pronouncements, I want to suggest that Graham's argument sharpens a question which has been rather overlooked in discussions and uses of the fragment and which merits a fresh examination of this very familiar slogan. What *is* the meaning and philosophical upshot of speaking about nature in terms of the vocabulary of *philein*? I will argue that pursuing this question should lead us to a new understanding concerning the theological undertones of B123. In particular, it should lead us to a new recognition of the insight which the fragment affords into the relation between (the study of) nature and (the study of) god in Heraclitus' thought.

In one sense, then, what follows will be an inquiry into the old, small and exercising chestnut which makes up B123. But this inquiry will also tie into,

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[2] Graham 2003: 178 (his emphasis).   [3] Graham 2003: 178.

[4] Graham 2003: 175. There is a conceptual tension in Graham both (i) taking himself to be arguing against a literal translation and (ii) arguing that, in the *philein* + infinitive construction, the verb never means 'loves to' but has a different, non-personalising sense. If (ii) is right, then the traditional translation would not be overly literal but semantically incorrect.

[5] In Graham 2010: 161, we find: 'a nature is hidden'. Graham 2003: 178 renders B87 as 'a foolish man generally gets excited (ἐπτοῆσθαι φιλεῖ) at every report.' Hadot 2006: 7 allows the translation 'loves' but interprets B123 similarly: '[h]ere, the word "loves" (*philei*) denotes not a feeling but a natural or habitual tendency, or a process that occurs necessarily or frequently.' Hülsz (2013a: 185 and 2013b: 288 with n. 23) follows Graham, describing his argument as conclusive; Hülsz renders: 'nature is wont to be hidden.' Most 2016: 120 refers to Graham sympathetically but noncommittally for the view that *philei* in B123 need have no affective connotation; he renders: 'a nature tends to hide.' Mouraviev 2006: 140 briefly and tentatively questions Graham's philological claims and inferences, observing that Heraclitus B87 and Democritus B228 (addressed below) offer two possible counterexamples.

and confront us with, something of a Presocratic sacred cow. Graham is eager to emphasise that his analysis of B123 yields the result that here – in one of the first and most momentous philosophical occurrences of the term *phusis* – nature is categorically not figured as an agent nor personified as something which is in any way volitionally or consciously involved in effecting its own concealed nature. In doing so, Graham gives voice to a long tradition, which goes back to certain canonical accounts in Plato and Aristotle of the early natural philosophers, accounts which represent these thinkers as engaged in producing mechanistic and non-teleological patterns of explanation. This perception of the 'Presocratics' has played a formative role in the development of modern attitudes towards early Greek philosophy of nature. So too has the related notion that, in their pioneering strides in speculation and argumentation about the natural world, these philosophers rendered theology a subordinate aspect of natural philosophy ('natural theology') and retained only a radically depersonalised and naturalised notion of god. Now, to be sure, it is not the case that Presocratic scholarship exhibits consensus concerning these issues (we will have occasion below to note different voices pulling in different directions). Nonetheless, Plato's and Aristotle's representations of their predecessors continue to cast a long shadow. The deep-seated idea that, in moving away from mythological accounts of the world, the early philosophers of nature broke radically with an older notion that the study of nature is the study of divine persons remains pervasive and is regularly taken for granted. This sacred cow can still be heard lowing vigorously, and Graham's argument concerning B123 serves to save its hide from any possible *prima facie* contrary reading of the fragment.

This chapter, then, will both reconsider B123 itself in a new light and, consequently, suggest that the language of this particular fragment offers us one powerful and overlooked perspective from which to examine critically certain expectations that are deep-seated and still rife concerning the scope and orientation of early Greek inquiry into nature.

In the first half of the chapter, I re-evaluate some instructive uses of the construction *philein* + infinitive, particularly in Herodotus who, as Kahn observes, offers the earliest available corpus of (Ionic) prose after Heraclitus and is our most important guide for the (especially linguistic and conceptual) expectations of Heraclitus' audience.[6] In the second half, I return to B123 in light of this survey. I conclude by noting briefly how this analysis of B123 ties the fragment, as one striking test case, to the larger question of the scope and orientation of early Greek inquiries into god and nature and

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[6] Kahn 1979: 92; cf. Graham 2003: 175–6.

how it underscores the importance of approaching these inquiries through a critical dialogue with the canonical accounts of the first Greek philosophers of nature in Plato and Aristotle.

What, then, is the significance of *philei* in B123? What sort of volitional and deliberate agency, if any, does it suggest? The upshot of our consideration of uses of the construction outside Heraclitus will be that, for the first-time reader or auditor of B123, these would be evocative, open and far from obvious questions. In the context of Heraclitus' work, however, the other reflections which surround B123 subsequently inform and constrain these questions. A reader who comes back again (and again) to this statement in light of Heraclitus' other fragments – in particular, his thoughts elsewhere on god and nature and his attitudes to language and interpretation – can be attuned to the insight which a personal reading affords into the intentionality, purposeful action and intelligence that determine nature's organisation and appearance.[7]

2　The Construction *Philein* + Infinitive

To begin with, Graham poses the philological question too narrowly by looking exclusively at occurrences of *philein* within the context of the construction *philein* + infinitive. We should start by stressing the rudimentary but important point that uses of *philein* outside of this construction commonly and unmistakably ascribe to the subjects of the verb personal affective and preferential attitudes.[8] The verb standardly signifies anything from love or an affectionate regard for something or someone to, more broadly, having a positive, approving or otherwise favourable attitude towards something or someone.[9] ('Loves' or 'likes', then, are not the only translations available in B123. We might alternatively render, for example: 'nature is minded to hide.' At any rate, the verb frequently indicates broadly the state of being positively and favourably disposed towards

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[7] I will not make any assumptions about the ordering of the fragments. The question will be how we may encounter B123 in a hypothetical initial reading, and then how we may return to it in light of the other reflections which surround it. The appropriate structural image for relating Heraclitus' fragments to each other is the circle in whose circumference the starting point and the end point are common (B103).

[8] I make no claims here about the 'original' or 'basic' meaning of this vocabulary. I am only marking the most common and standard ways in which we find it deployed in extant archaic and classical sources.

[9] See LSJ, sv. φιλέω for numerous attestations from a wide array of genres and periods. From here the verb naturally extends to the results and outward manifestations of such affective states, e.g. 'to entertain as guest', 'to have intercourse', 'to kiss'.

something.) The verb in these senses is directed towards a seemingly unrestricted range of objects, including both persons and abstract or inanimate things. Notably, the term *philein* and its cognates are very commonly used with this sort of force to navigate the theological issue of what or whom the gods love and do not love. We standardly encounter evaluations of particular mortals as 'dear' to the gods.[10] The same language is used to indicate that a certain turn of events or state of affairs is in line with divine volition,[11] that certain mortal actions meet with divine approval or disapproval,[12] or that a deity is itself positively and naturally disposed towards engaging in some action.[13] In one distinct usage, this terminology expresses uncertainty or anxiety over whether a particular appellation will meet with divine favour or disfavour.[14]

The verb *philein*, in short, is ubiquitous outside the context of the construction *philein* + infinitive, and it is regularly a personalising verb. It ascribes to the subject of the verb (frequently – in a distinctive set of theological applications – gods or a god[15]) an affective and preferential attitude towards something. In doing so, the verb itself, if taken at face value, implies that its subject is the sort of thing to have such attitudes. Now, it does not follow that every occurrence of the verb (even outside the construction *philein* + infinitive) encourages us to adopt a reified and personal conception of the syntactical subject as, in fact, an agent that is characterised by attitudes of this sort. It is a consequential point, which we should accept from Graham's analysis, that near-contemporary readers of Ionic prose will indeed have been regularly exposed to uses of the construction which arguably invite a depersonalising interpretative response.

[10] As in the term θεοφιλής, e.g. Hdt. 1.87 (καὶ θεοφιλὴς καὶ ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός) and Democr. B217; cf. e.g. Pl. *Lg.* 716c–d. Similarly in poetry: φιλεῖ δέ ἑ μητίετα Ζεύς, *Il.* 2.197; cf. e.g. *Il.* 2.668–9, 9.117, 16.94, 18.117–18 and 20.347; *Od.*15.245–6; A. *Pr.* 304; Hdt. 1.65; 7.148 (in the context of Delphic oracles); B. *Ep.* 4.1–2; 11.60.

[11] As in Hdt. 1.87 (negatively): ἀλλὰ ταῦτα δαίμοσί κου φίλον ἦν οὕτω γενέσθαι. Cf. e.g. *Il.* 9.23; *Od.* 7.316; Hdt. 2.64; Eur. *Ion* 14; Pl. *Ap.* 19a.

[12] As in *Od.* 14.83: οὐ μὲν σχέτλια ἔργα θεοὶ μάκαρες φιλέουσιν. Cf. e.g. Aeschylus, *Pr.* 660. The term *philein* and its cognates frame the exposition and critique in Plato's *Euthyphro* (6e10–11b5) of Euthyphro's successive candidate definitions of piety as what the gods love and what all the gods love.

[13] Ἑρμεία, σοὶ γάρ τε μάλιστά γε φίλτατόν ἐστιν ἀνδρὶ ἑταιρίσσαι, *Il.* 24.334–5; cf. e.g. *Il.* 1.541–2. This construction seems to be a periphrastic version of the construction *philein* + infinitive. It uses an adjective to govern the infinitive, with the same result of articulating a regular pattern of behaviour or action.

[14] E.g. A. *A.* 161; Pl. *Phlb.* 12c3–4; cf. Heraclit. B32, using another volitional term (οὐκ ἐθέλει καὶ ἐθέλει). On this theological issue, both in Heraclitus and elsewhere, see Rowett 2013.

[15] To clarify my position in response to a query from an anonymous reader: I am not suggesting that this vocabulary is *more commonly* used in theological than in other contexts, but only that we encounter in our sources a set of theological applications which is both distinctive and widespread.

Put differently, they will have been accustomed to the thought that, in uses of the construction, the author may not be inviting us to take at face value or to place any weight on the typical personalising connotations for the verb. We will also see, however, that it is a far less clear-cut and straightforward matter than Graham suggests what role the personal force of the verb can play within the construction *philein* + infinitive. Various applications of it can be seen to evoke, directly or indirectly (or even playfully), certain affective and volitional dispositions, on the part either of the syntactic subject itself or of some further implicit agency which underpins the regular pattern in question. Most importantly, nothing in the typical use of the construction requires us to posit that the verb *philein* is used here with some special (depersonalised) semantic *sense*, distinct from the (personalising) meaning of the verb elsewhere.[16] This means that the possibility of taking the personifying force of *philein* seriously (the possibility of taking the author at his word, as it were) is always there. In some especially instructive cases, notably pertaining to the nature and disposition of god, we can see this possibility activated through the context in which the construction *philein* + infinitive is configured.

But let us begin with Graham's first example. When explaining why no breezes blow from the Nile, Herodotus states: 'a breeze likes to blow (*phileei pneein*) from something cold' (Hdt. 2.27). Does this expression personify the breeze? If taken at face value, it does. It figures it as an agent that possesses the sort of conscious, affective states which the verb *philein* conveys. Now, it may seem obvious that here at least we can easily strip away the meteorological point from the personification. Recognising the standard affective and volitional force of the verb elsewhere, we might say that, here, Herodotus is merely indicating a certain pattern of events by speaking of breezes *as though* they liked to blow only from cold places. This response may appear less self-evident against a backdrop in which winds and breezes are standardly gods and the recipients of cults and prayers.[17] Nonetheless, Herodotus, by reflecting on the inherent implausibility and inappropriateness of the idea that anything could blow from warm places (*ouk oikos*), and by underscoring the unchanging stability of this general rule (*tauta . . . egeneto*), is arguably moving away from a notion of winds as agents who may alter their conduct on a whim or in response to a prayer. But Herodotus' statement that these traditional divinities 'like' to act in a

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[16] This is particularly evident in Hdt. 7.50 (cited below), where the two volitional terms, *phileei* and *ethelei*, are used as functional equivalents.

[17] E.g. *Od.* 4.565–68; Hes. *Th.* 869–80; A. *Pr.* 88–91, 132; Hdt. 7.189. On the cults of winds, see further Burkert 1985: 175.

certain way – especially if we bear in mind the familiar use of the language of *philein* and its cognates to speak of divine dispositions and inclinations – still plausibly points towards that general divine guidance which in fact deliberately and intelligently determines this and all other such aspects of the ordered world as they are and should be. In fact, Herodotus elsewhere both explicates the natural mechanisms which facilitate another such feature of the ordered world (that timid and edible animals reproduce more easily than fierce and hardy ones) and explicitly traces it to god's wise providence (*tou theiou hē pronoiē . . . eousa sophē*), which *itself* orders the world as is plausible and appropriate (*hōsper kai oikos esti*, Hdt. 3.108). Herodotus' attitude to these regularities, then, recalls that of Ionian thinkers like Anaximander and Xenophanes, who offer similar explanations of such natural phenomena in natural terms (for example, on winds: Anaximand. A11.7; Xenoph. B30) but inscribe all such processes within a general framework of divine guidance and governance (Anaximand. A15; Xenoph. B25).

A similar suggestion can be made for the aphorisms which pertain to success and failure in human endeavours, such as: 'rewards, then, generally like to come about for those who have the will to act (*toisi . . . phileei ginesthai ta kerdea*), whereas to those who think over everything and hesitate they do not at all wish to come about' (*toisi de . . . ou mala ethelei*, Hdt. 7.50; cf. e.g. Hdt. 7.10.6, 7.9.3). Again, arguably nothing else in this passage suggests a reified and personified conception of the syntactic subject itself ('rewards'). And yet, this volitional language (*phileei . . . ethelei*) is highly evocative in a textual and cultural context constantly preoccupied with questions about whether and in what ways divine agency, divine favour and divine interventions govern and at least co-determine the vicissitudes and outcomes of human endeavours.[18] A striking confirmation of this suggestion is found in an aphorism put in the mouth of Themistocles (Hdt. 8.60.3): 'for humans who deliberate reasonably [it] generally wishes to work out (*ethelei ginesthai*); but for those who do not deliberate reasonably [it] does not wish nor does the god (sc. wish) to accede to the human plans (*ouk ethelei oude ho theos proschōreein pros tas anthrōpēias gnōmas*).' The initially impersonal *ethelei* seamlessly assumes *ho theos* as its subject: it is the same question, under different descriptions, whether 'it' wishes to turn out well for mortals and whether god wishes

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[18] On the central prominence of these theological questions throughout Herodotus' narratives, see Harrison 2000 and Fowler 2010.

to accede to their plans.[19] Notably, Artabanus' aphorism about the consequences of haste at Hdt. 7.10.6 follows immediately upon a sustained reflection on god's tendencies and motivations in curtailing and facilitating human endeavours (Hdt. 7.10.5, discussed below) and Xerxes' remarks about rewards come right after his observations concerning specifically *human* uncertainty (Hdt. 7.50). So, even where we may indeed be disinclined to place interpretative weight on the personalisation of the syntactic subject itself, the expression of a regular pattern of events through volitional terms like *philein* or *ethelein* can still sometimes evoke implicitly, and at one remove, a volitional agency which underpins this pattern of events.[20]

Some moralising aphorisms may be thought to give us an *indirect* insight into the psychology of the syntactic subjects. The pejorative, rhetorical bite of the aphorism that 'soft men like to come from soft countries' (Hdt. 9.122) arguably relies in part on the insinuation that, because of their upbringing and environment, such men cannot help, not only becoming soft, but precisely becoming the sort of people who luxuriate in their softness. A similar take can be suggested for the aphorism that children who are heedless of their father's example 'like' to be corrupted (Democr. B228; cf. also Hdt. 8.68.3).[21] Indeed, Heraclitus' remark (B87) that 'a stupid person likes to get excited (*eptoēsthai philei*) at every account' is in the same vein (I will return to B87 below). We encounter unmistakably playful allusions to the personal *erotic* force of the verb in Herodotus' statement that 'the *hetairai* in Naucratis love in some sense (*phileousi de kōs*) to be particularly alluring' (Hdt. 2.135) and in Pindar's reference to those things which maidens 'love to murmur in

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[19] The power of this transition is spoiled by the unnecessary emendation προσχωρέει (very much a *lectio facilior*!), so that ὁ θεός no longer governs ἐθέλει (the emendation, however, would not substantively affect my theological point). The term *ethelei* is here functionally equivalent to the uses of *philein* with the infinitive; the two terms are juxtaposed symmetrically in Hdt. 7.50 (quoted in this paragraph). For an initially impersonal use of the *philein* + infinitive construction, which subsequently introduces *ho theos* as the subject, cf. Hdt. 6.27 (discussed below). On the general phenomenon of the 'double motivation' or 'overdetermination' of human actions and endeavours, see Dodds 1951: 1–27.

[20] In the context of Democritus' ethics, is there any prospect for some comparable agency-at-one-remove which co-determines the achievement of 'respect' (*aidōs*), which 'likes' to come about through the proper education (B179), or the generation of 'shortages and excesses' which 'like' to cause disturbances in the soul (B191)? The question turns on the types of benefit and harm which Democritus had in mind when he prayed to meet only with 'propitious *eidōla*' and never with the malicious kind; see Plu. *de Def. Or.* 419a and S. E. *M* 9.19, with Taylor 1999: 214. In other occurrences of the construction in Herodotus, one may similarly trace the aphorisms to affective and volitional dispositions within the sphere of human psychology, as for example with the statement that rebukes like to rouse a man's anger (Hdt. 7.160; cf. also Hdt. 8.128, 3.82).

[21] On Democr. B228; cf. similarly Mouraviev 2006: 140.

evening songs' (*phileoisin . . . hupokourizesth'*, *P.* 3.17–19; for the erotic context here, cf. *P.* 3.16, 3.20).

Some especially instructive uses of the construction demonstrate the significance of the point that, since the verb *philein* is not used here with some special and depersonalised semantic sense, the *possibility* is always there of taking its affective and volitional force seriously. In Herodotus 7.10.5, the Persian Artabanus cautions Xerxes:

> You see how the god smites with his thunderbolt (*keraunoi ho theos*) the creatures which stand out above and does not allow them (*oude ea(i)*) to make a show of themselves, but the little ones do not provoke him (*ouden min knizei*); and you see how it is always on the greatest buildings and trees that he hurls (*aposkēptei*) his bolts: for the god likes to curtail all things that stand out above (*phileei gar ho theos ta huperechonta panta kolouein*). And so in this way a large army is destroyed by a small one: whenever the god in his jealousy (*ho theos phthonēsas*) should throw fear or a thunderbolt among them, then they perish unworthily. For the god does not allow pride in anyone other than himself (*ou gar ea(i) phroneein mega ho theos allon ē heōuton*).

Artabanus not only identifies in god's conduct a regular and universal pattern of action, which manifests itself consistently and seamlessly in relation to human endeavours, animals, artefacts and natural objects, but also inscribes this pattern within a certain framework of affective dispositions and deliberate intention. Within this context, the construction *philein* + infinitive performs double duty. First, it articulates the general principle for which Artabanus cites examples both before and after this statement. Second, the verb *phileei* is imbued by, and itself augments, the repeated expressions of divine intentionality which surround this statement and permeate the passage. The nominative *ho theos* recurs four times. This emphatic repetition underscores the point that it is the same subject who is pleased and minded to curtail superior things as the one who is provoked to anger by them and is jealous of his pride in response to them. Here, then, the configuration of the construction brings to the fore the personal force of the verb *philein* – a term frequently used elsewhere to address the will, preferences and inclinations of the gods – and makes us highly conscious of it. God loves or is minded to curtail superior things: this is not merely a consistent pattern of action, but a policy of divine governance which is underpinned by a particular set of conscious affective and volitional dispositions.

In 6.27, Herodotus at first uses the construction impersonally: '[it] likes in some way to give a sign in advance (*phileei de kōs prosēmainein*),

whenever some great catastrophe is about to befall a city or a nation.' But, after specifying the 'great signs' which appeared to the Chians, Herodotus renders explicit the subject which was initially absent: 'the god showed them these signs in advance' (*tauta men sphi sēmēia ho theos proedexe*, 6.27). By first suppressing and then emphatically identifying the subject, Herodotus invites us to reread the initial statement by focusing our attention on those deliberate and intelligent divine dispositions which underpin the regular patterns of mantic signs and their interpretability. It is, of course, god who is minded to give a sign in advance. (Notably, the initial active infinitive, *prosēmainein*, expects a subject, and the recurrence of *pro-* in *proedexe* underscores the point that 'the god' is indeed the very subject which was left implicit in the initial statement.) To take one final example, Pindar states that 'the Muse likes to recall great contests' (*megalōn d'aethlōn Moisa memnasthai philei*), and then immediately follows up that assertion by invoking the Muse with an imperative: 'sow now some splendour' (*speire nun aglaian tina, N.* 1.11–13). By ascribing to the goddess this general attitude, Pindar endows the subsequent imperative with the air of a right-minded invocation. Pindar asks the goddess to pursue in this particular case ('now') an action which would be one instance of a general type of action which she is in general favourably disposed and minded to pursue.[22]

Is nature, then, minded to hide? The force of the verb *philein*, when it governs an infinitive, turns above all on the context (textual, conceptual, cultural, theological) within which the construction is configured. What, then, is the surrounding philosophical context in which we read and re-read Heraclitus B123?

3   Back to Heraclitus

From multiple readings of Heraclitus' remarks, a network of connections and interrelations gradually emerges. Nature, god, fire, soul, wisdom, attunement (*harmoniē*), *logos*, war and law: these principles are connected to one another in a system of relations which looms large in the text and yet which it would be difficult (and perhaps ill-conceived) to try to pin down

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[22] I discuss these passages here as particularly helpful illustrations of the potential of the construction *philein* + infinitive. They are not meant to represent anything like a comprehensive survey. Cf. e.g. also Soph. *Aj.* 988–9: 'you know, everybody is fond of laughing at the dead (φιλοῦσι πάντες . . . ἐπεγγελᾶν) when they are just lying about'; here, the infinitive ἐπεγγελᾶν underscores the point that this purported habit of morbid derision is something which its perpetrators relish and enjoy.

in a precise and determinate manner.[23] Much in Heraclitus motivates and raises questions concerning these connections and interrelations.

The force of the term '*phusis*' in Heraclitus is itself by no means fixed or clear in advance. It is itself something which emerges with increasing sharpness from multiple readings. In the programmatic opening of Heraclitus' book (B1), the qualification 'in accordance with nature' is Janus-faced. Looking backwards, it modifies the way in which Heraclitus sets forth words and deeds (*epeōn kai ergōn . . . diēgeumai kata phusin*) and in relation to which men are like the inexperienced even when they had experienced them. Looking forwards, it is according to nature that Heraclitus discriminates each thing and indicates how it is (*kata phusin . . . echei*). The carefully positioned qualification *kata phusin* thus emerges as the linchpin of Heraclitus' project of setting forth, discriminating and indicating the true and non-evident character or essence of each thing. In B112, in the context of a reflection on wisdom (which is probably being identified here with sound thinking (*sōphronein*) as 'the greatest virtue'), the qualification *kata phusin* is again carefully positioned so as to play a similar linchpin role: looking backwards, it modifies the proper way to conduct oneself and, if we read the qualification further backwards along the clause, to speak in line with the truth or reality of things (*alēthea legein kai poiein kata phusin . . .*); looking forwards, it modifies the way in which the wise perceive and register things (*. . . kata phusin epaiontas*).[24]

B1 and B112, then, situate *phusis* as the true and non-evident constitution or character of things – their real underlying essence. In the context of Heraclitus' thought, nature is thus determined above all by dynamic elemental processes and by complex interrelations and coincidences in a nexus of opposites, which are in turn key aspects of what Heraclitus describes as the 'unseen attunement' (*harmoniē aphanēs*) which underlies things and which is 'stronger than the evident one' (B54). Whatever else, then, the nature which likes to hide (B123) is aligned with this unseen attunement. As such, the nature of things is also the object and focus of Heraclitus' philosophical efforts (as is especially clear in B1) and the goal of true understanding and a wise life (B112). In this way, *phusis* is not only a cosmological and ontological concept but also an epistemologically and even ethically significant one. Although we should not place weight on the assumption that everything in the wording of B106 is authentically

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[23] Cf. Granger 2013: 193: 'Justice, strife, war, fire, and even the *logos* seem to merge in Heraclitus' thought, although not in a way that makes for a clear formulation.'

[24] On the *apo koinou* syntactical function of *kata phusin* in Heraclitus B1 and B112, cf. Hülsz 2013a: 183–4.

Heraclitean, the use of the term *phusis* here fits well with what we find elsewhere: in fact, the nature of every day (i.e. its non-evident but true character and constitution) is one (*phusin ... mian ousan*), and Hesiod's claims, which suggest otherwise, are therefore a mark of his ignorance (*agnoounti*).[25]

Graham takes it as settled that *phusis* in B123 refers to the individual nature of a thing rather than to Nature as a whole (understood, for example, as the cosmic order taken universally).[26] This assertion is far from obvious, and we should avoid overly confident pronouncements on either side of this question. The wording of B123 (*phusis kruptesthai philei*) pointedly does not circumscribe or delimit *phusis* through restrictive genitives or in any other way. It does not tell us something *merely* about the nature of this or that thing or class of things, but precisely about the nature of nature *simpliciter* and the ways in which nature is and is not amenable to our understanding. Certainly, the thrust of B123 is that the nature *of things* likes to hide and, in a particular domain or in the context of a certain investigation, we will be inquiring into the hidden nature of particular things and kinds of things. And yet, here Heraclitus speaks about nature *simpliciter*. In *some* sense, then, he isolates for consideration the idea of 'nature' itself and identifies a consistent pattern of behaviour which nature exhibits everywhere. Similarly, in B1 and B112 Heraclitus speaks quite generally (and without restrictive genitives) of philosophical and epistemic procedures which are in tune with this general principle (*kata phusin*). Heraclitus is a pioneer in that broad tradition in which we later encounter, for example, Euripides' talk of 'the ageless cosmos of immortal Nature' (*athanatou ... phuseōs kosmon agērōn*, fr. 910.5–7 *TrGF*) or Philolaus' reference to 'the Nature' (*ha phusis*) in the cosmos, which was fitted together or attuned (*harmochthē*) from limiteds and

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[25] Is B106 merely a variant of the criticism of Hesiod in B57? Kirk 1962: 155–62, Marcovich 2001: 320–1 and Mouraviev 2006: 127 argue that, in some form, the term *phusis* in B106 most probably goes back to Heraclitus. For 'real constitution' or 'real essence' as the basic force of '*phusis*' in Heraclitus, and for the observation that the term is both ontologically and epistemologically significant, see further Hülsz 2013a (esp. 182–5) and also Kirk 1962: 229–31, Kahn 1979: 105, Naddaf 2005: 128, Curd 2013: 234–5. For uses of *phusis* with a similar force ('real constitution', 'character'), cf. e.g. Parm. B10.1, 5 and B16.3; Epicharm. B10; Emp. B110.5, as well as the lone Homeric occurrence: *Od*. 10.302–3 (πόρε φάρμακον . . . καί μοι φύσιν αὐτοῦ ἔδειξε), with Kirk *loc. cit.* and Verdenius 1964: 15, n. 5. We need not, of course, exclude the connotation of 'origin' or 'growth' from *phusis*; cf. Hülsz 2013a: 182 and Vieira 2013: 476 with n. 11 and, on the term *phusis* more generally, Naddaf 2005: 15, 20. For Heraclitus in particular, the nature of things will also include the ongoing, dynamic processes of ordered change which determine their character.

[26] Graham 2003: 175, n. 5; cf. similarly Kirk et al. 1983: 192 and Hadot 2006: 7. Most 2016: 119 also suggests that *phusis* indicates here, not 'Nature', but a nature typical of a particular kind or class of beings.

unlimiteds (B1; cf. B6). One might reasonably counter that, while
Heraclitus does not circumscribe 'nature' with restrictive genitives or in
some other way, he also does not clearly reify it with a definite article, as
Philolaus does and as Heraclitus himself does in relation to god in B67 (*ho
theos*). Indeed, Heraclitus may still be working his way *towards* the articu-
lation of the novel notion of 'Nature' as a cosmic whole, and it is not
implausible that such a clearly defined category of 'Nature' should appear
only at a later and more advanced stage of this conceptual process. It is
worth noting, however, that it is not clear that modern editors are in fact
right to print *phusis* without the article. Among all the ancient sources
which cite the fragment, Themistius alone omits the article.[27] We should,
in sum, avoid definite views and conclusions on this point. It is difficult to
determine how far Heraclitus goes towards conceptualising nature as the
cosmic order as a whole when, in B123, he isolates for consideration 'nature'
as something which exhibits everywhere a consistent pattern of beha-
viour.[28] At any rate, it is important to stress that the hidden nature
(B123) and unseen attunement (B54) of which Heraclitus speaks go beyond
what we might have expected in an account of the physical world. They
extend quite broadly to the formation and fundamental character or
essence of all things.[29] In B1, it is Heraclitus' entire subsequent project
of discriminating and indicating how things truly are which is said to be
in line with nature (*kata phusin*), and Heraclitus goes on to discriminate
and to indicate, not only the elemental measures and processes which
constitute things but also, prominently, various structures of opposition
and unity which underlie them (pure and impure, valuable and worth-
less, weariness and rest, etc.).

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[27] Them. *Or.* 5.69 (φύσις δὲ καθ᾽ Ἡράκλειτον κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ); contrast Philo *Somn.* 1.6 (ἡ φύσις . . .
ἐν ἀφανεῖ που κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ); cf. Philo *Spec.* 4.51 (τῆς φύσεως οὐκ ἀεὶ κρύπτεσθαι φιλούσης),
Fug. 179 (φύσεως τῆς κρύπτεσθαι φιλούσης) and *Mut.* 60 (φύσεως τῆς ἀεὶ κρύπτεσθαι φιλούσης);
Porph. *ap.* Proclus i*n R.* 2.107 (ἡ φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ); Jul. *Or.* 7.11 (φιλεῖ γὰρ ἡ φύσις
κρύπτεσθαι). Mouraviev 2006: 140 makes this point and suggests printing ἡ φύσις.

[28] Epicharmus, a rough contemporary of Heraclitus, also gives us pertinent but no more transparent
evidence. In B4 (which does use the article) 'nature alone' (ἁ φύσις . . . μόνα) knows how the chicken
has her wisdom to engender life in eggs. Contrast Epicharmus' more restricted talk in B10 about 'this
nature *of humans*' (αὕτα φύσις ἀνθρώπων). One might insist that nature in B4 is also implicitly
restricted to the individual nature *of the chicken*. It is at least possible, however, that, in personifying
nature and speaking of it as a knowing (all-knowing?) agent, Epicharmus is imagining it as the
physical order of things in general (Nature) or, again, that we find Epicharmus B4 at some
intermediate point in the conceptual process which will ultimately issue in the more explicit idea
of Nature as a cosmic whole.

[29] Hülsz 2013a emphasises the point that, for Heraclitus, '*phusis*' refers with a broad ontological force to
the being or essence of things, and not, as for Aristotle (e.g. *Metaph.* 4.3.1005a34–b2), to one genus of
being among others.

In another text (B67), Heraclitus certainly reifies as a cosmic whole those sorts of measures of opposition and unity: 'The god (*ho theos*): day night, winter summer, war peace, satiety hunger. He alters (*alloioutai*), as when mixed with perfumes, he gets named according to the pleasure of each one.'[30] God, whatever else we can say about him, encompasses the structures of opposition and unity which in part make up the hidden nature and unseen attunement of things. The different opposites which Heraclitus lists exemplify designations that manage only to circumscribe partial aspects of god, which come to the fore in his continuous permutations. In B30, using language evocative of divinity, Heraclitus identifies the universal world order – the cosmos – as an eternal (i.e. never first created) living being, associated in particular with the all-pervasive form of fire (which, like god in B67, goes through continuous permutations): 'but it was and is and will be, ever-living fire, kindled in measures and extinguished in measures.'[31] In B67, then, 'the god' is himself the fabric of oppositions which the ordered world comprises, while in B30, correspondingly, the cosmos is itself an ever-living and eternal divinity. The god and the ordered world thus emerge as one.

In his conception of the world as a living divinity, Heraclitus stands in a complex relation to the alignment of divinity and nature in the Homeric and Hesiodic traditions. Homer and Hesiod standardly represent the same divinity both as an anthropomorphised person and as what *we* would demarcate as natural phenomena (e.g. *Ouranos, Gē*), sensations (Pain, Hunger), impulses (*Erōs*) and social principles (Justice, Strife, Peace, etc.). In the *Iliad*, for example, a group of Greeks cook their meal 'over Hephaestus' (*Il.* 2.426), while, in the *Theogony*, Might both sits by Zeus' throne (*Th.* 385–8) and is something in which Zeus is preeminent (*Th.* 49).[32] Heraclitus breaks with this tradition in a number of ways. Whereas the gods in Homer and Hesiod present us with a multiplicity of often conflicting and competing interests, Heraclitus works towards a

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[30] Kahn 1979: 276–80 convincingly argues that there is no good reason to insert πῦρ (or some other noun) after ὅκωσπερ. In light of B67, we cannot infer from B108 ('the wise is different (κεχωρισμένον) from everything') that Heraclitus' god is transcendent and removed from all things. Long 2007 argues that wisdom's difference consists rather in its exemption from the unity of opposites (so e.g. god is wise but not also foolish). For the translation 'different', see Marcovich 2001: 441 (comparing Hdt. 5.61; 3.20); cf. Long 2007: 3 with n. 7.

[31] In some sense, which remains inexplicit, fire is fundamental and all-pervasive: all other things and elements can be described as 'exchanges' for fire or the 'turnings' of fire (B90, B31, B30); see Kirk et al. 1983: 197–200.

[32] On this phenomenon, see further Lloyd 1966: 202 and Rowe 1983: 130.

more unified view of the divine sphere.[33] And he goes further than Homer and Hesiod in construing the world order as a whole (rather than different phenomena severally) as a divine being. Nor is Heraclitus' god human-like either in form or in capricious conduct. Insofar as he embodies the ordered world – the cosmos – Heraclitus' god exhibits a regular and systematic (and, to this extent, intelligible) nature quite distinct from the epic gods. And yet, the alignment of god and nature in Heraclitus still preserves substantial affinities with the Homeric and Hesiodic conception. Common assertions to the contrary notwithstanding, Heraclitus' cosmic god cannot be described without substantial reservations as 'depersonalised', nor is he remotely comparable to our notion of a law of nature.[34] If this living organism which is the cosmos is very different from the human-like divine persons of Homer and Hesiod, it is still fundamentally a person: a living, intelligent and intentional agent who exercises wise judgement and deliberate will. If this divinity is the one divine law on which all human laws depend (B114),[35] this law-like character bespeaks its authority, power and universality, not its reduction to a blind mechanism.

In describing his god as 'ever-living fire' (*pur aeizōon*, B30) Heraclitus also associates him with the nature of soul, in its ideal and purest state (as in B118; contrast the drunkard's inferior and 'moist' soul in B117).[36] In inquiring into the world order, then, we are inquiring into something of the nature and structure of an all-pervasive, cosmic soul: a living being. Heraclitus' god is, moreover, the epitome of wisdom ('the one wise thing', B32, B41). This wisdom consists in mastering (*epistasthai*) the judgement and resolve or purpose (*gnōmēn*) responsible for the steering of all things (B41). (Equally, it is the goal of human inquiry – the one wise thing *for us* – to understand (*epistasthai*) this judgement and resolve.) Heraclitus' god-fire is an immanent, intelligent and volitional helmsman: the thunderbolt steers and guides all things (B64). Indeed, it is only by reflecting on god's

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[33] Note 'the god' (B67); 'this cosmos' (B30); 'the one wise thing alone' (B32), as well as the identification of 'Hades' and 'Dionysus' (B15) and, arguably, 'Ares' and 'Zeus' (B53, describing War as the father and king of all; cf. Granger 2013: 194).

[34] Contrast e.g. Naddaf 2005: 133, Graham 2013, Granger 2013: esp. 187–8, 197 and Gregory 2013: 110–13.

[35] The expression ἑνὸς τοῦ θείου in fact allows us two complementary readings: 'the one divine thing' and 'the one divine (sc. law)'; on the ambiguity, see Kahn 1979: 117.

[36] On the physiology of soul in Heraclitus, see Betegh 2013. In B36, '*psuchē*' is used both as a mass term (ψυχή) – as one of the cosmic masses alongside (but superior to) water and earth – and also as a count noun, in reference to particular 'souls' (ψυχῇσιν). See also Betegh 2009: 405–7 for the attractive view that the soul in B45 – whose limits he who travels every road will not be able to find out – refers both to the all-pervasive and ubiquitous cosmic soul and to the wise mortal's own soul.

wisdom and will, in his capacity as helmsman, that human agents come to approximate and share in such things: it is the divine character or disposition (*ēthos*) to have judgement and resolve (*gnōmas*) and it is human character not to have them (B78).[37]

Several other fragments allow us to glean Heraclitus' readiness to think and speak of god in terms of volitional, intelligent and also normative agency. As the one divine thing (or: law) on which all human laws depend, god possesses the power to rule in precise accordance with his will (*kratei . . . hokoson ethelei*, B114).[38] Again, god, as the one wise thing, is both favourably disposed and unfavourably disposed (*ouk ethelei kai ethelei*) towards the human designation 'Zeus' (B32).[39] The divine governance of the cosmos determines things not only as they are but also as they should be (keeping the sun in its bounds, for example, is a matter of Justice: B94). And the justice and rectitude of god's order extend down to those states of affairs in relation to which humans pronounce evaluative judgements – for example, Justice will catch (*katalēpsetai*) liars and perjurers (B28b) – although the ignorant and limited outlook of humans typically prevents them from recognising this global justice and rectitude: 'to god, all things are beautiful and good and just, but humans have construed some as unjust and others just' (B102). The statement that 'fire, coming on, will discern and catch all things' (*krinei kai katalēpsetai*, B66) construes fire not only as a supreme cognitive power but also as an evaluative and punitive one on a universal scale. The precise echo with the statement about punitive Justice in B28b (*katalēpsetai*) guarantees the latter point.[40] Possible agents of this divine Justice are the risen 'guardians' of B63, who famously recall Hesiod's guardian *daimones*, former members of the golden race who observe mortal transgressions (*Op.* 121–6, 248–55). Finally, nothing in our evidence tells against taking seriously the theological implications of Heraclitus' involved reflection on the divine mode of communication operative in Delphic oracles: 'the lord whose oracle is the one in Delphi neither says nor conceals but gives a sign' (B93). We can reasonably infer that Heraclitus, like his contemporaries, considered such divine communication to mortals a

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[37] For the senses 'intention', 'purpose', 'resolve' or 'plan' in γνώμη, see LSJ, sv. II.2, III.1, 5; Powell 2004: sv. 3.c; cf. Parm. B8.53, with Coxon 1986: 219 and Mourelatos 2008: 229–30.

[38] For the last clause of B114, see Schofield 2015: 53 for a convincing defence of the translation 'it controls just as far as it wills, and is a match (ἐξαρκεῖ) for all things, and prevails (περιγίνεται).'

[39] Presumably because of its conceptual and theological implications. One oft-noted point here is that the appellation 'Zeus' captures god's association with 'life' (ζῆν) but not with its opposite, death (cf. B48). Preoccupations with the attitudes of gods towards human designations for them recur in our sources; cf. n. 14 above.

[40] Contrast Osborne 1987: 171–2, who advances a strictly cognitive reading of B66.

reality.[41] The fact that Heraclitus conceived of the ordered world as itself the ever-living and uncreated god does not, therefore, mean that his god is in turn limited exclusively to what we may be inclined to locate within the confines of the category of nature. Heraclitus' reflections about the natural world fit into a broader theological framework of reflections about god. His idea of nature is one aspect of his broader idea of god, not the other way around.[42]

In different fragments, Heraclitus reveals the goal of philosophical inquiry under different descriptions. Heraclitus' inquiry aims to discriminate and indicate, in accordance with nature (B1), the hidden nature (B123) and unseen attunement (B54) of all things, as constituted by the dynamic elemental processes and the structures of opposition and unity which underlie them. It aims at the acquisition of 'wisdom', which is to say the proper way to speak, act and perceive in accordance with nature (B112); or to grasp the judgement and plan by which god steers all things through all (B41). An inquiry into the world order or the hidden nature and unseen attunement of things *is* an inquiry into the wisdom and the living soul which is god. The search for the nature which likes to hide is, under a different description, the search for the deliberate judgement and intentional resolve or plan by which god determines all things as they are and should be. Within the framework of Heraclitus' theology, cosmology and psychology, if nature – or the nature of each thing individually and all things collectively – likes to hide, then it is god himself who likes to hide.[43]

Before we turn to tie together the threads of this inquiry and to draw our conclusions concerning B123 and the force of *philei*, we should consider,

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[41] It is nonetheless an open question exactly how we should relate Heraclitus' acceptance of Delphic divination to his broader theological outlook. For example, is it in fact better to think of Apollo (Heraclitus notably refrains in B93 from *naming* the god) and his distinct and proprietary agency as one aspect of a broader divine whole? Cf. the remarks above on B67, B15 (identifying Hades and Dionysus) and B53 (arguably implicitly identifying Zeus and Ares). On B93, see further Tor 2016. For the view that B5 criticises misguided theological understandings of prayer rather than prayer itself, see Osborne 1997: 36–7 and Adomenas 1999: 101–6.

[42] Contrast e.g. Graham 2013 and Gregory 2013: 110–13. The former maintains that Heraclitus and the other early Ionian philosophers restricted theology to a subordinate aspect of natural inquiry. But this would leave little room for evaluative and punitive divine governance, or for oracular divination.

[43] Aristotle records the anecdote that Heraclitus encouraged visitors, who hesitated when finding the great man in the incongruously lowly position of warming himself by the kitchen oven (θερόμενον πρὸς τῷ ἰπνῷ), to come in since 'here too there are gods' (εἶναι γὰρ καὶ ἐνταῦθα θεούς, A9 = *PA* 645a17–23). The story fits well not only with Heraclitus' cosmological approach – Aristotle cites the anecdote when defending inquiry also into the humbler animals, and indeed Heraclitus can detect the unseen attunement also in, say, the structure of the posset (ἵσταται κινούμενος, B125; with Mackenzie 1986a (=McCabe 2015: 65–72)) – but also more specifically with the theological framework of his cosmological inquiries. Even the humble kitchen fire offers us a manifestation of the all-pervasive, ever-living and all-steering god.

finally, the pertinence of Heraclitus' general attitude to the business itself
of reading and listening and to the literal or everyday significance of words.
As Kahn puts it, Heraclitus repeatedly 'describe[s] human incomprehen-
sion as a kind of perverse blindness in regard to what is staring us in the
face'.[44] Heraclitus' own emphatic and recurrent image is that of a deafness
(B34, B19) which is at once a speculative and an exegetic matter. It
characterises equally the failure of most people to listen properly to their
experiences (to hear, we might say, the cosmic *logos*: B50) and to the words
of human speech: in particular, Heraclitus' words (B1).[45] Most people are
at odds precisely with that with which they most constantly associate (B72)
and are deceived in the recognition of what is most obvious and hiding in
plain sight (*pros tēn gnōsin tōn phanerōn*, B56). Heraclitus diagnoses a kind
of alienation and detachment from our experiences and our speech. His
call for a reorientation towards a mode of engagement whereby we register
our experiences and our speech in the ways that we in fact encounter them
(B17) is linked with an emphasis on the literal or ordinary significance of
words. The names of things, for example, give us some insight (even if, it
seems, only ever a partial one) into the complex natures of the things they
name (B48, B67, B32).[46] But this principle is by no means limited to
proper names or nouns. Various fragments reflect Heraclitus' broad notion
that (what he, at any rate, takes to be) the literal semantic force of words
can disclose real characteristics and connections in things and demands
recognition and reflection (e.g. *xun noō(i) . . . tō(i) xunō(i)*, B114; *logou . . .
homologein*, B50; *aidoioisin, anaidestata . . . Aidēs*, B15).[47] Heraclitus' atti-
tude to language and to interpretation, then, creates an interpretative
framework which favours taking seriously and paying close attention to
the literal or everyday force of the words which he himself chooses so
carefully. Further to Heraclitus' theology and cosmology, then, this general
framework too renders it a very natural question to ask precisely *why* we
have come to express regular patterns in the world through an affective and
volitional verb like *philein*. Indeed, the phraseology and syntax of B123
itself arguably impel us to reconsider carefully and anew our grasp of
the fragment's three constitutive terms. Glenn Most (2016) highlights a

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[44] Kahn 1979: 105.
[45] See Graham 2008: 177–81 for the idea that, for Heraclitus, a proper engagement with his sayings
requires the same sort of attuned approach as – and is itself preparatory for – a proper engagement
with our sensory experiences.
[46] See further Kirk 1962: 116–22; cf. Tor 2016: 103–4.
[47] Schofield 1991: 21 identifies a typical Heraclitean emphasis on the significance of our everyday
expressions in connection with the stumbling drunkard's moist soul in B117.

paradox in B123: whereas *phusis* suggests a movement of growth in which something emerges from invisibility towards visibility, the term *kruptesthai* pulls in exactly the opposite direction. Whether or not we accept this attractive interpretation, the notion of a hidden *phusis* is certainly striking and by no means self-evident. Its effect is, I think, to disrupt any immediate and unreflective response to the significance of the terms which make up B123 and to elicit a fresh and careful consideration. What, precisely, does nature amount to here? In what ways does it hide? And how are those two ideas linked here: what is the force of the statement that nature 'likes' or 'is minded' to hide?

4   Conclusions

A fundamental upshot of the foregoing discussion is that the statement and language of B123 are theologically loaded in ways that connect deeply and meaningfully with key aspects of Heraclitus' thought. For the first-time reader or auditor, the term *philei* raises evocative and open questions concerning the sort of force that nature – or whatever further, implicit agency underpins nature – is taken to be here. *Philein* and its cognates are regularly used to negotiate the volitional and purposeful dispositions of the gods – what the gods are positively and favourably inclined to do, to approve or disapprove, to facilitate or to curtail. And the construction *philein* + infinitive itself is readily available for this sort of negotiation, when configured in the appropriate theological and conceptual context.

   In the first instance, B123 identifies a systematic pattern in the way in which the nature of things (their real constitution and character) is not simply and immediately given in perception or, as it were, worn on the sleeve. But a reader who came back to this statement in light of Heraclitus' theology and cosmology, as well as his attitude to language and interpretation, can be attuned to the insight which a personal reading of *philei* affords. Such a reading will indeed faithfully reflect how this hidden nature of things – in particular, the nexus of opposition and unity and the transformations of fire which underpin all things – coincides with god (who is himself aligned further with wisdom and soul) and is continually determined by god's judgement and resolve. If the nature of things relates to our perceptions and our understanding as it does, then this is because god, through his judgement and resolve, is minded to organise the world order and the nature of things – i.e. *himself* – as he does. Whether Heraclitus' reader or auditor registered this signification of divine volition and intentionality in the term *philei* would turn on how

closely and synoptically she was reading or listening. *Phusis*, then, captures here one central aspect of god: his role as the real underlying structure and character of things. If we think that Heraclitus reifies *phusis* itself as a cosmic whole (as, for example, Philolaus and Euripides later do), then the syntactic subject of the sentence will indeed be itself the affective and volitional agent (Nature). If, conversely, we take *phusis* to be only a distributed feature of each thing individually and all things collectively, then the verb *philei* will convey the affective and volitional disposition of that implicit agent – god – who continuously determines the nature of things. I argued above that the construction *philein* (or *ethelein*) + infinitive can be seen to work in both sorts of ways. For Heraclitus, nature is either a divine person in one of his aspects (Nature, understood as a cosmic whole) or, minimally, a feature of all things which throughout reflects the character, will and judgement of a divine person. The language of B123 accords with and conveys this attitude.

If, then, god is in some sense minded to relate himself to our perceptions and understanding as he does, why does he conduct himself in the way that he does? We may outline three possibilities:

(i)   The implication may be that god has some deliberate policy directly in relation to the ways in which nature is and is not perceived and understood by us, its human observers. That is, nature likes to be concealed *from us*.

(ii) If this seems implausibly anthropocentric, we can view god as minded to determine, not his relation to any particular group of perceivers, but his essential nature as an epistemic object. On this view, god determines quite generally what epistemic access to him – that is, to the real nature and unseen attunement of things – would be like. God determines that such access must be both challenging and indirect, and not simply and immediately given in perceptual experience.

(iii) More weakly still, however, one might suggest that all that god is *minded* to do is to organise and conduct himself as he does and that the epistemic consequences (nature's concealment) are only a side-effect. Indeed, Hülsz who, following Graham, denies *philei* any affective or volitional force, stresses the epistemological preoccupations of B123 and infers that nature's concealment is only 'a metaphor for ignorance, rather than [a claim] about what φύσις really is, in and by itself.'[48]

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[48] Hülsz 2013a: 185.

But both option (iii) and Hülsz's argument require us to read against the precise and well-crafted way in which Heraclitus framed his statement, by artificially divorcing the finite verb (*philei*) from the infinitive to which it is in fact linked (*kruptesthai*). This coupling indicates that what nature is positively and favourably inclined to effect is precisely its concealment, i.e. its distinctive nature as an epistemic object. *Pace* Hülsz, this concealment is a feature of nature itself and, *therefore*, a constraint on our own epistemic access to nature.

This leads us back to option (ii). In B123, Heraclitus tells us something fundamental about the ways in which god does not and, by implication, does allow access to himself, i.e. to the true essence of things. In this respect, the fragment is in dialogue with a widespread notion in our sources, from Homer onwards, that the presence, nature and agency of the gods do not tend to present themselves to us openly and unproblematically, and that precise insight into such things can be both difficult and indirect.[49] Heraclitus B123 is a second-order statement. It tells us something about the true character of the true character of things and, consequently, about how we must engage with our perceptual experiences as well as with statements like B123 itself: not quickly, uncritically or superficially, but by thinking and rethinking – or reading and re-reading – with a view to different possible directions and with an ear for precise detail.

The emotional and intellectual attitude of the fool of B87, who 'likes to get excited at every account', is thus precisely out of sync with nature's own attitude in B123 and, correspondingly, inverts the attitude which is necessary for the wise man. Whereas nature is minded to be concealed (*kruptesthai philei*), and so requires us to sift carefully and deliberately through much dirt for little gold (B22) as we progress towards hard-won insights concerning the underlying elemental processes and the unseen systems of opposition and unity, the fool is positively inclined to welcome any account indiscriminately (*eptoēsthai philei*), as though this concealed nature was openly and easily available. In a manner reminiscent of those well-known failed interpreters of Delphic oracles, then, the intellectual and emotional attitude of the fool (B87) is precisely and disastrously ill-suited to the attitude of the god (B123) to whom he is trying to listen and whom he is trying to understand.[50] The epistemological thrust of B123 is not

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[49] For some more or less explicit articulations of this mostly implicit general attitude, see Hom. *Od.* 16.161; Hes. *Op.* 483–4; Hdt. 9.100; X. *Mem.* 4.3.13; cf. Mikalson 2003: 131.

[50] Contra Graham 2003: 176, then, we would not be missing the point of B87 by identifying an affective force in its use of the *philein* + infinitive construction. What of the relation between the statements that nature likes to be concealed (κρύπτεσθαι, B123) and that the lord at Delphi neither

simply that it is difficult to get at the nature of things because it is concealed from view. In the context of Heraclitus' thought and in relation to his other reflections, the fragment locates this point within a broader theological framework. In trying to understand the nature of things we are trying to understand a divine person's deliberate and intelligent patterns of behaviour. We could only achieve such understanding if we become attuned to the ways in which this divine person does and does not permit insight into himself or, in Heraclitus' own image, if we learn how to *listen* properly to the ways in which the nature of things does and does not communicate itself to us (B50, B1, B19, B34, B108). In B123, Heraclitus reflects on the intentionality of the divine in a way that goes beyond his ascription to it elsewhere of intelligence and deliberate cosmic governance. Here Heraclitus confronts us with the intentional way in which god determines what kind of epistemic object the nature of things (that is, god himself) must be and, therefore, what epistemic access to nature must be like.

In closing, let us turn from the old chestnut to the sacred cow.[51] Plato's Socrates, in his intellectual autobiography in the *Phaedo*, famously portrays the 'inquiry into nature' (*peri phuseōs historia, Phd.* 96a7-8) that preceded him as a search for non-teleological, mechanistic and material explanations for the constitution and character of things. A recitation from Anaxagoras' book (the only earlier thinker mentioned by name in this account), who made mind a central principle of his philosophy, raised hopes, which were quickly dashed: Anaxagoras failed to use his mind and did not in fact advance any teleological explanations for natural phenomena (*Phd.* 96a5–99d2). Aristotle's favoured terms for his philosophical predecessors are '*phusiologoi*' and '*phusikoi*', and his own canonical account of the beginnings of natural philosophy in *Metaphysics* A is clearly influenced by Plato's

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says nor conceals (οὔτε κρύπτει) but gives a sign (B93)? One might press the point that B93 addresses what is after all a rather special, oracular case of divine communication and disclosure. More plausibly, however, the two statements offer us a substantially continuous notion of divine (self-) disclosure as something which does not lay itself out to view plainly and unproblematically but allows mortals only an indirect, effortful and fallible sort of access. Heraclitus' theological attitude here is, then, substantially consistent, but we need not expect him to use the concept of concealment uniformly in expressing this attitude: in B123, he does so by describing a tendency for concealment; in B93, when thinking about the distinctive case of Delphic oracles, he does so by identifying more subtly a *tertium quid* which lies in between saying and concealing. (By analogy, if, as is rightly and almost universally agreed, B93 is meant to describe not only Apollo's mode of communication but also, by implication, that of Heraclitus, then Heraclitus would be identifying here a sense in which he does not produce a *logos* (οὔτε λέγει) even though elsewhere (e.g. B1) he describes what he gives us as a *logos*; see further Tor 2016.) Mackenzie 1988: 30 (=McCabe 2015: 58) interestingly refers in passing to B93, B123 and B54 as expressions of the indirect ways in which both Heraclitus and his god communicate.

51 The following paragraph reprises some material from Tor 2017: 37-9.

Phaedo.[52] Once again, Anaxagoras was the first to trace expressly the ordered world to the operation of mind in nature, and must have appeared like a sober man in comparison with his own predecessors and their random ramblings; but even Anaxagoras failed to make adequate explanatory use of this principle, simply wheeling it out when at a loss for some mechanistic explanation (*Metaph*. 1.4.984b15–19, 985a16-21). The implication concerning still earlier thought (and this will include Heraclitus) is clear. The pre-Anaxagorean *phusiologoi* – the drunkards to Anaxagoras' sobriety – failed to achieve even such an ultimately disappointing recognition of the relevance of a universal divine intelligence for the inquiry into nature.[53] These passages – though not the only historical narratives available within these later traditions themselves[54] – have exerted a profound and pervasive influence. They have encouraged the notion that, when the early cosmologists move away from mythopoeic and anthropomorphic personalisations, they are also breaking completely with the idea that reflection on nature means reflection on the deliberate and goal-directed actions and volition of some sorts of divine persons and divine minds.[55] As Sedley suggests, the persistence of the predilection to cast the Presocratics as non-teleological materialists was probably helped in part by the perception that, *qua* science, this approach contrasts favourably with Plato's own

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[52] On this canonical account, see the chapters in Steel 2012; on Aristotle's engagement with the *Phaedo*, see esp. Betegh 2012 and Menn 2012: 211–16. Aristotle's secularising conception of the *phusiologoi* is indirectly reflected in his label for their own predecessors – the earlier and more obscure *theologoi* – with whom, at least within the domain of natural philosophy, Aristotle favourably contrasts the *phusiologoi*. On these Aristotelian classifications, see Palmer 2000. On secularisation in the Peripatetic doxographic tradition, see Mansfeld 2013.

[53] Still earlier thought: esp. *Metaph*. 983b1–984b8; Heraclitus is mentioned at *Metaph*. 984a7–8 as a proponent of fire as the *archē*. Aristotle allows that talk of love or desire in Hesiod, Parmenides and Empedocles could convey related, if even more embryonic or implicit, preoccupations with the good and fine order of things (*Metaph*. 984b22–985a10; cf. *Metaph*. 988a14–17, 33–4). My interest here is in the long shadow cast by these well-known texts in which Plato and Aristotle broadly figure their dialectical relation to their predecessors, represented collectively. Any adequate account of Plato's and Aristotle's complex engagements specifically with Heraclitus would of course require a separate paper. For discussions, see Irwin 1977a, McCabe 2000 (esp. 93–138; cf. also: 178–85), Adomenas 2002 and Osborne 2009. We may note very broadly, however, that the radical flux with which Heraclitus and the Heracliteans are associated indeed leaves little room for a teleological or theological conception of nature.

[54] Contrast e.g. Plato's repeated references in the *Philebus* to a consensus among 'our ancient predecessors' that mind and a certain knowledge steer and govern all things: *Phlb*. 28c6–8, 28d7–9, 30d7–8; cf. Sedley 2007: 1 n. 2.

[55] For a classic statement, see Heidel 1910. For a recent articulation, see Kahn 2013: 2–7 for Heraclitus; but contrast Kahn 1979: 272 on intelligent divine governance in Heraclitus. Naddaf 2005: 163 exemplifies the traditional view: the Presocratics understood *phusis* as 'blind necessity (*anankē*), without any recourse to intentional cause.'

turn towards theistic teleology.[56] Against this predilection, it has been argued that the assumption that the world is governed by divine power was in fact never questioned before the advent of atomism.[57] But often, even when the basic postulation of cosmic divine intelligence is itself conceded, the sway of the Platonic and Aristotelian narratives remains pronounced.[58] It remains a pervasive precept that early philosophical inquiry into nature was not motivated by – and precisely refused to be framed as – a programme of inquiry into the inclinations and will of a divine person or divine persons.

Notably, Graham concludes his discussion of B123 by emphasising that he has dispelled the possible (worrying?) impression that here, in its first appearance on the philosophical stage, *phusis* is being personalised as some sort of volitional and deliberate agent. The analysis of the fragment which I defended above sought to rehabilitate the basic veracity of that impression. On this analysis, Heraclitus B123 offers us one striking counterexample to the canonical narrative. Heraclitus frames the inquiry into nature as an inquiry into the inclinations and will of a divine person. For Heraclitus, the inquiry into nature – as well as the second-order reflection on what sort of speculative approach such an inquiry must involve – are fundamentally a matter of thinking about, and thinking in line with, the deliberate and dialectical disposition of god himself, the supreme manifestation of fire, wisdom, will and soul. On second thoughts and on second reading, nature is indeed minded to be concealed.

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[56] Sedley 2007: 1–2.

[57] Guthrie 1952: 90–3, 96; Palmer 1998: 11, 33–4; Sedley 2007: 1–8. See for Anaximander: A15 = Arist. *Ph.* 203b10–15, B1; Anaximenes: B2 (if we accept the substance of Aëtius' report; see the reservations in Alt 1973; Alt still, however, allows (1973: 132) that Anaximenes' appeals to air to explain, for example, the orderly courses of the heavenly bodies (A15) can plausibly suggest a directive and steering influence on the part of air); Xenophanes: B25, with Tor 2013: 267–9; Heraclitus: B41, B64 (discussed above); Parmenides: B12; Diogenes: B5; cf. Thgn. 373; Soph. *El.* 175–6, *Trach.* 127.

[58] So, for example, Graham 2013: 200 maintains that the naturalistic *explanantia* of the Ionian philosophers 'are always essentially natural beings, which are only accidentally, or perhaps better: derivatively, divine (if they are).' For Heraclitus, as he emerged above, the goal-directed and normative wisdom, will and judgement of god-fire are integral to his cosmological role. Granger 2013: 171–2, 176 appears to contradict himself when he first denies and then concedes that Anaximander and Xenophanes accord the divine a causal and ordering role in maintaining the workings of nature. He maintains throughout that the early Greek philosophers fundamentally 'depersonalize' the divine; cf. n. 34 above.

Deinos *(Wicked Good) at Interpretation*
(*Protagoras 334–48*)

Charles Brittain

1 Introduction

The 'poetic interlude' in Plato's *Protagoras* is brilliant and funny, but also intriguing, in part because disagreement over its *significance* puts it among the most contested scenes in Plato: it is a tough and aged chestnut. For some readers the heart of this episode is (rather curiously) a substantive philosophical view they are keen to ascribe to Plato – for instance, a metaphysical distinction between Being and Becoming.[1] For others, the episode is a simple parody of sophistic methods of poetic interpretation, significant only for philology as a (rather difficult) source for reconstructing Simonides' *Ode to Scopas*.[2] And if all points between have not yet been defended, it is only a matter of time until its proper 'conkerer' comes forward to defend each of them.[3] But these proper, sporting, approaches to our chestnut all depend on, or assume, a more basic kind of literary reading, which would provide a general interpretation of Socrates' parody of literary criticism, since it is only when we see how the scene works that we can start to figure out how Plato is using his sources or what his philosophical aims in the episode are. There has been a lot of excellent work on this front in the last few decades and perhaps even enough to guide a full literary interpretation of the episode which could serve as a hammer to smash the old chestnut.[4] But my aim here is not to play

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It is a privilege to offer this paper to MM McCabe, whose anti-dogmatic and challenging readings of Plato and other ancient philosophers have been and remain a source of delight and inspiration to me and many others.

[1] See, e.g., D. Frede 1986 and M. Frede 1988 (and the response of Code 1988); cf. n. 24 below.
[2] Interpretations of Plato's dialogues that ignore substantial parts of the text as philosophically irrelevant have become increasingly redundant in the last thirty years, as a result of the revolution in Platonic studies pioneered by MM McCabe. The poetic episode was largely overlooked in Taylor 1976; see Ford 2014: 19 for further references to this tradition.
[3] See, e.g., Beresford 2009, who proposes an ethical motivation for Socrates' parody; and Ledbetter 2003 (esp. Chapter 5, 99–118) and Trivigno 2013, who construct more Socratic (and so proper) models of interpretation on the basis of his parody of Sophistic poetics.
[4] This includes the essential and provocative work of Scodel 1986, Ferrari 1990, Giuliano 1991, Most 1994, Trivigno 2013 and Ford 2014.

the game at all, but instead to put the chestnut under the hermeneutic microscope, so to speak, in order to find a hidden crack that may be of service to future players. So I address here a much more limited question about the *interpretational methods* used in the episode: how *exactly* does Socrates generate the parodic interpretation of the poem? This means doing a lot of fairly detailed reading of the text, but I think that the parody is good enough to withstand whatever I can throw at it; and the results are, I hope, both provocative and significant for the dialogue as a whole.

The poetic episode is a break in the argumentative structure of the second third of the dialogue, where, in response to Protagoras' great speech, Socrates gives four arguments to produce a case for the unity of the virtues as knowledge:

1.   Justice = Piety (330c–31b), based on the premise that if piety is not just, piety is unjust.
2.   Temperance = Wisdom (332a–33b), based on the premise that folly is the opposite both of wisdom and of temperance.
3.   Justice = Temperance (333b–d). This argument collapses into a dispute about what it means to be 'good' (333e–34c), which leads to a general discussion about dialectical methods (334d–38e).
     Break: the poetic episode (339a–48e). The dialectical impasse leads to a new form of competitive debate featuring poetic interpretation.
4.   Courage = Wisdom (349a–51a), based (at least as Protagoras sees it) on the argument that since the courageous are confident and the wise are confident, the wise are courageous.

The poetic episode itself is divided into four clearly marked sections:

Section A 339a–41e: After the dialectical impasse at the collapse of the third argument (above), the sophists and Socrates debate dialectical methods and come up with the resolution that Protagoras will take over as the questioner while Socrates will give model answers. Protagoras then announces that he is transposing the debate about virtue to the realm of poetic interpretation, and challenges Socrates on the coherence of Simonides' poem to Scopas. Socrates responds with two comic ripostes.

Section B 342a–43c: Socrates prefaces his third, more sustained, effort at interpretation (after the jokes in A) with an ironic contextualization: Simonides' aim in the poem was to take down Pittacus' saying that 'It is hard to be noble', i.e. to challenge this example of Laconian (or laconic) philosophy in order to establish his own credentials for wisdom.

Section C 343c–47a: Socrates gives a detailed exegesis of the poem to
show that all of it is in fact directed at that aim.

Section D 347c–48a: The episode ends with a Socratic epilogue, explain-
ing his preference for discussing the issues rather than defending an
interpretation of a poem.

Here the main focus is on Section C, though we need to start with Sections
A and B since they give the set-up and provide the reader with a model of
the interpretative methods Socrates is going to employ. The results will, I
hope, also shed some new light on Socrates' methods of argument and his
apparently deconstructive conclusions about the literary interpretation in
Section D. (These are the two sacred cows grazing near our chestnut tree.)

2   Set-Up

The episode starts with the transfer of the debate between Protagoras and
Socrates to a new formal context, of poetic interpretation, but with the
same substantive content (virtue). Protagoras gives a concise description of
the framework for the new game:

> The greatest part of a man's education is to be skilled (*deinos*) at poetry. This
> consists in (1) being able to understand the correctness or incorrectness in
> the compositions of the poets and (2) knowing how to analyze them and (3)
> how to defend one's analysis when questioned. (339a1–3)[5]

The model for the third stage in the game – defence of one's interpreta-
tion – is something like Academic dialectic, as we see it in the Socratic
dialogues (including the three arguments against the Protagorean thesis of
the disunity of the virtues we have just seen in the *Protagoras*).[6] The basic
rules are that the questioner proposes thesis P ('Are the virtues distinct?' 'Is
Simonides' *Ode to Scopas* well-constructed?'), and, if the answerer accepts
the thesis, the questioner's job is to show that the thesis is false, while the
answerer's job is to defend it. But the transfer of the dialectic to the
hermeneutic mode calls for a different sort of question and response
from the two participants, since the Protagorean questioner takes aim at
apparent failures in *artistic* composition ('Is a poem well-composed if it

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[5] *Prt.* 339a1–3: Ἡγοῦμαι, ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἐγὼ ἀνδρὶ παιδείας μέγιστον μέρος εἶναι περὶ ἐπῶν δεινὸν
εἶναι· ἔστιν δὲ τοῦτο τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν ποιητῶν λεγόμενα οἷόν τ᾽ εἶναι συνιέναι ἅ τε ὀρθῶς πεποίηται καὶ
ἃ μή, καὶ ἐπίστασθαι διελεῖν τε καὶ ἐρωτώμενον λόγον δοῦναι. See Brancacci 1996, who takes the
three requirements in this sentence as the basis for his reconstruction of the historical Protagoras'
literary theory.

[6] On the practice of 'Academic dialectic' outside of the Platonic dialogues, see Ryle 1971.

contains contradictions?'), and the answerer must accordingly explain them away.[7] The result, as we will see, is a sort of grafting of the literary problem-and-solution method developed in fifth-century Homeric inter-pretation – where the reader tries to resolve apparent contradictions (and other problems) in the Homeric poems – into a dialectical framework.[8] (There is good evidence, I think, that the integration of the problem-and-solution method into a dialectical framework derives from Protagoras himself: we know a bit about some actual Protagorean criticism of Homer, and his method is parodied by Aristophanes as well as by Plato. But that's a topic for another paper.)[9]

So how does this dialectical game work?[10] Round 1 is in *Protagoras* 339–41 (Section A above).

Question: Is Simonides' *Ode to Scopas* well made?
Answer: Yes – Socrates accepts the thesis.
Challenge: Protagoras then presents a problem for this thesis: the poem contains a blatant contradiction between its initial claim that it's hard to be good and its subsequent criticism of Pittacus' assertion of the same point. More precisely, Simonides' claim in lines 1–3:

> For a man it's hard truly to become good
> – perfect in hands, feet, and mind,
> built without a single flaw . . .

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[7] Though as we can still see in Aristotle, *Po.* Chapter 25 (discussed below), poetic failures can include moral faults. An analogue in dialectic is the respondent's option to defend a thesis in a form shaped by *additional* constraints which he accepts on the basis that they are held by 'the wise'. These could include moral constraints of the sort Socrates employs in his interpretation of the poem. See *Po.* 1461a31–b3 and n. 30 below.

[8] Evidence for pre-Aristotelian literary criticism, including prototypes of the problem and solution format, is collected in Richardson 1975 and Pfeiffer 1968, and summarized briefly in Richardson 1992. On the problem and solution format, see especially Pfeiffer 1968: 66–75. (The later history of Homeric interpretation these practices gave rise to is characterized in Richardson 1980.)

[9] Protagoras' views on language and poetry are known primarily from disjointed citations in Plato and Aristotle and parodies in Aristophanes (collected in DK80 A24–30). Fehling 1976 brilliantly noted that most of the fragments are best understood not as elements in an early philosophy of language or literature (*pace* Classen 1959), but as parts of a single dialectical or sophistic attack on Homer, demonstrating multiple errors in *Iliad* 1.1. This method of taking down a famous poet or poem by attacking its beginning appears to be satirized in 'the battle of the prologues' in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, as well as in the *Protagoras* – on the former, see Segal 1970, and, more recently, Hunter 2009: 10–52 and Griffith 2013: 80–114, who contextualize the battle of prologues as a species of the standard poetic genus of agonistic critique. Note, however, that Protagoras' work on Homer seems to have included some non-agonistic insights on the structure of the *Iliad* (see DK80 A30), although this was also parodied by Plato in the *Protagoras*; see Capra 2005.

[10] My reconstruction of the game was inspired by Scodel 1986, esp. her 29–32 and her n. 9.

contradicts his criticism of Pittacus in lines 11–13:

> But for me that saying of Pittacus doesn't
> ring true (even though he was a wise guy):
> he says 'it is hard to be noble' . . . (trans. Beresford, rev. Brittain)[11]

See the Appendix for a text of the full (extant parts of the) poem in English and in Greek.[12]

In *Prt.* 340–1, Socrates gives two joke responses to show how the hermeneutic version of the dialectical game works. It soon becomes clear that the idea is for the answerer to solve the problem or contradiction posed by the questioner by appeal to one of a set of lexical ambiguities. (See Table 1 this section, which summarizes the cumulative results of Socrates' first four moves in the game.)

So our initial problem is the apparent contradiction between these two assertions:

1	2	3	4	5	6		a	b	c	d
ἄνδρ'	ἀγαθὸν	μὲν	ἀλαθέως	γενέσθαι	χαλεπόν	vs. *Not:*	χαλεπὸν	φάτ'	ἐσθλὸν	ἔμμεναι
For a	man[1]	it's	hard[6]	truly[4] to	become[5] good[2]	vs. *Not:*	he says[b]	it is hard[a]	to be[d]	noble[c]

Solution i: Socrates tries to resolve this by noting that word 5 in line 1 ('to become' (*genesthai*)) and word d in line 13 ('to be' (*einai*)) assert different conditions, so there is no contradiction.

> 'Take a look now and see if you agree with me, Prodicus, since it's not clear to me that Simonides contradicts himself. Give us your opinion: do you think becoming and being are the same or different?' 'Different, by god,' Prodicus said. 'So Simonides set out his own view in the first lines,' I said, 'that it's hard for a man truly to become good?' 'That's right,' Prodicus said. 'Whereas he criticizes Pittacus,' I said, 'not as Protagoras thinks for saying the same thing as himself, but for saying something else. *Because Pittacus didn't say that what is hard is to become noble, as Simonides did, but to be it. But the two are not the same, Protagoras, being and becoming – so Prodicus here says. Yet if being isn't the same as becoming, Simonides doesn't contradict*

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[11] The translation is Beresford's excellent version in his 2008, adapted silently when the arguments in the text or in this paper require precision or disambiguation. But see next note on the Greek text: I use the order and lineation in Page 1962.

[12] The Appendix gives the standard reconstruction of the text (in Page 1962). Since the poem is not preserved elsewhere, editors have only the parodic information in the *Protagoras* to go on and consequently disagree vehemently about the number of lines and their order. Beresford 2008 proposed a new reconstruction in which the whole poem survives, with lines 14–20 transposed to line 4, and lines 21–30 at the end, after line 40 in Page. Although this proposal has been well received by philosophers (e.g. Denyer 2008: 148), it is implausible on philological and literary-historical grounds – see Manuwald 2010 – so I do not use it. My general argument, however, is about Socrates' interpretation and thus intended to be fairly neutral about the real structure of the poem.

himself. And perhaps Prodicus here would say, like many other people, with Hesiod [in *Works and Days* 289–91] that it is hard to become good: "for the gods have put sweat on the route to virtue", but that "once one reaches its heights, it is easy thereafter, hard though it was" to acquire it.'[13] (*Prt.* 340b1–d5)

That is to say, Socrates appeals to Hesiod as a source for the idea that it is hard to get but not hard to retain virtue and to Prodicus for an appropriate disambiguation of the terms 'become' (*genesthai*) and 'be' (*einai*).[14] If we put this passage and the sequel on lines 1 and 11–13 in Section C together, we end up with three possible interpretations of word 5 or the term '*genesthai*': Prodicus proposes 'become' (contrast: *be*); Protagoras gives 'turn out to be' (i.e. 'be') – hence the contradiction (since there is no contrast with 'be'); and Socrates argues for 'be temporarily' (contrast: *be permanently*). Protagoras immediately knocks down solution i as against *communis opinio* (*contra* Hesiod), but it is clear that it is a non-starter for this poem given lines 20–40, where we learn that it is not easy to have virtue; and Socrates had anyhow explicitly allowed that he was 'playing for time' in suggesting it.

Solution ii: Socrates' second solution relies on an ambiguity in *chalepon* generating different senses at word 6 and at position a: in word 6 (in Simonides' *propria persona*) it means 'hard', but at position a (in a Cean spin on Pittacus' saying) it means 'bad', so there is no contradiction:

> 'So perhaps the Ceans and Simonides take "hard" to mean bad or something else you don't understand. Let's ask Prodicus – he's the right person to ask about Simonides' dialect. What did Simonides mean by "hard", Prodicus?' 'Bad,' he said. *'So that's why he criticized Pittacus for saying it's hard to be noble: it's as if he had heard him saying that it's bad to be noble.'* 'What else do you think Simonides meant, Socrates, but to shame Pittacus for not knowing how to analyze words correctly, because he was from Lesbos and was brought up speaking a barbarous dialect?' 'Well, Protagoras,' I said, 'you heard Prodicus. Do you have any response to his view?' *'It's very far from the truth, Prodicus,'* Protagoras said. *'I'm quite certain that Simonides meant by "hard" what the rest of us do, that is, not bad, but what is not easy but comes about through a lot of effort.'* 'That's what I think Simonides meant as well,'

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[13] *Prt.* 340c: οὐ γὰρ τοῦτο ὁ Πιττακὸς ἔλεγεν τὸ χαλεπόν, γενέσθαι ἐσθλόν, ὥσπερ ὁ Σιμωνίδης, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἔμμεναι· ἔστιν δὲ οὐ ταὐτόν, ὦ Πρωταγόρα, ὥς φησιν Πρόδικος ὅδε, τὸ εἶναι καὶ τὸ γενέσθαι. εἰ δὲ μὴ τὸ αὐτό ἐστιν τὸ εἶναι τῷ γενέσθαι, οὐκ ἐναντία λέγει ὁ Σιμωνίδης αὐτὸς αὑτῷ. (Here and below, when discussing longer passages of Greek, editorial constraints restrict the citation of Greek to just the italicised sentences showing the core ambiguities.)

[14] The elaborate rhetoric of logical form here – Socrates' step-by-step approach to establishing the apparent contradiction and then resolving it – is parallel to the very deliberate rhetoric of Socratic 'induction' at e.g. *Prt.* 311–12 and of Socratic 'deduction' at e.g. 332–3.

