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SOCRATIC DIALECTIC AND THE RESOLUTION OF FALLACY

IN PLATO'S *EUTHYDEMUS*

by

CARRIE ELIZABETH SWANSON

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION  
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Dissertation Co-Directors:  
Alan Code and Robert Bolton

My dissertation is devoted to an examination of the resolution of fallacy in Plato's *Euthydemus*. I argue that the Socratic response to fallacious reasoning is conducted at two different levels of philosophical sophistication. Socrates relies upon the resources of *Socratic dialectic* in responding to sophisms due to ignorance of refutation. Insofar as *Socratic dialectic* is grounded in a grasp of the nature of genuine refutation, the objections it raises to false refutation are fully explanatory. On the other hand, Socrates employs various self-refutation arguments against theses which depend on false assumptions regarding the nature of predication. While this method of examination cannot explain *why* the sophists' theses are false, these limitations on Socratic expertise are overcome in other passages in the dialogue which are replete with clues to the reader that point to a genuine explanation and resolution of the sophists' arguments for their various theses. Here Plato implicitly relies on the results of what I call *higher dialectic*. I conclude that the *Euthydemus* is concerned to identify Socratic dialectic as only a *part* of philosophy---thus anticipating the *Sophist's* conception of Socrates as the practitioner of a 'noble sophistry', (γενναία σοφιστική, 231b3-8) and the elenchus as a propaedeutic to philosophy, which purges the soul of false beliefs.

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## Introduction

The *Euthydemus* is certainly the funniest dialogue in the Platonic corpus. It is also one of the strangest. What exactly is the joke and what is the nature of this comedy? If it is a parody, what does it satirize? If its sole purpose is to amuse, why would Plato implicate that unfunniest of gods in such a farce? As Socrates explains to Crito, the whole riot began when the god ordered Socrates to engage the sophists Euthydemus and Dionysodorus in conversation:

As good luck would have it, I was sitting by myself in the undressing-room just where you [Crito] saw me and I was already thinking of leaving. But when I got up, my customary divine sign (τὸ εἰωθὸς σημεῖον τὸ δαιμόνιον) put in an appearance. So I sat down again, and in a moment the two of them, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, came in... (272e1-273a2)<sup>1</sup>

Apollo's divine intervention, combined with the brothers' subsequent claims to wisdom (at 273d8-9, 274a5, and 274a10-b1), rouses our expectation that despite all the horseplay, the dialogue's underlying purpose is as serious as any elenctic encounter dramatized in the earlier Socratic dialogues: surely the soldier of Apollo will disabuse the pretenders to virtue of their conceit? This seriousness of purpose is underscored by Socrates himself in his initial challenge to the sophists:

Put off the rest of your display to another time and give a demonstration of this one thing: persuade this young man here [i.e., Cleinias] that he ought to love wisdom and have a care for virtue (πέισατον ὥς χρὴ φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ ἀρετῆς ἐπιμελεῖσθαι), and you will oblige both me and all the present company. The boy's situation is this: both I and all these people want him to become as good as possible...He is young, and we are anxious about him, as one naturally is about a boy of his age, for fear that somebody might get in ahead of us and turn his mind to some other interest and ruin him (ἐπ' ἄλλο τι ἐπιτήδευμα τρέψας αὐτοῦ τὴν διάνοιαν καὶ διαφθείρῃ). If you have no objection, make trial of the boy (πείραν τοῦ μειρακίου) and converse with him in our presence. (275a4-275b6)

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, translation of the *Euthydemus* is from Sprague (1993) with modifications.

There is scarcely any task more serious than the protreptic task of exhorting the young to the care of the soul. It is noteworthy then that Plato makes Socrates insist from the start that the silliness (and the sadism) of the sophists is therefore *not* funny under the circumstances:

These things are the frivolous part of study (which is why I also tell you that the men are jesting); and I call these things “frivolity” (παδιᾶν) because even if a man were to learn many or even all such things, he would be none the wiser as to how matters stand but would only be able to make fun of people, tripping them up and overturning them by means of distinctions in words, just like people who pull the chair out from under a man who is going to sit down and then laugh gleefully when they see him sprawling on his back...They said they would give a demonstration of hortatory skill (προτρεπτικὴν σοφίαν), but now it seems to me that they have thought it necessary to make fun of you before beginning. So, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, put an end to this joking; I think we have had enough of it. (278b2-278d1)

Neither is anyone to laugh at Socrates’ protreptic counter-demonstration:

The next thing to do is to give an exhibition of persuading the young man that he ought to devote himself to wisdom and virtue (ἐπιδείξατον προτρέποντε τὸ μαιράκιον ὅπως χρὴ σοφίας τε καὶ ἀρετῆς ἐπιμεληθῆναι). But first I shall give you two a demonstration of the way in which I conceive the undertaking and of the sort of thing I want to hear. And if I seem to you to be doing this in an unprofessional and ridiculous way, don’t laugh at me (ἰδιωτικῶς τε καὶ γελοίως αὐτὸ ποιεῖν, μὴ μου καταγελάτε)---it is out of a desire to hear your wisdom that I have the audacity to improvise in front of you. Therefore, you and your disciples restrain yourselves and listen without laughing... (278d1-278e2)

We are led to expect therefore that the dialogue has a serious moral purpose. We are also led to expect that this purpose is two-fold: somewhere in the eristic scenes, the sophists will be refuted; in the protreptic scenes, Cleinias will be persuaded to devote himself to philosophy. On both counts, however, our expectations seem to be dashed. Socrates’ encounters with the sophists seem more designed as a comic demonstration that they are incorrigible candidates for elenctic refutation, irredeemable by the elenctic art. And while the first protreptic scene ends on a promising note...

Now then, since you [Cleinias] believe both that [wisdom] can be taught and that it is the only existing thing which makes a man happy and fortunate, surely you would agree that it is necessary to love wisdom and you mean to do this yourself (ἀνανγκάιον εἶναι φιλοσοφεῖν).

This is just what I mean to do, Socrates, as well as ever I can! (282c8-282d3)

...Socrates' second protreptic speech (288d5-292e7) ends in *aporia*; worse still, the very respondent to whom his speech is addressed is mysteriously supplanted at a critical juncture, his answers impersonated by a 'superior being'—thinly disguised as Socrates himself:

What do you mean, Socrates? Did that boy utter all this?

You're not convinced of it, Crito?

Good heavens, no! Because, in my opinion, if he spoke like that, he needs no education (παιδείαν), either from Euthydemus or anyone else.

Dear me, then perhaps after all it was Ctesippus who said this, and I am getting absent-minded.

Not my idea of Ctesippus!

But I'm sure of one thing at least, that it was neither Euthydemus nor Dionysodorus who said it.

Do you suppose, my good Crito, that some superior being (τις τῶν κρείττονων) was there and uttered these things---because I am positive I heard them.

Yes, by heaven, Socrates, I certainly think it was some superior being, very much so. (290e1-291a7)

But what kind of a protreptic artist is it who puts words into his charge's mouth, and then abandons him in aporetic confusion?

Can we 'restrain ourselves, and listen without laughing' to any of this? By the end of the dialogue, we may feel a tug of gratitude towards the faithful Crito, who gives voice both to this very worry, and to a still deeper source of concern:

Well, Socrates, I am indeed a person who loves listening (φιλήκοος) and who would be glad to learn something (ἡδέως ἂν τι μανθάνοιμι); but all the same I am afraid that I also am not one of Euthydemus' sort. Instead I am one of those you mentioned who would rather be refuted by arguments of this kind than to use them to refute. Now it seems ridiculous to me to give you advice (ἄταρ γελοῖον μὲν μοι δοκεῖ εἶναι τὸ νουθετεῖν σε) but I want to tell you what I heard. When I was taking a walk one of the men who was leaving your discussion came up to me (someone who has a high opinion of himself for wisdom and is one of those clever people who



write speeches for the law courts) and he said, Crito, aren't you a disciple of these wise men? Heavens no, I said---there was such a crowd that I was unable to hear, even though I stood quite close. And yet, he said, it was worth hearing. What was it? I asked. You would have heard men conversing who are the wisest of the present day in this kind of argument. And I said, what did they show you? Nothing else, said he, than the sort of thing one can hear from such people at any time---chattering and making a worthless fuss about matters of no consequence. (These are his approximate words). But surely, I said, philosophy is a charming thing. Charming, my innocent friend? he said---why it is of no value whatsoever! And if you had been present, I think you would have been embarrassed on your friend's account (πάνυ ἂν σε οἶμαι αἰσχυνθῆναι ὑπὲρ τοῦ σεαυτοῦ ἐταίρου), he acted so strangely in his willingness to put himself at the disposal of men who care nothing about what they say, but just snatch at every word (οὕτως ἦν ἄτοπος, ἐθέλων ἑαυτὸν παρέχειν ἀνθρώποις οἷς οὐδὲν μέλει ὅτι ἂν λέγωσιν, παντὸς δὲ ῥήματος ἀντέχονται). And these men, as I was just saying, are among the most influential people of the present day. But the fact is, Crito, he said, that both the activity itself (τὸ πρᾶγμα αὐτό) and the men who engage in it are worthless and ridiculous.

Now as far as I am concerned Socrates, the man is wrong to criticize the activity (τὸ πρᾶγμα ἐδόκει οὐκ ὀρθῶς ψέγειν) and so is anyone else who does so. But to be willing to argue with such people in front of a large crowd does seem to me worthy of reproach (ὀρθῶς μοι ἐδόκει μέμφεσθαι). (304c6-305b3)

Crito defensively insists that while he is a φιλήκοος of arguments and a lover of learning, there is, after all, a limit to the things he wants to learn.<sup>2</sup> Thus the first worry Crito expresses concerns the scope of philosophy: does it belong to the activity and practice of the true philosopher either to examine or be examined by one who argues fallaciously and merely for victory? Whoever the unnamed speechwriter is, Crito is evidently in agreement with his assessment of eristic activity as utterly worthless.<sup>3</sup> In that case, he wonders why the real lover of learning should bother with the arguments of such people at all. Moreover, Crito has rightly (if somewhat dimly) discerned that the speechwriter mistakes eristic activity and argumentation for *the thing itself*—

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<sup>2</sup> Crito's self-description calls to mind the remarks made of the philosophical nature described at *Republic* 475b-c: the philosopher isn't choosy when it comes to learning; he does not desire one part of wisdom and not another, but the whole of it. But such a person could have a considered view—a *logos*—of what is useful and what is not when it comes to some particular subject matter. This seems to be the position Crito takes himself to be in as regards eristic argumentation. Whether Crito is of a fully philosophical nature is another question.

<sup>3</sup> Some commentators have taken the speechwriter to be Isocrates. I briefly discuss this possibility and its implications below, Chapter 1.3, 40-41.

philosophical activity, rightly conceived.<sup>4</sup> And in that case, Crito wonders, why would Socrates risk perpetuating the negative reputation of philosophy by talking with such men before a large audience?<sup>5</sup>

There is however a deeper concern behind Crito's criticism. While this deeper worry is dramatized rather than explicitly voiced in the passage above, it is subsequently explicitly acknowledged by Socrates in his reply to Crito. This is that it is not just that critics of philosophy mistake the practitioners of eristic for philosophers; they also tend to make the opposite mistake, construing philosophical activity—and Socrates' elenctic activity in particular---as eristic debate. As Socrates admits (305d5-7), such critics of philosophy, *whenever* they are 'cut short' in private conversation---as opposed to the public displays of the sophists---invariably attribute their downfall to people of Euthydemus' sort. (εἶναι μὲν γὰρ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ σφᾶς σοφωτάτους, ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἰδίοις λόγοις ὅταν ἀποληφθῶσιν, ὑπὸ τῶν ἀμφὶ Εὐθύδημον κολούεσθαι).

I take it that Socrates' reference is meant to include the petulant reaction of such critics to being refuted in that particular form of private conversation that constitutes the Socratic elenchus.<sup>6</sup> But if that is right, then Plato's philosophical comedy ends on curiously mixed chord. For Crito's speech is surely less motivated by his concern for the reputation of philosophy than it is by his concern for the reputation of his friend; in which

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<sup>4</sup> 'Somewhat dimly', because while Crito rightly supposes that the sophists are not really wise, or really philosophers, he does not possess a complete account of philosophical activity rightly conceived.

<sup>5</sup> Cp. *Republic* 490e-491a, 495c-496a: the ill repute of philosophy is due in part to its unworthy practitioners, including sophists. See also Nehamas (1988), 14: 'Socrates, as Plato himself depicts him in his early dialogues, was eager to argue with each sophist on particular occasions. In his middle works, Plato seems to have wanted to show that such argument is out of place, because the sophists' place itself is outside of philosophy.' In one sense the present study may be described as devoted to the examination and the ultimate rejection of this claim; for it is a central contention of this thesis that while sophistry does lie outside philosophy, the examination of sophistical refutations does not.

<sup>6</sup> It is obvious however that the 'private' sessions referred to are intended to include sophistical gatherings. Cp. *Republic* 499a: arguments of true philosophers keep clear of the sophistries and eristic quibbles that 'in both public trials and private gatherings (ἰδίαις συνουσίαις)', aim at nothing but reputation and disputation.

case his warning seems designed to put us in mind of Socrates' doom. Crito's story of his encounter with the speechwriter effects a subtle but deliberate shift in dramatic tone, from comedy—or farce—to tragedy. The shift in tone is achieved by a shift in perspective, from Socrates in action to Socrates observed. It is as though at dialogue's end, Plato pulls the camera back upon the entirety of the foregoing proceedings: having been invited to observe the difference between Socratic and sophistic activity, the reader is now invited to look upon both from the perspective of the critic of philosophy, and to share in Crito's unease that this difference is lost upon the critic.

Is Crito's anxiety shared by Plato? I shall argue in these chapters that it is, and that the *Euthydemus* was written to address it. It is of course not news that---in *some* sense or other---the dialogue champions Socrates and Socratic argumentation over sophists and sophistic argumentation. What I want to suggest however is that Plato does not let Socrates win this contest simply by exposing the flaws, moral and logical, of sophists and sophistry respectively. On the contrary, the *Euthydemus* is deeply interested in raising and answering new questions about the moral and the philosophical efficacy of the Socratic elenchus itself. On the moral side, the dialogue evinces a new sensitivity on Plato's part to the effects of elenctic examination on the young---anticipating Socrates' remark in the *Republic* (537d-539a) that the philosopher must be extremely careful about how he goes about introducing young people to arguments. (Lest having been refuted often and in many places, and shaken of his convictions regarding his traditional education in virtue, while being unable to discover the true convictions, the young person

turns from a law-abiding character to a lawless one).<sup>7</sup> On the philosophical side, the dialogue is concerned to identify Socratic dialectic as only a *part* of philosophy, and to locate and strictly delimit its epistemological status as lying above eristic and the rhetorical arts, but below that of dialectic as that is conceived in the *Republic* and even later dialogues---thus anticipating the *Sophist's* conception of Socrates as the practitioner of a 'noble sophistry', (γενναία σοφιστική, 231b3-8) and the elenchus as a propaedeutic to philosophy, which purges the soul of false beliefs (231e4-6).

Once we see that it is the elenchus itself that is examined in the *Euthydemus*, a number of the interpretative problems of the dialogue become amenable to fruitful analysis. Among these are the difficulties I have alluded to above. Does it fall within the scope of philosophy to expose the fallacies of eristic argumentation? If it does, then does Socrates manage to refute the sophists in the eristic episodes? If he does, in what sense does he manage to do so? Then with respect to the protreptic scenes: how are we to understand the joke about Socrates' ventriloquism at 290e1-291a7? And more fundamentally, is there a solution implicit in the text to the *aporia* at 292a-e? If there is not, in what sense does Socrates' protreptic efforts with Cleinias succeed where those of the sophists fail? If there is, in what sense does Socrates' protreptic efforts succeed if (as the 'disappearance' of Cleinias would seem to indicate) the beginner could not possibly follow one who led him to its solution? The thesis that I shall work to establish in this dissertation is that attractive answers to these problems come into view once we see that Plato is engaged in new thinking about the elenchus in the *Euthydemus*.

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<sup>7</sup> Unlike many commentators, I believe that the *Euthydemus* was probably written around the same time as the *Republic*. Nothing I argue below however depends on whether it does not in fact 'anticipate' the *Republic* because it was in fact written after the *Republic*.

The text that I shall adopt as my starting point of an explanation and defense of these claims is 305e5-306d1, which constitutes Socrates' reply to Crito's admonition. I shall argue that the speech also constitutes Plato's reply to Crito: in it, the dialogue ended, Plato steps forward *in propria persona* to suggest his answers to the questions he has been interested in raising regarding the moral and epistemic status and limitations of Socratic dialectic.

In Chapter One, I provide an analysis of the Epilogue which explains how this final speech constitutes a kind of legend or key to our understanding of the entire dialogue. We shall find that in his response to Crito, Socrates outlines a rank ordering of all of those arts and their practitioners which, both on stage and off stage, make up the *dramatis personae* of the *Euthydemus*: the philosopher and the statesman, Socrates and the Socratic elenchus, the sophists and eristic argumentation, the composer of speeches and the various rhetorical arts. The rank ordering concerns the degree of wisdom---or goodness---in accordance with which each of these arts and their practitioners exercises a craft. An overlooked, but perhaps unsurprising, result of Socrates' taxonomy of wisdom is that the practitioner of the elenchus falls below the possessor of complete philosophical and political wisdom. What is rather more surprising is that by way of making that point, Socrates implies that the elenchus in fact 'partakes' (μετέχειν) of two *bad* arts: sophistry and speechwriting. I provide an analysis of the relation of 'partaking' that removes the air of paradox from Socrates' implication.

A crucial premise in Socrates' argument for the rank ordering of the arts is the claim that while both philosophy and politics are *good*, each is related to something *different* (εἰ μὲν οὖν ἡ φιλοσοφία ἀγαθὸν ἔστιν καὶ ἡ πολιτικὴ πράξις, πρὸς ἄλλο δὲ

ἐκατέρα, 306b2-3). In Chapter Two I offer an interpretation of this statement and explain its philosophical motivation. It will emerge that its meaning lies hidden in the ‘labyrinth’ (λαβύρινθον, 291b7)--as Socrates calls it---that constitutes the *aporia* of Socrates’ second protreptic interview with Cleinias (288d5-292e5). I provide an analysis of the *aporia* and demonstrate that the *Euthydemus* contains the conceptual resources needed for its solution. In particular, I show that Socrates’ assertion in the Epilogue that philosophy and politics are both good but are both πρὸς ἄλλο provides a crucially important clue that points the way out of the labyrinth. I also argue that the solution to the *aporia* of the second protreptic episode reveals the motivation behind the odd contrivance of Cleinias’ disappearance and Socrates’ ventriloquism. Cleinias drops out of the conversation just at the point that Socrates’ search for a superordinate art that will complete human happiness takes a wrong turn. Cleinias’ temporary submergence is a device that is intended to draw our attention to this fact; its purpose is to indicate that a return to the starting point of the labyrinth would reveal that it is dialectic, and not the statesman’s art alone, that is properly said to be the superordinate art that, combining using and making, completes human happiness.

In Chapter Three I turn to consider how my analysis of the Epilogue and the second protreptic episode contributes to our understanding of the *Euthydemus* as a protreptic dialogue. I argue that my interpretation of these passages indicates that in the *Euthydemus*, Plato portrays Socratic expertise as dual in nature: the art that Socrates exercises is a complex craft, which is composed of a protreptic art on the one hand, and the art of refutation on the other. In the exercise of either function however, Plato regards Socratic activity as merely a necessary propaedeutic to the exercise of a full-blown

dialectical capacity that is familiar from such middle period works as the *Republic*, and later dialogues---in particular, the *Sophist*. I then attempt to flesh out this claim by showing how, in the remaining episodes of the dialogue, Plato is actively concerned to illustrate the epistemic limitations of Socratic expertise.

Of primary interest here of course are Socrates' scenes with the sophists Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. I demonstrate that in these 'eristic' episodes, the Platonic response to fallacious reasoning is conducted at two different levels of philosophical sophistication. In these passages, Socrates is on the attack against the sophists in both the *rôle* of questioner and answerer. In the performance of both of these parts, he relies upon a mode of inquiry which I call *Socratic dialectic*. The starting points of Socratic dialectic are always the statements and responses of the interlocutor---in this case, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. The goal of Socratic dialectic in the role of *questioner* is to examine and test the statements of the interlocutor by reducing the interlocutor to contradiction. The first episode in which Socrates employs this method of examination is 286b7-288a7. In this passage, Socrates argues that certain theses held dear by the sophists (e.g., that false speaking is impossible) are dialectically self-refuting. It is however characteristic of Socratic dialectic that this method of examination cannot explain *why* the sophists' theses are false. The Socratic response to fallacy in this case is therefore *non-explanatory* in this sense.

On the other hand, these epistemic limitations of *Socratic dialectic* are overcome in other passages in the dialogue which are replete with clues to the reader that point to a genuine explanation and resolution of the sophists' arguments for their various controversial theses. In these texts, Socrates is generally silent, and the learner in dialectic

is thrown upon his own resources. In particular, the reader is invited at every turn to modify, clarify, or reject various assumptions made by the brothers regarding the nature of predication. Here Plato implicitly relies on the results of what I call *higher dialectic*. I argue that in contrast to the resources of Socratic dialectic, this theory, which receives explicit formulation in the *Sophist*, is conceptually rich enough to expose and dispose of the various false assumptions upon which the sophists' theses rest.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I turn to assess the Socratic response to fallacy on display in those scenes wherein Socrates adopts the role of *answerer*. The passages of primary interest here are those in which Socrates raises various objections to the false refutations to which he is subjected by the sophists. Drawing on both the internal evidence of the *Euthydemus*, as well as the account of Socratic activity that is related at *Sophist* 230b4-8, I demonstrate that Socrates' objections to these false refutations are grounded in a *Socratic definition of genuine refutation*. I argue that since this is so, Plato regards the Socratic objections as fully explanatory *solutions* to the fallacies with which Socrates is confronted. These objections have explanatory force because they are *causal*: the objections specify the cause of a refutation's failure to be genuine as due to the violation of a clause in the Socratic definition of genuine refutation. Because these solutions specify a variety of such causes of false refutation, they generate a *taxonomy* of fallacy. I establish that a careful reading of the dialogue reveals that, even where Socrates himself does not raise a specific objection to a fallacy, Plato nevertheless relies upon the Socratic definition of genuine refutation in his recognition of the following forms of false refutation as *sui generis*: Homonymy, Begging the Question, Secundum Quid (both *a dicto secundum quid ad dictum simpliciter*, and *a dicto simpliciter ad dictum secundum*



*quid*); Ignoratio Elenchi; Combination; Amphiboly; Many Questions; and Accident. Moreover, I argue that Plato is concerned to defend this taxonomy in the *Euthydemus* against certain contemporary alternative taxonomies. In particular, Socrates' doubtful dialectical ally Ctesippus is used as a foil against whose false solutions to fallacy Plato may argue his theoretical opposition to the view that all fallacies are 'dependent on language', insofar as all are due to 'double signification' in an argument's terms.

In Chapter 6, I analyze the Socratic response to fallacy as this is articulated in two remaining passages in the dialogue. The first---Dionysodorus' 'Ox argument' (300e3-301c5)---has struck many commentators as a sophisticated parody of the notion of participation familiar from Plato's middle period dialogues. The second passage (303d5-303e4), as many commentators have noted, in some way generalizes the results of the Ox argument. In these texts Socrates returns to the role of *questioner* in his confrontation with the sophists. In this capacity, he once again examines a thesis employed by the sophists in the production of fallacy which bears upon the nature of predication. In this case, the thesis in question is that for all  $x$ , if  $x$  is other than  $F$  (for some property  $F$ ), then  $x$  is not- $F$ . At 300e3-301c5, the sophist Dionysodorus utilizes this thesis in order to undermine a thesis of Socrates' own, namely, that the many beautiful things are different from the beautiful. Socrates' response to the sophist's argument is highly elliptical; in consequence its content and aim has received a number of unsatisfactory treatments by commentators on the dialogue. I demonstrate that Socrates' counter-argument, when properly understood, amounts to the claim that the sophist's critique of Socrates' position cannot be coherently stated, as the sophist's commitment to his own thesis---'Other than  $F \rightarrow \text{Not-}F$ '---renders this critique straightforwardly contradictory.

At 303d5-303e4, Socrates makes a pointed back-reference to the sophist's previous proof of the non-existence of beautiful things. I demonstrate that Socrates implies in this passage that Dionysodorus' earlier argument proves too much; for the sophist's 'proof' that there are no beautiful things may be generalized for any property whatsoever: for all F, no x is F. The observation that Socrates derives from this result is that the sophists consequently do not *say anything significant*: rather, they 'stitch up their own mouths' (303d5-303e4). Since this is so, the sophist's commitment to the thesis 'Other than  $F \rightarrow \text{Not-F}$ ' is dialectically self-refuting.

I conclude that these final two episodes furnish two further examples of the distinction between *Socratic dialectic* and *higher dialectic* which, I maintain, informs the entire dialogue. In his response to Dionysodorus, Socrates makes no attempt to explain or defend the relation of participation that obtains between Forms and their participants. He does not attempt to articulate any reading of the sophist's thesis---Other than  $F \rightarrow \text{Not-F}$ ---according to which it may be *true*. Neither does Socrates advance any views concerning the possibly distinctive nature of the property of the Different. All such considerations are left to the practitioner of a higher form of dialectical inquiry---an expertise that is dramatized in Plato's later dialogues. These episodes reveal rather a Socrates at work within the confines of his peculiar dialectical domain, and wielding its familiar tools: an examination of an interlocutor's views which reduces the thesis of the interlocutor to contradiction or self-refutation.

The Socratic response to fallacy in this instance is thus once more revealed to be *non-explanatory*. Higher dialectic differs from Socratic dialectic then in this regard. In particular, higher dialectic issues in a complete theoretical grasp of the nature of

predication. Dialectical expertise at this level is *explanatory* insofar as it yields a synoptic view of the interrelations among the Forms. The goal of Socratic dialectic, by contrast, is to test an interlocutor's claim that he possesses knowledge of a particular subject matter. Dialectical expertise at this level is *explanatory* insofar as it is grounded in a grasp of the nature of genuine refutation. In the *Euthydemus* in particular, the goal of Socratic dialectic is to test the sophists' claim that they are experts in the art of refutation. It is thus a major contention of my reading of the dialogue that Socratic dialectic is up to this latter peirastic task, despite the fact that it does not rely upon or claim knowledge of a complete theoretical grasp of the nature of predication.

I conclude with the observation that the *Euthydemus* is a protreptic dialogue in a very special sense. It is the fact that the dialogue showcases various levels of philosophical argumentation that makes it especially valuable as a protreptic tool.

## Chapter One

### 1.1 Between Philosophy and Politics

Socrates' final speech in the *Euthydemus* at 305e5-306d1 has received virtually no serious attention in the scholarly literature.<sup>8</sup> The reasons for its neglect are perhaps all too easy to explain. To put it bluntly: (a) the argument as stated is obviously unsound; (b) the argument is weird; (c) the argument is playful. Indeed, Myles Burnyeat has suggested despairingly that in the face of these facts, we must conclude that Socrates is portrayed by Plato in this passage as *guying* the sophists: the obscurity of the argument and its apparent logic-chopping nature is meant to evoke and parody the eristic argumentation of the brothers Dionysodorus and Euthydemus.<sup>9</sup>

In my view, this interpretation is deeply mistaken. Socrates' argument is admittedly obscure; its soundness is suspect; and his remarks do have a playful aspect. Nevertheless, the speech which concludes the dialogue makes a completely serious and important point. By way of a first step toward grasping what this point is, we may begin by noting how Socrates' exchange with Crito at 305b4-305e4 sets up the speech. In response to Crito's qualified endorsement of the speechwriter's opinion on the foregoing

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<sup>8</sup> I have found no intelligent commentary on this passage. Sprague's (1962), 32 treatment is perhaps typical: 'It is obviously to the advantage of [the speech-writer] to malign both philosophy and politics, but, according to Socrates at 306c, he is apparently unwilling to do this. Thus, we are intended to conclude, his attack is inconsistent.'

<sup>9</sup> Burnyeat made the remark at a colloquium at Princeton University in the late 1990s where he presented an earlier draft of Burnyeat (2002). I have no idea if he still holds this view of the passage.

discussion, Socrates inquires not after the *identity*, but the specific *occupation* of the man:<sup>10</sup>

Crito, men like these are very strange. Still, I don't yet know what to say in return. What sort of man was this who came up and attacked philosophy? Was he one of those clever persons who contend in the law courts, an orator? Or was he one of those who equip such men for battle, a writer of the speeches which the orators use?

Crito replies forcefully that to his certain knowledge, the man is definitely *not* an orator (Ἡκιστα νή τον Δία ῥήτωρ)—he thinks he has never appeared in court---but he is reputed to be ‘a clever man and clever at composing speeches’ (δαινὸν εἶναι καὶ δαινους λόγους συντιθέναι, 305c1-4). To which Socrates responds:

Now I understand---it was about this sort of person that I was just going to speak myself. These are the persons, Crito, whom Prodicus describes as occupying the marches between the philosopher and the statesman (μεθόρια φιλοσόφου τε ἀνδρὸς καὶ πολιτικοῦ). They think that they are the wisest of men, and that they not only are but also seem to be so in the eyes of a great many, so that no one else keeps them from enjoying universal esteem except the followers of philosophy (οἶονται δ' εἶναι πάντων σοφώτατοι ἀνθρώπων, πρὸς δὲ τῷ εἶναι καὶ δοκεῖν πάνυ παρὰ πολλοῖς, ὥστε παρὰ πᾶσιν εὐδοικεῖν ἐμποδῶν σφίσιν εἶναι οὐδένασ ἄλλους ἢ τοὺς περὶ φιλοσοφίαν ἀνθρώπους). Therefore, they think that if they place these persons in the position of appearing to be worth nothing, then victory in the contest for the reputation of wisdom will be indisputably and immediately theirs, and in the eyes of all. They think that they really are the wisest, and whenever they are cut short in private conversation, they attribute this to Euthydemus and his crew. They regard themselves as very wise, and reasonably so, since they think they are not only pretty well up in philosophy but also in politics. Yes, their conceit of wisdom is quite natural because they think they have as much of each as they need: and, keeping clear of both risk and conflict, they reap the fruits of wisdom. (305c5-305e2)<sup>11</sup>

There is nothing in this exchange between Crito and Socrates to indicate a lack of seriousness on Plato's part toward the content of what is said. On the contrary, Crito's observation that the speechwriter is not also an orator seems designed to make some kind

<sup>10</sup> This may be some evidence for thinking that the speechwriter is not Isocrates, since Plato could presumably have been more direct if he had wished to be so. In support of the identification however one may point to Isocrates' identification of Socratic conversation and eristic debate (*Adv.Soph.* 291b, *Antid.* 258). But for my purposes nothing turns on whether the speechwriter is or is not Isocrates. For more on the controversy surrounding the identity of the speaker, see below Chapter 1.3, 40-41.

<sup>11</sup> Sprague (1993) translates μεθόρια as ‘no-man's land.’ While the phrase is perhaps more evocative than ‘marches’ or ‘borderlands’, I think it evokes the wrong thing, viz., that a state of hostility exists between the philosopher and the statesman. The self-assurance of the speech-writer that it is best to have a limited share in both philosophy and politics is echoed in Callicles' speech at *Gorg.* 485a-e; see also below, n.12.

of thematic connection with a crucial premise of Socrates' second (and aporetic) protreptic speech, viz., that the knowledge that will benefit us and make us happy must be a kind of knowledge which combines making and knowing how to use the thing which it makes (289b4-6). (Cp. 289d2-290a5, wherein Socrates explains at length why the speechwriters---the λογοποιοί---are thereby eliminated as possessors of the knowledge in question).<sup>12</sup>

In one sense we cannot be sure of Plato's precise attitude toward Prodicus' pronouncement about the borderlands (μεθόρια) or frontier between the philosopher and the statesman, since we do not know the context in which Prodicus' statement was made. (Was the original a component of one of Prodicus' famous semantic distinctions? Was one of the words thus distinguished σοφία (wisdom) or σοφιστής (sophist)? Is the interesting metaphor of the μεθόρια between philosophy and politics Prodicus' own, or is it a Platonic gloss?). However, we have no reason to suppose that Socrates is not being serious simply because of his reference to Prodicus. For the manner in which Socrates develops Prodicus' point is perfectly consistent with things Plato states with utter conviction elsewhere. (Cp. Socrates' remarks, *Republic* 490e4-491a5, 495c-496a9, regarding the nature of the souls that imitate the philosophic nature and, attempting to lead a philosophic life that is beyond them, bring disrepute upon philosophy itself).<sup>13</sup> It seems safe to suppose therefore that Plato simply uses Prodicus (as he occasionally does) to introduce a topic or theme the sophist has treated unintelligently and superficially so

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<sup>12</sup> I explain this thematic connection below, Chapter 2.2, 62-63.

<sup>13</sup> Cp. also *Phaedrus* 269b-269c and *Republic* 497e-498a: as it is taught now, those who think they have learned the preliminaries of philosophy think they have been fully trained in philosophy; whereas in fact the complete art of *logoi* embraces the whole of philosophy.

that Socrates may develop it intelligently and in earnest.<sup>14</sup> We have then no reason to expect that Socrates adopts a sophistic guise when he responds as follows to Crito's follow-up question:

And so, Socrates, do you think there is anything in what they say? For surely it can't be denied that their argument has a certain plausibility (εὐπρέπειαν).