I said, 'and Prodicus knows it too – he's joking and seems to be testing you to see if you can come to the aid of your position.' (*Prt.* 341b5–d9)[15]

Again, taking this passage and one a bit later together, we are offered three interpretations of '*chalepon*': Prodicus proposes 'bad' (as a joke), Protagoras insists it means 'hard' and, according to Socrates, in correcting Pittacus at line 13, Simonides takes it to mean 'impossible'. But in the passage above, Protagoras again immediately rejects Prodicus' offer (Socrates' solution ii) as a non-natural meaning; and Socrates concedes it, because the alleged sense of '*chalepon*' is contextually impossible and, anyway, he had Prodicus propose it as a joke while he played for time.

Thus, as I understand them, the comic solutions Socrates proposes in Section B are designed as exemplary cases: the dialectical challenge of a contradiction between lines 1 and 11–13 of the poem triggers an analysis of line 1 using the formal methods of the problem-and-solution genre. That means that Socrates needs to discern in these lines at least one ambiguity (from a set of lexical ambiguities including, so far, metaphor and dialect), such that line 1 asserts something that line 13 turns out not to contradict. He has six words in line 1 to use to try to resolve this contradiction; and since words 5 and 6 did not work, the next step for the answerer is to try words 3 and 4 and so on ... until he solves the contradiction.

We can see that this word-by-word approach is a formal procedure from the sequel in *Protagoras* 343, in Section C, where Socrates tries to bolster his third solution (below) of the contradiction between lines 1 and 11–13, based again on word 5 'become' (*genesthai*), by proposing supporting interpretations for words 3 and 4 of line 1. Simonides, we now learn, actually used 'becoming' to signify the temporary possession of virtue, and 'being' the (impossible) permanent state. So, Socrates says:

> Let's look at it together to see if I'm right. The very first line of the poem would seem crazy if his intention was to say that it's hard for a man to become good, but then he threw in the antithetical particle (*men*). For there's no point to throwing that in unless one takes Simonides to be speaking against, or disputing, Pittacus' saying. *So when Pittacus says that it is hard to be noble, he contests this by saying 'Not at all, rather it's (*men*) becoming good that is hard for a man, Pittacus, truly.' Nor does he mean 'truly good', as if some things were truly good and others good but not truly* – that

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[15] *Prt.* 341c–d: Διὰ ταῦτ᾽ ἄρα καὶ μέμφεται, ἦν δ᾽ ἐγώ, ὦ Πρόδικε, τὸν Πιττακὸν λέγοντα χαλεπὸν ἐσθλὸν ἔμμεναι, ὥσπερ ἂν εἰ ἤκουεν αὐτοῦ λέγοντος ὅτι ἐστὶν κακὸν ἐσθλὸν ἔμμεναι ... Καὶ ὁ Πρωταγόρας, Πολλοῦ γε δεῖ, ἔφη, οὕτως ἔχειν, ὦ Πρόδικε· ἀλλ᾽ ἐγὼ εὖ οἶδ᾽ ὅτι καὶ Σιμωνίδης τὸ "χαλεπὸν" ἔλεγεν ὅπερ ἡμεῖς οἱ ἄλλοι, οὐ τὸ κακόν, ἀλλ᾽ ὃ ἂν μὴ ῥάδιον ᾖ ἀλλὰ διὰ πολλῶν πραγμάτων γίγνηται.

would seem silly and un-Simonidean – rather, we have to take 'truly' here as a case of hyperbaton. (*Prt.* 343c–e)[16]

Although the function of this passage is not to generate a new solution to the original contradiction, the formal method Socrates uses to come up with these supporting arguments for his new thesis seems to be the same. So it seems reasonable to characterize these as two 'partial solutions' to the original contradiction.

Partial solution iii: The first argument is an interpretation of the antithetical particle '*men'* at word 3 in line 1. Socrates does not construe this as a case of ambiguity – he pretends that only one interpretation is available contextually: Simonides, on the one hand (*men*) asserts that it is hard to become good, whereas (*de*) Pittacus claims that it is hard to be good. But, again, it is easy to see that there are at least three further interpretational options for the contrast phrase. The obvious contrast is, presumably, not between line 1 and lines 11–13, as Socrates pretends, but between the subject of line 1 – the man in word 1 – and the subject of the next (lost) verses; so the possibility of a *man (andra)* becoming good might contrast with the goodness of a *god* (see line 14), or with the goodness of a specific *honorand* (e.g. Scopas) or of a *middling* person (see lines 31–40) . . .

Partial solution iv: The second argument is a similar attempt to exploit tacitly an ambiguity on the adverb 'truly' (*alatheōs*) at word 4 in line 1: Socrates claims that it is silly to think that this modifies 'good' (*agathon*, word 2), and so takes it with 'hard' (*chalepon*, word 6), in hyperbaton, and as a sentential operator: 'Actually, . . . ' And again, there are at least two other options, both more plausible in light of the second half of the poem. First, it is more likely that it does in fact modify 'good' (*agathon*), since Socrates' dismissal of this option as naïve is funny, given his notorious use of phrases like 'truly good' in the Platonic dialogues. Or, secondly, it may modify 'become' (*genesthai*), so that the implied contrast is between *succeeding in* becoming good and *partly* or *momentarily* or *only apparently* becoming good.

Table 1 summarizes Socrates' attempts to resolve the original contradiction between lines 1 and 11–3 of Simonides' poem by appealing to ambiguities in words 5 (twice), 6, 3, and 4 of line 1.

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[16] *Prt.* 343d–e: λέγοντος τοῦ Πιττακοῦ ὅτι χαλεπὸν ἐσθλὸν ἔμμεναι, ἀμφισβητοῦντα εἰπεῖν ὅτι Οὔκ, ἀλλὰ γενέσθαι μὲν χαλεπὸν ἄνδρα ἀγαθόν ἐστιν, ὦ Πιττακέ, ὡς ἀληθῶς – οὐκ ἀληθείᾳ ἀγαθόν, οὐκ ἐπὶ τούτῳ λέγει τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ὡς ἄρα ὄντων τινῶν τῶν μὲν ὡς ἀληθῶς ἀγαθῶν, τῶν δὲ ἀγαθῶν μέν, οὐ μέντοι ἀληθῶς . . .

Table 1

1	2	3	4	5	6			a	b	c	d
ἄνδρ'	ἀγαθὸν	μὲν	ἀλαθέως	γενέσθαι	χαλεπόν	vs.	*Not:*	χαλεπὸν	φάτ'	ἐσθλὸν	ἔμμεναι
For a man[1]	it's hard[6] truly[4] to become[5] good[2]					vs.	*Not:*	he says[b] it is hard[a] to be[d] noble[c]			

word 5:	γενέσθαι/'become'	= get (acc. Hesiod)	= be (Protagoras)	= be temporarily (Socrates)
vs.				
word d:	ἔμμεναι/'be'	= retain (contrast)	(no contrast, hence contradiction)	= be permanently (contrast)
word 6:	χαλεπόν/'hard'	= hard (Prodicus)	= hard (Protagoras)	= hard (Socrates)
vs.				
word a:	χαλεπόν/'hard'	= bad (contrast)	(no contrast, hence contradiction)	= impossible (contrast)
word 3:	μὲν (antithetical)	= μὲν. . .γενέσθαι to *become*. . .	= ἄνδρ' μὲν for a *man*	= ἄνδρ' ἀγαθὸν μὲν ἀλαθέως *a truly good man*. . . .
	contrasts with:	being (line 13)	a god (line 14)	a middling person (line 36)
word 4:	ἀλαθέως /'truly'	= ἀγαθὸν ἀλαθέως really *good*	= χαλεπόν ἀλαθέως truly (sentential operator)	= ἀλαθέως γενέσθαι *really* succeed in becoming
	and so modifies:	word 2	word 6	word 5

If these initial cases are exemplary, they point us to a general hermeneu-tic method and in particular to one that has a near-contemporary *formal* analysis in Chapter 25 of Aristotle's *Poetics*. Here Aristotle used material from the established genre of Homeric problems and solutions to char-acterize a hermeneutics that can be applied to poetry as such. This provided him with a disparate set of methods developed by rhapsodes and sophists for defending the skill of the poet in the face of apparent inconsistencies or errors. The general method is summed up towards the end of Chapter 25:

> When a word seems to involve a contradiction, we should consider how many different meanings it might bear in the passage, e.g. in 'there the bronze shaft was stayed' (τῇ ῥ' ἔσχετο χάλκεον ἔγχος), we should ask in how many ways 'being stayed' might be taken, if we interpret the phrase in this way or in that. We should adopt the opposite procedure to the one which Glaucon describes when he says that some people start by making an unreasonable assumption and then proceed to base their argument on acceptance of it; then, if something contradicts their own presupposition, they censure the poet, as if that was what *he* had said. (*Po.* 1461a31–b3)

(The case in question is *Iliad* 20.272, where we are told that Aeneas' spear was 'stayed' by a layer of gold on Achilles' shield, although it penetrated two bronze layers and stopped before two final layers of tin. The problem is generated by the scholiastic assumption that the expensive gold was the outside layer of the shield, rather than the middle layer. The solution Aristotle suggests is that the outside (gold) layer checked or 'stayed' the motion of the spear, but it didn't stop immediately.)[17]

Poetics 25 describes a number of specific methods or tropes, but the formal core is a set of six lexical solution-schemata in 1461a9–31, based on:

diction: a term may have a different sense in another dialect ('mule' = sentinel).
metaphor: a generic term can be used in a specific sense ('all' = many).
prosody: accentuation can change the sense of a term ('οὐ' = where *or* not).
phrase-division: the sense of a phrase can be varied by different punctuation.
ambiguity: a term may have several senses ('more' = a bit more *or* a greater part of).
idiom: a term may have idiomatic senses ('wine' = neat *or* diluted wine).[18]

These lexical tropes are also picked up and given a bit more logical precision when Aristotle polishes them up for use in dialectical games in Chapter 4 of *Sophistici Elenchi*; see Section 5 below.

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[17] See Lucas 1972: 246–7 *ad loc*.
[18] The examples are taken from Aristotle's extremely obscure selection in 1461a9–31. My interpretations rely heavily on the excellent commentary of Lucas 1972: 241–5.

The relevant point for us is that solutions i–iv above in the *Protagoras* exemplify three of the six Aristotelian lexical tropes in the discussion of just the first line of the Simonides poem: in the cases of words 3 and 4, *men* and 'truly' (*alatheōs*), Socrates uses unusual phrase-divisions; for word 6, 'hard' (*chalepon*), he tries diction or dialect; and for word 5, 'become' (*genesthai*), he appeals to several applied senses of the verb, i.e. 'metaphorical' uses of it in the technical sense defined in the *Poetics*. It seems unlikely that this is just an interesting coincidence; rather, it indicates, I think, that these are exemplary cases directing readers to an established literary tradition: Plato wants us to see what is going on.

3   Overall Interpretation

So much for the formal model for interpretation. Before we turn to Socrates' second, more detailed interpretation in Section C, however, we should take a quick look at the general thesis he tries to support there, given his assumption that the poem is consistent because all of it is directed at a single aim (*dianoia*).

In Section B (*Prt.* 342–3), Socrates frames the poem by means of a detailed exercise of (in Glenn Most's term) 'contextualization', showing the genealogy of the Laconian philosophy, of which Pittacus' saying 'It is hard to be noble' is an example.[19] (This is, *inter alia*, an amusing and point-by-point parody of the sophistic genealogy given by Protagoras in *Prt.* 316–17.)[20] Having established this context for it, Socrates identifies the point of the whole poem:

> Since he was eager for a reputation in wisdom, Simonides realised that if he took down this saying, as if it were a famous athlete, and mastered it, he would become famous among his contemporaries in turn. So he took aim against this saying for this reason, and he composed the whole poem with the intention of cutting it down, as I see it. (*Prt.* 343c1–5)

In Section C (343c–47a), Socrates shows how he thinks Simonides tried to achieve this in detail, by interpreting sets of lines in the poem as premises, or evidence for premises, in an overarching argument of the following form (with Simonides' claims in quotations and Socrates' construals of them in parentheses):

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[19] See Most 1994.   [20] See Trapp 1987.

i. 'It is hard to be good' (permanently, as opposed to becoming good for a while),

ii. 'because virtue is contingent on circumstance' (since virtue is knowledge, so losable).

iii. 'Hence one should praise willingly middling people' (i.e. *willingly* praise middling people but *force* oneself to praise people who do shameful things if one thinks it is overall best).

This general argument is rather hard to see because Socrates does not set it out explicitly, but rather argues separately for each of ten interpretative ploys (in addition to the four we have seen so far), which are supposed collectively to warrant it. Most of these mini-arguments are discussed below and all are summarized in Table 2 in Section 4.[21] But, before we look at them in detail, it is crucial to see, I think, that his general argument – and so his overall interpretation – is nuts (designedly), if we want to understand the method behind Socrates' hermeneutic maneuvers. The interpretation is funny because the Socratic versions of the premises and conclusion of the general argument are manifestly contradicted by the poem itself (or were when it was fully extant).

Ad premise i, on the impossibility of being permanently good. Socrates takes the poem to be an argument against Pittacus and his saying, *passim*. But the poem is to Scopas: Pittacus is not the addressee and really cannot be the subject of lines 21–40. Socrates' positing of Pittacus as Simonides' interlocutor, as if the two were in a Platonic dialogue, is his most outrageous move, I think, and meant to be obviously funny. But if this is not serious, the aim of the poem cannot be to criticize Pittacus by establishing a distinction between being and becoming.

Ad premise ii, on the contingency of virtue. It is plain from the extant body of the poem that, however he arrived at it in the missing verses, Simonides' view is actually that circumstances or fortune are the main determinants of whether one is good or bad – i.e. Simonides' view is flat out the *reverse* of Socrates' assertion of the (relative) autonomy of virtue and his assumption that virtue is knowledge.

Ad conclusion iii, on praise for decent people (i.e. those who do nothing shameful willingly). Socrates repurposes Simonides' contrast between vicious and decent *people* – determined by whether the wrongs they do

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[21] These points come in four sections tied to the sections of the poem Socrates cites, Sections a–e in the Appendix: so Section a = points i–v, b = vi–vii; c = viii–x; d = xi–xii; e = xiii–xiv. The problems or points discussed below and listed in the Appendix are noted with superscript Arabic numbers in the Greek version of the poem set out there.

are committed willingly or only under constraint – into a contrast between willing and forced *praise* in his exegesis of lines 27–40. This looks like a rather wicked joke on Simonides' actual point in the poem, since it seems likely (as Most suggests) that Simonides' idea was to assert the poet's licence to establish criteria of excellence through his praise, and so to praise, willingly or not, the tyrant Scopas.[22] In any case, ancient readers would have known that Socrates was joking here since the construal of the adverb 'willingly' with the praise in the previous line in the poem (line 27), as Socrates takes it, breaks a strong metrical convention.[23]

This not to say that Socrates' interpretation does not have important connections with substantive philosophical arguments and theses in the dialogue, of course, or to deny that Socrates' interpretation *floats* two substantive ethical hypotheses he is about to deploy against Protagoras. The point is just that it is not possible to determine exactly what these connections are or see how they function if we do not see exactly how the interpretation is generated or the precise way in which it is parodic – for example, in also floating two other ethical theses that turn out to be incompatible with the two that Socrates later uses against Protagoras.

4   Details of Interpretation

With this caveat about the overall argument in mind we can start to look at Socrates' detailed interpretations in Section C: see Table 2, this section. You can see from the summary in Table 2 that, as I reconstruct it, Socrates makes twelve interpretational ploys (solutions iii–xiv) in order to secure his overall interpretation, the thesis that the poem is well constructed in virtue of containing a single consistent argument against Pittacus. The central point I want to make by examining Socrates' detailed interpretations in this section is this: each solution or point is by design (a) the resolution of a dialectical contradiction (as predicted by our model); (b) an example of a trope of lexical ambiguity corresponding to one of six systematized in Chapter 25 of Aristotle's *Poetics*; and (c) manifestly wrong.

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[22] See Most 1994.

[23] The line break at the end of 27 is implied by the end of a metrical period, which is established by a pause (evident from the metrical licences permitted before it); otherwise we would expect a shortening of the final syllable of *phileō* before *hekōn*. (Though Hayden Pelliccia, my metrical authority here, also noted *per litteras* that Socrates' metrically unconventional reading of the phrase as 'praise willingly' is supported by parallels in Pindar (fr. 43.4) and a mid-fifth-century curse-tablet from Gela (see Jordan 2007: 345–46).)

Table 2 *Simonidean problems and Socratic (and other) solutions*

	Problem	Interpretation	Reasoning	Solution
a.				
i. 340b–d	*genesthai//einai* other options:	= get//remain [be//be permanently: Socrates] [be//be: Protagoras]	evidence: Hesiod and Prodicus	'*metaphor*'?
ii. 341b–d	*chalepon* other options:	= bad [hard: Protagoras] [impossible: Pittacus acc. Socrates]	evidence: Prodicus	'*diction*'
iii. 343c–e	*men* (contrast:) other options:	//Pittacus (*oude* l. 11) [//a god?] [//Scopas?] [//'a solid guy' line 36]	crazy unless in contra-distinction	'*division*'
iv. 343d–e	*alatheōs* other options:	vs. Pittacus = 'actually' [modifies 'good' (*agathon*)] [modifies 'become' (*genesthai*)]	silly unless it is a sentential operator	'*division*'
v. 343c–44b	*genesthai//einai* other options:	= be//be permanently [see [i] above]	<point of the poem>	'*metaphor*'?
b.				
vi. 344c–d	*andra* other options:	= good man [any man: acc. Simonides]	clearly	'*idiom*'
vii. 344c	*amēchanos* other options:	= makes x lose knowledge [can't be managed: acc. Simonides]	clearly	'*equivocation*'
c.				
viii. 345a	*praxas eu* other options:	= action that makes good [acting well]	clearly	'*equivocation*'

Table 2 *(cont.)*

	Problem	Interpretation	Reasoning	Solution
ix. 345a–b	*kakōs*	[doing well/being fortunate: acc. Simonides] = makes good person bad (lose knowledge)	clearly	'equivocation'
	other options:	[acts badly] [anyone acting badly] [doing badly: acc. Simonides]		
x. 345c	*aristoi hous*	= those who are best for longest are also loved by gods		'ambiguity'
	other options:	[being most loved by gods explains good fortune: acc. Simonides]		
d.				
xi. 345c–46b	*hekōn*	= I love and praise willingly	uneducated otherwise	'division'
	other options:	[anyone who does nothing shameful willingly: acc. Simonides]		
xii. 345c–46b	*anankē*	= compelled by the belief that best, despite anger		'division'
	other options:	[pressure of circumstance: acc. Simonides?] [actual necessity?]		
e.				
xiii. 346d	*kala*/fine	= contrary of *aischra*/shameful	ridiculous otherwise	'equivocation'
	other options:	[contradictory of *aischra*/shameful]		
xiv. 347a	*epainēmi*	= in Lesbian dialect because directed at Pittacus		'diction'

In this table, Socrates' interpretation is given on the first line of each problem, while other options are noted on the second line.

Here I look at just a few cases for reasons of space: solutions vi, vii, viii, ix, x, and xiii. (I do not review Socrates' most notorious ploys, solutions iii–v and xi–xii – the arguments for the 'metaphysical' distinction between temporary (*genesthai*) and permanent states (*einai*), and for ruling out the reading of 'willingly' (*hekōn*) that has Simonides endorsing the possibility of willing wrongdoing. These moves are more familiar, and, in the first case, also harder to pin down because its interpretation is bound up with irresolvable arguments about lost parts of poem.)[24] My procedure below is to cite the lines from Simonides (cited in full in the Appendix) and Socrates' comments on each point first, before giving my construal of each solution and identifying the form of ambiguity it represents. Although Socrates does not state the apparent contradictions his solutions are supposed to resolve, I state those before the solutions to make it easier to appreciate his moves. (You can see what I am trying to conclude from each case by looking at the summary of my interpretation in Table 2.)

Problems vi & vii. These two points concern the start of the argument for the contingency of virtue, in Section b of the poem, where Simonides asserts that incapacitating misfortune (*amēchanos sumphora*) will make anyone bad:

> but a man
> there's no way he can help being bad when some
> incapacitating misfortune takes him down.   (lines 14–16)

Socrates comments:

> *Whom does 'incapacitating misfortune take down' in the control of boats? Clearly not the lay-person, since the lay-person is already down.* So just as one can't knock down someone who is lying down, but it's a person who is standing up that one knocks down, not someone lying down, so too it's the person who is capable that incapacitating misfortune can sometimes take down, not someone who is already incapable: the onset of a great storm can make a helmsman incapable, the onset of a hard season can make the farmer incapable, and it's the same story for the doctor. There's

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[24] On the supposed metaphysical implications of Socrates' third distinction between *genesthai* and *einai*, see, e.g., D. Frede 1986 and M. Frede 1988 (and the response of Code 1988). See n. 12 on the most recent iteration of the long-standing dispute about how to reconstruct the poem.

scope for the noble person to become bad … while there's no scope for the bad person to become bad, since he was bad already ex hypothesi. *So it's the capable and wise and good person for whom 'there's no way he can help being bad' when 'some incapacitating misfortune takes him down'.* (*Prt.* 344c6–e4)[25]

Apparent contradiction: Simonides appears to say that fortune determines virtue. But this conflicts with Socrates' paratextual assumption that knowledge determines virtue.

Socrates makes two moves here:

Solution vii: First, he construes 'incapacitating' (*amēchanos*) as active, so it means 'a disaster such that it makes one lose one's capacity for contrivance', that is, Socrates infers, results in the loss of one's knowledge (of how to deal with the situation).

Solution vi: Secondly, in order to secure that construal, Socrates has to take the 'man' (*andra*) in line 14 – 'there's no way *a man* can help being bad' – as 'a *good* man', that is, on his interpretation of problem vii, a *knower*, and so someone who can lose knowledge.

Solution vii is a simple case of equivocation on the (unusual) active and (usual) passive senses of '*amēchanos*': a disaster that incapacitates you for dealing with such things vs. a disaster that you do not have the capacity to deal with. Solution vi is a case of Aristotelian 'idiom' – exemplified in *Poetics* 25 by the use of 'wine' to refer to wine mixed with water – because 'a man' can mean 'a good man', contextually. But both points are palpably absurd (here). Why would a storm make a helmsman lose knowledge? Or a bad season make a farmer lose knowledge? Nor is there any restriction in the poem of the sort of victims misfortune incapacitates. Rather, Socrates needs solution vi to allow for solution vii, and we can see that he intends *that* construal because he uses the point that badness derives from the loss of knowledge for the next argument (solution viii). Although Socrates does not make it explicit, what drives him to argue for these two ambiguities is not the text of Simonides, but *his own paratextual assumption that virtue is knowledge.*

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[25] *Prt.* 344c–e: τίνα οὖν ἀμήχανος συμφορὰ καθαιρεῖ ἐν πλοίου ἀρχῇ; δῆλον ὅτι οὐ τὸν ἰδιώτην· ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἰδιώτης ἀεὶ καθήρηται … ὥστε τὸν μὲν εὐμήχανον καὶ σοφὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν ἐπειδὰν ἀμήχανος συμφορὰ καθέλῃ, οὐκ ἔστι μὴ οὐ κακὸν ἔμμεναι·

Problems viii & ix: These two points come in the continuation of the argument for the contingency of virtue in Simonides, at lines 17–18. Since anyone is bad when misfortune takes him down:

> Any man's good when he's doing well in life (*praxas eu*),
> bad when he's doing badly . . .

Socrates comments:

> What constitutes doing well at letters and what makes a person good at letters? Clearly, learning them. Again, what sort of doing well makes a doctor good? Clearly, learning how to cure the sick. . . . (*Prt.* 345a3–4)[26]

Apparent contradiction: (as above) Simonides appears to say that fortune determines virtue. But this conflicts with Socrates' paratextual assumption that knowledge determines virtue.

Socrates takes the first line as if it had a tacit 'becomes' (*gignetai*) as its main verb, so the line means 'it is *by* doing well that one *becomes* good'. Hence:

Solution viii: 'Doing well' (*praxas eu*) means here what *makes* one good, which Socrates fills out with the assumption that it is only learning that can fill this role, since he assumes paratextually that virtue is knowledge. This is an impressive reconstrual or equivocation on the participial phrase *praxas eu*, which less inspired readers take as giving the condition under which the agent *is* good, rather than the cause of her *becoming* good.

Solution ix: Problem and solution ix deploy the same argument for the opposite case of bad action and badness, covered by Simonides in line 18, 'bad when he's doing badly'. So, an agent becomes bad, Socrates argues, by doing badly, i.e. by losing knowledge.

It is notable that each of the ambiguities in solutions vi–ix is justified by the claim 'Clearly . . . ' (*dēlon hoti*). This phrase occurs five times in a row in *Protagoras* 344c–45b, presumably because the justification for this sort of interpretation is different from the sort of evidence Socrates brought to bear in solutions i–v in *Protagoras* 340–3, which he explained as necessary to preserve the *internal consistency* of the poem. The stress on the obviousness of the assumptions in solutions vi–ix indicates, I think, that we should recognize that these points introduce a huge *paratextual assumption* into the text, i.e. that virtue is knowledge.

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[26] *Prt.* 345a: τίς οὖν εἰς γράμματα ἀγαθὴ πρᾶξίς ἐστιν, καὶ τίς ἄνδρα ἀγαθὸν ποιεῖ εἰς γράμματα; δῆλον ὅτι ἡ τούτων μάθησις. τίς δὲ εὐπραγία ἀγαθὸν ἰατρὸν ποιεῖ; δῆλον ὅτι ἡ τῶν καμνόντων τῆς θεραπείας μάθησις.

Problem x: This point comes as the conclusion of the argument for the contingency of virtue at lines 19–20. Since people are good or bad depending whether they are doing well or badly:

> [and the best of us
> are those the gods love most.]

Socrates comments:

> So this part of the poem also aims to show that it is not possible for a man to be good and remain so, whereas becoming good is possible (and likewise bad); and those whom the gods love are the best for the longest time. (*Prt.* 345b8–c3)[27]

There is a textual difficulty about these lines in the poem, because if they existed at all, the lines are known to us only through Socrates' apparent paraphrase here. But if we follow Page's text and Manuwald's construal of it, it looks like Socrates' paraphrase rests on the form of ambiguity that Aristotle calls a (specific) 'amphiboly' in Chapter 4 of *Sophistici Elenchi* – i.e. one relying on a grammatical shift of subject to object or vice versa.[28]

Apparent contradiction: (as above) Simonides appears to say that fortune determines virtue. But this conflicts with Socrates' paratextual assumption that knowledge determines virtue.

Solution x: If this reconstruction is correct, Socrates rounds off the contingency argument with the conclusion: 'the more and longer you are good, the more the gods love you' (because gods love virtue). But, as we can infer from the immediately preceding lines 15–18, Simonides' original point was the reverse, i.e. to the effect that: 'the more the gods love you, the better (off) you are' (because the gods' love is equivalent to good fortune and that is the main determinant of goodness).

Problem xiii: This point concerns the conclusion of the poem, on the criteria for praise in lines 39–40. Simonides concludes that a decent enough person is apt for praise, given the lack of saints and limitless supply of fools:

> The way I see it, all's fair (*kalon*)
> if there's no shame (*aischron*) in it.

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[27] *Prt.* 345c: ὥστε καὶ τοῦτο τοῦ ᾄσματος πρὸς τοῦτο τείνει, ὅτι εἶναι μὲν ἄνδρα ἀγαθὸν οὐχ οἷόν τε, διατελοῦντα ἀγαθόν, γενέσθαι δὲ ἀγαθὸν οἷόν τε, καὶ κακόν γε τὸν αὐτὸν τοῦτον· ἐπὶ πλεῖστον δὲ καὶ ἄριστοί εἰσιν οὓς ἂν οἱ θεοὶ φιλῶσιν.

[28] See Manuwald 1999: 345–6 *ad loc.* An English example of amphiboly is the Shakespearean sentence 'The Duke yet lives that Henry shall depose' (*Henry VI*, I.4); for an Aristotelian example, see text to n. 36 below.

Socrates comments:

> These lines are also addressed to Pittacus, so Simonides is saying 'Pittacus, I am not criticizing you because I am censorious, since . . . someone who enjoyed criticism would have a full-time job blaming . . . <the limitless supply of fools>.' *'All's fair if there's no shame in it.'* He's not saying this as if he meant that everything is white if there's no black mixed in it – that would be multiply ridiculous – but because for his part he accepts without criticism what is in between as well <as the extreme.>. . . 'A man's good enough for me as long as he is middling and does nothing bad.' (*Prt.* 346b8–d7)[29]

Apparent contradiction: Simonides appears to say that fineness characterizes decent people, even if they would do wrong when constrained by circumstance. But this conflicts with Socrates' assumption that such people are in fact middling (i.e. non-virtuous) people.

Solution xiii: Socrates construes 'fair' (*kalon*) as the contradictory of 'shameful' (*aischron*) – as 'non-shameful' (*mē aischron*) – rather than as the contrary of it – i.e. 'fine'. Since he rejects the latter interpretation as 'multiply ridiculous' in this context (at the end of this poem), he construes the sentence as an assertion of the appropriateness of praising middling people. It seems much more plausible, however, that Simonides meant precisely to *broaden* the criteria for fineness in the light of his realization that the completely blameless man is not to be found (Section d, lines 21–25). It is not ridiculous to calibrate one's criteria for excellence in accordance with the actual limits of human achievement, or so a standard reader might think, and doing so does not mean praising middling people but rather praising people who achieve the sort of excellence we can actually attain.

And so on: each of problems i–xiv raises an apparent contradiction given an obvious reading of Simonides' poem and the paratextual assumptions about virtue that Socrates insists on here.[30] Likewise, the form of each of the parodic solutions i–xiv fits one of the five tropes of ambiguity described above. I leave the precise reconstructions of the remaining apparent

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[29] *Prt.* 346b-d: πάντα τοι καλά, τοῖσί τ' αἰσχρὰ μὴ μέμεικται. οὐ τοῦτο λέγει, ὥσπερ ἂν εἰ ἔλεγε πάντα τοι λευκά, οἷς μέλανα μὴ μέμεικται – γελοῖον γὰρ ἂν εἴη πολλαχῇ – ἀλλ' ὅτι αὐτὸς καὶ τὰ μέσα ἀποδέχεται ὥστε μὴ ψέγειν . . .

[30] Socrates in fact sees four apparent contradictions in the poem. Problems i–v concern the apparent contradiction *Protagoras* adduced between lines 1–3 in Section a and lines 11–13 in Section b of the poem. Problems vi-x concern the tension between what Simonides appears to say in Sections b–c of the poem and Socrates' assumption that virtue is knowledge. Problems xi–xii concern the tension between what Simonides appears to say in Section d of the poem and Socrates' assumption that no one errs willingly. And problems xiii–xiv concern the tension between what Simonides appears to say in Section e of the poem and Socrates' assumption that there is a category of non-virtuous but decent people. The first, second and fourth tensions correspond to the premises of the overarching argument given in Section 3 above.

contradictions and Socratic solutions as an exercise for the indefatigable reader. (My solutions are indicated in Table 2.)

5   Upshot

Why is Socrates doing this? What is the function of his tour de force of misinterpretation, constituted by twelve hermeneutic ploys exemplifying these particular five forms of ambiguity? In my view, the answer is *not* that this allows Socrates to present his own views through or despite the game of poetic interpretation. True, the theses that virtue is knowledge and that there is no willing error *are* hypotheses that Socrates appeals to in the last part of the dialogue. But there is no reason to think that the distinction between being and becoming or the acceptance of a class of middling people – the two other main theses of Socrates' interpretation of Simonides – are part of any substantive *Socratic* position, at least in *this* dialogue. In fact, it is hard not to think that they are incompatible with the measuring art and the general presuppositions of the final argument that courage is wisdom (though I will not try to show that here).[31]

But a doctrinal interpretation is ruled out in any case, I think, by the formal context of the interpretation of the poem, if I am right to construe it as being a species of dialectical or agonistic debate. Aristotle supports this view at the end of *Poetics* 25, when he characterizes the problem-and-solution method in general thus:

> Contradictory assertions should be examined *in the same way as refutations in arguments* (ὥσπερ οἱ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις ἔλεγχοι), to see if the same thing is asserted of the same thing and in the same way, <in order to tell whether> the poet is in fact contradicting *either* himself *or* what a sensible person would assume. (1461b15–18)

If we take the dialectical model seriously – and it is the one that most closely fits Protagoras' initial description of the debate at 339a (cited in n. 5) – Socrates has accepted the dialectical thesis that the *Ode To Scopas* is well constructed and is thus obliged by the rules of the game to defend it. A dialectical defense is one that uses two sorts of premise: (a) premises that are *consistent* with the poem/thesis (under his construal) – as Socrates does in problems i–v – and (b), where appropriate, additional premises accepted (with the same proviso of consistency) *either* by the respondent himself,

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[31] See Beresford 2009 on the second point (and *pace* D. Frede 1986 on the first).

which we see in Socrates' treatment of problems vi–x, *or* by the wise, as we see in his analysis of problems xi–xiv.

So what *is* the point of this incredible display of misplaced ingenuity if it is not to advance a set of specifically Socratic philosophical theses? Perhaps it is just a really professional parody of literary criticism, showing how background assumptions determine interpretation or how Plato can outdo Aristophanes by a factor of four in a battle of prologues? Well . . . yes! But the dialectical format and the consistency of Socrates' hermeneutic methods should give us pause, I think, when we set them in the context of the dialogue as a whole. For the poetic 'interlude' is introduced as a *solution* to the dialectical impasse brought about by the contrast between Socrates' and Protagoras' methods of argument, and Socrates promised to *model* the formal techniques required for a proper dialectical discussion (338c–d). And the 'interlude' is full of formal echoes of the surrounding 'philosophical' discussion – such as the formalistic argument patterns, the agonistic frame- work, and the pervasive parallels between Socrates vs. Protagoras in the dialectic outside, and Protagoras vs. Simonides and Simonides vs. Pittacus in the poetic-dialectic inside the interlude.[32] The precision of these echoes of the surrounding arguments is what makes the poetic episode a great parody, of course, but it also suggests that a primary function of the 'interlude' should be formal and methodological.

The most intriguing evidence that it is right to look for a formal methodological point as the upshot of Socrates' interpretation, however, is more telling than I have let on so far. It is something to see that the poetic episode exhibits a dialectical framework and exemplifies within it five of the six lexical tropes used in the problem and solution genre and later analyzed in *Poetics* 25. But the parody is a lot more biting if we find that the 'lexical' ambiguities it showcases match up precisely with a set of 'logical' fallacies that are crucial to the substantive philosophical arguments in the dialogue. So I conclude by arguing briefly that Socrates' interpretation of

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[32] (1) The argument patterns in the poetic episode mirror those outside it: see, e.g., the quasi-formal arguments establishing whether Simonides' poem does or does not contradict itself in 339c–d and 340b–c and the parallels from passages outside the episode noted in n. 14. above. (2) Similarly for the agonistic frame of each part: the larger debate between Socrates and Protagoras is described in plainly agonistic terms at the dialectical impasse in 335–38 and *passim*. Protagoras sets up a similarly agonistic frame at the start of the poetic episode at 339a–c, and Socrates acknowledges it when he describes Protagoras' first move in terms of a boxing metaphor at 339e and notes that he is testing Protagoras in 341d and 342a. (3) Simonides' criticism of Pittacus' saying is described in explicitly eristic terms in e.g. 342b–d, and thus echoes Socrates' criticism of Protagoras outside the episode. (Though this parallel is complicated by Socrates' ascription of a laconic form of philosophy like his own to Pittacus, which turns the more expansive Simonidean 'argument' into a parody of Protagoras.)

the poem relies crucially on a set of lexical and/or logical points that are also central to the overarching set of four arguments for the unity of the virtues in the surrounding 'philosophical' debate that this episode supposedly interrupts.

It is perhaps controversial that the four arguments do hinge on intentional fallacies, but I will assume this, relying on George Klosko's analysis (though with one or two revisions).[33] On a Kloskovian reading of the arguments, the four central fallacies are these:[34]

1. The first argument, Justice = Piety (330c–31b), relies on the inference that if piety is not just, piety is unjust. But this inference, from not just to unjust, looks like a conflation of the contradictory with the contrary when taken by itself (and without the elaborate metaphysical or causal doctrine often supplied to Socrates but unavailable to Protagoras in context).
2. The second argument, Temperance = Wisdom (332a–33b), relies on the premise that folly is the opposite of both wisdom and temperance. But this claim, that folly is both un-wisdom and immoderation, when viewed in context and from the interlocutor's perspective, looks like an equivocation on the term 'folly'.
3. The third argument, Justice = Temperance (333b–34c), collapses with disputes about faring 'well' and 'good'. But this collapse is easily explained as the result of (what Protagoras takes to be) an equivocation by Socrates on the terms *good* and *well* in expressions such as 'faring well' and 'securing goods'.
4. The fourth argument, Courage = Wisdom (349a–51a), relies on the inference from the premises that the courageous are confident and the wise are confident, to the conclusion that the wise are courageous. Klosko takes this to be a conversion fallacy (All A are B <—> all B are A), on the basis of his reconstruction of Protagoras' counter-argument (but see below).

The text gives us strong reason to think that these are intentional fallacies – though readers who insist on saving the virtue of a fictional character (Socrates) can perhaps agree that we are at least supposed to *notice* the ambiguities. In one

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[33] See Klosko 1983. The identification of such Socratic arguments as 'fallacies' is defended brilliantly in Klosko 1979: they are fallacious if (1) we distinguish formal arguments in Platonic dialogues from the surrounding evidence for e.g. Socrates' purpose in making them (and so do not help Socrates out with unlimited tacit premises) and (2) interpret the premises as the interlocutor takes them.

[34] Klosko's analysis of the first argument is given in Klosko 1983: 131–33, of the second argument in 1983: 133–36, and of the fourth argument in 1983: 136–42. Since Klosko does not review the third argument because it is unclear exactly how to reconstruct it (see his further references in 1983: 129 n. 11), point (3) above is my own suggestion.

case the logical problem is clearly identified, since Protagoras objects explicitly against the 'conversion' inference in the *fourth* argument (350c) and even constructs a parallel argument (to the conclusion that strength is knowledge) to show his interpretation of the fallacy. In the conclusion of the *second* argument, Socrates' recapitulation of the premises makes it as plain as possible that the argument rests on the (contestable) premise that each thing – and so folly – has one opposite; and, though it is not explicit, this makes it pretty clear that the conclusion can be blocked by positing an equivocation here (333a). Protagoras' objections to the two other arguments are less precise. But in the *first* argument he explicitly rejects Socrates' inference from the likeness of Justice and Piety to their identity (331c), an inference of a form that covers contrary-contradictory conflation; and the *third* argument breaks down completely at Protagoras' insistence on the varieties of goodness, i.e. as one might construe it, his demonstration that the word 'good' is equivocal.

Let us assume, then, that Socrates' overarching dialectical argument for the unity of the virtues relies on four notable fallacies at crucial points in the sub-arguments. If so, it is hard to think that it is a coincidence that Socrates applies variants of the crucial ambiguities that these four fallacies turn on to generate the central points in his interpretation of the poem.[35]

Case I: the conflation of not-just/unjust in the *first* argument
              is mirrored by
          the conflation of noble/non-shameful in solution *xiii*.
Case II: the equivocation on 'folly' in the *second* argument
              is mirrored by
          the equivocation on 'incapacitating' in solutions *vi-vii*.
Case III: the equivocation on well/good in the *third* argument
              is mirrored by
          the equivocations on faring/doing well on good in solutions *viii–ix*.
Case IV: the conversion of courage and confidence in the *fourth* argument
              is anticipated by
          the conversion of good and god-loved in solution *x*.

It would take too long to go through each of these in detail. But I think that at least the structural parallels are correct, and it would not be hard to

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[35] The general point that Socrates' interpretation of the poem is also intentionally fallacious was already made in passing by Klosko, as well as the inference that the scholarly distinction between a serious philosophical discussion surrounding a whimsical poetic interlude is untenable; see Klosko 1983: 130.

make a decent case for all four correspondences. I will just say a word about Case IV. Klosko is probably wrong to characterize this as a conversion fallacy: rather, it seems more like a technical species of *amphiboly*, or syntactical ambiguity, as described in Chapter 4 of Aristotle's *Sophistici Elenchi* (where four sub-types of *Poetics* 25's trope of ambiguity are discerned).[36] Aristotle exemplifies this with sentences in which the grammatical form leaves it indeterminate which noun-phrase is the subject and which the object: for example, in the indirect statement τὸ βούλεσθαι λαβεῖν με τοὺς πολεμίους, which can be read as either 'The enemy wants to catch me' or 'I want to catch the enemy.' In both our cases – relating courage and confidence in the fourth argument, and goodness and god-lovedness in solution x – it looks like the relevant point is that, whether or not a biconditional holds between the terms, there is an *explanatory asymmetry*: confidence cannot per se explain courage, but is implied by courage; and being loved by the gods does not per se explain goodness, though it is implied by goodness. I accept that this bare characterization of it is far from the last word on the logical analysis of the controversial fourth argument; but it is perhaps enough to show that there is a real relation between Socrates' apparently fallacious fourth argument and the poetic trope of ambiguity he deploys in solution x.

6   Conclusion

My interim conclusions about the significance of the poetic episode in the *Protagoras*, our chestnut, are four and fairly modest. (1) Something like solutions i–xiv are the interpretative ploys Socrates uses; and they are rightly understood by reference to the late fifth-century hermeneutic conventions later collected and systematized in *Poetics* 25. (2) Socrates' poetic methods are deployed in an agonistic game with formal rules that are strongly analogous to those of the game of Academic dialectic, later described by Aristotle in the *Topica* and *Sophistici Elenchi*.[37] (3) The

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[36] I am grateful to Tad Brennan and Rachana Kamtekar for pressing me to this more complex analysis of Case IV.

[37] I should note, however, an important corollary of my argument for scholars interested in the origins of literary theory (and 'rhetoric' more broadly): if Socrates' interpretation is funny if and because Plato's contemporaries in the 390s or 380s BC knew the rules of the literary game, then Sections A–C above show that a written set of such rules existed at that time. This implies that we should push back the start of 'rhetoric' to at least the end of the fifth century, against the current orthodoxy; see *contra* e.g. Schiappa 1999 and Sansone 2012. (The older view for which Sections A–C offer new support is represented in e.g. Hubbard 2007.) I am indebted to Mark Griffiths and Jeff Rusten for pointing out this corollary.

interpretation Socrates gives thus is not a way of promoting his own overall *substantive* philosophical position, since it includes two hypotheses he rejects as well as two he endorses in the subsequent argument. (4) The poetic episode is nevertheless vital for understanding the pervasive *formal* questions Plato illustrates and examines in the dialogue as a whole, since it reflects on the dialectical methods that are applied in all parts of the text.

But these conclusions are significant, I think, with respect to the prospective longevity of two neighbouring sacred cows. The first concerns the figure of Socrates. In the poetic episode, Socrates uses blatant ambiguities to resolve apparent contradictions and thus support his dialectical thesis that the *Ode to Scopas* is well made. In the surrounding examination of Protagoras' view of virtue, Socrates also uses fallacious arguments based on the same set of ambiguities to support his dialectical thesis of the unity of the virtues as knowledge.[38] This is troubling only if we fail to observe both that Socrates is a character in a fictional dialogue and that the dialogue is concerned with the examination of a range of dialectical practices and methods. Socrates is a functional element of a dialogue by Plato; and one function of his role in the poetic episode is, I suggest, to present the reader with a set of hermeneutic challenges about how to interpret the surrounding arguments and thus about the practice of making (and improving) arguments.[39]

The second concerns the Platonic view of interpretation. I have argued that Socrates' parody of literary interpretation is funny precisely because it applies established literary methods in an absurd way. But the particular absurdity of Socrates' moves presupposes that there are available to the careful reader alternative interpretations of the lines he is reading that are at least not absurd and may even be correct: his blatant misreading of the poem on the basis of misplaced paratextual assumptions

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[38] Despite the work of Klosko 1983, the notion that Socrates deliberately uses fallacious *arguments* is still foreign to most philosophical analyses of his arguments, which tend to take his commitment to the truth as fundamental to Plato's distinction of philosophy from eristic in the Socratic dialogues: see, e.g., Benson 1989. The consensus in the case of the four initial arguments for the unity of virtue in the *Protagoras* can be seen from Vlastos 1956: xxvi–xxxvi, esp. n. 19, through to Irwin 1995: 80–81 and Wolfsdorf 2002 (on the first argument). There is also no hint that Socrates may be playing foul in the classic studies of M. Frede 1992 or Kahn 1996. Nor do the English commentators *ad loc.* go further than faint suggestions that something may be amiss – see, on the first argument, Taylor 1991: 111, 'The ambiguity of the sentence probably reflects a failure (?[*sic*] on the part of Socrates or of Plato) to distinguish between the different implications of "like"'; and Denyer 2008: 127, 'Perhaps Socrates is aware of how problematic these inferences are'.

[39] Cf. Allen 2006, who shows how Socrates takes up and improves the substance of four initial arguments in the argument that takes up the last third of the dialogue. My idea is to take this one stage further by reading the poetic episode as an analogous commentary on the form of the initial arguments.

implies the possibility of appropriate readings based on well-grounded contextual information, and even indicates, I think, what they should be in the case of the extant portions of the poem. If so, Socrates' parodic misinterpretations may – and, I think, do – provide evidence for elements of a positive Platonic theory of interpretation, even though Socrates concludes the episode by stressing his preference for live argument over the interpretation of written texts.[40] The Platonic texts (unlike Socrates) are still alive.[41]

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[40] In this I follow Most 1994 and Ford 2014, although the latter takes Socrates' actual interpretation seriously, rather than the shadow version implied by his parody in my account. Ledbetter 2003 (esp. Chapter 5, 99–118) and Trivigno 2013 also extract serious (and interesting) theories of interpretation from the poetic episode, but theirs are framed as Socratic rather than Platonic theories.

[41] I am very grateful to Hayden Pelliccia, Tad Brennan and Rachana Kamtekar for their essential help with the genesis of this paper; to kind audiences of earlier versions at Figeac, Berkeley and Toronto for their helpful criticisms; to Hugh Benson for insisting on (as well as supplying) the textual grounds against my view of Socrates; and to Verity Harte for her critical reading of the final version of the paper and for her generous support.

Appendix

Simonides To Scopas

ἄνδρ' ἀγαθὸν **μὲν³ ἀλαθέως⁴ γενέσθαι¹** (1)
χαλεπὸν² χερσίν τε καὶ ποσὶ καὶ νόωι
  τετράγωνον ἄνευ ψόγου τετυγμένον·
. . .
. . .
. . . (7 lines missing acc. Page)
. . .
. . .
. . .
οὐδέ μοι ἐμμελέως τὸ Πιττάκειον (11)
νέμεται, καίτοι σοφοῦ παρὰ φωτὸς εἰ-
  ρημένον· χαλεπὸν φάτ' ἐσθλὸν **ἔμμεναι⁵.**
θεὸς ἂν μόνος τοῦτ' ἔχοι γέρας, **ἄνδρα⁶** δ' οὐκ
ἔστι μὴ οὐ κακὸν ἔμμεναι, (15)
ὃν **ἀμήχανος⁷** συμφορὰ καθέληι.

πράξας γὰρ εὖ⁸ πᾶς ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός,
κακὸς δ' εἰ **κακῶς⁹** . . .
[ἐπὶ πλεῖστον δὲ καὶ **ἄριστοί¹⁰** εἰσιν
οὕς ἂν οἱ θεοὶ φιλῶσιν.] (20)

τοὔνεκεν οὔ ποτ' ἐγὼ τὸ μὴ γενέσθαι
δυνατὸν διζήμενος κενεὰν ἐς ἄ-
πρακτον ἐλπίδα μοῖραν αἰῶνος βαλέω,
πανάμωμον ἄνθρωπον, εὐρυεδέος ὅσοι
  καρπὸν αἰνύμεθα χθονός· (25)
ἐπὶ δ' ὑμὶν εὑρὼν ἀπαγγελέω.
πάντας δ' **ἐπαίνημι¹⁴** καὶ φιλέω,
ἑκὼν¹¹ ὅστις ἔρδηι
μηδὲν αἰσχρόν· **ἀνάγκαι¹²**
δ' οὐδὲ θεοὶ μάχονται. (30)
. . .
. . .
[οὐκ εἰμὶ φιλόψογος, ἐπεὶ ἔμοιγε ἐξαρκεῖ
ὃς ἂν μὴ κακὸς ἦι] μηδ' ἄγαν ἀπάλαμνος εἰ-
  δώς γ' ὀνησίπολιν δίκαν, (35)
ὑγιὴς ἀνήρ· οὐ †μὴν† ἐγὼ
μωμήσομαι· τῶν γὰρ ἠλιθίων
ἀπείρων γενέθλα.
πάντα **τοι καλά¹³,**
τοῖσίν τ' αἰσχρὰ μὴ μέμεικται. (40)

Ed. by D. Page 1962 *(PMG 542)*
Lineation acc. Page.
Superscript numbers refer to Table 2 above.

a. For a man it's hard truly to become good (1)
– perfect in hands, feet, and mind,
built without a single flaw;
. . .
. . .
. . .
. . .
. . .
. . .
. . .
b. But for me that saying of Pittacus doesn't (11)
ring true (even though he was a wise guy): he says
"it is hard to be noble";
only a god can have that prize; but a man, (14)
there's no way he can help being bad when some
incapacitating misfortune takes him down.

c. Any man's good when he's doing well in life,
bad when he's doing badly . . .
[and the best of us
are those the gods love most.] (20)

d. So I'm not going to throw away my dole of life on a
vain, empty hope, searching for something there
cannot be, a completely blameless man – at least not
among us mortals who win our bread from the broad
earth. (25)
(If I do find one, I'll be sure to let you know.)
So long as he does
nothing shameful willingly I give
my praise and love to any man.
Not even the gods fight necessity. (30)
. . .
. . .
e. [I'm not censorious, since for me, a man's good
enough as long as he's not bad] or too helpless, and
has the sense of right that does cities good; a solid guy.
I won't find fault (36)
with a man like that. After all, isn't there
a limitless supply of fools?
The way I see it, all's fair
if there's no shame in it. (40)

Trans. Beresford 2008 *(arr. & rev. by Brittain).*
Sections a–e are divided by sense, not meter.

The Unhappiness of the Great King
(Gorgias 461–81)

Amber Carpenter

> Socrates, you seem to be audacious in your speech, like a real rabble-rouser. And you declaim these things now, while Polus suffers the same fate he accused you of making Gorgias suffer. For he said that when you asked Gorgias whether … he would teach justice, Gorgias appeared ashamed and said he would teach [it] … And on account of this admission, he was forced to say the opposite of what he'd said … and Polus mocked you, to my mind rightly so. But now the same thing has happened in turn to him. And I myself do not admire Polus in his conceding to you that to do injustice is more shameful than suffering it. For from this concession, he's become tangled up by you and muzzled, ashamed to say what he thinks.   (*Grg.* 482c4–e2)

Does Socrates shame his interlocutor into self-contradiction? Has he, in particular, put Polus in a situation where he is ashamed to say what he really thinks, so that – saying what is expected instead – he ends up contradicting himself? We need not buy Callicles' explanation of exactly how this trick was turned – by equivocation, he says, on the notion of 'just', which has two distinct and legitimate senses (just by nature and just by custom). We might all the same suppose that Polus does not in fact think that being unjust is shameful, but he was ashamed to admit it. And so, acknowledging the shamefulness of injustice, he finds himself in the awkward position of claiming that it both is, and is not, worse to do injustice than to suffer it.

Since few of us would seriously 'rather suffer than do injustice' (*Grg.* 469c2) in every case;[1] and since we all nevertheless recognise that explicitly denying the shamefulness of injustice takes the moral hollowness and chutzpah of a Thrasymachus, this explanation of what has just gone on between Socrates and Polus seems plausible enough. In what follows, however, I will argue that this plausible explanation – handed to us so neatly by Plato via Callicles – is misplaced. Perhaps Polus does not find injustice shameful, and perhaps he is ashamed to say so. But to suppose that this captures the nature and significance of the dispute between Polus and Socrates skips lightly over just how deep their disagreement is – and it mistakenly portrays Polus as the radical instead of Socrates.

1   Happiness and Goodness

The correct place to locate the deep difference between Socrates and Polus, I will argue, is in their opposing positions on the relative priority of 'happiness' and 'goodness' (or 'the good') – and if this is right, then it will turn out that Socrates is *not* a eudaimonist.[2] This claim is contrary to a widely entrenched scholarly presumption that simply takes the fact of Socrates' eudaimonism as read,[3] or as the point of departure in explaining all ancient Greek moralists;[4] insofar as textual support is offered for Socrates' supposed eudaimonism, it generally requires the *presumption* that Plato uses 'good' and 'happiness' interchangeably, or at least depicts Socrates as doing so.[5] But 'good' and

[1] C. D. C. Reeve calls this Socrates' 'paradigm unacceptable proposition' (1989: 9).

[2] Vlastos's 'Eudaimonist Axiom' is still current as a formulation of eudaimonism: 'happiness is desired by all human beings as the ultimate end (*telos*) of all their rational acts' (1999: 105–36, 108). Irwin says Socrates 'commits himself to a eudaimonist position, insofar as he claims: (1) In all our rational actions we pursue our own happiness. (2) We pursue happiness only for its own sake, never for the sake of anything else. (3) Whatever else we rationally pursue, we pursue it for the sake of happiness' (Irwin 1995: 53). This ascription of eudaimonism to Plato's Socrates rests primarily on a literal reading of the *Euthydemus*; insofar as the *Apology* or *Crito* (Irwin 1995: 45) or *Lysis* (Irwin 1995: 54) are drawn in to support it, the substitutability of 'happiness' for 'good' is presumed (on which, see nn. 5 and 10 below). Attributions aside, eudaimonism as here described is at once a claim about the good which explains the goodness of everything else, whose goodness needs no explanation itself; and at the same time, therefore, a claim that we in fact aim at it in all of our rational or well-considered actions.

[3] For instance, Santas's classic 1979 study begins his treatment of happiness in Chapter 8 by referring us to Chapter 6, 'we have seen . . . Socrates' view that virtue brings happiness' (1979: 218); but the discussion in Chapter 6 is in fact, aptly, conducted almost entirely in terms of benefits and harms, with appeal to the *Meno*'s more circumspect claim that 'no one wants (wishes) to be miserable and ill starred' (1979: 186). See also Brickhouse and Smith 2000, whose 'principle of eudaimonism' articulates the crux of the matter: 'Happiness is everyone's ultimate goal, and anything that is good is good only insofar as it contributes to this goal' (2000: 128); see also Brickhouse and Smith 1994: 103; Reeve 1989: 125–135 collects a number of the relevant passages.

[4] Julia Annas takes as her point of departure that 'ancient writers belong to the same ethical tradition as Plato. They are eudaimonists' (1999: 2); and claims that 'Ancient theories unanimously locate virtue within our overall aim of happiness' (2003: 3), focusing her discussion on 'the ethical theory of Socrates in Plato's "Socratic dialogues"' (2003: 4).

[5] Vlastos 1999 is most explicit about this (1999: 109 n. 20), as we will see below. In addition to Irwin 1995, Irwin 1977b (esp. 51–4) also identifies 'happiness' (and 'doing well') as the 'final good' on the

'happy', I shall argue, are importantly *not* interchangeable for Socrates in the *Gorgias* – even if 'good' is short for 'human good'. Indeed, the dispute with Polus is precisely over which of the two has priority over the other.[6] Polus follows common sense in supposing that there is some agreed and recognisable content to happiness, however much people may dispute the details; and good is derivatively defined as 'whatever contributes to happiness'. Socrates takes the opposite view: in flagrant defiance of common sense, he refuses to acknowledge any agreed content to 'happiness' whatsoever, insisting that happiness be derived entirely from determinations of what is good. If this distinction can be made good, then there is good reason to reserve the title 'eudaimonist' for some version of Polus' position and withhold it from Socrates, for it is Polus who takes happiness to be the final goal and ground of explanation.[7] We would need, then, some other name for Socrates' position – which, I suppose, would be 'agathist', for he takes the good, and only the good, as the final ground of explanation.[8]

One might wonder, however, whether there is a substantial distinction to be made here. Both 'happiness' and 'the good' are contested; they are unclear, and used (perhaps differently) across a wide range of contexts; and

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basis of the *Euthydemus* (1977b: 15, 52); indeed, the index entry for 'happiness' in Irwin 1977b simply directs the reader to 'Good, final' (1977b: 360). Of course no one supposes happiness is *The Good*, described at *R.* 505d–509c; rather, an Aristotelianism ('the human good') is imported and then abbreviated ('the good') to justify the equation. Doing so however assumes a distinction, and a way of thinking about goodness, that does not in fact find a natural home in Plato's ethics, or that of his Socrates. If Plato could be made to talk about 'the human good', it would likely look rather more like the supremacy of virtue, as Vasiliou 2008 develops the notion: virtue is how goodness is manifested in things of this kind. But to gloss this as 'the human good', would presume the *irrelevance* of physical qualities to a human being and human life.

6 Reeve 1989: 126 offers a gloss to accompany his claim that 'Socrates embraces *eudaimonism*,' which captures just the asymmetry characteristic of the position I wish to highlight: 'he [Socrates] holds that we all aim at the good *because* (in some way or another) it guarantees us eudaimonia or happiness' (emphasis mine).

7 In arguing against this widespread approach to Plato's ethics, I am not completely alone: Devereux 2004 argues against attributing strong eudaimonism to Plato in the *Republic* – virtue there is a good in its own right; and he ascribes a Kantian ethic to Socrates in Devereux 1995. Vasiliou 2008 is an extended exposition of an approach to Plato's ethics as good- and virtue-centred; 'the focus of this study is virtue, not eudaimonia', and without arguing against attributing eudaimonism to Plato, Vasiliou '*begins* from the idea that virtue is supreme (as . . . Socrates himself does)' (2008: 6).

8 Morrison 2003: 20 uses the term 'agathism', defining 'rational agathism' as the view that 'the good is desired by all human beings as the ultimate end of all their rational acts'. Although there are points of convergence, our respective views – and our uses of the term 'agathism' – are not the same. The crux of our difference seems to stem from Morrison's use of 'happiness' to mean 'a particular human being's good'; since his interest is in egoism, this definition allows him to peg 'happiness' to egoism, and results in eudaimonism being a species of agathism, namely the egoistic sort, grounding value and principles of choice in one's own good (2003: 18–20). Morrison offers no textual evidence that this is how Plato – his Socrates or the other interlocutors – are in fact using the Greek words *eudaimonia* and *eudaimōn*; and interest in this is another difference between us. In spite of this and other disagreements along the way, Morrison's conclusion that the Platonic Socrates is nowhere an egoist (2003: 32–3) ultimately coincides with a larger claim of which this paper is a partial defence – *viz.*, that Plato's ethics consistently takes only the good (and *not* happiness) to be an ultimate ground of value and principle of action; that this cannot operate egoistically, however, would require considerably more discussion.

in many respects they seem to obey the same logic. For example, about happiness and about the good it seems equally correct to say that 'whatever recognises (*gignōskon*) it hunts for it and pursues it wishing to seize and possess it' (*Phlb.* 20d8–9). And both seem perfectly able to function as the end-point of explanation. Thus Socrates in the *Symposium* famously agrees to the claim that '[t]here is no need to ask further on account of what one wishes to be happy; rather, the answer seems to be complete (*telos*)' (*Smp.* 205a2–3).[9] And yet, less than two pages later, he has his lovers cutting off 'even a foot or a hand' if it is not good (205e3–4), in defence of his claim that people only want what they think is *good*. 'A lover does not seek the half or the whole, my friend, unless it chances to be good as well . . . for what people love is nothing other than the good' (*Smp.* 205e1–206a1). That is, the passage with the definitive statement of eudaimonism concludes with the explanatory finality of the good. For this reason, we may be inclined to agree with Vlastos's view that 'neither Socrates nor Plato feels called upon to *argue* that happiness is man's good: they use the terms interchangeably'.[10]

   Now this is clearly not the usage of the *Republic*, which not only puts unqualified goodness alone at the centre of thought and action, but even specifies that *happiness* is some distinct thing, and something which we are better off *not* aiming at.[11] So the extended likening of the good to the sun, in Book 6, may be underdetermined and open to multiple interpretations in many respects; but it is at least indisputable that Socrates there claims that neither knowledge nor pleasure *is* the good (*R.* 6.505b–d). And he adds here to the claim of *Meno* 77d–78a, that people want only what they take to be good, the additional qualification that their *thinking* it good does not satisfy the person herself who is desiring – it must actually *be* good. 'Concerning just and fine things don't many seize upon things thought to be so, even if they are not really so? . . . while no one puts up with acquiring things merely believed to be good – rather everyone seeks what really is so, and despises mere belief here' (*R.* 505d5–9). Unlike every other desired quality or thing, when it comes to judging of goodness, we cannot escape caring whether it *really is* as we judge it to be – not merely thought

⁹ Compare Aristotle: 'Now happiness seems, above all else, to be such a thing; for this we choose always on account of itself and never on account of something else' (*EN* 1.7.1097a34–b1).
¹⁰ Vlastos 1999: 109, n. 20. For 'Socrates' usage', we should 'see e.g. how freely he interchanges the terms in his statement of the Calliclean thesis at *Grg.* 494e–495b: "those who have pleasure, pleasure of whatever sort, are *happy*", or again, without any intervening explanation, "this is the *good* – to have pleasure of whatever sort"'; we will return to this at the end of the chapter.
¹¹ See discussion of *R.* 421, below.

good, whether by myself or others, but *actually* good. No one wants for themselves what merely appears, but is not, good. And this is at once a psychological and a normative fact true *only* of the good,[12] explicitly contrasted with judgements about virtue or beauty, where the fact that 'everyone deems this a fine sentiment' might be 'good enough for me'.

Happiness is nowhere in sight – unless we take it to be tacit within 'virtuous and fine', and thereby likewise banished from any role in determining what is truly good, or functioning as the ultimate end of action. In fact, Socrates has already said that we *ought not* to aim at happiness; and if happiness, in any recognisable sense, is a good thing to have and comes along with being good, this will be due to the providential ordering of nature. In response to Adeimantus' complaint that 'you are not making your guardians very happy' (*R.* 4.419a2–3), Socrates insists that within the well-governed city *none* of the citizens will be focused on attaining happiness – their goal instead will be to do their own jobs as well as possible:

> [W]e must compel and persuade the auxiliaries and guardians that they are to be the best craftsmen at their respective tasks, and likewise with the others. And thus with the whole city growing and managed well, we must suffer nature to render to each his share of happiness. (*R.* 4.421b9–c5)

Happiness as distinguishable from goodness is granted as a coherent *desideratum*; but *that* should not be the focus of our endeavours. Such happiness is neither up to us nor guaranteed by logical necessity to attend the attainment of what we *should* focus on. We must leave it to nature.[13] If we do attain it, this does not explain the goodness of what we *do* aim at. And if it is entirely likely to come along with goodness (and we might take it as the larger burden of the *Republic* to show this, while at the same time revising our initial conception of happiness so that it is more plausible), this will be due to the good overall order of the natural world.[14] Socrates' advice to the guardian class is that everyone pursue and secure the good, and hope that nature is not stepmotherly.

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[12] Imagine a Moorean sort of exercise, asking whether there could be circumstances under which it would be good *to appear* X, without actually being X; and for every X, including happiness, except goodness itself, the answer is 'yes'.

[13] As Grube translates it.

[14] That happiness cannot be had without goodness is a corollary to the discussion at *R.* 505d; for any happiness attained apart from goodness could not be what we were seeking when we thought we wanted happiness, because it is not *good.* This does not, of course, prevent people being mistaken about whether happiness as ordinarily conceived is itself a good thing, worthy of pursuit. On the two-step structure here, revising our initial conception of happiness but then showing that happiness on any description is not the ultimate aim, see Carpenter 2015: 22–3.

The importance of this passage is not just that it undercuts the *Symposium*'s claim that we all do in fact aim ultimately at happiness – after all, we might think that claim was already undercut in the *Symposium* itself, with its insistence that it is *only goodness* that really moves us. The real significance of this remark from the *Republic* is that, even at this stage in the dialogue, Socrates allows there to be a perfectly intelligible notion of happiness that has specifiable content.[15] There *is* something that we mean by 'happiness', independently of our conception of 'the good'; and although that is not detailed here, we can readily suppose what that might be, by the fact that *nature* should be responsible for supplying it. Happiness consists presumably in the evident and agreed goods that so many of Socrates' interlocutors instantly recognise as desirable: health, beauty, pleasures, good birth, social standing, wealth and presumably the power to satisfy desires that comes with that.

Consider, for instance, Socrates asking Meno whether 'to be able to obtain good things is virtue', where 'by good things you mean, for example, health and wealth' (*Men.* 78c4–6). Meno's immediate rejoinder is to add to the list, 'gold and silver, also honours and offices in the city' (78c6–7). Or when Cleinias agrees in the *Euthydemus* that happiness is having good things, those goods (as 'everyone would tell us') are money, 'being healthy, and handsome, and having to hand enough enough of the other things the body needs' (*Euthd.* 279a8–b2); while good birth, power, and honour in one's own domain are conspicuous goods (279b2–3), virtue comes as a doubtable afterthought (279b5–8). And the *Apology*'s grand call to moral sobriety reveals Athenians who are not 'ashamed to take such care for wealth, reputation and honours, while not caring for nor giving thought to wisdom or truth, or to the soul being its best' (*Ap.* 29d9–e3).

What this shows, in turn, is that for ordinary thought and discourse, for all that 'happiness' may be contested, there are certain fairly stable and agreed features it has, and certain things that are incompatible with it.[16] Aristotle speaks with the voice of common sense when he says that 'those who say that the man on the rack, or fallen into great misfortunes, is happy if he is good, are talking nonsense, whether intentionally or not' (*EN* 7.13.1153b19–21); and 'no one calls happy a man who has been subject to

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[15] This is much in contrast to his obdurate stance in the *Gorgias*, for reasons that will become clear below.

[16] Thus Annas acknowledges, 'We intuitively think that happiness must be intimately linked to health, money, success and achievement, so it is a strain to find that someone can be happy who has none of these things . . . ' (2003: 11); and these are not, she grants, just the intuitions of 'we moderns' – they are shared by Plato's contemporaries.

such chances [as Priam], and comes to a miserable end' (*EN* 1.9.1100a8–9). It just does not matter what the state of your soul is – if you are suffering tremendous material loss or physical pain or social denigration, we cannot call you 'happy'. That is simply not what the word means. 'Happiness' may be elastic, but it cannot stretch *that* far.[17] How much can the term 'happiness' stretch before it snaps, loses all meaning and becomes unintelligible gibbering? One important limit – a limit that will be crucial for our discussion of the *Gorgias* – is that the state called 'happy' has to be recognisable to others as such, and so be a condition which others might envy.

This basic 'axiom of happiness' – that it is evidently desirable – is the one that Socrates scandalously flouts in the *Gorgias*. It is closely related to another axiom of happiness: happiness *feels good* or is *enjoyed* by the person who has it. This may not be its essence, or even what we aim at when we aim at happiness; but it is a limiting condition on what can be considered 'happy'. Deny this – defend, say, the happiness of the man on the rack, or of Priam – and you are simply no longer talking about the same thing. Perhaps the virtuous Priam *is* 'happy' – but of the happiness referred to there, none of the truisms of happiness would hold, including that it is universally desired and explanatorily final.

Both the positive feel and the social recognition proper to happiness are related in turn to a deep conviction that happiness involves being able to do what you like – or as the *Republic* has it at 520a3, to 'turn in whatever direction one wants'.[18] Happiness thus invites consideration of power, success, and pleasure – so that it is natural to exalt those 'who have wealth and other types of power, and to declare them happy' (*R.* 364a6–7). The hyperbolic version of this is vehemently endorsed by Callicles, 'How should a man be happy while enslaved to anyone at all?' (*Grg.* 491e5–6) – and it is worth noting that at this point in his encounter with Socrates, although

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[17] *Contra* Annas, who claims in a single paragraph that 'Plato's theory was not seen as absurd as an account of happiness' and yet 'Aristotle reacts with outraged common sense' (2003: 11). The tension could be avoided by not forcing Plato into the eudaimonist mould. We can then grant that Plato's theory *of goodness and the good human life* was not seen as absurd, while observing that his Socrates is indeed found absurd when he tries to make happiness wholly determined by and subservient to virtue and goodness – found absurd not just by the excitable Polus, but by sober Aristotle as well.

[18] '[L]icence (*exousia*) to do as they wish (*bouletai*)' (557b5–6) in *Republic* 8 means 'each will arrange his private (*idian*) life in a way that would be ingratiating (*areskoi*) to him' (557b8–10). Such a life is called pleasant, and free and blessed (*all' hēdun te dē kai eleutherion kai makarion kalōn ton bion*) at 561d7–8, and doing whatever one feels like is 'a divine and pleasant life' at 558a1–2, a 'pleasant constitution' at 558c2. Compare *Grg.* 469c5–6: The enviable tyrant is the one 'with licence (*exeinai*) in the city to do whatever he takes a notion to (*ho an dokēi autōi, poiein touto*)' – cf. *doxēi beltiston*, 466e2, 10.

there has been much talk of the 'superior', the 'better', the 'worthier' and the 'stronger', it is only here, at the rejection of self-control as a kind of constraint, that *happiness* comes back into the picture. Its fundamental and self-evident incompatibility with constraint is the touchstone by which to measure other claims about what is desirable and good.

In short, it is axiomatic that happiness is something evident to others, desired and envied. Someone in pain or hindered in the fulfilment of their purposes is not enviable. Everything we need to know about goodness or goods simply follows from this. If health and wealth and good birth are self-evident goods, it is because it is these that enable one to enjoy unhindered fulfilment of his purposes. This is why we see so many Socratic interlocutors, with views conspicuously at odds with Socrates', cheerfully willing to endorse the Socratic dictum that 'happiness is having good things' (e.g. *Smp.* 202c10–11, *Euthd.* 279a2–3). Socrates for his part is so keen to elicit their agreement to this point because its unobtrusive ambiguity provides cover for his favourite trick: appealing to axioms of goodness – such as 'what is good, is beneficial'[19] – in order to reverse the order of explanation between the two key terms, so that the un-astute interlocutor finds himself unexpectedly committed to the priority of goodness over happiness, making happiness the possession of whatever things turn out to be independently good. For an instance of this, let us consider more closely the context of the *Symposium*'s declaration of the explanatory finality of happiness. After introducing the principle that 'you call someone "happy" because they possess good and beautiful things' (*Smp.* 202c10–11), Diotima goes on (204e5–205a7):

> What is his when the good things have become his?
>   This is an easier answer to come up with, I [Socrates] said, he is happy.

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[19] Socrates appeals to this throughout his manoeuvrings with Polus in the *Gorgias*, from his claim that either power is not good, or else orators have no power (466b), to the proof that the punished villain is happier than the unpunished one (esp. 477a); he later appeals to the same principle in his attempt to relieve Callicles of his hedonism: 'Some pleasures are good while others are bad . . . And the good ones are the beneficial ones, and the bad ones are harmful ones?' (*Grg.* 499c7–d2). Other instances, many of which adopt the negative form (good does not harm), include *Men.* 87e1–2, *Prt.* 333d9–e2 and *R.* 1.335d and 2.379b (which calls good 'the cause of doing well (*aition ara eupragias*)'). Further axioms of goodness which are not likewise axioms of happiness include 'what is good is appropriate' (*prosēkon*, proper to, befitting), used at *Grg.* 507a–508a, and connected with its near conceptual kin, adequacy, completeness, order and due measure (see also *Phlb.* 22d, 64d–65a); 'what is good is true and non-deceptive' at *R.* 382a–e, and *Phlb.* 64b–c, 65a.

> For it is by possessing goods that the happy are happy, she said; and there is no further need to ask why (the one so wishing) wishes to be happy; rather that answer seems to be complete.[20]
>
> This is true, I said.
>
> Now do you suppose this wish, this kind of love, is common to all human beings, and does everyone wish that goods should be his always – or what do you say?

Staking out the ambiguous territory of 'happiness is having goods', Diotima from the first insinuates an order of priority (the goodness explains the happiness). Focusing on the desire to *have good things* creates the impression that there are things that just are good – and they are not made so by serving to provide some independently specified notion of happiness. It is not elision but transition that leads then to the conclusion that 'what people love is nothing other than the good' (*Smp.* 205e7–206a1).

With the young Socrates, there is not much work to be done here, for he readily accepts that explanatory priority flows from goodness to happiness, and not the other way round. It is only a nod to common usage that brings happiness into the conversation at all. But the same move is made in the *Euthydemus* with Cleinias, who requires a bit more persuading. After securing the easy agreement that we fare well (*eu prattein*) 'by having many good things' (*Euthd.* 279a1–2),[21] it becomes apparent that Cleinias thinks this means happiness is being healthy and handsome, wealthy, well-born and powerful (*Euthd.* 279a–b). Only after dropping happiness and pinning the discussion to good and benefit can Socrates persuade Cleinias that the initially doubted goods of virtue and wisdom (279b5–8) are in fact the only independent goods, with the once obvious happiness-making goods being relegated to the inferior status of dependently good (281d2–e1).[22]

What we see in these discussions are two incompatible ways of understanding the 'happiness is having goods' principle, the one properly eudaimonist, the other Socratic and agathist. They differ according to the

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[20] These are the lines which Vlastos 1999: 108 cites as eudaemonist, glossing it as claiming that we do everything for happiness – his 'Eudaimonist Axiom' from n. 2, above.

[21] The *eu prattein* of 279a2 is picked up and glossed as 'happiness' at 280b4–5: 'We agreed that if we had many good things, we would be happy and do well (*eudaimonein an kai eu prattein*)' (*Euthd.* 280b5–6). McCabe 2005: 195ff. notes the ambiguity, highlighting Socrates' concern with 'the direction in which value flows'.

[22] '[W]ith respect to all the things we called good in the beginning, the correct account is not that in themselves they are good by nature, but rather . . . if reason and wisdom (*phronēsis te kai sophia*) are in control, they are greater goods. In themselves, however, neither sort is of any value.' McCabe 2002 takes this conclusion to highlight the non-derivative value of the person's own state.

direction of explanation. According to the common-sense picture, happiness is a relatively stable, relatively contentful notion, and it acts as the final good explaining the goodness of anything else. So the goods that one has, having which make one happy, are *whatever* things bring the happiness defined already independently of considerations of any other sort of goodness (there is no other sort of goodness). For Socrates, however, the explanation of normativity flows in the opposite direction – as the *Republic* puts it, the good 'is the cause of doing well' (2.379b13);[23] happiness does not *make* things good. In his ethical inquiries, Socrates introduces the 'happiness is possessing goods' principle in order to reverse the common-sense direction of explanation: in the *Gorgias*, he will only call 'happy' that state (whatever it is) which involves having goods whose goodness is determined independently of any considerations of happiness. For the common-sense eudaimonist, Polus among them, things are good because they make you happy; for Socrates in the *Gorgias*, things make you happy because they are good.

This deep division on the matter of the explanatory priority of goodness and happiness drives the unresolved dispute between Polus and Socrates in the *Gorgias*, to which we now turn.

2   Spoiling for a Fight

It is the question of the unjust use of oratory that prompts Polus to enter the fray. Oratory is marvellous, in his view; but it need not lay claim to virtue in order to be so. This, and not sheer brazenness, is why Polus does not share Gorgias' shame in acknowledging that the orator does not teach virtue (*Grg.* 461b). Being gratified – obtaining what one wishes and the associated positive affect – is good, and so oratory would be 'an admirable thing' simply for being able to give gratification. Picking up Socrates' description of oratory as a knack for giving gratification and pleasure (*Grg.* 462c4–7), Polus concludes, 'Well then, doesn't rhetoric seem to you to be a fine thing, since it is able to gratify (*charizesthai*) people?' (*Grg.* 462c8–9).

Socrates insists with disdain, as if it were obvious, that he cannot know whether oratory is admirable until he knows what it is. And he goes on to chastise Polus for his undue haste, charging on in the discussion as if he had understood what had already been said. It is a memorable and rhetorically effective characterisation, but one which we should be cautious about

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[23] Compare *Grg.* 508b1–3, discussed in Section 3.

swallowing whole, pleased to be on the right side laughing at Polus before we have properly understood what is going on.[24] It is, after all, not at all obvious that one must know fully what something is before one can make a good judgement about its qualities; nor is it obvious that Polus is hasty to confirm oratory's admirableness based on its agreed power to gratify.

This is not just because we may have legitimate doubts about Socrates' infamous epistemological principle of the 'Priority of Knowledge What'.[25] Much worse, under the cover of this epistemological squeamishness, Socrates is upending the dialectical playing field. His insistence that he cannot determine rhetoric's goodness on the basis of its quality as gratifying actively precludes consideration of the very position Polus endeavours to represent. For suppose Polus actually has a view, and indeed the not uncommon view, that being gratifying *is* being good. In that case, Polus does *not*, in fact, need to know anything more about oratory in order to know that it is good. It is indeed a twofold good, both based on the goodness of gratification: first, oratory is good simply because it gives gratification to others (it does them a good turn); second, because people respond favourably to being indulged, oratory as a tool for producing gratification gives power to the orator (466b4–5), which power in turn is simply the power to obtain gratification himself, or indulge his desires to do whatever he sees fit (466b11–c2). It may be agreed that happiness is 'possessing goods'; but as far as Polus is concerned, what counts as 'goods' is determined by the fact that happiness involves the conspicuous and enviable (468e8, 469a1) power to do as one likes. Things are not good prior to and independently of that fact about happiness. The fractious conversation which ensues arises from Polus' stubborn, and legitimate, resistance to accepting Socrates' version of the 'happiness is having goods' claim, along with its implications.

Socrates' initial characterisation of oratory, as a knack for producing gratification and pleasure, indicates the close connection between gratification and positive affect. It is a connection which is not disentangled in this passage. We see in Polus' response to Socrates' outrageous claim not to know whether the Great King is happy that Polus takes the goodness of

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[24] We must, that is, avoid falling into the trap set by what Alexander Nehamas calls 'Platonic irony'. 'Plato's irony', he observes, 'is more disturbing than Socrates'. It uses Socratic irony as a means for lulling the dialogues' readers into the very self-complacency it makes them denounce . . . in the process of producing in us a disdain for Socrates' interlocutors, the dialogues turn us into characters just like them' (1988: 44).

[25] *Men.* 80d–e is a *locus classicus* for Socratic insistence that we cannot say *anything at all* about what something is like until we know what it is. Fine 1992 is responsible for baptising the principle 'PKW'.

positive affect as self-evident, and an unquestionable aspect of happiness. But the hedonist interpretation of this connection – where pleasure is taken to be the desired thing, quite universally, and power is relevant only as an adjunct to this – will be pursued in the conversation with Callicles. With Polus, attention is focused on the positive affect of desire-satisfaction (gratification), and so on power. Pleasure is relevant here as the positive feeling associated with successfully exercising your power to accomplish what you set out to do. While Aristotle takes up a sanitised version of pleasure as the natural concomitant to unimpeded, purposive activity (*EN* 10.4.1174b–75a), its popular version is represented by Polus, who therefore rightly attempts to resist the distinction between 'aiming at pleasure' and 'aiming at what is best' (464b–465a), which underwrites Socrates' denigration of oratory as a knack for flattery.[26] Such a distinction forecloses the possibility that a pleasure could be good simply as such, or that something's being pleasant could be the very thing that is good about it. The denigration only gets off the ground if the pleasant/good distinction is correlated, as Socrates claims, to the distinction between *mere* appearance and reality (464a). But the reality of affect *just is* its appearance to the person affected, so that in this respect happiness admits of no appearance/reality distinction. Socrates may call oratory 'a shameful sort of thing, . . . because it aims at the pleasant without [aiming at] the best' (464e2–65a2), but if Polus thinks that getting what you aim at, or what it pleases you to have, *is* what is good, then aiming at gratifying desires already includes 'the best'. Polus is not, as accused, 'asking two things at once' (466c7), when he asks whether oratory is not good and powerful, giving people the power to do whatever they see fit. 'Good' does not have some independent meaning apart from being or serving the unhindered exercise of one's ability to do as one likes.

This is why Polus unhesitatingly holds power to be obviously good for its possessor (466b4–5) – since power is the ability to get what you want, or gratify your desires, or simply 'to be gratified', it is virtually analytic that

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[26] Vasiliou's thought-provoking discussion of this passage notes that Socrates' crucial constructive contribution (the anatomy of flattery, 464b–66a) is directed to Gorgias, not Polus. This, he suggests, is because Polus cannot conceive of a good *for* the soul, independent of 'good for Polus' (2008: 109) or good for the body (2008: 113); but such a notion is necessary in order to make sense of Socrates' position. Closer to the surface, however – and nearer to our purposes here – Socrates' anatomy of flattery hangs on the priority of goodness: The difference between real craft and imitation is that the former, in all four domains outlined, aims at the best; the latter, by contrast, aims at pleasure (464c–d). This priority of goodness is the crucial point Polus cannot admit – and why the speech here is directed to Gorgias. Note that both of these failures might be considered 'common-sense' failures – the poor man's version of *EN* 1.6 is bafflement at what 'for the best' could mean, distinct from the health, wealth and gratification of desires constitutive of human happiness; and it is Aristotle who insists that it is *the man* who gets angry (with his soul), *de An.* 1.4.

power is good, no matter what you do with it. It may seem that his fatal error in his dispute with Socrates comes in his unwillingness to concede that even foolish desires are well gratified (466e). But it is not so simple as that. For, unable though he may be to spell it out precisely, Polus is entitled to his own definition of what makes a desire foolish – it will be a desire the gratification of which brings about the thwarting of other, greater desires or of future unhindered exercises of power to execute one's projects. What makes someone foolish is that they do not know how to manage their desire-gratification so as to maximise it: the fool is the one who gets caught, not the one who commits the crime. Thus Polus explains that his objection to 'that sort of power' – wielding a knife in a crowded marketplace – is that 'the person acting in this way is necessarily punished' (470a5–6), and this is presumably just what that same man did not want. Polus can admit that some desires are foolish, and yet maintain his position that good and bad are defined by reference to desire-satisfaction. Presuming the murderer in the marketplace did not want to be punished for his crime,[27] then being punished is bad because it is not getting what he wants (escape from punishment) and in the usual course of things involves him in the future not being able to exercise his powers to attain his goals.

In the agreement that happiness is having good things, Polus maintains the line of someone who subordinates good to happiness – with its emphasis on feeling and appearing, pleasure and gratification, getting what you want – in the face of Socrates' equal insistence on the priority of the good (its consideration of the fine, the true, the beneficial-in-some-other-sense) in determining what counts as happy. And this, I suggest, informs Polus' infamous inability to recognise any distinction between what one wants, and what one thinks best.

3   Turning the Socratic Trick

If it is not Polus' admission that desires can be foolish that leads him into the morass from which Callicles attempts to rescue him, then how is it that Socrates turns the Socratic trick of getting Polus to agree, without agreeing, to the Socratic position that good is prior to happiness, and indeed the only consideration by which to determine desirability?

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[27] The assumption is safe, for if he did want it, it would be no punishment. Polus would reject any fanciful example of a wrongdoer taking gratification from his punishment; if happiness is conspicuously desirable and enviable, and if (as he supposes) we all fundamentally want to exercise our powers to obtain our objectives, then punishment – the hindering of one's free exercise of one's powers to obtain one's objectives – will never be desired.

The answer in short is: by refusing to conduct the conversation in terms of happiness at all, and insisting on appealing instead only to goodness. Polus may have a position which he consistently represents; but he is not articulate and explicit about what the fundamental and non-negotiable principles of it are, and so he will not immediately see what it is about Socrates' questions that begs the question in Socrates' favour.

In particular, the discussion has not made explicit that there are two senses in which it can be true that 'happiness is having goods', and that these two senses are fundamentally opposed. Socrates insists on conducting the conversation in terms of 'goodness', beginning with the 'aiming at pleasure/aiming at the best' distinction. This persists when he begins the examination of 'power' by asking whether 'by "having power" you mean something that is good for the one who has power' (466b6–7; reiterated at 466e6–7, 467a3), and then is exploited at 468c3–5, when Socrates tacitly invokes the axiomatic connection between goodness and benefit to claim that Polus has conceded the vital point: that 'so long as doing as one sees fit accords with acting beneficially, it is good and this, so it seems, is having great power' (470a10–12). This gloating obscures the fact that 'harm' is still unspecified; Polus' 'concession' takes harm to be damage to one's well-being (in the ordinary sense), and Socrates has still given him no reason to acknowledge any other kind of harm. But since the core values of happiness have by now fallen from view, Polus is in no position to observe that the knife-wielder is harmed only *by virtue of* the loss of liberty and reputation that punishment comprises. He invites Socrates to say how *he* distinguishes between good/beneficial and bad/harmful cases of 'doing as one pleases' (justice, of course, 470c1–3), never attempting his own distinction.

This is not the first time Polus is tongue-tied by this manoeuvre. Socrates' almost mind-numbingly laborious (and still unsatisfactory) spelling out of the difference between merely instrumental goodness and the final goods which ground them (467c–468c), supposedly won him the concession that

> we do not want simply to slaughter or to exile from the cities or to expropriate property as such; but if these things are beneficial, then we want to do them, and if they are harmful, we do not want to do them. For we want good things, as you say; we do not want things that are neither good nor bad – nor do we want bad things. Or? Do I seem to you to speak truly, Polus, or not? Why don't you answer? (*Grg.* 468c2–8)

Now Polus has particularly good reason to fall silent here – but it is not so much the embarrassment of self-refutation as it is the frustration

of one's position being precluded by definition. Polus has just acknowl-
edged things are 'neutral' when they are sometimes good and sometimes
bad; and exiling someone is one such 'neutral' thing (this returns
explicitly at 470b–c). So there must be some good or benefit arising
from exiling someone, in order for that to be good in any particular
case. Of course, there are plenty of cases where one might point out the
practical benefit to a tyrant of banishing a particular person – a rival
who is not yet very powerful, say. But Polus has claimed that the power
to banish *whomever one likes, whenever one likes* is good, regardless of
considerations of some *further* benefit from the banishment. With a
view to happiness, this makes perfect sense: if happiness involves the
conspicuous enjoyment of the free exercise of one's capacities, then that
'for the sake of which' exiling might be done may simply be 'because it
pleases me', or 'because I feel like it', 'it gratifies me to do so' – that *just
is* the benefit it brings, and that suffices to make it good. But this
option is forced out of the picture by Socrates' insistence on the priority
of the good, and the resulting insinuation that there must be some
further good that the exiling brings about – as if 'it gratifies me' did not
suffice. Appeal to goodness *already conceived of as determined indepen-
dently of desires* leads to a notion of 'benefit' which should likewise be
specifiable without reference to gratification. And this is what leaves
Polus tongue-tied, in danger of losing his grip on the notion that
something neutral becomes good *simply because that is what I choose*.

Socrates exploits the mere appearance of common ground to wrest from
Polus the mere appearance of agreement. Cue Polus' exasperation:

> As if *you*, Socrates, would not welcome being able to do what you see fit in
> the city, rather than not; or would not be envious whenever you saw
> someone putting to death some person he saw fit, or confiscating his
> property or tying him up! (*Grg.* 468e6–9)

Notice that Polus' reaction is an appeal to what *everyone recognises* as
desirable, and so to what is acknowledged to be enviable. He returns to
his touchstone: happiness – the happiness which serves as the final end-
point in the explanation of human action – is, if nothing else, an enviable
state, one that we all collectively can recognise in others and want for
ourselves. Happiness cannot be something unrecognisable to others as
something desirable for themselves. And enjoying unhindered achieve-
ment of one's aims (whatever they are) is 'to be envied either way'
(469a1), however one manages it. Once Socrates explicitly makes justice
the criterion of benefit and goodness (470c1–3), Polus is able to find his

voice again, rejecting Socrates' appeal to justice by explicitly reintroducing happiness into the discussion: 'But Socrates, we do not even need ancient cases to refute you – current events would quite suffice to refute you, and to demonstrate that many who behave unjustly are happy' (470c9–d3).

When Socrates insists that he would 'not even know whether the Great King is happy', for 'I do not know how he stands in regard to education and justice' (470e4–7), he is insouciantly – even perversely – dissociating happiness from its natural home among satisfaction, pleasure, and being recognisably well-off, and associating it instead (much to the consternation of Polus) with education (*paideia*) and justice (*dikaiosunē*), with truth and virtue – conditions (to his mind) *worthy* of admiration regardless of how they make one feel or whether they allow one unimpeded gratification. He then baldly asserts the priority of the good over happiness, 'I say that the fine and good man or woman is happy, but that the unjust and base person is miserable' (470e9–11). That is to say, however the Great King *feels*, and whatever anyone else might think of him, education and justice are good. But this flies in the face of the best-recognised facts about happiness: that it *feels good*, is *enjoyed* – closely related to it involving the successful satisfaction of one's desires or aims (the notion of 'gratification' neatly joins the two); and that others recognise and envy the happy man as such. Polus takes Socrates up on both of these points.

First, in his sarcastic rejoinder to Socrates' claim that the unjust tyrant is miserable, it is clearly important to Polus that the tyrant himself does not *feel* miserable. 'And after all these iniquities, it has escaped his notice that he had become most miserable, nor does he have any remorse' (471b6–7). With happiness as the anchor by which we fix the content of good and benefit, Polus allows no gap between how the tyrant *feels* the world is going for him, and how it in fact is with him. Unfelt misery is no misery at all; conversely, feeling satisfied (and being satisfied with one's state) is inseparable from being happy. From the first-person perspective, there is no distinction between the appearance of happiness and its reality. Since it is just plain obvious that happiness is that which everyone desires and that at which our actions aim, Polus ends up repeating his disbelief in Socrates' sincerity, without the indignation: 'You're just unwilling to admit it; you do actually think it is as I say' (471e1).

Second, in his appeal to what 'everyone agrees', Polus is not – as Socrates sanctimoniously claims – appealing to false witnesses, powerful only because they are many. He is, rather, insisting, as Aristotle will do a generation later, that nothing can be called happiness which is universally reviled or rejected. On the contrary, while appeal to a majority of witnesses

has no place if one is considering the truth about goodness, it is perfectly legitimate if one is considering happiness – precisely because it is axiomatic that happiness is something enviable, something recognised and recognisable as what one wants. It is with a view to happiness, and the considerations compelling and relevant to happiness, that Polus asks, 'do you not think, Socrates, that you have been thoroughly refuted, when you say such things that no human would say?' (473e4–5). If the good has definite content and reality independently of, and prior to, any considerations of happiness, then Socrates is right to dismiss Polus' witnesses. But that begs the question at issue. For the dispute between Polus and Socrates is precisely over which of happiness and goodness has priority in determining the content of the other. If, as Polus supposes, happiness is prior to the good – and what counts as good is simply *whatever* brings happiness – then these witnesses are most relevant indeed; for whatever its disputed content, happiness is something we can all recognise as such. If no one recognises the candidate Socrates puts forward, defined wholly derivatively from goodness, then Socrates has simply changed the subject.

This question of explanatory and normative priority is not obscure or surprising. Indeed, it is a *leitmotif* in Socratic questioning. Euthyphro is enjoined to say what is 'that form itself that makes all pious actions pious' (*Euthphr.* 6d10–11), and later 'the god-loved is not the pious, nor the pious the god-loved . . . because the pious is loved on account of its being pious; but it is not because it is loved that it is pious . . . [while] the god-loved, on the other hand, is so because it is being loved by the gods' (*Euthphr.* 10d12– e8). Or in the *Meno*, 'even if [the virtues] are many and various, all of them have one and the same form on account of which they are virtues' (72c6–8). In the *Gorgias*, Socrates later acknowledges explicitly that the crux of the matter is precisely this question of priority, challenging Callicles to '[e]ither refute this account of ours, [and show] that it is not by the possession of justice and temperance that the happy are happy, and by [possession of] badness that the miserable [are miserable], or else if it is true, examine what follows' (508a8–b3). Throughout his discussion with Socrates, Polus attempts to insist on the priority of happiness over goodness, invoking three acknowledged facts about happiness: it *feels good*; it involves *getting what you set your mind on* (interpreted as 'and the more, the better', so unconstrained desire-gratification); and it is recognisable and envied as such by others. The conception of happiness thus defended is the orientation towards power, honour, and wealth criticised in the *Apology*, rejected in the *Republic*, and articulated as the obvious goods by Meno and in the *Euthydemus*' conversation with Cleinias. As long as Polus holds to this,

Socrates' attempts at reorientation – via a Socratic version of 'happiness is having goods' – must fail.

   Polus eventually loses his grip on this when it comes to 'disgraceful'. In this, Callicles does not mis-locate the crux of the argument when he picks up the point at 482d. Polus needs some better account of the disgracefulness of doing injustice, or else to deny that it is disgraceful. This would not be impossible. For instance, Polus might maintain that those – including Archelaus himself – who admit Archelaus behaved disgracefully do not mean he caused pain or harm to himself or to the third parties making the judgement; rather, they (and Archelaus himself, if he concedes his behaviour is disgraceful) mean he behaved in a way we all agree to censure lest anyone should try to behave that way against us, because it is painful and unbeneficial to anyone so treated, leading to their unhappiness.[28] Or Polus might simply say that disgraceful means bad for recipients, not bad for agent – that is, that action is disgraceful which leads to others' unhappiness, but it is not particularly relevant to one's own happiness at all.[29] Either way, Polus must return to and insist on the fundamental role of 'happiness' in the explanation of goodness and badness, prior to any independent notion of goodness (which he must refuse to accept exists), if he is to maintain his position. This is what a consistent eudaimonism would look like. After missing the disgrace point, Polus rolls over, no longer trying to seriously participate in the conversation. By 478d, it is safe for Socrates to reintroduce happiness to the discussion on his own terms; after an argument based on the beneficial, any happiness appealed to rests firmly on a foundational notion of goodness.

4   Callicles and Conclusion

While Callicles accuses Polus of allowing to happen to him precisely what Polus claims Gorgias wrongly allowed to happen to him, in fact we find that Socrates does to Callicles just what he did to Polus: he introduces goodness where it can be equivocally accepted by both parties, and makes

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[28] This is more or less the line Callicles takes; as this option remains open, I disagree with Mackenzie 1982 that 'Polus does indeed stand refuted' (1982: 87) on this score – though not, it should be clear, because I endorse the Vlastos 1991: 139–48 alternative that Plato has (or inadvertently depicts Socrates as having) got confused. The confusion is Polus'.

[29] Or if disgraceful happiness is no longer recognisably enviable, then he might have reconsidered (as Stauffer 2006: 73 points out) whether doing injustice is disgraceful, after all.

his case by drawing on a notion of goodness that presumes its priority to happiness.

Socrates does not, as Vlastos says, use the terms 'good' and 'happy' interchangeably.[30] Rather, it is Callicles' view that is unstable, precisely because (as Plato depicts him) he is torn between happiness as informed by the good (*agathist*) and good as informed by happiness (*eudaimonist*). So, for example, in his long opening speech, 'happiness' is strikingly absent – it is all about what is just and unjust, about superiority and strength. But once he specifies superiority and strength as 'competent to accomplish whatever they have in mind' (491b2) – a classic non-negotiable feature of happiness – then concern for happiness soon follows. Socrates' proposal that the best men rule themselves and their own desires is firmly rejected, by reference to happiness (491e5–6).[31] And Calliclean hedonism immediately follows: 'the man who'll live correctly ought to allow his own appetites to get as large as possible and not restrain them' (491e8–492a1).

The discussion which follows takes place largely in terms of plea- sure – and Callicles is utterly unpersuaded. Rather than using 'happy' and 'good' interchangeably here, Socrates uses their different connota- tions as part of an argument: Callicles insists that 'those who enjoy themselves, however they may be doing it, are happy'; Socrates tries to challenge this view by asking whether he thinks that pleasure is the good ('But say now whether you claim the pleasant and the good are the same', 495a2–3). This is intended to be a new move, a way of getting at Callicles from a different direction, to make him give up his view. It is successful because it exploits the natural relationship between happiness and pleasure (when we suppose happiness to be something determinable independently of a separate conception of goodness) in contrast to the conspicuous absence of any such relation between pleasure and goodness (taken as something determinable separately from considerations of happiness). Socrates rightly thinks it is easier to show that (unrestricted) pleasure is not *the good* than to show that (unrestricted) pleasure is not *happiness* (495b3) – and that is what he sets out to do. It is by appeals to 'the good' that pleasure is seen to be inadequate, and Callicles' hedonism crumbles.

But this only works if Socrates precisely *does not* use happiness and the good interchangeably, but rather recognises their distinct connotations.

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[30] Nor is 'good' *in this context* (which supposedly warrants taking 'good' as short for 'the human good') simply used interchangeably with 'happy'.
[31] 'How should a man be happy while enslaved to anyone at all?', cited in Section 1.

And the dispute, both here and with Polus, only makes sense if Socrates (and indeed Plato) recognises too that one must choose which of happiness and the good is prior to the other.[32] Either goodness is definable independently of happiness, and we allow our conception of happiness to be constrained by what is – independently – determined to be good; or else happiness is defined independently of goodness, and, if happiness is our only ultimate aim, we allow the goodness of only that which contributes to happiness. Such a view may have to have a non-standard explanation of the disgraceful, and any vices that do not entail painful constraint of one's ability to satisfy one's aims; but only such a view can coherently oppose Socrates' outrageous claim that it is worse to do than to suffer injustice.

One might think that Socrates has sufficiently proved his point when the alternative position is driven to such extremity as to be radically revisionist about shame – has the view not been sufficiently refuted when it attracts such counterintuitive and unseemly commitments? But who has won is not the point; the point is rather that we cannot see what is at stake if we do not even appreciate the difference between the two sides – and we cannot do that if we insist on forcing Socrates into the eudaimonist mould. Socrates and Polus are not having a dispute over what happiness is; they are having a dispute over what is good: Polus holds that what is good is what makes you happy, and is good *because* it makes you happy; Socrates holds that the good is beneficial, appropriate, fitting and fine, and because of this having such things makes you do well (and only such doing well should be called 'happy'). Polus has not lost (if he has lost) because he is stupid, but because he defends eudaimonism: he takes the limiting conditions on any intelligible notion of happiness (enviable, successful, free, incompatible with constraint and pain) to be the limit of what can be considered 'goods'. For Socrates, the possible goods – having which explains the goodness of a human life – are constrained only by principles of goodness (it is beneficial, does no harm, is proportionate and sufficient, appropriate and fine). There is not just a difference between the agathist and the eudaimonist; there is, as Socrates says in the *Crito* (49d3–4), 'no common ground between' the two.[33]

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[32] Or else be a Kantian-style dualist about value – which is a view attributed to Socrates by Devereux 1995, and could perhaps be drawn out of the *Republic* based on the passage at 421b–c, quoted in Section 1.

[33] 'No common ground', that is, between those who think harming or doing others injustice is always wrong, and those who think it might be justified. If it might be justified, this can only be by appeal to considerations of happiness determined independently of a prior conception of goodness. And so it is no accident that the very same point – that it is always worse to do than to suffer injustice – arises in the discussion with Polus in precisely this context.

Love and Knowledge

Raphael Woolf

1   A Venerable Debate

This chapter, though it will have something to say about the topic of the title in its own right, is principally a discussion of Plato and (in line with the volume's theme), specifically, but not exclusively, of a particular passage: Diotima's famous speech on love in the *Symposium*. Even more specifically, the chapter will reflect on a worry about that speech first brought to prominence by Gregory Vlastos in his celebrated paper *The Individual as Object of Love in Plato*.[1] Vlastos presents a Plato who, on the basis of such texts as Diotima's speech, leaves no room for the individual as object of love.[2] On this reading of the speech, what the lover values is beauty, whose ultimate realization is the Form of Beauty, the quest of all lovers who are properly oriented in their search. An individual such as Alcibiades is not valued for his individuality – his qualitative uniqueness, his difference from other individuals – but for whatever quantum of beauty he may happen to manifest, beauty that is bound to be a meagre reflection of the Beautiful itself, to be set aside once one has ascended to the Form.

Debate about this problem (if that it be) has been extensive in the post-Vlastos literature,[3] and one might think that this particular old chestnut has long lost its savour. I shall attempt nonetheless to inject a little spice by coming at the issue from a slightly different perspective. My aim is to shed light on Plato's view of the relation between knowing an individual and

It is an unqualified pleasure to dedicate this essay to MM McCabe, whose incomparable gift of communicating philosophical eros has been an inspiration to me and, as this volume testifies, to many others.

[1] Vlastos 1973: 3–42.

[2] Vlastos 1973: 31 summarises what he takes to be Diotima's (and Plato's) position as follows: 'Now since all too few human beings are masterworks of excellence . . . the individual, in the uniqueness and integrity of his or her individuality, will never be the object of our love.'

[3] Since it is not a primary goal of this paper to take sides in the debate, I shall not attempt to document scholarly responses comprehensively; references to some significant contributions may be found in the footnotes below.

loving them. This approach, I hope, might enable us to understand better the view that Diotima espouses; and perhaps also suggest how *we* might think of the relation between love, knowledge and their respective objects.

The notion of qualitative uniqueness I take to be at least one strand in the concept of the individual at work in Vlastos's reading,[4] and it is what I shall focus on in my discussion here. Vlastos does sometimes *contrast* the idea of loving someone for the individual that they are with loving 'a complex of qualities answering to the lover's sense of beauty' (1973: 28). In this he appears to assume, rightly, that it is not a requirement of loving someone for their unique personality that one conceive of their qualities in terms of either excellence or beauty. This is not of course the same as taking a person's individuality to be independent of their qualities. Such conceptions of the individual I confess to finding mysterious, and it is one based on the idea of qualitative distinctness that I shall stick to here.[5] Vlastos's critique I take, correspondingly, to include the idea that for Plato only an individual's beauty or excellence, not their qualitative distinctness, matters.

As is the case with many influential papers, the effect of Vlastos's interpretation was by and large to provoke scholars into challenging it. With respect to Diotima's description of the lover's ascent, responses have tended to discern a greater recognition for the individual as object of love than Vlastos had allowed. Among other things, Vlastos seemed to present a Plato alien to modern sensibilities with regard to the importance of individuality. In seeking to correct this portrait, admirers could reclaim Plato as a figure still startlingly original but less foreign to a contemporary outlook.

Yet over forty years after the publication of his paper, a glance at the content of Diotima's speech is liable to leave the impression that, when it comes to her view of the individual, Vlastos was onto something.[6] His interpretation does not come from nowhere; and it is not hard to see why Diotima might be taken to regard the individual as of no account.[7] I shall shortly offer some considerations in support of this reading. My main

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[4] See, as well as the quotation cited in n. 2 above, Vlastos's talk of caring for another's 'fulfillment of his own unique personality' (1973: 19).

[5] I am in sympathy with the emphasis in Williams 1981: 16–18 on character difference for the understanding of the role of the individual in personal relations.

[6] A sense of unease is discernible in A.W. Price's vivid yet qualified assertion that when it comes to the theory in question 'Personal love, of a kind, is thereby not supplanted, but glorified' (1989: 54).

[7] For some trenchant remarks to this effect, see Obdrzalek 2010: 438.

purpose in doing so, however, will not be to adjudicate the debate between Vlastos and his critics. Rather, I shall suggest that in at least one respect the terms of the debate may have been misconceived.[8]

Diotima's problem, I shall claim, is not with individuality but with mutability. Since embodied individuals are, as such, mutable, they are not proper objects of love. Why should their mutability have this consequence? Because it is taken as a requirement on genuine love that the object of love be known; and embodied individuals, because of their mutability, cannot be known. Individuals that are not susceptible to change can be perfectly proper objects of love, on this view. By keeping in mind that embodied individuality is Diotima's focus, we will be able to take full measure of her, at times, undoubtedly caustic remarks without being forced thereby to conclude that Plato's attitude to the individual as such is hostile.[9]

2   Some Preliminaries

Before turning to the content of Diotima's speech, let me briefly address two preliminary points. First, the precise scope of Diotima's conception of love (*erōs*) is notoriously hard to pin down and I shall not attempt a detailed exposition here.[10] Perhaps it may be roughly captured via the idea that a party in the grip of *erōs* can be described not simply as one who loves some object but as a *lover* of that object, thus excluding, for example, loving relationships between friends or between parents and children, but including, as well as romantic attachments, passion for abstract items – money, exercise, and philosophy are some of Diotima's own examples (205d)[11] – items that will include, paradigmatically, the Form of Beauty itself.

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[8] For a recent critique of the debate, in different terms from mine, see Sheffield 2012. Sheffield in effect accepts the premise that animates the debate – that as a theory of interpersonal love Diotima's speech falls badly short – by arguing that interpersonal love is not its central concern.

[9] A connection between mutability and the dubious status of the individual for Diotima is drawn by Barbarić 2007: 227–8 n. 30, but he seems to me unjustified in inferring on this basis that Plato does not acknowledge a concept of the individual that we would recognize. Likewise, Fossheim 2010: 50, in asserting that 'a conception of the individual as different from all else in the sense of being qualitatively unique . . . is in all probability a Romantic notion, and one we would be hard pressed to find in Plato', may be correct in the first part of that claim; not so (I shall argue) in the second.

[10] Interpretations are almost as numerous as commentators, reflecting both the complexity of Diotima's account and the fact that no single English word is a precise match for the Greek term. For discussion see Halperin 1985.

[11] Diotima is here responding to the question of why we do not say, of everyone, that they are lovers, given that everyone loves something; her response is that we do not call those who love money, exercise and so forth 'lovers'; rather, only one particular species of lover gets the name of the whole phenomenon (205d3–8) – her implication being that, common usage notwithstanding, those in the other categories count as lovers too.

It is worth emphasizing that, in the present context, 'love' still seems to offer a better rendering of *erōs* than does an even broader term such as 'desire'.[12] One possible attraction of reading *erōs* as desire is that doing so would extinguish Vlastos's problem before it arises, since no one is particularly concerned to insist that a theory of desire ought to take the individuality of its objects into account. However, this reading might then correspondingly imply that the content of Diotima's speech no longer engages with that of previous speakers,[13] for whom interpersonal bonds were a major theme. What is, on any account, the radical nature of Diotima's proposals is presumably intended to cause the reader to reflect on and perhaps revise some of the dialogue's earlier conceptions;[14] but that aim would be nullified if her strategy appeared to be to change the subject.[15] 'Love' retains, more transparently than 'desire', the connection with much of what had excited previous speakers' interest.

I have spoken of Diotima's examples, and Diotima's conception of love. As a point of method, what conclusions may we draw (and here I turn to my second preliminary point) about what Plato thinks on the basis of what Diotima says?[16] Scholars today are rightly sensitive to the question of who (if anyone) in a given dialogue speaks for Plato. Diotima is, at least, presented as some sort of authority figure in the *Symposium*.[17] Socrates, before reporting her words, without apparent irony introduces her as 'wise' (*sophē*, 201d3) in matters of love (and in many other fields) and as having taught him about such matters.

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[12] This is not of course to deny that the speech associates (without, I think, ever quite identifying) *erōs* with terms that can be rendered as 'desire', such as *boulēsis* (205a5) and *epithumia* (205d2). For a reading that treats *erōs* in the *Symposium* primarily in terms of desire, see Kahn 1987.

[13] Diotima's speech is, significantly, reported by Socrates; but while that means that chronologically it is indicated as prior to the dialogue's 'live' speeches, its dramatic ordering after most of the latter have been delivered is clearly meant to carry weight.

[14] Compare Phaedrus' account, in the first main speech of the dialogue, of the love of Alcestis for Admetus and of Achilles for Patroclus (179b–180a) with Diotima's explanation of these relations at 208d. See also the following note.

[15] A fate perhaps not entirely avoided by Eryximachus, who pompously takes Pausanias' analysis in the dialogue's second speech, developed in the context of interpersonal relations, of *erōs* as having two forms, and broadens it out in his own speech into the realm of physiology and cosmology, before Aristophanes (originally scheduled, pre-hiccup, to speak before Eryximachus) takes up the reins with his account, so contrasting in both style and substance, of how it is union with one's 'other half' that figures as the ultimate object of *erōs* – an account then 'prophetically' critiqued by Diotima at 205d–e (cf. 212c). Plato, I take it, wants us to notice the versatile scope that his various speakers give the term; but not to see Diotima's theory as unresponsive to one of their principal applications of it.

[16] This is a question to which Vlastos himself was perhaps insufficiently alert. For a sensible discussion of the issue, see Kraut 2008: 287–8.

[17] For a possible qualification, see n. 45 below.

That, of course, invites the question of how we are to assess Socrates' relation to Plato.[18] I shall suppose that a figure who receives sincere endorsement from Socrates is a figure whose words Plato means us to take seriously.[19] And since there is no comparable figure in the *Symposium*, I shall take Diotima as the nearest thing we have in that work to a representative of Plato's own view. But I shall also give weight to the contributions of other characters, in particular Alcibiades. As Nussbaum 1986 has argued, in critique of Vlastos, one cannot reckon fully with Plato's views on love without consideration of what Alcibiades has to say. While I am not of the opinion that Alcibiades' speech is intended as an equal counterweight to that of Diotima – it seems to me implausible that such a problematic figure should be given that privilege – Alcibiades nonetheless has credentials that should encourage us not to dismiss him: firstly, his close relationship with Socrates, and, secondly, the sheer prominence of his speech at the climax of the *Symposium*. So I shall regard it as proper to take into account elements of his speech in constructing my own interpretation.

3   The Speech of Diotima

Let us now turn to the speech of Diotima itself, and various remarks that appear to disparage the individual or at least invite us to do so – for example:

> Looking now towards the multitude of beauty, no longer, like a slave, towards the beauty in an individual (*to par'heni*). (*Smp.* 210c7–d1)

It is important to recognize what Diotima is not saying here. She is not inviting us to expand our horizons to include all the variety of beauty that one may find across multiple individuals. Rather, she is recommending that we replace concentration on the beauty in a single person with an appreciation of the sheer quantity of beauty (*polu ēdē to kalon*, 210d1) that the world contains. No one who held individuals, as such, to be of value – individuals, at any rate, of the kind that the lover is envisaged as engaging with during his ascent – could label the focus on an individual's beauty as 'slavish'. Nor could one attach that label if one had in mind that mere failure to savour individuality across the board was the lover's principal error; for that would still imply a fundamentally correct attitude on the lover's part – that the individual as such is precious – that Diotima's epithet

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[18] See in this context Kosman 1976.
[19] A similar view of Diotima is taken by Hobbs, Chapter 5 of this volume.

shows no sign of recognizing. The task she sets, rather, is the more radical and (as she would have it) liberating one of seeing beauty not in its variety but in its bulk, so that attachment to a given individual, conceived as a minute fraction of the total rather than as a unique member of the set, is something one could no longer reasonably care about. The message is reinforced when she bids us a few lines later to turn our gaze to 'the vast sea of beauty' (*to polu pelagos . . . tou kalou*, d4), where the sea metaphor and its quantitative complement indicate that viewing beauty as a great mass is the appropriate precursor to encountering the Form.[20]

The description of that encounter in turn makes it clear that the individuals we have previously admired en route are dispensable:

> Suddenly he will discern something wondrously beautiful in nature, that very thing, Socrates, for the sake of which all the previous labours took place. (*Smp.* 210e4–6)

Merely instrumental value is accorded here to one's previous erotic encounters – and how striking it is to call them labours (*ponoi*). Those encounters were for the sake of attaining the vision of the Form and are given no significance beyond that. Diotima drives the point home in a famous image:

> Beginning from these beautiful things, he ascends always for the sake of that beautiful thing, using them like steps. (*Smp.* 211c1–3)

Once we reach the Form it, rather than particular manifestations of beauty, is the object in which the lover most fully achieves his objective of producing offspring, begetting true virtue instead of images thereof (212a).[21] Those other beautiful things, including human individuals, were steps whose purpose was to enable us to get somewhere else. Once this purpose is attained, the reader can be forgiven for thinking that, as far as Diotima is concerned, the value of the individual is nil,[22] and that the qualitative uniqueness of individuals has itself no positive role in her scheme. There

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[20] See here Nussbaum 1986: 180.
[21] It has often been assumed that this passage envisages that the lover is still somehow (also?) doing his begetting with a human beloved, but the text gives scant support for such a reading. See here Sheffield 2006: 175–6.
[22] It is true that Diotima had earlier spoken of the lover coming to place 'little' (*smikron*, 210b6) rather than no value on the individual, but premature to conclude, with Reeve 2006: 302 that 'the lover used to *overvalue* his beloved . . . now he *values him appropriately* . . . valuing appropriately is still valuing' (his emphasis). Diotima's remarks concern (as Reeve recognizes) the move from appreciating a single beautiful body to all beautiful bodies; but once she moves on to appreciation of the amount of beauty in the world at large her language sharpens considerably; now the individual is 'no longer' (*mēketi*, 210d1) the object of our gaze and the contrary attitude is (as we have seen) labeled slavish.

may, for example, be no one quite like Socrates, but he is to be judged, like anyone else, by the amount of beauty he possesses, and this will inevitably be insignificant beside the beauty of the Form.

A somewhat different stance, however, is indicated when we move on to Alcibiades' speech:

> When it comes to the peculiarity (*atopia*) of the man's [Socrates'] character . . . you would not find anyone else who comes near, either among his contemporaries or those of the past. (*Smp.* 221d1–4)

This passage is noteworthy because Alcibiades here draws attention to Socrates' qualitative uniqueness.[23] What is more, this forms part of his explanation as to why he is so devoted to Socrates. One of the reasons that Alcibiades is in love with him is precisely because there is no one else quite like him. No doubt those qualities that mark Socrates out as distinct are admirable ones, as far as Alcibiades is concerned. But Alcibiades is not here giving us that as the grounds for his affection, but rather their unique manifestation in an individual. And this, I think, entitles us to say that Alcibiades takes individuality to have its own special value, not independent of, but not reducible to, the set of traits it manifests.

4   Love and Knowledge

For Alcibiades, an individual such as Socrates can serve as an object of love in his own right, which may indicate that Diotima's view, which sees only the Form in this light, is not the last word on the matter. Nonetheless, I have suggested that Diotima should be regarded as a figure of authority in the *Symposium*; so for the time being I shall seek grounds from Plato's text for her view. My proposal is that embodied individuals are not proper objects of love because they are not possible objects of knowledge. A necessary condition for a subject genuinely to love an object is that the object be known, an idea which may be connected, in the form of a syllogism, with the disqualification of embodied individuals as objects of love:

> Syllogism L
>
> L1:   Only what is known can be a proper object of love
> L2:   Embodied individuals cannot be known
> _____
> L3:   Embodied individuals cannot be proper objects of love

[23] At any rate among human beings (*anthrōpōn*, 221d5); hence, Alcibiades says, his comparison of Socrates to Silenus and the satyrs.

What advocacy of the premises (L1 and L2) of this syllogism is to be found in Plato's text? It seems that Alcibiades, to judge by his following remarks, subscribes to L1:

> Know well that none of you knows (*gignōskei*) this man [Socrates]. (*Smp.* 216c7–d1)

> When he [Socrates] is serious and opens up I do not know if anyone has seen the treasures within; but I once saw them and they seemed to me divine (*theia*) and golden (*chrusa*)[24] and utterly beautiful and wondrous, so that in short I had to do whatever Socrates bid. (*Smp.* 216e5–217a2)

Alcibiades claims in these extracts that only he really knows Socrates.[25] The negative claim, that none of Alcibiades' addressees know Socrates, is followed by the positive claim that he – and perhaps he alone – has seen the treasures inside Socrates' soul, an experience that resulted in his becoming Socrates' devoted follower. Once again, Alcibiades is attempting to explain the grounds of his love for Socrates, and he does so by indicating that he knows the depths of Socrates' soul. To be sure, it was what he found in the depths, not just the fact that he found them, that caused him to fall so completely. But at the same time his juxtaposition of the others' lack of knowledge with his own intimate acquaintance indicates that only one with real knowledge of Socrates is in a position genuinely to love him.[26] To know a person may not be a sufficient condition for loving that person, but it is a necessary one.[27]

This seems to be an idea that is reflected in our own conception of love. When young fans scream 'I love you' at members of a boy band whom they have never met or spoken to, a wise response is that they may be experiencing a crush or an infatuation but it is not – cannot genuinely be – love. Our use of the term restricts its application in relevant contexts to cases where there is some reasonably deep personal engagement between lover and beloved. Likewise, depth of love is only possible in these contexts with a commensurate

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[24] A literal rendition of *chrusa* as 'golden' retains connotations (highlighted by its juxtaposition with 'divine') lacking in a freer choice such as the 'bright' of the translation of Nehamas and Woodruff 1989; see further Section 8 below.

[25] This suggests that Alcibiades might (rightly or wrongly) not subscribe to premise L2. See further Section 8 below.

[26] This point raises interesting questions, which I shall not pursue here, about self-knowledge and its relation to self-love.

[27] Does Diotima concur with this latter sentiment? At 204a she says that one who is wise is not a lover of wisdom (*ou philosophei*), so by implication such lovers lack wisdom. Her remark, however, is a specification of the claim that lovers do not possess that of which they are lovers, rather than a denial that lovers have knowledge of that which they love.

depth of knowledge. And someone who came to realize in the course of a relationship that, for example, they had a superficial or false view of another person might well be prepared to acknowledge, in the light of that realization, that they did not really love that person, even if they had thought that they did. If L1 is a premise that Alcibiades can regard as plausible, so too may we.

5   Knowledge of Individuals

What, then, of L2? Let us investigate via a further syllogism:

> Syllogism K
>
> K1: What is constantly changing cannot be known
> K2: Embodied individuals are constantly changing
> ───
> K3 (= L2): Embodied individuals cannot be known

To begin, in reverse order, with K2: appropriately enough, given the way that I am interpreting Diotima's speech, evidence for the view that (embodied) individuals are constantly changing is to be found therein:

> One is always becoming new, and in other respects perishing, in one's hair, flesh, bones, blood and whole body. And not only in body, but also in soul, in one's moods, character-traits, beliefs, desires, pleasures, pains, fears, each of these never remains the same for each, but some are coming to be, others perishing. (*Smp.* 207d7–e5)

No bodily feature or mental quality of a person is constant, according to Diotima. She goes on to note that by the implantation of fresh memory through study a soul's knowledge can be preserved (*sōizei tēn epistēmēn*, 208a6), and to that extent souls may have stability. But the concession is a limited one.[28] Diotima says at 208a7–b2 that the way qualitative persistence is maintained is by changes of this kind, but her sole actual example of this latter sort of change is the case of continuously renewing a given item of knowledge by practice (208a2–7). This is juxtaposed with the losing of some pieces of knowledge and the gaining of others (207e5–208a2), which is what was also said to happen with the other affections of the soul (beliefs, moods and so on) mentioned at 207e2–5. The overall picture is of the individual undergoing constant qualitative change in body and soul with respect to every type of attribute, knowledge being the sole

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[28] I therefore think it is incorrect to see, with Irwin, Diotima's remarks as designed to show that the changes undergone by a person 'are regular and maintain a close qualitative similarity between the [person] at one time and at another' (1977a: 6).

possible (and far from unqualified) exception. If knowledge is the one characteristic of the soul that is consistently presented in Plato as being independent of embodiment, then the exception Diotima grants here, so far as it goes, merely draws attention to the inevitably flux-ridden nature of the embodied individual.

I am not claiming that these remarks of Diotima provide direct evidence for advocacy of the thesis that what constantly changes cannot be a proper object of love. It is the claim (premise K2) that embodied individuals are constantly changing that the text explicitly endorses. One might even suppose that connecting this text with issues about the *object* of love would be misplaced, since the inconstancy emphasised by Diotima functions as 'the explanation of the *lover*'s [emphasis in original] condition: mortals always look for beauty to restore what they are losing.'[29]

I think the lover's condition is indeed Diotima's focus at this point in her narrative, though her explanandum is itself somewhat mutable, narrowing from erotic desire in general to that of 'beasts' (*thēria*) at 207a–c, then broadening again at 207d where she speaks of 'mortal nature' (d1). She then declares that 'every single living creature' (*hen hekaston tōn zōiōn*, 207d4) undergoes constant change, before proceeding to pick out features, such as items of knowledge, that apply in this regard only to humans, affirming pointedly that 'we are never the same' (*oudepote hoi autoi esmen*, 208a1–2).

Thus while Diotima claims to have explained, in terms of mortal nature's being able (in a limited way) to share in immortality, why 'everything' (*pan*, 208b5) values its own offspring, she has also oriented us toward the specifically human quest that she is about to describe, marked by her turning now decisively back to the case of humans (*tōn anthrōpōn*, 208c2). At the climax of her description, the contrast between stability and mutability will pick out the special status of the Form as the lover's goal (*telos*, 210e4). The things partaking in the Form come to be and pass away, while the Form undergoes no change at all (211b3–5). Diotima thus intimates that, whatever may be the case with beasts, an account of the human drive to transcend mortality would lack explanatory power if it could offer no more than what is mutable as its proper object.

6   Knowledge and Change

If, as I claim, Diotima connects the immutability of the Form with its privileged status as object of love, we need to ask what Platonic view might

[29] I cite here, with thanks, the words of an anonymous reader.

underlie such a connection. I turn, then, to premise K1: what is constantly changing cannot be known. Although this is not a premise advanced by Diotima, she does single out the Form as possessing special epistemic status (210d7–e1), before proceeding to contrast its stable nature with that of the objects that partake in it (211a–b), suggesting a distinction in cognition matching the metaphysical distinction between Form and its partaking objects.[30] Thus while Diotima's own advocacy of it must remain moot, it is no surprise that K1 has respectable Platonic provenance. I call on two passages in evidence, both in various ways controversial, but each providing solid support for K1:

> We previously agreed that if anything appeared to be of that sort, it should be called opinable and not knowable (*gnōston*), the wandering intermediate captured by the intermediate power. (*R.* 5.479d6–8)

> It could not be known by anyone; for as soon as the would-be knower approaches, it would become different and of a different quality, so that it could no longer be known what sort of thing it is or in what condition it is; and I suppose no knowledge knows (*gignōskei*) its object when that is not in any condition whatsoever'. (*Cra.* 439e7–440a4)

The first of these texts makes it clear that what differentiates objects of opinion from objects of knowledge is that the former undergo change: the 'wandering' – that is, changing – intermediate is that which, in the *Republic*'s terminology, both is and is not, by contrast with the stable kind of item (the Form) that simply is. Now the quoted excerpt is part of the famous argument in *Republic* 5 that seeks to distinguish knowledge from opinion or belief. It is an argument whose interpretation has been fiercely debated.[31] But it should be relatively uncontroversial that the argument appeals to a distinction between what changes and what is stable to ground its distinction between belief and knowledge.

Thus the conventions of the many who possess mere belief have just been said to 'roll around' (*kulindeitai*, 479d3) between what is and what is not, which presumably reflects the parallel status of the items that these conventions are about. Hence the 'opinable and not knowable' is what wanders or changes; the knowable is what does not change. The exact sense of 'what is and what is not', between which opinions and their objects roll

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[30] Compare *Phdr.* 247d–e, which appears to contrast knowledge that relates to the world of change with knowledge that relates to real being, a formulation supportive of the idea that for Plato a distinct form of cognition applies to what is unchanging.

[31] For a contribution to the debate see Harte, Chapter 7 in this volume.

around has, again, been a crux of interpretation. But the terminology, though awkward in translation, can be regarded as a plausible enough way of capturing the notion of change, since the latter may readily be glossed as the switch from being in some state or condition to not being in it (or vice versa).

There is of course much more to be said about the complexities of the *Republic* 5 argument, for example that it is concerned with a notion of change that is at least in part synchronic (*hama*, 478d5), as encapsulated in the so-called Compresence of Opposites thesis, whereby a perceptible object that is, say, beautiful in one respect or relation, will also be not beautiful in another; I shall say a little more about synchronic change, in the context of the relation between love and knowledge, below.[32] But compresence also includes more straightforward diachronic change, as indicated by its use in Diotima's own speech to capture the contrast between the Beautiful itself and ordinary beautiful particulars (*Smp.* 210e–211b), where the latter's being beautiful at one time but not at another (211a3) is one of the respects in which the phenomenon of being and not being is applied.

Let me turn now to the second text in support of K1, the *Cratylus*' assertion that anything undergoing change cannot be known. The idea, presumably, is that there is no determinate way in which such a thing can be correctly characterized. For even as the subject attempts to grasp its characteristics, since these are undergoing alteration the object would be in the process of becoming 'different and of a different quality' (*allo kai alloion*, 440a1). Given that there is no determinate way that the thing is (*mēdamōs echōn*, 440a3–4), it cannot be captured determinately. It does not matter for my purposes exactly what sort of object Socrates has in mind here;[33] the text clearly conveys the thesis that there is no knowledge to be had of what is changing.

If that is right, then, *a fortiori*, what is constantly changing cannot be known. Indeed *constant* change does not seem to be a requirement for the problem to arise.[34] If I am, at the age of twenty, beautiful, but, at the age of

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[32] See n. 35.

[33] Or indeed whether the passage is intended to express scepticism about the cognitive status of Forms, their purported immutability undermined by the very act of cognising them, on which see Mackenzie 1986b. On the *Cratylus*, see also Schofield, Chapter 9 this volume.

[34] It is not clear that the *Republic* passage discussed above requires constant change, rather than mere lack of complete stability, for a thing to be unknowable, though the objects of belief are said 'always' (*aei*) to cleave to opposites at 479b7.

eighty, not beautiful, it might be argued that I cannot be correctly characterized as either, regardless of whether in the interim I was in a constant process of change with respect to my beauty. It seems that we should correctly say 'I am both beautiful and not beautiful'. But even with appropriate temporal qualifiers added to avoid straightforward contradiction, this expresses an indeterminacy about what (or who) I am. And as I shall argue in the following section, there is reason to doubt that an object to which such indeterminacies apply should be regarded as knowable, at least in the kinds of context relevant to the question of whether individuals can properly feature as objects of love.

We have, at any rate, succeeded in identifying premises entailing the conclusion that embodied individuals cannot be known (Syllogism K). Since they cannot be known, they cannot be proper objects of love (Syllogism L). So embodied individuals are not proper objects of love. By the same token, if it is their mutability that disqualifies them from being knowable, it looks as if only what is immutable (such as a Form) could qualify as a proper object of love.

7   Change and the Object of Love

The discussion thus far may seem to have a rather abstract air about it. For even if we grant the Platonic credentials of the thesis that embodied individuals are not proper objects of love because, being in a constant process of change, they cannot be known, we still need to ask: how plausible is the thesis? Even if we allow (as I think we should) that knowing an individual is a necessary condition for loving that individual and that individuals are constantly changing, we might wonder whether the fact that individuals do change thus is really sufficient to disqualify them as objects of knowledge. One might formulate this worry as a more specific objection. The kinds of change we undergo, it might be argued, are mostly rather trivial ones in both body and soul. To focus for the time being on the soul, as the seat of personhood, it seems undeniable that one's putative beloved, like any other embodied individual, will undergo, over a given stretch of time, a stream of changes in moods, desires and beliefs. Why should this phenomenon render the beloved unknowable in any sense that would suggest they cannot genuinely be loved?

Consider the objection the other way round: we might care to admit that *major* changes in a person can be grounds for the withdrawal of love, grounds that correspond quite closely to the more abstract considerations

we have been focusing on. Let us say, for example, that one's beloved, in the first flush of romance, was fun loving and extroverted, but some time later has become morose and unsociable. It is not odd in such situations if one's love for the beloved wanes or disappears altogether. And a plausible refrain on the part of the lover in such circumstances is 'I just don't know you any more', or 'I just don't know who you are any more', where the 'any more' indicates, if anything, that the impression one ever did know that person may itself have been illusory.[35] And this response does seem to capture something about what is going on. It is not (or not simply) that the beloved had better qualities before and has worse qualities now – drastic improvement can be just as unsettling for a partner.[36] Rather, the subject has the sense in such situations of being with a person who is revealed to lack, in important respects, an identity, a person for whom the question 'who are you?' presents no satisfying answer; and that is one reason why it may be difficult to continue loving them. It is that person contemplated as, after all, not possessing a determinate character that makes love hard to sustain.

If that is right in the case of major changes, then it seems to me a mistake to deny that minor changes can be equally undermining. It can be the smallest thing about a person that causes one to fall in love with them, the smallest thing that marks them out as special. We might admit that a certain look in a person's eye, the way they wrinkle their nose, a quirky way of telling a joke, can all be reasons why we fall for someone. This may seems to clash with the intuition discussed earlier that love requires a certain depth of knowledge; but these are really two different issues. That quirky sense of humour – even, perhaps, the look in the eye – may be buried quite deep and hard to elicit. What is important is that it should mark out the individual as special, and in principle any characteristic can do this.

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[35] Thus one might equally say in such circumstances, 'I thought I knew you but I didn't'. The change at issue may be synchronic as well as diachronic – when the attentive and loving spouse is revealed as simultaneously a determined adulterer, for example. (Only a determinedly unimaginative outlook would insist that one of these elements must be a straightforward mis-description.) One should, I think, resist the idea that it is simply the unexpectedness of such scenarios that creates the cognitive dissonance. Unexpected revelations may cause initial consternation; but after the shock subsides it is confrontation with (to coin a phrase) compresence of opposites that provides the deeper source of disquiet.

[36] Interestingly Diotima shows no particular concern with the idea that the change undergone by embodied individuals may be for the worse. Wedgwood 2009: 311, who rightly notes Diotima's emphasis on the mutability of embodied humans, seems to me mistaken to see decline as of special significance for her. Diotima is, in fact, careful to characterize mortality as a cycle in which generation and destruction complement each other (207d7–8 and e4–5).

When it comes to whether we fall in love or not, it is often true that the smallest difference can make all the difference. A person's other characteristics may be splendid; and certainly we cannot call love genuine without a grasp, going deep, of what that person's other characteristics are. But the crucial element that determines whether we end up loving or not may nonetheless be something quite small.

If that is so, then the smallest change can make all the difference too. When the look in the eye that drew one in is no longer there, if the quirky sense of humour fades over time, we may sense that the person in front of us is not someone we ever really knew – not that we know them now and didn't before, or vice versa, but that an indeterminacy has been revealed that makes it inappropriate to speak of that person as being someone it is possible to know. The waning of love, in consequence, is a natural response. In this way there are important connections between the concepts of love, knowledge and change that may explain why the third of these can undermine the second in a way that in turn threatens the first.

With this in mind, let us return to Plato and observe that Socrates takes a close interest in the relation between mutability and love in the following passage:

> Don't be surprised that I say these things; rather, stop philosophy, my own beloved, from saying them. She is saying what you now hear from me, and is much less fickle than my other beloved. For the son of Cleinias says different things depending on the occasion, but philosophy always says the same things (*tōn autōn*). (*Grg.* 482a3–b1)

Here Socrates contrasts the inconstancy of his human beloved, the son of Cleinias (that is, Alcibiades), with the constancy of philosophy. And although Socrates does say that he loves both Alcibiades and philosophy, it is clearly the latter that he privileges. For it is philosophy whose example he chooses to follow, not that of Alcibiades. In the *Symposium*, Alcibiades is ready to confess that his fickleness is more than skin deep: he is agonizingly torn between Socrates' exhortations to seek a truly good life, and the seductiveness of pleasing the crowd (215e–216b). This is the Alcibiades whom Socrates, as ruefully portrayed by Alcibiades himself (217a–219d), resists. Socrates' love for Alcibiades is, it seems, of a markedly attenuated sort,[37] and the contrast between stability and change is invoked to explain why.

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[37] A point reinforced in the *Protagoras* (309b8–9), where Socrates reports that he 'paid no heed and frequently forgot about' the presence of Alcibiades in the face of Protagoras' wisdom, where any

Alcibiades' volatility (like most things about him) is at the extreme end of the scale. That the smallest difference can make all the difference in matters of love is, in any event, my slogan, not Plato's. But it reflects an underlying metaphysical point about individuality that Plato is keenly aware of. What makes one an individual in the first place – what marks one out as qualitatively distinct from others – may be a relatively insignificant feature:

> I think that Theaetetus will not be an object of my judgement before this snubness of his has been stamped on me and left a memory different from the other snubnesses I have seen. (*Tht.* 209c5–8)

> He [Theaetetus] looks like you [Socrates] in his snubness and protruding eyes, though he is less pronounced than you in these respects. (*Tht.* 143e8–144a1)

The first of this pair of passages is from the closing pages of the *Theaetetus* and shows Socrates arguing that in order for Theaetetus to figure as an object of one's judgement, Theaetetus' distinctive features must be stamped on one's mind. Thus if it is to be Theaetetus whom one has in mind, one must register not just a snub nose, which many people who are not Theaetetus have, but Theaetetus' distinctive snubness. In the second text, from near the beginning of the dialogue, Theodorus helpfully notes that, though both Socrates and Theaetetus have snub noses, that of Theaetetus is less pronounced, and it is this difference that one would need to capture in order for it to be the case that one has Theaetetus rather than Socrates in mind.

By implication that small difference may be what makes Theaetetus and Socrates qualitatively distinct and hence available to be apprehended as individuals. Although that difference is not here said to be the only thing that does this (as we see from the second quotation the two vary similarly in the protrusion of their eyes), there is, rightly, nothing in the passage that suggests it could not be. That the smallest difference may make all the difference stands as an important metaphysical truth about the grounds of individuality that Plato acknowledges. If that is a truth about the nature of our identity as individuals, then it is no surprise that it should carry over to the theory of our value as individuals, and thereby shed some light on why change, great or small, should be central to that discussion.

irony in Socrates' description of Protagoras would lack force in the absence of his sincere view that wisdom is a greater attraction than the physical beauty of an Alcibiades (cf. 309c11–12).

8   The Individual as Object of Love

I have tried, via Syllogisms L and K, to find Platonic grounds for the thesis implied by Diotima, that the embodied individual is not a proper object of love. I have also tried to show how not only Plato but we his readers might conclude that change can undercut one's claim to the knowledge of an individual on which genuine love must be founded. What should now be clear, then, is that on this view it is their susceptibility to change that renders individuals problematic as objects of love. And this means in turn that individuality is not something that need itself be seen as problematic or (worse) as worthless. In the *Symposium*, Diotima's disparagement of the individual is to be explained in terms of the flux-ridden condition of embodied individuals that she so eloquently describes. It would be a mistake to read the hostility on her part as thereby applying to individuality manifested in stable objects.

It remains, then, an open question whether Plato holds that individuals as such (rather than insofar as they are mutable) have special value. Diotima is describing the state of embodied individuals. But elsewhere in Plato there is evidence of a view that souls (or persons) are in a state of flux only to the extent that they are embodied, and that a soul that communes with the Forms takes on the stable condition of the latter:

> Soul is most like what is divine, immortal, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, and ever-unchanging. (*Phd.* 80b1–3)

This text is an extract from the so-called Affinity Argument of the *Phaedo*, whose purpose is to show that, considered by themselves, independently of the body, souls have similar characteristics to Forms, including, as we see, stability. But does this come at the cost of individuality? Although it may be tempting to suppose that Platonic souls in their ideal condition are not qualitatively different one from another, there is, I think, little to be said in favour of this view.

Note, first, that Forms themselves are evidently individuals. The Form of Justice, for example, is not qualitatively identical to the Form of Largeness. Each is an entity with its own distinct character. The individuality of Forms is attested, with regard to the Form of Beauty, in the *Symposium* itself. Its qualitative distinctness from ordinary beautiful objects is one of Diotima's principal themes, the Form alone being unqualifiedly beautiful, with no admixture of ugliness (211a). It is also, implicitly, distinguished from the Form of Good, when Diotima affirms that while the objective of love is to possess the good forever, it is to give birth in the beautiful (206a–b).

If Forms are individuals in this way, there seems no reason to deny that the souls that are akin to them may be individuals too. Moreover, given that Forms in general are the objects of highest value in Plato's universe, it would be odd to think that individuality as such is something that Plato disparages. With specific reference to souls, we can find evidence of recognition of the value of individuality in the cosmogonical narrative of the *Timaeus*. After the Demiurge has created the world-soul, he returns to his mixing bowl to fashion the individual souls that are destined to become human, and proceeds with the mixture as follows:

> Having compounded it all, he divided it up into souls equinumerous to the stars, and allocated each soul to each star. (*Ti.* 41d8–e1)

Here, then, we have a picture of souls' existence before earthly embodiment, with souls portrayed as dwelling, prior to incarnation, with gods – the stars are, of course, gods (40a). Moreover, each soul has its own star (its own god). And if a soul lives a virtuous life in its subsequent incarnation, it gets to return to its star:

> The one who has lived well for the appropriate time would journey back to dwell with his partner (*sunnomos*) star, and have a happy and characteristic (*sunēthēs*) life. (*Ti.* 42b3–5)

It is perhaps tempting to imagine that all the stars, and all the souls that dwell with them, are two groups each of whose members is qualitatively identical with one another. But this makes little sense of the idea of a 'partner' star. On the view that there is qualitative homogeneity in the heavenly realm, any virtuous soul could go back to any star indifferently – there are, after all, enough stars to go round. Yet it is evidently that very star to which the soul was originally allocated that is to receive it at the end of its earthly life. Each soul has *its* star, and to its star it returns. The weight that the text places on this aspect of the virtuous soul's career is explained if we suppose that each soul has a particular star that is the correct match for it. Each star is a distinct individual such that only the soul that shares its custom (*nomos*) and character (*ēthos*) represents the proper pairing.

Strikingly, the picture presented in the *Timaeus* looks in this regard more akin to Aristophanes' account of love in the *Symposium*, as the seeking of one's unique partner, than it does to that of Diotima. One difference, perhaps, between Timaeus' account and what Aristophanes says is that Aristophanic persons, being apparently mortal (191a–b;

cf. 190c),[38] are, as such, vulnerable to Diotima's strictures about change. Indeed Diotima's remarks about the mutability of the embodied individual come directly in the wake of her pronouncement that we do not survive our bodily incarnation:

> Mortal nature seeks as much as possible to be everlasting and immortal. And that is only possible by generation. (*Smp.* 207d1–2)

This limited view of immortality is affirmed at 212a6–7 where Diotima states that 'if any human may become immortal, it is that one', the demonstrative referring to one who has given birth to true virtue through an encounter with the Form: a privileged version of immortality by procreation, not escape to a different sort of immortality altogether.

I take it that the difference in outlook, with regard to immortality, between the *Symposium*, on the one hand, and dialogues such as the *Phaedo* and *Timaeus* on the other, reflects a genuine uncertainty on Plato's part over the question of whether our souls can exist without our bodies. For a philosopher as conscious as he is of the difficulty of finding the truth, uncertainty in this area is no more than one would expect. But if I am right, his appreciation of the consequences of supplying one answer rather than the other is unwavering. In the context of the potentially stable existence offered by disembodiment, Plato makes room for the individual as bearer of value.[39] In a context, such as that of Diotima's speech, that disallows such existence, the value of the individual is correspondingly downplayed.

It may be that Socrates the embodied individual is nonetheless a unique exception as possible object of love, if one takes seriously the metaphor deployed by Alcibiades of the golden contents of his soul. The character of gold (as the Greeks well knew) being unusually resistant to change, a Socratic constancy is suggested (borne out by other aspects of Alcibiades' praise of him)[40] which, as we have seen, Socrates also claims for himself in the *Gorgias*.[41] Here, then, the

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[38] Only the traditional post-mortem fate of Hades awaits them, albeit in unity with their other half had that been achieved in life (192e).

[39] Though I cannot argue the point here, it seems to me that the greater appreciation of the individual that one finds in the *Phaedrus* is closely connected with that dialogue's view of the soul's existence as independent of embodiment. The place of the individual as object of love in the *Phaedrus* is upheld on rather different grounds by White 1990.

[40] Socrates is portrayed as impassive in the face of Alcibiades' own sexual allure (219c–d), as unusually resistant to cold, lack of food and alcohol (219e–220b), and most notably as maintaining the same calm confidence in hazardous retreat from battle as he did in everyday life (221a–b).

[41] Note here the metaphor of gold applied by Socrates to his own soul (in his praise of Callicles as a 'touchstone') at *Grg.* 486d; and see also Socrates' playful application to himself, as Alcibiades reports it, of the 'gold for bronze' metaphor at *Smp.* 219a1.

grounds for Alcibiades' love of Socrates as an individual may pass, or come close to passing, the Platonic test.

Indeed there is support to be found for Alcibiades' position at an earlier stage of the *Symposium*, in the speech of Pausanias, a principal theme of which is that love is, if not complicated, then certainly complex. Pausanias tells us that the goddess of *erōs* (and correspondingly *erōs* itself) is dual: there is a vulgar Aphrodite and a heavenly one (180c–181d). Thus a particular lover can love in either a beautiful (*kalon*) or disgraceful (*aischron*) fashion. Pausanias explains:

> Wicked is that vulgar lover, the one who loves the body more than the soul. For he is not stable (*monimos*), inasmuch as (*hate*) he loves a thing that is not stable either . . . but the lover of one who is a good character remains for life inasmuch as he is attached to what is stable. (*Smp.* 183d8–e6)

Pausanias does not withhold the epithet of *erōs* from cases in which the object is unstable. But he does make it clear that the *erōs* one experiences for a stable object is of a different sort from that which one experiences for an unstable object. Terminologically, and capturing the normative difference, it would not do violence to Pausanias' idea to label his heavenly variety 'love' and the vulgar variety concerned with bodies by some baser term, such as 'lust'.

For Pausanias, then, it is the stability of love's object that grounds any love worthy of the name. This is a view from which, it seems to me, neither Alcibiades nor Diotima herself would dissent.[42] Indeed it is tempting to read Pausanias as anticipating in inchoate form the view of the relation between love and its objects that Diotima will eventually propound.[43] The chief difference in this regard between Pausanias (and Alcibiades) on the one hand, and Diotima on the other, is one of metaphysical ambition: Diotima proceeds to argue that only Beauty itself, rather than (as Pausanias holds) any person of good character, has the requisite stability to qualify as object of love.

Alcibiades in turn evidently sees Socrates, with his golden soul, as the worthiest object of love.[44] And for all Diotima's authority, we should not

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[42] Diotima also seems to favour a principle implied by Pausanias' remarks, that the character of the subject is determined by the character of its objects: at 212a she informs us that we will give birth to images of virtue inasmuch as (*hate*) we are in contact with an image, to true virtue inasmuch as we are in contact with the truth.

[43] For a view of Agathon's speech along similar lines, see Sedley 2006.

[44] At 218c7–8 Alcibiades reports how he told Socrates that the latter was the only worthy (*axios*) lover he had had; but at 222b he ruefully acknowledges that Socrates is far more beloved than lover, a view corroborated, with regard to Alcibiades, by the participants at 222c.

dismiss the thought that Plato may be inviting us to ask whether Alcibiades the lover is better placed to take the measure of things than Diotima the teacher.[45] For us as Plato's readers, however, who likely fall some way short of the condition of a Socrates, and are perhaps still more uncertain than Plato about our chances for a disembodied existence, there is likely to be considerable discomfort at the idea that we in our embodied state, with its attendant inevitable processes of change, are not proper objects of love and by the same token cannot genuinely love our fellow (embodied) humans.

Plato, I believe, wishes us to treat this possibility both seriously and critically. Further investigation of the relations that obtain between love, knowledge and change will be necessary if we are to reach a proper assessment of Plato's thought in this area, and of what we ourselves should think. I do not claim to have done more than scratch the surface here. But I hope to have shown, via the exploration of a familiar and much-debated text, that a Platonic concern with these relations is both textually well-founded and philosophically worth engaging with.[46]

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[45] It has indeed been argued that there is a 'disturbing' aspect to Socrates' praise of Diotima (Benardete 2000: 179) in his remark that she caused the plague at Athens to be delayed by ten years (201d), given that the plague would plausibly have been much less disastrous had it struck ten years earlier than it did. If the remark is thus intended as a subtle undermining of Diotima's status, it perhaps conveys the idea that the temporal world is rather less her forte than the eternal.

CHAPTER 5

Socrates, Eros and Magic
Angela Hobbs

1 The Puzzle

In *Symposium* 202d13–203a4, Diotima tells the young Socrates that *Erōs*[1] is not a god but a great *daimōn*, and that

> everything daimonic (*pan to daimonion*) lies between the divine and mortal realms … its power (*dunamis*) being that of interpreting (*hermēneuon*) and conveying things from humans to gods and from gods to humans: entreaties and sacrifices from the former, and commands and returns for sacrifices from the latter. Being in the middle, it fills in the space between them, so that the whole is bound together into one continuum. It is through [this] that the whole *technē* of the seer (*mantis*) operates, and that of priests, and of those concerned with sacrifices, rites and incantations (*epōidai*), and everything to do with the seer and with magic (*goēteia*). God does not mix with humanity, but it is through the daimonic that all association and converse (*dialektos*) exists between gods and humans, whether awake or asleep.[2]

[1] I employ '*Erōs*' to denote the *daimōn* in Diotima's speech (or god in everyone else's speech) and '*erōs*' to denote the human passion (although it is not always possible to detect a clear distinction between the two in the text). I use 'eros', without a long vowel or italics, to denote modern usages, such as in Freud.

[2] Δαίμων μέγας, ὦ Σώκρατες· καὶ γὰρ πᾶν τὸ δαιμόνιον μεταξύ ἐστι θεοῦ τε καὶ θνητοῦ.
    Τίνα, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, δύναμιν ἔχον;
    Ἑρμηνεῦον καὶ διαπορθμεῦον θεοῖς τὰ παρ' ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἀνθρώποις τὰ παρὰ θεῶν, τῶν μὲν τὰς δεήσεις καὶ θυσίας, τῶν δὲ τὰς ἐπιτάξεις τε καὶ ἀμοιβὰς τῶν θυσιῶν, ἐν μέσῳ δὲ ὂν ἀμφοτέρων συμπληροῖ, ὥστε τὸ πᾶν αὐτὸ αὑτῷ συνδεδέσθαι. διὰ τούτου καὶ ἡ μαντικὴ πᾶσα χωρεῖ καὶ ἡ τῶν ἱερέων τέχνη τῶν τε περὶ τὰς θυσίας καὶ τελετὰς καὶ τὰς ἐπῳδὰς καὶ τὴν μαντείαν πᾶσαν καὶ γοητείαν. θεὸς δὲ ἀνθρώπῳ οὐ μείγνυται, ἀλλὰ διὰ τούτου πᾶσά ἐστιν ἡ ὁμιλία καὶ ἡ διάλεκτος θεοῖς πρὸς ἀνθρώπους, καὶ ἐγρηγορόσι καὶ καθεύδουσι.

And in 203d7–8 she says that *Erōs* 'philosophizes throughout his life, a clever magician (*deinos goēs*), wizard (*pharmakeus*) and sophist.'[3]

This intertwining of the daimonic, *Erōs*, philosophy, sophistry and magic is startling; and almost as surprising is the fact that it has received so little attention in editions, translations and commentaries. Diotima's speech in general and the ladder of love in particular is so often quoted, cited and alluded to, not only by philosophers and classicists, but also by psychologists, theologians, poets and many others,[4] that people unthinkingly assume that they are familiar with all its contents, and further assume that all its contents must have been minutely explored. Yet this claim that *Erōs* is both a philosopher and a magician[5] has been given cursory treatment or ignored altogether by the majority of modern translators and commentators,[6]

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[3] ... φιλοσοφῶν διὰ παντὸς τοῦ βίου, δεινὸς γόης καὶ φαρμακεὺς καὶ σοφιστής ...

[4] Freud and the Orthodox theologian Kallistos Ware are just two of many examples. Freud himself claims that his theories of libido and sublimation owe much to the notions of *erōs* and its re-channelling in the *Symposium* (although Freud is also very interested in Aristophanes' speech, it is chiefly the ladder of love from which he takes inspiration; he is also aware of the re-channelling imagery of *Republic* 485d): in the Preface to the *Three Essays* he writes that 'the enlarged sexuality of psychoanalysis coincides with the Eros of the divine Plato' and in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* he is even more explicit, claiming that 'in its origin, function and relation to sexual love, the "Eros" of the philosopher Plato coincides exactly with the love-force, the libido of psychoanalysis' (for specific references see Santas 1988: 153–88, esp. 154–7 and Price 1990: 248 and 250–8). There are in fact significant differences between Freudian libido and sublimation and Diotima's *erōs* and its re-channelling, but these need not concern us here; what matters is the way in which Diotima's speech sparked Freud's thought. In *The Orthodox Way*, Ware (1979) claims in his discussion of the seventh-century theologian John Climacus' *Ladder of Divine Ascent* that Climacus offers a synthesis of Platonic and Hebraic images. Another Orthodox theologian, Christos Yannaras, also engages with Diotima's ladder in Chapter 7 of *On the Absence and Unknowability of God*, 'Apophatic Knowledge as Erotic Communion' (2005: 105 and 130–1 n. 12). In general, Yannaras argues that Orthodox Christianity is both inspired by and transforms Platonism (I am indebted to Mark Vernon for the references to Diotima's ladder in Orthodox thought).

[5] For reasons of space I concentrate mostly (though not exclusively: see Section 1 (iii)) on the relationship between philosophy and magic rather than philosophy and sophistry.

[6] Not even Dodds 1951 comments on it. Dover 1980: 140 notes that *goēs* and its cognates are normally opprobrious (despite 203d8), but does not discuss these unusually positive uses here. Rowe 1998: 175, note on 202e7–203a1, comments on the overlap between priests, seers and magicians, but does not comment on how striking the connection with philosophy is. In his note on 203d7 (1998: 177) he remarks on the term *goēs*, but simply says that this only tells us of the speaker's attitude towards x; it tells us nothing about x himself. He adds that all three terms (*goēs, pharmakeus* and *sophistēs*) 'may have negative connotations, but may also be used positively, depending on the circumstances, and/or (as probably here) with ironic reference to their negative aspect', but does not elaborate on this, and does not make it clear that in Plato the terms are usually used negatively. Hunter 2004: 86 refers to *Erōs*' skill with magic and comments that the 'kind of witchcraft' which *Erōs* exercises is a point of similarity with Socrates (we will be discussing the similarities in Section 1 (iv)), but does not remark on the strangeness of this. McPherran does not comment on Diotima's depiction of *Erōs* as a *goēs*; he does remark (2006: 91 n. 47) that Socrates is depicted as 'some kind of magus' in the *Symposium*, but does not expand on this (again, we will be returning to the portrayal of Socrates in Section 1 (iv) and Section 3 (c)). Belfiore 2012: 195 notes briefly that both *Erōs* and Socrates are presented as magicians in the *Symposium* but does not expand on the point or comment on its oddness. Gellrich 1994: 275 cites

perhaps because talk of magic sits uncomfortably with the analytic tradition.[7] But it is an intertwining that requires careful consideration for a number of reasons:

  (i) Plato's characters usually – though not always, as we shall see – deploy *goēs, goēteia*, *goēteuein* and *goēteuma* as terms of disparagement (whether they are used literally or metaphorically)[8], and the same is true of incantations, *epōidai* (mentioned by Diotima as operating in the vital intermediary daimonic realm at 203a1) and often of *pharmakon, pharmakeus* (203d7–8) and *pharmattein*.[9] In *Gorgias* 483e, for example, Callicles complains that in current democratic Athens we 'mould the best and strongest among us, taking them from infancy as if they were lions,' and 'utterly enthrall them through the exercise of spells and magic' (*katepaidontes te kai goēteuontes katadouloumetha*) (483e4–6); while at *Meno* 80a–b Meno, frustrated that his attempts to define *aretē* have been found wanting by Socrates, protests that 'you are bewitching me (*goēteueis*) and casting a spell over me (*pharmatteis*) and utterly enchanting me (*atechnōs katepaideis*)' (80a1–2), and he advises Socrates not to travel outside Athens as 'if you were to carry on like this in any other city, you would very probably be arrested for being a magician (*goēs*)' (80b6–7). In the *Sophist* 234c–235a the Eleatic Stranger dismisses the sophist as 'some kind of magician' (*tōn goētōn . . . tis*, 235a1) who imitates realities and who bewitches (*goēteuein*, 234c5) the young with his deceptive words; and at *Euthydemus* 288b Socrates remarks ironically that Euthydemus and Dionysodorus are unwilling to give a serious display of their wisdom, but simply play conjuring tricks (*goēteuein*, b8) on their audience like Proteus.[10] A similar usage occurs at *Philebus* 44c8, where Socrates says that Philebus and his school regard pleasure as simply a beguiling trickery (*goēteuma*). The mimetic artist, too, is dismissed at *Republic* 598d3 as a *goēs* who only appears to know about his subjects; mimetic art is also compared with conjuring tricks (*goēteia*) at *Republic*

203d but does not go on to explore this particular passage further; she offers a different interpretation of Plato's use of magical terminology from the one given here. There is no reference to *Erōs* as *goēs* in Guthrie 1975. In the introductions and notes to modern translations, there is no mention of it at all in Hamilton 1951, Rutherford 1986, Nehamas and Woodruff 1989, Waterfield 1994, O'Grady 1997, or Howatson and Sheffield 2008.