Plausibility is just what it does have, Crito, rather than truth. It is no easy matter to persuade them that a man or anything else which is between two things and partakes of both is worse than one and better than the other in the case where one of the things is good and the other evil (ἄνθρωποι καὶ τᾶλλα πάντα ὅσα μεταξύ τινῶν δυοῖν ἐστὶν καὶ ἀμφοτέροιον τυγχάνει μετέχοντα, ὅσα μὲν ἐκ κακοῦ καὶ ἀγαθοῦ, τοῦ μὲν βελτίω, τοῦ δὲ χείρω γίγνεται); and that in the case where it partakes of two distinct goods, it is worse than either of them with respect to the end for which each of the two (of which it is composed) is useful (ὅσα δὲ ἐκ δυοῖν ἀγαθῶν μὴ πρὸς ταῦτόν, ἀμφοῖν χείρω πρὸς ὃ ἂν ἑκάτερον ἢ χρηστόν ἐκείνων ἐξ ὧν συνετέθη). It is only in the case where the thing in the middle partakes of two distinct evils that it is better than either of those of which it has a share (ὅσα δὲ ἐκ δυοῖν κακοῖν συνεθέντα μὴ πρὸς τὸ αὐτὸ ὄντοιν ἐν τῷ μέσῳ ἐστὶν, ταῦτα μόνον βελτίω ἑκατέρου ἐκείνων ἐστὶν, ὧν ἀμφοτέρων μέρος μετέχουσιν). Now if philosophy is good, and so is political activity (and each has a different end), and those partaking of both are in between (εἰ μὲν οὖν ἡ φιλοσοφία ἀγαθὸν ἐστὶν καὶ ἡ πολιτικὴ πράξις, πρὸς ἄλλο δὲ ἑκάτερα, οὗτοι δὲ ἀμφοτέρων μετέχοντες τούτων ἐν μέσῳ εἰσὶν) then these men are talking nonsense, since they are inferior (φασυλότεροι) to both. If one is good and the other bad, then they are better than the practitioners of the latter and worse than those of the former (εἰ δὲ ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακόν, τῶν μὲν βελτίους, τῶν δὲ χείρους); while if both are bad (εἰ δὲ κακὰ ἀμφοτέρα), there is some truth in what they say, but otherwise none at all. I don't suppose they would agree that both [philosophy and politics] are bad, nor that one is bad and the other good (οὐκ ἂν οὖν οἶμαι αὐτοὺς ὁμολογῆσαι οὔτε κακὰ αὐτὰ ἀμφοτέρω εἶναι οὔτε τὸ μὲν κακόν, τὸ δὲ ἀγαθόν). The fact of the matter is that, while partaking of both, they are inferior to both with respect to the object for which either politics or philosophy is of value (μετέχοντες ἀμφοτέρων ἡττοὺς εἰσὶν πρὸς ἑκάτερον πρὸς ὃ ἢ τε πολιτικὴ καὶ ἡ φιλοσοφία ἀξίω λόγου ἐστὶν), and that whereas they are actually in the third place (τρίτοι ὄντες τῇ ἀληθείᾳ) they want to be regarded as being in the first (πρώτοι). However, we ought to forgive them their ambition and not feel angry, although we still ought to see these men for what they are. After all, we ought to admire every man who says anything sensible, and who labors bravely in its pursuit. (305e3-306d1)<sup>15</sup>

Now this argument certainly does seem unsound as it stands. Why should we think for example that anything that is between two good things and partakes of both is necessarily worse than the two good things for which either is useful? What is the relevant sense of 'betweenness'? What is the relevant relation of 'partaking'? (Is a 'spork'---an eating utensil with a spoon-like concavity at one end and tines at the other---

<sup>14</sup> Socrates' reference to Prodicus at *Euthydemus* 277e4 seems to serve this kind of function.

<sup>15</sup> Translation Sprague (1993) with modifications.

worse than either a spoon or a fork for conveying food to the mouth?) Even more counterintuitive is the claim that anything that partakes of two ‘bad’ things is necessarily *better* than the two evils of which it has a share. (Do the whites of two spoiled eggs make a relatively healthier omelet than that composed from the two rotten wholes? Is a new breed of dog that is produced from two breeds that have turned out *not* to be useful for the purpose for which they were bred necessarily better at the end---hunting, companionship—with respect to which the original breeds have proved failures?)

However, I think the argument looks more promising if its scope is restricted to activities or arts and their practitioners. We may then ask what Plato might mean by one activity or art being between (μεταξύ, 306a2) two others, and, while ‘partaking of’ or ‘sharing in’ (μετέχοντα, a3) these two others, coming off better or worse with respect to ‘the end for which each of the other two is useful’ (a3-4). The restriction to activities and practitioners seems licensed by the preceding reference to the contenders, true and false, for the reputation of wisdom and their various activities or arts: philosophers and philosophy, sophists and eristic argument (τῶν ἀμφὶ Εὐθύδημον κολούεσθαι, 305d6-7), speechwriters and speechwriting, and (implicitly) statesmen and politics.

As for the sense we are to assign to the relations of lying ‘between’ and partaking/sharing in, I suggest that a helpful, though negative, clue is provided by *Gorgias* 462-465 and its elaborate comparison of the epistemic status of the crafts of politics (legislation and justice) and ‘body-care’ (gymnastic and medicine) with their false images (the flattering ‘knacks’ of sophistry, rhetoric, cosmetics, and cookery, respectively). At *Gorgias* 464c1-3 Socrates states that ‘Each member of these pairs—medicine and gymnastics, justice and legislation, shares with the other, insofar as they are



both about the same thing (ἐπικοινωνοῦσι μὲν δὴ ἀλλήλαις, ἅτε περὶ τὸ αὐτὸ οὔσαι, ἑκάτεραι τούτων, ἥ τε ἰατρικὴ τῇ γυμναστικῇ καὶ ἡ δικαιοσύνη τῇ νομοθετικῇ); nevertheless they differ from one another in some respect (ὅμως δὲ διαφέρουσιν τι ἀλλήλων).’ It would seem that the *Gorgias* then endorses the following claim:

(G) If two activities or crafts x and y share in each other, then x and y are concerned with the same subject.

In the case of medicine and gymnastics, the common subject will be ‘body-care’, or more generally, the body; in the case of legislation and justice, the common subject will be politics, or more generally, the soul. It is clear however that sharing in common (ἐπικοινωνοῦσι) in this sense cannot adequately capture the relevant notion of sharing (μετέχοντα) in our text; for pairs of activities are not therein said to be sharers or partakers of *each other*, but of still other activities or arts they are said to lie ‘between.’<sup>16</sup>

I suggest we sort this out as follows. The argument invites us to define the various activities in question teleologically, in terms of the ends for which each activity is useful or aims at (or is ‘πρός’). A *Good* activity therefore—like philosophy or politics, rightly conceived—is a complete partaker of itself, being sufficient when exercised in the right way to achieve the end it aims at. Where X and Y are not identical however, an art X is a partial partaker of another art Y just in case the end at which X aims is identical to the end at which Y aims; but since X only partially shares in the relevant characteristics that constitute Y, X will only imperfectly achieve the common end at which both X and Y

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<sup>16</sup> Another highly noteworthy difference between the *Gorgias* and the *Euthydemus* texts is that in the former, all (real) crafts are said to be ‘πρός’ the best (τὸ βέλτιστον), not πρὸς ἄλλο. I return to discuss the significance of this claim in the *Gorgias* below, Chapter 2.4, 76.

aim. (An inference that is supported by Socrates' language of composition or constitution, συνετέθη, 306a6, συντεθέντα, 306a7). This interpretation of the partaking relation in turn allows us to make sense of the related notion of 'betweenness.' It will obviously not be sufficient for an art A to lie between two others B and C that A is πρὸς neither B nor C (or their respective ends). For in that case, all other arts besides philosophy and politics (e.g. fly-fishing) will lie between philosophy and politics. What Socrates must mean is that an art A lies between two others B and C just in case A satisfies the two conditions of being a (partial) partaker of B and a (partial) partaker of C.

On this interpretation, Socrates' utterance at 305e5-306d1 emerges as a natural expansion upon what he has just said to Crito about the contenders for the reputation of wisdom who dwell in the borderlands between philosophy and politics. What Socrates tells us at 305c5-305e2 is that the occupants of the marches between the philosopher and statesman are the speechwriters; but it is implied that their rivals, 'the philosophers'---a tribe whom the *speechwriters* identify as the practitioners and teachers of eristic debate of the Euthydemus variety---are also neither true statesmen nor true philosophers, and hence that they too are co-occupants with the λογοποιοί of the μεθόρια between true philosophy and the true political craft. What Socrates tells us at 305e5-306d1 then is *why* this is so: it is true of *any* art that lies between and partakes of two arts that are truly *good* that that art and its practitioner are mere partial partakers of the characteristics that are constitutive of the truly good arts. Since, as Socrates says, the speechwriters *wrongly* suppose that they have an *adequate* share of (μετέχειν...ὅσον ἔδει, 305e1) both philosophy and politics, speechwriting as such is a mere partial partaker of those constitutive features of both philosophy and politics that enable each to fully realize their respective ends. Since

Socrates' expansion and explanation of his prior statement to Crito is evidently meant to apply with full generality to *all* arts and practitioners (καὶ ἄνθρωποι καὶ τὰλλα πάντα, 306a1-2) we may infer that the 'art' of the brother sophists Euthydemus and Dionysodorus is subject to the same deficiency: eristic debate and its methods of argumentation are also mere partial partakers of the constitutive features in virtue of which both philosophy and politics, rightly conceived, are able to fully realize their respective ends.

Socrates does not tell us in this text *which* characteristics of philosophy and statesmanship the speechwriter and eristic sophist 'partake of.' However, the internal evidence of the rest of the dialogue suggests important clues. Thus it is certainly clear from the brothers' episodes with Cleinias and company that the 'art' of eristic interrogation shares with dialectic the *bare formal feature* of a procedure of questioning and answering that aims at the refutation of the interlocutor. But since the sophists aim to refute their victim 'no matter how he answers' (275e5-6), their version of dialectic is revealed as a demented image of true philosophical activity. On the other hand, the sophists are also described by Socrates as professing the ability to 'fight the battle of the law courts' (272a1-2) and as possessing the ability 'to teach other people both how to deliver and how to compose the sort of speeches suitable for the courts.' (272a2-4). Thus the sophists partake also of bare formal features that are characteristic of the possessor of true political wisdom. However, since it is (at least in their current incarnation)<sup>17</sup> their skill at eristic debate that the sophists are eager to display, and not their skill at the

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<sup>17</sup> Cp.273d: the brothers declare that they now treat instruction in generalship and forensic matters as 'mere bye-work (παρέργους).'

composition and delivery of speeches, their eristic ‘art’ is more like a degenerate version of philosophy than it is a degenerate version of the political art *per se*.

We must assume therefore that it will not be a condition on an art’s lying between two others and (partially) partaking of both that it partake of features of both *to an equal degree*. The same would seem to be true of the speechwriter’s art. Thus we may suppose that the *reason* the composer of speeches considers it worth his while to study philosophy even to the degree that he does (305d8-305e2) is that he considers it necessary to familiarize himself to some degree with the art of valid argument and genuine refutation. On the other hand, when Socrates characterizes speechwriting in (savage) detail at 289e1-290a5, he seems to identify as the bare formal feature it shares with the true political craft not these latter argumentative virtues, but rather its concern with the persuasion and exhortation of others in public arenas where questions of justice and polis management hang in the balance:

...as far as I am concerned, whenever I have any contact with these same men who write speeches, they strike me as being persons of surpassing wisdom, Cleinias; and this art of theirs seems to me something marvelous and lofty. Though after all there is nothing remarkable in this, since it is part of the enchanter’s art and but slightly inferior to it. For the enchanter’s art consists in charming vipers and spiders and scorpions and other wild things, and in curing diseases, while the other art consists in charming and exhorting (κήλησίς τε καὶ παραμυθία) the member of juries and assemblies and other sorts of crowds. Or do you have some other notion of it?

It would seem therefore that the speechwriter’s craft, since it shares more formal characteristics with that of the true art of polis management and the administration of justice, is more of a debased version of the πολιτική τέχνη than it is an debased version

of ἡ φιλοσοφία—despite the fact that it too, like eristic sophistry, lies between and partakes of both true arts.<sup>18</sup>

So far we have addressed only the second of the triads of arts that play a role in Socrates' argument, viz., the triad *good-worse-good*. I take it however that it is a virtue of my interpretation of the second triad that it transforms a nearly unintelligible piece of argumentation into a Platonic commonplace. Indeed, if the foregoing is along the right lines, we begin to see that our text is in a sense a mere reformulation of things Plato says elsewhere about rhetoricians and false philosophers. Thus the *Gorgias* speaks of rhetoric as an image of a part of the political art (ἡ ῥητορικὴ...πολιτικῆς μορίου εἶδωλον, 463d2), and of both sophistry and rhetoric as species of flattery (κολακευτική) which impersonate (ὑποδύσα) and pretend to be (προσποιεῖται) the true crafts of legislation and justice which always aim at the best (ἀεὶ πρὸς τὸ βέλτιστον) (464c3-d1). The *Republic* similarly employs the language of imitation to describe the souls who consort unworthily with philosophy, whose thoughts and opinions are capable of producing not true wisdom, but only sophisms (Cp. 491a1-2: τὰς μιμουμένας ταύτην καὶ εἰς τὸ ἐπιτήδευμα καθισταμένας αὐτῆς; cp. 496a5-9: τοὺς ἀναξίους παιδεύσεως, ὅταν αὐτῇ πλησιάζοντες ὁμιλῶσι μὴ κατ' ἀξίαν, ποῖ' ἅττα φῶμεν γεννᾶν διανοήματά τε καὶ δόξας; ἄρ' οὐχ ὡς ἀληθῶς προσήκοντα ἀκοῦσαι σοφίσματα, καὶ οὐδὲν γνήσιον οὐδὲ φρονήσεως [ἀξιον] ἀληθινῆς ἐχόμενον;). What the *Euthydemus* does differently is to speak of the deficiencies of certain activities not in terms of their imitation or impersonation of true arts, but in terms of their partial sharing in or partaking of aspects or characteristics of true crafts, in this case philosophy and politics, respectively.

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<sup>18</sup> Cp. *Gorgias*' assertion G.452e1ff: 'I say [rhetoric] is the power to persuade by speech jurymen in the jury-court, council-men in the Council Chamber, assembly-men in the Assembly, and in every other gathering, whatever political gathering there may be.'

On the other hand---as noted above---there is a significant difference between the manner in which the *Gorgias* and the *Euthydemus* characterize the relations holding between rhetoric, sophistry, politics, and philosophy. The *Gorgias* describes rhetors and sophists as ‘mixed up in the same area and about the same things (ἐγγὺς ὄντων φύρονται ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ καὶ περὶ ταῦτ’ αἱ σοφισταὶ καὶ ῥήτορες)’ so that they don’t know what to make of themselves, and other people don’t know what to make of them’ (465c4-7). Why does the *Gorgias* rank sophistry and rhetoric under the political art (as false images of legislation and justice, respectively), while the *Euthydemus* places both speechwriting and sophistry—at least of the eristic sort---between politics and philosophy?

I suggest that the answer has to do with an important question we have not so far addressed: what is meant by Socrates’ claim that while both politics and philosophy are good, both are related to a different thing (πρὸς ἄλλο, 306b3)? What is the end of philosophy as Plato conceives of that activity in the *Euthydemus*? What is the end of the political art? Cleinias’ ‘inspired’ observations in the second protreptic episode include the following claims about philosophy and politics respectively: mathematicians—‘at least those who are not entirely senseless’---hand over their discoveries to the dialecticians to use; generals hand over the products of their craft to the statesman (290b8-d3). We are led to expect that Socrates will proceed to determine which of the two arts—politics or philosophy—constitutes the one whose possession will make us happy. Instead philosophy seems to drop out of the argument, while the claim that the political art is the craft in question leads to apparent *aporia*. (291b1-292e5). Many commentators on the *Euthydemus* have taken the reference to dialectic and mathematics in this passage as evidence that the dialogue presupposes a conception of philosophy that belongs to Plato’s

middle period.<sup>19</sup> In that case, the question arises: is the end of the political art to which Socrates alludes in the Epilogue the Good itself, as that is conceived in the *Republic*? But then why is the Good not the end of the activity of philosophy also? Or is the end of philosophy knowledge? Yet the *Republic* famously describes the Good itself as the cause of knowledge and truth, other and more beautiful than both. (508e-509a). Does it follow that Plato conceives of philosophy in the *Euthydemus* as somehow subordinate to the political art? Or is the political art in some way subordinate to philosophy? But then what are we to make of Socrates' claim in the Epilogue that philosophy and politics are *both good*, but each aims at a *different* thing?

I will suggest below that the answer to that question will take us a considerable way towards the solution to the *aporia* of the second protreptic episode.<sup>20</sup> However, I believe we can make better progress on that score if we first attempt to fill out the remainder of Socrates' final argument in the Epilogue; for as we shall see, it is only once the implications of this final argument are fully worked out that a solution to the dialogue's *aporia* comes into view.

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<sup>19</sup> More recently Hawtrey (1978), Hawtrey (1981), pp.127-129, and Kahn (2000), have argued for this view, though with various qualifications. Hawtrey believes the passage clearly presupposes the curriculum of propaedeutic studies and their method outlined in Book 7 of the *Republic*. However, Hawtrey claims the *Euthydemus* bears closer affinities with the *Meno* (on the grounds, e.g. that both dialogues argue that nothing is good without knowledge). Kahn believes that the *Euthydemus* is a 'proleptic' dialogue: 'The *Euthydemus* provides the clearest textual evidence of a situation that we might in any case reasonably assume: that before Plato composed his artistic masterpiece the *Republic*, he had in mind, and was discussing with his closest associates, many of the ideas that he would give literary expression to not only in this work but also in later works,' (96). Nevertheless, Kahn seems to admit that his view simply boils down to the claim that the '*Euthydemus* is an early work...where 'early' means simply 'before the *Republic*;' it cannot mean 'before the doctrine of Forms.'

<sup>20</sup> See Chapter 2.4, 75-81.

## 1.2 Good Arts and Bad Arts

The question we must face next then is whether our analysis of Socrates' second triad (*good-worse-good*) sheds light on the interpretation of the other two triads in a way that secures Socrates' conclusion, viz., that despite their conceit that they are the wisest, speechwriters and their art are in truth in third place behind philosophy and politics (τρίτοι ὄντες τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, 306c5).

As stated, Socrates' argument at 305e5-306d1 unfolds as follows (implied clauses and premises are supplied in brackets):

- (1) [If an art and its practitioners lie between and partake of two other arts, then the two other arts are either both good or both evil, or one is good and one is evil].
- (2) If an art and its practitioners lie between and partake of a good art and an evil art, then they are worse than the good art but better than the evil art [with respect to the end for which either of the latter arts is useful].
- (3) If an art and its practitioners lie between and partake of two good arts, then they are worse than either good art with respect to the end for which either of the latter arts is useful.
- (4) If an art and its practitioners lie between and partake of two evil arts, then they are better than the two evil arts of which they have a share with respect to the end for which either evil art is useful.
- (5) Speechwriting and its practitioners lie between and partake of two arts, viz., philosophy and politics.
- (6) [(Therefore) Speechwriting and its practitioners lie between and partake of two arts that are either both good, both evil, or one good and one evil art]. (By 1, 5).
- (7) The speechwriters would deny that both philosophy and politics are bad, and that either philosophy or politics is bad.



- (8) [(Therefore) the speechwriters would agree that both philosophy and politics are good]. (By 6, 7).
- (9) [Philosophy and politics are (in fact) both good].
- (10) (Therefore) the speechwriters would agree (correctly) that speechwriting and its practitioners lie between and partake of two good arts, viz., philosophy and politics. (By 5, 8, 9).
- (11) (Therefore) the speechwriters would agree (correctly) that speechwriting and its practitioners are worse than either philosophy or politics with respect to the end for which either of the latter arts is useful. (By 3, 10).
- (12) (Therefore) the speechwriters could be persuaded to adopt the (correct) view that speechwriters and their art come in third place in the contest for wisdom behind philosophy and politics. (By 11).

It is evident that all of the heavy lifting in this argument is being done by assumptions (3) and (5). We might well wonder why the speechwriters—or any other practitioner of an art that Socrates deems as falling ‘between’ two good arts—would accept premise (3) in particular. Even if Socrates could persuade them of the truth of (5) (on the grounds, perhaps, that the activity of speechwriting is not, after all, exactly the same activity as ruling a polis or doing philosophy), why should any craftsman persuaded on that score accept that his art is thereby rendered *less good* than either philosophy or politics? The fact that Socrates’ move here seems to beg the question against the speechwriters’ claim to the crown of wisdom may also then be taken to contribute to the impression that Plato does not take this particular argument very seriously.

I believe the proper response to these worries is indicated by Socrates’ statement at 306a1 that it is *not easy* to persuade the speechwriters of his conclusion (οὐ γὰρ ῥᾴδιον αὐτοὺς πείσαι) and hence by implication, of the means by which he arrives at it. I take

Socrates' warning to entail that Plato does not regard the argument as it stands as being dialectically irresistible to the false contenders of wisdom. Rather, Plato invites us to fill out for ourselves (as we are attempting to do here) the relevant senses he attaches (for example) to the crucial relations of betweenness and partaking. We do better justice to Plato's intentions therefore if we regard the passage more as an argument schema, the details of which must be filled in before its dialectical purchase can be adequately assessed, rather than a knock-down argument, which as stated it clearly is not.

A deeper source of concern is the fact that as stated, it looks as though premises (2) and (4) are otiose, for they play no apparent role in the derivation of Socrates' conclusion. If Socrates were able, after the requisite amount of argumentative effort, to convince the speechwriters (or the sophists) of the truth of premises (3), (5), and (8), his work would be very nearly done. Then why does he introduce premises (2) and (4) into the argument at all?

On the other hand, if the apparently otiose premises are in play, the argument seems to allow that an art that is actually *bad* could be 'between and partake of' two good arts. We are told that an art that is between two good arts is *worse* than the two good arts of which it partakes. But that would seem to allow that both an evil art and a less-than-good but better-than-evil art can be between and partake of two good arts. It does not seem we can eliminate this possibility on the ground that any art that partakes of two good arts must, in virtue of that fact, be good *to some degree*; for by parity of reasoning, it would follow that any art that partakes of two evil arts is in virtue of that fact evil to some degree; and this seems to be explicitly denied by premise (4). But if both bad and merely less-than-good arts may make their way into Socrates' second triad (*good-worse-*

*good*), then it is unclear how the rank ordering of arts in the argument is to be understood in such a way that makes intelligible Socrates' conclusion that the speechwriting art comes in third place for the prize of wisdom. One natural way of understanding this latter claim is that, since philosophy and politics are *two* distinct goods, then---regardless of how philosophy and politics stand to each other as regards *their* goodness---since speechwriting is inferior to both, it comes in third place. But suppose speechwriting is---by Plato's lights---a bad thing. Then if---as seems to be countenanced by premise (2)---there exist arts or activities that are less than good but better than evil which can be between and partake of both philosophy and politics, it is no longer clear why speechwriting comes in third place—as opposed to (at least) fourth---in the contest for wisdom.

It would seem these problems may be evaded only if we make the following assumptions: (i) Some of the premises of the argument are indeed otiose. (ii) The argument is agnostic on the score of whether speechwriting is merely worse than two good arts or is itself a 'bad' art. (iii) The argument is equally agnostic on the question of the existence of less-than-good but better-than-evil arts and their practitioners.

There are however good reasons for resisting each one of these assumptions. As for (i), it is at any rate worth seeking an interpretation that utilizes all the premises of the argument, since any interpretation that does would be superior to one which did not. As for (ii), there is considerable evidence internal to the rest of the dialogue that Plato deems evil *both* speechwriting and eristic sophistry, as being the degenerate images of politics and philosophy, respectively. And as for the existence of a practitioner and his activity that are morally and epistemically less than good but definitely not bad—both have been

in plain view throughout the entire dialogue. Plato of course does not regard Socrates and the Socratic elenchus as bad; but there is considerable internal evidence in the *Euthydemus* that he does not regard either as good *in the sense of goodness that is relevant to the argument* of 305e5-306d1.

In the succeeding subchapters I will defend these claims by examining the evidence in question. In the remainder of the present subchapter I shall demonstrate that an examination of the relevant internal evidence of the dialogue reveals that Plato regards both speechwriting and the art of eristic as *bad* arts. I shall then explain how this result considerably clarifies the function of the partaking relation in the argument of the Epilogue. In Chapter 1.3 I argue that this deeper understanding of the partaking relation sheds light on the position of the Socratic elenchus in the taxonomy of arts in the Epilogue. In particular, I demonstrate that other internal evidence from the dialogue reveals that Plato regards the Socratic elenchus as an art ‘lies between’ and ‘partakes of’ both two good arts ---philosophy and politics (rightly conceived)---as well as two ‘bad’ arts---eristic sophistry and speechwriting. Finally, in Chapter 1.4 I return to Socrates’ taxonomy of arts in the Epilogue and provide an interpretation of the entire argument which takes as the values of ‘evil arts’ speechwriting and eristic sophistry, and which takes the Socratic elenchus as the value of an art that is ‘between’ the poles of good and evil. It will emerge that Socrates’ conclusion regarding the status of speechwriting vis-à-vis philosophy and politics follows, despite the fact that he and his characteristic elenctic activity occupy a moral and epistemic status between that of philosophy and politics on the one hand, and sophistry and speechwriting on the other.

Our starting point is Plato's evaluation of the speechwriting art elsewhere in the dialogue. Given the congruence we have detected so far between *Gorgias* 464-465 and the Epilogue of the *Euthydemus*, we should not be surprised to find that in both dialogues Plato's attitude toward the rhetorical arts is negative in the extreme. If anything, the *Euthydemus* is harsher: as we have already had occasion to note, Socrates ranks the speechwriters' art *below* that of the professional enchanter of spiders and scorpions (289e1-290a5). In the *Gorgias* however, Socrates explicitly declares that the art of rhetoric is a bad thing. (Αἰσχρὸν ἔγωγε—τὰ γὰρ κακὰ αἰσχρὰ καλῶ, 463d4). Does the *Euthydemus* agree?

Socrates does not in the *Euthydemus* predicate κακός (bad/evil) or its cognates of the speechwriting art directly. It is however impossible to read the Epilogue without being reminded of the fact that Socrates did take a most definite and controversial stand on the nature and scope of τὸ ἀγαθόν and τὸ κακόν in his first protreptic interview with Cleinias (278e-282e). The cornerstone of Socrates' strategy for motivating Cleinias to become wise and virtuous is his argument that *wisdom is good*, and *ignorance is bad* (ἡ μὲν σοφία ἀγαθόν, ἡ δὲ ἀμαθία κακόν, 281e4-5); while all the sorts of things which we might have supposed to be good things---wealth, beauty, health, etc.---are in themselves neither good nor bad. For

..if ignorance controls them they are greater evils than their opposites, to the extent that they are more capable of complying with a bad master; but if good sense and wisdom are in control, they are greater goods; in themselves, however, neither sort is of any value (ἐὰν μὲν αὐτῶν ἡγήται ἀμαθία, μείζω κακὰ εἶναι τῶν ἐναντίων, ὅσῳ δυνατώτερα ὑπηρετεῖν τῷ ἡγουμένῳ κακῷ ὄντι, ἐὰν δὲ φρόνησις τε καὶ σοφία, μείζω ἀγαθὰ, αὐτὰ δὲ καθ' αὐτὰ οὐδέτερα αὐτῶν οὐδενὸς ἄξια εἶναι, 281d6-e1).

Controversy has raged over the precise sense Plato attaches to Socrates' statement regarding the 'intermediate' status of the conventionally recognized goods.<sup>21</sup> What is of immediate interest here is the manner in which Socrates pairs up the polar opposites of wisdom and ignorance with the polar opposites of *good* and *bad*. The bearing that this pairing has on the argument of the Epilogue is this: the relevant sense---and the only relevant sense---in which an art may be said to be 'good' is that it is controlled and led by wisdom; and the relevant sense---and the only relevant sense---in which an art may be said to be 'bad' is that it is controlled and led by ignorance.

Socrates' earlier claims at 281d6-e1 regarding wisdom and ignorance are therefore highly relevant to the proper interpretation of his final argument in the Epilogue regarding the false contenders of wisdom. As we noted above, that argument conceives of arts or activities teleologically, in terms of the end at which each art aims, and for which each is useful. Earlier we said that an art or activity is *good* just in case it is a 'complete partaker' of itself, where we took this to mean that the art in question had the internal resources, when exercised in the right way, to achieve the end at which it aims. What the argument of the first protreptic episode now allows us to see is that the qualification that the art be 'exercised aright' is redundant: for a good art just is one that is controlled and led by wisdom; and 'wisdom never makes a mistake.' (280a7). This suggests that in the case of a *good* art or activity, there exists a relation (call it *wise use*) between the wisdom by which the art is led or guided on the one hand, and the characteristic practices, activities, routines, behaviours, etc., that are formally internal to the art itself. For example, in the case of the art of medicine of the 4<sup>th</sup> B.C.E., we might suppose that the

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<sup>21</sup> I address this controversy below; see especially Chapter 2.1, 58-60. I endorse (with qualifications) the interpretation of Parry (2003), who argues persuasively that the conventionally recognized goods are taken to be indeterminate, as opposed to indifferent, in value.

characteristic practices internal to the art would include palpitation of the patient, the diagnosis of disease, and the concoction and administration of drugs. If we further suppose that the end of medicine is health, (or the good of the body), then Socrates' point as applied to this art would be that if led by wisdom, the activities and practices internal to medicine will achieve health for the patient; while if they are guided by ignorance, they will not---indeed they may lead to more harm than if the patient had been left alone.<sup>22</sup>

Now I take it that there can be little question that Plato's attitude toward speechwriting and its practitioners in the *Euthydemus* is that it and they are led by ignorance, and not by wisdom. It follows that speechwriting is, by Plato's lights, a *bad art*. However, speechwriting is not bad thing because it is ignorance *of speechwriting*. Rather, the speechwriters imagine that they are the wisest of men (οἶονταί δ' εἶναι πάντων σοφώτατοι ἀνθρώπων, 305c7-8). As such, they suppose that they are in possession of the art that will make men happy; a conceit which Socrates of course undermines elsewhere in the dialogue (289d2-290a5). Since speechwriting thus aims at the same ends as philosophy and the political art, its 'ignorance' is properly characterized as the *ignorance of genuine philosophy and the true craft of politics*. Given its particular pretensions in the public arena, speechwriting is in particular an ignorant pretender to political wisdom. Just as medical practice led by ignorance is not medicine, but quackery, so political activity led by ignorance is not the true art of politics, but a mere degenerate imposture of it, which is incapable of attaining the end at which politics aims and which only the true art of politics reliably achieves.

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<sup>22</sup> Socrates implies precisely this point about the art of medicine at 280a2-3; he identifies health as the product of the art of medicine at 291e4-6.

The same result follows in spades for the activity of eristic sophistry and its practitioners: in spades, because the *Euthydemus* is of course more concerned with this particular species of ignorance than it is with any other. Just as in the case of politics, we must suppose that a relation of *wise use* exists between the wisdom by which philosophical activity is guided or conducted on the one hand, and the characteristic practices and formal features that are internal to philosophy itself. One of the practices internal to philosophy that is prominently on display in the *Euthydemus* is the asking and answering of questions for the purpose of refutation. When this activity is guided by ignorance however, the result is fallacy and dialectical fouls of various other kinds, most of which are due to *ignoratio elenchi*. In Chapters 3 through 6, I shall examine the manner in which these faults of the eristic art are exposed in the *Euthydemus*. What is of immediate importance for our understanding of the Epilogue is that just as in the case of speechwriting, eristic sophistry is led by ignorance of a genuine art---in its case, refutation---at whose end it also aims. It follows that it too is a *bad art*.<sup>23</sup>

These results in turn shed further considerable light on the nature of the sense Plato attaches to the relations of *partaking* and *betweenness* in the Epilogue argument. Partaking, we said, was the definitionally prior notion: an art A lies between two others B and C just in case A satisfies the two conditions of being a (partial) partaker of B and a (partial) partaker of C. In a case where B and C are both good, it is now clear that Plato cannot mean that the art between them partakes of B and C *in virtue of having a share of the wisdom* by which either or both B and C are led. For as we have seen, both the art of speechwriting and eristic sophistry may be said to lie between philosophy and politics;

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<sup>23</sup> One amusing way Plato makes this point is by making the sophists declare that *they* never make a mistake, because false belief is impossible (287aff.) Contrast Socrates' claim that wisdom never makes a mistake, 280a. The sophists and philosophers are at the opposite poles therefore on the scale of Wisdom.



but there is no suggestion in the *Euthydemus* that either of the former partake of wisdom to any degree. This suggests that the notion of *partially* partaking of an art is meant to capture the sense in which an ignorant pretender to an art can only hope to achieve its good, or the end for which it is useful, by imitating the forms or practices that are internal to an art in a manner that is peculiarly *external* to it. To understand an art from the inside, as it were, is to use or conduct its constitutive practices in a wise fashion. To imitate an art from the outside is to partake of as many of the art's constitutive activities as one ignorantly supposes one needs to achieve its good; led by ignorance however, these activities will fail miserably to achieve that end. By contrast, for one art X to be a *complete* partaker of an art Y is simply to be identical to Y: for X in that case will have a share in both the constitutive practices internal to Y as well as the wisdom that guides these practices aright.

What I want to suggest next is that this construal of the partaking relation yields two further important consequences for the interpretation of Socrates' thought pattern at 305e5-306d1. First, it explains Socrates' easy confidence in the truth of premise (4), viz., that it is *only* in the case where an art lies between two evil arts, that it is better than the two evil arts with respect to the end for which either evil art is useful. The claim seems counterintuitive if lying between, and hence partaking of, two bad arts entails that the intermediate craft has a share in the bad-making features of the evil arts of which it partakes. On our reading of the partaking relation however this will not follow. For if premise (4) is interpreted strictly along the same lines as premise (3), but with the values of good and bad reversed, Socrates' point will be that although the intermediate art in such a case has a share of certain constitutive features or practices that are internal to the

bad arts to which it is related, since it is itself not led in its use of these by their bad-making feature, viz., ignorance, the intermediate art is better than its outliers with respect to the ends at which the outliers aim.