[7] The passages even go unremarked by many historians of magic in the ancient world, such as Collins, who in his otherwise excellent *Magic in the Ancient Greek World*, claims that Plato was 'on the whole not particularly interested in magic' (2008: 4). I aim to show that this is not the case.

[8] The difficulty of ascertaining whether a particular use of magical terminology in Plato is intended literally or metaphorically is discussed further in Section 3 (c).

[9] Pharmacological terms are, however, often ambivalent in Plato: see, e.g., *Phdr.* 268c3, 229c8, 230d6.

[10] Gorgias is happy to use witchcraft imagery to describe rhetoric's manipulative power at *Hel.* 10.

602d2. In the discussion of atheism in *Laws* 909a–b, the Athenian Stranger directs his most scathing attack at the atheistic charlatans who hypocritically hide beneath a veneer of religion and charm the souls of the living by claiming that they can charm the souls of the dead and persuade the gods by bewitching (*goēteuontes*, b5) them with sacrifices and prayers and incantations (*epōidai*, b5), and who in this way try to wreck not just individuals but entire families and states solely for the sake of money. And in *Laws* 932e4–933e5, the Athenian Stranger divides poisoning into two kinds: the type which is effected by bodies on bodies through harmful properties in the drug or philtre according to the laws of nature, and the type that works by persuading the victim through sorceries (*magganeiai*) and incantations (*epōidai*) and 'so-called spells' (*katadeseis legomenai*), that they really are being harmed by those who possess the power of bewitchment (*goēteuein*).[11]

As these passages make clear, in addition to the terms *goēs, epōidai* and *pharmakeus* (and cognates), Plato generally deploys all magic-related words – including *magganeia* and *katadesis* – in a pejorative sense: *Laws* 933d is also highly critical of *epagōgai* (spells, magical attacks). One of the most coruscating assaults on *soi-disant* magical practices comes in *Republic* 364b–c, where Adeimantus dismisses contemptuously as utter charlatans the itinerant beggar-priests (*agurtai*) and seers (*manteis* – on which more in 1 (ii)) who knock on the doors of the rich and pretend that they have accumulated divine power through sacrifices and incantations (*epōidai*), and that they can thus expiate any wrong done by the wealthy man or his ancestors; or they can harm any enemy of his – whether the enemy is just or unjust – by means of their magical attacks (*epagōgai*) and binding-spells (*katadesmoi*), through which they claim to be able to persuade the gods.

(ii) It is particularly telling that some of these attacks link the harmful magicians and outright charlatans with seers (*manteis*): *Republic* 364b–c and *Laws* 908d3–4 and 933c7–e2 are cases in point. As we have seen, Diotima states clearly that the daimonic region which is so vital for connecting the mortal and divine realms is where the seer operates, and although she is not explicitly called a *mantis*, both her practices (such as being able to delay the arrival of the plague in Athens by 10 years) and her place of origin – Mantineia – strongly suggest that Plato wants us to consider her as such, or at least in part: he is probably playing with this idea when he has her 'see' into the future and foretell the content of both Phaedrus' and Aristophanes' speeches.[12]

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[11] It is notable that here *goēteuein* is used as an umbrella term to cover *magganeai, epōidai* and *katedeseis*.
[12] See Section 3 (b).

(iii) Given the fact that Diotima calls *Erōs* a sophist as well as a philosopher, magician and sorcerer, it is also significant that these harmful, deceitful and often plain fraudulent magicians, seers and beggar-priests are, as we have seen, in several places associated with sophists: as well as *Sophist* 234c and 235a,[13] in *Laws* 908d7, for example, the cunning devices (*mēchanai*) of the 'so-called sophists' are listed in the class of crafty – and hence particularly dangerous – atheists.

In consequence of (i)–(iii), Plato's usual strategy is – in complete contrast to Diotima in *Symp.* 202–3 – to try to *distinguish* the philosopher from this ragtag bunch of magicians, sophists and false prophets: this is of course the overall task of the *Sophist*;[14] and an implicit aim of *Laws* 933 is to separate magicians (including false seers) from genuine religious practitioners: this is why professional religious practitioners who engage in harmful magic are to receive the death penalty (933d7–e2). *Republic* 380dff is also relevant here: Socrates is adamant that God is not some kind of *goēs* who appears – or even deceitfully appears to appear – in different forms at different times; God is simple and without deceit and the least likely being of all to be a shape-shifter.

(iv) The question of Diotima's portrayal of *Erōs* as a *goēs* is particularly pressing in that, as many commentators have noted,[15] Socrates is himself depicted as at least a partial embodiment of *Erōs* in the dialogue: both frequent doorways and thresholds; both (usually) go barefoot; both are poor but resourceful; both are philosophers; both are either *daimones* or (in Socrates' case at the very least) *daimonios*; both are the best co-workers with human nature.[16] So if *Erōs* is a magician, then Socrates will be too.[17]

2   What Is a Magician? Part 1

So Diotima's explicit linking of philosophy with magic, clairvoyance and sophistry, in the form of the *daimōn Erōs*, certainly requires an explanation. But before we consider whether there is any way her arresting claim can be explained away, or whether we do indeed need to take it seriously, we must

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[13] See Section 1 (i).   [14] e.g. *Soph.* 216c–d, 230d–231a, 268b–c.
[15] e.g. Osborne 1994: 93–101; Rowe 1998: 176; Belfiore 2012: 187–96.
[16] Doorways and thresholds: 175a (Socrates) and 203d (*Erōs*); barefoot: 220b6, 174a (Socrates) and 203d (*Erōs*); resourceful: 223a8 (Socrates) and 203c–d (*Erōs*); philosophers: 218a2–b2 (Socrates) and 203d (*Erōs*); *daimōn*: 202b (*Erōs*); *daimonios*: 219b–c (Alcibiades of Socrates; whether Socrates is 'only' *daimonios* or actually a *daimōn* is touched on in Section 8); co-workers: 218d (Socrates) and 212b (*Erōs*).
[17] References in the *Symposium* to Socrates' ability to enchant with words, and how to interpret these references, are cited and discussed in Section 3 (c).

first confront the challenging question of what, if anything, might connect all the Greek terms for magical practices and practitioners and their cognates that we have encountered: *goēteia, magganeia, epōidai, epagōgai, katadesis, katadesmos*; and also *pharmakeus, agurtēs* and – in some instances – *mantis*. What, if anything, might allow us to use the umbrella term 'magic' to cover them (or at least aspects of them) all? And how might 'magic' and 'magician' themselves be described (even if not defined)? Despite the manifest complexities of these questions, I believe there is a rough working account of 'magic' and 'magician' which, with sufficient divisions,[18] could embrace all the Greek terms we have been considering. If for the sake of simplicity we restrict ourselves to the practitioner of magic and *goēteia*, I propose that both 'magician' and *goēs* refer to a being who or which effects some kind of transformation which the audience cannot rationally comprehend *at all*.[19] The *goēs*, of course, may well rationally comprehend what he or she is doing, at least up to a point, and indeed may have to possess such whole or partial rational understanding in order to produce the transformation.

The key question here, and one which we shall be exploring in Section 6, is of course whether this transformation is only ever an illusion, a deceptive conjuring trick. What is immediately clear, however, is that audience response is crucial: some thing or person is only 'magical' if the audience finds it so, or would find it so, if they knew that an intervention by some being had taken place.[20] If the audience ever does start to understand how the transformation – whether solely of the appearances or not – is

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[18] We will be looking at some of the possible divisions in Section 6.

[19] The '*at all*' is important. For example: one may not fully understand how a mobile phone works, or works so quickly, but still understand and accept the general point that there are physical laws that account for it, and that there are plenty of scientists, engineers and others who do understand these laws and how to use them. Something appears 'magical' if we really have no idea at all how it might be done. Of course, if you are watching a conjurer or illusionist in a context where you know that a conjuring trick is about to take place, you may not know how the trick is done, but still accept that the conjurer does, that there is a method that can be learnt. But this state of affairs is unlikely to account for all uses of the term 'magic' – and, in any case, if the conjuring trick is good enough, you may still not really believe what you are seeing, even if you say you know that there must be a scientific explanation (the film critic Lee Marshall has pointed out to me that the first viewers of moving film often had this divided response: they found it hard emotionally to commit to what they 'knew' to be true). The complex distinctions involved are discussed further in Section 6.

[20] This distinction is addressed in more detail in Section 6. For a variety of reasons, the magician (or the person hiring the magician) may find it prudent to keep the intervention secret, and let the audience believe that the transformation is simply the result of natural causes. As an anonymous reader succinctly puts it: 'I get the witch to harm my neighbour, but *not* in a way that makes it clear to everyone that the neighbour is being bewitched. If the neighbour realised he would look around for a cause, and conceivably find me.' The key point is that a transformation takes place that is or would be found inexplicable.

produced, then the magic will start to fade. But audience response will not be the entire story either, at least for the ascription of the term 'magician': whether or not the practitioner wants to be viewed as a magician or not, and whether their actions are witting or unwitting, they must be able to create a transformation, whether simply of the appearances or of the thing in itself.[21]

3 Can the Puzzle Be Explained Away?

For now let us return to the issue of whether Diotima's interweaving of magic and philosophy can be easily explained away, or whether it might after all be intended by Plato for serious consideration. Those wishing to explain it away might take one or more of the following positions (I address the positions in the next section):

(a) Perhaps *Erōs* is both a philosopher and a magician, but at different times, wearing different hats? On this interpretation, philosophy and magic would be viewed as distinct activities, albeit ones that take place within the connecting realm of the daimonic, and ones in which *Erōs* has a particular interest (or which both require *E/erōs* if they are to be undertaken successfully).

(b) Or perhaps Diotima's intertwining of these terms is yet more evidence of her slippery and unreliable nature? She is after all said to answer a question 'like one of the perfect sophists' (*hōsper hoi teleoi sophistai*) at 208c1, when she claims that the sole reason Alcestis dies for Admetus, and Achilles for Patroclus, was to win immortal glory for themselves – in effect a shameless rewriting of Phaedrus' speech,[22] in which he cited both Alcestis and Achilles as examples of people inspired to sacrifice themselves for *erōs*.[23] Diotima's reading of Alcestis' motivation seems particularly unfair, and even though Achilles in *Iliad* 18.114–21 does talk of his desire to win 'excellent glory' in returning to the fray, he also says that he wants to take revenge on the killer of 'that dear life', Patroclus. One may also note that she only delays the plague by ten years; she does not avert it altogether (and it has been argued by Benardete[24] that this delay in fact exacerbates the damage that the plague causes, as Athens would by now have been jammed with people flocking in from the countryside at the start of the Peloponnesian War). Diotima's probable status as some kind of

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[21] I thus do not completely agree with Rowe 1998: 177, who thinks that audience response is all that matters.

[22] Which of course Diotima has not officially heard – an ironic twist by Plato which may well be intended to indicate, amongst other things, her fictionality.

[23] *Smp.* 179b4–180a1.   [24] Benardete 2001: 192.

mantis[25] may well be relevant here. As we have seen from *Republic* 364b–c and *Laws* 908d and 933c–e, *manteis* could be regarded as highly suspect figures who mingled religious practices (or in some hypocritical cases a veneer of religious practices) with both witchcraft and, on occasion, outright quackery. For evidence of the general public confusion about seers, witness the unhappy case of Theoris from Lemnos, who was put to death (together with her entire family) for being a witch (*pharmakis*: Demosthenes, *Arist.* 25.79–80), but who is also referred to as a *mantis* by Philochorus (*ap.* Harpocration).[26] The lines between religion and witchcraft here are blurred still further by Plutarch, who calls Theoris a priestess (*hiereia*).[27] Benardete implicitly acknowledges these fluid demarcations when he calls Diotima a 'witch'.[28] It is no surprise, therefore, that Diotima is hard to pin down, and I am in no doubt that this is deliberate on Plato's part. Indeed, as a philosopher, sophist, magician and guide initiating the young Socrates into erotics and leading him from the mortal world to the divine Form of Beauty, Diotima fits much of her own description of the intermediary *daimōn Erōs*.[29] And, although *Erōs* is not himself called a *mantis*, as a *daimōn* he is explicitly said to inhabit the realm where *manteis* operate (202e7).

Intermediary *daimones* or daimonic figures such as *Erōs* and Diotima, therefore, are vital but tricksy characters, and we are not sure how much we can rely on them. And their elusive nature is, I would suggest, part of a wider theme in the *Symposium*, namely the necessary but unreliable nature of intermediaries in general. We hear the tale of the drinking party from Apollodorus, who in turn heard it from one of those present, Aristodemus. Yet both Apollodorus and Aristodemus admit to imperfect memories (178a1–3), and Aristodemus further confesses that he fell asleep after Alcibiades' speech (223b8–c1). As 'God does not mix with humanity' (203a), we are unequivocally going to need intermediaries in our erotic ascent to beauty and truth, but we are also going to have to work hard at interpreting what they convey: at 202e3, as we have seen, Diotima says that it is the job of the *daimones* to interpret and convey human entreaties to the gods and the gods' ordinances and returns for sacrifices to humans, but we

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[25] See Section I (ii). She does not have to be restricted to this role: there are elements of the priestess or general religious practitioner in the language of initiation and revelation that she employs (particularly *Smp.* 209e5–210a4, 211b5–7 and 212a).

[26] *FGrH* 382f60; see Collins 2008: 136–9 and Dodds 1951: 204 n. 95 and 205 n. 98.

[27] *Demosthenes* 14.   [28] Benardete 2001: 192.

[29] As we have seen (n. 15 above), attention in the secondary literature has concentrated on the similarities between Diotima's description of *Erōs* and Plato's portrayal of Socrates throughout the dialogue (n. 16 above), but the similarities between Diotima and *Erōs* are also very important.

are going to have to engage in hermeneutics too if we are to reach a point where we can have anything close to association and dialectic (202a3) with the divine. At 221e–222a Alcibiades says that one needs to make an effort to open up Socrates' words to discover the riches inside; the same is true of the *Symposium* itself if it is to function as an intermediary in its own right.

(c) A third escape route might be to say that when Diotima calls *Erōs* a *goēs* she is just speaking metaphorically: perhaps she simply means that erotic love makes us feel and do astonishing things, in much the same way that we can lightly and loosely call someone a 'magician' for doing something wonderful and unexpected, or even just use 'magic' as a general term of approval.[30] And it might be thought that support for this interpretation can be found in the *Meno* passage (80a–b) cited in Section 1 (i), where Meno says that Socrates has bewitched, drugged and enchanted him, and that in any other city than Athens he would be arrested for being a *goēs*.[31] After claiming that Socrates has bewitched him, Meno goes on to say 'if indeed I am allowed to jest . . . '[32] and then likens Socrates to a stingray. Meno does not say that the jesting tone applies to his previous accusations of enchantment, but it would not be unreasonable to suppose that this is his intention.

However, it is not clear to me that Meno *is* just joking and speaking metaphorically here, whatever the intended scope of his claim to be in jest: people often say that they are 'just joking' when they at least partly mean what they say. It is presumably no accident that Plato here puts the talk of magic into the mouth of a man from Thessaly: Thessaly, as we know from *Gorgias* 513a and Aristophanes' *Clouds* 749–55, was a centre for witches in fifth-century Greece. If you wanted to hire a witch, that is where you went. I believe that a similar ambiguity hangs over *Symposium* 215c–d, where Alcibiades claims that Socrates is far more astonishing than the satyr Marsyas, because Socrates can bewitch (*kēlein*, 215c1) and possess (*katechein*, 215c5; d6) his audience by means of words alone, whereas Marsyas required his pipes. Witness, too, Agathon's protest at 194a5 that Socrates

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[30] A 1950s schoolboy – at least as depicted in books – might have said 'wizard!' in much the same way. Belfiore 1980: 137, building on de Romilly 1975, treats the 'magical' terms used to describe Socrates and philosophers and philosophy in general (occasionally by Socrates himself: see Section 3 (d)) as metaphorical: her paper argues that philosophy works as a purifying (and metaphorical) 'counter-magic' to deceitful magical practices. Gellrich 1994: 307 thinks there are 'family similarities' between the magician, the sophist and the dialectician which hinge on the notions of *psychagōgia* and catharsis; as a result 'the metaphor preserves a number of key elements native to the original complex.'

[31] The savage irony of this claim is of course unintentional on Meno's part, but certainly not on Plato's.

[32] *Ei dei ti kai skōpsai* (*Men.* 80a4–5).

wants to cast a spell (*pharmattein*) over him. Alcibiades and (to a lesser extent) Agathon are more intelligent and sophisticated characters than Meno, and are unlikely to be using these words entirely at face value, but it is also clear that Socrates amazes, baffles and bewilders them, particularly Alcibiades:[33] it is certainly possible that doubts (perhaps unarticulated) as to Socrates' magical status lurk in the recesses of their minds. He is a strange, 'placeless' (cf. *atopia*, 221d2) character who habitually goes into apparent trances (175a–c; 220c–d), and who is not like anyone who has ever been or ever will be (221c–d).

   (d) But even if these passages from the *Meno* and *Symposium* cannot be read as unequivocally metaphorical (and thus cannot be adduced to provide unambiguous support for a metaphorical reading of Diotima's use of *goēs* and *goēteia* in 202–3), they still do not show that Socrates is a magician, or is regarded as such by Plato or indeed by himself. Plato may deliberately be playing with people's confusion about philosophers and the fact that they might be mistaken for magicians: Meno may genuinely have misunderstood the nature of Socrates' activities, and genuinely have believed him to be some kind of wizard. We may well see Plato alluding to this ambivalence about the status of the philosopher at *Phaedo* 77e–78a, where Cebes says that despite all Socrates' arguments to show that the soul exists both before birth and after death, there is still a child within us who fears that when we die our soul will be blown away on the wind: can Socrates persuade the child not to fear death as if it were a hobgoblin? Socrates replies that Cebes must sing incantations (*epaidein*) to the child every day until the fear is charmed away. But where shall we find such a good singer of charms, asks Cebes, since you are leaving us? And Socrates answers that Hellas is a large country and they must search through all its inhabitants, including amongst themselves, to find such a charmer (*epōidos*). Nor is this ambivalence only to be found in Plato: we may charitably assume that Xenophon is also playing with the public confusion about Socrates at *Memorabilia* 3.11.15–8, where Socrates is conversing with the courtesan Theodote. Theodote invites Socrates to become her partner in her search for male companions, and to come and see her often. Socrates jokingly protests that he has too much business to occupy him, particularly with his female companions who are studying love-philtres (*philtra*) and incantations (*epōidai*) with him. Theodote asks him whether he understands such things and he says that is why people such as Apollodorus and

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[33] Blondell 2006: 157 n. 42 cites nine occasions where Alcibiades speaks of Socrates' 'amazing' nature and behaviour.

Antisthenes never leave his side, and why Cebes and Simmias come to stay. And Aristophanes may be exploiting the same confusion – probably with less kindly intent – at *Clouds* 102, where Pheidippides calls all the inhabitants of the think-tank 'charlatans' (*alazōnes*), a term which can apply not just to braggarts in general but specifically to religious and magician quacks, such as the false *manteis* at *Charmides* 173c.[34] And at *Clouds* 749–55 Socrates is pointedly made to approve of Strepsiades' plan to hire a Thessalian witch to pull down the moon and lock it up, so that he does not have to pay monthly interest on his debts.

In short, when people call Socrates some kind of magician or enchanter (or imply that he is), it may not be a straightforward metaphor; rather, it may reveal their own genuine bafflement about how to understand him, and both Plato's and Xenophon's Socrates may on occasion play along with that.[35] So when Diotima calls *Erōs* a *goēs*, she may also have misunderstood *Erōs*. And given the clear links between her depiction of *Erōs* (and Socrates' depiction too in 212) and the dialogue's depiction of Socrates,[36] this suggests that she may have misunderstood Socrates too. She may have made the common teacher's mistake of thinking he was like her. So, again, we should be careful not to take what Diotima says at face value without proper scrutiny. If Apuleius is to be believed,[37] confusing philosophers and magicians in antiquity was not unusual: in his defence against the charge of being a *magus* in 158/9 A.D., he claims that many great philosophers, such as Socrates and Plato, have been confused with *magi*.[38]

4 Problems with These 'Explanations'

One or more of these, then, are the main strategies available to someone wanting to downplay Diotima's description of *Erōs* as a *goēs*, and – with the possible exception of (a) that *Erōs* is both a magician and a philosopher but wearing different hats – they all carry some weight. Yet none of them is

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[34] The author of *On the Sacred Disease* groups *alazōnes* together with magicians (*magoi*), purifiers (*kathartai*) and beggar-priests (*agurtai*) at 1.10–12; see Collins 2008: 34, 42 and 49–50.

[35] At *Smp.* 198a5 Socrates also appears to play along with the idea that he is some kind of *mantis* as well, when at the conclusion of Agathon's speech he remarks to Eryximachus that he, Socrates, spoke *mantikōs*, 'like a prophet', when he predicted that Agathon would speak wonderfully. It is similarly hard to judge Socrates' tone at *Phdr.* 242c4 where he says outright that he is a *mantis*, and also *Phdr.* 278e10–279a1, where he says that he is willing to prophesy about the future of Isocrates.

[36] See Section 1 (iv) and nn. 15 and 16 above.

[37] Although this may simply be a crafty way of bolstering his case.

[38] Apuleius, *Apol.* 27.18; see Collins 2008: 150–9. Empedocles claims that he can impart magical powers over the winds, and according to Diogenes Laertius 8.59 Gorgias said that he was present when Empedocles practised magic.

truly satisfying; nor do they convince taken together. In respect of (a), the more the dialogue portrays Socrates as at least a partial embodiment of *Erōs*, the more difficult it is to make sense of the different hats idea: Socrates' character would swiftly disintegrate in precisely the way that his ethics of flourishing and virtue is designed to counter.[39] And, in any case, the hats cannot be so very different if they are both powered by *erōs*. As for (b), it is very clear that Diotima is not just a somewhat slippery sophist and the more unreliable kind of *mantis*-witch: she is also given one of the most philosophically profound speeches in all of Plato. Furthermore, the similarities between her and her depiction of the *daimōn Erōs*[40] do not just raise a few alarm bells; they also emphasize her credentials as a daimonic guide who can lead Socrates and others towards the divine. Whatever her shortcomings, and however much we may be invited to question her views – as I believe we are – she is undoubtedly a figure of intellectual gravitas.[41] Given this, we should take her description of *Erōs* seriously (which does not mean to say that we necessarily have to take it at face value).

As for objections (c) and (d), we should note that not all Plato's uses of 'magical' terminology are hostile. At *Theaetetus* 149c–d midwives are said to deploy incantations (*epaidousai*) as well as *pharmakia* both to bring on and soothe the pangs of labour, while at *Republic* 426b incantations (*epōidai*) are listed in the repertoire of the physician, along with drugs, cauteries and incisions. There are also passages where elenchus, dialectic and philosophy in general are spoken of as beneficent spells and drugs. At *Charmides* 155e Socrates claims that a certain leaf to cure headache will only be effective if an incantation (*epōdē*) is sung when it is administered, and it turns out (156d–157c) that this charm is to take the form of words to treat the soul as the body cannot be treated without the soul being treated first (a holistic approach to health that Socrates says he learnt from the physicians of the Thracian king Zalmoxis); we later find out that this treatment of the soul will involve the inculcation of *sōphrosunē* through elenchus (175e–176b). *Republic* 595b6 is also significant here: knowledge is the *pharmakon* which can protect us against the dangerous deceptions of art. And at *Phaedo* 114d the myth is described as an *epōdē*. All these passages, of course, may just be Socrates' way of utilizing traditional beliefs in the power of spells, charms and drugs in order to bring about particular psychic and psychosomatic effects; however, I hope to show that Plato means us to take

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[39] See, e.g., *La.* 188d2–8 and *R.* 413e, 443d–e, 423e, 591d; Hobbs 2000: 230. For the roots of Plato's ethics of flourishing in the historical Socrates, see Hobbs 2000: 50 n. 2.

[40] See Section 3 (b).

[41] On this I am in agreement with Raphael Woolf in this volume, Section 2 of Chapter 4.

these positive uses of magical terminology seriously: that there are good as well as harmful kinds of magic and that philosophy is indeed 'magical' in the best sense of that word.

It is undeniably true that in late antiquity and the Renaissance there was a powerful tradition which viewed philosophy in this way, and which believed its roots lay in the philosophy of Plato. The most prominent example is Ficino. Ficino certainly holds that what he terms 'natural' magic[42] is amenable to rational explanation, exploration, utilization and empirical testing (this is the main thrust of his *De vita libri tres III*),[43] though only a select and educated few will be able to do this. Ficino, of course, may be thought to be biased, in that he was both a philosopher and a keen student of magic and astrology, as well as being a medically trained priest (a doctor in his own eyes); but one can also argue that he was comfortable being all these things precisely because he saw no necessary contradiction between them. Most relevant to our purposes is his *Commentarium in convivium Platonis* (often simply known, including by Ficino, as the *De amore*) which, although it is in reality an independent dialogue containing Ficino's syncretic philosophy of love, does contain perceptive discussions of some passages in the *Symposium*, and the debt to Plato's work is evident throughout.[44] In his reflections on *Symposium* 202–3 in *De amore* 6.10, Ficino writes that Diotima calls love a 'magician' (*magus*) 'because the whole power of magic consists in love. The work of magic is the attraction of one thing to another by way of a certain affinity of nature.'[45] Ficino, in other words, takes Diotima's depiction of *Erōs* as a *goēs* seriously (and, tellingly, notes in 7.2 that Socrates is a representative of *Erōs* as depicted by Diotima). In his underlying assumption that there need be no incompatibility between philosophy and (what he terms) natural magic he is deeply indebted to Plotinus *Enneads* 4.4 and even more to the late Neoplatonists, particularly a tract on sacrifice, theurgy and magic by Proclus which Ficino translated as *De sacrificio*: according to Proclus, heaven and earth are magically linked by natural forces of likeness and sympathy, and this allowed the sages of old – as Proclus terms them – to

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[42] In the Middle Ages and Renaissance a clear distinction was usually made between 'natural' magic and 'demonic' magic. 'Natural' magic revealed and accessed the normally hidden inherent properties of animate or inanimate beings; 'demonic' magic called on the intercession of demons. See Copenhaver 2007: 149 and Collins 2008: 1. The important distinction between ancient pagan *daimones* and demons in Christian thought is discussed further below in Section 7.

[43] See Copenhaver 2007: 137–69 and Copenhaver and Schmitt 1992: 159–60.

[44] See Jayne 1985: 4–7 for a very helpful breakdown of the dialogue and its definite and probable sources.

[45] Trans. Voss in Allen et al. 2002: 237.

bring divine powers into the mortal realm.[46] Iamblichus' belief that such cosmic sympathies can only be utilized with divine aid by means of esoteric magical rituals also helped shape Ficino's thinking,[47] and it is significant that Iamblichus' surviving works were amongst the earliest Platonic writings that Ficino translated into Latin.[48]

5   Taking the Puzzle Seriously

Given the unsatisfying nature, then, of the ways in which the portrayal of *Erōs* as a *goēs* might be explained away, it is, I submit, worth following up on Ficino's lead and at least considering what the potential benefits might be of taking Diotima's claim seriously. If *Erōs* is both a philosopher and a magician (and if these activities are not utterly distinct, at least to the degree that they both require erotic love and are both practised by Socrates), then what might the magical dimension tell us about the nature of both erotic love and philosophy? And as Socrates is portrayed as at least a partial embodiment of *Erōs*, what might the claim tell us about Socrates? What, indeed, might it tell us about Diotima herself, given her own similarities to the *daimōn* she describes?[49] We can go further. In 202d–203a, Diotima says that the daimonic realm fills in the space between the mortal and immortal realms, so that the whole is bound together into one continuum (a view partly prepared for by Eryximachus).[50] If we want to understand the whole better, we need to grasp what this really means, and as this intermediary realm is said to be where everything to do with magic operates, we need to ask what the connecting powers of magic might actually be.

Examining the alleged magical nature of the *daimōn Erōs* will also deepen our understanding of the daimonic in general, and this in turn will, crucially, illuminate Diotima's claim at 204e–205a that *eudaimonia* – 'flourishing', but, literally, 'being guarded by a beneficent *daimōn*' – is the final goal, the *telos*, of all human desire. This claim is made so soon after her account of the intermediary role of the daimonic and her particular description of the *daimōn Erōs* that it is implausible to suppose that Plato

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[46] Proclus makes the point clearly in e.g. *On the Priestly Art*; see also Copenhaver 2007: 147 and 167 n. 52.

[47] Iamblichus, *Myst.*; see Copenhaver 1987: 441–55.   [48] See Celenza 2007: 85 and 95 n. 58.

[49] See Section 3 (b).

[50] See 188b6–d3, where Eryximachus says that sacrifices and all things controlled by the seer (*mantis*) are the means of all communion (*koinōnia*) between gods and humans, and that these ceremonies work their effects solely by preserving or curing *erōs*. So although Eryximachus does not explicitly mention magic or *daimones*, he introduces the notion of an intermediary realm occupied by the seer and his or her knowledge of erotics.

has not deliberately engineered the connection: it is far more plausible to infer that he wants his readers actively to recover the original meaning of the term *eudaimonia* and think about what it might really involve, both for humans and even the gods themselves. And this deepened understanding of the daimonic in general will also of course further our understanding of Socrates, including what he might mean by talking of his *daimonion* sign in the *Apology, Phaedrus* and elsewhere,[51] and what was meant by the charge that he brought 'new daimonic beings' (*kaina daimonia*) into Athens.[52] Nor is this all: by directing our attention onto *daimones* and the daimonic in the *Symposium*, Plato encourages us to ask whether Socrates not only *has* his own personal daimonic sign, not only is 'daimonic' (*daimonios*), but might actually *be* a *daimōn*.

6   What Is a Magician? Part 2

It is time to return to and refine the rough working account of 'magician' in Section 2, which I claimed could embrace all the Greek terms that we have touched on here: namely, a being who or which effects some kind of transformation which the audience cannot *in any way* rationally comprehend, or would not in any way be able to comprehend, if they knew that an intervention by some being had taken place. This transformation could be of two basic kinds, as Socrates suggests in the *Republic* 380d passage cited at the end of Section 1 (iii), where he and Adeimantus are discussing whether god is some kind of shape-shifter: in general, a shape-shifter could either genuinely take on another form, or simply mislead us into the belief that he has done so. Taking our lead from this, we can refine the distinctions as follows:

(i) The magician could create an illusion and transform the *appearance* of things. This transformation could take place in a context where the audience knows (or believes or expects) that magic is taking place, or one in which they do not. In other words, the transformation could be understood to be an illusion, or the audience could be genuinely deceived into thinking that the illusion is reality. The potential benefits and dangers of this kind of magic may partly depend on whether the audience is aware of the magical context.[53] Even more critical, perhaps, is whether the changed appearance is closer to, or further from, inner or underlying reality (assuming that such a thing exists).

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[51] e.g. *Ap.* 31c and *Phdr.* 242b8–c3.   [52] e.g. *Ap.* 24c.
[53] This could cut both ways. It is possible to imagine benefits arising from deception, though whether they would be worth it would be a moot point.

(ii) The transformation could transform things in *themselves*. Again, this transformation could take place in a context where the audience knows (or believes or expects) that 'magic' is taking place, or one in which they do not. These transformations could also be beneficial or harmful in a number of ways, and again this would depend partly on whether the audience is aware of the context[54] and even more on whether the transformations reveal, foster and restore, or conceal and disfigure the true, healthy nature of the being or the true nature of the object.

(iii) There is also a third possibility, namely that (ii) could follow from (i), that things are changed in themselves as a result of a process which begins with viewing things differently, or being viewed differently. In other words, 'magic' can transform both the viewer and the viewed. Once more, the potential benefits and dangers will partly depend on whether the altered vision, or altered visioning, and resulting transformation in the viewer and/or the viewed is closer to, or further from, the true and healthy state of the person or the true state of the object.

(iv) A final, vital point to note: can magic also transform itself, conceivably out of existence?[55] The process of transformation in viewer or viewed or both may result in a depth of rational understanding which precludes the ascription of 'magical' to what is going on. As we shall see in the next two sections, if *Erōs* is both a philosopher and a magician, and if Socrates is partly an embodiment of *Erōs*, then this point will be crucial for our understanding of both erotic love and philosophy – and of course of Socrates himself.

7   *Erōs* the Rational Magician

What, then, are the consequences of (i)–(iv) (Section 6) for Diotima's claim that *Erōs* is a *goēs*? I believe that (i)–(iv) show how Diotima's claim might be both true and important.

Erōs is a magician because in the *Symposium* we can see *erōs* effecting all these kinds of transformations. Our erotic love for one person can transform our view of them and sharpen our understanding so we come to see how the physical beauty of our beloved is akin (210b1) to the beauty of other bodies, and this understanding then brings about a widening in the scope of our erotic love to embrace these other bodies too; our *erōs* for them in turn transforms our view both of them and the world so that we come to appreciate how the

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[54] And again this could cut both ways.
[55] I am grateful to Jamie Dow for a discussion of this question.

beauty of bodies is akin to the beauty of souls, and then, in ascending order, of practices and laws, individual sciences and eventually the Form of Beauty itself (210d7–e1). It is being in love, therefore, which first (210a) sparks the illumination in our understanding, and this illumination in turn triggers a widening of *erōs* which then brings about a further deepening of our understanding, and so on in turn: as the whole is increasingly revealed to us, we can move through it towards the divine. At each stage *erōs* works with our rational understanding (it is our best co-worker, *sunergos*, 212b) to transform our vision of our (ascending) beloveds and thereby of the cosmos. This expanded erotic vision also, crucially, transforms the lover too, making him[56] a better person and teacher and increasingly able to bring forth fine words (*kaloi logoi*) which, again in turn, educate and transform the beautiful youths with whom he was originally in love. Whether he remains in love with them as he ascends the ladder is of course a keenly debated issue which need not concern us here: the salient point for our enquiry is that his transformed vision of the world also transforms him in himself and the transformation in him allows him to transform others (whether or not he still sees these others as beloveds, or simply as friends or students).

All these transformations, then, reveal, rather than concealing and disfiguring, the true nature of the lover, the (possibly by now former) beloved and the cosmos itself. And the revelations of these formerly hidden connections and harmonies in the whole – connections which ultimately bind the mortal and divine realms at 212a – in turn foster and strengthen those existing connections by allowing the lover actively to utilize them. The power of the magician to effect change, which we saw put to harmful use at *Laws* 933 and elsewhere, is here employed for good, just as the power of the often despised and reviled seer is said by Eryximachus at 188b–c to reveal and thereby strengthen the normally hidden connections in the cosmos and bring about communion between mortal and divine.[57] At their best both the seer and the magician *Erōs* can turn dormant connections into active, humming ones which are available for humans to use to increase their virtue and thereby their *eudaimonia. Erōs* in particular allows us to see how what we formerly perceived to be separate people, objects, practices and bodies of knowledge are in fact all parts of a greater whole. By revealing the whole, *Erōs* strengthens it; and the act of loving the parts of the whole strengthens the ties still further.

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[56] And perhaps sometimes making her a better person (Diotima, for example, has presumably ascended the ladder rather than being born at its zenith).
[57] See n. 50 above.

This astonishing process of revelation and transformation may well initially strike us as magical. As we come to understand it better, however, and understand ourselves, our (former) beloveds and the cosmos better, the magic is likely to fade: the 'magical' stage is a transitional one. It should not surprise us, therefore, if *erōs* is transitional too: since the erotic quest is ultimately, as we have seen, for *eudaimonia* (205a1–3 and 205d1–3) – even if the lover is rarely conscious of this – then what would happen to *erōs* if its object was achieved? Would it be transformed out of existence? Does *erōs* in fact work towards a state in which the conditions for its existence no longer obtain? These are questions I am exploring elsewhere: for now we need only note that magic and *erōs* may only be stepping stones towards a state of *eudaimonia* and full rational understanding in which they are no longer required, or even possible.

The same may be true of philosophy itself, defined as a desire and search for wisdom. The perfectly wise gods have no need of it (204a1–2). Hence Socrates' key question (204a8–9), utterly central to the aim and design of the dialogue: 'who are those who philosophize?' Philosophy too, like *erōs* and magic, may be working towards an ultimate transformation which includes its own destruction. And Socrates, as the philosopher *par excellence*, partial embodiment of *Erōs* and magical practitioner with words, may be heading along this same path: Plato, it seems to me, is suggesting through his depiction of Socrates as – in part – an erotic magus that Socrates in this form at any rate cannot survive. Yet as we shall see in the final section, it is also possible that the *daimōn* magician *Erōs* can bring his avatar Socrates back to life in another form.

These questions about the self-transformative and transitional nature of *erōs* and philosophy are brought into focus by the emphasis on the 'magical' nature of each; and the possibility of the ultimate destruction of each if their goals are reached may seem disturbing. However, as erotic love desires *eudaimonia* to continue into the future (at 206a Diotima tells us that the desire for *eudaimonia* will cash out as a desire to possess good things for ever), and as the future can never be attained in the present, then the goal of *erōs* will always recede, will always remain tantalizingly out of reach in the ungraspable future, at least in the world of human life and time. The same may be thought to be true of philosophy. After death, their goals may be realisable, but in our mortal, timed existence, our erotic and philosophic quests go on,[58] and can, at least in their earlier stages,

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[58] This will of course depend on how one interprets 212a and what it might mean to claim of the person who reaches the top of the ladder of love and apprehends the Form of Beauty that 'it belongs to him, if to any mortal, to be immortal.' Can eternity – a timelessness in which boundaries of past, present and future dissolve – be experienced within, or alongside, mortal existence? If it can then it might

appear magical to the lover and the philosopher[59] in their ability to transform not only our vision of the world, but also ourselves and others.[60]

One final point: when reflecting on the challenges posed by Diotima calling *Erōs* both a philosopher and a magician, it is very important to bear in mind that when Plato writes the *Symposium*, the later distinction between 'natural' magic, which works through an understanding of inherent natural properties, and 'demonic' magic, which works by calling up demons, does not exist.[61] In the *Symposium, daimones* such as *Erōs* can help us understand, access, strengthen and utilize the connected constituents of the cosmos through a deeper understanding of their inherent properties. They can help us understand and take part in the whole.

8   *Erōs*, Magic and the Defence of Socrates

We are now in a position to see more clearly[62] how in *Symposium* 202–3 Plato confronts, in the boldest possible way, both the charge brought against Socrates that he did not believe in the city's gods but new daimonic beings (*kaina daimonia, Ap.* 24b8–c1),[63] and also an inchoate public perception of him, deliberately stoked by Aristophanes (and perhaps less deliberately by Meno, Alcibiades and others) as some kind of sophist and magician.[64] Plato implies in 202–3 that Socrates, as the partial embodiment of *Erōs* and the supreme philosopher, is indeed a magician and a sophist, but there are ways of being these that are positive, not negative. And not only does he possess his own personal daimonic sign, not only is he *daimonios* (as Alcibiades claims at 219c1), but he may actually be a *daimōn* himself. But that is all good too.

It may be possible to go even further. Burkert (1962a: 43–4) argues that the philological history of *goēs* indicates that the term originally referred to

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conceivably be possible to achieve the goals of *erōs* and philosophy before death. Again, I am writing about this in detail elsewhere and only raise the question here as a possibility to consider.

[59] They may go on appearing magical to the non-lover and non-philosopher who do not acquire a rational understanding of the process.

[60] It follows from this that magic will transform itself out of existence (in the eyes of its practitioner) before either *erōs* or philosophy.

[61] See n. 42 above and Kieckhefer 1994: 817–20 and 1999. The notion that demonic magic is harmful appears as early as Iamblichus: he attacks the Egyptians for demonolatry in *Myst.* 32.8–33.11 (although Iamblichus also has reservations about 'natural' magic: he only approves of magic which uses the gods' help; see Copenhaver 2007: 150–1 and 163). Both Origen and Augustine view *daimones/* daemones as unequivocally pernicious spirits (Thorndike 1908: 46–66).

[62] See Section 5 and n. 52 above for the introduction of this issue.

[63] Socrates says in *Ap.* 31c7–d2 that this charge arose from his talk of receiving warning signs from 'something divine (*theion*) and daimonic (*daimonion*)'.

[64] See Section 3 (d).

a specialist in a particular type of lamentation for the dead, a *goös*.[65] Collins (2008: 59) suggests that 'the *goēs* was skilled precisely in invoking the spirits of the dead, and although this characteristic cannot always be felt, in some authors such as Plato a good case can be made that such a distinction is still relevant.' He persuasively cites *Laws* 909b for support, and adds that 'later sources take it for granted that *goēteia* refers exclusively to invocation of the dead'.[66] In this light, Diotima's depiction of *Erōs* as a *goēs* and philosopher may imply that Socrates' daimonic, erotic nature means that he also has the power to revive himself. At 203d we learn that on the same day *Erōs* may be dying and then come to life again due to the nature of his father *Poros* (Resource). Does Socrates also possess such abilities,[67] and, if so, how might they be manifest? I would suggest it is by his continuing power to engage our minds and imaginations: by inspiring us to engage passionately – erotically – in philosophy, and enter into passionate debate with him and others in the *Symposium* itself, Plato's Socrates enables us to invoke his spirit and keep him alive.[68]

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[65] Gellrich also explores this theme in her 1994: 276–7.
[66] Collins refers to Johnston 1999: 100–23.
[67] Perhaps in part due to his creative stonemason father?
[68] If there is any mileage in this thought, then this may be another reason for all the 'herm-' based terms in the dialogue and their association with the messenger- and prophetic-god Hermes, who specifically acts as an intermediary between the world of the living and the underworld, as well as between the living and the gods in general; indeed at times he appears as a god of the underworld itself. At 215b1 Alcibiades calls statuary-shops '*hermoglupheia*', places for the carving of herms; and at 217a3 Alcibiades refers to his beauty as a '*hermaion*', a gift from Hermes; the same word is also used by Eryximachus at 176c1 about the fact that Agathon is feeling too hungover to drink much, as this 'stroke of luck' lets Eryximachus – who also overindulged the previous night – off the hook; and almost certainly relevant is 202e3, where Diotima talks of *Erōs* '*hermēneuon*', interpreting messages between gods and humans ('almost certainly' in that it seems almost certain that *hermēneuein* derives from Hermes – and even if it does not, Plato could still wish his readers to make the association). Although this is not the only probable reason for the terms (see Hobbs 2000: 258–9 for a political one involving the mutilation of the herms just before the disastrous Sicilian expedition), there is no doubt that Hermes is important in the dialogue. Plato is not only examining thresholds between human and divine, the phenomenal world and the realm of the Forms; he is also exploring creative and lasting interaction between the dead and the living.

The Psychological Import of the First Wave
in *Republic* 5

Tad Brennan

1   Introduction

The topic of this chapter is a passage in Book 5 of the *Republic* that Socrates refers to as the First Wave.[1] My thesis is that we should read the First Wave on two levels.[2] We should read it as a sincere proposal about ideal politics and the structure of an ideal city. And we should also read it as an illustration of ideal human psychology that tells us about the correct structuring of the virtuous person's soul.

At first glance this thesis may seem banal and uncontroversial. Even beginning readers of the *Republic* know that the work operates on two levels, with politics and psychology pursued in parallel. Socrates begins his search for an ideally just city in order to illustrate justice in the soul. Parts of the city are somehow analogous to parts of the soul, and political order and disorder provide models for the internal psychic conditions that constitute virtue and vice. These are accepted truisms of Platonic scholarship.

Nevertheless, my application of these truisms to the First Wave is controversial. For it is also sometimes thought that in the middle books of the *Republic* (i.e. Books 5–7), Plato abandons tripartite psychology and

1 *R.* 451c–457b.
2 I also think we should read the other two Waves (*R.* 457c–472a, 472a–541) that make up the rest of the middle books in the same way, but they are not the focus of this paper.

talks about politics for its own sake, without intending us to use his political pronouncements as guides to his psychological theories. John Ferrari, for example, comments that 'the city-soul analogy is strikingly absent from Books 5–7.'[3] Norbert Blössner agrees: 'In Books 5–7 the analogy [between city and soul] is put to no work.'[4] Both of these critics are perceptive readers of the *Republic* and of the analogy in particular. Nevertheless, I will argue that their view is mistaken.

The first half of my thesis is also controversial, because some readers have refused to take seriously Socrates' claim that some of the philosophers who rule the ideal city will be women. The reasons for their refusal sometimes reflect no more than their own prejudices or the limits of their own imagination.[5] But in other cases, the refusal is motivated by genuine puzzles about Plato's attitude towards women.[6] Addressing those puzzles will allow us to take the political content of the First Wave seriously.

My thesis about the First Wave connects to more general issues. It involves how we read the middle books of the *Republic*. They are sometimes read as an extended discussion of political theory that does not have any direct connection to the tripartite psychological theory just developed in Book 4. Throughout Books 5 through 7, cities are cities, not souls, and human behaviour is not explained through the interactions of three sub-personal agents. After the middle books, the city-soul analogy returns to centre stage in Books 8 and 9, where the vices of the vicious individuals are explained via the interactions of the parts of the individuals' souls, as illustrated by the interactions of the three classes within imperfect cities. But in the middle books, Plato simply takes a break from psychology, in order to unburden himself of some pronouncements about politics.

The consequence of this sort of reading for the unity of the *Republic*'s argument is more extreme than even that rehearsal would suggest. For the city-soul analogy and the tripartition of the soul are both integral to Socrates' central argumentative project in the *Republic*, which is to answer the challenge of Glaucon and Adeimantus from Book 2, by showing how a life of justice is better and happier than a life of injustice, regardless of external fortune.[7] The virtues and vices, and the happiness and goodness of

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[3] Ferrari 2009: 408.   [4] Blössner 2007: 350.   [5] Bloom 1968: 383.

[6] Buchan 1999: 142, for instance, argues that Socrates' proposal to place women among the Guardians is undermined by his doubts about their capacities: 'the requisite natural capacities spring from the philosophical soul, a soul which no woman possesses.' I do not think Socrates or Plato accept this last claim, i.e. that no woman possesses a philosophical soul.

[7] Four lives are under consideration: a just life favoured by the typical rewards of justice (612d, 613c), a just life blighted by the consequences of a false reputation for injustice (361c), an unjust life suffering its just deserts (613b), and an unjust life unjustly profiting from a false reputation for justice (361a).

lives, are all understood through the city-soul analogy and tripartition, and the challenge of Book 2 is clearly answered in Book 9.

The *Republic* offers us an argument for living justly: a just life is a happier life than an unjust life, no matter how external circumstances may turn out. If it aimed only to persuade us that justice is desirable, it would remain a merely protreptic exercise. But it offers more: it offers us a theory of what living justly consists in, and – more still – practical advice about how to make our own lives more just. The advice comes in the form of a regulative ideal, which we are invited to approximate: make your soul more like this pattern, and your soul will be more just. Make your life more like the pattern of this life, and your life will be more just. Make your life more just and your life will be more happy.

The sensible person at the end of Book 9 (591c1–592b6) does exactly this: he establishes a constitution within his soul by looking at the paradigm of an ideal city. So close are the similarities between city and soul that Socrates can describe the sensible person's psychic cultivation in terms of 'founding himself' (592b3 using the word for founding or establishing a city) and 'practicing politics in the city of himself' (592a7).[8]

But given the structure of this advice, we are entitled to ask: what does it mean to make my soul more like a certain pattern, when the pattern is laid out in political terms? How do I make my soul more like the ideal city, when the ideal city is so complicated? Sometimes the answers are fairly easy. The ideal city is ruled by philosophers: I pattern my soul after that city when I live my life under the guidance of reason and rationality. The ideal city has producers who are neither too rich nor too poor, who never meddle

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We can schematize the four options as the cross-products of internal character (good or bad) and external fortune (good or bad). Thought of in this way, it is noteworthy that Cephalus himself introduces this pattern in the anecdote of Themistocles (329e), which compares the desirability of a good or bad character (*tropos*) in good or bad circumstances (Athens or Seriphus). It is characteristic of Cephalus that he thinks that happiness requires both good character and good external circumstances. It is not clear that Plato disagrees: the just man on the rack is not ranked in the final ranking of lives (580).

[8] I think this is the correct translation of *'en ge tēi heautou polei'*, rather than Grube-Reeve's 'in his own kind of city'. That translation suggests that the sensible person will remain politically inactive unless they happen to stumble upon a Kallipolis. The correct translation emphasizes that the sensible person is already politically active through their active engagement in their own internal polity, i.e. soul. This translation is compatible with the more politically quietistic view that Grube-Reeve's translation suggests, but it is also compatible with the possibility that a sensible person might become active in the non-psychic, literal politics of the non-ideal city they find themselves in, a possibility that Socrates' *'isōs'* in a8 also wants to leave open. Similarly, I dispute their translation of 592b4–5 by 'he would take part in the practical affairs of that city and no other.' The verb here still governs *'ta politika'* from a5, so that the phrase is better translated 'he will practice the politics of that city and no other.' And one can practice the politics of the ideal city both in one's own life, and in non-ideal cities one finds oneself in (as argued by Menn 2005: 47).

in politics, and are obedient to their rulers: I pattern my soul after that city when I moderate my bodily appetites so that I am neither indulgent nor ascetic, so that my appetites never control my behaviour, so that my appetites are under strict rational control.

So far so good. But we learn from the middle books that the ideal city practices eugenic mating lotteries: how do I pattern my soul after that? The ideal city includes both male and female rulers: how do I pattern my soul after that? The middle books themselves end with just such an exhortation to imitation, at Book 7 (540a–b), when the Philosopher-Rulers reach the culmination of their training, see the Form of the Good, and use it as a pattern to put themselves and the city in order. How can one pattern be a pattern both for their own souls and for the city? And how can the conclusion of the middle books tell us to put ourselves in order using a pattern that is a pattern for cities, if the middle books themselves have been telling us about political structures that have no psychic analogues?

Considerations like this motivate my interest in finding tripartition within the middle books of the *Republic*.

2   The First Wave

The First Wave may be summarized as follows. Challenged by Polemarchus and the other auditors about his earlier claim (423e) that the Guardians should have their wives and children in common, Socrates restates his commitment to the idea that the living arrangements of the Guardians should be modeled on those of sheepdogs (451c7).[9] This entails that female Guardians will take part in all of the guarding and hunting and other activities of the male Guardians, and thus will need the same education. The positive proposal of the First Wave is thus placed before us: the Guardian class will include women, who will receive the same education that the men receive and take part in all of the same governing activities, including ruling the other citizens and warring with other cities.

Socrates imagines this positive proposal meeting two kinds of resistance. First, it will affront established convention, and so incur the ridicule that anything unconventional encounters. Socrates here simply denies that convention has any normative purchase of its own: if a convention is not in accord with a rational assessment of what is beneficial, then we should

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[9] By 'Guardians' (*phulakes*), Socrates seems to be referring both to the rulers of the city (sometimes called 'perfect guardians', as at 414b and 428e) and to the military forces sometimes called 'auxiliaries'.

ignore its judgments – including any ridicule it incites – and replace it with a new, rationally grounded convention.[10] This, Socrates says, has happened in recent Greek history, when an earlier conventional objection to exercising in the nude was shown to be out of line with the benefits that reason revealed the practice to have, and was in time replaced by the new Hellenic convention in favour of exercising nude. Both convention and conventional judgments (of the beautiful and decorous and their opposites the unseemly and ridiculous) must be brought into conformity with rational assessments of benefit: only the beneficial is beautiful, and only the harmful is ugly.[11]

A different sort of resistance comes from an objector who claims that the new proposal violates the Natural Jobs Principle of 370a7–b2, that people with different natures should do different work.[12] Everyone, the objector continues, will agree that men and women have different natures; it follows that they must not do the same work, on pain of contradicting the earlier principle. Here Socrates responds that the Natural Jobs Principle is sensitive only to certain differences in nature, and is insensitive to other differences in nature. The difference between a bald man and a hirsute man is a difference of nature, but not a difference relevant to their aptitude for making shoes. So too for the differences of male and female: the difference between reproductive roles is a difference of nature, but not one relevant to the assignment of jobs in the city. What matters for that assignment is the difference between, for example, the person who has a medical nature and the person who has a martial nature. These differences are equally to be found among men and

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[10] Presumably the second half of the thought, not expressed here, is that if a convention happens to be in accord with a rational assessment of what is beneficial, then what is unconventional will be harmful, and should be criticized as harmful, not as unconventional.

[11] I am strongly inclined to think that Socrates is imagining a line of objection that originates in the spirited part of the souls of his auditors. The terms of the objection involve the values that Spirit emphasizes: honour and shame, inherited customs that mark out one tribe and its folkways from another tribe and its folkways, what is *oikeion* vs. what is *allotrion*. For women to exercise, says Spirit, is not the done thing; it's not what our kind of people do. Socrates' response is to bring the dog to heel, reminding Spirit that it must defer to the judgments of the rational part. His review of the history of gymnastics in Greece is directed to his auditors' reasoning parts, both reminding them that over time the dog will accept correction, as it has in the past, and undermining the illusory authority of convention by emphasizing its dependence on contingent accidents of history and culture.

[12] If the last objection arose from the values of Spirit, this new objection comes from grounds that are related to Reason, but from a sort of immature Reason that does not employ dialectic properly: it does not make the right distinctions within classes, and it focuses on the verbal terms employed rather than the things designated. It is characterized as an expression of the 'antilogical art', where anti-logic is the art of finding contradictions, whether productively (as in Socratic elenchus) or mischievously (as eristics do). It is a sort of imperfect mimic of Reason, and clarity about the relation of anti-logic to dialectic proper is part of the study of the reasoning part of the soul. The Third Wave, as an extended reflection on the nature of the reasoning part of the soul, also contains reflections on the proper use of contradiction in dialectic (523a–525a; 537d–539d).

women: among women as well as men there are individuals who have and others who lack the natural abilities for medicine, music, gymnastics, war, and philosophy. Thus among women as well as men there are individuals who are suited to the job of Guardian. And since our current practice in non-ideal cities prevents women from having jobs that their natures suit them to, it is our current practice, not our new proposal, which is contrary to nature.

Having established the possibility of Guardian women, Socrates then argues that the proposal is also beneficial to the city. His argument is that the education and training provided to the Guardian women will make them the best of the women in the city, and that there is nothing better for a city than to have its men and women be as good as they can be.[13]

Having thus argued that the proposal is both possible and beneficial, Socrates again insists that any resistance to it arising from judgments about what is ridiculous or unconventional should be dismissed as reflections of false conventions that are not in accord with what is genuinely good. With that, he declares that they have escaped the First Wave.

A central claim of the First Wave was that for each of the jobs in the city, there are women with a nature suited for that job. The ground for this claim seems to be a mix of endoxic assertion and bold induction: Socrates is presumably reporting ordinary observation and common opinion when he

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[13] Two oddities here. First, the argument looks a bit muddled. The conclusion is that we should adopt the policy because the women in the city will be better if we adopt it than they would be if we did not adopt it, i.e. we are comparing the same women to themselves, with and without education. That is a good reason to adopt the educational policy, but it is not obviously connected to the earlier claim that these women are the best in the city, which compares these women with their natures and educations to other women with different natures and educations. Their superiority to the other women might be the result of their better nature rather than a better education, in which case it is no argument for the education. And their superiority to the other women in the city is not per se a goal to be striven for in any case; if it were, then we could achieve it just as well by driving the rest of the women into backward ignorance and ineptitude. What we want, surely, is to make each woman as good as she is capable of being, given her nature; what effect this will have on a competition between the women is a secondary question. The second puzzle here comes from the claim that there is 'nothing better' for a city than to have each of its citizens be as good as possible. This is a strangely atomistic approach to measuring and augmenting the goodness of a complex organic whole; it is not true, for instance, that there is nothing better for an orchestra than to have each of its performers be as good as possible. Socrates is about to make this very point in the Second Wave when he argues that there is nothing better for a city than what binds it together and makes it one (462b). These two successive claims that 'there is no greater good for a city than X', where X is one thing in the First Wave and a different thing in the Second Wave, should arouse our interpretive antennae. There may be some connection between this atomistic analysis of the goodness of the city here in the First Wave, and the atomistic bias evident in the citizens' attitudes towards the city in the First City of 369c, when they interact with each other simply because each believes it is better for himself, i.e. with no sense of belonging to a corporate enterprise. It is a limitation of the Appetites that each pursues its own satisfaction alone; it is an achievement of Spirit to be able to think of itself as part of a larger organism whose welfare is complexly constituted. (And Spirit can do this at least to some extent, though not as clearly as Reason will be able to.)

says that 'we will say' that some women are naturally suited to medicine, music, and gymnastics, and some are not naturally suited to them. He then proceeds, apparently in the same vein, to claim that some women are also martial, and some are philosophical. But it is less clear that he can appeal to common opinion in making these claims: indeed, these are exactly what his opponents will not grant him, and he does not seem to have any argument for them.

The passage just before this (455c–e) contains an argument that might be related, but does not seem entirely on point. It argues that there are no jobs in the city that are proper to women qua women or to men qua men, and concludes that the natures (i.e. the natural aptitudes for jobs) are similarly distributed among both 'animals', male and female. The ground for denying that any job belongs to women qua women or to men qua men is the alleged fact that men as a class are better at simply every civic job than women as a class are.[14] Glaucon agrees with the population-level claims that men as a genus are better in practically every task than are women as a genus, but adds the important amendment that many women are better than many men in many things.

Even with Glaucon's amendment – about which more soon – this is a bizarrely backhanded argument for the equal distribution of natures. If there were any job in which women excelled men, then we would say that this was a job which was proper to women qua women. Since there is none, we say that every job has some women naturally suited to it. How can the absence of excellence in one area be a guarantor of competence everywhere else?

Because I judge this argument unworkable, I conclude that the main ground for Socrates assertion is simply his direct observation of the variety of natural aptitudes that women display (as others have noted, Socrates' mother displayed a natural aptitude for medical activities). But I do not infer from the failure of the argument that Socrates – or Plato – had any doubts about its conclusions. These conclusions, with Glaucon's amendment, are three:

1) In practically every civic job, men as a class have more natural aptitude than women as a class;[15]

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[14] The 'civic job' formula (*epitēdeuma tōn polin dioikountōn*) is used to set aside the question of reproductive activity, where Socrates has conceded that the two sexes manifest some specialization of abilities.

[15] It is not logically entailed by this claim about classes that there will be some individual man or men who are better than the best individual woman, either in a given sample of the population – as I discuss below – or in the population as a whole. (It is made probable, though not necessary, by some theorems about statistical distribution, which will have been unknown to Plato.) However, Glaucon's amendment suggests that he takes Socrates' initial claim in this way, i.e. as entailing that the best women will be less good than the best men. This is why his amendment registers only the more moderate modification, that some women will be better than some men, rather than the

2) For every civic job, there are women with a considerable, significant natural aptitude for that job;

3) For many civic jobs,[16] there are many women who have more natural aptitude than many men do.

Since those claims are all put forward as claims about the classes of male and female as a whole, it is worth considering how they might play out in particular cities, and particularly how Glaucon's amendment affects the picture. If the general population contains two subpopulations that overlap in this way, then random samples of this population will sometimes reverse the picture from the population level. Example: if we look at all 30,000 runners who finish the Boston Marathon, we will find that the male runners as a group are faster than the female runners as a group, but that many women are faster than many men. If we then start taking random mixed-sex samples of 1,000 runners from the larger group, we will find many samples of 1,000 in which the fastest runner is a woman. We will find samples in which the fastest 5, or 10, or 500 runners are all women. We will find samples in which the women as a whole are faster runners than the men as a whole in that sample, though some men were faster than some women. None of these patterns could occur if every woman in the Boston Marathon was slower than every man in the Boston Marathon. Now think of these samples as medium-sized cities around the Greek landscape, of the sort that Socrates would like to establish or reform. Whatever may be true of the genus of men as a whole and the genus of women as a whole, it is perfectly possible that in a given city of a few thousand people, the natural abilities of the women will excel the natural abilities of the men in a variety of civic jobs, including philosophizing and ruling.

Thus even if we think that only the most philosophical people in a given city will be entitled to admission into the class of Guardians, we should conclude that in many particular cities, women will be entitled to admission on those grounds.

But in fact I do not think that we should imagine class admission on this competitive model in any case. It seems to me that Socrates' real model involves discrete differences of orientation rather than scalar differences of ability. What suits a person for entry into the Guardian class is simply this:

stronger modification – also compatible with what Socrates said – that some women will be better than all men.

[16] Why does Glaucon limit his amendment to 'many jobs'? Are there any civic jobs in which there will not be many women superior to many men? It is hard to imagine what they could be. Perhaps Glaucon was thinking of, e.g., the day-labourers of 371e who have only their bodily strength to sell. But even here, there will be many women who are hardier at hefting hods than many men are.

they love the Good and wisdom more than honour or pleasure, they orient their lives around following the Good in all of their actions, and they make that greater love effective in the organization of their souls so that they are wise, just, temperate, and courageous. I do not say that this is easy to do; it takes decades of training, and indeed Socrates assures us that there will never be many philosophers in a city. Among other things, you will need to learn some solid geometry. But if you do it, then the presence in the city of other people who are better at solid geometry cannot affect your membership in the class. There is not a limited number of slots; anyone with the right nature who receives the right education will become a Guardian. If a woman has a philosophic nature, receives a Guardian's training, and follows the course until she sees the Form of the Good at fifty, then she will be a Philosopher-Ruler, entirely independently of whether or not there is someone else in the city, male or female, who has more natural aptitude than she does. Nor is there any reason to think that she will have to defer to the better geometer's political pronouncements in a counsel of Guardians – we are told that the Kallipolis may have multiple Philosopher-Rulers, but not whether they ever disagree, or how they would arrive at a decision after disagreeing.[17] And the same considerations apply to male Guardians as well – supposing I met the threshold qualifications for solid geometry that would allow me to see the Form of the Good, I would not fail to gain entry into the class simply because my city also contained a Theaetetus. Socrates sometimes envisions (520) a kind of collegium of multiple Philosopher-Rulers who rule and study in turn; he surely does not require that every one of them is precisely as naturally adept at every relevant skill as every other. Instead, they all have the basic philosophical nature, i.e. they love wisdom and the Good, and they all meet certain threshold qualifications for the relevant abilities, i.e. they are good enough, without it mattering whether they are each literally the best.

If readers of the *Republic* sometimes come away with the impression that the most naturally apt individual in the city will become the sole autocratic ruler of everyone else, it may be the result of an argument at 412b8–c10 in which Socrates introduces the perfect Guardians and distinguishes them from the subordinate Guardians or Auxiliaries. Here, Socrates argues that the Guardian class, as yet undifferentiated, should be ruled by the best among them, and that the best guardians will be those who are best at

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[17] Indeed, it seems to me entirely compatible with everything else we know about Plato's attitude towards democracy, that a counsel of Philosopher-Rulers would settle a practical disagreement by putting the question to a majority vote.

guarding the city. This is motivated by the parallel assertion that the best farmers will be those best at farming. But there is a problem with this premise. We have been told that the abilities needed for guarding the city are swiftness of foot, strength of hand, and keenness of vision (375a5–7). So if the Guardians should be ruled by those best at guarding, then they will be ruled by those who are the fastest runners with the best vision. Leadership contests will be settled by a footrace, followed by an eye exam. And that is a conclusion at odds with what we learn in the rest of the book.

From the perspective of the work as a whole, we know that the rulers of the Guardians are Philosopher-Rulers; their job is to see the Form of the Good and direct the activities of the city so that it resembles that Form, and their leading virtue is wisdom. This job is fundamentally different from the job of the Auxiliaries, who have keen vision, swift feet, and good fighting skills, and whose highest virtue is courage. The jobs of Guardian and Auxiliary are so different that we know that the natures appropriate to these two jobs are distinct natures. And having a philosophical nature is a very different thing from being extremely good at being an auxiliary – wisdom is not simply courage in a superlative degree.[18] And this shows that the comparison to farmers is fundamentally misleading. Those who are best at farming will indeed be the best farmers – they will have, to the highest degree, the natures suited to farming, perfected by training and experience. But being the best at farming in this sense will not fit you to rule the farmers: the rulers of the farmers in the Kallipolis will not themselves be farmers at all, or have farming natures in either a positive or superlative degree. And no amount of skill at farming will suddenly transform a farming nature into a nature suited to rule farmers. No more will skill at being an auxiliary suddenly transform a swift keen-eyed dog into a philosopher.

One way to diagnose the oddity of the argument in 412b8–c10 is that it introduces what we will later understand as an abrupt, discrete difference in natures – the difference between honour-loving silver souls and

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[18] Exactly this conceptual error seems to be made at 412e when Socrates emphasizes that they will select the rulers of the Guardians by seeing which are the best 'guardians of the conviction' that they should pursue what is good for the city. But being excellent at retaining a conviction is not wisdom, but courage, as the close parallels between 412e and 430b show. I infer that at this earlier stage in the argument, Socrates' interlocutors do not yet understand what philosophy or wisdom really are, and are still confusing them with a sort of intensified courage about the right convictions. After we have learned that real philosophy involves knowledge from first principles rather than tenacious true belief, we will be able to see why the initial separation of Guardians from Auxiliaries was inadequately framed.

wisdom-loving golden souls – but introduces it as though it were simply a matter of scalar intensification, being better and better at the same lower activities. The argument is not unsalvageable; from the perspective of the work as a whole, we can also see that the right understanding of what it is to be 'best at guarding the city' means something much different than being extremely good at the limited number of abilities that have been enumerated prior to 412b (swiftness, vision, etc.). It means having a certain orientation towards values and convictions, and being able to defend those convictions, philosophically, and deduce them from one's knowledge of the Good.

I have been arguing against a third line of resistance to the First Wave, which Socrates did not anticipate, one which finds a contradiction between Socrates' claim that some women should be Guardians, and the suggestion that for any women who is good at X, there will be some man who is better at X.[19] I claim the argument fails for two reasons. First, the point about samples shows us that the better man may not be in the relevant sample; if I am trying to revolutionize Megara, then the talent pool in furthest Mysia is of no concern to me. Second, membership in the Guardian class should not be thought of in terms of competitive exclusion or first-past-the-post scoring, but in terms of discrete differences in nature. If I have the requisite nature, then someone else's possession of the same nature does not knock me out of the class, even if they possess it in a higher degree.

There are other lines of resistance to taking the First Wave seriously, derived from a different feature of Plato's ubiquitous misogyny: not his disparagement of women's intellectual abilities, but his tendency to associate women with moral vices like intemperance and cowardice. But before I turn to answering those concerns, I want to ask about how we might read the First Wave as part of the dialogue's larger program of representing the city as a model for one's soul.

3   How to Use the First Wave to Shape Your Soul

We have the First Wave in front of us, and now I want to ask: how can I put my soul in order using it as a model?

Elsewhere I have argued that the Second Wave offers us a model for soul-approximation in the following way.[20] As a political program, the

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[19] And again, the exchange between Socrates and Glaucon only suggests it, and does not strictly entail it by anything either says.
[20] Brennan 2012: 117–18.

Second Wave argues that we should abolish nuclear families from the Kallipolis, and replace them with an ideology in which every member of the Guardian class (including the Auxiliaries) thinks of every other member as a family member. They will consider the entire city to be their family, and will not only call each other 'brother' and 'mother', but also feel for these new institutional relatives the depth of solidarity and affection that ordinary people feel in biological families. Along with this scheme to extend the emotion of family feeling to the whole city, there will also be secret eugenic mating schemes. No one will know who their biological relations are, but in fact the people that they are calling 'sister' and 'father' and so on will be the people with the best natures, as guaranteed by the eugenics scheme.

I derive the psychological program as follows. Sexual reproduction is a ubiquitous figure throughout Plato's works for the propagation of ideas, beliefs, and convictions.[21] Family connections are a figure for the network of strongly held irrational convictions based on contingencies of tradition, prejudice, and local culture: the mass of values and opinions I cling to because it is what I was raised with and how I define myself. Eugenics is a figure for the philosophical production of the best beliefs by the best means, i.e. knowledge grounded in understanding.[22]

What it means to have a soul that is structured as the Kallipolis is structured by the Second Wave is that I have abolished any convictions that I had simply because I was raised with them, and replaced them with new and improved philosophical convictions that are underwritten by a scientific understanding of the true values. I will feel towards my new convictions the same powerful sense of irrational attachment that I used to feel towards my contingently acquired prejudices; that is what it means to say 'father' and 'mother' of the eugenically produced people in the city. The replacement of false convictions by philosophically assured true convictions does not alter the fact that my reason is a small part of me, and that my much greater spirited part is the locus of my visceral values. I will still have viscerally felt attachments to my values and convictions that are distinct from my philosophical appraisal of them. But now my visceral attachments will be attached to all and only the values that my reasoning part can endorse on philosophical grounds.

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[21] *Tht.* 148e–151d; *Phlb.* 63d; *Smp.* 208e–209e; *R.* 495b–496a, 537e–539a, 603b.
[22] *R.* 495b–496a provides a clear illustration of the converse: when Socrates wants to illustrate the production of 'illegitimate and inferior' ideas and convictions through the misuse of philosophy, he invents a miniature allegory of miscegenation, i.e. dysgenics, in which an inferior man from a lower class mates with the daughter of a social superior.

This reading of the Second Wave also tells us how to extract the psychological analogue from the proposal at the end of Book 7 (541a) that the civic reformers should begin their reforms by sending everyone over age ten out into the fields.[23] Again, parental influence is a figure for the irrational acquisition of convictions and their ascendancy over my values. What it means to get rid of everyone over ten 'in my soul' is that I will reject the authority of mere tradition; any beliefs I had merely because they were part of 'the ethos that my parents had' (541a1) – or that my culture, religion, tribe, etc., had – will be rejected from my soul.

I have also argued that the Second Wave bears a special connection to the spirited part of the soul, because of its emphasis on irrational convictions about value, its emphasis on group loyalty and the values of solidarity and tribal affiliation, all of them hallmarks of the psychology of Spirit. The Third Wave, which argues that all and only philosophers should be rulers, seems very naturally have a special relevance to the reasoning part of the soul.

With that model in mind, we may wonder what the psychological significance of the First Wave is, and in particular whether it has any special application to Appetite. Certainly the most notable feature of the First Wave is its discussion of women; could women stand as some sort of figure for psychological elements like Appetite, or appetitive pleasures or desires?

When women are mentioned in the *Republic*, outside of the First Wave, they often seem to be connected to appetitive pleasures, or the vices that arise from appetitive pleasures. For instance, in Book 10 we are told that tragic pleasure appeals to an inferior part of us (603a–b), a part that loves variety (*poikilia*, 604e and 605a), and that our indulgence in the pleasures of tragedy will lead us to behave in ways that are characteristic of women (605e). In Book 8, we are told that the democratic constitution – a constitution in which necessary and unnecessary appetites are all gratified – displays a variety (*poikilia* again) of the kind that children and women enjoy (557c). Earlier, the youth of a good father is transformed into a Timocrat by the influence of his mother who cares about money (549c–d). If we put this story of a Timocratic soul in parallel with the story of the Timocratic city and its

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[23] The figure ten is a bit of a cipher on any reading, whether a psychologizing one such as I propose, or a merely political one. What makes it opaque is simply that there is very little evidence that ten was an age of any significance in Greek culture. Typically, the important years are seven and fourteen (both in Solon fr.27 and in the Stoics, *SVF* 2.83, 835; D. L. 7.55); here we might expect transitions from pre-rational child to rational child or young adult. I have not seen any suggestion of why Plato chose the number ten, or what significance he thought it had. True, it has special status in Pythagorean lore as a 'perfect' number, but that has no obvious relevance to this case, nor is it usually applied to ten years.

genesis, we can see that the driving force that produces the corrupt Timocracy is the appetitive desire for gold and silver (547b).[24] Here again the mother represents the corrupting power of appetitive desires.

Outside of the *Republic*, as well, women seem to be associated with bodily excesses or vices. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates initiates the philosophical discussion by asking Crito to send home a wailing Xanthippe (*Phd.* 60a), and at the end of the discussion, when the men succumb to tears at Socrates' imminent death, he rebukes them for behaving like women (*Phd.* 117d). In the *Timaeus*, we are told that souls who were first incarnated as men are later incarnated as women due to their injustice and cowardice (*Ti.* 42b-c, 90e).

We are faced with catastrophic success. We have found ample evidence that Plato could have intended a discussion of women to somehow stand for a discussion of appetite. But the apparent tendency of the comparison of women to appetite is such as to undermine the explicit message of the First Wave, which is that women can be philosophers. The images of women that we have seen make women appear to be inimical to philosophy, or incapable of it.

That direction of thought ends in failure. But a different possibility is suggested by the *Philebus*. It comes from a passage in which Socrates is mixing the ingredients of the good life together, and he composes a brief dramatic interlude between the personified components of the mixture. The components in question are reason (*nous*) and pleasure (*hēdonē*), and the dramatic interlude has Socrates practicing one of the midwife's arts by arranging a marriage.[25] (Since words for mixture are often used for love-making, the analogy is a natural one.) First he addresses the pleasures as 'my dear girls' (*ō philai*), and asks whether they would like to set up housekeeping with the personified reason; they agree readily. Next, Socrates asks intelligence and reason whether they would like to be mixed with pleasures. Their response is grumpy and suspicious, demanding to know what kind of pleasures Socrates is suggesting they should mix with. He means the true pleasures, but he asks them whether they would also like to be mixed with the greatest and most intense pleasures as well. This provokes an extended tirade from Reason that features many tropes famil-iar from anti-feminist literature: the intense pleasures are a ball and chain;[26] they fill the household with madness and chaos; they are so careless

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[24] I discuss this in more detail in Brennan 2012: 112–114.   [25] *Tht.* 149d–150a.

[26] *empodismata*; cf. Euripides, *Orestes* 605–606; Simonides fr. 7.116; Musonius' diatribe 'Whether life with a woman is an impediment to philosophy' in Stobaeus 4.22a20.

and forgetful that they neglect the children of Reason and leave them to die. But true and pure pleasures are acceptable to Reason, and a mixture – or a marriage – is contracted between Reason and Pleasure. Thus Socrates mixes the ingredients of the best life.

This miniature marital fiction offers us a very different approach to the First Wave. For while it supports our earlier findings that women in general may represent pleasures and desires in general, it now stresses the importance of distinguishing within the classes. Some pleasures are maddening, vicious, and incapable of incorporation into a life of reason. But other pleasures are not only compatible with reason, but actually indispensable for a good life. Some women may be vicious and intemperate, but other women have guardian natures, suited for virtue and philosophy.