Such would be the situation for example of any art or activity that had the following properties: (i) the intermediate art aims at the same ends at which its two bad relatives respectively aim; (ii) the intermediate art shares certain constitutive features or engages in certain characteristic activities that are internal to its two bad relations; (iii) whereas the bad arts, being led by ignorance, fail to achieve their respective ends, the intermediate art manages to reliably achieve these ends, at least to some degree, precisely because it is not led by ignorance---either because it is led by wisdom, or because it is led by some degree of, or species of wisdom sufficient to enable it to reliably outstrip its bad relations in the attainment of their common ends.

### 1.3 Between Good Arts and Bad

Now it seems to me that it is no accident that it is Socratic activity as that is described in the *Euthydemus* that precisely conforms to conditions (i)-(iii) above. This is the second further significant consequence of our construal of the partaking relation: Socrates and his peculiar philosophical activity make their way into the contest for wisdom at 305e5-306d1. To see why this is so and how Socratic activity does conform to conditions (i)-(iii), we need only remind ourselves of a few salient facts regarding Socrates' portrayal in the dialogue:

Condition (i): There is a very clear sense in which Socratic activity in the *Euthydemus* aims at the same end as that at which a ‘bad’ art aims. For the entire dialogue is a dramatization of a contest of hortatory skill between Socrates and the sophists, who take turns demonstrating their protreptic art on the receptive (and vulnerable) Cleinias:

Put off the rest of your display to another time and give a demonstration of this one thing: persuade this young man here [i.e., Cleinias] that he ought to love wisdom and have a care for virtue (πέισατον ὥς χρὴ φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ ἀρετῆς ἐπιμελεῖσθαι). (275a4-6).

They said they would give a demonstration of hortatory skill (προτρεπτικὴν σοφίαν), but now it seems to me that they have thought it necessary to make fun of you before beginning. (278c5-7).

The next thing to do is to give an exhibition of persuading the young man that he ought to devote himself to wisdom and virtue (ἐπιδείξατον προτρέποντε τὸ μεράκιον ὅπως χρὴ σοφίας τε καὶ ἀρετῆς ἐπιμεληθῆναι). But first I shall give you two a demonstration of the way in which I conceive the undertaking and of the sort of thing I want to hear. (278d1-5).

Now then, since you believe both that [wisdom] can be taught and that it is the only existing thing which makes a man happy and fortunate, surely you would agree that it is necessary to love wisdom and you mean to do this yourself.

This is just what I mean to do, Socrates, as well as ever I can!

When I heard this I was delighted and said, There, Dionysodorus and Euthydemus, is my example of what I want a hortatory argument to be (Τὸ μὲν ἐμὸν...παράδειγμα...ὅϊων ἐπιθυμῶ τῶν προτρεπτικῶν λόγων εἶναι, τοιοῦτον), though amateurish, perhaps (ἰδιωτικὸν ἴσως), and expressed at length and with some difficulty. Now let either of you who wishes give us a demonstration of the same thing in a professional manner (ταῦτόν τοῦτο τέχνη πράττων ἐπιδειξάτω ἡμῖν). Or if you do not wish to do that, then start where I left off and show the boy what follows next: whether he ought to acquire every sort of knowledge, or whether there is one sort that he ought to get in order to be a happy man and a good one, and what it is. As I said in the beginning, it is of great importance to us that this young man should become wise and good (282c8-e6).

Socrates declines to describe his protreptic capacity as a τέχνη.<sup>24</sup> His demurrals however is understandable in the light of the sophists’ behaviour toward their ‘pupils’: in

<sup>24</sup> Cp. 278d5-6: ‘... if I seem to you to be doing this [i.e., giving a demonstration of protreptic skill] in an unprofessional and ridiculous way, don’t laugh at me (ἰδιωτικῶς τε καὶ γελοίως αὐτὸ ποιεῖν, μή μου καταγελάτε).

each interview they subject an interlocutor to a series of canned questions which are guaranteed to dumbfound and hence ‘refute’ anyone who is inexperienced in argument. As Socrates subsequently remarks, their technique is easily learnt and imitated.<sup>25</sup> It is the possession of a τέχνη in this sense that Socrates denies. Nevertheless his remarks do indicate that he takes himself to possess a certain skill in protreptic address (προτρεπτικὴν σοφίαν, 278c5-6) and argumentation. It seems equally clear that Socrates takes protreptic activity to aim at an end which its practitioner may attain to varying degrees of success or failure. As Socrates explicitly tells us at 275a4-6, his aim is to *persuade people to love wisdom and to have a care for, or incline to, virtue*. As Plato is at pains to point out however, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus make expressly the same claim for their art. For the sophists claim not only that they are able to teach people wisdom by means of their eristic τέχνη; they also claim that the protreptic art is *part of the same art* as that capacity (viz., eristic) by means of which they make men wise and good:

But tell me just this: are you able to make only that man good who is already persuaded (πεπεισμένον) that he ought to take lessons from you, or can you also make the man good (ἀγαθὸν ποιῆσαι) who is not yet persuaded on this point, either because he believes that this thing, virtue, cannot be taught at all, or because he thinks that you two are not its teachers? Come tell me, does the task of persuading a man in this frame of mind (τὸν οὕτως ἔχοντα) both that virtue can be taught, and that you are the ones from whom he could learn it best, belong to this same art or to some other one (τῆς αὐτῆς τέχνης ἔργον...ἢ ἄλλης)?

It belongs to this same art, Socrates, said Dionysodorus (274d7-e7).

It follows that Socratic activity in the *Euthydemus* shares a common end with the eristic art. But the formal resemblance between the two does not end there. For Plato has constructed the dialogue in such a way as to leave us in no doubt that there are *two*

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<sup>25</sup> Cp. e.g. 303e7-304a5. Plato emphasizes this in a number of ways in the *Euthydemus*. I discuss these in detail in Chapter 5. This aspect of the dialogue also receives thoughtful treatment in Burnyeat (2002).

distinct functions to Socratic conversation. The *Euthydemus* artfully unfolds in a series of alternating encounters between the sophists and various interlocutors, including Socrates, on the one hand, and Socrates and Cleinias on the other. In the Cleinias scenes, it is the protreptic aspect of Socratic activity that is on display. In his scenes with the sophists, it is rather the elenctic or refutational function of Socrates' skill that is in evidence.<sup>26</sup> The first function of Socratic activity is more positive in nature: in this aspect, Socrates exhorts to virtue both those who make no knowledge claims (like Cleinias, who says he is 'not yet, at least, wise', and who is a modest person and 'no boaster'),<sup>27</sup> as well as those who have been elenctically refuted (the more familiar situation of Socrates' interlocutors in many of the earlier Socratic dialogues). The second formal aim of Socratic activity, illustrated in his scenes with the sophists, is more negative: the elenchus proves the ignorance of pretenders to virtue and knowledge. It is clear however that the sophists take themselves to be supremely wise also on the ground of their expertise in refutation. It follows that the twin ends at which Socratic activity aims in the *Euthydemus* are precisely those at which the 'bad' art of eristic aims as well.

What then of the other 'bad' art alluded to in the dialogue? Does Socrates aim at the same end as the οἱ λογοποιοί (the composers of speeches)? If he does, then given that Socrates' immediate ends are those of protreptic and elenctic conversation, the speechwriters would have to share either or both of these ends. We have little to go on by way of answering this question, since it is the relationship between eristic, the elenchus, and philosophy that is in the spotlight in the *Euthydemus*. A clue is however provided by the Epilogue's description of the composer of speeches. Crito remarks that the derisive

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<sup>26</sup> I discuss the various episodes in which Socrates refutes the sophists in Chapters 3 through 6. From a dramatic point of view of course, Socrates is portrayed as losing his contest with the sophists (303a).

<sup>27</sup> Cp. 283c6-8.

auditor he encounters does not himself deliver the speeches he composes for the professional rhetors (305c1-4). Socrates adds that such people satisfy themselves that they are most wise (305c7-8), since they think they have sufficient learning in both philosophy and politics for their purposes; and ‘keeping clear of both risk and conflict, they reap the fruits of wisdom’ (305e1-2). Some commentators have seen in these remarks a sneering criticism of Isocrates. Others have argued that the figure is merely a fictional representative of the speechwriting occupation.<sup>28</sup> Whatever the truth of the matter, if Isocrates may be taken as (at least) *typical* of the sort of speechwriter Plato has in mind, it seems natural to suppose that it is Plato’s view that the conceit of wisdom of such an individual extends to mastery of the protreptic art.<sup>29</sup> If that is so, then we may conclude that Socrates’ characteristic activity in the *Euthydemus* indeed aims at the same ends as the two ‘bad’ arts of eristic sophistry and speechwriting, respectively.

Condition (ii): It follows immediately that Socratic activity will share certain constitutive features that are internal to the two bad arts to which it is related. Our analysis of the partaking relation above has already indicated what these constitutive features will be. The protreptic aspect of Socratic conversation will have a share of certain features of both the speechwriter’s hortatory art and the debased protreptic of the sophists; the elenctic function of Socratic activity will resemble the refutational practice

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<sup>28</sup> The strongest case for identifying the figure as Isocrates is perhaps made by W.H.Thompson (1868), 179-182, who is followed by Shorey (1933), 167-168. Friedlander (1969), 194, argues that the critic is a type, not a historical figure.

<sup>29</sup> This does seem true of Isocrates, at any rate. Cp. *Antidosis* 84: ‘I maintain also that if you compare me with those who profess to turn (προτρέπειν) men to a life of self-control and justice, you will find that my teaching is more true and more profitable than theirs. For they exhort (παρακαλοῦσιν) their followers to a kind of virtue and good sense which is ignored by the rest of the world and is disputed among themselves; I, to a kind which is recognized by all.’ Cp.277: ‘The power to speak well and think right will reward the man who approaches the art of discourse with love of wisdom and love of honour’. Translation Norlin (1929), with modifications.

of the sophists. Moreover, just as we noted earlier that eristic more nearly resembles philosophy while speechwriting partakes more of the true political art, the positive and negative aspects of Socratic activity are differentially reflected in the two bad arts it falls between: Socratic protreptic more nearly resembles the hortatory aspects of the speechwriter's art than it does the sophists' art as a whole; the Socratic elenchus more nearly resembles sophistical refutation than it does the speechwriter's art as such.

Condition (iii): It remains to show that Socratic activity, so situated between two bad arts and having a share of both, is 'better than the two evil arts of which it has a share with respect to the end for which either evil art is useful.' I take it that this result, while initially perplexing, is now utterly uncontroversial. For Plato will take the claim to mean that Socratic activity, in the exercise of its dual protreptic and elenctic functions, is better than either eristic sophistry or speechwriting at attaining the ends at which all three arts aim. The source of the failure of sophists and speechwriters in this regard is the same as the source of their failure as philosophers and statesmen: their bad arts are led by ignorance.

It seems equally clear however that the explanation of Socrates' relative *success* at protreptic and elenctic conversation does not lie in his possession of the kind of wisdom by which the arts of philosophy and politics are led. This is obvious in the light of a number of facts to which Plato carefully draws our attention throughout the dialogue:

- (1) At the very beginning of the dialogue, Socrates' δαιμόνιον arranges his encounter with the sophists (272e1-273a2). This raises our expectations that the ignorant pretenders to wisdom will be subjected to elenctic refutation. But as we know from the *Apology* and other Socratic dialogues, Socrates claims that his elenctic capacity is guided by a wisdom that is merely human, not divine.<sup>30</sup> As Socrates says at *Euthydemus* 293b7-8, he 'knows many things, but only small ones' (πολλά, μικρά γε).
- (2) Socrates pointedly asks Dionysodorus at 274d7-e7 whether it is the task of the same art both to persuade a man who is not yet convinced that virtue can be taught that it can be, *and* to persuade the person persuaded on *that* score that one is oneself the person from whom one could best learn virtue. Socrates subsequently indicates that he was prepared to persuade Cleinias of the teachability of virtue (an argument that is preempted by Cleinias' wholehearted agreement with the thesis, 282c4-5). But Socrates would certainly not claim that he is also prepared to persuade Cleinias that Socrates is the person from whom the boy could best learn virtue and wisdom.<sup>31</sup> Socrates is clear therefore that a division of labor obtains between his task and the true teacher of virtue and wisdom. Socrates can only exhort and refute. His art can go no further.<sup>32</sup>
- (3) Finally, while it is true that Socrates is a philosopher, and hence a lover of wisdom, Socrates defines the love of wisdom in the second protreptic episode as

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<sup>30</sup> *Apology* 20d6-20e3; cp.20c1-3.

<sup>31</sup> Indeed, Socrates indicates a number of times in the dialogue that he is rather in search of someone to make *him* wise and good, and he (ironically) beseeches the sophists to make him so (273e, 285c).

<sup>32</sup> Cp. Socrates' final remarks at *Tht.* 210b11-c5: 'And so, Theaetetus, if ever in the future you should attempt to conceive or should succeed in conceiving other theories, they will be better ones as the result of this enquiry. And if you remain barren, your companions will find you gentler and less tiresome; you will be modest and not think you know what you don't know. This is all my art (τεχνη) can achieve---no more.'



the acquisition of knowledge (288d8); and more specifically, as the acquisition of the knowledge that will benefit us and make us happy (288e1-2). Yet Socrates quickly elicits Cleinias' assent that this knowledge will also have to be of a sort that combines knowing how to make the things that it makes with knowing how to use these products (289b4-6). The argument then proceeds to explore the claims of two candidate crafts—politics and philosophy—to the identity of the knowledge in question. Both of these forms of wisdom however seem to be conceived of as *superordinate* crafts---that is, as arts which take over the products of lower crafts in order to put these latter to wise use.<sup>33</sup> Thus the geometers and astronomers and arithmeticians (οἱ γεωμέτραι καὶ οἱ ἀστρονόμοι καὶ οἱ λογιστικοί) are said to hand over their 'prey', mathematical discoveries, to the dialecticians (τοῖς διαλεκτικοῖς) to use, while generals---the 'hunters of men'---hand over their products for the statesman to use. (290b8-d3). The search for the identity of the single craft whose wise use will benefit us and make us happy ends in apparent *aporia*. Nevertheless, one thing is clear: the 'wisdom' that eludes Socrates and Cleinias cannot be identical to the 'human wisdom' in virtue of which Socrates successfully manages to achieve the relatively limited ends of protreptic and elenctic conversation and argument. For it is of course no part of his exercise of the latter activities as these are characterized in the *Euthydemus* that Socrates wisely dispose of either the products subordinate to the political art (e.g. war captives) or the advanced mathematical discoveries of the sister sciences of arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy.

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<sup>33</sup> I discuss the significance of this claim in detail below in Chapters 2.2-2.3.

In light of all three considerations (1)-(3), it follows that, according to the evaluation of arts in the *Euthydemus*, since Socratic activity is not guided in its exercise by either ‘full-blown’ philosophical or political wisdom, Socratic expertise and its exercise are *not good* in the sense of goodness that is relevant to the argument of 305e5-306d1.

#### 1.4 Winners and Losers

It is now time to take stock. Our attempt to interpret the partaking relation at 305e5-306d1 led us initially to the following view of the ‘goodness’ of the only two activities whose goodness the argument explicitly recognizes, viz., philosophy and politics: good arts, we said, are ‘complete partakers’ of themselves, insofar as they are sufficient when exercised in the right way (viz., wisely) to achieve the ends at which they aim. By contrast, the ‘worse’ arts of eristic and speechwriting are mere partial partakers of philosophy and the true political craft; for eristic and speechwriting partake merely of certain activities and practices that are formally internal to the exercise of politics and philosophy, rightly conceived. We next asked whether this construal of the *good-worse-good* triad could shed light on the workings of the other two triads (viz., *bad-better-bad* and *good-worse/better-bad*) in a manner that secures Socrates’ conclusion that speechwriting comes in third place behind philosophy and politics.

This question however pointed immediately to problems concerning the contribution of the other two triads to the derivation of Socrates’ conclusion. Given the notion that an art that partakes of two bad arts may nevertheless be *better* than its two evil

relatives, there seemed to be no bar to saying that *both* an evil art and a less-than-bad-but-not-quite-good art could lie between and partake of the two good arts of philosophy and politics; but in that case, it was no longer clear how the rank ordering of contenders for wisdom is to be understood. In attempting to solve these problems, I drew upon evidence from elsewhere in the dialogue to establish that the *bad-better-bad* triad is intended by Plato to represent the epistemic and moral status of Socratic activity vis-à-vis two ‘bad’ arts: the dual activities of Socratic protreptic and elenctic conversation ‘lie between and partake of’ the two bad arts of speechwriting and eristic sophistry.