It is consistent to think that the As on the whole are better than the Bs on the whole, and also to think that a mixture of A and B is better than an unmixed mass of A. Of course, if Bs come in a great variety, then the goodness of the mixture may depend on admitting only the best Bs; an admixture of Bs that are less than the best might produce a mixture that is less good than unmixed As. Thus we will not admit every pleasure to the mixture, but only a limited set. And we will not admit every woman to the Guardian class, but only those whose natures suit them to it (a restriction which of course applies equally to men).

So it is also entirely consistent to think that certain select Bs can improve a mixed class by their presence, while also holding the strongest and most virulent prejudices against other Bs. Socrates can disparage and decry the vitiating effects of certain sorts of pleasures without in any way undermining his commitment to the idea that the best life must contain some pleasures, and that the pleasures that it contains are good-making features in it. And Socrates can express the normal anti-feminist stereotypes against certain sorts of women without this in any way undermining his commitment to the idea that the Guardian class should contain women, and that the women who are properly included among the Guardians make the class better by their presence.

What this suggests is that the First Wave is informing us about Appetite and about Reason at the same time, by showing us the importance of distinguishing appetitive pleasures from the pleasures of reason, and from pleasures in general.

There is a certain class in the city of people who both philosophize and rule. One might have thought that women should be excluded from this class, on the grounds that they lack the requisite aptitudes. Extrapolating from one's experience with those women who are cowardly, intemperate, and unintelligent, one might have thought that all women in the city will be

part of the Producer class. But that is not so: while most women lack the guardian nature, some have it, and they should be incorporated into the guardian class.

There is a certain part of the soul, the reasoning part, which in virtuous people organizes their lives as well as contemplating. One might have thought that desires and pleasures have no place in this soul part, on the grounds that they are inimical to rationality. One might have thought that desires and pleasures are to be found exclusively in Appetite. But that is not so: while most desires and pleasures are incompatible with rationality, there are others that are vital to full rationality and to a fully rational life.

Take this as a response to a common mistake about psychology. When people hear 'rationality' or 'the calculative part', they jump to Humean conclusions, thinking that rationality will not have its own desires and pleasures.

We now have a reading of the psychological content of the First Wave which is both doctrinally sensible and consistent with the political content. Women are not being used to represent Appetite on the psychological level, while being paragons of rationality on the political level. Instead, women in general represent desires and pleasures in general, and a special subclass of philosophically adept women represent a special class of pure, true, and rationally acceptable desires and pleasures.

Let us return to the practical question of the *Republic*: how can I set my soul in order by using the ideal city as a model? What does it mean to model my soul after a city that has adopted the First Wave? What would it mean, by contrast, for my soul to be modeled after a non-ideal city that has not adopted the First Wave? We can now answer these questions. In order to become fully virtuous, in order to practice ideal politics in the city of yourself, you must actively embrace the pleasures that are proper to rationality – the true and pure pleasures that accompany rational activity – and see them as intrinsic to a fully rational life. You must not make the mistake of thinking that reason and pleasure are naturally inimical. You must not aim for a joyless and aloof rationality. Nor should you relegate all of your desires and pleasures to the realm of Appetite. Appetitive pleasures are one sort of pleasure, but not the only sort. You must distinguish among pleasures, distinguish among desires, and assign the different kinds to their proper roles. Rational pleasures have a role in the guidance of your life; they belong in the citadel of your soul. Irrational and appetitive pleasures must not be permitted to rule within you, though of course Reason will sometimes mandate their gratification.

Notice that the process of finding the right solution to our question – of how to read the First Wave psychologically – repeated one of the central

motifs of the First Wave itself: the importance of making relevant distinctions. The more philosophical of the objections that Socrates considers – the antilogical one – gains its impetus from jumbling together all kinds of 'natures', and treating all differences in nature as equally important. The answer to that objection came through the careful distinction of natures – reproductive natures and bald natures do not have the same status as musical natures and medical natures when we are considering suitability for civic jobs. This led to a proper distinction of women, so that women with medical natures or musical natures will not be admitted to the Guardian class, but women with philosophical natures will be. In our case, the catastrophic success arose when we jumbled together all pleasures and desires, and condemned them all as appetitive. If all pleasures are appetitive and anti-philosophical, and women stand for pleasure, then women cannot be philosophers. The answer came through carefully distinguishing kinds of desires and pleasures (which is, indeed, a central task of the *Philebus* itself). Many pleasures – the intense and violent ones – cannot be included into the best life. But certain pleasures can be, especially the pleasures that arise from philosophy itself.

The First Wave now tells us something important about Appetite. Just as we should not craft our city by sending all of the women down to the Producer class, so too we should not craft our souls by sending all pleasures to the Appetitive part. The Second Wave tells us something important about Spirit, its sociability, its plasticity, and its attachment to familial connections.[27] The Third Wave, which tells us that philosophers should be rulers, suggests a clear allegorical message for our understanding of Reason: the ideally virtuous reason will see a full unification of theoretical and practical rationality, made possible by the unification of the highest object of each in the Form of the Good (504e).[28] In light of this pattern, I propose that the tripartite psychology is not 'strikingly absent' from the middle books (in Ferrari's words), but instead actually gives them their structure. Books 5–7 give us three waves of new psychological insights into the structure of our souls.

4   Porphyrian Reading

I began this paper with some complaints about readings of the *Republic* that make the middle books devoid of psychological relevance, and thus seem to abandon the city-soul analogy. I have advocated a reading of the First Wave that gives the political program a direct psychological analogue.

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[27] I argue this more extensively in Brennan 2012.   [28] I hope to argue this more fully elsewhere.

I have sometimes thought that Plato has no business in the *Republic* discussing politics in anything other than an allegorical mode. After all, the challenge of Glaucon and Adeimantus is about individual lives, the justice in an individual and its effect on their individual soul. And Socrates introduces the model of the city explicitly in order to make a point about justice in the individual. Thus he really ought not to be talking about politics except insofar as it functions as a model for the soul.

The problems with this hard-line allegorical reading are two. First, it is very hard to avoid the impression that some of the things that Plato says about politics in the *Republic* are things that he not only believes, but believes are worth saying in their own right. Second, the attempt to read the entire political content of the *Republic* allegorically seems doomed to failure or to self-parody. I may have already reached those destinations in what I have written above, but even if I have avoided them as yet, I can see them in prospect. Perhaps reproduction is a figure for the propagation of ideas, but what is the special psychological significance of the restriction of female Guardians' breeding years to the ages of twenty through forty? And the male years from twenty-five to fifty-five? What daft numerology can map those details onto psychology?

So I want to reject the idea that politics is merely allegorical in the *Republic* (though it may be that I am the only person who has ever held that idea), and offer a new model in its place. It is true that many features of ideal politics can be used as ways of talking about ideal psychology, but this does not mean that politics is mere allegory. In particular, it does not mean that a good city has the shape and structures that it has only because a good soul has the shape and structures that it has. Rather, what the Republic suggests is that each of these domains derives its structure from something more fundamental than them, namely the Form of the Good.

If souls and cities are parallel instantiations of an underlying Form (or complex of Forms), then we should not be surprised that they will share a lot of content, while also diverging in certain details. As Porphyry puts it, 'In all things there is a share of all things, but in a way appropriate to the being of each one.'[29] The psychic part of appetite, and the political part of the producing class, are both expressions of a deeper feature of the cosmos,

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[29] *Sent.* 10: Πάντα μὲν ἐν πᾶσιν, ἀλλὰ οἰκείως τῇ ἑκάστου οὐσίᾳ· ἐν νῷ μὲν γὰρ νοερῶς, ἐν ψυχῇ δὲ λογικῶς, ἐν δὲ τοῖς φυτοῖς σπερματικῶς, ἐν δὲ σώμασιν εἰδωλικῶς, ἐν δὲ τῷ ἐπέκεινα ἀνεννοήτως τε καὶ ὑπερουσίως. 'All things [are present] in all things, but in a way appropriate to the being of each one; for in the intellect [all things are present] intellectually, in the soul [they are present] rationally, in plants seminally, in bodies imagistically, and in the Beyond they are present non-conceptually and super-essentially.'

namely soul's maintenance of mortal bodies. But the details of the expression may differ quite a lot. There is more dirt in the agricultural sector of a city than in an appetitive soul – not only is there no literal dirt in psychic appetite, but there may not be any figurative dirt either.

As a different example, consider the expulsion of the grown-ups from the city, and its psychic analogue of freeing myself from the grips of traditional authority. These may both be expressions of the same underlying pattern. But when I expel ideas from my soul, there are no actual people being evicted from houses, no actual violations of human rights, no actual killing fields where the representatives of traditional authority go to die. This difference in expression will mean that in some cases we will be willing to endorse one manifestation of an underlying pattern, while rejecting a parallel manifestation when it manifests itself differently in a different domain.

5   Conclusion

I have attempted to advance several claims in this paper.

First, I have argued that the First Wave has a psychological reading that allows us to see it as an integral part of the method of the Larger Letters. The First Wave directs the founders of the Kallipolis to organize the city in a certain way, and directs me to organize my soul in a way that is relevantly the same way. I organize my soul this way by distinguishing among the desires and pleasures, those whose nature it is to belong to Appetite, to Spirit, or to Reason. I happily acknowledge the contribution of rational desire and rational pleasure to the life of my reasoning part, while at the same time looking with suspicion on the desires and pleasures of appetite, and refusing to admit them to the life of my rational part. I avoid the twin errors of thinking that all desires and pleasures are appetitive desires and pleasures (a mistake about the nature of the appetitive part), and thinking that reason is essentially devoid of desire and pleasure (a mistake about the nature of the reasoning part).

Next, I have argued that the political reading of the First Wave is sincerely intended: Plato really did think that an ideal city would include women in its Guardian class. The interesting obstacles to taking the political proposal seriously come from Plato's pervasive misogyny and sexism: there is only too much evidence that he thought women as a whole somehow less good than men as a whole. But that attitude is consistent with his having thought both that the Guardian class is better

with some women sharing all of the tasks in it, and that some women have the right natures for sharing all of the tasks.

Finally, I have proposed a way of thinking about this sort of reading of the explicitly political material in the *Republic*, which both insists on deriving psychological conclusions from the political claims, and also insists on taking the political claims at face value as well. The political content is in one sense always allegorical, figurative, illustrative of something else, but in another sense always fully literal. The Porphyrian Principle gives us a better way to think about the relation between the two kinds of content. I ought not to say that the political content of the *Republic* is merely an allegorical presentation of Plato's psychological theories, but rather that both kinds of entities, cities and souls, have the shapes and structures that they do because they are instantiating the same underlying formal structures. The common formal content allows descriptions of one level (for example, cities) to give us information about the other level (for example, souls). And we will not be surprised that the two levels express this common formal content in somewhat different ways, since formal structures are present in different instantiations in a way that is appropriate to the being of each case.[30]

Knowing and Believing in Republic 5

Verity Harte

1   The Chestnut

My topic is that most chestnut-y of old chestnuts, Socrates' distinction
between knowledge and belief in the argument directed at the sight-lovers
at the end of *Republic* 5 (476c7–480a13).[1] The chestnut itself might be
stated like this:

In 477c–d, Socrates states identity conditions for powers (*dunameis*): the
conditions under which two powers are the same power and the conditions
under which two powers are distinct powers.

> Shall we say that powers[2] are some kind of being, precisely the things
> by means of which both we – and whatever else may be capable – are
> capable of the things we are capable of. I mean, for example, that
> sight and hearing are among the powers, if you understand the type I
> wish to speak of.
>
> I do understand, he said.
>
> Then hear what seems to me the case about them. In the case of a power, I
> see neither any colour nor shape nor any of the other sorts of features such as
> many other things do have, paying attention to which I distinguish for
> myself regarding some things one group from another. *In the case of a power
> I look only to that over which it is and what it effects; and I call each of them a
> power in this way: what has been put in position over the same thing and effected
> the same thing I call the same [power]; whereas what [has been put in position]
> over a different thing and effected a different thing [I call] another [power].*
> What about you? What do you do?
>
> This.[3] (*R.* 5.477c1–d7, my emphasis)

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[1] References are to the Greek text in Slings 2003.
[2] 'Power' is probably the best translation, but an alternative, 'capability', would make it easier to see the
connection between noun and verb in English.
[3] My translation deliberately errs on the side of the literal in the emphasized passage, at the cost of some
elegance in English.

At worst, Socrates here commits the fallacy of inferring from the claim that powers are the same when they both do and are set over the same things that two powers will differ only if they both do different things and are set over different things. At best, Socrates apparently arbitrarily stipulates identity and distinctness conditions for powers from which it follows that knowledge and belief cannot share the same objects.[4] But this seems puzzling. First, intuitively, it is possible for one person to have knowledge of the very same thing that another person believes; indeed, in modern epistemological discussions it is assumed that knowledge entails belief so that whatever a person knows that same person will also believe. Second, if Socrates' position entails that a knower of the Form of Justice cannot bring that knowledge to bear in knowing, of some action, that *it* (the action in question) is just, it is hard to see how the philosophers' hard won knowledge will bring them much success in ruling. But the argument in which this chestnut appears forms part of a sequence of arguments whose intended goal is to support the claim that philosophers should rule, in part by pointing to the fact that philosophers have *knowledge*.

In addressing this chestnut, I want to highlight and reject one central assumption on which such a reading of it depends. This is the assumption that when Socrates identifies a power as being *set over* some type of object, the relation of being set over entails that one can exercise that power *only* in relation to the relevant object type. Evidently, such an assumption is necessary to this reading of the chestnut. Absent this assumption, it would not follow from knowledge and belief being different powers and set over different objects that knowledge and belief could not *also* be

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[4] At issue is the best understanding of the two criteria Socrates states at 477d1–5. There are two ways to understand these criteria: (Option A) 1. If power p1 and power p2 are over the same thing and effect the same thing, p1 = p2. 2. If power p1 and power p2 are over a different thing and effect a different thing, p1 ≠ p2. (Option B) 1. Power p1 and power p2 are over the same thing and effect the same thing iff p1 = p2. 2. Power p1 and power p2 are over a different thing and effect a different thing iff p1 ≠ p2. Option A is silent on different powers being set over the same thing, but effecting different things. Thus, when Socrates subsequently infers from the difference between knowledge and belief that they are set over different things (478a1–13), his argument commits a fallacy, given this reading of 477d1–5. (For the point, compare, for example, Crombie 1963: 57.) Option B avoids having Socrates commit a fallacy in inferring from the difference in the two powers that they not only effect different things, but are over different things, by writing this very implication into biconditional 2. But Option B assumes a conception of powers according to which no power is over the same thing, but effects a different thing, or effects the same thing, but is over a different thing, from a different power. Proof: For any powers, p1 and p2, either (i) p1=p2 or (ii) p1≠p2. If (i), they are over the same thing and effect the same thing (by 1, Option B). If (ii), they are over a different thing and effect a different thing (by 2, Option B).

exercised in relation to the same objects, so that the same things could be both known and believed.[5]

I shall defend an alternative understanding of the 'being set over' relation, according to which a power being set over some type of object does not entail that the power can be exercised only in relation to that type of object. Rather, the relation of being set over indicates the kind of object to which a power is specially related, for which it is *tasked*, as it were.[6] It does not follow from this that the power cannot be exercised in relation to other types of object. At most it follows only that, if it is exercised in relation to other types of object, its special object has some role to play in the exercise. Even this does not *follow* exactly, though I will argue that something like it is part of the view.

The kind of position I have in mind can be illustrated using one of Socrates' own examples: the power of seeing. Colour is the obvious candidate special object of the power that is seeing. But this does not mean that colours are the only things I can see: I can see people, places and things. Colours, however, do play a role in any exercise of seeing.[7] The fact that they do so might be said to 'colour' my seeing (pardon the pun): it affects what my seeing of other things is like – the aspect of things I have access to in seeing them, the character of that access, and so on. One might compare the Aristotelian picture according to which colours are the special objects of seeing, with no implication that colours are the only things I can see. (Indeed, the availability of the comparison may be indirectly supportive of my thesis.)

However, if the seeing example supports rejection of the restriction of the exercise of a power to its special domain, in conjunction with Socrates' second example, hearing, it raises the spectre of a different problem. While there are objects that I can both see and hear, the objects for which seeing and hearing seem specially tasked, colours and sounds, exclude one another in the sense that, synaesthesia aside,

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[5] Formally, this move bears some similarity to the important move made by Nicholas Smith in Smith 2000, when he argues that it is a mistake to assimilate Socrates' relation between a power and the object that power is set over to the relation between a mode of cognition and its object, what that cognition is *about*. I agree. But Smith's account of powers is largely negative: a power's relation to the objects over which they are set is *not* the cognition-about relation and accordingly does not preclude exercises of the power being *about* the objects of different powers. My project is to offer a positive account of powers and of the epistemological implications of Socrates' identification of knowledge and belief as powers, and moreover one that uses evidence from the *Republic*'s own discussion of powers.

[6] Gosling 1968: 123 mentions but does not develop such a view.

[7] I think this must be true of every activity that can, non-metaphorically, be described as *seeing*.

one cannot see sounds or hear colours. If the objects for which the powers of knowledge and belief are tasked relate to each other in this way, the chestnut will still fruit. This exclusivity of special object, however, I take to be an inessential feature of Socrates' choice of examples, as the background to the passage will show. The situation is (non-accidentally) comparable to the way in which, in *Republic* Book I, Socrates illustrates his notion of the *ergon* (the work or function) of something (that which something does only *or best* with that thing, 352e3–4) by pointing to seeing, the *ergon* of eyes, an activity that only eyes can do.

2   Evidence for My View

The resolution of the chestnut is itself part of the evidence I would offer for my view. But this evidence would not be complete without a fuller defence of the chestnut's needing to be resolved. Some think the distinction of objects for knowledge and for belief in such a way that nothing can be both known and believed is not a bug, but a feature of Plato's epistemology.[8] Nor could the evidence provided by resolution of the chestnut be complete without a full statement of the corresponding reading of the argument in which the chestnut appears, defended against alternatives. That is a task beyond the scope of the present chapter. For now, my evidence will be finer-grained: attention to the language in which Socrates expresses his criteria for the individuation of powers, especially in light of a passage with comparable language in *Republic* Book I.

Others have noted that *Socrates'* epistemology centrally involves the view that knowledge is a *dunamis* or power, and, more generally, *Socrates'* notion of a power has been a focus of study.[9] The material from *Republic* I that I shall consider has been included in such study. But discussions of this feature of Socrates' epistemology and of his conception of power have not been brought to bear on the talk of knowledge and belief as powers in

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[8] For a recent, clear and robust defence of the exclusiveness of the domains of what can be known and what can be believed, what is undoubtedly the traditional reading of *Republic* Book 5, see Gerson 2006, especially Chapter 4.

[9] See, e.g., Benson 2000, especially Chapter 9. Though Benson notes the comparable claims of *Republic* 5 (Benson 2000: 195), using the comparison as support for the notion that *Socrates* thinks of knowledge as a power, he does not extend his illuminating discussion of what would be involved in thinking of knowledge as a power, which draws in part on the material from *Republic* I that I shall consider below, to the claims that are made in *Republic* 5.

Republic 5 and the literatures on each have not typically been brought into conversation with one another.[10] There is, therefore, independent value in connecting the material on which I shall draw in Book 1 with the discussion of powers in Book 5.

2.1   Epi *with Dative*

Start with Socrates' language, in 477d1–5, when he states his identity conditions for powers:

> δυνάμεως δ' εἰς ἐκεῖνο μόνον βλέπω ἐφ' ᾧ τε ἔστι καὶ ὃ ἀπεργάζεται, καὶ ταύτῃ ἑκάστην αὐτῶν δύναμιν ἐκάλεσα, καὶ τὴν μὲν ἐπὶ τῷ αὐτῷ τεταγμένην καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἀπεργαζομένην τὴν αὐτὴν καλῶ, τὴν δὲ ἐπὶ ἑτέρῳ καὶ ἕτερον ἀπεργαζομένην ἄλλην.

> In the case of a power I look only to that over which (*epi*) it is and what it effects (*apergazetai*); and I call each of them a power in this way: what has been put in position over the same thing and effected the same thing I call the same [power]; whereas what [has been put in position] over a different thing and effected a different thing [I call] another [power].[11]

What should be understood by Socrates' use here and elsewhere in the passage of the preposition '*epi*' with dative? He uses it in combination with the verb 'to be' (*einai*), with '*pephuken*' (to be of a nature to), but also, and most illuminatingly, with the verb '*tassō*' (to marshal or put in position) (for example, at 477b8 and 477d4). This latter is a military verb with normative connotations.[12] It suggests that powers stand in relation to (*epi*) things to which they have been assigned, stationed or positioned, which are, as it were, their post.[13] Especially in the context of this military verb, '*epi*' with dative seems most appropriately understood in context as indicating a domain of normative assignment for powers.[14]

Domains of normative assignment are not obviously distinguished in any of the ways that spell trouble for Socrates. The military context

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[10] Conversely, Nicholas Smith's important pair of papers focusing on the use and significance of power talk in *Republic* 5 (Smith 2000 and Smith 2012) do not connect this talk to any passage of *Republic* 1 or, more broadly, to the discussion of powers in or out of epistemological contexts elsewhere in Plato.

[11] This is the passage I emphasized in the chestnut passage, translated in Section 1.

[12] The point is well noted and developed by Vogt 2012: 62–5, though we differ in some important respects on the epistemological upshot of this way of thinking.

[13] Such a normative reading also gets support from the use of *pephuken* ('is of a nature to') at 477a11 and 478a4–5.

[14] Sv ἐπὶ *(epi)* LSJ B.III.6. In a similar vein, Christopher Rowe, in his recent translation and in his notes thereto, writes of powers 'being for' or 'being assigned to' things, understood as identifying a sphere of concern (2012: *ad loc*). He also correctly notes the parallel to be found in *Republic* 1 (2012: 406).

provides examples of domains of normative assignment that cooperate on shared tasks, domains that overlap and that may stand in various subordination relations.

Consider first how a squadron of soldiers may cooperate in an assault on a military target in such a way that specialized soldiers fulfil specialized tasks towards the goal: one sets charges, another stands lookout, for example. In this example, there are particular tasks for which particular specialized soldiers are tasked and which, in the normal run of things, only those specialized soldiers will fulfil. But there will be other tasks, such as firing at the enemy or defending each other, for which all are tasked; and there is one task, the assault as a whole, which all share together.

Consider a second military example: In the US military, a squadron, made up of individual soldiers, is led by a sergeant; and a platoon, made up of a number of squadrons, is led by a lieutenant. The domains of command of lieutenant and sergeant overlap; the command of the sergeant is subordinated to that of the lieutenant; and the soldiers in the domain are not exclusively responsive to sergeant or lieutenant. This is an example in which the overlapping tasks are both similar and subordinated – command; think of this as a *vertical* relation between tasks. As we saw in the first example, a domain may also form the arena of operation of tasks that are not similar; think of this as a *horizontal* relation between tasks, as obtains in respect of a single company of soldiers between the tasks of quartermaster and commander, for example.

Consider a third military example: A domain of normative assignment need not exhaust the possible sphere of operation of the person or power whose task is specially related to the domain. At least in certain circumstances, the sergeant of one squadron may command an individual soldier outside of his or her squadron and being in command of certain soldiers presumably does not exhaust the military activity of a sergeant.

It may be helpful at this point to distinguish different ways in which domains – of any sort – may be distinct from one another and to fix some terminology to use for these kinds of distinction. 'Distinct' itself may be used to indicate either that two domains are *non-identical* or that two domains are, not only not identical, but also *disjoint*, which is to say that the two domains do not overlap with one another. When necessary, I shall talk of things that are distinct and non-overlapping, as distinct from things that are distinct and overlapping. My military examples illustrate the general point that items in some domain of normative assignment are

not, simply in virtue of this fact, automatically distinct in either of these two specific ways.

Contrast these two ways in which one domain of normative assignment for some power might be distinct from another from a different relation, that of being *exclusive*. Two domains are exclusive if, for two distinct powers, p1 and p2, the members of the domain of power p1 exclude the operation of the power p2 and the members of the domain of power p2 exclude the operation of the power p1. With respect to the powers of seeing and hearing, colours and sounds are arguably exclusive in this way. My third military example illustrates the point that two domains may be distinct and non-overlapping but nevertheless not exclusive. I shall argue that Socrates' conception of the powers, knowledge and belief, allows that their respective domains are non-exclusive. This is consistent with (though does not require) the domains of these powers being distinct and non-overlapping.

Note that, while the military examples show that domains of normative assignment need not be distinct or exclusive, they also suggest some important sense in which the relation between the element to which a task is assigned and the domain of its assignment *is* unique: organized systems such as the military avoid redundancy by not assigning the *same* task in relation to the objects of a domain twice over.[15]

My military examples are not in themselves designed to establish any specific positive constraints on how we should understand Socrates' picture of the relation between a power and its domain. My use of the military analogy is designed to make the negative point that domains of normative assignment are not in and of themselves exclusive in the way required for the reading of the chestnut according to which an exercise of the power that is knowledge or belief can be exercised only in relation to items in the domain over which it is set as a power. I shall shortly turn to *Republic* Book 1 for additional support for understanding the domain of a power as one of normative

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[15] I do not count cases of subordination, such as the powers of command of sergeant and lieutenant relative to the same soldiers, as double assignment: first, the lieutenant's power in fact has a larger domain, incorporating command over other squadrons; second, and no doubt in part in consequence, the lieutenant will not typically exercise her power of command on matters that typically fall to the sergeant under her. Nor do I count it as double assignment if a task requires more than one person for it to be fulfilled. What I mean is that the army would not, in addition to the role of quartermaster, devise and staff the role of 'squartermaster', a position whose task is to fulfil all the duties of a quartermaster.

assignment. This is also the context on which I shall draw for a positive account of Socrates' constraints on the relation between powers and their domains of normative assignment. First, however, I want to pick up the remaining part of Socrates' characterization of powers in the Book 5 passage.

2.2 What Powers Effect (apergazetai)

Socrates distinguishes powers not only by giving them distinct domains of normative assignment, but also by pointing to a difference in what they effect (*apergazetai*). What is the *effect* of a power?

Socrates is not explicit on this point, but there is reason to think that the *effects* of the powers, knowledge and belief, are simply the activities of *knowing* (more precisely, knowing what is, that/how it is) and *believing*.[16] There are two main pieces of evidence for this. First, at 477d8–e4, when Socrates and Glaucon formally agree that each of knowledge and belief should be identified as a power, Glaucon identifies belief as the power 'by which we are capable of believing' (e3). This suggests that the effect of the power belief just is the activity of *believing*. The second piece of evidence comes from the structure of Socrates' argument at 478a4–13. Socrates and Glaucon have just recalled their agreement that knowledge and belief are different powers. In what follows, Socrates clearly means to apply his criteria for distinguishing different powers to show that, being different powers, knowledge and belief are both *over* different things and have *different effects*.

> Is, then, each of them [sc. knowledge and belief], being capable of something different, naturally *over* something different?
> Necessarily.
> But knowledge is presumably over what is, to know respecting what is that/how it is?
> Yes.
> Whereas belief, we say, believes?
> Yes.
> Does it [believe] the very same thing that knowledge knows? And will the same thing be both knowable and believable? Or is that impossible?
> Impossible, he said, on the basis of what has been agreed. (478a4–13)

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[16] More needs to be said to fill out what such activities amount to. For thoughtful discussion, see Smith 2012, especially 59–60, in part rethinking the view of Smith 2000: Appendix.

It is clear where in this passage Socrates applies that part of his criterion for distinctness of powers that sets different powers over different things. Knowledge is 'over what is'. We are not yet told what belief is set over, but we do draw the negative conclusion that it is impossible that it be set over the same thing as knowledge is. Where then does he draw the conclusion regarding their different effects? The answer must be that he does so when he characterizes knowledge as set over what is 'to know ... that/how it is' and characterizes belief as 'believing'. So understood, his argument has a nice chiastic structure: knowledge is set over A and accomplishes B; belief accomplishes B*, which leaves us with the substantive claim to be made by the next stage of the argument, to identify more precisely A*, the distinct thing that belief is set over to effect believing. This turns out to be what both is and is not (see, e.g., 478e2).

I have argued that the effects of the powers, knowledge and belief, are the activities of knowing and believing. However, this does not mean that, for any power Φ, its effect is the activity of Φ-ing. '*Apergazomai*' – the verb that Socrates uses in his statement of this part of his identity conditions – is often found in Plato with its cognate accusative: '*to ergon apergazomai*' (to effect its work or function). Two examples are found in the so-called '*ergon* argument' at the end of *Republic* I (353b14–c1; 353c9–10). I shall shortly argue that the framework of this earlier argument provides important background to the discussion of powers in Book 5. The use of the verb with cognate accusative suggests that the most general way in which to identify the *effect* of a power is as its *ergon*. For some powers, the *ergon* of a power Φ is the activity of Φ-ing; but for others, the *ergon* is something resulting from this activity. This kind of view is familiar, of course, from Book 1 of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

In *EN* 1, Aristotle has at least half an eye on the *ergon* argument of *Republic* 1. So should we. I have already provided some evidence that Socrates' use in Book 5 of '*epi*' with dative indicates a domain of normative assignment for powers. Socrates' verb for a power's production of its effect, *apergazomai*, can be read flatly as indicating simply that something is *caused* or *produced*. But this verb too can carry normative connotations of completing or bringing to perfection some *ergon*. The *ergon* argument of *Republic* 1 occurs at the end of a lengthy passage in which the cluster of terms that Socrates uses in formulating his identity conditions for powers makes its first appearance. Consideration of this passage provides significant support for a normative understanding of the relation between powers, effects and domains.

2.3   Evidence from Book 1

A striking feature of the chestnut passage is that Socrates gives the impression of introducing into the discussion a somewhat technical notion and yet Glaucon seems easily able to understand precisely what is meant. This combination is readily explained if Plato is using it to signal that he here has Socrates deploy a notion developed, but not so prominently signalled, elsewhere. If, as I shall argue, earlier in the dialogue, we find an understanding of what a power is that can illuminate the subsequent identification of knowledge and belief as powers, there is reason to hold that this earlier understanding should act both as a resource for and as a control on our interpretation of that subsequent identification. The ease with which Glaucon understands Socrates' somewhat technical notion makes sense if one bears in mind the conversation between Socrates and Thrasymachus to which he was witness back in Book 1 and to which we know both he and his brother were paying close attention.[17]

The context of the Book 1 passage I am interested in is the discussion of crafts or skills (*technai*). Socrates and Thrasymachus agree that ruling is a skill. They disagree over whether, as a skill, ruling will benefit the subjects over which it is exercised or the ruler who exercises the skill. At 340d–e, Thrasymachus had insisted on a strict understanding of who counts as the practitioner of a skill. The practitioner of a skill, strictly and properly speaking, is one whose exercise of the skill does not deviate from the skill. This is why rulers who make a mistake as to their own advantage and do not properly legislate for it do not constitute an objection to Thrasymachus' view that justice consists in the advantage of rulers. Such errant rulers do not count as rulers, properly speaking.

At 345c1, Socrates begins a sequence of argument in which he exploits Thrasymachus' strict understanding of skill to argue that benefits resulting from activities external to the exercise of a skill do not constitute a benefit of the skill as such. For example, since money making is external to the exercise of medicine, benefits that accrue to a doctor from the making of money in connection with the practice of medicine do not count as a

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[17] I focus on the background to the notion of a power provided by the *Republic* itself, which is clearly of most relevance. But it is consistent with this that the notion is one a reader of the *Republic* could have been additionally prepared for by reading other Platonic works. The *Hippias Minor* explores the idea that justice might be 'a power' (*dunamis tis*) or knowledge (*epistēmē*) *or both*' (375d8–9, my emphasis). *Charmides* 168b2–3 ascribes knowledge (*epistēmē*) 'a certain kind of power (*dunamis*) so as to be of something (*tinos*)'. At *Grg.* 447c1–2, Socrates indicates that one of his questions for Gorgias is what is the power (*dunamis*) of his skill (*technē*). For a survey and discussion of uses of the term '*dunamis*' in Plato, see Souilhé 1919.

benefit of medicine. My concern here is not the legitimacy of Socrates'
argument, but the picture of skill that he develops as part of it.

A skill – like a power in Book 5 – has a domain over which it is
set. Socrates' language for this relation precisely mirrors that of
Book 5.

> The shepherding art in fact has concern for nothing else than that over
> which (*epi*) it is set (*tetaktai*), how to procure what is best for this. (345d1–3)

This common characterization of skills and of powers is not surprising,
since what is distinctive of skills, in Socrates' view, is precisely their having
a certain *power*. This does not mean that powers *just are* skills. Rather, skills
are a sub-class of powers.

> Don't we each time say that each of the skills is different in virtue of this,
> having a different power (*dunamis*)? (346a1–2)

Each skill provides its own benefit (*ōphelia*): medicine, for example,
provides the benefit of health; navigation that of safety in sailing (346a6–8).
But the exercise of a skill need not be the only way in which the relevant
benefit may be produced. Socrates provides an example where this is not
the case. Suppose a navigator, while exercising the skill of navigation, came
to be healthy as a result of his being relevantly advantaged by sailing. Still,
Socrates says, one would not for this reason identify navigation as medicine
(346b2–6).

Socrates is not specific as to what more precisely one should say about
the relevant determining relation between skill and relevant benefit. A skill
should presumably offer a reliable and regular way of producing a benefit
and should do so non-accidentally. The best way to account for this, I
suggest, is to situate the relation between skill and benefit in a normative
framework: the norms of the skill – what counts as correct performance of
it – relate to the successful production of said benefit.[18] Unlike the skill of
medicine, successful exercise of the skill of navigation is not determined by
the production of health. Thus, although it is possible for health to result
from an exercise of navigation, health is the benefit of medicine, not of
navigation.

The benefit of a skill, Socrates says, is 'its own' (*idion*), not 'common'
(*koinon*) (346c2–3). Given the context, this cannot mean that the benefit of
a skill is *unique* to it in the sense that only the skill in question can cause its
production. That is directly contradicted by the example of the navigator

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[18] This allows, too, that the regularity and reliability is not a statistical matter.

restored to health by sailing. At most, what is unique is the *relation* between a skill and its own benefit: the reliability of the skill's production of the benefit in question, the way in which that production sets standards for the skill.[19]

The distinctive relation between a skill and its own benefit may be compared with the way in which Socrates later characterizes the *ergon* of whatever object may have one.

> Then do you suppose an *ergon* – of a horse or anything else – to be this: whatever a person does or does best with this alone. (352e3–4)

> Now, then, I think, you better understand what I was just now asking, when asking whether this would not be the *ergon* of each thing: whatever something effects (*apergazētai*) either alone or most excellently in comparison to other things. (353a9–11)

Socrates gives two illustrations. The *erga* of eyes and ears are seeing and hearing respectively. These *erga* are unique: seeing can be done *only* with one's eyes; hearing can be done *only* with one's ears (352e6–11). However, despite this first illustration, Socrates' conception of an *ergon* is not as unique. The *ergon* of a pruning knife is pruning (taking cuttings from plants). This *ergon* is not unique. Many kinds of knife *can* be used to prune. But a pruning knife is the most effective equipment to use (353a1–8). As Socrates says, it has been 'worked to this purpose' (*tōi epi toutōi ergasthenti*, 353a4–5). An *ergon* is unique only in the sense that it is uniquely specialized; it alone is specially assigned to the task in question. This is comparable to the point I made earlier regarding the military example: the distribution of *erga* avoids redundancy if an *ergon* is the *special* task of only one thing.

What is the relation between an *ergon* – the focus of 352e3–4 and 353a9–11 – and a *benefit*, on which Socrates focused earlier in this Book 1 discussion? The following passage, from that earlier discussion, helps to illuminate this relation.

> Then it's not the case that each person has this benefit – the getting of payment – as a result of his own skill: rather, if one must consider the matter precisely, medicine produces health, whereas the mercenary art produces payment; building produces a house, whereas the mercenary art, accompanying it, produces payment; and in this way all the other skills each effect

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[19] A similar question arises as to the correct understanding of the term '*idion*' in the context of Aristotle's 'function argument' in *EN* I.7. For helpful discussion, see Barney 2008: 301–2 and additional bibliography cited in her n. 20.

their work/function (*to autēs hekastē ergon ergazetai*) and benefit that over which (*epi*) they are set (*ōphelei ekeino eph' hōi tetaktai*). (346d1–6)

346d1–6 accords each skill a domain of operation. The domain of medicine, for example, will include sick bodies. Skills benefit; but the burden of Socrates' argument has been to establish that the recipient of the benefit in question is not the practitioner of the skill, but the items in its domain. The benefit of medicine is health; objects in the domain of medicine – sick bodies – gain the benefit of health. In this passage, a skill's production of benefit coincides with its effecting its work or function (its *ergon*). This suggests that, where a benefit exists, to produce the benefit is to effect the work of the skill: to produce health is to effect the work of the skill that is medicine. This does not mean that any and every *ergon* is a benefit. We are entitled to conclude only that the benefits on which Socrates focuses in this discussion of skill are a subclass of *erga*.

One final point should be made regarding 346d1–6 before drawing this picture together. The relation between medicine and the mercenary skill described in this passage should not be projected onto the earlier example of the navigator who recovers health through sailing. There is no suggestion that this navigator exercises *medicine* alongside navigation. Rather, this is a case where the benefit that medicine is specially tasked with producing in sick bodies is, as it happens, brought about in such a body by the operation of a different skill.

Should the action of the navigator on his own sick body be thought of as an exercise of the skill of navigation? Certainly, there *is* an exercise of navigation on the relevant occasion (and there is no exercise of medicine). Presumably, it is an exercise of navigation that, in addition to causing the non-medically enabled recovery of health, effects the specialized task of navigation, safe voyage. A situation in which navigation produces health alongside safe voyage is the sort of situation in which Aristotle might appeal to his notion of incidental causation and a mediaeval thinker to the notion of double effect. Socrates gives no specific advice here. I shall call the navigator's production of health in this instance an *atypical result* of the skill of navigation. Note, however, that 'atypical' is not here meant as a statistical notion. Though the outcome of this exercise of the skill of navigation may be atypical – it is not what the skill is *for* – the exercise counts as navigation and thus as an exercise of the skill of navigation no less for all that.

All Socrates needs for his argument against Thrasymachus is this notion of an atypical result: Thrasymachus, presumably, wanted to argue that

acquisition of benefits such as power and money and so forth is not merely a possible *atypical* result of ruling, but the task to which ruling is assigned and hence constitutive of its best understanding. Further, while the atypical result of navigation that Socrates gives as example involves the production of health, a benefit, atypical results need not be of benefit. Socrates might agree that money is a possible atypical result of ruling,[20] in the sense of being a result that may be produced by ruling. But Socrates will think it one for whose production ruling is not in fact specifically tasked and which, in addition, would not benefit a ruler if it were so produced.

3   The Powers of Knowledge and Belief and Their Relation

Absent a verbal prefix,[21] 346d1–6 unites in a single passage of Book 1 all the significant terminology of Book 5's identity conditions for powers. With this passage before us, we are now ready to pull together the picture that emerges from the Book 1 discussion of skills that provides, I argue, the background to the discussion of powers in Book 5.

The picture is this: There exists a class of powers, of which a subclass are skills. Such powers are set over a domain and they are specially tasked to the performance of some work or function in connection with that domain; the performance of this work or function is constitutive of the power as a power; the work or function sets standards for the correctness of the operation of the power. In some subclass of cases, including but not necessarily restricted to the exercise of those powers that are skills, the performance of the power's work or function produces a benefit that accrues to the items in the relevant domain.

Importantly, the various components of this model – the power, the domain and the work or function – do not stand in relations that exclude the possibility of other powers acting in connection with the relevant domain. Powers are not restricted to acting in their own domain and items in a domain are not resistant to the action of powers not specifically tasked for that domain. Such extra-domain action of a power is *atypical* in the sense of having the possibility of what I called an *atypical result*, illustrated by the example of navigation resulting in health. As this example shows, *atypical results* can exist alongside the power's typical results. The example of navigation resulting in health is the most striking example of an

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[20] Since *atypical* is not a statistical notion, it is consistent with the picture I am ascribing to Socrates that ruling as it is in fact commonly exemplified often results in the acquisition of money.
[21] *ergazetai* not *apergazetai.*

atypical result, but one might extend this characterization to other examples that Socrates has suggested. Consider, for example, what should be said of successful pruning accomplished by a carving knife. Think of this as *weakly atypical*. Pruning is not the specified task of a carving knife. But carving knives and pruning knives share a task and domain conceived more broadly as the action of cutting on bodies, so that the relation between pruning and carving is considerably closer than that between navigation and medicine.

The Book 1 discussion has not provided obvious examples of what, in developing my earlier military examples, I characterized as horizontal and vertical relations between tasks in some broadly shared domain. Perhaps the relation suggested by Socrates between money making and medicine or ruling and so on might be thought of as horizontal. He certainly portrays them as acting side by side and on separate, specialized tasks. Further, Socrates' picture is at least consistent with the existence of both horizontal and vertical relations between powers and tasks. Note that a vertical relation may coincide with atypical action. The lieutenant's command over the soldiers in a squadron is not specifically tasked with the issuing of those orders that fall to the sergeant's remit. The issuing of such commands would thus be weakly atypical, but would nevertheless fall within the specified authority and domain of a lieutenant's task.

Setting vertical/horizontal relations to one side for the moment, apply the general features of Socrates' model of powers to the Book 5 powers, knowledge and belief. As powers, knowledge and belief are specially tasked in relation to the objects of some domain: knowledge is the power to know which is tasked in relation to a domain characterized as 'what is', which may safely be assumed to include Forms; belief is the power to believe which is tasked in relation to a domain characterized as 'what both is and is not', which may safely be assumed to include those sensible features of things that are vulnerable to the compresence of opposites.[22] While these domains of objects may be distinct – even, *contra* Fine 1978 and 1990,[23] distinct and non-overlapping, as the argument of Book 5 suggests that they are – Socrates' model of powers allows that knowledge may act in the

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[22] The precise specification of the relevant domains will not concern me here. Fine 1990: 93–4 allows that, at least at 480a1, Socrates talks of what knowledge and belief are set over (*epi*) as Forms and sensibles, respectively, though she takes this to offer 'an elliptical way of expressing a more complex claim' to the effect that knowledge *requires* knowledge of Forms, so that if one focuses only on sensibles one will at most believe. My reading offers a way to maintain consistency across the passage in Plato's expressions of knowledge or belief as set over (*epi*) certain things without committing Socrates to the problems Fine's 'contents analysis' is intended to avoid.

[23] Both reprinted in Fine 2003 as Chapters. 3 and 4 respectively.

domain of belief and belief may act in the domain of knowledge. Such exercises of knowledge and belief would, however, be atypical. That is to say, the exercise of these powers in the domain of the other would not correspond to the specific task of the power. Of course, allowing that knowledge and belief *may* act in each other's domains is not the same as saying they will. The model allows that domains are not exclusive; but the specific possibilities of specific powers in respect of alternate domains must be established case by case.

There is, as Fine has argued, some textual evidence that Plato does allow the possibility of knowing in connection with objects that seem rather to be in the domain of belief and of believing in connection with objects that seem to be in the domain of knowing.[24] At 506c6–7, Socrates at least implies that he has beliefs without knowledge regarding the Form of the Good, a paradigm object in the domain of knowledge; this is precisely why he is reluctant to expound on the subject as urged to do by Glaucon. At 520c1–5, the philosopher who returns to the cave is said, as a result of his knowledge of Forms, to be in a position to exercise knowledge (*gnōsesthe*, c4) of 'the images' (*eidōla*, c4) to be found there; the images in question are naturally thought of as objects proper to belief.[25] The evidence of these passages is certainly defeasible.[26] But, as I said at the beginning, there is at least one contextual reason why Plato *ought* to allow for knowledge in relation to the objects proper to belief, for it is hard to see the benefit of philosopher rulers having knowledge, if it does not enable them to know, for example, of some particular action that it is just.[27]

Note that it is not enough to say – as traditional 'two world' interpreters do say – that knowledge of Forms ensures that the returning philosopher will have true beliefs about the justice or injustice of particular actions.[28]

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[24] Fine 2003: 66.

[25] Or to a sub-category of belief, given the greater elaboration of epistemological distinctions that have been drawn in the meantime, particularly in the illustration of the Line.

[26] *R.* 529b7–c1 is sometimes held to *assert* that there can be no knowledge of perceptibles. So argues Schwab 2016: 50–5. However, in context, the point can be read as restricted to a claim about the availability of knowledge of perceptibles to a vulgar astronomer attempting to derive knowledge of the heavenly bodies by dint of looking up at them. Cf. the note *ad loc.* in Rowe 2012.

[27] The general point that Plato could not intend in context to preclude the philosophers' knowledge from being effective amongst particular, perceptible objects is well made by Annas 1981: 194. But Annas's purported solution to this problem (1981: 209–11) strikes me as unsatisfactory, since, while it allows that I may know, for example, that Socrates is human, it still does not allow for knowledge that some person or action is just. But surely the *Republic* makes clear that the latter would be at least as important, if not more so, in the context of ruling a city.

[28] So, for example, Gerson 2006: 165–6.

If the power of knowledge can be exercised only in relation to Forms and belief is the only power that can be brought to bear on Forms' sensible images, then it would, I submit, be a mystery why knowledge – the power or its exercise in relation to Forms – would have this consequence for exercises of the knower's power of belief. It does not follow from the fact that sensible images of Forms are *images*, for this is a metaphysical relation between Forms and sensibles, but an explanation of such a consequence of knowledge for belief would be required to forge a connection between the *contents* of exercises of knowing and believing.[29]

Here is what I would propose happens when a knowledgeable philosopher encounters a particular action that is just, albeit just only in some specific and qualified respect. The philosopher recognizes the justice of the action in the relevant respect, while at the same time recognizing that the justice of the action is merely a qualified *instance* of justice and as such has features specific to its context that should properly be distinguished from justice. (The instance may, for example, be a case of returning what one owes – a just case of doing so.) In such a philosopher's recognition, there is a perfectly proper exercise of knowledge, in relation to an item squarely in the domain of knowledge, the Form of Justice. That such a knower would have the Form in mind when regarding particular instances is, I think, the clear implication of two passages: (1) the earlier characterization of a knower as being awake, and as 'capable of observing both [the Form] and the things that partake of it' and not, like the dreamer, mistaking one for the other (476c7–d2);[30] (2) the later characterization of the returning philosopher as recognizing the images in the cave as images and as the specific images they are 'as a result' (*dia*), as Socrates says, of their having seen the truth regarding Forms (520c3–5).

That the knower who recognizes the justice of an individual action exercises her knowledge of the Form indicates, as I earlier suggested, that the special object of knowledge acts as a medium for such extra-domain activity in much the way that colour acts as a medium of seeing. But should one in addition think of this knower as *knowing* of the particular act in question that *it*, the act, is just? It is not clear to me what else one could reasonably call their cognitive relation to this fact. But such exercise of the power of knowledge would be at least weakly atypical: it is not the special task of knowledge to know particular instances, though the power can do

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[29] Forging such a connection is, of course, a central achievement of Fine's reading in Fine 1978 and 1990.

[30] I have discussed this characterization and its implication in greater detail in Harte 2006.

so.[31] However, though a (weakly) atypical exercise, it is an exercise of *knowledge* and counts as *knowing* nonetheless.

One certainly should not think of a knower's recognition of the justice of an individual action as an exercise of *believing*, for belief is used in the context to designate the activity of the person from whom the knower is sharply distinguished. Indeed, it is used in context at least in part to signal the activity of one with confused pretensions to knowledge. This aspect of belief causes some complication for the project of stating with any clarity what the *normative* task of belief should be understood to be. In the context, Socrates seems to be doing two things at once: identifying belief as a *power*, which suggests it has an assigned task in relation to the objects in its domain, and at the same time admonishing belief for its pretensions to knowledge.

My own guess as to what should be said more specifically about the power belief is that belief is some kind of general perceptual power.[32] That is to say, sight and hearing – Socrates' initial examples of powers in the Book 5 passage – are not mere examples, but closely related to belief. Support for this thought comes from the fact that the lovers of sights and sounds addressed by the argument are to be determined as, not philosophers, but *philodoxers* or lovers of belief (480a6–7). But their official designation as lovers of sights and sounds already makes clear their attachment to seeing and hearing. This in turn may help to explain Socrates' use of sight and hearing as examples of powers, though their own special objects (colours and sounds) are cognitively inaccessible to the other in a way that, as I argue, the objects of knowledge and belief are not.

Socrates' characterization of the objects of the domain of knowledge and those of belief suggests a relation between them: the domain of

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[31] This is related to a broader, widely recognized phenomenon, in both Platonic and Aristotelian discussions of knowledge (*epistēmē*), that, unlike modern epistemologists, neither Plato nor Aristotle appear to regard knowledge of particular propositions (knowing that *p*, for some proposition *p*) as the central case of knowledge on which discussion should focus. (It is consistent with this that they allow that knowing that *p* for some proposition *p* is a case of knowledge.)

[32] Since Forms are not perceptible, does this proposal entail that belief about Forms is impossible? It does not, providing Forms have perceptible images (as they evidently do) and providing some beliefs about those perceptible images involve beliefs about Forms. I have already argued that philosophical *knowledge* about perceptible images of Forms involves *knowledge* of Forms (see text at and following n. 30, this section). In Harte 2006 I argue that the lovers of sights and sounds' characterization as dreamers implies that they too have (confused) Form-involving thoughts in their response to Forms' perceptible images. Thus, I would argue, identifying belief as a perceptual power does not preclude belief about Forms; it would, however, go some way to explain why those whose thoughts about Forms are exclusively the result of exercises of the power of belief would be precluded from knowledge.

knowledge is *what is*; that of belief *what both is and is not*. Understood as including on the one hand, Forms, and on the other, participants, the connection between the domains is underpinned by a metaphysical relation between these objects within them. Given this, it is tempting to ask whether there is a *vertical* relation between the powers of knowledge and belief, so that the authority of knowledge would extend to include objects in the domain of belief, though its exercise in relation to them would still be atypical. Some slight suggestion of such a vertical relation might be seen in Glaucon's claim, at 477e1, that, knowledge is not only a power, but is 'most formidable (*errōmenestatēn*) of all powers (*dunameis*).' It is not clear what formidableness will amount to in this context. But it is clear that knowledge is being accorded greater force than other powers, and in the immediate context, specifically than the power, belief. This implies some common ground for competition and comparison.

If knowledge and belief stand in a vertical relation, then, while knowledge will have the authority to reach down to the domain of belief albeit in atypical exercise, an attempt on the part of belief to reach up to the domain of knowledge will be an act of usurpation. The lovers of sights and sounds with their pretensions to knowledge would exemplify such misapplication of belief. In contrast, Socrates' later reluctance to expound on the Form of the Good from a position of beliefs without knowledge would demonstrate appropriate restraint.

Much more would need to be said to defend the details of this proposal, especially these closing, speculative remarks about the character of belief and the possibility of a vertical relation between it and knowledge. I do not claim to have shown that this way of developing the model of powers one gets from putting Book 1 and Book 5 together is the only one available. The main point I would insist on is the importance of putting together Book 1 and Book 5 and, once one has done so, the evidence it provides that the domains of knowledge and belief are not exclusive in the way required for the reading of the chestnut according to which the power that is knowledge or belief can be exercised only in relation to items in the domain over which it is set as a power

4   Conclusion

Socrates is explicit that the domains of knowledge and belief are distinct and in terms that suggest that he thinks the two domains are distinct and non-overlapping.

> Does [belief believe] the same thing that knowledge knows? And will
> the same thing be both knowable and believable? Or is that
> impossible?
>   Impossible, he said, on the basis of what has been agreed. (478a11–13)

On the view I have proposed, what this means is that the domains of
objects for which knowledge and belief are each specially tasked as powers
are distinct and my view allows (though does not require) that the domains
are distinct and non-overlapping. For something to be 'knowable' or
'believable' is for it to be such that knowledge and belief are specially
tasked in relation to it. But this does not mean that objects in the domain
of knowledge or of belief are for that reason cognitively inaccessible to one
another.

The conclusion at 478a11–13 follows from the agreement that knowl-
edge and belief are different powers combined with the principle for
individuation of powers announced in the chestnut passage (477c1–d7,
translated in Section 1). In the chestnut passage, Socrates stipulates
identity conditions for powers according to which different powers are
uniquely tasked.[33] Given these identity conditions, Socrates does not
make a fallacious inference in inferring that, as a distinct power from
knowledge, belief must be set over something distinct from that which
knowledge is set over. Nor, however, does Socrates simply *arbitrarily*
stipulate such identity conditions for the powers, knowledge and belief.
Rather, he spells out the identity conditions implicit in the earlier model
according to which what a power is – and what, accordingly, it effects – is
a function of the domain for which it is normatively tasked and vice
versa. Though Socrates' identity conditions involve two components –
the domain and the effect – linked by '*te*' ('both') and '*kai*' ('and')
(477d2) – he appears to treat them as a unit when he describes himself
as individuating powers by looking *only* to *this* (singular), followed by the
pair (477d1–2).[34]

Socrates allows, then, that the same thing may be both known and
believed. Does knowledge, in Socrates' understanding, *entail* belief? If
this is the question, 'Does Socrates' conception of knowledge incor-
porate an attitude of conviction, a holding to be true?', there seems
no reason to deny this. But when Socrates individuates the power,
belief, from the power, knowledge, it is not clear to me that belief is

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[33] I thus take Option B of the two options I distinguished earlier; see n. 4 above.
[34] On this point, compare Gosling 1968: 125 and Hintikka 1973: 15.

best understood in the way that modern epistemologists understand it, as the attitude of regarding as true, though Socrates' power too no doubt incorporates such an attitude.[35] My speculative proposals as to the character of belief as a perceptual power and of a vertical relation between it and knowledge would allow that knowledge and belief could, at least in certain circumstances, combine and collaborate. This may explain why Socrates speaks of 'beliefs without knowledge' (*tas aneu epistēmēs doxas*, 506c6) in a way that strongly suggests a contrast to beliefs *with* knowledge. But, since knowledge and belief are, on the view I propose, differently tasked, a relation between them could not, I think, be one of logical entailment.

I close by noting some main points of difference between my view and others that have been proposed.[36] Like Fine, I reject 'the Two Worlds Theory' when understood as she understands it, as the view that 'there is knowledge only of Forms and belief only about sensibles'.[37] Like Fine, I take it to be perfectly possible for a philosopher-ruler to know of some particular (qualifiedly) just action that *it*, the action in question, is (qualifiedly) just.[38] Unlike Fine, however, I take knowing of a particular just act that it is just to be an atypical exercise of knowledge in the sense I have explained (though an exercise of knowledge nonetheless). Beliefs about Forms will also be atypical and, if regarded as having authority, inappropriate. Like traditional two-world readers, I take the domains of knowledge and belief to be distinct and (at least arguably) non-overlapping, and not, as Fine does, as sets of contents that are distinct, but overlapping. But I understand the consequence of this distinctness in a way quite different from the traditional two-world reading. The domains of knowledge and belief are not exclusive; the objects of knowledge and belief are not cognitively inaccessible to the other. There is a way in which

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[35] See, e.g., the rough and ready characterization of belief provided by Eric Schwitzgebel in his *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* entry on belief, as 'the attitude we have . . . when we take something to be the case or regard it as true' (Schwitzgebel 2014). That '*doxa*' (which I have been translating as 'belief') in Plato (amongst others) is not in fact well understood on 'belief', from the perspective of the modern conception, was the thesis of Whitney Schwab's talk, 'The Birth of Belief', a presentation to Yale's Working Group in Ancient Philosophy, October 2, 2015.

[36] I do not claim an exhaustive survey of alternatives suggested.   [37] Fine 2003: 66 n. 1.

[38] It would, then, be incorrect to understand my position as holding that in such an example the knower and believer have the same object only 'in a way', as at least one reader has taken it. This is not to say that the *content* of their knowledge and belief respecting said object are the same. But it is not such difference in content that provides the difficulty for the proposal that philosophers should rule in the reading of the chestnut here in focus; that arises from the idea that knowledge *of or about particulars* is precluded by Socrates' principle for the individuation of powers.

knowers and (mere) believers occupy different worlds, cognitively speaking: regarding the justice of a particular just act, their cognitive contents differ, since one sees an image of the Form of Justice *as an image of the Form of Justice*, the other does not. But there is nothing to prevent their having their attitudes to one and the same object: a (qualifiedly) just particular action.[39]

Knowledge, True Belief and Poetry in Republic 10

Dominic Scott

1 Introduction

The discussion of poetry in *Republic* 10 is one of the most notorious passages in Plato – a veritable basket of old chestnuts. The controversies are not confined to aesthetics, but include epistemology, metaphysics and psychology. One reason there is so much to say is that the passage contains not one argument, but several. As a whole, it can be broken down into two parts. The first (595c–602c) is an epistemological critique, in which Socrates attacks the claim that poets should be considered authorities on the topics about which they write, such as ethics and religion (cf. 598e2). The second (602c–606d) is a psychological critique, which argues that poetry, whether tragedy or comedy, corrupts its audiences through its power to strengthen the non-rational element of the soul. In turn, both parts can be seen as breaking down into two principal arguments, each with a slightly different conclusion. The first argument (595c–601c) attempts to show that poets have no knowledge of their subject matter; the second (601c–602b) twists the knife in the wound: they do not even have true belief.[1] The psychological critique also includes two main arguments. The first (602c–605c) aims to show that poetry consorts with, and so strengthens, the inferior part of the soul, i.e. the seat of the emotions and appetites. Finally, Socrates again twists the knife in the wound by adding a further argument, which claims that poetry can corrupt even those who have decent characters and beliefs (605c–606d). Of course, none of these four arguments can be read in complete isolation from one another. For one

[1] Although it is much shorter than the first argument, Socrates nonetheless describes it as constituting the second half of this section at 601c4.

thing, successive arguments rely on premises established by their prede-
cessors; also, Socrates sometimes makes a rather cryptic point in one
argument, which is elucidated later on. But it is important to recognise
that there are four discrete arguments, each of which can be studied in its
own right.

The focus of this chapter will be on the second, 601c–602b. This
argument certainly uses premises from the first. There, in order to show
that imitators lack knowledge, Socrates had claimed that they are
further removed from the truth about the object they imitate than
someone who actually makes it. But in the second argument he claims
that in fact the maker of the object only has true belief; it is the user who
has knowledge. This means that the imitator is in an even worse
position than we thought: they don't just lack knowledge; they lack
even true belief.

In the past, this argument has generated some puzzlement. The
problem centres around the concept of knowledge at work in the
passage. At one point, 601d8–9, Socrates characterises the user of some-
thing as the person who has most experience of it. At 602a3, he states
that knowledge arises from use,[2] which seems tantamount to saying that
it arises from experience. Some scholars have claimed that the argument
thus assumes an empirical conception of knowledge, which seems to put
it at odds with what has preceded. The first argument talked of experts
looking to the Forms, and in the central books of the *Republic* knowl-
edge was defined in terms of Forms.[3] But in the second argument, there
is no reference to such a metaphysical standpoint; all the emphasis
appears to be on experience (*empeiria*). Perhaps, it was conjectured,
the argument constitutes a throwback to an earlier Socratic train of
thought, making it difficult to reconcile with *Republic* 5–7.[4] Here is
Adam on the passage:

> Plato has already proved that Imitation is 'third from Truth' ἐκ τῆς
> εἰωθυίας μεθόδου (596a), i.e. from the ontological standpoint provided
> by his own Ideal Theory. The following argument takes up a different
> standpoint, according to which knowledge is defined as ἐμπειρία or practical
> familiarity (601c, d, 602a). The attitude assumed throughout this
> section resembles in some respects that of the historical Socrates. . . . Can
> the two points of view be reconciled? . . . We must admit that Plato himself

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[2] ἐκ τοῦ χρῆσθαι. Shorey 1937: vol. II, 447 actually translates this as 'from experience or use'.
[3] The argument concerning knowledge and Forms at the end of Book 5 is discussed in Verity Harte's
contribution to this volume (Chapter 7).
[4] See Krohn 1876: 254–5 and 369.

does not, as a matter of fact, endeavour in this passage to connect the two arguments.[5]

In short: the first argument takes a metaphysical approach, requiring the knower to look to the Form, a theme familiar from earlier books of the *Republic*; the second seems to take an empirical approach: the knower is someone who has experience of the correct use of the objects in question. So we need to ask whether these approaches are compatible with each other and, if so, how they are to be connected. In this chapter I shall argue that they are indeed compatible and explain how the second argument builds upon the first. In addition, I shall attempt to show how the conceptions of knowledge, true belief and imitation in the second argument are continuous with the earlier parts of the *Republic*, especially Book 6.

Any solution to the problem needs to be based on a careful analysis of the argument. But before attempting this, I shall review some of the main moves of the first argument, on which it clearly relies. This will feed into the project of bringing out the continuity between the two arguments.

2   The First Argument (595c8–601c3)

Socrates begins his critique of poetry as a whole at 595c8–9 by looking for a general definition of mimesis. As he does so, it becomes clear that he intends to rely on a parallel between painting and poetry: his procedure is to extract a definition of mimesis by first examining painting, and then apply it to poetry.[6] So between 595c8 and 597e8 he establishes an outline definition and does so by means of a metaphysical analysis, positing an ontological triad: first there is the Form, such as bed or couch, then a particular bed made by a craftsman, and finally an imitation of a bed painted by an artist. On this analysis of mimesis, the imitator stands at 'three removes' from the truth. Having established this for painting, Socrates swiftly applies it to poetry:

> 'Well then,' I said, 'do you call the imitator the person who makes the product that stands at three removes from nature?' 'Certainly,' he replied. 'The same will also go for the writer of tragedies, if he is an imitator; he is by

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[5] Adam 1963: vol. II, 403. In the course of his remarks he refers to the attempt of Bosanquet 1895, 389ff. to deal with the problem, as well as to Krohn 1876. The issue does not seem to have attracted the interest or concern of more recent commentators, though Halliwell 1993: 130 has a brief note expressing surprise at the reference to experience in 601d8.

[6] I have discussed the exact method Socrates is using here in Scott 2016.

nature at three removes from the king[7] and the truth, as are all other imitators.' 'I suppose so.' 'So we agree about the imitator.' (597e3–598a1)

Next, he proceeds to give a more detailed account of what mimesis involves (598a1–d6), yet again using painting as his point of reference. When we say that the painter imitates the particular, we should be more precise: the painter merely imitates the particular as it appears (from one perspective). He captures only 'some small part of the object' (598b7–8). This is an important claim for the argument, because it allows Socrates to say that the imitator can do this without having knowledge of the object; he only grasps something very superficial about it.

At 598d8 Socrates is ready to turn directly to the central issue of the first argument: the question of whether imitators have any knowledge of the objects they represent. From here until 601b7, he tries to show that, just as painters can capture the look of an object without having knowledge of it, the same applies to poets. In brief, his reasoning goes as follows. If you had the choice of making something rather than just imitating it, you would surely opt for the former. So the question is whether Homer actually made individuals and cities better, for instance, or whether he merely produced images. No examples of this can be found, either for Homer or other poets, and so it is concluded that they did not actually have any knowledge of politics, religion, morality or war – the most important subjects on which they wrote.

There is, of course, a huge amount to be said about this argument, but I wish to raise a specific question that will be most salient when it comes to analysing the second argument. It concerns the ontological triad. Socrates spends some time explaining what he has in mind in talking of three entities where painting is concerned: the Form of Bed, a particular bed, and a representation of a bed. Clarifying this is indeed the main task of the passage that runs from 595c8 to 597e8. Now, at 597e6–8 (quoted above), he turns from talking about the triad in the context of painting to poetry, but does not at this point explain *how* the parallel applies to poetry; he just says that it does, inferring that the poet, being an imitator, is also at three removes from the Form. As we read these lines, we are left wondering just what the ontological triad might look like where poetry is concerned, especially what the relevant Forms and particulars would be.

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[7] See Adam 1963: vol. II, 464–5 for a review of different explanations for this way of referring to the Forms; also Halliwell 1993: 116.

But Socrates does offer some help on this issue a little later on, in the passage arguing that Homer and the other poets lacked knowledge (598d8–601b7). Here he mentions a number of different arenas in which the poets might have practised, but in fact merely imitated. The examples come from medicine, politics, ethics, warfare and various kinds of craft. But most of the passage is concerned with politics or ethics (i.e. human virtue), whether in public or private life. Here is a text that gives a flavour of the argument:

> Homer, my friend, if you are not at three removes from the truth about virtue, an image-maker (as we defined the imitator), but are even at two removes, and can recognise what sorts of practices make people better or worse in private and public, tell us this: what city has been better managed because of you, as Lacedaemon was because of Lycurgus, and many other cities, both great and small, because of many other people? (599d2–e1)

From the opening lines of this quote, we might say that the Form at issue, the occupant of level one, will be the Form of Virtue.[8] But it seems appropriate to refine this into saying that the relevant Forms will be those of the virtues – Justice, Temperance, Wisdom and Courage, along with the Forms of the Good and the Fine (*kalon*). What about the second level? Here we should remember that in the previous passage, when he was first defining mimesis, Socrates characterised both the second and third levels as involving 'makers' or 'craftsmen' (*dēmiourgoi*), for example, of beds (level two) or images of beds (level three).[9] So in the moral case, level two ought also to be occupied by a 'maker' of some sort, and on the basis of our quotation, it is natural to say that the level two maker is a craftsman of virtue in others: for example, Lycurgus helped to inculcate virtue in the citizens, both in their public and private lives. Socrates also cites Charondas as the benefactor of the Sicilians, and Solon of the Athenians (599e2–3).

Confirmation of this reading can be found by looking back to a passage in *R.* 6.500d5–9, where Socrates talks of the philosopher-ruler as a craftsman of virtue: someone who inculcates virtue in his citizens:[10]

> If, by some necessity, he had to practise implanting in human characters what he sees there [sc. the Forms], both in private and in public, and not

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[8] See also 600e4–6, where Socrates talks of poets imitating images of virtue.
[9] Cf. 596e6–11, 597b10, 599a3–8 and d4.
[10] Note the similarities of language between 10.599d6 and 6.500d6 (i.e. the use of the phrase ἰδίᾳ καὶ δημοσίᾳ). There are also references to ἐπιτηδεύματα at 599d5–6 and 501b4–5.

only fashion himself, do you suppose that he would be a bad craftsman of temperance, justice and the whole of demotic virtue?

So it seems plausible that in *R.* 10 Socrates wants us to imagine the political leader as a level two craftsman of virtue.[11]

What about the third level of the poetic triad? Again, we should recall that Socrates characterises mimesis as essentially a form of production: the imitator is a maker of images or appearances[12] – but in the poet's case, appearances of what? To judge from 599d2–e4 and 600e4–6 (the latter of which talks explicitly about the poets creating images of virtue), we should say that, instead of creating actual virtuous people (by moral education and legislation), they create appearances of virtuous people.

Admittedly, if we look more widely at *R.* 10, we can see that Socrates has other (though complementary) ways of characterising poetic appearances. Particularly important is the following sentence, which comes in the course of the third argument (603c5–8):

> In our view, imitative poetry represents human beings acting freely or under duress, thinking that they have done well or badly as a result of their actions, and in all this experiencing either pain or joy.[13]

Here we find nothing inconsistent with my reading of 599d2–e3, that poets create appearances of virtue; the sentence just spells out in more detail what is involved: creating appearances of actions and the psychological states that lie behind them – beliefs and emotions.

This, then, gives us a sense of what the poetic triad might look like. It is not the only example we could develop: Socrates gestures towards medicine and warfare as providing other cases. But it does seem to be the central focus of this passage: in addition to 599d2–e3, 600a8–e2 discusses the ways various figures were admired for educating their followers in virtue (cf. 600d6): Pythagoras, Protagoras and Prodicus.[14]

There is another issue we need to raise. In the passage quoted, 599d2–e1, Socrates refers to actual legislators who are reputed to have made

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[11] However, as is evident from 500c2–d7, another example of producing virtue would be to produce it in oneself. I discuss this further in n. 17 below.

[12] On this aspect of mimesis, see Harte 2010, esp. 77–8.

[13] Moss 2007: 428 rightly highlights 603c as a source for answering the question of what the poets imitate.

[14] One might ask why Socrates puts all the emphasis on virtue: won't the poet also imitate the Forms of the vices, if there are such Forms? Perhaps it is because the argument is targeted at those who claim Homer 'educated Greece' in virtue. If so, it is appropriate to use virtue as the prime example. Also, there is good evidence that the poets did indeed focus on virtuous characters. See Moss 2007: 431–2.

their cities better (especially by moral education, according to my interpretation). I have also cited 6.500d5–9 to support the idea that a ruler is to be seen as a 'craftsman of virtue'. But this points to an important distinction that will be crucial when we come to see how the second argument coheres with the *Republic* more generally: in 6.500d5–9 we are considering the philosopher-ruler in the ideal state, whereas 599d2–e3 refers to political leaders in actual states. I do not think there is a problem here, because Socrates holds that the idea of a political or moral craftsman can be found in both contexts. But I shall return to this distinction below.

3   Overview of the True Belief Argument

The second argument runs from 601c7–602b11. As it is relatively short (by far the shortest of the four arguments in the critique of poetry), we can quote it in full. I have introduced lettering to divide up the sections according to the analysis I shall be giving.

(A)   'The painter, we say, will depict reins and bridle.' 'Yes.' 'But it's the leather-worker and the smith who will make them.' 'Of course.' 'So does the painter know what the reins and bridle should be like? Or is it not even the makers, the leather-worker and the smith, but only the person who knows how to use them, the rider?' 'Very true.' 'So shall we not say that this applies to everything?' 'How do you mean?' 'For each thing there are three crafts: one concerned with use, one with production and one with imitation.' 'Yes.'

(B)   'So are the excellence, beauty and rightness of every artefact, creature or action related only to the use for which each thing is made or naturally developed?' 'That is so.'

(C)   'So it must be the case that the person who uses each thing has the most experience of it, and that he tells the maker about the good or bad features of the thing in his use of it. For example, the flautist tells the flute-maker which flutes serve his purpose in his playing. He will tell him the sorts of flutes that need to be made, and the maker will follow him.' 'Of course.' 'So the person with knowledge gives instructions about good and bad flutes, while the one who has belief will make them.' 'Yes.' 'With respect to the same artefact, then, the maker will have true belief about whether it's fine or defective through his association with

the expert and by being made to listen to him; but it's the user who will have knowledge.' 'Certainly.'

(D) 'And will the imitator have knowledge, arising from use, as to whether the things he depicts are fine and correct or not? Or will he have true belief, as a result of keeping company with the expert and receiving instructions about what sorts of things he should portray?' 'Neither.' 'So the imitator will have neither knowledge nor true belief about the fineness or otherwise of what he imitates?' 'It seems not.' 'Then he's an impressive authority about his subject matter, this poetic imitator!' 'Far from it.' 'Nevertheless, he will still imitate, but without any knowledge of the ways in which each case is bad or good; rather, it looks as if he will imitate whatever seems fine to the ignorant masses.' 'What else?'

(E) 'So, it seems, this is what we can reasonably agree. As regards what he imitates, the imitator has no knowledge worth mentioning; instead, imitation is a form of play – nothing serious. And those who take up tragic poetry, whether in iambics or epic, are all imitators to the highest degree.' 'Certainly.'

The first two sentences of (A) say nothing to surprise us in the light of the first argument. But the rest of (A) introduces the distinction between user and maker, and immediately attributes knowledge to one rather than the other. Notice, however, that the object of this knowledge is circumscribed right from the start, though a bit vaguely: what is at issue is the knowledge of what the artefacts should be like, i.e. *what sort of thing* should be made (the quality of the object).

I have isolated Socrates' next question as item (B) because, in the space of just two lines, he introduces two themes that will be central to understanding the argument as a whole. The first concerns value: he will henceforth be interested specifically in evaluative qualities: excellence (*aretē*), beauty (*kallos*) and rightness (*orthotēs*). These, he says, are defined in reference to use. So from now on, it will be important to be aware that, when he goes on to talk about whether or not someone has knowledge or true belief, he will be interested first and foremost (and perhaps only) in the knowledge or true belief that something is good, beautiful or right. The second important thing that happens here is that the range of imitable items increases. So far we have heard only about artefacts; now, natural objects and actions are added to the list.

In (C) Socrates focuses on the distinction and relation between the user and the maker, whereas in (D) he turns to the imitator. Finally, he sums up

the argument, and indeed both the first two arguments, in (E). I shall here focus on (C) and (D).

(C) maintains the emphasis on evaluative knowledge: the user knows about the goodness or badness of the artefacts produced by the maker. Also, it is here, for the first time, that he attributes mere true belief to the makers (having so far just denied them knowledge). But notice that this true belief is strongly anchored in the user's communications with the maker: there is a causal link between the two, which ensures the reliability of the maker's true belief. The stage is now set for denying that the imitator has either knowledge or true belief in (D). He is neither a user, nor does he have any association with a user such as might generate (reliable) true belief. Yet again, all the emphasis is on what he fails to know or truly believe about the value of his imitations. Finally, Socrates says something about what he does do: he will imitate what appears fine or beautiful to the ignorant multitude.

4   Makers and Users

Again, there are many questions that could be raised about this argument. But for the purposes of this chapter, I wish to focus on the following: how is the argument, with its distinction between makers and users, meant to apply to poetry? We can see what Socrates means when he talks of a painter imitating an artefact that others make or use, for example, a bridle. But if there is to be a valid parallel with poetry, he must assume the poet produces imitations of things that others either make or use. But what does this mean? What are these things, and who are the corresponding makers and users?[15] There is good reason for focusing on this issue here. My original problem was about making the second argument cohere with the metaphysical perspective assumed in the first argument of Book 10 and elsewhere in the *Republic*. As we now try to identify the users and makers who correspond to the poetic imitators, the most promising candidates will turn out to include the philosopher-rulers of the ideal state and those who work under their guidance. And the moment we identify the knowledgeable users of the argument with the philosophers of the central books, the appearance of a misfit between different standpoints (practical and metaphysical) will start to fall away.

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[15] This issue has not been sufficiently aired in the literature. Halliwell 1993: 10 touches on it briefly; Heath 2013: 36 discusses the second argument, but not the problem; Ferrari 1990: 128–9 has a brief and interesting discussion of the argument, but does not flag up the problem.

   To identify the users and makers who correspond to poetic imitators, I propose to start by recalling what was in effect a parallel problem raised by the first argument: how does its distinction between the three ontological levels apply to poetry? By looking at 599d2–e3, I suggested that, in the case that most interests Socrates, the top level corresponds to the moral Forms, the next to the production of virtuous characters (involving dispositions to act, think and feel), and the third to the production of appearances of virtuous people. If this is correct, how could we develop it to fit the user-maker distinction that Socrates has now applied at level two?

   In the light of what I have said about the first argument, this turns into the following question: what would it mean to say that the process of educating citizens in virtue involves two types of agent – the 'user', who has knowledge, and the 'maker', who merely has true belief? Presumably, the idea is that there are some people who are engaged in the 'hands on' education of citizens (the 'makers'). They work under the supervision of political leaders, who apply their knowledge of what is ultimately good for the state to decide the appropriate qualities to inculcate, and then communicate this to the subordinate teachers of virtue.

   As I said above, we should be prepared to think of this kind of production in two political contexts, ideal and actual. In the ideal state, this would mean that under the supervision of the philosopher-rulers there exist cohorts of moral educators,[16] who lack philosophical understanding, but are reliably guided by the rulers. In the context of the actual state, we should think of lawmakers like Solon and Lycurgus, who framed laws and practices with a view to the overall good of the state and, through their laws, guided others in the day-to-day inculcation of virtue.[17]

   But there is a second way of applying the user-maker distinction to the case of poetry. This time, we take our cue from the text of the second argument itself, specifically from the reference to action (*praxis*) in 601d5.[18] This is the point where Socrates does briefly

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[16] I.e. educators of the citizens at large.