I have argued that the air of paradox of this result is removed once an adjustment is made in our understanding of the partaking relation. The only relevant sense countenanced by Socrates in which an art may be said to be *good* is that it is controlled and led by wisdom; equally, the only relevant sense in which an art may be said to be *bad* is that it is controlled and led by ignorance. I suggested therefore that a relation of *wise use* obtains between wisdom and the characteristic activities and practices of a good art, activities and practices that are, formally speaking, internal to the art itself. Since one art can partake of the characteristic practices of another without being led in its conduct by the epistemic-cum-moral virtues or vices which guide the art of which it partakes, Socratic activity may unproblematically partake of eristic and speechwriting. For this will entail only that while aiming at the same ends as these arts, it bears a certain formal resemblance to them in certain respects, but does not partake of their bad-making feature, viz., ignorance.

The same considerations afforded a sense in which a truly *bad* art (and not merely a less-than-good one) may be said to lie between and partake of two good arts. For a bad

art such as eristic or speechwriting may partake of the practices of two good ones (such as politics or philosophy); yet this will not entail that either partakes of the wisdom by which either of the good outlying arts is led.

If the foregoing interpretation of the partaking relation is along the right lines, we may claim to have clarified the contribution all three triads make toward the rank ordering of the arts alluded to in the Epilogue. The dialogue's evaluation of arts and activities entails that *both* Socratic activity, and eristic sophistry and speechwriting, are between and partake of both philosophy and politics. It follows that both Socratic activity, as well as eristic and speechwriting, are all three *worse* than both philosophy and politics, with respect to achieving the ends of these two 'good' things. (That is the triad, *good-worse-good*). The argument also entails however that Socratic activity is *better* than eristic sophistry and speechwriting, with respect to the ends at which all three of these activities aim. (That is the triad, *bad-better-bad*). It follows that Socratic activity, while worse than either philosophy or politics at achieving the ends for which either good art is useful, is nevertheless better than either eristic or speechwriting at achieving these ends. (That is the triad, *good-better/worse-bad*). For Socratic expertise is guided neither by the ignorance by which eristic or speechwriting is led, nor by the wisdom which guides the activity of either philosophy or politics (rightly conceived).

Two difficulties however remain. First, Socrates clearly states that his argument entails that the speechwriters will come in third place in the contest for wisdom, right behind the philosophers and the politicians (306c5). On my interpretation however, the speechwriters will (at best) tie for fourth place, with the Euthydemus crowd, behind

Socrates and the exercise of protreptic and elenctic conversation. Yet if that is the true outcome of the contest as Plato intends it, then why does he not make Socrates say so?

The second problem concerns our interpretation of the *good-better/worse-bad* triad. As I have just indicated, I take the triad to represent the relation in which Socratic activity stands to either politics or philosophy on the one hand, and speechwriting and sophistry on the other. However, I argued above that the *ends* of Socratic activity are not those of either the philosopher or statesman. For despite the fact that we are still in the dark about the precise nature of the ends at which philosophy and politics aim, it seems clear that the *immediate* ends of Socratic activity *as such* are the dual aims of protreptic and elenctic conversation. The respective ends of these latter activities would seem to be getting people to care for their souls, and disabusing them of their false conceit of wisdom by means of genuine refutation. But if that is so, it does not seem true to say that Socratic activity (partially) partakes of either philosophy or politics. For we said it was a necessary condition of one art X partially partaking of another art Y that the end at which X aims is *identical* to the end at which Y aims.<sup>34</sup>

I will conclude my discussion of the Epilogue by addressing these two objections in turn.

Why does Socrates not explicitly argue for the moral and epistemic superiority of Socratic activity over speechwriting? I began my analysis of the argument by noting the reasons for its neglect by commentators: its apparent unsoundness; its weirdness; and its playfulness. I have argued that the argument, once correctly understood, is sound. I have also urged that it is no more weird—or, at any rate, no more unfamiliar in its content---than things Plato says elsewhere about the relationship between philosophy, politics, and

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<sup>34</sup> See above, 20-21.

their false imitations. I do not however think it can be denied that the argument is playful. The joke here---as usual in this dialogue---is on the ignorant pretenders to wisdom. As Socrates confides to Crito, it would be difficult enough (οὐ γὰρ ῥᾶδιον αὐτοῦς πείσαι, 306a1) just to get the speechwriters to agree to the following (the argument schema on our first construal above):

- (1) [If an art and its practitioners lie between and partake of two other arts, then the two other arts are either both good or both evil, or one is good and one is evil].
- (2) If an art and its practitioners lie between and partake of a good art and an evil art, then they are worse than the good art but better than the evil art [with respect to the end for which either of the latter arts is useful].
- (3) If an art and its practitioners lie between and partake of two good arts, then they are worse than either good art with respect to the end for which either of the latter arts is useful.
- (4) If an art and its practitioners lie between and partake of two evil arts, then they are better than the two evil arts of which they have a share with respect to the end for which either evil art is useful.
- (5) Speechwriting and its practitioners lie between and partake of two arts, viz., philosophy and politics.
- (6) [(Therefore) Speechwriting and its practitioners lie between and partake of two arts that are either both good, both evil, or one good and one evil art]. (By 1, 5).
- (7) The speechwriters would deny that both philosophy and politics are bad, and that either philosophy or politics is bad.
- (8) [(Therefore) the speechwriters would agree that both philosophy and politics are good]. (By 6, 7).
- (9) [Philosophy and politics are (in fact) both good].
- (10) (Therefore) the speechwriters would agree (correctly) that speechwriting and its practitioners lie between and partake of two good arts, viz., philosophy and politics. (By 5, 8, 9).

(11) (Therefore) the speechwriters would agree (correctly) that speechwriting and its practitioners are worse than either philosophy or politics with respect to the end for which either of the latter arts is useful. (By 3, 10).

(12) (Therefore) the speechwriters could be persuaded to adopt the (correct) view that speechwriters and their art come in third place in the contest for wisdom behind philosophy and politics. (By 11).

As noted above, Socrates derives his conclusion in large part by relying on premise (5) as an instantiation of the triad *good-worse-good*, introduced in premise (3). Since that is so, it seemed that premises (2) and (4) are not utilized in the argument. I have argued that this appearance is merely apparent; all three triads are included in Socrates' speech precisely in order that his special expertise may be located in a taxonomy of arts which are related to philosophy and the political craft. We may now add however that the *explicit* utilization of premises (2) and (4) is easily explained. Earlier we had occasion to note the resistance Socrates may be expected to meet in getting the speechwriters (or the sophists, for that matter) to accept even premises (3) and (5). We are now in a position to presume that their resistance would be total if Socrates attempted to persuade them of the following *additional* claims:

(13) Speechwriting and eristic sophistry are led by baleful *ignorance*, and hence are *bad* arts.

(14) There exists an art which lies between and partakes of the two bad arts of speechwriting and sophistry.

(15) Therefore, this art and its practitioner are better than either speechwriting and sophistry and their practitioners. (By (1), (4), (13), (14)).

(16) This art and its practitioner lie between and partake of philosophy and politics on the one hand, and speechwriting and sophistry on the other.

(17) Therefore, this art is worse than philosophy and politics, but better than speechwriting and sophistry. (By (2), (16)).

Indeed, in the light of Socrates' wild encounter with the brothers Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, it would seem safe to say that it is a major theme of the *Euthydemus* that Socratic conversation is *powerless* to persuade certain people of their ignorance. Certainly the sophists seem incurable in this regard; yet if that is so, they are unsuitable candidates for elenctic refutation. The same would seem to be true of the speechwriters, or at least those who share the outlook of the exemplar encountered by Crito. For, as Socrates has pointed out just prior to our text, it is precisely people of that sort who, upon being refuted, petulantly blame their downfall on 'the followers of Euthydemus' (305c5-305e2). I will argue below that it is a major development in Plato's thinking about the moral and philosophical efficacy of the elenchus that its power is inherently limited in this way.<sup>35</sup> This limitation however does not entail that persons who are less incapacitated, epistemically speaking, may not follow the drift of Socrates' argument to its punch-line. That is reached via the implicit premises (13)-(17), understood in the light of the entirety of the foregoing proceedings. The joke is Socrates' final riposte to the speechwriter, through whose grubby epistemic lens Socratic activity, sophistic activity, and philosophy itself seemed indistinguishable in (negative) value. It is also the final riposte in a dialogue that is full of jokes at the expense of those who, like Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, are responsible for bringing philosophy into disrepute; and Socrates, as is fitting, gets the last word.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Chapter 3.1, 90-91.

<sup>36</sup> Thus I do not claim that the speechwriting art is said to come in third place *because* it ranks below Socratic activity. Speechwriting comes in third place because it is worse than philosophy and politics. My



That brings us to our final problem. How can Socratic activity be a partial partaker of either philosophy or the political craft, if its immediate ends are not identical to the ends of either of the former arts? The answer lies in the fact that Plato conceives of the goodness of philosophy and politics in teleological terms---that is, in terms of the ends at which each of these two superordinate activities aims. To say that Socratic activity aims at the ends of either philosophy or politics is to say that Socratic activity aims at ends in addition to, and beyond, its own immediate ends. But this is not problematic, since the successful attainment of the immediate ends of protreptic and elenctic activity does in fact *advance* the aims of the superordinate arts of philosophy and politics. Indeed, if I am right in thinking that the *Euthydemus* recognizes a sharp distinction between Socratic dialectic and the higher dialectic of the second protreptic episode, we must recognize Socratic conversation as a necessary propædæutic to the examination of the results of the higher mathematical disciplines.<sup>37</sup> Socratic activity thus advances, in its own peculiar fashion, the same ends at which philosophy and politics aim. It is, I suggest, in this sense that Plato conceives of Socratic activity as aiming at ends that are strictly identical to those of philosophy and politics.

This solution squares too with the fact that Socratic activity is ‘between and partakes of’ the two ‘bad’ arts of speechwriting and eristic. We made sense of this claim above by noting that while aiming at the same ends as philosophy and politics, the sophist and the speechwriter also claim skill in protreptic and the art of refutation. Since however these bad arts fail to advance the intermediate aims of Socratic conversation, this

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claim is that speechwriting and eristic sophistry come in fourth place if all of the implications of the argument are carried out to their end.

<sup>37</sup> A result which I hope strikes the reader as familiar middle period doctrine.

contributes inevitably to their failure to attain the ends of either philosophy or the political craft.

These results however lead to a question that cannot be put off any longer: what, exactly, *are* the ends of philosophy and politics, as these activities are conceived of in the *Euthydemus*? What does Socrates mean by saying that while both philosophy and politics are good, each is related to something different (εἰ μὲν οὖν ἡ φιλοσοφία ἀγαθὸν ἐστὶν καὶ ἡ πολιτικὴ πρόξις, πρὸς ἄλλο δὲ ἑκάτερά, 306b2-3)? In the next chapter I will argue that the answers to these questions lie hidden in the ‘labyrinth’ (λαβύρινθον, 291b7)—as Socrates calls it---that constitutes the *aporia* of the second protreptic episode. We shall discover that Socrates’ assertion in the Epilogue that philosophy and politics are both good but are both πρὸς ἄλλο provides a crucially important clue that points the way out of the labyrinth.

## Chapter Two

### 2.1 The First Protreptic Episode

Our reading of the Epilogue of the *Euthydemus* has revealed that in this dialogue, Plato regards Socratic expertise to be an art that lies ‘between’ the arts of philosophy on the one hand, and politics on the other. I have argued that the sense we must attach to this result is that Socratic activity, in both its protreptic and refutatory aspects, advances the same ends at which philosophy and politics respectively aim. A full grasp of the nature of Socratic expertise in the *Euthydemus* would seem then to be contingent on the identification of the distinct (ἄλλο) ends of philosophy and politics. However, as we have noted above, the Epilogue is not exactly forthcoming in specifying these distinct ends. I suggest that the reason this is so is because Plato takes himself to have embedded the answer to their identity in the second protreptic episode of the dialogue (288d5-293a6). This episode ostensibly ends in ἀπορία when Socrates and Cleinias fail to find the single superordinate art which, combining using and making, ‘provides and completes’ human happiness (291b5). We shall find however that the proper identification of the distinct ends of philosophy and the political craft point the way out of the ἀπορία.

To see why this is so, we must begin by examining the argument of the first protreptic episode (278e3-282d3); for it is the positive result of Socrates’ first protreptic argument which forms the starting point of his second, and apparently unsuccessful, demonstration of his hortatory skill. Socrates neatly summarizes the positive result of his first argument at the commencement of the second protreptic episode:

So, Cleinias, I said, remind me where we left off. As far as I can remember it was just about at the point where we finally agreed that it was necessary to love wisdom, wasn't it? (288d5-7)

The conclusion that it is necessary for Cleinias to love wisdom is of course the proposition which Socrates had challenged the sophists themselves to demonstrate to Cleinias through an exercise of their own vaunted skill in the art of moral exhortation:

Put off the rest of your display to another time and give a demonstration of this one thing: persuade this young man here [i.e., Cleinias] that he ought to love wisdom and have a care for virtue (πέισατον ὥς χρὴ φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ ἀρετῆς ἐπιμελεῖσθαι). (275a4-6)

The brothers however make a mockery of Socrates' challenge by submitting Cleinias to a bewildering series of false refutations.<sup>38</sup> If Cleinias' reaction is anything to go by, Socrates' own first protreptic argument by contrast seems to end in complete success:

Now then, since you believe both that [wisdom] can be taught and that it is the only existing thing which makes a man happy and fortunate, surely you would agree that it is necessary to love wisdom and you mean to do this yourself.

This is just what I mean to do, Socrates, as well as ever I can! (282c8-d3)

Unfortunately, many of Plato's commentators have been less impressed than Cleinias by the first protreptic argument; for as we have noted above, the precise means by which Socrates wins this conclusion is highly controversial. At 279a-b, Socrates and Cleinias agreed that certain kinds of things are obviously good things insofar as we do well when we possess them. The list of agreed upon goods includes health, beauty, noble birth, power, honour in one's country and---significantly---the recognized virtues of self-control, justice, and courage. At Socrates' urging, the virtue of wisdom is added to the list (279c). Upon consideration, Socrates insists that good fortune (εὐτυχίαν) be added too, on the grounds that 'everybody, even quite worthless people', says good fortune is 'the

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<sup>38</sup> I discuss these in detail below, Chapter 3.2, 94-112.

greatest of the goods'. Socrates then immediately corrects himself, insisting now that they have erred in adding the same thing twice to the list of goods---since 'wisdom surely *is* good fortune---this is something even a child would know' (279d). When Cleinias expresses amazement at the latter thesis, Socrates explains by mean of an inductive argument: it is the wise expert (flute-player, writing master, ship's pilot, general, doctor), not the ignorant novice, who has the better luck in any particular field of endeavour. Socrates takes this to show that 'wisdom makes men fortunate in every case'---since if wisdom made mistakes or made us unlucky 'she would no longer be wisdom'; hence if a man has wisdom, he has 'no need of any good fortune in addition' (280b).<sup>39</sup>

However, in the next stage of the argument, Socrates works to undermine Cleinias' unreflective attitude toward the goodness of the conventionally recognized goods. First, Socrates wins Cleinias' agreement that it is not, after all, the mere possession of good things that makes us happy; we must use these good things, too, if they are to be of any advantage to us (280c-d). ('If we had a great deal of food but didn't eat any, or plenty to drink but didn't drink any, would we derive any advantage from these things?...If a man had money and all the good things we were mentioning just now but made no use of them, would he be happy as a result of having these good things?'). Next, Socrates raises the question whether it is the possession and wise use, or the possession and unwise use of these goods that will be sufficient for happiness. Reflection upon this point leads Socrates to the surprising conclusion that *in themselves*---that is, apart from either wise or ignorant use---neither the conventional goods nor their

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<sup>39</sup> This statement raises a number of interpretative issues. Among these are whether Socrates conceives of wisdom as a craft that adapts to circumstances, insuring that we may be as happy as possible under circumstances that are beyond its control, or a craft that masters or controls circumstances, insuring that we may be as happy as possible in an absolute sense. (This problem is noted by Reeve (1989), 133-134). However for the purposes of my argument we may safely ignore these complex issues.

opposites (sickness, poverty, ugliness, etc.) are of any value (αὐτὰ δὲ καθ' αὐτὰ οὐδέτερα αὐτῶν οὐδενὸς ἄξια εἶναι, 281d3-e1). However, on the basis of this claim, and without any further intervening argument, Socrates characterizes the foregoing conclusion in terms of what would appear to be a stronger claim:

Then what is the result of our conversation? Isn't it that, of the other things, no one of them is either good or bad, but of these two, wisdom is good and ignorance bad? (ἄλλο τι ἢ τῶν μὲν ἄλλων οὐδὲν ὄν οὔτε ἀγαθόν οὔτε κακόν, δὲ δυοῖν ὄντοι ἡ μὲν σοφία ἀγαθόν, ἡ δὲ ἀμαθία κακόν; 281e3-5).

This second conclusion, which plays a key role in both the first and second protreptic episodes, has struck many commentators as deeply problematic.<sup>40</sup> This is so for two main reasons. First, it does not seem to follow from the argument Socrates advances to establish it. As we have just noted, at 281d3-e1 Socrates concludes that in themselves the recognized goods and their opposites have no value as far as our happiness is concerned. He reaches this result by arguing as follows:

1. If the recognized goods are led by ignorance, they are greater evils than their opposites, insofar as they are more capable of aiding and abetting a 'bad master' (concluded at 281d5-7). (Thus e.g. health and wealth guided by ignorance are greater evils than ignorance-led sickness and poverty).