[17] A variant of this model would be the philosopher who produces virtue in their own soul (cf. 500c3–d3). In this special case, the user and the maker combine in one individual. (This is also possible with artefacts, for instance gourmets who grow their own food, or flautists who make their own flutes.) There is the further question about what such people use their virtue for. If they live privately in a non-ideal state, they use their virtue to produce their own happiness. As Socrates says at the end of Book 9 (592a7–8), they found an ideal state in their own souls, and so can use their virtue to help it flourish. If they rule as philosophers, they use their virtue for the good of the state, as well as their own happiness.

[18] 'So are the excellence, beauty and rightness of every artefact, creature or action related only to the use for which each thing is made or naturally developed?' (601d4–6)

widen the scope of the argument: taking the distinction between use and making beyond the field of artefacts, he applies it to animals and actions. The implication of this sentence is that the principle of assigning knowledge to the user, not the maker, applies not just to artefacts, but to natural objects and actions as well.

For this parallel to work there must be 'makers' of natural objects and of actions. Unfortunately, he does not elaborate on these categories, but immediately resumes his focus on artefacts.[19] However, it is not difficult to see what he means by the reference to animals: the maker could be the horse-breeder or the pig-farmer, the user the horse-rider or the diner.[20] An obvious way to understand 'makers of actions' is simply to think of people who perform actions – in the best case, morally virtuous actions. This fits well with the emphasis in the argument as a whole on the qualities of being virtuous, right or fine. Following through the logic of the passage, we then have to posit someone else who supervises such agents, with a view to 'using' their actions. The supervisor has knowledge, while the agent being supervised has mere true belief. But what does 'using' mean here, and why is it plausible to assign knowledge to this mysterious user and only true belief to the person who performs the actions?

We can answer these questions if we work, once again, with the distinction between the ideal and the actual state. Take the ideal first. In Book 4 Socrates had differentiated the auxiliaries from the guardians by saying that the former have true beliefs, while the latter have knowledge (*phronēsis*).[21] Obviously, the guardians supervise the activities of the auxiliaries (and the producers). But in what sense do the guardians *use* the actions of their subordinates? Socrates is happy to adopt the language of use in a political sense, when he says in 7.520a3–4 that the law 'uses' the citizens to bind the city together. So I do not think it a stretch to say that the philosopher-rulers can use the actions of the subordinate classes to bring about the overall good of the state, its *eudaimonia*. Applied to the actual state, the point would be as follows. Instead of a philosopher-ruler, we have a legislator, such as Solon or Lycurgus. Beneath them, we have ordinary, decent citizens who follow the laws as set down, and achieve a sort of true-belief based virtue as a result.[22] The actions they perform

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[19] See Halliwell 1993: 130.
[20] The same idea can be extended to living things more generally, to include crops for example.
[21] See 433c7–d1.
[22] Such a figure appears in the fourth argument of Book 10, as someone vulnerable to corruption by imitative drama: cf. 605c5–606d7, esp. 606a7–8.

through having such virtue are, once again, used by the legislators for the overall good of the state.[23]

So we now have two different accounts of how the user-maker distinction might apply to the sphere of human virtue. According to the first, the 'making' is a matter of producing virtue in others; on the second, it is the performance of virtuous actions by the makers themselves. I shall not attempt to choose one account over the other. Both seem to me compatible with the text,[24] and it is possible that Plato had both in mind. For my purposes nothing significant hangs on the difference between them; it is enough that we have found ways of applying the maker-user distinction to virtue. On either reading, as I shall go on to show, we can resolve our overall puzzle about the conception of knowledge at work in the second argument.

5   Imitators

Having clarified the identity of the users and the makers, we should now focus our attention on what the argument has to say about imitators, and how this can be applied to poetic imitation in particular. In a nutshell, my view is that, whereas someone at level two produces virtuous people (by moral education) or actions of his own, poets merely produce appearances of virtuous people or actions. Let us pursue this in more detail.

As I stressed above, Socrates defines the imitator as a producer of appearances. But we should be careful about how we develop this idea.[25] There is a temptation to model the imitator too closely on level two craftsmen. At 596b5–6 Socrates had talked about such craftsmen looking to the Form in creating an individual bed. The temptation might be to assume that, similarly, level three 'craftsmen' look to the particulars (specifically, how they

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[23] This appears to be Aristotle's reading of our passage in *Pol.* 3.4.1277b18–30. (For scholars who connect the two passages, see for instance Newman 1902: vol. III, 173 and Reeve 1998: 73 n. 33.) In this passage, Aristotle contrasts the virtues of rulers and subjects (probably in the context of the ideal state: cf. Barker 1946: 107). Only the rulers have *phronēsis*; subject citizens have true belief. What makes this passage so like *R.* 10 is that Aristotle cites the Platonic example of users and makers of flutes to illustrate the difference between rulers and subjects. It is also worth noting that for Aristotle the virtues of subjects are not virtues in the perfect sense, unlike the virtues of the ruler: cf. *Pol.* 1.12–13, alongside 3.4, which I have discussed in Scott 2010. This sounds similar to Plato's claim that the auxiliaries do not have virtue in the full sense (*R.* 4.430c3).

[24] Although I introduced the second account by citing the reference to actions at 601d5, this text can also be made to fit the first. The 'makers' of the actions might just be the educators working under the supervision of the rulers: in producing virtuous characters, they also produce virtuous actions in the citizens. So I do not think we can use 601d5 to decide between the two accounts.

[25] Here I agree with Harte 2010: 77.

appear) in order to create their images. Now, perhaps this is true when it comes to painters of physical objects, but interestingly, Socrates nowhere talks explicitly about the painter 'looking to the particular', and when it comes to poetry he also avoids making such a parallel. Assume that, in the moral case, at level two we have educators producing virtue in others or individual agents performing virtuous actions of their own. Socrates studiously avoids saying that the poet follows virtuous characters around and imitates their actions, feelings and thoughts. We might be tempted by the mirror analogy early in the whole passage (596b10–e3) to read such an account into his description of poetic mimesis, but he himself never endorses it. So, when stating that the poet creates appearances (of virtuous people), he does not require a tight causal link between the creation of these appearances and actual people in the world. Thus our word 'imitate' might be misleading.

All this is confirmed if we now turn back to the second argument to see how it describes the imitator. Towards the end of the passage, in (D), Socrates says that he will imitate something as it appears fine (*kalon*) to the ignorant masses (602b2–3). Again, Socrates does not say that the poet takes a particular person who is in fact virtuous and then represents them acting, feeling and thinking virtuously; rather, the poet will produce an appearance of a hero acting, feeling and thinking, and do so in such a way that they appear good to the audience, i.e. to the many (who are themselves morally ignorant).

This is an important development in Plato's account of imitation. So conceived, imitation requires some experience or grasp of what the audience thinks, and some kind of activity in which one makes the details of the representation fit the audience's presuppositions.[26] The idea that the poet adjusts his work to the moral beliefs of his audience appears earlier in the work, at *R.* 6.493a6–494e6. Here Socrates is considering the idea that the sophists corrupt the *demos*. In an interesting passage, he turns the idea on its head: all the sophists do is to watch the *demos* carefully, to see what pleases or displeases it, and then label such things good or bad respectively; their 'expertise' thus derives merely from spending time with the *demos*, and their ethical pronouncements are thus parasitic upon the views of the *demos* (493a9–b7). I mention this passage because in it he says that the same applies to poetry (493d2–4). This sounds to me very much like an anticipation of

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[26] The fact that the audience's values help to shape the nature of the product explains Socrates' claim at 603a9–b5 that mimesis and the non-rational part of the soul with which it consorts are co-genitors of an inferior product. The idea of co-production is discussed at length in Harte 2010.

the claim in *R.* 10.602b2–3 that poets make their work conform to the audience's values.

Let me take stock. So far, I have given an account of how the argument of *R.* 10.601c7–602b11 can apply to poetry, not merely to painting. In doing so, I have attempted to identify the sort of users and makers Socrates must have in mind to apply the argument to poetry, and what he means by attributing knowledge to the user and only true belief to the maker in a political context. In the context of the ideal state, the user is the guardian, the philosopher-ruler, who has knowledge of the good, the fine and the virtues.[27] Next come the subject citizens, either as educators of others or as agents who perform demotically virtuous actions based on true belief, derived from the guardians. In the context of an actual state, the user is the legislator; the maker is the kind of decent citizen who follows their lead, whether in educating others or performing actions of their own. By contrast, the imitator does not even have such true belief: all they do is to take what seems good to the many and use this to shape whatever appearances they produce.[28]

Before we return to the original problem about the second argument, let me consider an objection to reading the distinction between maker and user in the context of the ideal state. My claim is that the philosopher-rulers, with their knowledge of the good, are the users; beneath them are subordinates, either educators or those acting with demotic virtue, who only have true belief. These are the makers. The objection to my interpretation runs as follows. To complete the triad, we need to add the poetic imitators, who produce mere appearances of virtue, and do so by tracking what the ignorant many believe. But in the ideal state, of course, there will be no such imitators. So, the objection runs, we cannot accommodate the ideal users and makers together with the poets, as Socrates characterises them, all in one scheme. (If we wanted to have poets alongside these users and makers, we would have to have an altogether better class of poet, who really does 'look to' actual virtuous people in the state and imitate them.) However, I think this objection can be answered. The point of the first two arguments is to expose the poets' cognitive failings. Their advocates claim that they have knowledge; to debunk this, Socrates asks who would have knowledge in the strict sense. Answer: the philosopher. The specific point of the second argument is to pursue this

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[27] Ferrari 1990: 129 rightly compares the philosopher-ruler to the user rather than the maker, although he does not elucidate the point or discuss the identity of the maker. For an earlier version of this idea, see Bosanquet 1895: 391, though again his discussion is very brief.

[28] Note the symmetry between the poet and the true believer: just as the poet gets his views by time spent with the *demos*, so the true believer depends on constant communication with, and deference to, the user.

critique one step further and ask who would have true belief. Answer: someone under the supervision of a philosopher. We then contrast the imitative poet with such a person and find that they lack even true belief. For this line of argument to work, it is not necessary that all three characters co-exist in the same political context. So I think running the distinction between political makers and users can be done in the context of the ideal state, as well as in an actual one.

6　Return to the Original Problem

How does all this help solve the problem with which we began? The problem arose from the suspicion that the second argument ignores the distinctively metaphysical epistemology of the rest of the work, replacing it with an empirical approach. In my analysis of the argument, I have concentrated on finding the relevant users and makers who rank above the poetic imitators, and have claimed that Plato is thinking of political leaders and their subjects, whether in the context of the ideal or actual state. Reading the passage this way serves to highlight the continuities between the argument and earlier passages in the *Republic*, not just the first argument of Book 10, but also the account of the philosopher-rulers in Book 6 (especially 500d5–9), including the contrast between their virtue and the demotic, true belief-based virtue of their subjects. (We have also seen how the account of poetic imitators in the second argument dovetails with the description of oratory and poetry earlier in Book 6, at 493a6–494e6.)

Let me spell out in more detail how the epistemology of this argument is consistent with what has preceded. Since I have divided up the users and makers into four groups (ideal users and makers, actual users and makers), we can take each in turn. If we identify the users with the philosopher-rulers of the ideal state, there should be no problem in making the passage consistent with what has preceded. Such rulers will look to the Forms in their work, as is implied in the first argument and spelt out in 6.500c3–501c3. The only reason for being concerned would be the emphasis on experience that we find in the second argument. But there is no inconsistency here. Socrates does not say that experience is sufficient for knowledge; he only implies that it is necessary (601d8–9), and this is entirely in keeping with his approach in the central books. In 7.539e3–540a4 we learnt that the philosopher-rulers spend fifteen years between the ages of thirty-five and fifty acquiring experience in military

and administrative roles prior to taking full responsibility for running the state.[29]

What about the other kind of user – the legislators of the actual states, like Solon and Lycurgus? On my reading, Socrates is also crediting them with knowledge of the Forms. Now this does not introduce any inconsistency with the rest of the *Republic*, so far as I can see. But we might nonetheless find this suggestion hard to swallow: did Plato really believe that Solon and Lycurgus had philosophical knowledge of the Forms? Perhaps not. However, I think we can allow that in this passage Plato is prepared to operate with more relaxed epistemological criteria. What he wants to say is that the cognitive state of legislators is superior to those whom they supervise, who are in turn superior to imitative poets. If the cognitive state of the legislators falls short of being knowledge in the sense required by the central books, the overall point of the second argument, which is to deny even true belief to the poets, remains intact. But we have to be careful here. If Socrates allows for more relaxed criteria when talking of the knowledge of the legislators, in what ways has he relaxed his criteria? We have to be sure that this does not introduce some new inconsistency with what has preceded.

If the legislators look to the Forms in their work and yet fall short of full knowledge, one explanation is that they only have a partial understanding of the Forms. But there is another way of interpreting their cognitive state. To develop this, we have to ask what Socrates means by 'looking to the Forms' in *R.* 10.

In the central books of the *Republic*, Socrates disclaims knowledge of the Good (cf. 6.505a5–6). Pressed by his interlocutors to say what it is, he refuses even to give a sketchy definition. Instead he offers something completely different: an analogy to something in the visible realm, the sun. Similarly, he refrains from defining any of the Forms in the central books, despite their importance to his account of the philosopher-rulers. By contrast, the main purpose of Books 2–4 is to give definitions of the four cardinal virtues in state and soul. Using the tripartite analysis of each entity, Socrates gives quite detailed accounts of the virtues. Is there a discrepancy here?

In my view, the forms that he defines in Books 2–4 are not the super-abstract Forms that he mentions but fails to define in the central books. They are lower level 'types': they represent justice, etc., as manifested in two kinds of entity, the state and soul.[30] So the Form of Justice itself, as

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[29] Shorey 1937: vol. II, 228–9 n. *d* rightly stresses the importance of experience in the philosopher-rulers' education.

[30] For this distinction see Campbell and Jowett 1894: vol. II, 15–17; Adam 1963: vol. I, 168; J.S. Morrison 1977: 215–16; Reeve 1988: 52–3; Ferrari 1990: 120–22; Burnyeat 1999: 283 n. 51; Vasiliou

distinct from justice in state or soul, would have an altogether more abstract definition, which he never attempts to give in the *Republic*.

The distinction between lower level types and abstract Forms is very important for understanding the cognitive state of the political users I have identified in discussing the second argument. Perhaps it is only the philosopher-rulers of the ideal state that look to the abstract Forms. The legislators of actual states may only have looked to the lower level forms. This may sound completely speculative, but I think there is a passage that helps to confirm it. At the end of Book 9, Socrates gives an explanation of why the laws and conventions are as they are, praising some states of character and castigating others (588b–591b). This passage operates against a background of the tripartite psychology of Book 4, specifically the idea that justice is a kind of harmony between the three parts of the soul, with reason in control of the other two. The different kinds of vice alluded to in this passage are then analysed as states in which the three parts are not in the correct relation with each other, with the lower parts running out of control. Socrates explains the censure of certain character states along the following lines: such and such a state is castigated because it involves the incorrect relation of the parts. This sounds like a historical claim that someone – presumably a lawmaker – understood (or at least anticipated) the tripartite account, and on the basis of it set the conventions and laws.[31] In other words, Socrates implies that such lawmakers of the past did look to something like the account offered in Book 4: they were indeed looking to the lower level forms.[32]

Finally, we should say more about the state of true belief attributed to the 'makers', either in the ideal state or the actual state. In their case, the original problem does not apply, because that was about whether Socrates had changed his conception of knowledge, and the makers only have true belief. (If Plato is advancing an empiricist conception of true belief here, that does not introduce a problem of consistency with other parts of the work.) But there is in fact a different problem of consistency here, which arises from comparing the first and second arguments of *R.* 10. The first argument used a particular model for understanding the cognitive activity of the makers: they make the particular (bed) by looking to the form (596b4–7). In the second argument, they work under the supervision of the user. Is Socrates characterising the maker

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2008: 228–9; and Scott 2015: 29 and 93–4. In company with some scholars, such as Vasiliou 2008: 228 n. 24, from this point forward, I shall use the capitalised 'Forms' to talk of the transcendent entities of the central books, and 'forms' to talk of the lower level-types.

[31] For a good example see 590a6–8, where he explains the long-standing censure of intemperance in terms of the psychology of Book 4.

[32] See Scott 2015: 83.

differently in these two arguments? I can see two possible answers to this question. One is that, in the second argument, the actual maker does not look to the form at all; only the user does this, on the basis of which they supervise the work of the maker. Alternatively, both look to the form, but the user has a better grasp of it. This second reading is less of a revision to the model proposed in the first argument because it still has the maker looking to the form.[33] The first reading involves more revision, but at least it maintains the idea that the *process* of production involves reference to the form, even if it is no longer the actual maker who looks to the form.

I shall not attempt to adjudicate between these two readings. If one goes for the first possibility and admits an inconsistency, it is still not anything like the problem with which we began. If one goes for the second, there is the further question that arises when we apply the model to the political context: do the makers have an incomplete grasp of the transcendent Forms or merely of the lower level types? If one is thinking in the context of the actual state, and if I am right that the political leaders, the users, only looked to lower-level forms, then it is natural to assume that the makers do likewise, though with less grasp of those forms than the users. If we are talking about the ideal state, it is possible that the makers have an inchoate grasp of the Forms. Elsewhere I have argued for a very restrictive account of who actually 'looks to the Forms', confining such activity to philosophers.[34] So my view is that, even in the ideal state, the makers would only look to lower-level forms, not the transcendent Forms.[35] However, I do not need to insist on this claim for the purposes of this chapter, and to do so would require taking on yet another old chestnut, and my time is already up.

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[33] In favour of this reading, one might point to a parallel to *R.* 10.601c–602b in *Cra.* 387d–390d, where Socrates distinguishes between makers and users of artefacts, attributing a superior cognitive state to the user. In this passage Socrates also talks of 'looking to the form' (of shuttle), and explicitly states that the maker does do this (389b1–3). But it is also implied that the user will look to the form (cf. esp. 390b1–5).

[34] See Scott 1995: 80–83.

[35] In trying to show how the second argument can be made epistemologically consistent with the rest of the work, I have concentrated on the context most relevant to poetry, viz. politics and ethics. But one can legitimately ask whether the argument's account of the production and use of *artefacts* is epistemologically consistent with the rest of the work. Socrates is saying the user looks to the form of the artefact, and the maker follows the user (as in *Cra.* 387d–390d). Of course, this relates to another old chestnut: the question of whether Plato allows forms of artefacts outside of Book 10. But if he does, there is no obvious epistemological difficulty or inconsistency: the user, whether in politics or bed-making looks to an *eidos*, and guides the maker accordingly. However, if there are *eidē* of artefacts, I think they would be immanent forms, lower-level types, not transcendent Forms, like Justice. (In this respect, I am very sympathetic to the account of these issues sketched in Burnyeat 1999: 245–9.) So in the case of artefacts, there is no room for an equivalent of the distinction I made between philosopher-rulers and legislators of actual states. But I do not see that as a problem for my account.

Another Two Cratyluses Problem

Malcolm Schofield

1 An Unresolved Problem

Nearly 150 years ago Benjamin Jowett began the introduction to his translation of Plato's *Cratylus* with these words:[1]

> The *Cratylus* has always been a source of perplexity to the student of Plato. While in fancy and humour, and perfection of style and metaphysical originality, this dialogue may be ranked with the best of the Platonic writings, there has been an uncertainty about the motive of the piece, which interpreters have hitherto not succeeded in dispelling.

In short, the *Cratylus* was for the Master of Balliol a paradigmatic old chestnut.

Have things changed since he was writing? Certainly the dialogue has been the beneficiary of some superb philosophical scholarship in recent years, with the highlights being three major book-length studies of the highest quality from Rachel Barney (2001), David Sedley (2003) and Francesco Ademollo (2011). All these authors in their very different ways are trying to crack one particular version of Jowett's puzzle: is Plato in the *Cratylus* a naturalist (of some sort) or a conventionalist (of some sort) about what makes words the right words for the things they signify? But they give very different answers to the question.

Barney's Plato is a pessimistic naturalist: if a word is to be right for what it is designed to signify, then ideally it should reflect or imitate the nature of that thing – yet in principle no imitation, as he has Socrates argue, can ever be correct 'except in a very limited degree', and an approximation would be 'of no particular use'.[2] Sedley, by contrast, presents us with a more bullish

[1] Jowett 1875: 163.   [2] Barney 2001: 141.

Plato, who sees in the practice of etymology a means of revealing the 'genuine illumination' about things that was cast by early Greek intellectuals in their coinage of the vocabulary of the language. While his Plato will firmly reject etymology as a route to secure knowledge, it can 'offer us a whole range of decodings which any Platonically attuned reader will recognise as philosophically correct'.[3] Ademollo for his part is prepared to allow that Socrates remains, for most of the dialogue (if not all: his stance on that is not sufficiently clear),[4] a naturalist of a kind. But on his account Plato as author steers the reader from the outset into seeing that words could in principle, as in practice, only ever count as right for their job by virtue of convention.

One presupposition shared by most participants in this long-running debate, to which Barney, Sedley and Ademollo are just the latest major contributors, is that Plato himself does adopt a stance of his own in the dialogue, which he communicates to the reader either through the proposals or arguments that he attributes to Socrates (as Barney and Sedley assume) or through the evident weaknesses in the naturalist positions propounded by Socrates and subsequently by Cratylus when he is subjected to Socrates' questioning (as Ademollo thinks). A main challenge for interpreters is then to try and work out exactly what that Platonic stance should be taken to consist of. Their radically divergent attempts to do so may suggest, however, not only how difficult such an interpretative project is, but perhaps also that there is something questionable about the presupposition that underpins it. I agree with Rachel Barney against some of those who have stressed the 'open-ended non-authoritarian character' of the Platonic dialogue that 'the mere fact of being written in dialogue form does not preclude the *Cratylus* from expressing positive arguments for philosophical doctrines – arguments and doctrines which we may legitimately (if not automatically or with certainty) ascribe to Plato himself'.[5] Nonetheless I think it is worth attempting an approach to the dialogue which does not assume that its chief purpose is to communicate its author's own views.

2   The Puzzling Role of Cratylus

My starting point and indeed my focus in this chapter will be something that earns less comment in those distinguished studies. It is Plato's own starting point. After Cratylus has acquiesced in Hermogenes' suggestion that Socrates join their discussion, Hermogenes makes a report of the position Cratylus has been taking (383a4–b2):

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[3] Sedley 2003: 153, 98.   [4] See Schofield 2013: 490–1.   [5] Barney 2001: 18.

> This fellow Cratylus, Socrates, says that for each of the things there are there is a correctness of name that is naturally constituted; and that a name is not whatever some people who have agreed with each other to call a thing call it, applying to it a bit of their own speech.[6] Instead there is a kind of naturally inherent correctness to the names, the same for all, Greeks and foreigners alike.

He then describes his unsuccessful attempt to get Cratylus to say what he means. He tries him with some proper names. In response Cratylus says his own name truly is 'Cratylus' and Socrates' 'Socrates', but that 'Hermogenes' is not his interlocutor's name – even if that's what people call him. But beyond that Cratylus only toys with him (384a1–4):

> He makes nothing clear and is teasingly coy with me, making out that he does have a meaning in his own mind, claiming to know something which if he were willing to speak clearly he would make me too agree and take the same line as he does himself.

Hermogenes asks Socrates' help: if Socrates can somehow make out what Cratylus' oracular utterance means, he would be pleased to hear it; although he would prefer to know the opinion Socrates himself has on the subject.

   Socrates duly takes up the invitation. And for more than forty pages of text he conducts a conversation just with Hermogenes, which effectively constitutes an elaborately theorised and then comprehensively illustrated account of what he takes Cratylus to have in mind (the attribution of the account of the theory itself to Cratylus becomes explicit as Socrates concludes his exposition: 390d–e). Only in the dialogue's last thirteen pages does Cratylus reenter the conversation, now as a thoroughly equable and cooperative discussant, to endorse Socrates' whole treatment of the topic, but also to advance some more extreme claims of his own about names, which are then subjected to devastating criticism. So Cratylus' reluctance to say straight out what he means is highlighted on the dialogue's first page, and not redeemed until its finale, when he seems to behave quite differently: at once a curious transformation, and a curiously structured piece of writing. Why did Plato write the dialogue that way? Could an answer to that question help us to answer Jowett's puzzle about its motivation? That is the approach to the old problem that I want to explore in this chapter.

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[6] Ademollo 2011: 24–5 proposes that *phōnē* here should be translated 'voice' rather than 'speech' or 'language'. But Plato needs a reference to some particular language in order to set up the contrast with a correctness that is 'the same for all, Greeks and foreigners alike'.

3　An Answer: First Attempt

The most economically speculative answer to the question might run as follows. Plato writes the dialogue because he wants to examine the prospects for a naturalist theory of names developed in distinctively Platonist style – to see just how far he can make it work, and where overambitious claims for its potency would have to be withdrawn. He attributes the basic idea for the theory to Cratylus at the start of the dialogue because he is well aware that Socrates had never proposed any such idea; and it was also useful to be able in its last few pages to represent Cratylus as the overclaiming opponent needed if Socrates is to direct a critique against any inflated ambitions that might be entertained for that theory. But the main ingredients in the theory he constructs are indeed Platonist: notably the treatment of name-making as a *technē* conforming to Socratic ideals of craftsmanship, including an appeal to a version of the theory of Forms reminiscent of Book 10 of the *Republic*, and a vastly extended and systematic exercise in the kind of etymologizing Plato engages in *en passant* in many other dialogues, which he here represents not as application of any Socratic method, but as a temporary and perhaps disavowable inspiration that has taken hold of Socrates following conversation with the soothsayer Euthyphro. It is accordingly Socrates who is made to work the theory out, in unchallenging conversation with a compliant member of his intimate circle, Hermogenes. The historical Hermogenes, younger brother of the wealthy Callias (familiar from the *Protagoras*), was present at Socrates' death (*Phd.* 59b), and someone upon whom Xenophon relied for his account of the trial that preceded it (*Ap.* 2–10; *Mem.* 4.8.4–10). His fictional counterpart figures in the *Cratylus* initially as a proponent of an alternative conventionalist view of names. But his main role in the dialogue, sustained over the greater part of its length, is to act as Socrates' collaborative but basically passive interlocutor. There is nothing in either the dialogue or the historical record (such as it is) to indicate that he was an independent intellectual force to be reckoned with.

This rationale for the curious construction of the *Cratylus*, in particular of its restriction of Cratylus' role to initial statement of the basic idea it explores and then to target of its closing critique, can accommodate a variety of interpretations of the philosophical attitude to the naturalist theory that Plato might have been wanting to communicate in the dialogue. It is compatible with either Barney's or Sedley's reading, although perhaps less readily with Ademollo's, for whom a distinction between Socratic and Cratylan versions of naturalism is not easy to draw.

Whatever the attractions of such a rationale, however, it suffers from one obvious deficiency. It treats Cratylus as no more than a useful counter on the board of the game of intellectual chess Plato has decided to play in the *Cratylus*. Yet Cratylus is evidently no mere counter. On the dialogue's opening page Plato puts art and energy into investing Cratylus with colourful oddity.

4   An Answer: Second Attempt

One thought might be that Plato wants the dialogue to sum up his own personal engagement with Cratylus and his thinking. For Plato's Cratylus had a historical counterpart, who not only espoused a version of Heracliteanism (and Heracliteanism becomes an increasingly important preoccupation of the dialogue as it progresses), but according to Aristotle was on that account a significant figure in Plato's own philosophical development. As such Cratylus seems to occupy a quite special place among the cast of Socrates' interlocutors with whom Plato populates his dialogues.

Aristotle's key pronouncement on the matter is articulated in the following well-known passage from Book 1 of the *Metaphysics* (6.987a32–b10):

> In his youth he [Plato] had become familiar first of all with Cratylus and with Heraclitean views to the effect that all perceptible things are always in flux, and there is no knowledge that relates to them. This is a position he later subscribed to in these terms. Socrates, on the other hand, engaged in discussion of ethics, and had nothing to say about the general system of nature. But he was intent on finding out what was universal in this field, and was the first to fix his thinking on definitions. Plato followed him in this, and subscribed to the position that definition relates to something else, and not to the perceptibles – on the kind of grounds indicated: he thought it impossible for there to be a common definition of any of the perceptibles, since they were always changing. Plato, then, called these kinds of realities 'ideas', and claimed that the perceptibles were something in addition to them, and were all spoken of in terms of them – what he said was that, by virtue of participation, the many shared their names with the forms.

In other words whatever encounters the historical Socrates might or might not have had with the historical Cratylus, that Cratylus according to Aristotle played a major role in Plato's own intellectual formation.

Scholars have often questioned the reliability of Aristotle's testimony. But its basic historicity has been well defended by Sedley, whose arguments

and conclusions are with some qualifications endorsed by Ademollo.[7] The sceptics suggest that with his penchant for constructing philosophical genealogies, Aristotle has simply extrapolated an explanation of how Plato came to hold his own theory of knowledge from the ending of the *Cratylus* itself.[8] There Socrates argues that there can be no knowledge of things in the sort of Heraclitean flux Cratylus sees as the comprehensive truth about the nature of reality: if there were knowledge, it would have to take as its objects entities exempt from such flux like the beautiful itself, which is always such as it is (439b–440e).

There is more reason to reject than to embrace the sceptical take on Aristotle's report. It is certainly plausible that he used these last pages of the dialogue to interpret his biographical information, and to make sense of the way Plato came to use the Heracliteanism he heard from Cratylus. But he knew more about Cratylus than the *Cratylus* discloses, for example that Cratylus ended up thinking that one should say nothing – and that he simply 'used to move his finger', presumably when he did want to communicate. And he reports a no doubt related complaint that Cratylus leveled against Heraclitus: you cannot step into the same river even once (*Metaph.* 4.4.1010a10–15). Moreover (if I may reproduce something I wrote on a previous occasion), 'he doesn't actually need the biographical claim for his main purpose – to explain Plato's motivation for positing Forms; and the way he highlights it at the beginning of the passage suggests someone who thinks he has real news to impart'.[9]

The closest correspondence between the Cratyluses of Aristotle and the *Cratylus* is in that commitment of both to a theory of Heraclitean flux. In the *Cratylus* that theory is construed as a general truth about the whole of reality, whereas Aristotle restricts its scope to the domain of the perceptible. However there may not be much significance in the difference. The *Theaetetus*, too, presents the theory in similarly universal terms, but

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[7] See Sedley 2003: 16–21 and Ademollo 2011: 14–18. Sedley 2003: 17 n. 37 thinks the balance of the evidence suggests that Plato had actually been Cratylus' pupil, but Ademollo 2011: 318 takes the view that 'Cratylus probably had *no* pupils at all', principally on account of the way he is characterized on the first page of the dialogue, together with the claim made in this regard about Heracliteans in general at *Tht.* 180b–c: see further Section 5 below. When Cratylus reenters the discussion late in the *Cratylus*, Socrates is made to assume that he does take pupils; and Cratylus in reply does not rule out the possibility of taking on Socrates as such (*Cra.* 428b–c). But as I shall be arguing below, Cratylus undergoes ahistorical transformation in this final part of the dialogue.

[8] Diogenes Laertius clearly engages in such extrapolation, making Plato attach himself both to Cratylus and to Hermogenes, taken to be an Eleatic (D. L. 3.6).

[9] Schofield 2008: 53. We should note also that from the Socratic Aeschines of Sphettus Aristotle takes another piece of information he retails about Cratylus: the way he waved his hands and hissed while he spoke (*Rh.* 3.16.1417b1–3).

develops it within an argumentative context that is largely restricted to discussion of perception and what is perceptible. Otherwise the most striking affinity Aristotle's Cratylus has with Plato's is his interest in language and in the way it relates to the world. Aristotle's report that he ended up just moving his finger – pointing at things, presumably – has often been persuasively construed as due to his final conclusion about flux: as Socrates argues in the *Theaetetus*, if everything is always changing in every dimension, then it is impossible to apply an expression in referring to or describing it more or less correctly than its negative counterpart. If that interpretation is on the right lines, then just as in the *Cratylus*, Aristotle's Cratylus will have been a thinker whose interest in language is intimately connected with his ideas about the nature of the reality to which language is taken to apply. And it might be possible to go further (with Sedley, followed by Ademollo) and see the ending of the *Cratylus*, where Socrates presses upon Cratylus the question of 'whether it is possible to speak of a thing correctly if it is always slipping away' (*Cra.* 439d), as deliberately foreshadowing the sceptical stance on language that Aristotle's Cratylus eventually found himself having to adopt.[10]

So to this extent there is a pretty good doctrinal fit between Aristotle's Cratylus and the Cratylus of the dialogue. There is reason to expect that that would have been so. When in the dialogues Plato brings on stage thinkers of some stature for Socrates to engage with, he may not always treat them with the respect they might have thought they deserved. But where we have independent evidence about them (often we do not: on whether the historical Thrasymachus held that justice is the advantage of the stronger we are in the dark), he turns out to be reasonably scrupulous in ensuring that the words he puts in their mouths accord with what they are elsewhere recorded as having said or thought. Thus the Zeno of the *Parmenides* is recognizably Zenonian, and its Parmenides understandably finds metaphysical pluralism problematic, although here Plato is of course freely extrapolating to what such a brand of philosophical monist he takes him to be might have said (we shall return to consider extrapolation and the freedom with which Plato engages in it in Section 6 below). When Plato's Gorgias makes persuasion and its power his central preoccupation, and agrees with Socrates that it produces conviction but does not teach, we recognize the author of the *Encomium of Helen*, and the claim there that speech in a public forum 'delights and persuades on account of the art (*technē*) with which it is written, not because it is spoken with truth'

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[10] Sedley 2003: 18–19; Ademollo 2011: 17–18.

(*Hel.*13). The *Theaetetus* goes out of its way to construct a defence of Protagoras, in which Socrates develops on his behalf an explanation of how it is possible without inconsistency to hold both that man is the measure of all things (which is cited as the opening of his book *Truth*) and that some people are wiser and better able to teach than others. Here we are reliant on Plato himself for the information about what Protagoras thought. But this way of proceeding would make no sense if the representation of his views were in any obvious way unfaithful to them.

According to Aristotle it was the historical Cratylus' Heracliteanism that made such a significant impact on Plato. But although Heracliteanism plays an explicit and significant role in the *Cratylus*, most notably as the representation of reality that many of its etymologies communicate, it is of course not the dialogue's main focus. So if one reason that might have prompted Plato to write it was a fascination with Cratylus' philosophical thinking, there seems little case for supposing that it was that encounter with his Heracliteanism that primarily motivated composition of the *Cratylus.* If it was some idea of the historical Cratylus that played a major part in prompting it, that idea must obviously have been one concerned with the nature of language. Aristotle's evidence that Cratylus did make at least one statement on the subject has been mentioned in the previous section. So there is at least some reason to think that the stance ascribed to him on the opening page of the dialogue might represent a position the historical Cratylus took, at any rate at one time in his philosophising on the subject – although not his final view (if we may believe Aristotle) that 'one should say nothing'.

The basic proposal attributed to Cratylus in the dialogue is the thesis that 'for each of the things there are there is a correctness of names that is naturally constituted' (383a), subsequently summarised by Socrates as the view that 'the names belong to the things by nature' (390d–e). We have no other evidence that Cratylus held such a view. But it seems highly likely that he was a proponent of the natural correctness of names in some shape or form, even if the wording given at 383a might be suspected of being Plato's own articulation, designed to enable precision in the theory Socrates will go on to elaborate. Otherwise it would be hard to see why Plato would or indeed could have selected him as the advocate of the naturalist position he wanted to examine. Moreover if he was a Heraclitean, some kind of naturalist stance on names would be what one would expect, once debates about what is natural and what is conventional had got under way, as they did above all in the age of the sophists – the time, evidently, when Cratylus was active. For Heraclitus saw names and

especially similarities between them as providing us – if we are intellec-
tually alert – with a window on reality. It suffices simply to mention some
well-known fragments: 'The name of the bow is life; its work is death'
(B48, with its play on '*bíos*' ['life'] and – when differently accented – '*biós*'
['bow']); 'One thing alone is the wise: it is not willing and is willing to be
called by the name of Zeus (*Zēnos*)' (B32); 'Greater deaths (*moroi*) gain
greater portions (*moirai*)' (B25); 'If it were not Dionysus for whom they
march in procession and chant the hymn to the phallus (*aidoia*), their
action would be most shameless (*anaidestata*). But Hades (*aidēs*) and
Dionysus are the same, him for whom they rave and celebrate Lenaia'
(B15).[11]

So this dialogue on what makes names correct probably does start off
with a Cratylus close to the Cratylus of history, a figure at one time of some
philosophical importance for Plato. But as I shall now argue, from that
observation fuel for further interpretation seems to run out. Our second
attempt at understanding the structure of the *Cratylus* – as a working out of
Plato's personal engagement with Cratylus – takes us some distance, but
not far enough. It is time to consider the way Plato presents him as he
reenters the conversation in the dialogue's final phase.

5   The Two Cratyluses of the Dialogue

Given Cratylus' silence throughout most of the dialogue, it is hard to know
how many of the other propositions about names he is eventually repre-
sented as being prepared to assert are any more than extrapolations on Plato's
own part. Sometimes he is credited as a likely source even for elements in
Socrates' theory – such as at least some of the etymologies, or the idea of an
etymological programme – that are not ascribed to him.[12] I agree with
Ademollo that what influence he had on the material in that part of the
dialogue or its shaping is 'impossible to evaluate'.[13] But aside from the
dangers of equating what may very well be Platonic extrapolations with
proposals actually made by Cratylus, there is a further reason for caution over
what we ascribe to him. Plato's fullest engagement with Heracliteanism

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[11] The discussion of B48 in Kirk 1954: 116–22 is still worth consulting; see also Kahn 1979: 201–2.
[12] See, e.g., Barney 2001: 52–5 and Sedley 2003: 76, 104.
[13] Ademollo 2011: 190. Socrates makes an interesting remark to Cratylus at *Cra.* 428b: 'But if *you* are in
a position to say something finer than these things [sc. Socrates' own exposition of a linguistic
naturalism], I would not be surprised. For you seem to me to have both looked into such matters
yourself and to have learned from others.' On the face of it, this looks like first an implicit assertion of
his own originality on Plato's part, and then an indication that he knows quite a bit about Cratylus'
own ventures in etymologizing.

comes, of course, in the *Theaetetus*, where there is a particularly indicative passage on the intellectual *modus operandi* adopted by Heracliteans presumably of Socrates' time, in this evidently apeing what they plausibly enough took to be Heraclitus' own oral as well as written style. When Theodorus suggests that they respond to questions by firing 'some little enigmatic phrase from his [Heraclitus'] quiver' and never give a proper account of anything, Socrates replies that he supposes they keep proper explanations for pupils whom they want to assimilate to themselves. Theodorus remarks in turn that 'there are no pupils and teachers among these people'. Theodorus goes on: 'As I was just going to say, you will never get these men to give an account of themselves, willingly or unwillingly. What we must do is to take their doctrine out of their hands and consider it for ourselves, as we should a problem in geometry' (*Tht.* 180a–c).

Considering Cratylus' doctrine for themselves, after listening to a succinct account of unsuccessful attempts to elicit anything clear from him, is precisely what Socrates gets Hermogenes to help him do, for the next forty pages or more of text – without in the course of it attempting to consult Cratylus himself. It does not seem much of an interpretative leap to see Plato as meaning his readers to take him to be presenting Cratylus from the outset as a typical Heraclitean: conforming to the stereotype Theodorus draws in the *Theaetetus*, in as much as he contents himself with making a pregnant and enigmatic pronouncement of which he then refuses to give a clear account,[14] and adopting an 'ostentatious mysteriousness'.[15] Intensification of that mysteriousness must be what Plato intends to convey by making Hermogenes refer to the frustrating discussion he is represented as having attempted to conduct with Cratylus in a conversation that we do not hear, but that is supposed to have preceded the start of the dialogue itself.

However, there is an apparent obstacle to this seemingly attractive line of interpretation. For Cratylus is made to adopt a quite different demeanour when he rejoins the philosophical conversation at 427e, and particularly once Socrates starts quizzing him on what commitment to the basic naturalist thesis on names entails. Now Cratylus conducts

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[14] So when Sedley says (2003: 51): 'No one is likely to doubt that Cratylus, for all his reticence about explaining it, has a worked out theory of names', I find myself disagreeing. Perhaps the confidence he is represented as having (383b) in the correctness of the names 'Cratylus' and 'Socrates', and in regarding 'Hermogenes', however, as not Hermogenes' name, indicates that he – like the author of the Derveni papyrus – thought etymologizing could reveal the nature signified by a real name. But to hold such a view is a long way from having worked out anything we might want to call a theory. See Ademollo 2011: 319 for judicious comments on this issue.

[15] Ademollo 2011: 27.

himself as a mostly reasonable and altogether cooperative respondent, who is made to signal respect for Socrates at the outset, albeit qualified by the implication that Socrates merely divines what he himself knows by dint of long study (428b–c). He takes some extreme positions: 1) All names that count as real names are well made, with no possibility of faulty or less than optimal construction, nor of incorrect application – or indeed of false speaking of any kind (428e–433c). 2) Getting someone to understand the names of things is the only and best way of teaching the reality of things (435d–436a). 3) All things without exception are in flux: a thesis whose truth he not unreasonably takes to be implied by the combination of 2) and the general outcome of the etymological analysis conducted in the long central section of the dialogue: 436e–437a, 440d–e. He is quite stubborn in his defence of 1) and 2), and with 1) in particular resists the obviously powerful logic of Socrates' refutations. But he never ducks answering Socrates' questions, and he certainly does not snarl or sulk or sweat or throw tantrums like a Callicles or Thrasymachus. In fact Plato gives him no distinctive colouring of any sort. His style of answering certainly bears no resemblance to that memorably ascribed to Heracliteans in the *Theaetetus.*

What the objection indicates, I suggest, is that the dialogue presents the reader with a further kind of two Cratylus problem beyond the one notoriously articulated by Socrates in the course of his critique of 1) (432b–c).[16] The Cratylus portrayed at the outset and the Cratylus we meet with from 427e onwards seem quite different performers, so far as intellectual style is concerned. The fact that proposition 3) above is explicitly presented as a Heraclitean thesis does nothing to disturb that conclusion. In fact the way Cratylus is represented as subscribing to the truth of 3) reinforces it. At the end of the dialogue Socrates advises Cratylus to think carefully about the matter. Cratylus responds as follows (440d7–e2):

> But let me assure you, Socrates, that even right now my view of the matter is not unconsidered, but as I consider it and struggle with the issues [literally: am having trouble] it seems to me that things are much more the way Heraclitus says.

Sedley (following Kirk's 1951 article) suggests that the considering and the 'having trouble' (*pragmata echein*, undertranslated by him as 'turn over in the mind') refers to the thinking Cratylus has been doing just in the course

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[16] Might the choice of Cratylus as example in the problem Socrates is raising at 432b–c be a steer to the reader that he might actually be speaking with an imitation, not the real Cratylus? The same postmodern metatextual thought occurred independently to me and to David Sedley.

of the dialogue, not in past reflection, as indicated by the present tenses of
the relevant Greek verbs.[17] That seems to me implausible: Cratylus is surely
wanting to impress upon Socrates that he has thought long and hard about
the topic.[18] Nonetheless Sedley rightly points out that when just before at
440c Socrates refers to 'the Heracliteans', he does not seem to be including
Cratylus in their number. And Cratylus is plainly not in this closing
passage of the dialogue being presented as a declared Heraclitean dogma-
tist. In fact his style of talk here much more resembles Socrates' than the
'prophetic' mode of utterance reported at the outset by Hermogenes
(384a).

The mysterious Cratylus to whom we are indirectly introduced by
Hermogenes at the beginning of the *Cratylus* is turning out to be less of
a mystery than the figure that reenters the conversation in its final section.
The dialogue's initial Cratylus was a typically cryptic Heraclitean. But the
philosophical identity of Socrates' partner in the last thirteen pages of the
discussion is proving more of a puzzle.

6   The Second Cratylus Reviewed

At this point it seems sensible to reflect on the overall philosophical shape
of the clutch of positions sustained by this second Cratylus in that final
stretch of dialogue (428e–440e). It might be described as a comprehensive
linguistic naturalism pushed to radical extremes, with semantic, epistemo-
logical, and ontological components, articulated in theses 1), 2) and 3)
respectively, and in an order of exposition that reflects logical sequence.
Any name to count as a name, and therefore to satisfy the requirements of
natural appropriateness, must be entirely successful in uniquely capturing
the nature of the referent to which it is applied, inevitably therefore
correctly and truly. Getting people to understand names so conceived is
the ideal and indeed the only way of teaching them the nature of that
referent: the only route to knowledge of it. Examination of names so
understood (in line with the etymological analysis of 391b–421c) reveals
the universal truth about things: reality consists in flux – everything real is
in motion if it is real.

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[17] Sedley 2003: 18 n. 40; cf. Ademollo 2011: 487. For argument to the contrary see Allan 1954: 279–80.
[18] I agree with Sedley that in the discussion of 2) Cratylus has been making it clear that he is persuaded
that the Heraclitean ontology is true: see 436b–c, 436e–437a. But there does not seem to be any sign
there or later that thinking about the issue is something he is in the immediate present having any
trouble with.

Did any one Greek philosopher advocate such a theory, with all its three components? Not so far as we know. Socrates in the *Euthydemus*, in associating use of the argument that it is impossible to contradict what anyone else has said with Protagoras and his followers, and even earlier thinkers, takes this to be tantamount to claiming that there is no such thing as false speaking (286b–c); Aristotle associates the same line of thought with Antisthenes, who likewise couples denial of the possibility of contradiction with the impossibility of false speaking (*Metaph.* 5.29.1024b32–4). In the *Sophist* the impossibility of speaking falsely is associated ultimately with Parmenides' prohibition of saying what is not, and is treated as the basis of sophistry (*Sph.* 236d–237b). Next, for the idea that understanding names is the path to knowledge the best parallel is again Antisthenes, although this must effectively have been a position taken by others also – Prodicus is the obvious example. Epictetus (*Epict. diss.* 1.17.10) credits Antisthenes with the dictum: 'The principle/starting point (*archē*) for education is the study of names.' Finally, the doctrine of universal flux is of course identified above all with Heraclitus and the Heracliteans, Cratylus included, although at the start of his discussion of it in the *Theaetetus* Socrates is made to characterize it as a feature of the general stance of all previous thinkers other than Parmenides, naming Protagoras and Empedocles as well as Heraclitus, and enlisting Epicharmus and Homer from among the poets too (*Tht.* 152d–e).

Thus the individual elements of the theory all have identifiable antecedents. But the package as a whole is most plausibly viewed as Plato's original construction. Perhaps we should interpret it as an ingenious tour de force, in which he was attempting to show – just as with the etymologies in their very different mode – how a great deal of previous philosophy and (no less importantly) current sophistry can be fitted together to form a synthesis: in this case (whatever may be intended with the etymologies), an utterly wrong-headed synthesis. As such it might be regarded as an exercise (presumably earlier in date) comparable with the comprehensive map of philosophical positions in ontology constructed with similar critical intent in the *Sophist* (242b–249d). The mainspring for the synthesis here is the naturalist theory of names. So Plato makes Cratylus the speaker from whom Socrates gradually teases it out over the course of the final discussion. But he is now only tangentially connected with what I am supposing was the more authentically cryptic Cratylus presented at the beginning of the dialogue. This new Cratylus is more of a symbolic indication of where that original Cratylus' initial idea might lead someone if it was pressed to the limit.

I suspect that Plato was particularly wanting his readers to see both how readily and how unSocratically the views of his rival Antisthenes (who evidently saw himself, not Plato, as Socrates' true heir) belong within such a context. It was an old suggestion that 'Cratylus' stood as proxy for a contemporary whom Plato did not wish to name or engage with directly. Antisthenes was often a preferred candidate, and indeed his claims were revived in Guthrie's *History*.[19] Hypotheses like that have, however, fallen out of general favour, partly because any such identifications are bound to be insecure, and partly because the working assumption prevalent in most English-speaking Plato scholarship at the present and for a good time past has been that analysing the arguments on the page, or latterly also making sense of the dynamics of the philosophical drama as it is presented to the reader, is what the job of the philosophical interpreter should consist in, not speculating about the provenance of the material. Nonetheless it has become progressively clear, particularly in scholarship of the present millennium, how important reflection on the Greek philosophical tradition was for Plato, particularly in his later period: in the present context I need only refer to MM McCabe's *Plato and His Predecessors* (2000).[20] And with Sedley's pioneering work (2003), and more recently with Ademollo's rich treatment of the etymologies (2011), it is now more evident than ever that in the *Cratylus* such reflection constitutes a centrally important dimension of the dialogue.

However, whereas in the section comprising the etymologies, Socrates makes it clear enough that he is drawing on a great deal of historical material from Homer to Anaxagoras, such hints are scarcer in the closing conversation with Cratylus, which is couched in entirely abstract terms, with even the mentions at the end of Heraclitus and Heracliteanism (*Cra.* 440c–e) simply a conveniently economical way of indicating the flux doctrine. That does not mean that there are no other philosophical presences making themselves felt in what Cratylus is made to maintain. It is rather that where such presences are contemporary, Plato mostly resorts to tactics other than the veiled or less veiled references that in the etymology section he used with the earlier thinkers.[21] The best parallel is with the *Theaetetus* (whose affinities with the *Cratylus* are well known).[22] When Plato wants there to engineer discussion of Heracliteanism (which as noted above he wants conceived broadly, as a metaphysical tendency with which

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[19] Guthrie 1978: 2–4.   [20] However, see also Adomenas 2006.
[21] For just one particularly notable example, see the treatment of *dikaiosunē* at 412c–413d, with the discussion in Sedley 2003: 114–19.
[22] I am grateful to David Sedley for the suggestion.

many previous thinkers can be associated), he makes Socrates introduce it as the secret doctrine Protagoras taught his pupils (*Tht.* 152c). The tactic here is not dissimilar. He makes Cratylus the proxy for the proponents of views in recent and current philosophy that he wants to associate with the naturalist theory of names: Cratylus' own secret doctrine, one might say.[23] At just one point this is more or less explicit. At 429c–d (in the discussion of 1)) Socrates suggests that Cratylus' view that 'Hermogenes' is not Hermogenes' name implies that if one says of him 'This is Hermogenes', that is not even a false statement. And he puts it to him that this adds up to the thesis of the impossibility of falsehood which quite a lot of thinkers have subscribed to, 'both now and in the past'.

The evidence that Antisthenes was among those thinkers has already been cited (*Metaph.* 5.29.1024b32–4). It was connected with his key doctrine that nothing can be spoken of except by its own proprietary *logos*, 'one on one': which is very close to the view of the relation between a name and the thing for which it is the name that Cratylus is represented as contending for in this stretch of the *Cratylus* (429e–430a), and which is then spelled out by Socrates with an analogy with portraits which is pressed to show the untenability of the view – whether as applied to names or to *logoi* (430a–431c). Treatment of names was itself clearly a matter to which Antisthenes attached huge importance. Diogenes Laertius' catalogue of his writings records a work entitled 'On education, or names', in five books (6.17). His pronouncement on the subject retailed by Epictetus (*Epict. diss.* 1.17.10) has similarly already been cited: 'The principle/starting point (*archē*) for education is the study of names.' It is striking that one of only two emphatic claims Cratylus is made to make without any feeds from Socrates in the final section of the dialogue is his response to the question what power or function (*dunamis*) names have.[24] He says (435d): 'Teaching, Socrates, in my own opinion – and it's altogether straightforward: anyone who knows the names knows the things too.' And in an exchange or two later, responding to Socrates' query as to whether there is any better or indeed other form of teaching than this, he declares (436a): 'That is what *I* think – that there is none other at all: this is both the only one and the best.' I think

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[23] Making Cratylus a proxy figure is a device, of course, not nearly as transparent to the reader as is explicit talk of a secret doctrine. If, as most scholars think, the *Cratylus* precedes the *Theaetetus* in date of composition, it may be that Plato decided he needed a more indicative way of intimating that Protagoras was meant to function in part as a proxy for other thinkers than the use of Cratylus as a proxy that I am maintaining.

[24] The other is his argument that consistency in what names reveal should be regarded as a very important proof that the original name giver had true knowledge of the things he was naming (436b–c).

it hard to resist the thought that Antisthenes at this point becomes the most important figure in the amalgam that I am arguing Cratylus has become in these closing pages of the dialogue, at any rate until Socrates raises the issue of the validity of Heracliteanism at the very end.

The critique Socrates is made to launch against the positions Cratylus upholds in them is generally recognized to be the most argumentatively strenuous section of the entire dialogue, with sustained onslaught on 1) constituting the most brilliantly resourceful passage in the range of dialectical stratagems it deploys, the discussion of 2) including *inter alia* an attack on the first explicit appearance in philosophy of something beginning to approach a coherence theory of truth, and the treatment of 3) the hardest to interpret in its extreme concision and compression. The arguments developed here are undoubtedly what have in recent times most excited those philosophical readers who have approached the *Cratylus* with a mindset shaped primarily by engagement with dialogues such as the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*, as perhaps most notably Bernard Williams in his influential paper 'Cratylus' Theory of Names and Its Refutation' (1982). MM McCabe, in 'Putting the *Cratylus* in Its Place' (Mackenzie 1986b), effectively took three paradoxical contentions she saw as salient in the position attacked in the final section to be what shape the entire structure and thrust of the dialogue. '"Hermogenes" is not Hermogenes' name', 'Falsehood is impossible', 'Coming to know is impossible' are the trio she had in mind: all of them striking strong resonances with one or other of the *Euthydemus, Theaetetus*, or *Sophist*.

One thing these responses to the *Cratylus* get us to remember is just how intensely Plato became preoccupied especially in those other three dialogues with the cluster of issues in semantics, epistemology, and ontology that are pursued in its closing pages. For example, where their treatment of the problem of falsehood is concerned, Sedley speaks of 'the long road' that is widely held to have 'started in Socrates' encounter with the sophists in the *Euthydemus*, continued in the *Cratylus* and *Theaetetus*, and ended triumphantly in the *Sophist*, with some further related thoughts in the *Philebus*'.[25] And it has always been recognized that the question of whether knowledge could take things in radical universal flux as its object that is raised at the very end of the *Cratylus* prompts a hint of the *coup de grâce* delivered to Heracliteanism at the end of the first part of the *Theaetetus* (182c–183b). The closing discussion with Cratylus, and the debate over the distinctive theses he is made to propound there (1), 2) and 3)), enable Plato,

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[25] Sedley 2003: 132.

therefore, to work at paradoxical philosophical stances with which he is evidently obsessed, ingeniously brought together on this one occasion within the framework of a consolidated – if perverse – total theory. It is hard to think of his discussion here just as conclusion or coda to examination of the viability of the naturalist conception of names. This final stage of the dialogue is surely not merely its last chapter, but its *telos*.

7   Conclusion

I have been arguing that the figure of Cratylus is both one of the puzzles of the *Cratylus* and a key to interpreting what Plato was about in the dialogue. The opening page sets out to make Cratylus a man of mystery. He is then all but forgotten through the bulk of the dialogue, where Socrates is made first to develop in characteristic Socratic style an economically argued Platonic theory of how there has to be a natural correctness for names, and what in general terms its basis must consist in; and then to produce in a dazzling and protracted display of ingenuity a comprehensive account of the way etymological analysis and subsequently phonemic dismemberment of the vocabulary of Greek can exhibit its natural correctness – or at least disclose the views about reality held by those who coined it. After such a performance Plato needs to produce something that will move the reader sharply to a different intellectual plane and enable the dialogue to reach a yet more impressive conclusion, satisfying in dramatic and philosophical terms alike.

His *coup de théâtre* is achieved by bringing Cratylus back on stage, not to issue dogmatic pronouncements, but surprisingly enough to converse with a Socrates who is now by contrast once more the argumentative critic par excellence. Cratylus for his part has been transformed into a rather artificial interlocutor, humanly much less interesting than in Hermogenes' initial descriptions. Rather quiet theatre, one might think, compared with the drama of many other Platonic dialogues. But Plato surely expects us to find ourselves intellectually transported (in the company of Williams and McCabe) to a new and deeper level of philosophical engagement by the paradoxicality of that cluster of extreme claims about matters fundamental to all philosophy (claims familiar to readers of the later dialogues, which are now made by Cratylus, and here developed from his basic idea of the natural basis of naming); and by the power and ingenuity of the Socratic elenchus to which they are subjected. We sense that Plato is in these final

pages using 'Cratylus' to work through some of the deepest and most insistent concerns in his mature philosophising.

If that is indeed his ultimate focus, then the need to reach a decision between a naturalist or a conventionalist view of language (a focus of our first shot at an answer to Jowett's perplexity) has become by the end somewhat secondary, as has any interest Plato had in constructing a testament to the significance of the personal encounter with the Cratylus he had met in his youth (the tack followed in our second shot). What most matters in the dialogue's last chapter is the project of teasing out an entire complex of interconnected logical, epistemological and metaphysical positions that might be taken to be implicit in linguistic naturalism, if interpreted in radically simplistic terms, and of getting us to see the absurdities they generate. To reach that endpoint must have been one of the major objectives Plato had in composing the *Cratylus.* His construction of the strange role of Cratylus within its idiosyncratic structure and trajectory was the way he decided to achieve it. His strategy here may therefore be seen as a foretaste of the later dialogues' technique, brilliantly exhibited by MM McCabe in *Plato and His Predecessors*, of associating metaphysical positions that he will reject – as in the end beyond the reach of rational dialogue – with shadowy versions of great figures of the philosophical past: Parmenides, Heraclitus, Protagoras.

Is Aristotle a Virtue Ethicist?

Joachim Aufderheide

1   Introduction

Aristotle is the sacred cow of virtue ethicists. Or perhaps better: he is one of the sacred cows. Defining 'virtue ethics' ostensively by pointing at Aristotle was useful when virtue ethics was revived in the twentieth century. Now virtue ethics no longer needs to piggyback on Aristotle: neo-Aristotelian ethics is regarded as merely one species of the genus 'virtue ethics', among Confucian, Humean and even Nietzschean species.[1] While virtue ethics does not entail Aristotelian ethics, few adherents of the creed deny Aristotle's quasi-sacred status: non-Aristotelian virtue-ethicists have tried to broaden their sect, not to kill one of their sacred cows.

Since virtue ethics stands on its own two feet now, we can reasonably ask whether Aristotle's ethics is a species of virtue ethics – just as we can reasonably ask whether Plato is a Platonist, or whether Kant is a Kantian. But why ask the question? Plato's case illustrates the point: many students come to Plato with the preconception that he believes in heavy-duty Forms and that he has certain outlandish views about the soul. Worse, many read Plato only to confirm their Platonist view of Plato (and never grow out of it). Similarly, if we approach Aristotle's ethics expecting to find a virtue ethics, we may oversimplify his ethics or get them wrong.[2] So, why not simply read Aristotle and put the question of virtue ethics to one side? Asking whether Aristotle is a virtue ethicist serves two purposes: to inform contemporary virtue ethics, insofar as an answer may present a connection

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If I have learnt anything from MM McCabe about doing ancient philosophy, then it is to start with the text, read the text carefully and try to figure out what the text says in its own right. She has, moreover, the gift of bringing dead philosophers alive by inviting us to look at our questions and concerns from their perspective. In my tribute to her, I hope to catch some of her magic.

[1] See the papers in Russell 2013.

[2] Since most philosophers take Aristotle to be a virtue ethicist by default ('virtue ethics is what Aristotle did', Putnam 1988: 379), hardly anyone explicitly *argues* that Aristotle is a virtue ethicist (with the exception of Mcaleer 2007).

between Aristotle and virtue ethics more nuanced than it is usually taken to be; and to improve our understanding of the structure of Aristotle's ethics, insofar as certain of its structural features are highlighted by asking questions arising from virtue ethics. Thus, by studying each theory in its own right, but with a view to comparing them, we can gain a new and illuminating perspective on both.

But how to line up virtue ethics and Aristotle's ethics with a view to comparing them? Are we not distorting Aristotle's ethical theorising if we bring a distinctly contemporary question to his text and expect Aristotle to have an answer?[3] Every serious scholar takes care not to simply apply our conceptual framework to Aristotle's texts, or any framework alien to Aristotle's. We can avoid the problem of distorting Aristotle by construing the title question as a question about the relationship between ethically good action and virtue. While I do start with *our* question, not Aristotle's, the relevant texts nevertheless show *his* theoretical commitments – if read properly. And read the texts we must: rather than comparing Aristotle's politico-ethical system on a grand scale to contemporary virtue ethics,[4] I propose to concentrate on key texts, the definition of virtue in *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.6 and the good person as measure in *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.4.

2   Virtue Ethics as Ethical Theory

Most contemporary virtue ethicists see themselves as proposing and defending an approach to ethics distinct from its deontological and consequentialist rivals.[5] We should not confuse virtue ethics with virtue theory. If we do, we might be led to conclude that virtue ethics could not be 'a thing on its own' because virtue theory 'is so obviously an important element of both [Kantianism and Utilitarianism]'.[6] A virtue theory studies the nature of the virtues (which traits are virtues; how to acquire them; their moral psychology), usually without making a deeper

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[3] For an excellent exploration of Aristotle's relation to contemporary ethical theorising, see Broadie 2007, who also touches on my title question.

[4] Like Simpson 1992 and Buckle 2002, and to a lesser degree Santas 1993 – all of whom dissociate Aristotle from virtue ethics.

[5] At the end of the last century Rosalind Hursthouse hoped that 'future generations of moral philosophers . . . will lose interest in classifying themselves as following one approach rather than another; in which case all three labels [sc. deontology, consequentialism and virtue ethics] might become of merely historical interest' (1999: 5). However, two pages later, she declares that '[a]s things are now, the approach is still new enough to be distinctive'.

[6] Nussbaum 1999: 167, who does not make the distinction.

theoretical commitment to any specific ethical theory, whereas virtue ethics seeks to provide a fully-fledged normative theory, comparable in scope to its perceived rivals. Both Kant and Mill do study the nature of virtue, but without endorsing a virtue ethics. Observing the distinction between virtue theory and virtue ethics, we must ask what role virtue would need to play in virtue ethics as a distinct approach to normative ethics.

Given the variety of virtue ethical approaches, we should not become exasperated over the vague answer 'that a theory is virtue ethical if virtue notions are *sufficiently* central in that theory'.[7] While this 'definition' fails to specify *the* role virtue or virtue-notions need to play in a virtue ethics, it pushes us towards considering what is central to an ethical theory – and we clearly can have a plurality of concerns: for instance moral epistemology, reasons, motives, consequences, happiness, emotions and right action. Instead of considering the whole gamut of concerns, I shall focus only on right action or rather ethically good action – not because a virtue ethical account of right action defines virtue ethics, but because this concern, more than the others, helps differentiate normative theories. An account of ethically good action – my neutral term for right, good, or appropriate action – is central to an ethical theory:[8] it provides a framework that enables us to evaluate and justify what we or others should do or should have done.[9] While different species of virtue ethics differ significantly over the roles of motives and happiness, they agree on a general level in their accounts of ethically good action. Moreover, if two ethical theories have substantially different accounts of ethically good action, they belong to distinct genera. However much Kantians and consequentialists can learn from virtue ethics about emotions or practical reasoning, i.e. however much they adopt for their respective virtue theory, they cannot adopt a virtue ethical account of ethically good action. The account of ethically good action is a fault line of ethical theories; the other concerns provide less

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[7] Swanton 2013: 334. Nussbaum 1999: 201 proposes 'to do away with the category of "virtue ethics"' because of the variety of virtue ethical approaches.

[8] I use 'ethically good action' instead of 'morally good' in order a) to remain neutral on the question whether Aristotle had a conception of morality similar to our own (denied, perhaps most prominently, by Anscombe 1958), and b) to bring out that for Aristotle there is something good about right actions, however difficult it may be to specify just what this 'something' is. I am not suggesting that the goodness alone fixes the ethical status of the action; I do not presuppose a teleological or deontological framework.

[9] I omit action-guidance deliberately, as the theoretical account of right action need not, and in many cases does not, guide action in the sense that the agent uses the account of right action to determine the thing to be done. The point applies not only to many forms of consequentialism and deontology, but also to the canonical, though slightly disreputable, virtue ethical account of right action as 'an action is right if and only if it is what the virtuous person would do'.

clear-cut divisions.[10] Whether Aristotle has a virtue ethics thus hangs on his account of ethically good action.

All species of virtue ethics that purport to offer a normative ethics deny that ethically good action can be defined independently of virtue. While different species will spell out the relation differently, we can take the dependence of ethically good action on virtue as a distinguishing mark of virtue ethics: the genus 'virtue ethics' differs from other genera of moral theories in making ethically good action dependent on virtue.[11] Virtue terms which define ethically good action must therefore not rely on any prior notion of ethically good action. In particular, when defining certain traits of character as virtues, the definientia must not smuggle in other normatively foundational notions specifiable independently of virtue, such as law or the good, a point which applies to all virtue ethical definitions of right action. To examine the relation between virtue and ethically good action in Aristotle, I shall ask two questions: (a) is ethically good action dependent on virtue? And (b) is virtue dependent on ethically good action?

Although Aristotle does not explicitly use the concepts of theoretical dependence or independence in the *Ethics*, he would recognise at least three ways in which ethically good action could depend on virtue, were ethically good action to depend on virtue: (i) a person must attain virtue before being able to perform ethically good actions; (ii) the definition of ethically good action relies on the notion of virtue which in turn can be defined without reference to ethically good action; and (iii) the virtuous person, her reason or responses, at least partly constitutes what counts as ethically good action – which obviously resonates with (i) and (ii). Aristotle understands the first two kinds of dependence in terms of priority: virtue may be temporally prior to ethically good action and/or prior in account and knowledge.[12] Following Aristotle's terminology, I shall pursue my title question in terms of priority: if the definition of virtue does not rely on a prior notion of ethically good action and if the account of ethically good action does rely on a prior notion of virtue, then Aristotle's ethical theory is a virtue ethics; if virtue is defined through a prior notion of ethically good

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[10] For instance, both deontologist and consequentialist theories can embrace the insight that wisdom (*phronēsis*) provides the best and sometimes the only guide to finding out the right thing to do in a particular situation (*pace* Mcaleer 2007: 220).

[11] Cf. Russell 2009: 65–70 and 105. A virtue ethical definition of ethically good action may either appeal only to notions wholly derivable from virtue or virtue terms, or, more weakly, appeal to notions that are not wholly independent of virtue notions (cf. Swanton 2013).

[12] I do not think that virtue is prior in the first sense in *EN* 2.4, but I cannot argue for it here. In *Metaph.* 9.8 Aristotle additionally mentions 'priority in being' in an argument to establish the priority of actuality over potentiality.

action, and ethically good action does not in turn rely on a prior notion of virtue, then the structure of Aristotle's ethics differs from that of contemporary virtue ethics and we should not 'make' him a virtue ethicist.

3 Virtue, Ethically Good Action and the Middle

Examining the relative priority of virtue and ethically good action raises a difficulty: Aristotle does not provide a neat definition of ethically good action. Ethics starts from the question how one should live. While much of recent moral philosophy concentrates on actions, Aristotle offers a much wider perspective: the quality (or success/failure) of a life depends not only on individual actions, but also importantly on the states of character of the person living it, together with the moral psychology tied to character. Many recent virtue ethicists, starting from Anscombe, welcome this change in view and suggest we follow Aristotle in making states of character the primary ethical notion. Although Aristotle does not explicitly define ethically good action, we can examine the relation between virtue and ethically good action through studying the so-called 'doctrine of the mean' from which we can glean Aristotle's account of ethically good action.[13]

3.1 *Ethically Good Action and the Middle*

Aristotle introduces the notion of the 'middle' in his discussion of habituation in *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.4. Good building and good actions within the spheres of justice or courage help the learner attain the desired craft or virtue, and good actions accord with right reason: learner and expert alike must do what is right, appropriate, good, or reasonable within the sphere of action (they must act *kata ton orthon logon*, 1103b31–2). But what is the right and good thing to do apart from 'acting in accord with right reason'? Aristotle responds by invoking what turns out to be a central feature of his theory of virtue: the middle, a highly context-sensitive notion (1104a3–10). Aristotle introduces the concepts of 'excess' and 'deficiency' with the examples of strength and health (1104a14–18). To become strong, you must train neither deficiently nor excessively. The example should be familiar enough to illustrate Aristotle's point: training too often, or for too long, or with weights too heavy, or at the wrong time – all of these

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[13] While I keep the conventional 'doctrine of the mean', I shall usually translate *meson* as 'middle' and *mesotēs* as 'middle state', the most basic meaning. In the course of his discussion, Aristotle expands on how we should understand the words.

dimensions contribute to the quality of the training, and getting them wrong will lead to inferior results. Getting the dimensions right – or, as Aristotle says, doing what is well measured (*summetros*, a18), lying between deficiency and excess (cf. a25–6) – will help attain the desired state. Similarly, both fleeing or facing every danger are excessive or deficient responses compared to the courageous person's response: she runs or stays only when appropriate because she discerns the relevant features of the situation, an ability the learner can only acquire with a measured or middle approach to facing danger (cf. a25–7).

Expert and learner alike must do the just or moderate things – actions which lie in the middle and are characteristic of virtue. Aristotle spells out the dimensions in which emotional and practical responses must hit the middle to count as best: neither too much nor too little, at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right aim and in the right way (1106b18–24). Aristotle thus specifies praiseworthy actions otherwise than by applying virtue terms: 'excessive and deficient responses are wrong and censured, whereas the middle is praised and right' (b25–7).[14] If we follow Aristotle in going beyond the virtue terms in act appraisal, we should not stop at the notion of right reason – which Aristotle sets aside – but go, with Aristotle, all the way to the notion of the middle response. Since, then, the notion of middle response plays a central role in Aristotle's account of action, I suggest we regard hitting the middle in action as roughly equivalent to the sought after notion of ethically good action.

3.2   *Virtue and the Middle*

The central importance of the doctrine of the mean also shows in the identification of the virtues. Neo-Aristotelian virtue ethicists tend to identify the virtues by reference to human flourishing, or happiness.[15] While Aristotle acknowledges that 'the virtue of a human being is the state of character on which her goodness depends and as a result of which she will accomplish her function well' (1106a22–4), he does not try to derive any specific virtues from the definition of the human good. The quote invokes the famous argument from 1.7 in which Aristotle gives content to the human good, happiness, by considering the human function: accomplishing the human function well, exercising the rational part

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[14] Following Rassow's text as reported in Susemihl's apparatus (1880).
[15] See especially Hursthouse 1999.

of the soul well, *is* exercising the virtues. But relying on the bipartition of the soul into irrational and rational (obedient and directive), Aristotle concludes only that there must be virtues of character and virtues of intellect, both of which are pertinent to happiness (1.13). Thus the definition of happiness, and therefore what is good for the possessor of virtue, is too general to identify specific virtues of character, especially if the virtues are moralistically conceived.[16]

Aristotle presents a list of virtues. In 2.7 he enumerates eleven virtues, apparently displayed on a chart (*ek tēs graphēs*, 1107a33–4) without indicating how he created the list.[17] The list, moreover, does not merely illustrate the sort of virtues one could analyse: turning to the individual virtues, he wants to show 'what they are, and what they relate to, and how. And at the same time it will be obvious how many there are' (3.5.1115a4–5), by which he either means to highlight the numerousness of the virtues (as opposed to Plato's cardinal virtues), or else to offer a closed list. In any case, the whole discussion of ethical virtue relies on the doctrine of the mean: not only does the list of virtues in 2.7 sandwich each virtue between two vices; Aristotle also trusts that 'we will understand the character traits more fully if we go through them case by case, and we will be more firmly convinced that the virtues are middle states when we see, synoptically, that it is so in every case' (4.7.1127a15–17). So, while the content of happiness (and benefit) constrains which traits count as virtues, key to identifying the virtues for *Aristotle* is the doctrine of the mean.[18]

We can now reformulate the question whether ethically good action is prior to virtue or vice versa in terms of the middle: what is the relation between the middle response in action, and virtue as a middle state between two vices? A virtuous person will respond well both in action and affection to any given situation because virtue aims at and hits the middle (*tou mesou . . . stochastikē*, 1106b15–16). But does the response count as middle because it stems from a middle state? Or does the state count as middle because it tends towards middle responses? Which middle, in other words, is prior?

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[16] Happiness is specified by reference to certain aspects in which a human life must go well. If these aspects include doing the right thing, understood independently from Aristotle's virtues, then his account of virtues relies on a prior notion of right and could, therefore, not count as a virtue ethics. If, however, doing the (independently) right thing is not built into the account of virtue, then it is hard to see how the definition of happiness yields the virtues as Aristotle understands them, as opposed to, say, Calliclean virtues. Broadie 2007: 115 develops the point beautifully.

[17] D. Frede 2014 offers a nice discussion of this problem.

[18] See Gottlieb 2009: 77 for further discussion.

4 Priority in 2.6: Aristotle's Definition of Virtue

Aristotle begins defining the genus of virtue in Chapter 2.5 as a state (*hexis*) of character. Having discussed the differentia in 2.6, he defines virtue as 'a character state in the middle relative to us issuing in decision, the middle being determined by reason, namely reason by which the wise person would determine it' (1106b36–1107a2). Although the term 'issuing in decision' (*proairetikē*) points forward to the full discussion of decision in 3.2–4, it also points backward to the theme of motive: a virtuous person decides on the just and moderate things for their own sakes (cf. 2.5.1105b28–32). What we choose to do, and how we do it, depends centrally on our emotional response to the situation: many of our actions are, if not prompted, then at least informed by various forms of pleasant or distressing emotions such as fear, boldness, desire, anger and pity (cf. 2.5.1105b21–3) – all of which can be excessive, deficient, or in the middle (2.6.1106b18–20). The associated actions will likewise be excessive, deficient, or in the middle (b23–4). A decision issued by virtue will therefore involve neither excessive nor deficient emotional or practical responses.

　How are we to understand 'excessive', 'deficient' and 'middle'? Aristotle appears to offer two answers: virtue is 'a middle state between two bad states, one of deficiency, and the other of excess, and also because . . . virtue both finds and chooses the middle in affections and actions' (2.6.1107a2–6). The question whether Aristotle is a virtue ethicist invites us to probe the relation between virtue as a middle state and the middle response. Is virtue a middle state primarily because it issues in middle responses, or are the responses issued by virtue in the middle primarily because they are issued by a state which is independently a middle state? According to the response-first reading, virtue as middle state derives from the prior and independent notion of the middle response; according to the state-first reading, responses count as middle only insofar as they stem from a middle state. I begin with the state-first reading.

4.1 *Priority of the State*

According to the state-first reading, we can explain 'excessive', 'deficient' and 'middle' only through the states issuing the response. Aristotle introduces the triad on the back of the equal, the larger and the smaller on a continuous and divisible scale (2.6.1106a26–9). If we follow Aristotle in focusing on the emotional response and take our cue from the quantitative terms, we may take Aristotle to suggest that emotional responses are right

(and wrong) whenever they hit (or miss) the middle on a continuous and divisible scale of quantities (1106b24–7). For instance, one's anger might arise too late, be too intense, be held for too long, etc. But, according to the state-first reading, as soon as we start considering more complex situations, we face a difficulty. Suppose you are angry because you have received a flagrantly insulting email from a student. Your anger flares up, but on closer examination, the student seems to suffer from a serious mental illness – in which case the anger should subside immediately: in view of the full picture anger ceases to be appropriate. While the example shows why Aristotle rejects the arithmetical middle (cf. 1106a29–b5) – the right and middle response does not always lie in the middle between too little (say zero anger) and too much (extreme rage) – it also raises the general question why Aristotle thinks the right response should have anything to do with the middle. Why, in other words, does he subscribe to any 'doctrine of the mean' rather than a 'doctrine of the right and appropriate'?[19]

Aristotle's earlier discussion in 2.5 prepares the answer: the emotional responses stem from certain capacities which tend to develop into states 'in virtue of which we are in a good or bad condition with respect to the emotions' (1105b25–7). Excellent character states, virtues, prompt us reliably to respond well; defects of character prompt us not to respond well. But the incorrect responses form a pattern: one person tends towards deficient responses, another towards excessive ones. Aristotle therefore postulates corresponding states of character issuing in excessive and deficient responses respectively: each individual virtue lies between an excessive and a deficient state. We can then evaluate an emotional or practical response as lying in the middle relative to us by reference to the issuing state: an individual response lies in the middle insofar as it stems from and expresses a middle state.[20] Returning to the example, responding with zero anger lies in the middle insofar as it expresses the middle state called 'good temper', a state between irascibility and 'unanger' (apparently of Aristotle's coinage, 2.7.1108a4–9). Although the unangered and the good-tempered person alike respond with zero anger, the former fails to hit the middle: not because she does so for the wrong reasons (she may or may not), but because she *never* exhibits anger, i.e. she fails on the score of frequency, a difference hard to account for by concentrating on individual actions rather than character. Thus, according to the state-first reading, assigning

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[19] Both Hursthouse 2006 and Brown 2013 urge Aristotle to give up speaking of the middle.
[20] Cf. Urmson 1980. Broadie 1991: 97–102 explores this interpretation in greater detail.

primacy to character over the response accounts for and explains Aristotle's 'doctrine of the mean'.

4.2   Priority of the Response

Read in its own right, however, the text draws a different picture: far from assigning priority to the state over the response in emotion or action, Aristotle derives the definition of virtue from a prior notion of the middle response. He begins with a general point about excellence: anything capable of excellence will in virtue of its excellence (a) be in a good condition and (b) accomplish its work well (1106a15–17).[21] By introducing two very different examples – the excellence of eyes and horses – Aristotle supports the general application of (a) and (b) (a21–2), including to human beings: 'the virtue of a human being is the state of character on which her goodness depends and as a result of which she will accomplish her work well' (1106a22–4). Turning to the nature of excellence, he seeks to elucidate further how excellence relates to being in a good condition and accomplishing one's work well. Aristotle begins his argument by explaining the success conditions for accomplishing one's work well. Distinguishing the arithmetical mean from the middle relative to us (1106a29–36), Aristotle observes that experts, avoiding excess and deficiency, seek out and choose the middle relative to us (1106a36–b7) and thereby accomplish their work well. Good works lie in the middle between excess and deficiency: adding or taking away anything would worsen them (1106b5–14). In the case of craft, expertise (*epistēmē*) explains the expert's reliably hitting the middle because, strictly speaking, *it* looks towards the middle and guides the works (*erga*) towards it (b8–10). The craftsperson's excellence thus consists in aiming at and hitting the middle relative to us.

Aristotle takes himself to have discovered a general feature of excellence involving reason: aiming at and hitting the middle explains the craftsperson's accomplishing her work (*ergon*) well. Consequently, human excellence, virtue of character, should aim at and hit the middle too (1106b14–16), which Aristotle hastens to confirm. By giving a few examples of emotional responses (getting angry, feeling fear, etc., b18–24), Aristotle drives home the point that emotional and practical responses *can* hit or miss the middle and *are* praiseworthy and right (both marks of virtue) when they lie in the middle

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[21] I reserve 'virtue' for excellence of character; in all other cases, I render *aretē* as 'excellence'. 'Work' renders *ergon*, a concept wide enough to capture both separable products such as houses or shoes and self-contained activities such as seeing.

relative to us.[22] Human excellence, Aristotle concludes, has the same struc-ture as craft: 'virtue is a kind of middle state, at least *insofar as* (*ge*) it is effective at hitting the middle' (b27–8). After showing how the conclusion coheres with things said about going wrong and getting it right, Aristotle defines virtue as a character state in the middle relative to us issuing in decision. Thus, contrary to the state-first reading, Aristotle does not start out with excessive and deficient states (crafts are not middle states) but rather defines excellence in general as a state hitting the middle via analogy to craft. The response-first reading stresses that Aristotle relies heavily on the notion of middle response which he so laboriously introduces through the analogy to explain the role of virtue in accomplishing the human *ergon* well.[23] According to the response-first reading, Aristotle does not merely illustrate the middle through craft, but rather derives the definition of virtue from the prior notion of a middle and right response.

4.3   *The Return of the Question*

Aristotle's definition of virtue confirms the response-first reading: 'virtue is a state in the middle relative to us issuing in decision, the middle being determined by reason, namely reason by which the wise person would determine it' (1106b36–1107a2). Aristotle, as we have seen, argues for virtue as a middle state by reference to craft in 2.6; the qualification 'middle relative to us' simply transfers from response to state, as does its being determined by reason (*logos*, anticipated in 2.2). Now, the elucida-tion of reason as 'reason by which the wise person would determine it' further supports the response-first reading: the wise person's reason hardly determines the middle state (although grammatically the Greek says that) – except indirectly via the middle response. The wise person does not or would not first determine a certain state whose responses count as middle in virtue of stemming from that state; rather she would determine the right responses such a state must issue in when activated, and would thereby indirectly determine the state.

   Aristotle's exposition points towards the priority of middle action over virtue, but the reference to the wise person forestalls that conclusion.

[22] Before setting it aside, I should perhaps say that I agree with Brown 2013: 69 n. 8 on the middle 'relative to us': an action or emotion is in the middle relative to us if and only if it responds properly to the relevant human concerns which the particulars of the situation present. Human nature obviously constrains (reasonable) human concerns, but does not determine them.

[23] Brown 2013: 70–1 discusses this point more fully. Her whole article convincingly defends the reading outlined in this paragraph.

Since Aristotle does not believe that we can know what is the right thing to do in a particular situation until we ourselves are immersed in the situation (or if we follow an authority, the authority must be immersed), he can only say in a general way what the particular right action is, namely a hitting of the middle (2.2). But what counts as middle in a particular situation is what the wise person would determine as the middle. Therefore, the response-first reading as specified so far does not settle the priority of ethically good action over virtue: *that* question requires examining how the wise and virtuous person determines the middle.[24] Should the middle depend conceptually or in existence in some way on virtue or the virtuous and wise person, then virtue-notions would again have priority over ethically good action. Take the state-first reading: a response hits the middle only insofar as it stems from and expresses a middle state. The middle response – the right thing to feel or do – would not be independent of virtue; virtue would determine the middle response not merely by enabling its possessor to take good aim, but rather by being constitutive of what counts as the goal in the first place. The response-first reading denies the last step by pointing to the analogy between virtue and expertise in craft. While the expert uses reason encapsulated in her expertise to determine the right or middle response to the situation, what counts as middle in the first place does not depend on the expert's reason: generally we can specify good craft products without reference to the expert. If virtue resembles craft, then virtue, just like any other expertise, causes the virtuous person to hit the middle, thereby producing an independently specifiable good outcome.

To sum up, Aristotle's definition of virtue and the surrounding discussion in Book 2 leaves open the question whether Aristotle is a virtue ethicist: like craft, virtue is a middle state insofar as it hits the middle, and unlike craft, it is a middle state insofar as it lies between two vices. When Aristotle proleptically refers to the wise person, he raises the question whether the middle at which virtue aims depends in some deeper way on the wise and virtuous person. While Aristotle does not address the question of priority head-on in Book 2 (the puzzle in 2.4 concerns temporal priority), he nevertheless offers some material elsewhere, in Books 6 and notably 3, which helps *us* answer the question.

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[24] Interestingly, Brown 2013: 70 sets aside the reference to reason – as if irrelevant for the question whether Aristotle is a virtue ethicist (to which she turns in the last part of her paper). Rapp 2006: 111–2 on the other hand thinks the addition starkly opposes Aristotle's position to deontology and consequentialism.

5   Priority in 3.4: The Good Man as Measure

What role does the good and wise person's reason play in determining the middle? Aristotle turns to elucidating virtue, a 'state issuing in decision', by discussing agency in general and decision and its elements in particular in Book 3. He begins with decision and deliberation, the elements of action forwarding the goal (cf. 1113a12–14), and only then turns to explaining both what action aims at and how the particular goal enters the agent's deliberation (3.4).[25] Aristotle no doubt assigns a crucial role to virtue in deciding on an action: to perform a virtuous action virtuously an agent must decide on the action for its own sake – which tends to require a firm state built up through habituation (2.4.1105a31–b5). Thus, her state of character informs *how* the agent pursues the goal: virtue seems necessary for pursuing the goal in the virtuous way. But does the state of character likewise inform *what* the agent pursues as goal when she pursues a particular goal? Aristotle examines the goal's independence from the good and virtuous person in 3.4.[26]

5.1   The Object of Wish: Three Proposals

Aristotle develops his stance towards the goal of particular actions only in contrast to two other foils, with which we must start. He anchors the discussion on wish and its object: since 'wish is for the goal' (1113a15), he focuses on identifying the object of wish (or what is wished for, *boulēton*). One group postulates the good as object of wish, another group the apparent good (a16). Both proposals hit truth only partly. Aristotle takes the first proposal to be unduly restrictive. Suppose an agent can wish only for what is good. If she chooses what is in fact not good, she fails to wish for an object of wish – which, implausibly, rules out mistaken wishing.[27] The second proposal, by contrast, falls short by being too permissive. If appearing good to an agent just is being an object of wish, two opposing objects can share the status of being wished for if they appear good to different

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[25] See D. Frede 2015 for helpful discussion of Aristotle's back-to-front order of exposition.

[26] Although Aristotle identifies the excellence associated with hitting the middle in action, i.e. responding in accordance with right reason, as wisdom (*phronēsis*), Book 6 does not much illuminate the question whether the standard or aim (*skopos*, 1138b22) is prior or posterior to the good person and her wisdom (cf. Taylor 2006: 108–10). If Book 6 is properly integrated in the *EN*, then Aristotle can regard the question about independence of the goal as settled in 3.4 – hence my focus. Obviously, the role of wisdom in Book 6 would need to be part of an exhaustive study of Aristotle's virtue ethical credentials; I will return briefly to it in my conclusion.

[27] As Socrates puts it in the *Gorgias*, if a person fails to do what is actually good [for him], he does not do what he wants (468d).

agents. Thus, whether X is an object of wish does not depend on its nature, but merely on whether an agent actually wishes for it (a20–2) – which, again, rules out mistaken wishing (supposing the agent cannot be mistaken about what appears good to her). While both proposals account for the Greek *boulēton*, they do not satisfy because each focuses on one aspect only. The first focuses entirely on tying the status of X as object of wish to X's being good, i.e. on what is wish-able, and neglects the agent's wishing, whereas the second starts from the agent's wishing for X – X's appearing good to an agent – and denies that there is more to being an object of wish.

Aristotle seeks to integrate the fortes of each into his own more comprehensive account: the insight that each person wishes for what appears good to her, and that being an object of wish does not reduce to being wished for by just anyone, i.e. that the nature of the object of wish must be taken into account. Aristotle proposes to restrict the unqualified and true object of wish to what is good (1113a22–4); everything else can only serve as qualified object of wish: what is good is without qualification *to be* wished for (yet another nuance of *boulēton*) – which becomes the agent's object of wish when it seems good to her. Since what is good must appear good to the prospective agent if she is to deliberate and act well, the object of wish and the object of wish without qualification coincide for the good person (a25). But does the alignment happen because the good person recognises an independent good, or because her decision-making determines what is good?

5.2   The Object of Wish: Two Measures

While the agent's wishing for a certain goal obviously depends on the agent, it is a real question whether its normative status does so too. Which standard determines whether something is worth wishing for without qualification? By alluding to Protagoras' famous *homo mensura* thesis ('man is the measure of all things . . . ' DK80 B1) Aristotle may indicate that he develops a response-dependent account of the object of wish according to which the object of wish without qualification depends importantly on the good person's response to it. Aristotle rejects the suggestion that whatever seems good to any given person *is* good (without qualification) by driving a wedge between an object's appearing good and an object's being good: what appears good to the bad person is fortuitous (1113a26) and not automatically good. According to Aristotle, one can make mistaken choices by wishing for what is not in fact good because an object's goodness outstrips its appearing good to just any person. But how? In response to

Protagoras, Aristotle likens the good person to 'a carpenter's rule (*kanōn*) or measure (*metron*) for every case' (a32–33). Aristotle here seems to correct Protagoras on the object of wish by replacing 'whatever seems good to any given person *is* good (without qualification)' with 'whatever seems good to the good person *is* good (without qualification)', suggesting that an object is to be wished for *because* it seems good to the good person.[28] Aristotle could thus explain well why the object of wish and the object of wish without qualification coincide for the good person (a25): for the goal of an action to be good *just is* for it to appear good to her – which would indeed make the good person the measure of what is good in action.

The good person will be a measure in a different way if Aristotle rejects the Protagorean approach more fully by denying that the good person's judgement plays any special role in X's being the unqualifiedly good thing to do. In particular, if the nature of the object can be specified independently of anyone's attitude towards it, the link between appearing good to the good person and being good without qualification no longer exists by fiat. If the unqualified object of wish is thus independent from the good person's responses, she would rather characteristically *detect* what is, independently of her judgement, good: what is good without qualification appears good to her. The good person's response would thus be measured in the sense that it measures up to reality – a reality independent of at least her responses. The good person would thus be a measure in correctly discerning what is good because her responses are characteristically appropriate, i.e. measured to any given situation (cf. *Metaph.* 1053a31–b4).

5.3   Aristotle against Response-Dependence

In which sense is the good person a measure? If Aristotle develops the response-dependent position as sketched, the good person's object of wish would be what is to be wished for without qualification in virtue of appearing good to her or to any good person similarly well placed. The structure of the text may seem to support such a reading: at 1113a25–6 Aristotle maintains that 'for/to the good person [the object of wish] is the

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[28] For the sake of brevity, I write as if an object's being to be wished for depends on actual responses. However, the good person could also be the measure if the unqualified object of wish conceptually depends on the good person: X is to be wished for without qualification if X is such that the good person would choose it. Aristotle distinguishes between priority in being and in account in *Metaph.* 9.8.

true object of wish; for/to the bad person a chance object'.[29] Supporting the primacy of the person in a good state with two examples, Aristotle explains the role of appearance: 'for (*gar*) the good person judges each case correctly, i.e. the truth appears to him in all cases' (a30–1). Now, if the truth concerning the true object of wish appears to the good person and this appearance *explains* why the true object of wish is the true object of wish not only *to* her, but also *for* her, then what is good for her is good *because* it appears so to her. If the good person's responses provide the measure, then what appears to the good person would be true in virtue of its appearing so to her.

The details, however, provide a stumbling block for this reading. In particular, the examples illustrating Aristotle's claim at 1113a25–6 tell against any kind of response-dependence. First, 'just as in the case of the body, for those in a good condition, healthy are things that are truly such [sc. healthy], but for sick people different things . . . ' (1113a26–8). While Aristotle undoubtedly holds up the healthy person as paradigm and reference point for the extension of 'healthy without qualification', he does not attach any further importance to the role of appearance, as would be required. Even if 'X appears healthy to the person in good condition' implies 'X is healthy for her',[30] the further claim that 'X appears healthy to the person in good condition' just is 'X is healthy for her' finds no support in Aristotle. If we ask why a certain food is healthy, the answer usually makes no reference to how it appears to anyone; the answer makes reference to the organs whose well-functioning constitutes health.[31] So, while healthy things appear healthy to the healthy, we cannot say that an object's appearing healthy to someone, even the good person, just is its being healthy: health is not a response-dependent concept.

If the first example tells against response-dependence, so does the second one – at least Aristotle intends them to work alike: ' . . . and likewise (*homoiōs*) with bitter, sweet, hot, heavy and all other things' (1113a28–9, quote continued). For those in a good condition, things are bitter, sweet, hot, or heavy which really are bitter, etc., whereas those in a bad condition

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[29] I render the datives in the Greek as 'for/to' because on the present proposal, there is no real difference between 'X appears good to the good person' and 'X is good for the good person'. See further on this point, Gottlieb 1991: 30–1.

[30] Being attracted by the right kind of food belongs to physical well-functioning and being in a good bodily condition (cf. 10.5.1176a3–9), whereas being in a bad bodily condition does not align what is attractive to the person and what is good and healthy for her (cf. 7.14.1154a22–b15).

[31] *HA* 10.1.633b16–23 and *Ph.* 6.1.224a25–6. Elsewhere, Aristotle describes health as 'consisting in a blending of hot and cold elements in due proportion, in relation either to one another within the body or to the surrounding' (*Ph.* 7.3.246b4–6; cf. *de An.* 1.4).

may get things wrong. However plausible a response-dependent construal of those qualities e.g. via competent observers under normal conditions may seem to us nowadays, if a quality Q such as bitter, sweet, etc., is like health, then Aristotle denies that 'X appears Q to the person in good condition' just is 'X is Q for her': there is more to being Q for a good person than its appearing Q to her. Support for a response-independent construal of sweet, bitter, etc., abounds outside the *Ethics*. All the qualities mentioned are embedded in Aristotelian scientific theories: they are what they are in virtue of their explanatory role, not in virtue of our responses to them.[32] The scientific understanding of the qualities thus drives a wedge between appearing Q and being Q (even *for* someone): what is sweet, warm, bitter and heavy without qualification is determined by the scientific theory. Just as in the case of health and partly for the same reasons – digestion and warmth are key to health (cf. *EN* 10.5.1176a12–15) – the person in a good condition will discern correctly how things really are.[33]

5.4   The Independence of the Object of Wish: Aristotle's Recognitionalism

Aristotle's use of the two examples points firmly towards response-inde-pendent qualities: if what appears X and what is X coincide for the exemplary perceiver, neither example indicates that the exemplar's perceiving contributes anything important to what it is to be X. Since the examples serve to illustrate the connection between the unqualified object of wish and the good person, we should adopt an alternative reading which does not make the unqualified object of wish dependent on the good person via appearance or judgement. Thus, there is a conceptual difference between X's seeming good to the good person and X's being good for her: the good person does not perceive correctly by fiat. We should, therefore, not translate *tō(i) spoudaiō(i)* in 1113a25–6 as 'for the good person' (as on the previous proposal), but as 'to the good person [the object of wish] is the true object of wish; to the bad person a chance object'. In other words,

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[32]   For instance, an object's being heavy explains why it moves to the bottom or towards the centre of the universe (*Cael.* 4.4); it would be absurd if the object were heavy because it appears so to a good judge. The other examples do not fare better: heat's role in constituting the four elements (*GC* 2.3.330a30ff.) and in digestion (*de An.* 2.4.416b28) leave no room for response-dependence. Heat, in fact, is closely related to sweetness and bitterness: heat causes concoction (*pepsis*), a chemical process key to both digestion (food has to be concocted to nutriment) and reproduction (semen and menses are concocted from blood). Aristotle is thus led to think that everything is nurtured by what is sweet (*Sens.* 442a2): this is what the body extracts from foodstuffs, leaving behind only bitter waste (*Mete.* 2.2.355b7; cf. *GA* 4.8.776a28–9).
[33]   I thank Anthony Price for helping me to appreciate Aristotle's position.

Aristotle seeks to explain in virtue of what the unqualified object of wish appears good to the good person. So, Aristotle's explanation that 'the good person discriminates (*krinei*) correctly in each case, and in each case, what is true is apparent to him' (1113a29–31) means what it appears to mean: what stands out about the good person is 'his ability to see (*horan*) what's true in every set of circumstances' (a32–3) where the truth is independent of the observer. And since this feature of the good person prompts Aristotle to compare him to a carpenter's rule (*kanōn*) or measure (*metron*), the comparison does not invite any form of response-dependence on the part of the good person: the good person's response measures up to how things really are independently of his response.[34]

If the good person's response does not in some way constitute the good and right response, Aristotle not only avoids more general problems for a more thorough response-dependent account of goodness (Does the good person's goodness also depend on her seeming good to herself?), but also provides a more persuasive account of virtue. Since Aristotle effectively defines virtue as the state of character issuing in middle responses, his definition of virtue would be too narrowly circular if the wise person's response constitutes the middle, since having wisdom requires full virtue of character (6.13.1144b30–1145a6): virtue is the state that hits the middle and the middle just is what the virtuous person perceives as middle. If, however, what constitutes the middle does not depend on the wise and virtuous person's response, Aristotle's account escapes at least *that* circle. Of course, the definition of virtue *does* make reference to the wise person, but if we accept the recognitionalist reading of 3.4, the reference need not tie up Aristotle in a vicious circle. If the middle and right response does not depend on the good person's response, Aristotle can, as he does, make reference to the good and wise person to indicate the sort of reason used in determining the middle in individual cases – without jeopardising his account of virtue.[35]

To conclude, Aristotle's discussion of the object of wish supports the conception of virtue developed in 2.6 that virtue enables its possessor to

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[34] 10.5.1176a18 (virtue and the good person are the measure) resembles the present account. At 5.10.1137b29–33, Aristotle likens the decent person to a *kanōn*, because the decent person corrects the deficiency which law sometimes creates when applied to difficult individual cases. Far from suggesting the decent person's response constitutes what is right, Aristotle likens her to the leaden *kanōn* in Lesbian building in particular, which adapts itself to the stone, as if the decent person adapts the given laws well to the situation.

[35] Aristotle would be caught in an epistemological circle if he made recognising the truth in a particular practical situation the prerogative of virtue. But clearly, many non-virtuous people know that they should pay back the money they borrowed, to whom, when, etc.

accomplish her work well by making the good person reliably perceive the situation correctly: the good person perceives the situation correctly and thus reliably recognises the unqualified object of wish because virtue attunes its possessor to what is fine (*kalon*) and pleasant in any given situation.[36] Non-virtuous agents succumb especially to misleading pleasures (1113a33–b1), which makes them miss the middle (1104b21–3; cf. *EE* 2.10 *ad fin.*). The reference to the wise person in the definition of virtue in 2.6 should not be read as indicating that the middle depends on the wise and good person's responses as outlined above: the wise person's judgement does not constitute the middle; it hits the middle.[37]

6 Conclusion

The value of addressing the question whether Aristotle is a virtue ethicist lies in the new perspectives we gain. Having framed the question in terms congenial to Aristotle's framework – whether excellent states of character are prior to ethically good action – we found Aristotle's closest equivalent to be a question about middles: is middle action prior to middle states of character, or vice versa? Although Aristotle does not explicitly advocate the priority of action over character in an account of ethically good action when defining virtue in 2.6, in the context of comparing Aristotle to virtue ethicists the reference to the wise person in his definition of virtue nevertheless raises the question whether the appropriateness of response somehow depends on virtue of character. While Aristotle counts a state of character as virtue both if (i) it is concerned with deciding on middle responses and (ii) it lies between two vices, he winds up assigning priority to (i) in 3.4. He eschews any kind of response-dependence of the object of wish on the wise and good person: likening the object of wish to other notions which he clearly considers to be response-independent, Aristotle cannot take the wise person's decision to constitute the ethically good thing to do. A practical response is appropriate insofar as it gets the parameters right, where appropriateness does not depend in any significant

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[36] Virtue further contributes to making the right decision insofar as it aligns the agent's desire with the result of the deliberation for the end. Virtue thus plays a crucial role in motivating the agent to act well.

[37] Obviously some facts about the good person are features of the situation. For instance how much I should give out of generosity depends partly on my bank balance. But Aristotle's discussion does not support the stronger thesis that an action is to be wished for because the virtuous person would wish for it. On the further question to what extent the right and good thing to do depends on human nature (perhaps exemplified by the good person in particular), see Charles 1995.

way on the virtue: the good and wise person decides on X because she
perceives X as (independently) to be done.

While undermining the alleged support for Aristotle's virtue ethical
credentials through a close reading of two key passages falls short of
removing Aristotle from the Pantheon of virtue ethics for good, it never-
theless casts doubt on Aristotle's status as a sacred cow of virtue ethics – if
we use the priority of virtue over ethically good action as characteristic of
virtue ethics. Not imputing virtue ethics to Aristotle has several advantages.
First, on the 'local' level of the text, assuming a priori that Aristotle is a
virtue ethicist, we will read the text in a certain way that conforms to the
'doctrine' – in which case we will misread two central passages, on the
definition of virtue and on the role of virtue in selecting the ethically good
thing to do. To boot, virtue ethicists tend to disregard Aristotle's commit-
ment to theoretical contemplation (*theōria*). If good character were the
primary notion in Aristotle's ethics, we would be hard-pressed to explain
how contemplation can find a place in the best life at all, let alone why
Aristotle extols the life of contemplation over the life of the merely ethically
good private person or politician (10.7–8). Accommodating Aristotle's
focus on lives (rather than individual unconnected actions) does not
require a virtue ethical framework. Happiness as the highest good
obviously plays the key role in Aristotle's ethics. Since virtuous activity is
central to happiness, virtue will be central too – but not primary. Although
Aristotle's exposition starts with happiness, on a theoretical level he builds
up the notion of happiness from more basic (and better known?) notions:
from independently specified good action (in terms of the middle) he
defines virtue, a notion which serves to define the virtuous person, whose
activities, in turn, lead to a happy life. Thus, as far as Aristotle's text goes, a
virtue ethical framework does not aid our exegesis or understanding.

Now to the more 'global' implications. If Aristotle is not a virtue
ethicist, what is he? If we define teleology and deontology as comprehen-
sive, but mutually exclusive theories, then Aristotle's ethics has to be one or
the other.[38] While comparing and contrasting Aristotle's ethics with our
normative theories may illuminate the structure of both Aristotle's and our
theories, neither deontology nor teleology captures the spirit of Aristotle's

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[38] For instance, Frankena 1973: 15 writes: 'Deontological theories deny what teleological theories
affirm. They deny that the right, the obligatory, and the morally good are wholly, whether directly
or indirectly, a function of what is non-morally good or of what promotes the greatest balance of
good over evil for self, one's society, or the world as a whole. They assert that there are other
considerations that may make an action or rule right or obligatory besides the goodness or badness of
its consequences'.

ethics. The difficulty of slotting Aristotle's ethics into any of the existing normative theories probably contributed to the project of postulating an alternative, namely virtue ethics – as if we could take Aristotle's ethics seriously only if he endorses a normative theory recognisable by us.[39] Conceiving of Aristotle as deontologist or teleologist (as understood in the mid-twentieth century) masks what is interesting and important about Aristotle's ethics: its offering a sustained examination of the most important factors for the good life. And here virtue ethics, especially eudaimonist virtue ethics, comes much closer to capturing what matters to Aristotle: happiness, lives, virtue, character, moral psychology, friendship and action. However, this assessment rings true only if we rely on outdated conceptions of the alternatives. In the wake of Anscombe's attack on modern moral philosophy, ethicists of all stripes have attended more to the issues close to Aristotle's heart, partly in response to the impetus of 'Aristotelian' virtue ethicists. We need not regard Aristotle as a forerunner of contemporary normative theories to take him seriously. Aristotle's contribution to reinvigorating the study of ethics may be understood best as a testament to the fruitfulness of engaging with a philosopher who defies easy classification.

Let us finally turn to the implications for virtue ethics. We started with the now outdated ostensive definition of virtue ethics as 'what Aristotle does'. Aristotle, however, does not seem to present an alternative to teleological or deontological theories if we take their respective accounts of ethically good action as the fault-line: while the object of wish is cast in terms of goodness, Aristotle need not take goodness to be the only relevant factor for evaluating and justifying action: he may count some actions as to be done or avoided simply in virtue of the type of action, regardless of their relation to goodness.[40] In any case, character does not seem to play the role in Aristotle's account that it does in contemporary virtue ethics. So, virtue ethicists could let go of their sacred cow: Aristotle helped shape contemporary virtue ethics, but more as instrument than paradigm. Alternatively, and especially in the light of recent criticism of virtue ethics as a distinct ethical system,[41] virtue ethicists could curb their aspirations and return to

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[39] Baron 2011: 26. Timmermann 2015 develops Baron's criticism of the term 'deontology' as a useful classification of ethical theories.

[40] Two critical cases are (i) the wrongness and badness of adultery, theft and murder (2.6.1107a11–12) – does he have to say that they are not to be done because they are bad? And (ii) courageous action: should an Athenian take up arms to defend his city because it is good, or simply because it is his duty?

[41] See especially Crisp 2015.

their roots. If virtue ethics *is* what Aristotle does (or the kind of thing), then virtue ethics would be what is now called 'virtue theory', the systematic study of virtue, but *not* a distinct normative theory. The answer to the question whether Aristotle is a virtue ethicist will ultimately depend on which turn virtue ethics takes: if it presents itself as a distinct normative theory, complete with its distinctive account of ethically good action, then Aristotle should not be regarded as its sacred cow; if virtue ethics presents itself not as a rival to already existing deontological or teleological normative theories, but rather as the sustained study of virtue, then Aristotle ought to be revered as a prime sacred cow.[42]

Soul as Harmony in Phaedo 85e–86d and Stoic Pneumatic Theory

Ricardo Salles

In Stoicism, *pneuma* or 'breath' is a corporeal, elastic substance made of fire and air that is present throughout the cosmos. One prominent thesis in Stoic pneumatic theory is that breath takes on physical tension (*tonos*) when it is stretched and that all the qualities and powers of a natural body depend on the degree of tension of its breath. *Any* difference in qualities or powers between two natural bodies is due to a difference in the degree of tension in their underlying breath. For example, plants have the power to grow, but not the power of intellection, and human beings, in contrast, have both powers, because the breath of plants is tensed differently than that of human beings. This theory applies not just to the qualities and powers of individual natural bodies, but also to those of the cosmos as a whole and, notably, to its power of intellection. According to the Stoics, the cosmos is an intelligent being, capable of entertaining thoughts, and its intelligence is precisely a power that it owes to the fact that its underlying breath is tensed in a certain way. In connection with this issue, the Stoics uphold a set of four theses that are among the boldest in their physics: firstly, that there is a degree of pneumatic tension that is primitive in the sense that all the other degrees of tension that breath may take on are variations of it; secondly, that intellection is the power that intelligent beings take on when breath possesses this primitive degree of

tension; thirdly, that this single intellectual breath pervades the whole cosmos; and fourthly, as a consequence of these three theses, that the portions of breath that explain the powers and qualities of the different natural substances that exist in the cosmos are portions of this primitive intellectual breath tensed in a certain way. [1]

In this chapter, I concentrate on psychic powers and argue for a parallel between two theories of the soul: the one that emerges from Stoic pneumatic theory and the one put forward by Simmias, Plato's character, in *Phaedo* 85e–86d. Given its central role in the *Phaedo* as a whole, its central place in ancient philosophy of mind, and the enormous amount of attention that it has attracted from modern philosophers and scholars, *Phd.* 85e–86d is perhaps one of the oldest chestnuts of the Platonic corpus. Modern work on the passage has focused on the place of Simmias' theory within the overall argument of the dialogue, its origin and its influence in later ancient philosophy. [2] On these questions, apparently, all that there is to be said has been said. But this is not so. To my knowledge the parallel between Simmias' theory and the Stoic pneumatic theory of the soul has not been noticed. I claim that the parallel is threefold: (1) our psychic powers, and notably intellection, depend on the physical tension of a body (for Simmias this body is our body, in Stoicism it is our breath), (2) the tension of this body is increased or decreased through its physical expansion or contraction, and (3) the expansion or contraction of the body, which are responsible for its tension, are the result of a change in its material composition. The question of whether there is indeed such parallel is important because what is at stake is nothing less than the possible influence of a Platonic passage on one of the most fundamental doctrines of Stoic physics. As will be seen, *Phd.* 85e–86d is not the only place in the Platonic corpus where we find a theory of the soul according to which the soul can be affected by the material composition of the body. But *Phd.* 85e–86d is unique in being the only place in the corpus where the connection between material composition and psychic powers is established *through* the key concepts of volume and tension: material composition affects psychic powers *because* material composition affects volume, volume affects tension,

[1] The main source for these theses is Diogenes Laertius, 7.138–139 (*SVF* 2.634, *LS* 47O, *BS* 12.3) cited below as T2d. See in general the evidence collected by von Arnim under *SVF* 2.439–62 and 2.714–23. On Stoic pneumatic theory, see Samburksy 1959: 21–48; Hahm 1977: 157–74; Long 1982: 36–49; Long and Sedley 1987: vol. I, 286–9 and vol. II, 277–87; and more recently Colvin 2005: 268–9 and 271; Powers 2012: 255–60; and Boeri and Salles 2014: 259–89.

[2] See notably the notes *ad loc.* in Wagner 1870, Fearenside and Kerin 1891, Hackforth 1955, Gallop 1975, Robin-Vicaire 1983, Rowe 1993 and Vigo 2009. See also the following studies: Gottschalk 1971 (esp. 179–81 and 190–6), Trabattoni 1988, Sedley 1995: 10–13, Caston 1997: 319–26, Blattberg 2005 and Corrigan 2010: 148–51.

and tension affects psychic powers. Thus, reading *Phd.* 85e–86d as forerunner of the Stoic theory throws light not just on this theory and its origin, but also on the Platonic passage itself and its distinctiveness within the corpus.

The chapter is organised as follows. In Section 1, I offer an overview of the *Phaedo* passage and bring out the presence of theses (1)–(3) in Simmias' theory of the soul. In Section 2, I present the evidence that the Stoics too upheld these three theses. In Section 3, I look at two passages from the *Timaeus* where we find the idea that the powers of something depend on its material composition, but in which, in contrast with the *Phaedo* passage, this connection is not established through the concepts of tension and volume. Finally, in Section 4, I study the main differences between the two theories and explore whether, despite these differences, the theory of Simmias may be more than just parallel to the Stoic pneumatic theory of the soul: could the *Phaedo* passage have actually influenced the Stoics?

1 Simmias' Theory of the Soul

According to Simmias' theory of the soul, our soul is an attunement (*harmonia*) of the four elements when they combine with each other in a certain proportion. The key idea of the theory is that when a *harmonia* of the four elements obtains in our body, the volume of our body is affected; consequently, given this change, it becomes tensed in a certain way and, given this tension, it becomes ensouled and comes to have the powers linked to the possession of soul. Thus, the possession of these powers is explanatorily related to the material composition of the body thanks to the threefold connection referred to in theses (1)–(3) that we also find in Stoicism: the connection between psychic powers and bodily tension, the connection between bodily tension and volume, and the connection between volume and material composition.

Simmias' theory is introduced in response to Socrates' argument from affinity for the immortality of the soul (78b–84b). According to Socrates, the soul has attributes that are normally found in immortal substances, namely, the Forms. So there must be an affinity between the soul and these substances. Therefore, Socrates argues, given this affinity, the soul too must be immortal. In response to Socrates, Simmias replies (85e3–86b5) that some of the attributes that the soul has in common with the Forms, for example, divinity, may also be found in *mortal* things. So the simple fact that the soul shares some attributes with immortal substances does not imply by itself that the soul also shares the attribute of immortality. Simmias introduces his own theory of the soul in the course of this objection. Its function is to illustrate through an

example how the attributes that the soul has in common with the Forms may also be found in mortal substances. The example offered by Simmias is of a tuned lyre. The attunement of the lyre is divine. It is an attribute that both the soul and the Forms have. And yet the attunement can be destroyed. Simmias, however, does not merely argue that divinity is *compatible* with mortality. He also claims that the soul is actually mortal insofar as it is an attunement (*harmonia*) of the body. As has been pointed out by modern commentators, the term *harmonia* is not used here to denote a harmony in the sense of a melodious sound – one of the primary senses of the term 'harmony' in English according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*[3] – but the state of the lyre in virtue of which the lyre may produce a certain sound. So the idea that the soul is an attunement of the body in the same way as a certain *state* of a lyre is an attunement of the lyre strongly implies, by analogy, that, in Simmias' theory of the soul, the soul is a *state* of the body.

When does the body reach this state? It does so when it is tensed in a certain way thanks to a proportion in its material composition.

> **T1a: *Phd.* 86b5–c1**
> And, as a matter of fact, Socrates, my belief at any rate is that even you realize that something like this is mainly what we take the soul to be: given that our body is somehow tensed and held together by hot and cold, dry and wet, and the like, our soul is a blending and an attunement of these same things, when they are blended with each other in due proportion.

This thesis is repeated under a different, but equivalent, formulation later in the dialogue.

> **T1b: *Phd.* 92a8–9**
> But soul is an attunement made of the bodily elements held in tension.

As is evinced in these two passages, the concept of tension, implied in the verb 'tense' (*enteinō*), is central to the theory. And so is the idea that tension is determined by material composition. The further idea that material composition affects tension through changes in *volume* is not explicit in T1a and T1b. But the idea is also constitutive of Simmias' theory. As a matter of fact, Simmias explains changes in the tension of our body through the concepts of tightening (*epitasis*, 86c4) and slackening (*chalasis*, 86c3). These are forms of expansion and contraction, which are no doubt changes in volume.

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[3] See *OED* 2016: *s.v.* 'harmony' 4 and 5. For the idea that *harmonia* in the *Phaedo* is attunement and not sound, see for instance Gallop 1983: 148–9, Rowe 1993: 203–7, Caston 1997: 320–21 and Corrigan 2010: 148. For the opposite view (that *harmonia* is sound), see Gottschalk 1971: 181 and Trabattoni 1988: 53.

The final step in the argument is the inference that, since the soul is a state of attunement and since this state is mortal or destructible (insofar as a change in the material composition of the body may suppress it), then the soul is mortal.

> **T1c: *Phd.* 86c2–d4**
> So if the soul turns out to be some kind of attunement, it is manifest that, whenever our body is excessively relaxed or tensed[4] by illnesses and other troubles, the soul must be destroyed at once, however divine it may be, just like other attunements, those in musical instruments and in all artefacts, whereas the remains of each body will endure for a long while, until they are burnt up or rot away. So notice what we shall say in response to that thesis, if anyone deemed that the soul, being a blending of the elements in our body, is the first thing to be destroyed in what is called 'death'.

The analogy between soul and attunement is now stated in full. The analogue of the lyre is ourselves, the analogue of the attunement of the lyre is the soul (which is therefore a state) and the analogue of the strings whose tension causes the lyre to be tuned is our body: the tension of the body, which is due to the contraction brought about by a certain proportion of the four elements in the constitution of our body, causes us to be ensouled. We may therefore conclude that, according to Simmias' theory of the soul, there exists the explanatory connection that the Stoics will argue for between (1) the soul (and its psychic powers) and bodily tension, (2) bodily tension and volume, and (3) volume and material composition.

Now, how should we understand Simmias' thesis that soul is an attunement (*harmonia*)? And what exactly does he mean when he claims that the soul is destroyed when this mixture or attunement is itself destroyed? The answers depend on how we interpret the passages above. There are at least two possible readings. One of them is that the body is a substance that may be tensed in different ways depending on how the elements *in the external environment* act on the body. The body constantly receives from outside a certain amount of heat, cold, dryness and humidity. And these are proportional to the amount of fire (the hot), air (the cold), earth (the dry) and water (the wet) in the environment. A variation in them has an impact on the body and its tension. In a certain amount, they cause the body to be tensed in such a way that we take on psychic powers. But in a different amount, the tension of the body changes and we lose these powers. In this reading, the thesis that soul is a *harmonia* means that it is a state that we acquire when the tension of our body is affected by the proportion of each of the elements in our environment.

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[4] Reading ἐπιταθῇ with Burnet following TW.

The second reading – closer to Stoic theory – is that the fire, air, water and earth that tense up our body are constituents of the body itself. The tension of the body depends, not on the proportional amount of each of the elements in the *environment*, but on the proportional amount of the elements *within the body*. Here too the soul is a state that we take on in virtue of the tension of our body. But in contrast with the former reading, this second reading advances a direct connection between the material composition *of our body* and our psychic powers. This second reading is closer, I believe, to the letter of T1c, which says that 'the soul is a blending of the [elements] in the body' (*krasin ousan tēn psuchēn tōn en tō(i) sōmati*).[5]

In sum, I have argued that we find in Simmias' theory of the soul in *Phd.* 85e–86d the threefold explanatory connection that we will also find in the Stoic pneumatic theory of the soul between (1) psychic powers and bodily tension, (2) bodily tension and volume, and (3) volume and material composition. Now, this parallel between the two theories is not only conceptual but also terminological. The terminology used by Simmias to present his theory is very close to that employed by the Stoics. First, the Stoic term *tonos* is not used anywhere in these passages. But as I noted earlier this notion is clearly implicit in the verb 'tense' (*enteinō*) used in T1a and T1b (*entetamenou* at 86b7 and *entetamenōn* at 92a9). And as in Stoicism, the concept of tension is used to account for psychic powers. The tension here is not logical. It is as physical as the tension of the chords of a lyre that gives rise to its attunement. It is also worth noticing that Simmias employs the participle *sunechomenon* in T1a to express the idea that the body is held together by the elements when they are present 'proportionately' (*metriōs*). And the verb 'hold together' (*sunechein*) is precisely the one selected by the Stoics to describe the action of the cohesive power of breath.[6] Finally, Simmias uses the term 'blending' (*krasis*) in T1c to denote the special kind mixture of elements that cause the body to take on soul powers, which is also a Stoic term of art.[7] As we shall see in the next section, the threefold connection (1)–(3) that we find in Simmias' theory is also conspicuous in several Stoics texts dealing with the soul in relation to pneumatic theory.

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[5] This is an important idea that Gallop's translation ('a mixture of bodily elements' in Gallop 1983: 37) does not capture fully adequately.

[6] One important text on this question – that assigns to the tension of the dispositional breath of a whole the function of holding it together (συνέχειν) – is *SVF* 2.441. See also 2.442, 2.444, 2.546 and T2a below.

[7] See *SVF* 2.463–481.

2   The Stoics on Theses (1)–(3)

The connection stated in (1) between psychic powers and tension is, as I noted in the introduction to the chapter, part of a larger correlation between pneumatic tension and the powers of natural substances in general, including inanimate ones. For example, the Stoics establish an explanatory connection between pneumatic tension and the power of cohesion or 'disposition' (*hexis*), a power that all natural substances possess and that secures their endurance by physically holding them together. The connection appears, for instance, in a set of two passages dealing with Chrysippus from section 43 of Plutarch's *De Stoicorum repugnantiis*.

> **T2a: Plutarch, *Sto. Rep.* 1053f (*SVF* 2.449, *BS* 14.26)**
> And again in *On Dispositions* he [sc. Chrysippus] says that dispositions are nothing but masses of air, for bodies are held together by these. And air – that they call 'hardness' in iron, 'density' in stone and 'whiteness' in silver – is the cohesive cause that each of the things held together by disposition be qualified.

> **T2b: Plutarch, Sto. Rep. 1054a–b (*SVF* 2.449, *BS* 14.26)**
> However, they declare everywhere that matter is from itself the inert and unchangeable substrate of qualities, and that qualities, being masses of breath i.e. airlike tensions, give form and shape to the parts of matter in which they come to be.

The two passages seem to report the same theory, which according to T2a proceeds from Chrysippus' treatise *On Dispositions*. Each passage emphasises slightly different aspects of the theory. T2a claims that bodies are held together by masses of air that are present in the body and that these unifying masses are responsible for such qualities of the body as its hardness and its colour. T2b makes the clarificatory remark that the masses in question are masses of *breath* and that these are 'airlike tensions' (I read the *kai* epexegetically). Although the sense of this claim is not evident, it seems strongly to imply (a) that breath determines the qualities of a body in virtue of its tension, and (b) that the specific degree of tension needed for it to do so is the one that is found in air. This second idea is also found elsewhere. For instance, in some places we find the notion that in the constant movement of contraction and expansion that Stoic breath carries out within natural bodies, the contraction, which is determined by the air component, is responsible precisely for the cohesion of the substance.[8] The general notion that breath imparts to bodies the power of cohesion in

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[8]   See also Simplicius, *in Cat.* 269.14–16 (*SVF* 2.452).

virtue of its tension is also implied in another Plutarch text: *De Communibus Notitiis* 1085c–e (*SVF* 2.444, *BS* 14.25) which I will not discuss here.[9]

The Stoics postulate at least four forms of breath: in addition to the dispositional breath referred to in T2a and T2b, responsible for the power of cohesion of natural bodies, there is natural breath or 'nature' (*phusis*), responsible for the powers of growth, nutrition and reproduction; psychic breath or 'soul' (*psuchē*), responsible for the powers of sense-perception and impulse; and intellectual breath or 'intellect' (*nous*) responsible for the power of intellection.[10] T2a and T2b refer to dispositional breath and to its connection with tension. But as we shall now see, the same applies to the other forms of breath as well: a portion of breath will qualify as intellect, soul or nature if and only if it is tensed in a certain way and, when it does, it exhibits the powers corresponding to each of these forms of breath.

To find the correlation between pneumatic tension and the specifically *psychic* powers of animate beings, we may look, for example, at a passage from Alexander of Aphrodisias' *Mantissa*.

> **T2c: Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Mant.* 115.6–12 (*SVF* 2.785, *BS* 13.23)**
> Furthermore, if the soul is a body, it is either fire or a thin breath pervading the whole animate body. But if this so, it is clear that they will not say that it is a brute [fire or breath] or [fire or breath] disposed in just any way. For not every fire or every breath has this capacity. So it will be [fire or breath] endowed with some peculiar form, principle or capacity or, as they themselves say, 'tension'. But if so, the soul will not be the breath or the fire, but the form, capacity or tension in these, according to which they differ from other things of the same type.

T2c pertains to a long section of the treatise running from 113.26 to 118.4, devoted to defending the Aristotelian view that the soul, being what explains the psychic powers of animate beings, is not itself a body, but the form of a body. T2c sets forth one of the several arguments developed by Alexander in favour of this view. The structure of the argument presented here is straightforward: if the soul were a body, it would be either fire or breath, but it cannot be either; therefore, the soul is not a

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[9] *Com. Not.* 1085c–d does not refer explicitly to breath, but to the mixture of fire and air that constitutes breath. On this question cf. Section 4 below.

[10] There is extensive evidence for this fourfold division. Some especially important passages are [Galen], *Introductio* 14.697.6–8 (*SVF* 2.716), Galen, *Adv. Iul.* 18.266 (*SVF* 2.718, *BS* 12.12), Philo, *Leg.* 2.22–23 (*SVF* 2.458, *LS* 47P, *BS* 12.8) and Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 9.78 (*SVF* 1013). Some of the sources express the difference in terms of a difference in *density*. I return to this specific issue in Sections 3 and 4 below.

body. Why cannot soul be either fire or breath? The reason adduced by Alexander is that not any mass of fire or breath could have soul, but only masses of fire or breath with a distinctive 'form, capacity or tension'. And this, Alexander believes, implies that the soul could not be, strictly speaking, the mass of fire or breath itself, but rather the incorporeal form, capacity or tension that the mass has.

The ground of this inference is not brought out in T2c, but only later on in the section: that which distinguishes two bodies from each other, Alexander claims, cannot be a body.[11] Thus, since the difference between an animate body and an inanimate one is the soul, the soul cannot be a body (as is implied by the view that soul is fire or breath), but rather its incorporeal 'form, capacity or tension'. Alexander does not mention his corporealist opponents by name. But those to whom he attributes the view that soul is fire are probably Heraclitus and Democritus and, in any case, those to whom he attributes the view that soul is breath with a distinctive *tension* are certainly the Stoics.

The correlation between psychic powers and pneumatic tension is also present in an important passage from Diogenes Laertius on the Stoic account of how cosmic breath is distributed across the cosmos.

> **T2d: D. L. 7.138–139 (*SVF* 2.634, *LS* 47O, *BS* 12.3)**
> The cosmos is managed by intellect and providence (as Chrysippus [says] in Book 5 of his *On Providence* and Posidonius in Book 13 of his *On Gods*) since intellect pervades every part of it just as, in our case, soul does. But of the things it pervades, some things [it pervades] more and some less. For some [it pervades] as disposition, for instance, bones and sinews, while others as intellect, for instance, the leading part of the soul. Thus, the whole cosmos too, being an animal and alive and rational, has ether as its leading part (as Antipater of Tyre [says] in book 8 of his *On the Cosmos*). Chrysippus in book 1 of his *On Providence* and Posidonius in his *On Gods* say that the heavens are the ruling part of the cosmos, whereas Cleanthes says it is the sun. Chrysippus, however, in the same work, says again that it is pre-eminently the purest part of ether, which he calls 'first god', and [which] pervades perceptibly, so to speak, the things in the air and all the animals, and [naturally] plants;[12] but it pervades earth, in accordance with disposition.

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[11] Cf. 116.18–27 commented on in Sharples 2008: 159–60. See notably 2008: 160: 'that soul is not just breath or fire does not mean that it cannot be breath or fire in a certain state, and there is no reason – at least until we come to the argument of 116, 18 below – to argue that soul is the state rather than the breath or fire'. See also Sharples 2004: 48 n. 129.

[12] Reading καὶ <φυσικῶς διὰ τῶν> φυτῶν with Marcovich and von Arnim.

Although the term 'breath' (*pneuma*) is not used in the text, it is clear that the passage deals with how cosmic breath – identified with 'intellect' and the 'first god' – is present in different parts of the cosmos.

The central idea in T2d is an analogy: just as we are pervaded by soul, but not all parts of us exhibit the powers associated with soul, so too intellect pervades the whole cosmos, but not all parts of the cosmos exhibit the power of intellection. In us and other intelligent beings, breath or intellect is present as intellect and it entails our power of intellection. But in the non-intelligent parts of the cosmos (including the non-intelligent parts of us), it is *not* present as intellect and it does *not* entail the power of intellection. In non-rational animals, for example, intellectual breath is only present as sense-perception or 'perceptibly' (*aisthētikōs*) which entails the powers that mark them off from living but inanimate beings. In plants, it is only present as nature or 'naturally' (*phusikōs*), which entails the powers that mark them off from lifeless beings. And at the bottom of the scale of nature, occupied by lifeless natural substances – which is the probable reference of the term 'earth' in the last sentence of the passage – intellectual breath is only present as disposition, which entails the power of cohesion that marks off these substances from artefacts and mere aggregates of bodies. In sum, in this cosmological context, intellect, sense-perception, nature and disposition are different forms of intellectual breath in virtue of which different parts of the cosmos take on different powers. Following the analogy, the same would apply to us. We too are pervaded by breath in the form of soul. However, there are parts of us that do not exhibit psychic power, but only powers associated with lower forms of breath. Thus, presumably, soul is present in these parts not 'as' soul but as lower forms of breath.

The notion that intellect 'pervades every part of the [cosmos]' (*eis hapan autou meros diēkontos*) but that there are bodies, or parts of bodies, in which intellect is not present as such but 'as' (*hōs*) nature or disposition is some-what paradoxical: although intellect is the form of breath that *entails* the intelligence of the bodies or parts of bodies in which it is present, intellect is also present in bodies or parts of bodies that *lack* intelligence. (The same type of problem arises in connection with the claim that we are pervaded by soul but that we have inanimate parts.) One possible way out of this paradox is the hypothesis that what Chrysippus meant is that the breath that pervades the non-intelligent parts of the cosmos 'is' intellectual in the sense that it *proceeds from* the intellectual breath located in the heavens which created, at the cosmogony, complex sublunary species by physically stretching from the heavens to earth, probably through the form of heat. For example, the trees in my garden are pervaded by intellectual breath as

nature in the sense that their natural, non-intellectual, breath had its *origin* in the intellectual breath of the heavens, which at some point in the cosmogony created the natural species to which they belong. Further reflection on this hypothesis would require a full study of Stoic phytogony and zoogony that I cannot undertake here. Another possible, but largely different, way out would be the hypothesis that in Stoicism intellectual breath is *currently* present throughout the cosmos, but that in some parts of the cosmos it only exercises some of its powers: in the trees in my garden, for instance, it only exercises its cohesive and natural powers.[13]

Anyhow, the correlation between psychic powers and pneumatic *tension* is not explicit in T2d. But it is certainly strongly implied in the claim made in the passage that soul pervades different parts of us to different *extents*: some 'more' (*mallon*) and some 'less' (*hētton*). The difference intended here cannot be quantitative, i.e. it cannot be a difference between, on the one hand, parts that are fully pervaded by soul in the sense that all the parts of these parts are pervaded by soul and, on the other hand, parts that are only partially pervaded by soul in the sense that some of the parts of these parts are not pervaded by soul. This cannot be the intended difference because there is strong evidence elsewhere that in Stoicism any part of any part of our body is, however small, pervaded by soul.[14] So the difference must be qualitative: breath pervades all the parts of our body, but the way in which it pervades each of them may vary. And one obvious way of understanding this qualitative difference is in terms of a difference in tension: in different parts of us, breath is more or less tensed and this difference in tension explains that, in these different parts, breath takes on different powers. The same, therefore, would apply to the cosmological case: cosmic breath bestows different powers on different parts of the cosmos through a variation in its degree of tension.

A full analysis of the evidence for theses (2) and (3) in Stoic physics would take us too far. Let me just briefly mention some key ideas. Regarding (2), the Stoic position is intuitively simple. If a certain amount of breath expands in order to fill up a greater volume, it must stretch and become thinner in order to do so. And this stretching causes an increase in

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[13] In favour of this latter hypothesis, cf. (a) Philo, *Leg.* 2.22–23 (*SVF* 2.458, *LS* 47P, *BS* 12.8) which claims that intellectual breath possesses not just the power of intellection, but also the powers of the lower types of breath as well, and (b) Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 9.77–81 (*SVF* 2.1013, *BS* 12.9) which claims that the cosmos is held together 'by a single power of *disposition*' (ὑπὸ μιᾶς ἕξεως), which is relevant for the present discussion since the cosmos, being an intelligent body, must be pervaded by intellectual breath which therefore must include the power of cohesion that holds the cosmos together.

[14] See, e.g., Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Mixt.* 217.32–218.1 and Plotinus 4.7.8b.1–22 (*BS* 13.21).

its inner tension. Conversely, if this process is reversed and the same amount of breath contracts in order to fill up again the smaller original volume, it must unstretch and become thicker, which causes a decrease in its inner tension. To put it differently, a change of volume through contraction or expansion entails a change in density that affects pneumatic tension. One consequence of this is that, since the types of breath distinguished by the Stoics differ from each other by their density and tension (the density and tension of each must fall within a certain range as I shall argue below), then a mass of breath of a given type will become a mass of breath of another type if it is sufficiently expanded or contracted. For example, considering that the four types of breath distinguished by the Stoics are dispositional, natural, psychic and intellectual, and that in this sequence the first is the densest and the last the most tenuous, a sufficiently large relaxation of a mass of dispositional breath, for instance, will yield a mass of natural breath or a sufficiently large contraction of a mass of intellectual breath will yield a mass of psychic breath.[15] Regarding (3), the central idea defended by the Stoics is that breath is a composite body (made of fire and air) whose volume varies according to the proportion of these two constituents. When some of the fire of a mass of breath contracts and changes into air, the mass itself contracts and takes on certain powers, and when some of its air expands and changes into fire, the mass itself contracts and takes on other powers.[16]

  This completes my discussion of the connection in Stoic pneumatic theory between (1) psychic powers and bodily tension, (2) bodily tension and volume, and (3) volume and material composition. Given this connection, the parallel between this theory and Simmias' theory of the soul is indeed very close.

3   Material Composition and Psychic Powers Outside *Phd.* 85e–86d

Apparently, the *Phaedo* passage is unique in the Platonic corpus as a precedent for the Stoic theory of the soul. As I shall argue in what follows, it is certainly not the only text in the corpus where a connection is established between the

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[15] The evidence for this theory comes from Stoic embryology and specifically the theory of the generation of soul out of nature. Cf. Plutarch, *Sto. Rep.* 1052f–1053a (*SVF* 2.806, *BS* 15.8) and Hierocles in his treatise *Elementa Moralia* 1.15–27 commented on in Bastianini and Long 1992: 369–70; Colvin 2005: 267–8; Konstan and Ramelli 2009: 37–8; Boeri and Salles 2014: 307–08 and 320; and Aoiz et al. 2014: 135.

[16] See Galen, *PHP* 5.3.8 (*SVF* 2.841, *LS* 47H), Simplicius, *in Cat.* 269.14–16 (*SVF* 2.452), Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 1.129.17–23 (*SVF* 2.413, *LS* 47A, *BS* 15.4) and Galen, *Nat. Fac.* 2.8.7–10 (*SVF* 2.406, *LS* 47E).

powers of a body and its material composition. But it seems to be the only one in which this connection is said to hold *because* material composition affects volume, volume affects tension and tension affects powers. As we shall see, no other text in the corpus that connects powers and material composition seems to claim that they are connected for these specific reasons. To support this claim, I shall focus on the two main passages of the Platonic corpus, both from the *Timaeus*, where the connection between powers and material composition is developed: 31b–c and 81e–82b.

Ti. 31b–c is the passage where Timaeus argues that the body of the cosmos is a composite that must be made of the four elements (as opposed to fewer of them) and that, thanks to this particular material composition, the cosmos as a whole is an enduring and stable entity. Let us look at the different parts of the argument.

The reason why the material composition of the body of the cosmos has to involve the four elements is indicated at the beginning (31b4–c2 and 32a7–b8). The overall structure of the argument is relatively straightforward: in order for the cosmos to be visible and tangible, its material composition must involve fire and earth; but these two elements need a bond that brings them together; and, given that the cosmos is three-dimensional, and it has, therefore, the structure of a 'solid' or cubic number, the bond must be twofold; therefore, the composition of the cosmos must involve not just fire and earth, but also the other two elements, air and water.

As Timaeus explains immediately afterwards, the specific proportion (*analogia*) in which the four elements are present in the cosmos determines its unity and endurance. In general terms, the power of cohesion that a body may have rests, as in Simmias' theory, on its particular material composition and, specifically, on a certain proportion in the amount of each of them (in *Phd.* 86c1 the term for 'proportion' was *metriotēs*). But the parallel between Timaeus and Simmias stops there. The crucial difference between the two is that, whereas for Simmias the proportion of the elements is needed to ensure the specific *tension* that secures the cohesion of the whole, for Timaeus the proportion of the elements secures the cohesion of the whole through the 'bonding' (*desmos*) of the elements, where by 'bonding' Timaeus means something that is unconnected to physical tension.

> **T3a: *Ti.* 31c2–4**
> Now, of bonds, the best one is that which, as far as possible, creates a unity between itself and the things bonded by it, and this is naturally best carried out by proportion.

The proportion that Timaeus has in mind is very specific.

T3b: *Ti*. 31c4–32a7

For whenever of three numbers, whether they are solid or square, the one
between any two of them is such that what the first one is to it, it is to the last
one, and, conversely, what the last one is to the one in between, it is to the
first, then, since the one in between happens to be both first and last, and the
last and the first, too, both happen to be in between, necessarily they will all
happen to be the same, and, being the same as each other, they will all be
unified.

Thus if the numbers that express the proportion of fire to air and of water to
earth in the cosmos satisfy these conditions, the four elements will be unified
and bonded to each other in the way required for cosmic cohesion.[17] I leave
aside the difficult question of why Timaeus believes that, since the *numbers*
that express the quantities of each of the elements are mathematically related
to each other in a certain way, then the *elements* themselves must be physically
unified. The important point for the moment is that, in contrast with
Simmias, Timaeus makes no reference in his account of the bonding of the
elements and of the cosmos as a whole to *tension* and its explanatory connec-
tion to cohesion. In this respect, the theory of Timaeus does not constitute, as
the theory of Simmias at *Phd*. 85e–86d clearly does, a precedent for Stoic
pneumatic theory.

   Ti. 81e–89d is the other passage on which I wish to focus. The passage is
part of the final section of the dialogue. In it, Timaeus explains the nature
of the diseases of the body and points out how they may affect the powers
of the soul. The nature of the diseases is explained, at least partly, in terms
of a lack of proportion between the four elements and between each
element and the different parts of the body in which they are naturally
located: they must arise in or leave the body 'proportionately' (82b3–4: *ana
logon*). As Timaeus later explains, the diseases of the body affect the powers
of the soul because these require for their proper functioning that the
different phlegms and humours of the body, and the corresponding
elements that constitute them, be located in specific parts of the body
and that they remain in these parts. Consider the following example.

T3c: *Ti*. 87a3–6

And once they [sc. specific types of phlegms and humours] move to the
three parts of the soul, they elaborately produce all kinds of bad temper and
melancholy in the part which each one of them falls upon, as well as of
temerity and cowardice.

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[17] See Cornford 1935: 45–52 (followed by Zeyl in Cooper and Hutchinson 1997: 1237 n. 12) and Brisson
       2001: 231 discussed, with Cornford, in Glenn 2011.

The exact connection between the diseases of the body and those of the soul is not spelled out in detail.[18] But the argument in 81e6–82b7 indicates that at least in some cases the connection holds because a lack of proportion in the elements in a part of the body affects its *temperature* (82a7–8: 'bodily parts that were cold become hot'), and because this change of temperature, in turn, affects the psychic powers of the person associated with that part of the body. Therefore, Timaeus' theory of the diseases of the body propounds, as Simmias' theory also does, a close connection between the material composition of our body and our psychic powers. And here too, the concept of proportion plays an important role: the material composition of the body affects psychic powers because these depend, partly at least, on the proportion of each of the material constituents in relation to each other. But the parallel does not extend any further. Timaeus claims that, at least in some cases, the connection holds because material composition affects *temperature* and *temperature* affects psychic powers. But in contrast with Simmias, Timaeus makes no reference to *tension* at all: the reason why temperature affects psychic powers is *not* that temperature affects tension and tension affects these powers. So here too, the theory of Timaeus does not constitute, as the theory of Simmias at *Phd.* 85e–86d surely does, a precedent for Stoic pneumatic theory.

It is worth noticing that Timaeus' theory of the diseases of the body – which connects material composition with psychic powers, but *not* through the concept of tension – seems to have had a decisive influence on how some ancient sources construed *Stoic* pneumatic theory. One case in point is Galen in his treatise *Quod animi mores corporis temperamenta sequantur*. According to Galen, the Stoics upheld the view that psychic powers require the mixture of the four elements in a certain range of 'proportion' (*summetria*).

> **T3d: Galen, *QAM* 783.10–784.13 (*SVF* 2.787, *BS* 13.25)**
> The doctrine of the Stoics classifies [the soul] under the same genus as [the genus of] substance. For they wish that the soul be a breath just as nature also is one, but [the breath] of nature is wetter and colder, whereas that of soul is drier and hotter. In consequence, this breath is the proper matter of soul considering that the form of [this] matter is the qualitatively proportional mixture of the airy and the fiery substances. Actually, it cannot be

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[18] For discussion of Timaeus' theory of the diseases of the soul, cf. Miller 1962: 175–87; Mackenzie 1981: 142–3, 175–8 and 195–204; Gill 2000: 63–5; Boys-Stones 2004: 5–6; Johansen 2004: 19–21; Grams 2009: 183; Lautner 2011; and Prince 2014. None of these authors interprets Timaeus' theory as granting some explanatory role to physical tension or connects his theory to Simmias' in any other way.

asserted that the soul is just air or just fire because it is not possible that the
body of the animal be extremely cold or hot, nor that it be dominated by one
of them in large excess, in which case, even if [the excess] is slightly larger
than the proportion, the animal becomes feverish in the proportionless
excesses of fire and, on the contrary, it becomes cold, pale and perceives
with difficulty, or even becomes completely insensitive, on account of the
domination of air. For [air], as long as it depends on itself, is cold, and it
[only] becomes warm in connection with its mixture with the fiery element.
Therefore, it has become clear that, according to the Stoics, the substance of
the soul is generated from a qualitatively determinate mixture of air and fire.

According to the theory reported here, the proportion of each of the
elements in the mixture that constitutes a mass of breath determines which
kind of breath it is. In particular, it determines whether or not it qualifies as
soul and, consequently, whether or not the living thing that it underlies has
psychic powers. The mass of breath is soul when the proportion of the
elements falls within a certain range. Within this range, the living thing is
animated and has psychic powers. A variation within this range may affect
their intensity and sharpness, but not the possession itself of the powers.
But in any variation beyond this range, the mass of breath ceases to be soul
altogether. In consequence, the body it underlies ceases to be animate and
no longer possesses psychic powers.

All this fits well with other reports of Stoic pneumatic theory.[19] However,
Galen departs from these sources by claiming that for the Stoics the material
composition of breath affects the psychic powers through *temperature*: mate-
rial composition affects psychic powers because material composition affects
temperature and temperature affects these powers (given that fire is hot and
air is cold, an increase in the amount of fire in the composition of breath will
raise the inner temperature of the being and this will affect its psychic powers,
whereas an increase in the amount of air will lower its inner temperature,
which will also affect its psychic powers). In his account, Galen seems to
follow closely Timaeus' theory and to present the Stoics as subscribing to this
theory rather than a theory like the one set forth by Simmias in *Phd.* 85e–86d,
according to which material composition affects psychic powers by affecting,
not temperature, but *volume* and *tension*.

Why did Galen present the Stoics in this particular way? One possible
answer is that in *QAM* he reads the Stoic doctrine from the angle of
Timaeus' theory of diseases, which Galen quotes extensively in his trea-
tise.[20] In line with the overall purpose of *QAM*, which is to establish that

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[19] See the evidence in Stoic physics for theses (2) and (3), which I refer to at the end of Section 2 above.
[20] Cf. for instance 4.789.6–16, 789.20–790.12 and 812.20–813.4.

this theory survived in later conceptions of how the soul is affected by the material composition of the body, Galen is interested in showing that the Stoic position on this question is at least very close to that presented in the *Timaeus*. But in order to do so, he had to sidestep the central role of volume and tension given by the Stoics in the correlation between material composition and psychic powers. He had to show instead that the Stoics were somehow committed to the idea that material composition affects psychic powers through *temperature* – as is the case in Timaeus' theory – rather than through volume and tension.

4   Final Remarks

I have argued that there is a parallel between Simmias' theory of the soul in *Phd.* 85e–86d and the Stoic pneumatic theory of the soul regarding the connection between (1) psychic powers and tension, (2) tension and volume, and (3) volume and material composition. This threefold connection occupies a central place in both theories and, in this respect, Simmias' theory is a firm precedent for the Stoic theory. This does not require that the two theories be alike in other respects too. In fact, they are not. Firstly, the body whose tension gives rise to psychic powers is, according to Simmias, the *human* body, i.e. the structured whole made of flesh, blood and bone that we know, and that Simmias refers to, as 'our body' (*to sōma hēmōn*) at 86c3. In the Stoics, by contrast, the body whose tension gives rise to psychic powers is a portion of breath, which is a bodily substance that pervades our body but that is not identical to it and that may exist without it for a more or less long period of time while keeping its powers. This entails the possibility of the survival of our soul after death and, in fact, the Stoics explicitly argued that our soul does survive our death,[21] something that Simmias explicitly denies. This opposition on the issue of the survival of the soul evinces a deep ethical difference between the two theories. Secondly, the two theories envisage differently the ontological status of the soul. In the Stoic theory, the soul is a body – a portion of breath – in a certain state. And in virtue of being in this state, this body bears psychic powers. In Simmias' theory, in contrast, the soul is not a body, but a *state* of our body, analogous to the attunement of a lyre, in virtue of which *our body* has psychic powers. Thus, not only is the Simmian soul not a body, which is something that in itself indicates a sharp difference between the two theories, but also it is not the *bearer* of psychic powers, but the set of psychic powers that our

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[21] Cf. D. L. 7.156–157 (*LS* 53N, *BS* 13.3).

body takes on when it is tensed in a certain way. In sum, despite the strong parallel for which I have argued, the two theories are based on radically different ethics and metaphysics.[22] An appreciation of these important differences brings out the specific and distinctive character of Simmias' theory as an account of the soul in terms of tension.

Could *Phd.* 85e–86d have actually influenced the Stoics? Or is the parallel between the two theories to be explained, rather, by the existence of a third theory, in which (1)–(3) are also prominent, and which separately influenced Plato and the Stoics? I believe the reasons for thinking that there was this third theory are weak. The strongest candidate would be early Pythagoreanism. Plato himself associates Simmias' theory with the Pythagorean school, and specifically with Philolaus (61e6–9) and his student Echecrates, who is also a character of the dialogue (88d3–6). Like Philolaus and Echecrates, Simmias seems to have been a real person. He is cited by other sources as belonging to the inner circle of Socrates' followers and as the author of philosophical dialogues that we only know by name: Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.2.48 and 3.10.17 and D.L. 2.124. But Plato's *Phaedo* is the only source that associates Simmias with the Pythagorean school and with Philolaus and Echecrates in particular. And, according to the specialists, there is in fact no clear doctrinal connection between *Phd.* 85e–86d and historical Pythagoreanism even though some historical Pythagoreans – Philolaus especially – did put forward some version of the theory of soul as harmony different from Simmias'.[23] This is not the place to examine the

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[22] It could be argued that a *third* major difference is that the two theories relate differently to epiphenomenalism, the view that the soul is causally inert insofar as it cannot *act* on other bodies. The Stoic theory, which argues that the soul is a body and that bodies in general are capable of causal action and passion, strongly denies epiphenomenalism. More specifically, the body that the Stoics identify with breath is an active, ordering force; therefore, Stoic breath must be causally efficacious and, if so, then any 'soul' i.e. any portion of breath that takes on psychic power, must be causally efficacious too. Simmias' theory, by contrast, is somehow committed to epiphenomenalism. For the soul is not an ordering force in Simmias' theory, but only the order, the state of the body resulting from the combination of its four basic material constituents. But as Socrates points out later on in the dialogue (and Simmias accepts) if the soul is indeed a state of the body that results from the combination of its material constituents, then the scope of actions that the soul is capable of performing is ultimately determined by this combination. In any case, the soul will be incapable of acting *against* this combination, e.g. (presumably) it will be incapable of causing this combination to dissolve or to change (93a and 94c–d). However, I am not fully convinced that this really evinces an important difference between the two theories. The epiphenomenal consequences of Simmias' theory are a far cry from the view that the soul is totally causally inefficacious, as a strong epiphenomenalist theory would want to argue. The limitation envisaged by Socrates and Simmias to its causal efficacy is in fact relatively small. For a full discussion of the relation between Simmias' theory and epiphenomenalism, cf. Caston 1997: 319–31. I am grateful to an anonymous referee for pressing this issue upon me.

[23] Cf. Burkert 1962b: 272; Trabattoni 1988: 55–6; Gottschalk 1971: 192–3; Huffman 1993: 328–32; Sedley 1995: 11–12; Kahn 2012: 49; and Horky 2013: 107–8. The theory of the soul as *harmonia* is attributed

issue in detail. But the crucial fact is that the Pythagorean concept of *harmonia* is unrelated to the concepts of physical tension and volume that are so fundamental in Simmias. Other possible precedents for Simmias' theory and its explicit reference to tension have been proposed – the Eleatics, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Alcmeon, and the Sicilian medical school are some examples – but the evidence here is even weaker.[24] It is unlikely, therefore, that the Stoics draw the threefold connection (1)–(3) from early Pythagoreanism, or some other early source, rather than from *Phd.* 85e–86d.

to Pythagoras and Philolaus by a number of ancient sources indicated in Gottschalk 1971: 192 n. 41 and critically discussed in Huffman 1993: 328–32, and some version of it was subscribed to by the early Peripatetics Aristoxenus (frs. 118–121, Wehrli) and Dicaearchus (frs. 5–12, Wehrli).

[24] Cf. Gottschalk 1971: 192–3. In Long 1975–6: 149–50, Long has argued, following earlier critics, that παλίντονος ('back-streched') in the simile of the bow and lyre in Heraclitus (DK 22B51) – not discussed by Gottschalk – may be a precedent for Stoic tension. However, the reading παλίντονος ('back-stretched') is disputed and most recent critics prefer παλίντροπος ('back-turning'), which makes no reference to tension.

A Neglected Strategy of the Aristotelian Alexander on Necessity and Responsibility

Richard Sorabji

A justly influential author, Michael Frede, has treated as an orthodoxy, needing no discussion, an interpretation of Alexander, put forward earlier in an objective spirit, in a seminal article by Susanne Bobzien[1] She discussed the Stoics' opponent, Alexander of Aphrodisias, who held the Aristotelian chair in Athens 500 years after Aristotle's death, at or soon after 200 AD. He was the greatest defender of Aristotelianism, and at a time when Aristotelianism needed defending against the refurbished versions of Stoicism and Platonism. Her interpretation of Alexander on this subject has now been treated not only as an orthodoxy, but as a ground for a sustained onslaught on Alexander as caught in a hopeless tangle, which will, I am afraid, mislead some readers, if nothing is said on the other side. I will draw attention to two small passages of Alexander, mentioned but not discussed in Bobzien's enlightening treatment, which I think may suggest that he had an entirely different strategy. I also disagree with the other objections raised against Alexander, and will try to fill out the picture of his approach, as I see it. But first I should give the context of Bobzien's interpretation; I will come to what I think is a mistaken use of her interpretation later.

In her article, Bobzien homes in on Alexander being the first to deny a certain Stoic principle. The principle is that if in the same circumstances (*periestēkota*), as Alexander puts it in his *On Fate* – or *external* circumstances, as it is more misleadingly put by him or someone else in

[1] Bobzien 1998a (=Sorabji 2016: 125–59).

Mantissa (*Supplement to On the Soul*)[2] – one acted (or chose, as the *Mantissa* adds) now in one way, now in another, there would be a change without any cause, which is impossible.[3] The *Mantissa*'s confinement to *external* circumstances is misleading because the Stoics think one's *internal* psychological state is also relevant to whether one can act otherwise. Bobzien finds no precedent for Alexander's denial of the Stoic principle that one will act the same way in the same circumstances, even among Middle Platonist discussions of Aristotle's undetermined sea battle in his *On Interpretation* 9. In her definitive book of the same year, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy* (Bobzien 1998b), she throws new light again by pointing out that the name of the second-century AD Stoic who pressed this question, Philopator, is given in the late fourth-century report of the Christian Nemesius, Bishop of Emesa. It was Philopator's earlier question to which Alexander felt obliged to reply. Nemesius records Philopator's argument a third way by saying that with the same *causes as circumstances (aitiōn periestēkotōn)*, it is not possible that the same things happen now one way, now otherwise.[4] I think that Philopator's challenge made Alexander make up his mind how far in advance necessitation would be objectionable. At one point, Alexander tellingly objects to our doing or not doing something having been inevitable before we were *born*.[5] Many people, but not all, would indeed see inevitability before birth, like Alexander, as particularly threatening to the idea of our moral responsibility, that is, to the idea that we can be justifiably praised or blamed for what we do. Aristotle had been vaguer in the discussion of his sea battle.[6] Various ethical ideas other than responsibility would be jeopardised, he thought, if our acts had been inevitable ten thousand years ago, or for the whole of time. But under pressure from Philopator's question, Alexander goes further. Even in the extreme case, where the same external and internal circumstances have recurred, it *still need not be* inevitable beforehand how we will act.

The denial of Philopator's principle is one new step by Alexander, but Bobzien rightly argues that he does not take the further step of introducing the idea of *will* as being free. In another innovation of her book, she finds the first move of this type in the Christian tradition marginally earlier in the Christian Justin Martyr (died c. 165).

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[2] Not all passages in the *Mantissa* are necessarily by Alexander, so I will rely on his *On Fate*, but most of the *Mantissa* passages I cite are in agreement with *On Fate*.

[3] Alex. Aphr. *Fat.* 15.185.7–11; *Mant.* § 23, 174.3–7. The authenticity of this part of the *Mantissa* has not been challenged.

[4] Nem. *Nat. Hom.* 174.3–27 (ed. Morani).   [5] Alex. Aphr. *Fat.* 17.188.15.   [6] Arist. *Int.* 9.

1   Alexander's Neglected Strategy, *On Fate* Chapter 15 and *Mantissa* §23

Now I will turn to the two small passages of Alexander (if the second is also by him) which I believe may show that he had a different and neglected strategy: *On Fate* Chapter 15 and *Mantissa* § 23.