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<sup>40</sup> Vlastos (1991) denies that the passage entails that wisdom is the only good thing, and that wisdom is identical to happiness. He sees the passage as making a sufficiency claim about the relationship between wisdom and happiness, whereby 'virtue, remaining the invariant and sovereign good, would of itself assure a sufficiency of happiness---enough of it to yield deep and durable contentment---but would still allow for small, but not negligible, enhancements of happiness as a result of the virtuous possession and use of non-moral goods.' Annas (1993) thinks the passage entails that happiness and wisdom are identical, and hence that 'virtue is the only real good, and the conventional goods are not really good at all, but should strictly speaking be called neutral, neither good nor bad.' She then complains that the claim that virtue is identical with happiness is inconsistent with Socrates' claim that wisdom is a craft; since if wisdom is a craft, it will have products; but if wisdom is the only good, its products cannot be valuable.

2. On the other hand, if good sense (φρόνησις) and wisdom (σοφία) are in control of the recognized goods, they are greater goods than their opposites (280e-281e). (Thus e.g. health and wealth led by good sense and wisdom are greater goods than sickness and poverty led by good sense and wisdom).
3. Therefore, in themselves, neither sort of recognized good or evil (e.g. health and wealth or sickness and poverty) is of any worth/value (281d8-281e1).<sup>41</sup>

It seems fairly clear that what Socrates means by (3) is that considered apart from either their wise or ignorant use, neither the recognized goods nor their opposites can be judged as being better or worse with respect to the contribution their mere possession makes to our happiness or doing well. However, this does not entail the claim that either the recognized goods or their opposites are neither good nor bad *tout court*.<sup>42</sup> Yet Socrates' move from the weaker claim to the evidently stronger claim, without further intervening argument, suggests that he thinks it does.

A second difficulty concerns the import of the second half of Socrates' conclusion, viz., that 'wisdom is good, and ignorance bad.' Does Socrates mean that wisdom is (really) the *only* good thing, while ignorance is (really) the *only* bad thing? If so, the claim is inconsistent with one familiar interpretation of the first half of Socrates' conclusion, viz., that none of the 'other things' (e.g. health and wealth, or sickness and poverty) is either good or bad.<sup>43</sup> One reading of the latter claim that has found favor with

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<sup>41</sup> This protreptic argument is very similar to the following from Aristotle's *Protrepticus*: '...lack of education combined with power breeds folly. For those who are ill-disposed in soul neither wealth nor strength nor beauty is good; the more lavishly one is endowed with these conditions, the more grievously and the more often they hurt him who possesses them but has not wisdom. The saying 'no knife for a child' means 'Do not give bad men power'. (Fr. B4 of Düring's reconstruction; transl. Düring (1961)).

<sup>42</sup> Noted by Parry, op.cit., 9.

<sup>43</sup> This is the view of Annas, op.cit.

some commentators is that health, wealth, etc. and their opposites are *indifferent* with respect to goodness and badness. On this view, the recognized goods of health, wealth, are indifferent in value in the sense that, while they may serve as means to happiness, they are not themselves constituents of happiness. (Suppose happiness is philosophical activity. Then wealth and health, while they may make access to this activity easier, are neither good nor bad since neither wealth nor health is a constituent of philosophical activity). However, (2) says that when guided by wisdom, health and wealth (etc.) are *greater goods* (μείζων ἀγαθά, 281d8) than their opposites when the latter are led by wisdom. On the ‘indifference’ reading of 281e3-5, this will entail that the recognized goods are better non-constitutive means to happiness: wealth, for example, when led by wisdom is better at providing access to happiness (whatever it is) than is penury led by wisdom. This result is however inconsistent with the assumption that Socrates takes ‘good’ to mean ‘constituent of happiness’, and hence with the assumption that wisdom is the only good thing.

Some stand or other must be taken on the interpretation of the conclusion of the first protreptic episode if we are to thread the labyrinth of the second. However, the issues raised by this text are highly complex, and lie beyond the scope of our inquiry into the nature of Socratic dialectic in the *Euthydemus*. Rather than fully defend any one reading over another, I will simply describe the interpretation that I favor, which has been recently (and ably) defended by Richard Parry.<sup>44</sup> On this reading, when Socrates concludes at 281e3-5 that none of the recognized goods is either good or bad, he means that the recognized goods are *indeterminate*—not indifferent---with respect to goodness and badness. Money, fame, power, or beauty are indeterminate in value since in favorable

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<sup>44</sup> Op.cit.



circumstances they are good things, while in less favorable circumstances they are bad.

As Parry argues,

In the one circumstance [the recognized good] enhances happiness, in the other it detracts from it; [it] is a potential constituent of happiness. Suppose happiness is pleasure. Listening to a symphony is indeterminate. Under favorable circumstances, it is a constituent of pleasure; under unfavorable circumstances, it is not a constituent of pleasure. In this sense, then, listening to a symphony is neither good nor bad. Moreover, if [a recognized good] is indeterminate with respect to good, it is not indifferent because there could be circumstances under which x can also enhance goodness....While in [281e3-5] Socrates is clearly introducing a distinction among the goods from the original list, the distinction is between active principle and passive elements. On the one side is wisdom, the active principle of happiness. On the other are all the rest---health, wealth, e.g.---which are passive. In themselves, the passive elements are indeterminate with respect to happiness; their being indeterminate means they can be determined to one or the other result...As the determining principle, [wisdom] is also determinate with respect to happiness. Being determinate with respect to happiness does not mean that wisdom by itself is happiness. Rather, it means that whenever wisdom is at work one is invariably happy. Still, wisdom is the active principle but not the only element in happiness.<sup>45</sup>

On this reading, Socrates' argument is strongly protreptic because it gives Cleinias a compelling reason to value wisdom above all the other recognized goods. If Cleinias chose to accumulate wealth or acquire the recognized goods of health, power, or even the conventional virtues of justice, courage, and self-control in the absence of the knowledge of how to use these good things wisely, he would actually harm himself; for lacking such wisdom, these potentially good things are actually bad. Socrates' argument does not establish that wisdom is the sole component of happiness; neither does it demonstrate that happiness consists solely or in large part in the activity of the wise disposition of the recognized goods. What the argument does show is that the virtue of wisdom which Socrates urges that Cleinias has a compelling reason to pursue crucially involves the wise use of (at least) the recognized goods. With so much as prologue then, we may now follow Socrates' further investigation of the nature of wisdom in the second protreptic conversation.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 10-12.

## 2.2 The Second Protreptic Episode: Producers and Users

Socrates' begins by laying out a number of claims that were established in his earlier conversation with Cleinias. These are that it is necessary to love wisdom (or literally, to be a philosopher, φιλοσοφητέον, 288d6-7); that the love of wisdom is some sort of knowledge; that the sort of knowledge in question which the philosopher seeks is one which will benefit us; and that there is no benefit (ὄφελος, 289a2, 289a4, 289b2) from the products of any sort of art unless we know how to use these products in such a way that their use benefits us. A new inference that is introduced at this point is that in addition to the *products* of an art being of no benefit in the absence of the knowledge of how to use the products, there will also be no benefit in the *knowledge* that makes the products unless there also exists a knowledge of how the products are to be used.<sup>46</sup>

On the basis of these observations, Socrates gains Cleinias' assent to the thesis that the acquisition of the knowledge that will benefit us must be a kind of knowledge which combines making and knowing how to use the thing which it makes. (Τοιαύτης τινὸς ἄρα ἡμῖν ἐπιστήμης δεῖ...ἐν ᾗ συμπέπτωκεν ἅμα τό τε ποεῖν καὶ τὸ ἐπίστασθαι χρῆσθαι τούτῳ ὃ ἂν ποιῇ, 289b4-6). Strictly speaking, it does not follow from the preceding assumptions that the knowledge the philosopher seeks must both itself produce a product and know how to use the *very product which it produces*. For all that has been said so far, it would be sufficient for a form of knowledge to be beneficial if it conveyed the wise use of the products of another art, or arts. It emerges however as the argument

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<sup>46</sup> Cp. 288e4-289a1: 'But earlier, I said, we gave a thorough demonstration of the point that even if all the gold in the world should be ours with no trouble and without the digging for it, we should be no better off—no, not even if we know how to make stones into gold would the knowledge be worth anything (οὐδενὸς ἂν ἀξία ἡ ἐπιστήμη εἶη).' In fact the claim goes beyond anything that is explicitly said earlier.

continues that Socrates' inference is driven by a number of implicit theses he holds about (a) the nature of ordinary craft knowledge and (b) about the particular form of knowledge sought by the philosopher.

With respect to (a), Socrates assumes that most ordinary crafts observable in everyday life are either *producers* or *users*: that is, crafts are either producers of some specifiable product of craft knowledge, or they consist in the expert use of the products of some separate, productive craft. Cp. 289b7-289c4:

Then it seems not at all needful for us to become lyre makers and skilled in some such knowledge as that. For there the art which makes is one thing and that which uses is another; they are quite distinct although they deal with the same thing (τοῦ αὐτοῦ περὶ). There is a great difference between lyre making and lyre playing, isn't there?<sup>47</sup>

With respect to (b), Socrates assumes that the form of knowledge which the philosopher seeks is such that it 'provides and completes happiness' (ἡ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν παρέχουσα τε καὶ ἀπεργαζομένη, 291b5), where this is evidently taken to entail that the possession and activation of this form of wisdom will benefit us precisely by meeting the condition that it combines making and knowing how to use the thing which it makes.<sup>48</sup>

Thus a productive art such as lyre-making cannot 'complete' our happiness, for by

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<sup>47</sup> Socrates' other examples of productive crafts or activities and their corresponding users include: mining for gold and the use of gold, money-making and medicine and the use of their respective products (money/health); and even 'the knowledge of how to make men immortal', and the use of this immortality. (Cp. 288e-289b). The latter may be a half-serious reference to the art that will make men as god-like as possible, viz., dialectic.

<sup>48</sup> I take it that Socrates' notion of a form of wisdom 'completing' human happiness can be cashed out in terms of the notion of a 'complete' end. The relevant notion of a 'complete end' however is perhaps usefully contrasted with Aristotle's notion of an 'unconditionally complete end', that is, an object of desire that is choiceworthy by itself (καθ' αὐτό) and never for the sake of something else. (EN 1097a30-34). Aristotle of course identifies *happiness* (εὐδαιμονία) as such an unconditionally complete end. I take it that Plato does not identify the wisdom which will complete happiness with happiness itself. What he implies rather is that (a) a productive craft that 'hands over' its product to its correlative 'user' art is incomplete, and hence cannot complete human happiness; and (b) that a using art in the absence of its possession of the products it uses is incomplete, and hence is equally incapable of completing human happiness. For the same reason, Socrates' notion of wisdom 'completing' happiness is not equivalent to the notion that wisdom is sufficient (or self-sufficient) for happiness (on any interpretation of self-sufficiency; cp. EN 1097b6-16). On this point see also 60 above: Socrates does not argue that happiness consists solely in the activation of wisdom.

hypothesis a productive form of knowledge is of no benefit if its product is not wisely used; and although there exists a craft of the wise use of lyres (viz., lyre-playing), this craft is by hypothesis distinct from the craft of lyre-making. It is on the same grounds that an evidently more serious contender for wisdom is eliminated (289d-e). As we have noted in Chapter One, Socrates argues that neither the art of oratory ('the enchanters' art', 290a1) nor the speechwriters' art can complete happiness, since the former is a using art and the latter is a productive art, and by hypothesis the two capacities are distinct. Nevertheless, Socrates' strategy invites the following objection. Why should we have supposed in the first place that the wisdom that will 'provide and complete happiness' must consist of some single form of knowledge which 'combines using and making'? Why could our happiness not be provided for by the possession of a set of forms of knowledge—perhaps some combination of using and producing arts? Initially, at least, this question is held in abeyance. Its submergence is attributable to the next observation regarding crafts which Socrates introduces into the discussion. This is the fact that a certain hierarchical order seems to obtain between producers and users: using arts are set over those productive arts that are 'concerned with the same thing', while the productive arts 'hand over' their products for the users to use.

A case in point is the art of generalship (ἡ στρατηγική), which is considered next as a candidate for the art that will complete human happiness. Unlike the first set of arts considered, this art is acquisitive by nature, not productive.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, it is rejected

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<sup>49</sup> Plato makes a bigger fuss about drawing distinctions between productive and acquisitive arts in the *Sophist*. (Cp. 219a-d: productive arts bring things into being that did not exist before; acquisitive arts take possession of things that already exist). Here he is interested only in the fact that both acquisitive and productive arts hand over their results to a using art.

on the same grounds as the productive arts surveyed so far. For, as Cleinias points out, generalship is a kind of ‘man-hunting’; and

No art of actual hunting...extends further than pursuing and capturing: whenever the hunters catch what they are pursuing they are incapable of using it, but they and the fishermen hand over their prey to the cooks...And the same is true of the generals...Whenever they capture some city, or a camp, they hand it over to the statesmen (τοῖς πολιτικοῖς)---for they themselves have no idea of how to use the things they have captured---just in the same way, I imagine, that quail hunters hand theirs over to quail keepers. So...if we are in need of that art which will itself know how to use what it acquires through making or capturing, and if it is an art of this sort which will make us happy, then...we must look for some other art besides that of generalship (290b5-290d8).

The art of generalship having been found wanting on such grounds, Socrates’ next suggestion is that it is the art of the statesman---that is, the ‘kingly art’ (τὴν βασιλικὴν τέχνην) of politics---that stands the best chance of being the form of knowledge which, combining using and making, completes our happiness. For

It was due to this art that generalship and the others handed over the management of the products of which they themselves were the craftsmen, as if this art alone knew how to use them. It seemed clear to us that this was the art we were looking for, and that it was the cause of right action in the state, and, to use the language of Aeschylus, that this art alone sits at the helm of the state, governing all things, ruling all things, and making all things useful (πάντα κυβερνῶσα και πάντων ἄρχουσα πάντα χρήσιμα ποιεῖν), (291c7-d3).

We are thus led to the assumption that the art that will complete happiness is a *single art* by a pair of observations. The first is the apparent existence of a hierarchy among the crafts of users and producers. The second is that the art of politics seems to be a superordinate craft that completes our happiness because there is no higher art that is set over politics that stands to politics as user to producer.

### 2.3 Into the Labyrinth

It is however evident---though seldom noted---that the notion of the uniqueness of the sought-after superordinate craft is largely aided and abetted by a curious dialectical

lapse—or seeming lapse---which Socrates commits at precisely this point in the investigation.<sup>50</sup> At 290d5-c6, Cleinias introduces, not one, but two distinct superordinate crafts by way of eliminating generalship from contention:

No art of actual hunting...extends further than pursuing and capturing: whenever the hunters catch what they are pursuing they are incapable of using it, but they and the fishermen hand over their prey to the cooks. And again, geometers and astronomers and calculators (who are hunters too, in a way, for none of these make their diagrams; they simply discover those which already exist), since they themselves have no idea of how to use their prey but only how to hunt it, hand over the task of using their discoveries to the dialecticians---at least, those of them do so who are not completely senseless.

Cleinias then returns to the case of generalship (cited above, 290c9-d8), explaining that generals hand over their ‘prey’ too, in their case to the statesman. Cleinias’ intriguing remarks on the nature of the relationship between the mathematical sciences and dialectic receive no further attention from Socrates. It is ‘the kingly art’ of politics that Socrates takes up next, in order to ‘give it a thorough inspection to see whether it might be the one which provided and completed happiness’ (291b4-6). However, as Socrates explains to Crito, it was by pursuing the claim of the kingly art to be the form of knowledge that completes happiness that the argument was led into ἀπορία:

...just there we got into a sort of labyrinth (ἐνταῦθα ὥσπερ εἰς λαβύρινθον): when we thought we had come to the end, we turned round again and reappeared practically at the beginning of our search in just as much trouble as when we started out (291b7-10).

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<sup>50</sup> Parry, *op.cit.*, rightly emphasizes that the second protreptic episode involves Socrates and Cleinias in a labyrinth, as opposed merely to an infinite regress. However, he says nothing about the art of dialectic and its relation to politics as figuring in a solution to the ἀπορία. Sprague (1976) thinks the ἀπορία wholly concerns the art of the statesman, similarly ignoring the reference to a dialectical art. She also denies that Socrates takes politics to be a productive art. (‘A second-order art, such as the kingly art...directs other arts...but does not itself know how to do any of the things that these other arts know how to do. (It is not an art of making, in other words). The statesman, therefore, finds himself in the position of ruling over craftsman who know more than he does.’) Reeve, *op.cit.*, 82-84, seems to see the potential significance of the manner in which dialectic drops out of the inquiry, but he is not occupied with providing an analysis or solution to the ἀπορία in the *Euthydemus*.