> For indeed if our decision (*krisis*) about things to be done took place with a view to one goal (*skopos*), perhaps there would be some reason to hold that our decisions about the same things would always turn out similar. But since that is not so (for we choose (*haireisthai*) what we choose sometimes on account of the noble, sometimes on account of the pleasant and sometimes on account of the advantageous, and it is not the same things that produce these outcomes), it is possible for us now to be moved towards the noble <and choose> these things at hand in our surroundings and at another time [to choose] others, according as we make our judgement in reference to the pleasant or the advantageous.[7]

> For if one had one goal in relation to which one made one's decision refer, it would have been reasonable that one should always choose the same thing from among the same things, at least if one always had and preserved the same stance in relation to the goal set before one and looked to it in making one's decision between things. But since there are several ends to which one looks in making one's decision and choice of things to be done (for one has before one's eyes the pleasant, the advantageous and the noble, and not all the things surrounding one have the same relation to each of these), one makes one's judgement about the things and one's choice among them sometimes in relation to the pleasant, sometimes in relation to the noble and at other times in relation to the advantageous, and will not always do the same things, nor always choose the same things, even when all the surrounding circumstances are the same. But each time [will do or choose] the things which most appear to lead to the goal.[8]

I believe that Alexander is here drawing a distinction, which I once ascribed to Aristotle and defended as a good one, between being caused and being necessitated.[9] Being caused, for Aristotle, is having a certain kind of explanatory factor. In the passages ascribed to his follower Alexander, our choice or action has a perfectly good *cause* (explanatory factor) in one of the three standing motives cited. But *which* of our standing motives will operate is not necessitated. Alexander wants thereby to show that even when necessity is absent, a cause can be

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[7] Alex. Aphr. *Fat.* 15.185.21–28. < > represents the conjectural filling of a suspected gap in the Greek; [] an explanatory addition to the English.
[8] Alex. Aphr. *Mant.* § 23, 174.13–24.   [9] Sorabji 1980: 26–44.

present, contrary to Philopator's charge from the beginning of each chapter, that the absence of necessity would imply a causeless change. There are several advantages of this interpretation of the two passages. First, instead of the passages playing no obvious role, they will provide a relevant defence against the point of immediate concern, Philopator's charge that Alexander's denial of the need for necessity before the moment of choice or decision saddles him with changes occurring without a cause. Further, we shall see that this interpretation will defend Alexander also from the charges of a modern interpreter, that Alexander has got himself into a hopeless tangle. The advantages of the interpretation, then, are that Alexander's passages thus come out neither irrelevant nor confused. If that makes the interpretation of Alexander plausible, then it may add a certain amount of support also for my earlier identification of the same distinction between cause and necessity in the founding father of Alexander's school, Aristotle.

In the two chapters, Alexander first argues that the person is the cause, and, in more detail, that the person's deliberation (*boulē*), deliberate choice (*prohairesis*) and judgement (*krisis*) are the cause.[10] That much is intended to establish his first point, that there is a *cause*. To me his most interesting argument for the second point, that there need be no *necessity*, is his observation that we have more than one motive, and he names the noble, the pleasant and the advantageous.[11] Indeed, we do have different standing motives, and the adherents of Philopator, who introduced the theme of necessity at the beginning of each chapter, would need to show that necessity has to govern which standing motive takes effect. I myself think that that cannot be shown and that Alexander is safe. But it is not whether he is safe that matters for present purposes, but that this is the strategy Alexander intends. He needs such a strategy, if he is to answer Philopator's actual objection, that he has created a change without a cause. The most relevant change is the person's action. Alexander's strategy says that whichever standing motive operates provides a perfectly good cause of that action. Alexander does not have to worry that from his perspective there is something else that may have no explanation, let alone a necessitating explanation, although that is not necessarily because the motives are incommensurable. There may be no explanation of why this time one standing motive operated, last time another. The objection that this

[10] Alex. Aphr. *Fat.* 15.185.15–16; *Mant.* § 23, 174.9–10.
[11] Alex. Aphr. *Fat.* 15.185.21–28; *Mant.* § 23, 174.13–24.

would divorce the agent from his wants or beliefs, or from his character, disposition, or reason does not seem to me convincing. The agent may by character always be equally attracted to two or more incentives, or may be volatile in susceptibilities. It is up to the Stoics to show that there must be an explanation, and a determining one, of the agent's variability, and this may be difficult. The important point is that the objection Philopator did offer has been answered: the cause of the action which he desiderates is the operative motive.

Frede takes Alexander's ability to choose otherwise in the same circumstances as coming close to the belief of his predecessor as Sather lecturer, Albrecht Dihle, in a will that decides or chooses in a way that is independent of the desires and beliefs of the person. Tony Long as editor has found a passage of Dihle's published Sather lectures in which Dihle says something like that in his own person.[12] But the wording applied by Frede to *Alexander* is very close to that of Susanne Bobzien's article, when she introduces the view that I can decide between alternative courses of action independently of certain internal factors, for example, my desires, and goes on to apply this to Alexander.[13]

Alexander has another related but different strategy that Bobzien mentions. In his *On Fate* version, the wise person does not do what they choose by being necessitated (*katēnankasmenōs*). For it might at some time seem reasonable (*eulogon*) to a wise person to refute a prediction of their activity and show the activity's freedom (*eleutheron*), in Alexander's carefully explicated sense, by *not* doing at some time what would [otherwise] have been brought about by that wise person as [also] reasonable (*eulogōs*). In the *Mantissa* version, even if a person chose the same things in the same circumstances, thinking them to be more reasonable, it would not follow that the choosing was necessitated (*katēnankasmenōs*), nor that *external* factors were causes of the decisions [sc. which would make the choice forced, *biaion*]. For the power is available (*exesti*) to that person, if they want to show at some time that their choice is not necessitated (*katēnankasmenēn*) and want to defeat the prediction, also to choose what they did not [otherwise] think reasonable. Once again, what is being denied here is necessitation, not causation. Their choice depends in either case on what they think reasonable and in one case partly on

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[12] Dihle 1982: 135.

[13] This is mentioned only as a consequence of Alexander's view in Bobzien 1998a: 134–5, 139, 171 (=Sorabji 2016: 126, 130, 156). In the last two passages she adds independence of the agent's disposition, character, reason or nature. But it is repeated as a criticism of Alexander in M. Frede 2011: 98.

competitiveness of character, which is explicitly mentioned. Their normal desires are operating, and the desires correspond to their characters as wise or competitive. A further case is mentioned in *On Fate* to show that physiognomic predictions cannot help getting it wrong. This is the case in which Socrates says that, by the discipline of philosophy, he overcame his *original* nature (*phusis*), which would have made him a womaniser.[14] In none of the cases of the ability to refute predictions is the suggestion that wants and beliefs in line with *present* character do not act as *causes*. The point is the entirely different one that the actions are not *necessitated* and in the *Mantissa* are also not *forced* by external factors. In the case of Socrates, what was overridden was only his *original* nature and *potential* character, not his *acquired* character, which Aristotle would call his *second* nature. In the other cases, character need not have been overridden at all, any more than desires and beliefs.

I now come to Frede's interpretation of Alexander of Aphrodisias and attack based on that interpretation. Frede's attack was delivered in his celebrated Sather lectures, beautifully edited from an unfinished manuscript after his untimely death by Tony Long.[15] It concerned Alexander's views on moral responsibility, or liability to praise and blame, and the type of freedom which he took that to require. I shall attempt to make a case on the other side by first trying to explain more fully what Alexander was doing. I shall say that that included some positive and unexpected turns, and that he is not guilty of the errors with which he is charged.

2 Up to Us versus Freedom

Alexander was interested in necessity and causation not only for its own sake, but because of its implications for whether necessity would allow our actions or choices to be *up to us*, in other words, liable to justified praise or blame. Many people may think that Alexander's claim is implausible when he says that necessity must be avoided right up to the moment of action or choice, if our actions or choices are to be up to us. But opinions may be more evenly divided on his view that our behaviour could not be up to us, and hence that we could not be liable to justified praise or blame for it, if that behaviour had been necessary or inevitable *before we were born*.[16] Inevitability before birth is indeed a more obvious source of worry for those who feel responsibility threatened, than inevitability a fraction before the moment of action, which is what Alexander resists.

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[14] Cicero, *Fat.* 5.10; cf. *Tusc.* 4.80.   [15] M. Frede 2011: 95–101.   [16] Alex. Aphr. *Fat.* 17.188.15

There should be no such dispute about whether behaviour inevitable from before birth could be *free*, to which I shall come, because on the Stoic Epictetus' conception of freedom as invulnerability, it clearly could be, while on Alexander's conception of freedom as un-necessitated choice or action, it clearly could not. But whether behaviour inevitable from before birth could be *up to us* and hence whether we could be liable to justified praise or blame, is a question on which then as now there seems to be no agreement. No clinching argument has been found, and people continue to appeal to different intuitions. In these circumstances, people may feel exasperated and think that their opponents' arguments beg the question. It is interesting that Alexander himself makes such a charge in Chapter 34 of his *On Fate*. He complains that his Stoic opponents claim that necessity *all along* is compatible with things being up to us, on the ground that it is compatible with our having virtue or vice. But that begs the question, he says, because as one who denies that *up to us* is compatible, he also denies that *virtue and vice* are compatible with all along necessity. However, I think we do better to avoid exasperation, since it is felt by both sides.

Although Philopator was challenging Alexander to accept only necessity *fractionally before* the action, the Stoics themselves accepted *all along* necessity, despite some attempts by the third head, Chrysippus, to find special senses of necessity in which it was not required. I have considered these attempts elsewhere, but I did not think they removed the necessity that worried the indeterminist,[17] and I am not aware of Epictetus or other later Stoics relying on them. Let us now look at the definition by the Stoics and by Alexander first of *up to us* and then of *freedom*.

3   Alexander's Partial Acceptance of a New Stoic Definition of Up to Us, *On Fate*, Chapters 13–14

Bobzien's discussion of Philopator points out that Alexander's *On Fate* Chapter 13 reports, and Chapter 14 repeats, a new Stoic definition of *up to us* (*eph' hēmin*) which seems also to be the work of Philopator, since the phrasing is repeated by Nemesius in the passage which discusses him.[18] What is *up to us* (humans) comes about not merely *through* us, as earlier Stoics had said, but in this refined definition through our being impelled (*hormē*) and giving our *assent* (*sunkatathesis*). What is *up to* the *irrational* animals, however, comes about through their being impelled in a sense, but

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[17] Sorabji 1980: 70–88.
[18] Alex. Aphr. *Fat.* 13.182.16–19; 14.183.22–3, 184.12–13; Nem. *Nat. Hom.* 105.9–12 (ed. Morani).

not through their assent, since assent is given by *reason* and they lack reason. At most they should be said to yield (*eikein*) rather than assenting and to engage in behaviour (*energein*), rather than acting (*prattein*). So we may guess that 'up to an animal', unlike 'up to us', does not for these Stoics imply moral responsibility. As for a stone or fire, certain things come about *through* these, such as falling, or heating, but these activities are not described as *up to* the stone or fire.

It is striking and somewhat surprising that in Chapter 14, Alexander *accepts* much of this new Stoic definition of *up to*, which will lead him to further divergences from Aristotle. But he does add two points of his own.[19] The Stoic view was that assent and yielding are given to a motivating appearance (*hormētikē phantasia*) about what to do. Alexander picks up both the Stoic appeal to appearance and their belief that assent is given by reason. A human has reason, he says, as a judge (*kritēs*) of appearances about things to be done (*phantasiai peri tōn prakteōn*), and uses it to examine (*exetazein*) whether the appearance is really the case. If not (and this is Alexander's major point), a human does not concede (*sunchōrein*) to it, but resists (*enistasthai*). In this way a human can abstain from, or pass by, what *appears* to be pleasant or advantageous. Endorsing the Stoic term 'assent' and the Stoic belief that it is rational, he adds his own term 'deliberation', but not in the context in which it was most used by Aristotle (deliberation about policies for achieving what matters in life). The only deliberation he mentions is about the reliability of appearances in a particular situation (a typical Stoic concern), and what to do if reality is different. The very essence of a human as a rational being is to have within himself (or herself) the original source (*archē*) of choosing (*helesthai*) or *not* choosing, so that someone who abolishes that, abolishes the human being. Alexander's strategy is to accept the Stoic requirement of rational assent to (some) appearances, and further to insist on something else with which the Stoics would agree, that we can examine and reject appearances. But he then concludes that we can abstain, pass by and choose *or not*. It is presumably at that point, although he does not say so, that he thinks that Stoic 'all along' necessity has all along closed off any alternative outcome.

Alexander's other objection in Chapter 14 starts with a small oversight pointed out by Bobzien. He wrongly thinks the Stoics allow 'up to *us*' to irrational animals, whereas in fact what the Stoics allow them is described as 'up to *animals*'.[20] But Alexander would object to this too because he

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[19] Alex. Aphr. *Fat.* 14.183.21–184.20.   [20] Alex. Aphr. *Fat.* 14.183.23–4.

wants to deny that anything is *up to* animals. This denial is forced on him
by his strategy of accepting the new Stoic definition of *up to us* in terms
of occurring through the assent of reason, since most Aristotelians agree
with Stoics that animals lack reason.[21] Alexander confronts Stoic views
either by rejecting them, or by accepting them as causing no threat to
Aristotelianism. But in the present case, I believe his acceptance causes him
to diverge from Aristotle.

   How does Alexander diverge? He recognises a chapter in which
Aristotle explicitly allows that animal behaviour can be voluntary.[22]
Since Aristotle introduced the subject of voluntariness in the same
chapter by saying that the voluntary is subject to praise and blame,[23]
this is a strong indication that animals can be praised and blamed, as I
have argued elsewhere is true of higher domesticated animals.[24] As for
Alexander, he appears to allow that irrational animals do not merely
'*yield*', but some can give *assent* of a sort,[25] but evidently not the assent
of reason. However, Alexander distinguishes *up to us* from the voluntary
more explicitly than Aristotle and he denies that anything can be *up to*
irrational animals, because of his acceptance that *up to us* involves assent
in accordance with reason and judgement, which irrational animals
lack.[26] Alexander understood this reason and judgement as involving
deliberation, and Aristotle himself had denied that animals can make a
deliberate choice of policy (*prohairesis*), something he treats as based on
deliberation. Some modern scholars, at least one on the authority of
Alexander, have argued that Aristotle intends *up to us* to require either
deliberate choice, or the capacity for deliberate choice.[27] My reason for
doubting this is that two texts from Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics* and from
the books common to the *Eudemian* and *Nicomachean Ethics* make
voluntariness imply *up to us*, while three texts from *Nicomachean Ethics*
3.1 and 3.5 create this implication indirectly as following from the volun-
tary having an internal origin of action, and an internal origin of action
implying *up to us*.[28] In other words, I take Aristotle to allow that
behaviour that is voluntary is thereby up to the agent. In that case,
Alexander's acceptance of the Stoic idea that what is *up to us* involves
the assent of reason, coupled with his assumption that they do not

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[21] Aristotle's pupil Theophrastus is an exception according to Porphyry, *Abst.* 3.25.3.
[22] Arist. *EN* 3.1.1111b8–9.   [23] Arist. *EN* 3.1.1109b31.
[24] For what follows, see Sorabji 1993: 108–12.   [25] Alex. Aphr. *Fat.* 14.183.31.
[26] Alex. Aphr. *Fat.* 14.183.26–9.   [27] Irwin 1980, Englert 1987: 75–117 and R. Long 1992.
[28] Aristotle, *EE* 2.9.1225b8; *EN* 5.8.1135a24; 3.1.1110a15–18; 3.5.1113b19–23, 1114a18–19.

distinguish between up to *us* and up to *irrational animals*, lead him to diverge from Aristotle in denying that anything is up to irrational animals.[29]

4   Alexander on Freedom, *On Fate* Chapters 18–19

I must now turn to the invocation of *freedom*, because in *On Fate* Chapter 18 Alexander himself invokes freedom in making a criticism of the Stoics, which may indeed seem to open him to objections. He has just been talking in Chapter 17 of the Stoics as believing that it has been necessitated since before our birth what we will do or not do. Yet, so he complains in Chapter 18, in all they say, the Stoics behave as if they had never heard of that doctrine, by hanging on to what is *free* (*eleutheron*), to which he adds as if it were his gloss 'and *under our own control* (*autexousion*)', and he goes on to mention the need for alternative possibilities of acting *or not acting*, when he uses the phrase '*or not*'.[30] The Stoics behave as if they were free in this sense, he complains, when they try to persuade others to a different course, as if they themselves had the power (*exousia*) to do this *or not*, and as if the others were able to choose (*haireisthai*). They also reproach and rebuke people, and again they act as if it were *up to them* (*ep' autois*) to write *or not* and as if they *chose* to write from *philanthropy*. Alexander has already made amply clear what kind of freedom he requires: the freedom in the same circumstances (as Chapter 15 says) to do or choose something *or not*. This kind of freedom is needed, he thinks, for choices being *up to us* and hence liable to praise or blame.

In Chapter 19, Alexander extends his invocation of freedom, and complains that the Stoics should have conceded that what is *up to us* is *free* (*eleutheron*), and under our own control (*autexousion*), and in control (*kurion*) of the choice (*hairesis*) and enacting (*praxis*) of *opposite* alternatives (a requirement still stronger than mere alternatives, and indeed too strong).[31] Nemesius later records the position slightly more fully. He has just enunciated Philopator's formula according to which in the same causal

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[29]   It has been put to me on the other side that when Aristotle allows some animal behaviour to be voluntary at 1111a25–6 and 1111b8–9 (which I have just argued to be sufficient for its being up to them), he must mean this in an attenuated sense, because animals do not meet the requirement of knowing (*eidenai*) what they are doing. But *eidenai* is a very broad term for cognition which can include non-rational cognition, and Sorabji 1993 includes (see index sv 'Aristotle, animals and minds') what Aristotle does try to deny to animals, including reason and belief (*doxa*), and what he concedes. To give only one example of concession, the lion perceives that the ox is near and rejoices that he will have a meal, *EN* 1118a20–2.

[30]   Alex. Aphr. *Fat.* 18.188.17–189.8.   [31]   Alex. Aphr. *Fat.* 19.189.9–11.

circumstances, necessarily the same things happen and it is not possible that they happen now this way, now otherwise. Nemesius continues: 'But if being impelled (*horman*) too follows of necessity, where does the *up to us* remain? For what is up to us must be *free* (*eleutheron*). But it would be free [only] if in the same circumstances it were up to us now to be impelled (*horman*), now not to be impelled.' Here it is still clearer that the freedom required for choices to be up to us is that most favoured by Alexander which, contrary to the Stoics, allows alternative outcomes *in the same causal circumstances*.

5   The Stoic Epictetus on Freedom and Freedom by Nature

Alexander evidently had not noticed that the Stoic Epictetus had twice said something *superficially* similar to the very thing Alexander asks for in Chapters 18 and 19. For seven times Epictetus brings in the idea that certain things are free *by nature* (*eleutheron phusei*).[32] The term alternates twice in one passage, *Discourses* 1.9, with 'free', but the qualification 'by nature' can be understood, and 'free by nature' does *not* mean the same as 'free'. Two of the seven passages say that what is *up to us* is free *by nature*.[33] Epictetus had narrowed down the concept of what is *up to us* compared with his predecessors to a small range of psychological acts or attitudes that no tyrant could take away from you, indeed not even Zeus, as he says at 1.1.23 in his very first discourse, which is on what is *up to us*. Two further passages of Epictetus pick out as free *by nature* our *prohairesis*, which might very inadequately be paraphrased as 'our will' and a still further one speaks of what is under the control of our will (*prohairetikon*) as free *by nature*.[34] Since our will is our disposition to make choices of a characteristic type, or sometimes is our particular choices, Epictetus may seem to be allowing something *related* to the freedom that Alexander desiderates. Of the two passages, which treat what is *up to us* as free *by nature*, the one from *Handbook* 1.2–3 gives extra information.[35]

> What is up to us is *free by nature*, unpreventable, unimpedable, but what is not up to us is weak, slavish, preventable, alien. So remember that if you think that what is slavish by nature is free and that what is alien is your own, you will be impeded, grieved, disturbed, you will blame both gods and humans. But if you think only what is yours to be yours, and what is alien to be alien, as it is, no one will ever compel you; no one will prevent you, you will blame no one, you will not do a single thing involuntarily, you will not

[32] *Epict. diss.* 1.19.7; 2.2.3; 2.15.1; 3.22.42; 4.7.8; 4.13.24; *Ench.* 1.2.
[33] *Epict. diss.* 2.2.3; *Ench.* 1.2–3.   [34] *Epict. diss.* 1.9.7–8; 2.15.1; 4.7.8.   [35] *Ench.* 1.2–3.

have an enemy, no one will harm you, for neither will you suffer anything harmful.

Evidently to call something free *by nature* is not to call it free, but to *qualify* the claim that it is free. Hence to understand it, we need to turn to freedom itself (*eleutheria*). Epictetus devotes a whole discourse to it, *Discourse* 4.1. That freedom is a prized quality rarely achieved by anybody. Through careful adjudication of desires, it frees you from inner (4.1.86–7) and outer tyrannies, so that you are enslaved to nothing, not to house, farm, family, clothes, furniture, nor, he adds (4.4.1–2) books – a warning to academics – nor finally to your own body. That is why you can tell the external tyrant that he cannot put *you* in chains, only your leg (1.1.23). The rare examples of being free he cites are Socrates and Diogenes the Cynic. This Epictetan freedom, unlike Alexander's freedom, does not in any way require indeterminism, which is not even mentioned throughout the length of 4.1. It is instead a kind of *invulnerability*, which results from a disposition always to make the right choices, such as is also recalled in the passage quoted from *Handbook* 1.2–3. Invulnerability is not the free person's *motive* for adjudicating desires the right way, but the resulting invulnerability is the reason for the person's being described as 'free'.

That suggests that what is free *by nature* is not what is free, but what *would* give you Epictetus' rare kind of invulnerability, if you would set your heart only on the right psychological attitudes that are up to you in the sense that no tyrant could take them away from you.

Epictetus does say something else about the particular choices of *everybody*, but it falls short of saying that they are *free*. He says that they are *not compelled*, except by their *other* choices. He is talking of acts of willing (*prohaireseis*). He says that even if you act under the threat of death, nothing compelled that in you which is capable of *prohairesis*. Rather, what happened was that one desire (*hormē, orexis*) for survival, defeated another desire to do the right thing, and specifically, one *prohairesis*, or act of willing, was subjected to necessity by another *prohairesis* (1.17.23–26). Epictetus' response that it is un-compelled except by other choices falls a long way short of the freedom (*eleutheria*) that implies *invulnerability*. It might be expressed by the Stoic term *autexousion*, having things under one's own control. If that latter term is sometimes translated as '*freedom*',[36] it too in Stoicism is freedom that falls far short of invulnerability. Epictetus' claim that action taken under threat of death is in a way uncompelled shows how distant his interest is from

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[36] M. Frede 2011, e.g. p. 75 on the Stoics, cf. p. 96 on Alexander.

that of Aristotle who chose a very different example of such action, throwing cargo overboard to save your ship in a storm. As the choice of example makes clear, Aristotle's interest is not in your being in a way uncompelled, but in your not being straightforwardly blameworthy. I have argued elsewhere that he gave it two different treatments. It is either involuntary, or voluntary but typically pardonable.[37]

I have now discussed Alexander's denial of necessity fractionally before the moment of action, his concessions to and differences from the Stoic account of *up to us*, his treatment of freedom and that of the Stoic Epictetus. I hope that this will be of some interest in itself. But it is also necessary for assessing the three objections which have been made to Alexander's counter-intuitive position, in Frede's celebrated lectures.[38]

6   Objection 1: Should Alexander Have Recognised That Stoic Will Is Free *By Nature* and Its Choices Are under Our Own Control?

A first objection concerns whether Alexander should not have recognised that Epictetus allows that, since the will and its choices are free *by nature*, it is *in principle* open to everyone that all their choices should be *free*. This was one charge made by Michael Frede, who also gave an explanation of Stoic freedom of will in terms of freedom *by nature* in Chapter 5 of his book, *A Free Will*, although without citing any of the seven passages on freedom *by nature*. Stoic freedom of will, he said, was the ability, allowed for by God's constitution of humans, to make our will not only free by nature, but, as in the case of Diogenes and Socrates, also *free*. But the answer to the charge that Alexander should have recognised this should now be clear. Epictetus is not telling us that everyone's choices *are* free (except in the sense of under our control); and the sense in which they could *in principle* be free invokes the rarely achieved ideal of a kind of invulnerability, which though extremely important, as exemplified occasionally in history – I have cited Mahatma Gandhi and Admiral Stockdale as coming close[39] – is not on anyone's view the kind of freedom required for one's being praiseworthy or blameworthy. Alexander may be

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[37] Involuntary: *EN* 5.8.1135b4, *EE* 2.8.1225a19; voluntary, but pardonable: *EN* 3.1.1110a18, a24, as discussed in Sorabji 1980: 259–63.

[38] The three objections by Michael Frede are compressed into M. Frede 2011: 97–101. I have discussed other aspects of his book in Sorabji 2017.

[39] Gandhi in Sorabji 2012: 67, 69; Stockdale earlier in Sorabji 2000: 225–7.

considered right or wrong to suppose that the freedom required for that purpose is the freedom to act or not in the same circumstances. But he would be right not to count Epictetus' freedom *by nature* as *actually achieved* freedom, nor as freedom in the sense that he needed for his purposes, and it is only to be expected that he would ignore it, even if he had noticed it.

In fact there is no oversight in Alexander at this point because he makes it explicit what kind of freedom he desiderates. When he says that what is up to us is free, he glosses this by saying that what is up to us is in control of the choice and doing of opposites in the same circumstances.[40] 'Opposites' may be an exaggeration because only doctors know how to cure as well as to kill. It would have been enough for Alexander to say 'choosing *or not*, doing *or not*'. Alexander's gloss on freedom seems later to be explicated by Nemesius, when he says that what is up to us would be free only if in the same circumstances it would be up to us now to be impelled, now not to be impelled.[41] The point that we can choose or do different things in the very same circumstances had been made by Alexander twice.[42]

Frede at one point put his objection not in terms of freedom (invulnerability) *by nature*, but in terms simply of freedom, complaining that Alexander failed to see that a Stoic choice might, despite Stoic determinism, be *free*.[43] If this is a distinct objection, it will mean freedom in a Stoic sense weaker than invulnerability or invulnerability by nature. A Stoic choice would be *up to us* because of our *assent*, and could also be *autexousion*, under our own control. It would be uncompelled, except by another choice. The will from which it came would be *by nature* free. But Alexander's interest was whether justified praise and blame would be excluded by Stoic necessity even before we were born or fractionally before the moment of action. He would not have seen this interest as being addressed either by Stoic invulnerability or by any weaker Stoic senses of freedom. Of course, Alexander may be wrong, but if I am right that there is an unresolved and ongoing disagreement among philosophers, at least about the implications of necessity before birth, Alexander could not be expected to accept the Stoic senses of freedom as relevant to that. I will now spend a moment on a different objection, before turning to the big one with which I started.

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[40] Alex. Aphr. *Fat.* 19.189.9–12.   [41] Nem. *Nat. Hom.* 105–6 (ed. Morani).
[42] Alex. Aphr. *Fat.* 15.185.7ff.; *Mant.* 174.3ff.   [43] M. Frede 2011: 100.

7   Objection 2: Ability to Do a Bad Job Is Not What Makes a Good Job Praiseworthy

Frede put a different objection to Alexander by saying that an individual's ability to do a bad job is not what *makes* his good job praiseworthy, nor that from which his good job *derives* its merit.[44] To this I would reply that Alexander's point was that the possibility of his having done otherwise was only a *necessary prerequisite* of someone doing a praiseworthy job, not that it *made* his job praiseworthy. I think there is something to be said for this more modest claim. If from *birth* someone had been unable to do anything less than a good job, I think our attitude might be one of *awe*, but it would not be one of praise, just as Aristotle says that the gods, and even the most godlike of men, are above praise.[45]

8   Objection 3: Does Alexander's Opposition to the Necessity of the Same Action in the Same Circumstances Divorce Agents from Their Motives, Desires and Beliefs? *On Fate* Chapter 15 And *Mantissa* §23

We encountered Objection 3 earlier, when we noticed Frede ascribing to Alexander the idea that decisions and choices are independent of the desires and beliefs of the person. He ascribed such a view in modern times also to Dihle, but the ascription to *Alexander*, with the same wording, had been made by Bobzien. In fact, the strategy I ascribed to Alexander in the two passages I quoted was very much the opposite. Alexander was there precisely *linking* choices and decisions to the agent's alternative standing motives as cause. The three motives mentioned very much involved desires and beliefs. Alexander's denial of necessity even at the moment of decision or choice did not depend on divorcing decision or choice from motive with its desires and beliefs. It depended instead on there being no necessity which of several standing motives would operate. I therefore think that the third objection fails.

9   A Final Objection

Nonetheless, a different objection may be raised against Alexander's reply to Philopator, who charged that Stoicism would make decisions and choices causeless. Alexander's reply, we saw, was that we have more than one standing motive and these are perfectly good causes, even though there

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[44] M. Frede 2011: 100.   [45] Arist., *EN* 1.12.1101b18–34.

need be no necessity which one will operate in the same circumstances. Alexander ought to concede that there may be no explanation of which cause operates, but that was not the objection raised. Philopator's objection was interested in actions or choices being causeless and that has not been proved.

The new objection needs to concede that Philopator's objection has not been proved. But it may still protest that Alexander's position is unbelievable. Against that quite different objection, I shall have, in closing, to recall the argument I used in the book I mentioned above which presented Aristotle too as divorcing cause from necessity.[46] For Aristotle, what we call a cause is one of four types of explanatory factor, as he spells out in *Physics* 2.3, and Alexander would agree. I have argued in my earlier discussion, though that claim is not needed now, that this account of cause avoids the defects of many other definitions, including those in terms of necessitation.[47] The point of interest now is that whether one has an explanation and even a complete explanation is relative to the question asked. I did not put this forward as a view of explanation formulated by Aristotle. He indeed thinks that, at least within the sphere of physical science, some things are better fitted by *nature* to explain. But this is compatible with their being so fitted in relation to a *question*, and I at any rate think that an explanation or complete explanation has to answer a question. That question often asks for one fact to be explained *in face of* what appears to be another conflicting fact.[48] To adapt one of my earlier examples, a good student might have two incentives, (a) the desire to attend a good lecture course, and (b) the struggle if he has to live exceptionally far off campus. Suppose he attends nine out of ten lectures. Someone might want to know why he missed one lecture, *in face of the contrasting fact that* he was motivated and the lectures were interesting, or *in face of the contrasting fact that* even unmotivated students were present. There is a perfectly good explanation: the exceptional distance to campus was always a disincentive, and that was his reason for missing one lecture, to his own regret. The lack of necessity has not detached him, as alleged, from his past motivations. Of course, a determinist will hold that there must have been some *extra* causal factor on the one occasion when he did not attend the lecture (his children were less well; he was more tired), just as an indeterminist will say that there need not have been. But these are merely expressions of faith, which tell us little more than 'I am a determinist', or 'I am an indeterminist'. It is not

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[46] Sorabji 1980: 26–44.   [47] Sorabji 1980: 45–69.
[48] I took this point from Scriven 1962 and Scriven 1963–4.

possible to argue the case by saying that without an extra factor there will be no explanation of the non-attendance. The exceptional distance is a perfectly good explanation in relation to the question asked. Moreover, there will be a perfectly good explanation in relation to innumerable other contrasts that might be raised.

There is admittedly one fact that cannot be explained, on this view, namely the student's missing one lecture in face of a *different* fact: that he attended nine. But why should there be an explanation in relation to every contrast we care to choose? Aristotle, as I believe, drew attention to *another* case in which there is no explanation: coincidences are *unexplained* conjunctions of things, each of which is *itself* perfectly explicable.[49] Be that as it may, in the present case, the missing lecture is inexplicable only in relation to a question of one particular type. It might be thought that distance does not provide a *complete* explanation, but completeness is also relative to the question asked, and the explanation is complete in relation to the question specified and innumerable others. Certainly, it would be *irrelevant* to seek to add the entire history of the universe, if that expression had any meaning, in the hope of adding completeness.

Suppose the lecturer, fully apprised of the student's situation, still insisted on an explanation of the one non-attendance in face of the attendances on other occasions. It would be hard to believe that the lecturer really did not understand. Rather, he or she might seem to be demanding an *apology* rather than an explanation,[50] and using the attendances to show that the one absence was not necessary. It would have been more human to offer to help the student to catch up.

The argument is that what is explained or caused is not thereby required to be necessitated. The distance was a standing motive on every occasion, but on Alexander's type of view, it may have taken effect only on one, and this need not have been because of an extra factor, nor by any necessity.

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[49]　So I interpreted Aristotle, *Metaph.* 6.3, in Sorabji 1980: 3–25.
[50]　I thank Raphael Woolf for making this observation.

'Present without Being Present'
Plotinus on Plato's Daimōn

Peter Adamson

The phenomenon of the old chestnut in Plato is itself very old. Like us, ancient Platonists had their favourite passages in the dialogues, which they quoted frequently and made a mainstay of their classroom teaching. Any reader of Plotinus will be struck by his frequent citations of the *Theaetetus*' admission that evil is inescapable in this world, or the *Republic*'s claim that the Good is 'beyond being'. Indeed the modern reader is apt to be disconcerted by the centrality of these Platonic lines, which Plotinus seems to wrench from their context and burden with more metaphysical weight than they were intended to bear. This tendency is part of a set of charges that can be made against Plotinus as an exegete of Plato. That he was a devoted reader of the dialogues can, of course, hardly be doubted. It is clear from Porphyry's account of his group's activities[1] and from the *Enneads* themselves, which often devote themselves to interpreting specific passages.[2] But, in addition to his apparently rather 'selective' approach, laying undue emphasis on his own old chestnuts, Plotinus' approach to Plato may seem to us off-puttingly dogmatic, in the ancient sense of that term. He assumes that Plato's dialogues are intended, not to explore philosophical issues in a dialectical and open-ended fashion, but to communicate Plato's doctrines. (And even if doctrines should be teased out of the dialogues, most would now find it doubtful that they would be the doctrines Plotinus claims to find there.) Furthermore, unlike the majority of today's Plato scholars, Plotinus is a 'unitarian': he assumes the doctrinal

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MM McCabe is the most sensitive reader of Plato I know, and some of the many cherished hours I have spent reading philosophy with her were devoted to Plotinus. So I thought it would be appropriate to dedicate this chapter to her, as it tries to show that Plotinus was himself a more sensitive reader of Plato than is often supposed.

[1] See *Plot.* 15, which mentions a debate over Alcibiades in the *Symposium* and some 'Platonic questions' (Πλατωνικῶν ζητημάτων) sent to Plotinus, which he assigned Porphyry to consider.

[2] A telling example is 3.9 [13] 1, a free-standing analysis of Pl. *Ti.* 39e7–9. This little essay gives us a window into the sort of detailed textual work that must have been routine in Plotinus' circle.

unity of the dialogues, never considering the possibility that Plato may have changed his views on any issue.

While these charges are not wholly unjust, they should all be qualified, giving us a Plotinus who is a more subtle reader of Plato. True, he does have his favourite Platonic passages, which may or may not be the same as ours. But the *Enneads* allude, almost always tacitly, to an enormous range of texts from Plato's dialogues. This can be sufficiently ascertained through a brief look through the *index fontium* in the 1977 edition of the *Enneads* by Henry and Schwyzer. True, Plotinus does read Plato 'dogmatically'. But he is sensitive to the difference between Plato and the characters in the Platonic dialogues. This applies even to Timaeus, who may seem to be a mere mouthpiece for Plato: at *Enneads* 2.1 [40] 6.6–8 Plotinus draws a distinction between the character and Plato himself ('and [Timaeus] is probably right, given that Plato too judges this view as likely').[3] Finally, though it is also true that Plotinus never suggests a development in Plato's views, he is very much alive to the difficulty of reconciling apparently contradictory passages in the dialogues. Like the ancient commentators on Aristotle, and before them commentators on Homer, Plotinus adopts the strategy of 'reading Plato through Plato' in order to dispel such contradictions. That is, he brings in other passages, often from other dialogues, to understand Platonic statements that may seem problematic. This is no thoughtlessly assumed unitarianism. To the contrary, it is an attempt to *demonstrate* the unity of Plato's thought, precisely by showing that what seems discordant can be brought into harmony.

In this chapter, I will be examining a case of Plotinus reading Plato through Plato: *Enneads* 3.4 [15], to which Porphyry gave the title *On the Daimōn Allotted to Us*.[4] The title is well chosen, in that it alludes to one of the Platonic texts on *daimones* that occasioned the treatise, namely *Phaedo* 107d5–e4. There Socrates speaks of a *daimōn* that was 'allotted' (*eilēchei*) to a human being in life, and now leads the human to a gathering place to be prepared for judgment. The *daimōn* in the *Phaedo* bears a striking resemblance to the *daimōn* in another Platonic account of the afterlife: the Myth of Er, which concludes the *Republic*. The Myth, and in particular the passage in

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[3] On this see Wilberding 2006, who points out in his note *ad loc.* (192–3) that Plotinus does usually assume agreement between Timaeus and Plato. Proclus, incidentally, also points out that Plato frequently has his main speaker defend positions he himself would reject, for instance when Socrates is made to espouse hedonism (see his *Commentary on the Republic* (Kroll 1899: 159–60)).

[4] There is not much secondary literature devoted to this treatise, apart from studies dedicated to Plotinus on the transmigration of souls. For this see Rich 1957, Browning Cole 1992, Stamatellos 2013. For M. Guyot's French translation with brief introduction and notes, see Brisson and Pradeau 2003: 329–63.

which it is said that a *daimōn* is associated with each human soul to accompany them through life (617d6–e5), is an outstanding example of an old old chestnut. It exercised tremendous influence on pretty much all ancient Platonist engagements with the topics of free will, fate, and the soul's afterlife.[5] Plotinus is no exception, and part of what he wants to do in treatise 3.4 is to understand the role of the *daimōn* here in the *Republic*.

In doing so, he is immediately confronted by a problem: the Myth says explicitly that the *daimōn* is *not* assigned by lot (*lēxetai*), as claimed in the *Phaedo*, but rather chosen. This already leads us in the direction of one of Plotinus' main concerns in 3.4, which is to explain how human autonomy is compatible with the role of the *daimōn*. Nor is that the only problem he faces in cracking this chestnut. There is a further incompatibility between both of these passages and *Timaeus* 90a2–5, which tells us: 'regarding that which is most authoritative in the soul, we should then understand it to be the *daimōn* that god has given to each of us, that which we said would have its home at the top of our bodies'. It seems abundantly clear in the myths of the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* that the *daimōn* is a distinct entity who plays the function of leading each soul. By contrast, Timaeus says here that the *daimōn* is a part or aspect of our soul, namely the rational soul which is seated in the head. In *Enneads* 3.4, Plotinus affirms that the *daimōn* does indeed belong to our soul. To this extent, he assimilates the 'mythic' statements in the *Phaedo* and *Republic* to the passage from the *Timaeus*. Yet he gives due weight to the idea that the *daimōn* is something outside the soul, by suggesting that it is an aspect of soul that remains 'inactive,' or as he puts it at one point, 'present without being present'.

1 The Platonic Background

Because treatise 3.4 is above all an attempt to understand these passages and bring them into harmony, we should first remind ourselves of a few salient features of the relevant Platonic texts. Let us begin with the *Phaedo* and *Republic*.[6] Both conclude with myths that describe a period between earthly lives, during which souls are punished or rewarded depending on how they have lived. Thereafter the souls return to earthly bodies. In the Myth of Er and an earlier passage of the *Phaedo* (81e–82b), it is said that the

[5] I detail various engagements with the myth in Adamson 2014.
[6] For these and other myths of the afterlife in Plato see Annas 1982, Partenie 2009; and for a brief overview of their reception in later antiquity Dillon 2004. Regarding Plotinus, Dillon mentions only *Enn.* 3.5 (on *erōs*), perhaps the most obvious case of a 'rationalisation' of mythic material in Plato, in this case from the *Symposium*.

next life may be that of a non-human animal. It should be noted that not all souls return from the hiatus to a human or animal life. The *Republic* mentions particularly wicked ('incurable') souls that are never released from their torment (615e3), while the *Phaedo* envisions the possibility of escaping the cycle of bodily reincarnation entirely (114c3). But the usual situation is that two bodily lives are separated by a period of reward or punishment. In what follows it will thus be convenient to speak of the soul's 'previous life,' the 'hiatus' experienced between death and rebirth, and the 'next life' after reincarnation. Of course, given the immortality of the soul, this process repeats indefinitely: any given life will be both 'previous' relative to the soul's subsequent incarnation, and 'next' after an earlier incarnation.

The *daimōn*'s function within the myth of the *Phaedo* is to lead the soul to the place of judgment at the beginning of the hiatus.[7] Socrates explains (108a) that such a guide is needed because there are many confusing paths, so the soul would get lost on its own. In addition, the *daimōn* uses force *(bia*, 108b2) to compel wicked souls to get to their destination. By contrast a particularly good soul will receive guidance from fellow souls and from the gods (108c4). This idea that a god, as opposed to a *daimōn*, may be the leading principle in some cases will also play a role in Plotinus. From this point, the *Phaedo* provides a long excursus on the structure of the earth, after which Socrates returns to the fate of the soul. He mentions the *daimōn* again at 113d, but only to reiterate that it leads the soul before it is judged and then rewarded or punished. Socrates never explains how it comes about that a certain *daimōn* was 'allotted' to a given soul (107d7), though the earlier passage does confirm that it will be a different *daimōn* that leads us in the next life (107e3).

Even a reader who does not share Plotinus' interpretive approach might be tempted to think the answer is given in the *Republic*'s Myth of Er. This time, the *daimōn* plays a role at the end of the hiatus, instead of guiding the souls when they first arrive in the afterlife. The *daimōn*'s function is explained by the spokesman of Lachesis, who speaks to the gathered souls who are about to return to the next life. The passage is as much an old chestnut for us as it was for Plotinus:

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[7] For more on the *daimon* in ancient philosophy, see Angie Hobbs's contribution to the present volume (Chapter 5), and Timotin 2012. Timotin pays special attention to the *daimōn* in Plato's *Symposium*, which I will not be discussing in this chapter since it seems to play no role in *Enn.* 3.4 (it is however crucial in 3.5, which I will mention below).

> Ephemeral souls, here begins a further cycle that will end in death for the race of mortals. A *daimōn* will not be given to you by lot, rather you will choose the *daimōn*. The one who draws the first lot will choose their life first, and be bound to it by necessity. Virtue has no master: each will have it more or less, due to either honoring it or dishonoring it. The blame lies with the chooser; god is blameless. (*R.* 617d6–e5)

On the one hand, the passage emphasises that the souls' destiny lies in their own power. Hence the statement, mentioned above, that the *daimōn* is not assigned by random lot, unlike the order in which the souls choose. (When the spokesman resumes speaking he clarifies that even the last to choose will still be able to select a good next life, 619b.)

On the other hand, the idea that the souls are bound 'by necessity' (*ex anankēs*) to the next life they have chosen suggests that Plato is not primarily concerned to preserve human autonomy. Rather, the point of (this part of) the myth is to absolve god of blame for whatever happens in the next life. Thus the spokesman finishes his speech with the statement that god is blameless (*anaitios*). The point is underscored in the story about the hasty soul who receives the first lot, and who chooses the life of a tyrant who will wind up eating his own children. Once he realises his mistake this soul blames luck and the *daimones* for what will befall him, whereas he should be blaming himself (619c). The reason that the *daimōn*, like the god, is not to blame is that we choose our *daimōn* by choosing our life. The *daimōn*'s real function, according to the Myth of Er, is to make sure that the next life we have chosen is the one we will really wind up living:

> Once all the souls had chosen lives, in the same order as they had drawn lots they went forward to Lachesis, who gave each the *daimōn* it chose, making this the guardian of its life and the one who would bring to fruition the things it had chosen. (*R.* 620d6–e1)

Though we usually talk about this scene in the myth as depicting the 'choice of lives,' we could just as accurately describe it as the 'choice of *daimōn*'.

These passages in the *Republic* strongly suggest that the choice available to the souls, which exculpates the god, occurs only during the hiatus between lives. But as Plotinus well knows, there is other material in Plato that can be used to undermine this impression. For one thing, both the Myth of Er itself and the myth of the *Phaedo* include a strongly worded passage telling us to practice philosophy in the life we are living now, in order to avoid punishment during the hiatus and in order to have the best chance of a good next life (*Phd.* 114d–115a, *R.* 618b–619a). But if our present

life is one we are living out 'by necessity' (*ex anankēs*) with our chosen *daimōn* ensuring that it is fulfilled, then it has already been determined in the last hiatus what we do now in this life. Under such a circumstance it would arguably make no sense to exhort us to pursue philosophy now – if we chose a life involving philosophy in the hiatus, we will do so, and if not, then not.[8] Thus Socrates seems to imply that we retain some freedom of self-determination during our present, embodied life. Furthermore, the same sort of exhortation appears in the *Timaeus*, immediately following the aforementioned passage that identifies the rational aspect of the soul as our *daimōn*. Immediately following that passage, Plato has Timaeus say that each of us should strive for happiness by 'always looking after what he has that is divine, and putting in good order the *daimōn* that lives together with him' (90c4–5). So Plotinus has good textual grounds to claim in *Enneads* 3.4 not only that the *daimōn* is some aspect of our own souls, but that our relation with this better aspect of ourselves is one that remains within our power in this life.

Before we look at the details of this Plotinian interpretation, we should touch on a fourth passage from Plato that is quoted in *Ennead* 3.4. This is drawn from another myth, that of the *Phaedrus*. Immediately after introducing the famous image of the charioteer, Socrates remarks that 'all soul cares for all that is without soul, moving around the entire heaven, taking on various forms at various times' (*Phdr.* 246b6–7). This quotation is another of Plotinus' old chestnuts, quoted not only at the beginning of the second chapter of 3.4, but also in several other treatises.[9] Intriguingly, in *Ennead* 3.2 Plotinus explicitly cites the Myth of Er's remark that 'the blame lies with the chooser' (3.2.7.19–20) and then goes on to say, evoking our *Phaedrus* passage, that soul cares for (*epimeleisthai*) the whole universe (3.2.7.24). The connection between the two passages, for him, is that the soul 'has movements of its own' (lines 20–21). The soul is autonomous and hence responsible for itself, and responsible too for the care of the physical world.

Plotinus' association of the *Phaedrus* myth with the Myth of Er is no casual or unmotivated one. It turns up again at 2.3.15.1–5, where Plotinus again refers explicitly to the Myth of Er, even mentioning the *daimōn*

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[8] I say 'arguably' because the line of thought I have just sketched could be answered within a compatibilist framework, as in Chrysippus' response to the so-called 'lazy argument': the exhortation is 'co-fated' with the choice to do philosophy and hence with the resulting, better outcome. But as we will see, Plotinus seems concerned to argue that we do retain a non-determined power to choose in the first life, not only in a hiatus between lives.

[9] In addition to the ones about to be mentioned there are allusions to it at 2.9.18.39–40, 3.2.4.9, and 4.3.1.33–4.

which 'cooperates in the fulfilment of their choices' (lines 4–5), and then goes on to refer to the myth of the *Phaedrus*. Here he states that the idea of the charioteer's 'sticking his head out' above the heavens represents the fact that the soul can master bodily circumstances. Another link between the myth of the *Phaedrus* and those from the *Phaedo* and *Republic* is that all three mention reincarnation. The *Phaedrus* envisions nine possible reincarnations for souls that 'lose their wings' and fall to earth (248d–e): philosopher, king, and so on to the worst possible outcome, a tyrant. As in the *Phaedo* and the Myth of Er, Socrates mentions a hiatus in which one can be punished or rewarded for one's previous life, followed by a 'choice and allotment of the next life', and he explicitly affirms that souls can transmigrate into animal bodies (249a–b).

Though, as its Porphyrian title suggests, *Ennead* 3.4 concentrates above all on the *daimōn* from the other three dialogues, Plotinus seems to be inspired at least as much by this stretch of the *Phaedrus*. We have seen that he quotes from *Phaedrus* 246b. He also seems to be in particular agreement with this remark of Socrates: 'the one who lived justly will change over to a better fate, the one who lived unjustly, a worse one' (248e4–5). This sentiment is fundamental to Plotinus' interpretation of the myths. Despite what these myths (including the one in the *Phaedrus*) say about a choice made in a hiatus between lives, for Plotinus it is really the way a soul has lived in its previous earthly life that helps to determine its next life – including what species of organism it will belong to. Plotinus develops this idea in the chapter which begins with the quotations from the *Phaedrus*. He states that the one who has reached 'the intelligible, intellect, and god' (*Enn*. 3.4.2.15) remains a human, whereas those dominated by sensation in the previous life become animals or even plants (a possibility never mentioned by Plato) in the next life. The specific animals proposed for reincarnation at the end of Chapter 2 are a clear reminiscence of the *Phaedo* passage on transmigration (the idea that those with civic virtue might become bees, at 3.4.2.30, is lifted directly from *Phd.* 82b). But the passage as a whole reads like a more biologically diverse version of the *Phaedrus*' list of different possible lives that await souls of different merit.

2 The *Daimōn*

This set of Platonic reminiscences in 3.4.2 provides the immediate context for Plotinus' first reference to the *daimōn*, at the start of Chapter 3: 'Who, then, is a *daimōn*? The one who was [a *daimōn*] here. And who a god? The

one who was here'. It is not immediately clear how to understand the questions. Given his focus on the Platonic myths in the rest of the treatise, one might even wonder whether Plotinus means to ask who is the *daimōn* or god that guides the soul in the afterlife.[10] But the immediately preceding context (marked as relevant by the connecting particle '*oun*' ('then')) was a description of the fate of various souls: someone who lived in accordance with sense-perception in their previous life becomes an animal in the next life, someone who lived a life of civic virtue becomes a bee or something similar, etc. Thus Plotinus is probably asking, 'who becomes a *daimōn* or god in the next life?' and answering, 'the one who was already a *daimōn* or god in the previous life'. We might shy away from the suggestion that humans can actually become *daimones* or gods, a possibility never mentioned in Plato's myths. But later in this very treatise, Plotinus is going to say that the excellent person (*ho spoudaios*) is indeed 'himself a *daimōn*, or at least daimonic (*kata daimona*)' (3.4.6.3–4, cf. 6.7.6.26ff). We can do better than to live a merely human life, since the *spoudaios* is one whose activity is superhuman.

In these two passages from the beginnings of Chapters 3 and 6, Plotinus is using the term *daimōn* with its standard meaning of a supernatural entity that is intermediary between humans and gods.[11] But in the rest of Chapter 3 he develops a different (or rather complementary) idea, by understanding the *daimōn* in *functional* terms. This is introduced right after the puzzling opening question as to who becomes a *daimōn* or god:

> For that which was active leads each man, since it was what led him here too. So is this the *daimōn* 'which was allotted during life' (*Phd.* 107d7)? No: rather, that which is before it. For this was set over it but inactive, and what comes after it is active. And if what is acting is that through which we engage in sense-perception, the rational part is the *daimōn*. But if we live in accordance with the rational part, the *daimōn* is that which is above this, set over it and inactive, going along with that which is active. (*Enn.* 3.4.3.2–8)

This is arguably the key passage of the entire treatise, so it is unfortunate that it too is rather puzzling. The basic idea is clear enough: for each soul, the *daimōn* is determined by that in the soul which is active (*to energoun*).

[10] This is what Stephen MacKenna thought; he translated 'what, then, is the spirit (guiding the present life and determining the future?)'. But I am in agreement with Dillon's note in the abridged edition of MacKenna's translation, which says that it should instead be translated, 'who, then, *becomes* a spirit . . . ' (see MacKenna 1991: 168 n. 40). Dillon's preference is also shared by Armstrong 1967 and Guyon in Brisson and Pradeau 2003

[11] For the idea of the *daimōn* as intermediary in Plato see Timotin 2012: 42ff.

The *daimōn* will be, not this active principle, but the *inactive* principle that is adjacent and superior to that which is active. Thus, if one lives a life in which sense-perception is active, then reason is the *daimōn*, since reason is the next thing 'upwards' from sense-perception. The slippage to a functional conception of the *daimōn* is especially striking in the last chapter of the treatise: since the *spoudaios* becomes 'daemonic' it is actually a god (rather than a *daimōn*) that plays the role of the *daimōn* for him (3.4.6.4).[12]

The puzzling part is that Plotinus says, at the beginning of the passage just quoted, that the active principle is 'what leads each man'. And we know from the Platonic myths that the *daimōn*'s job is precisely to lead (*agein*) the soul. Why then is Plotinus denying that the active and leading principle of each soul is its *daimōn*? The answer is that he is envisioning a scenario with not one, but two *daimones*:

> Why then does [the *daimōn*] 'lead' us? It is not [the *daimōn*] that leads the living person. Rather, [that *daimōn*] led before when the person was alive, but with the cessation of living [that *daimōn*] surrenders the activity to another [*daimōn*], the person having died from a life that was devoted to its activity. [The *daimōn*] wishes to lead and, once it is in charge, it itself lives and itself has another *daimōn*. (*Enn.* 3.4.3.10–14)

This is a compressed and difficult passage, but I believe that what Plotinus means is this: in one sense, we can refer to the active principle of this life as *daimōn*, since it is that which leads. In another sense – the one of more interest to Plotinus in 3.4, and the one described by Plato as 'allotted during life' – the *daimōn* is the next higher principle. Plotinus then claims that death offers an opportunity for this previously inactive capacity to step in and 'take charge,' meaning that it will become the active aspect of soul in the soul's next life. This means, as Plotinus states at the end of the passage, that the soul will now need to acquire yet another *daimōn*. A concrete case might be an animal that is reborn as a human. The animal's soul does have a rational faculty, but that faculty is idle during life as animal and it is sense-perception that is active and leading. Upon death, reason can step in and become the active principle. A new faculty superior to reasoning (presumably intellection) will then play the role of inactive *daimōn* in the next, human life.

The upshot, as Plotinus goes on to say, is that the *daimōn* provides the basis for the soul's improvement from one life to the next:

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[12] It is no doubt especially this line that made Porphyry connect the writing of 3.4 to the episode in which Plotinus' *daimōn* was summoned and proved to be a god (*Plot.* 10). On this episode and its connection to 3.4 see Rist 1963 and Edwards 1991.

> If he is able to follow the *daimōn* above him, he himself comes to be above, living its life, and placing in authority the better part of himself to which he is being led, and after that one, on up to another. (*Enn.* 3.4.3.18–20)

This paints an optimistic picture, according to which each soul has the prospect of living a next life whose distinctive activity is better than the activity distinctive of the previous life.[13] That result is far from guaranteed, however. The bad man (*ho kakos*) is allowing a worse, rather than a better, aspect of his soul to dominate in his current life. He makes this worse aspect his 'leader'.[14] So in his next life he will be 'pulled down' to a lower biological level, going 'into the life of a beast' (*eis bion thēreion*, 3.4.3.16–17). This gives us a theoretical basis for understanding what was said at the end of the previous chapter (3.4.2.16–30). Though it is possible to return as a human by 'watching over' one's human nature in one's past life (*anthrōpon etērēsan*), it sounds as though most people do not even manage this. Those who are dominated by their vegetative soul (*to phutikon*; presumably this means those who are interested chiefly in sex and food) actually become plants, and even non-philosopher scientists interested in heavenly phenomena (*meteōrologoi*) and the aforementioned persons of civic virtue become animals.

   Whatever the statistics, it is clear that each soul has three possible outcomes available in its next life:

(1)   The soul remains at the level of its previous life.
(2)   The soul improves by adopting the activity of its previously inactive *daimōn*.
(3)   The soul degrades by adopting an activity lower than the one distinctive of the previous life.

To be more concrete, let us take the case of a human. Since the distinctive human activity is reason, (1) a person who lives now in accordance with reason will return as a human. (2) One who strives to do even better can, as stated at the beginning of Chapter 3, become a *daimōn* – in both senses of the term, since *daimōn* is both the name of a supernatural entity whose activity is better than human activity, and a functional term referring to the next better activity than the one that was active. In extreme cases of improvement, the human may even become a god.[15] (3) Finally, humans who live in accordance with

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[13] Edwards 2014: 35 has phrased the point nicely: 'the self that we know is governed by the self in prospect'.

[14] Cf. *Enn.* 3.4.2.13–14 for the idea of 'following' sense images or the desire for procreation.

[15] It is not entirely clear whether Plotinus is here thinking of souls that free themselves from the cycle of reincarnation or of souls that return as humans that live a 'daimonic' or god-like life (as we saw the ambiguity is suggested in Chapter 6: δαίμων αὐτὸς ἢ κατὰ δαίμονα, at 3.4.6.3–4).

their lower faculties become either plants or animals, depending on whether they have allowed the vegetative or sense-perceptive powers to dominate them. It should be noted that Plotinus uses the term *daimōn* to refer not only to the better, inactive faculty – the one that will become dominant and active in the next life in case (2) – but also for the worse faculty indulged by the vicious souls of case (3). In 'mythical' terms this is spoken of as a 'bad or simpleminded' *daimōn* (3.4.6.18). But it is simply the mirror image of the good *daimōn*, that is, a faculty *worse* than the one that was dominant and active in the previous life.

This is the core doctrinal position set out in *Enneads* 3.4.[16] It raises several issues, which Plotinus explores in the rest of the treatise. First, how can we make sense of his key idea that the soul has faculties that are inactive throughout a life? In the next section of the chapter I will argue that Chapter 4 of the treatise, which seems to be a digression, in fact seeks to provide an answer to this question. It does so by considering the parallel case of the world soul, which likewise has faculties that are 'present without being present'. A second issue is the challenge Plotinus faces in squaring his doctrine with his Platonic sources. As we will see, he is at pains to do so, and offers an extended exegesis of the Myth of Er in Chapter 5. Plotinus' functional account of the *daimōn* as a faculty enables him to align the myths of the *Republic, Phaedo* and *Phaedrus* with the passage from the *Timaeus* that refers to reason as our *daimōn*. To some extent this is already clear from what we have seen, but we will examine the matter further by looking at Plotinus' explicit allusion to the *Timaeus* towards the end of Chapter 5. We also need to take account of the most striking feature of the Plotinian exegesis: he largely eliminates what I have called the 'hiatus' in the Platonic myths, and instead places the soul's choice of next life within the soul's previous life. In so doing, Plotinus avoids the implication of the Myth of Er mentioned above: that crucial, life-determining choices are made only in a hiatus between lives. This brings us to a third and final issue worthy of further consideration, namely Plotinus' attempt in 3.4 to safeguard human autonomy in this life.

3   The Puzzle of Inactive Faculties

Given that nature does nothing in vain, it may seem a weakness of Plotinus' theory of the *daimōn* that each embodied soul finds itself with a faculty that

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[16] A question worthy of further discussion would be how this doctrine fits with the teaching of the treatise Porphyry placed next in the *Enneads*, 3.5 on *erōs*, which also speaks about the *daimōn*. At 3.5.4.4–6 Plotinus does seem to suggest a similar functional account of *daimōn*, when he asks, 'is love the *daimōn* which, they say, follows along with each of us, the love that belongs to each?'

remains idle (*argos*) throughout its life. This, after all, was the functional definition of the *daimōn*: it is not the leading active faculty of this life, but the adjacent superior faculty which (if things go well) will become active in the next life. The difficulty of this idea is suggested by the beginning of a work by Plotinus' student Porphyry, an account of the psychological status of the embryo.[17] Porphyry sets out a range of possible views concerning the animal faculties that are as yet unavailable to an embryo, namely sense-perception and impulse (*hormē*, §1.1). If we assume that the embryo is not actually an animal, then we might say that these faculties are present in it potentially. But when we speak of an embryo as 'potentially' an animal this is not a mere first potentiality for becoming ensouled: the embryo has indeed received soul, yet is inactive (§1.2).[18]

How are we to understand this unusual sort of second potentiality? After all, the embryo cannot start sensing or having impulse at will, the way that a trained mathematician can begin doing mathematics. Porphyry suggests (§1.3) that it could be in the way that someone in a coma (*en tōi karōi*) is unable to use his faculties, 'even though the soul is present' (*kaiper tēs psuchēs parousēs*). Or, it might be like the condition of animals when they hibernate, since at that time their higher functions are 'immobilised' (*akinētos*). But does it really make sense to think of our relationship to the *daimōn* in this way? After all the person in a coma or the hibernating animal has used these faculties in the past and is liable to do so again, just as the embryo will soon be capable of exercising the characteristic faculties that belong to animals. By contrast, the faculty Plotinus designates as *daimōn* remains idle throughout this life. A power or potentiality that can never be used, even though it is 'present', seems to have a rather dubious metaphysical status.

An immediate answer suggests itself: in fact, the adjacent superior faculty need not remain entirely idle during this life. As we have seen, there are three possibilities in the next life for each soul (cases (1), (2) and (3) sketched above), and it is our conduct in this life rather than a single choice made in a post-mortem hiatus that determines which possibility will be realised. To return to the standard human case, each embodied person can either (1) stay at their same level by continuing to be rational, (2) improve by striving now towards intellection, and thus merit an intellective next life,[19] or (3) sink into an animal

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[17] Greek text and French translation, along with extensive introductory material, in Brisson 2012; English translation in Wilberding 2011. I cite by Kalbfleisch's section numbers which are retained in both of these recent volumes. On the topic more generally see also Brisson et al. 2008.

[18] κατὰ δὲ τὸ δεδεγμένον τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ ἡσυχάζον.

[19] It is clear from the description of the *spoudaios* that he is someone whose life is actually now led by intellectual activity, rather than someone led by mere reason but trying to improve his lot. In fact

or plant body thanks to their wicked ways. In case (2), it seems, the faculty of intellection which is usually idle in most people is being brought into active use. It is obviously tempting to connect this to Plotinus' famous doctrine of the undescended soul, which envisions precisely a constant activity on the part of soul which usually remains 'idle' in the sense that we are unaware of it. This connection is not made explicit by Plotinus, but should encourage us to pay particular attention to the idea of a present but idle power in *Enn.* 3.4.

And in fact, Plotinus does seem to feel the need to justify this notion of an idle power, rather than simply pointing out that a power that is usually idle could become fully active under certain circumstances. It is this, I suggest, that explains the inclusion of the fourth chapter of Plotinus' treatise. It seems at first sight to be an awkward digression on the topic of the world soul, which interrupts the discussion of the *daimōn* begun in Chapter 3 and resumed in Chapter 5. Indeed Plotinus himself marks it as a kind of digression, concluding, 'but the cosmos is discussed elsewhere; for present purposes, it has been dealt with insofar as relevant to the question (*aporia*)' (*Enn.* 3.4.4.14). But there must be some reason Plotinus includes this little excursus. That it was indeed relevant is suggested above all by the line that just precedes this apologetic end to the chapter: 'the vegetative faculty [of the world soul] is present without being present, as is the sense faculty' (3.4.4.13–14).

What Plotinus is saying about the world soul is that it has faculties that it would never be in a position to use. For instance it lacks sense-organs, as indicated by Plato at *Timaeus* 33c. This nearly explicit allusion to the *Timaeus* might provide a link of sorts to the exegetical interests of the rest of the treatise. But the key passage of the *Timaeus*, as we have seen, is from a distant section of that dialogue (90a–c), and this issue about the faculties of the world soul has no obvious connection to the *Timaeus*' reference to a *daimōn*. The relevance is philosophical, rather than textual: just as the *daimōn* is indeed an aspect or power of soul that remains idle, so the vegetative and sensitive powers of the world soul are 'present without being present' (*parestin ou paron*). Notice that Plotinus here uses '*pareinai*' ('being present'), the same verb used by Porphyry for the faculty unavailable to, say, a coma victim. In the case of both the individual soul and the world soul, we have an immaterial principle which descends into a body (this is the explicit link to what has come before, made at 3.4.4.1–3).

Plotinus says explicitly, 'intellect is active in this man' (3.4.6.3). So the *spoudaios* (for example Plotinus himself, according to the *Life of Plotinus*) is someone already living the 'next' life in the successful case (2).

Whereas in the case of the world soul, the lower faculties are too unworthy to be active, in the case of the individual soul, it is a higher faculty that lies beyond the soul's leading activity. But both souls have faculties that they do not use.[20] In the case of the world soul, this is a permanent arrangement, just as in a human who never actually engages in the activity characteristic of his or her *daimōn*.

   If we now glance back at Chapters 1 and 2, we can see that this contrast between the leading or dominant faculty and the 'present but not present' faculty has been on Plotinus' mind throughout. The opening lines of the treatise point out that nature (*phusis*) belongs to soul 'when it is in us' but soul dominates (*kratei*) it. In other words, humans are led by a higher faculty than the vegetative power (3.4.1.3–4). By contrast nature dominates in plants: it has 'come to be by itself, so to speak' (*hoion monē genomenē*) (3.4.1.5). Yet soul retains its other powers, even when it is in plants. As Plotinus explains in the following chapter, 'the [soul's] dominating part makes something ser-viceable to itself, but the other [parts] are idle, because they are outside' (3.4.2.4–6). Already before the introduction of the theme of the *daimōn*, we see that Plotinus is preparing the way for consideration of a superior power that is 'idle', meaning that it is not being used during the soul's current incarnation.

4   Finding Agreement

If this is the central issue of *Enneads* 3.4 philosophically speaking, the central issue exegetically speaking is how to reconcile Plato's treatment of the *daimōn* in the *Timaeus* with what we find in the myths of the *Phaedo* and *Republic*. The two issues are connected. This becomes clear in Chapter 5, where Plotinus appeals to his idea of a faculty that is 'present without being present', or as he puts it here, 'ours yet not ours', in order to harmonise the Platonic materials. He writes:

> That this *daimōn* is not *wholly* outside, but only insofar as it is not bound together [with us] and is not acting, but is ours with reference to the soul, yet not ours insofar as we are such-and-such humans living a life set under [the *daimōn*], is witnessed by the statements in the *Timaeus*. If the statements are

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[20] It may seem strange to say that the vegetative part (*to phutikon*) is idle in the world soul, since it does seem to be responsible for carrying out natural processes in the cosmos. Plotinus may simply be saying that it can cause these things while remaining 'quiet', in the sense of not coming to the attention of the world soul (as suggested at lines 6–7 and 11). The sense faculty is a clearer case since, as Plotinus notes, the cosmos has no sense-organs so that this faculty is presumably not in use at all.

taken like this, then there is no conflict, but there would be disagreement if the *daimōn* were taken differently. (*Enn*. 3.4.5.19–24)

Here Plotinus advertises an advantage of his understanding of the *daimōn*, which is that it resolves a potential conflict (*machē*) between Platonic texts. The potential conflict arises from *Timaeus* 90a, which as we have seen identifies the *daimōn* as 'that which is most authoritative in the soul', which here needs to mean reason since Timaeus adds that this aspect of soul is situated 'at the top of the body'. How can this be the case if, as the myths of the *Phaedo* and *Republic* describe, the *daimōn* is an external principle that leads the soul in the afterlife?

The solution should now be clear enough. In a sense the *daimōn* is external or 'outside' (*exō*) the soul, in a sense it is not. It is external when it is idle because the soul is not using it in its current incarnation (as already stated at 3.4.2.6, quoted above). The reason Plato would associate this situation especially with reason is, presumably, that most humans live lives devoted to the sensory world rather than philosophy – so what is 'leading' or 'dominant' for them is sensation rather than rationality. For such people reason is not bound together with them and is inactive (*oud' energōn*). Yet taking the longer view, we must insist that the soul of such a person does retain the capacity for reasoning. This capacity has the opportunity to become active after the current incarnation, by taking the lead in the next life. Returning to the question of Plotinus as a reader of Plato, one might be tempted to say here that the accounts of the *daimōn* in the *Phaedo* and *Republic* are being assimilated to the faculty-based theory of the *daimōn* in the *Timaeus*. And from this observation, one might further be tempted to say that a 'mythic' understanding of the *daimōn* is being eliminated in favour of a more rationalist approach.

There is something right about this, as we can see from the fact that Proclus objects to the 'deflationist' identification of *daimōn* with individual intellect (*merikos nous*) in order to preserve *daimones* as distinct super-natural entities.[21] Yet Plotinus reads the *Timaeus* in light of the myths just as much as vice versa. In order to accommodate the mythic accounts, the *daimōn* is given a general functional definition, as that which is superior to the active principle and which can lead the soul after death. Thus rationality becomes only the most standard example of the *daimōn*, rather than straightforwardly identical with it in all cases, as would seem to be the

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[21] Proclus, *in Alc.* 76.5–6 (Creuzer), with new edition by L.G. Westerink and translation by W. O'Neill in O'Neill and Westerink 2011, at 101. I take the reference from Brisson and Pradeau 2003: 332–3.

message of the *Timaeus*.[22] On the other hand, Plotinus makes a striking departure from Plato's myths by situating the *daimōn*'s opportunity to lead the soul in the next life, rather than in the hiatus between lives. As we have seen, for the *daimōn* to become active is for the soul to exercise in its next life the power that was present but idle in this life. This is something we can achieve by activating that idle power, engaging in an activity better than the one distinctive of our current incarnation.

The choice and the activity of the *daimōn* are thus associated with past and future lives rather than with the hiatus. This fits with a more general tendency in Plotinus to transfer features of the afterlife described in the myths to the lives we are living now. A good example is *Enn.* 2.3.15.5–8, where Plotinus asks what the 'lots' from the Myth of Er are supposed to symbolise. He decides that they signify the external circumstances (*ta exō*) into which one is born – for instance having certain parents and coming from a certain place.[23] Just as the lots symbolise 'involuntary' aspects of an incarnated life, rather than a real feature of a hiatus between lives, so our choice of next life already occurs in our present life and not in the hiatus between the two lives.[24] In this sense, we can see Plotinus as a forerunner of modern-day interpreters who take the old chestnut of the Myth of Er, and other Platonic mythical descriptions of the afterlife, as intended above all to persuade us to live virtuously in the here and now.

Yet Plotinus does not in fact deny the reality of the hiatus between lives. In Chapter 6, he speaks of it explicitly:

> The *daimōn* we are talking about is said to lead into Hades, and not to remain the same,[25] unless one chooses the same things again. But how are things beforehand? The 'leading to judgment' means coming into the same shape after departing from generation, which it had before generation. Then, just as from a different start, it joins those who are punished for the time in between, [before] the next generation. For them this is not life, but recompense. (*Enn.* 3.4.6.11–17)

Plotinus concedes to the myth that the new *daimōn* already 'is present' (*parestin*) during the hiatus, as the soul is receiving what is due to it in light of the way it has lived. If we add this to the comments earlier in the treatise that take more or less at face value Plato's endorsement of human-animal

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[22] It should be noted that by 'rationality' Plotinus must be thinking of fairly advanced rational activity, and perhaps even full-blown intellection. This is how Proclus understood him: as identifying the *daimōn* with individual intellect. I speak nonetheless of 'rationality' and not 'intellection' to make clear the link to the tripartite soul of the *Timaeus*.

[23] On this passage see also Adamson 2008: 285.   [24] Compare *Enn.* 4.3.8.9–10.

[25] A reference to *Phd.* 107e3.

transmigration, we may infer that there is no anti-mythological agenda in *Enn.* 3.4. I take this to be an attractive feature of his approach to reading Plato.[26] Though his interpretation of the eschatological myths is thoroughly philosophical and makes clear their relevance to our present lives, elements of the myth are cheerfully retained so long as they cause no philosophical trouble.

5 'Such Is Fate'

Though Plotinus does accept the reality of the hiatus, he puts no emphasis on the idea that the soul actually chooses its next life during this hiatus. Rather, the hiatus is reserved solely for recompense (*dikē*). In this way, he can avoid one particular bit of philosophical trouble: as observed above, the idea that each soul makes an irrevocable choice about its next life already in the hiatus beforehand has disturbing implications for human autonomy.[27] For, if I have already chosen my life before I was born, it is too late now to do anything about it. Plotinus meets this difficulty head on, asking at the beginning of Chapter 5: 'if one chooses the *daimōn* and the life there (*ekei*), how are we still in charge of anything (*pōs eti tinos kurioi*)?' (3.4.5.1–2). He responds by explicitly labelling this aspect of Plato's myth as a kind of riddle (*ainitettai*), whose solution lies precisely in the transfer of the choice of lives to previous incarnations. In other words, as we have already seen in some detail, the choices I make in my present life determine whether, next time around, I will live a life whose dominant activity is the same, better, or worse than the activity that dominates for me now.

On the exegetical front, Plotinus can cling to features of the Myth of Er itself that seem to insist on the inviolability of human autonomy. Especially useful is the famous declaration that 'virtue has no master' (*R.* 617e3), another of Plotinus' favourite lines in Plato.[28] But on the philosophical front he needs to persuade us that autonomy is indeed possible in this life. This is the difficulty he goes on to treat in Chapter 5; he also returns to it at the end of the treatise. I take his problem to be as follows. On the one hand, we cannot accept that all effective choice occurs in a hiatus between lives, since this would be inimical to our freedom in this life. On the other hand, it would have been quite convenient to place the

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[26] See Halliwell 2007, which in a very different fashion seeks to strike a balance between a 'this-worldly' and 'other-worldly' reading.

[27] As noted by Annas 1982: 134.   [28] See, e.g., *Enn.* 2.3.9.17, 3.3.49.2, 6.8.5.31.

choice in the disembodied hiatus, since in that circumstance there is no threat of compulsion from the sensible world. Plotinus solves the dilemma by insisting that neither our bodies nor other external things can really compel our choices. Even in the case where the *spoudaios* gets a bad body, his soul will 'more or less' be able to impose itself on the body, without its capacity of choice (*prohairesis*) being derailed by 'externals' (3.4.5.12–14).

For Plotinus this is the meaning of the part of the Myth of Er where souls are randomly assigned lots and then make their choice of lives on that basis. As in *Enn.* 2.3.15, the lots represent external conditions outside of our control, whereas with the choice of lives Plato 'gives authority (*to kurion*) to the souls' (3.4.5.17–18). At the end of 3.4, he illustrates the same idea with the image of a wind-tossed boat, whose passengers can move about freely on board. It is not given to us to determine the circumstances in which we act, but how we respond to those circumstances is up to us: 'it's not that everyone moves, chooses, or acts in the same way in the same situations. Thus different things arise for different people from the same or from different occurrences . . . for such is fate' (3.4.6.56–60). To a large extent this picture is familiar from other treatises. What emerges with unusual clarity in 3.4, however, is Plotinus' conviction that our choices in this life also help to determine our prospects in the next life. My soul's degree of success or failure therefore depends on the interaction of three factors: choices I made in my previous life, external circumstances in this life, and choices I am making now in this life.

Why is it so crucial for this theory to postulate a *daimōn*, a superior but currently inactive faculty of soul? Obviously Plotinus' motivation is partially, perhaps even mostly, exegetical. But our possession of a *daimōn*, a better aspect of soul than we currently use, underwrites the optimism that is one of the most characteristic features of Plotinus' Platonism. Most other late ancient Platonists are more given to Gnostic attitudes – Plutarch leaps to mind – or to the conviction that human soul is permanently fallen away from the intelligible world.[29] Plotinus, by contrast, wants to guarantee that the soul can progress from stage to stage, bettering its lot (pun intended) in each successive life by giving a new *daimōn* the lead (see 3.4.3.18–20). He admits that the soul can become worse too, of course. But his main objective in 3.4 is to establish a metaphysical account that explains how the soul can do better, and

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[29] See Steel 1978 and Dillon 2005.

how there can be identity across very different lives. This objective is achieved by positing the permanent presence and possession of a better part of ourselves, one that is present but not present, ours but not ours. Each of us has the capacity to become a god, because each of us is, usually without knowing it, already divine.[30]

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