As we shall see, it is important to bear Socrates' metaphor in mind when attempting to analyze the structure of the upcoming aporetic passage: in what sense does the argument 'turn round again', returning Socrates and Cleinias to their starting point? But it is equally important to bear in mind that one is typically turned round in a labyrinth by making a series of wrong turns—a series which begins with an initial wrong turn. Our suspicion that the first wrong turn is taken here should be aroused by Socrates' silence regarding the claim of dialectic to be the form of knowledge sought by the lover of wisdom. Both the mathematical sciences and generalship are rejected on the grounds that they are not users, but are rather equally acquisitive arts. Politics is then investigated on the grounds of its superordination over certain productive and acquisitive arts. But at least in terms of its characterization by Cleinias, dialectic would then seem to share in every property of the political art that makes it a fit candidate for further inquiry. The fact that it is the political art that subsequently returns us again to our starting point, while the path of dialectic is never pursued, strongly suggests that Plato invites us to solve the upcoming ἀπορία by returning to consider the relationship of dialectic to the kingly art of politics.

This impression is strongly reinforced by a second textual clue. For it is of course at precisely this fork in the road---politics, or dialectic---that Cleinias mysteriously drops out of the second protreptic episode. Crito expresses disbelief (290e1-2) that Cleinias himself could have been responsible for the remarks Socrates attributes to the boy. Crito's subsequent declaration that the speech could only have been made by 'some superior being' (τῶν κρείττονων τις, 291a6) clinches the point that it was in fact Socrates, and not Cleinias, who introduced the remarks about dialectic and its relationship to the mathematical disciplines. The immediate explanation for Socrates'

ventriloquism is surely that the remarks are far too sophisticated for Cleinias to have made himself. It is equally clear however that Plato need not have resorted to such an odd device, nor have drawn such coy attention to it (the banter with Crito over Socrates' impersonation goes on for sixteen lines) if its purpose is to introduce dialectic merely as a further example of an art that fails to combine acquisition (or production) with using (since a far less sophisticated example would have served). It is much more likely therefore that, as the road not taken, dialectic is introduced as the way out of the labyrinth.<sup>51</sup>

The manner in which the ἀπορία is generated supports these claims. Socrates begins by assuming that the kingly art sits *alone* at the helm of state, 'ruling all things and making all things useful.' It has already been assumed that politics is a *user*; that is, it is a form of knowledge that knows how to use the products of all the other crafts it is set over. Socrates moves next to inquire whether politics is also a *producer*: does politics, like medicine and farming, produce a product or result (ἔργον, 292a1) of its own when it 'rules over' and uses 'all the things in its control'? (291d5-292a9).<sup>52</sup> Here it is important to be clear about the force of Socrates' question. Politics will not be the art that appropriately combines using and making simply by using the products of lower-order crafts *and* producing a product of its own. Socrates' question rather is, what will the

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<sup>51</sup> Sprague (1993), 36, remarks on the incident: 'Cleinias' remarks and Crito's comments on them contribute, of course, to the contrast between dialectic and eristic which is a keynote of the entire dialogue'. One could hardly say less. McCabe (1998), 163, suggests that Cleinias' disappearance fits into a 'who's who?' theme of the dialogue: 'Ctesippus is speedily made a sophist. Cleinias is threatened with extinction by the sophists; while at the hands of Socrates he becomes unrecognizable (when he makes his best point, Socrates and Crito are incredulous that it was he who said it)'. I find it impossible to believe that the incident is meant as a criticism of Socrates (if that is what McCabe means). Nor do I understand how this interpretation is supposed to be consistent with McCabe's view that Socratic sincerity and integrity are also important themes of the dialogue: 'Socrates insists that Cleinias say what he believes', 164. If these qualities are integral to Socratic activity, why does he tend to 'absorb' his interlocutors (as McCabe claims)?

<sup>52</sup> Socrates ignores the alternative that politics could be an acquisitive, rather than a productive, art. It is doubtful however that this has any bearing on what follows.



product of the kingly art be which it *also* knows how to make useful? That is why it is reiterated (292a7-9) that if politics ‘is to be the art we are looking for, it must be something beneficial’ (εἰπερ ἐστὶν αὕτη ἣν ἡμεῖς ζητοῦμεν, ὠφέλιμον αὐτὴν δεῖ εἶναι).<sup>53</sup> The ‘it’ (αὐτὴν) refers not (directly) to the product of the kingly craft of which we are now in search, but the kingly craft itself. To say that the kingly craft must *itself* be of benefit however reminds us that whatever its product turns out to be, the kingly craft must itself know how to use this very product. For it was earlier agreed (289a-b) that an art is beneficial just in case there exists some art that wisely uses its product. If politics is to be the superordinate art whose possession would ‘complete’ happiness, it must therefore be the knowledge that combines making and knowing how to use the very thing it makes.

Having reminded us that the kingly art must be beneficial, Socrates adds that the statesman’s art must obviously also ‘provide us with something good.’ (292a11). It is at this point that the indeterminacy thesis regarding the recognized goods is invoked. Socrates reminds us that it was earlier agreed that ‘nothing is good except some sort of knowledge.’ (Ἀγαθὸν δέ γέ που ὡμολογήσαμεν ἀλλήλοις ἐγὼ τε καὶ Κλεινίας οὐδὲν εἶναι ἄλλο ἢ ἐπιστήμην τινά, 292b1-2). It follows, Socrates insists, that

...the other results (τὰ μὲν ἄλλα ἔργα) which a person might attribute to the statesman’s art--- and these, of course, would be numerous, as for instance, making the citizens rich and free and not disturbed by faction (πλουσίους τοὺς πολίτας παρέχειν καὶ ἐλευθέρους καὶ ἀστασιάστους)---all these appeared to be neither good nor evil (πάντα ταῦτα οὔτε κακὰ οὔτε ἀγαθὰ ἐφάνη); but this art had to make them wise and to provide them with a share of knowledge if it was to be the one that benefited them and made them happy (292b4-c1).

According to our interpretation of the first protreptic episode, Socrates does not infer here that the kingly art must provide some form of wisdom on the basis of the claim

<sup>53</sup> Here my translation differs from Sprague (1993), who for some reason translates ὠφέλιμον as ‘useful’, though she does not do so elsewhere.

that wisdom is the *only* good thing,. His point is rather that if the statesman were to bestow the recognized goods of wealth, freedom, and civic unity upon the citizens, without also instilling in them the wise use of these goods, he would not have given the citizens anything that is *actually good*; indeed, assuming the ignorance of the citizens, he may only have succeeded in given them something that is *actually bad*.

It is noteworthy that Socrates' list of ἐργα that he expects most people would accept as the usual products of good state-craft does not include the recognized virtues of justice, courage, and self-control; items which did make their way onto the list of 'indeterminates' in the earlier discussion. The omission seems odd, in light of Plato's usual association of these virtues with those products of the political art which are explicitly mentioned. (Cp. *Rep.* 395b-c: if the guardians are to be craftsmen of the city's freedom, they must imitate only people who are courageous, just, self-controlled, pious, and free. Cp. 405a-b: it is only the slavish who frequent the law-courts, taking pride in being clever at committing injustice and thereby making use of a justice that is imposed by others by masters and judges. Cp.431e-432a: self-control produces unity and harmony among the citizens; Cp.442a-b: the excessive love of money produces disorder and slavery in the state, etc.). It may be however (especially since his list at 292b4-c1 is evidently open-ended) that Socrates simply presupposes that wealth, freedom, and unity are themselves conventionally recognized products of the conventionally recognized virtues.<sup>54</sup> If that is so, then the traditional virtues of justice, courage, and self-control are at least implicitly included among the indeterminate products of the political art.

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<sup>54</sup> Especially given the further assumption that it is good *statesmanship* which instills these virtues in the citizens---or that good laws do. Protagoras gives voice to the latter conventional assumption at *Protag.* 326b-d: the state teaches virtue to the citizens through the laws.

What is more remarkable is that Socrates does not proceed to argue, on the basis of this application of the indeterminacy thesis, that the kind of knowledge in question that politics produces in the citizenry must consist precisely in the wise use of these other purported products of the statesman's art. If Socrates were to assume that the knowledge that completes human happiness consisted in the wise use of the other 'indeterminate' products of state-craft, he may have then turned to consider whether such a 'using' art is distinct from, or identical to, the productive art of politics, or is somehow a part of it, in virtue of being itself a product of the kingly art. The discovery of such a structure within the craft of politics would seem to bring an end to the search for a form of knowledge that combines using and making; but such a possibility is not subsequently explored.

A second path of inquiry that is not taken is the possibility that there exists a form of knowledge, distinct from the art of politics itself, which while not being itself a product of the kingly art, is nevertheless set over politics in that it wisely uses the 'indeterminate' products of the kingly art: unity, freedom, prosperity, and perhaps also, the virtues of justice, courage, and self-control (assuming that these latter indeterminate items are deemed the sources of the former). Instead, it is assumed that the knowledge which provides happiness must itself be a product of the art of politics itself. Moreover, since it is assumed that politics stands *alone* as the superordinate craft of crafts, the possibility that there exists a distinct form of knowledge that stands to politics as user to maker is implicitly rejected out of hand; for it has been agreed that the art that will complete happiness must be a *single* form of knowledge that combines using and making.

Having set up the inquiry on the basis of these assumptions, it is short work for Socrates to declare the argument hopelessly lost. Two further questions lead directly to *aporia*. Socrates asks,

(1) What knowledge does [the kingly art] convey? (2) And what use are we to make of it? (Ἐλλὰ τίνα δὴ ἐπιστήμην; ἢ τί χρησόμεθα;), 292d1.

Question (1) focuses on the status of politics as a *producer*. It asks, in what respect or concerning what product does politics make people wise? If (Socrates notes) the knowledge produced by the kingly craft is the art of shoemaking, then it makes people wise about the making of shoes. (292c7-9). However, by prior agreement (289a-b) any art productive of indeterminate items (like shoes) requires a wise user art set over it if it is to benefit us. It looks then as if the *product* of the kingly craft ‘must not be any of those results which are neither good nor bad, but must convey a knowledge which is none other than it itself’ (τῶν μὲν γὰρ ἔργων οὐδενὸς δεῖ αὐτὴν δημιουργὸν εἶναι τῶν μήτε κακῶν μήτε ἀγαθῶν, ἐπιστήμην δὲ παραδιδόναι μηδεμίαν ἄλλην ἢ αὐτὴν ἑαυτήν, 292d2-4); for nothing is (determinately) good, it seems, except the superordinate kingly craft itself.

Question (2) concerns the status of politics as a *user*. If the kingly craft is to benefit us, it must know how to use the product which it produces. But this product has turned out to be the kingly art itself; for no other product is determinately good. The argument has prepared us to countenance an art that combines the making (or acquisition) of specifiable products with their wise use. But there seems to be no answer to the question of how an art may wisely use itself when it is its own product. Consequently we are still in the dark regarding both the content of the knowledge that will complete

happiness (because we do not know what it produces), as well as how it uses anything so as to provide our benefit.

We are in the dark; but in what sense is the argument labyrinthine, ‘turning around’ and causing Socrates and Cleinias ‘to reappear practically at the beginning’ of their search (291b7-c1)? This twist is triggered by Socrates’ final attempt to salvage the inquiry. Socrates proposes (292d5-6) a modification to the initial answer to question (1). Instead of saying that the product of the kingly art is simply itself alone, it is suggested that its product is the ‘knowledge by which we shall make others good’ (292d5-6). The hope is that by thus amending the answer to question (1), we may arrive at more definite answers regarding both the product of the kingly art, and how it uses this product to benefit us. Unfortunately this suggestion, so far from yielding more definitive answers regarding the nature of the good conferred by the kingly art, only causes the nature of this good to recede indefinitely from our grasp. For we still shall not know

...in what respect will [these others] be good and in what respect useful, as far as we are concerned? (Οἱ τί ἔσονται ἡμῖν ἀγαθοὶ καὶ τί χρήσιμοι). Or shall we go on to say that they will make others good and that these others will do the same to still others? But in what conceivable way they are good is in no way apparent to us, especially since we have discredited what are said to be the results of the statesman’s art (ἐπειδὴ περ τὰ ἔργα τὰ λεγόμενα εἶναι τῆς πολιτικῆς ἡτιμάσαμεν, 292d7-292e2).

As Socrates has earlier complained to Crito, he and Cleinias ‘kept thinking we were about to catch each one of the knowledges, but they always got away’ (ἀεὶ ὥόμεθα ἐκάστην τῶν ἐπιστημῶν αὐτίκα λήψεσθαι, αἱ δ’ ἀεὶ ὑπεξέφευγον) like ‘children running after crested larks’---or like people who are turned around in a labyrinth (291b2-c2). I take it that the bird-catching metaphor evokes the manner in which the various ‘knowledges’ represented in the following argument schema are the receding accounts of

the good conferred by the kingly art; while the labyrinth metaphor evokes the manner in which the schema repeatedly returns to the original questions (1) and (2):

Question: What is the product of the political art, and how does it use this product to benefit us?

Answer:

1. Politics produces/consists in knowledge (K1) of how to make the citizens good.
2. Therefore, knowledge of how to make the citizens good produces good citizens.<sup>55</sup>
3. Politics must produce only results that are determinately good, not results that are neither good nor bad.
4. Nothing is determinately good except some form of knowledge.
5. Therefore, politics consists in the knowledge (K1) of how to make the citizens good by conveying to them some form of knowledge (K2).

Question: So what is this knowledge (K2) (i.e., what does K2 produce) and how does K2 use its product to benefit us?

Answer:

6. The knowledge (K2) so conveyed produces/consists in knowing how to make (still other) citizens good.
7. Therefore, the knowledge (K2) of how to make the citizens good produces good citizens.

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<sup>55</sup> Again, this is licensed by Socrates' suggestion: if politics were the art of shoemaking, then it would make the citizens wise with respect to making shoes, and shoemaking produces shoes.

8. But the knowledge (K2) must produce results that are determinately good, not results that are neither good nor bad.
9. Nothing is determinately good except some form of knowledge.
10. Therefore, the knowledge (K2) consists in knowing how to make the citizens good by conveying to them some form of knowledge (K3).

Question: But what is this knowledge (K3) (i.e., what does *it* produce), and how does K3 use this product to benefit us?!<sup>56</sup>

The schema can obviously be extended indefinitely. Socrates reports that at each of its revolutions, the nature of the good produced by the kingly art remains unclear. This result he says is due especially (ἐπειδήπερ 292e1) to the fact that we have discredited the usual results of state-craft. This would appear to be our final hint---one of many we have noted---that the *aporia* is to be solved by returning to consider the relationship of dialectic to the kingly art of politics. For as we noted earlier, if Socrates had assumed that the products of the political art were indeed the recognized goods of unity, freedom, and prosperity (and perhaps also their recognized sources, justice, courage, and self-control), then he may have turned to consider whether the knowledge that completes happiness consisted in the wise use of these products, and whether such a using art is distinct from, or identical to, the kingly art of politics.

If our analysis of the second protreptic episode has shown anything, it has shown that its aporetic conclusion could be avoided if the relationship between philosophy and

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<sup>56</sup> It is worth noting that this puzzle may be alluded to (albeit in a highly condensed form) at *Republic* 505b. ('Furthermore, you certainly know that the majority believe that pleasure is the good, while the more sophisticated believe it is knowledge...And you know that those who believe this can't tell us what sort of knowledge it is, however, but in the end are forced to say that it is knowledge of the good.') If so, this may be some evidence in favor of taking the solution to the puzzle to presuppose a conception of knowledge of the good as dialectical knowledge.

politics were better understood. In that case, it seems impossible to resist the implication that Plato concludes the dialogue by setting us on the path of inquiry that leads us out of the labyrinth: both philosophy and politics are good, but each is related to or aims at a different thing. (εἰ μὲν οὖν ἡ φιλοσοφία ἀγαθόν ἐστίν καὶ ἡ πολιτικὴ πράξις, πρὸς ἄλλο δὲ ἑκάτερον, 306b1-3). It is now time to consider what this statement means, and how it helps solve the *aporia*.

## 2.4 The Aporia Resolved

We may begin with the observation that, in accordance with the argument of the protreptic episodes, if philosophy and politics are *good*, it is because they are led by wisdom. In Chapter One I argued that it is a consequence of this assumption that the political art to which Socrates refers is not the imposture practiced by the speechwriter or the orator, but the superordinate craft, practiced by none of Socrates' contemporaries, which is described in the second protreptic episode. Similarly, the philosophical art to which Socrates alludes is neither the imposture practiced by the sophists, nor even the form of philosophical activity practiced by Socrates himself. 'Philosophy' here means philosophy as that is described in the second protreptic episode. Since Plato uses the term 'dialecticians' to describe the practitioners of this superordinate craft (290c5), we may take it that what Socrates claims at 306b1-3 is that dialectic and politics are both good, but each is related to or directed at (πρὸς) a different thing.



The next question is what sense we are to attach to the preposition ‘πρός’. It seems unlikely that in saying that philosophy and politics are each πρὸς something different, Socrates can mean that philosophy and politics are *concerned* with distinct objects, in the sense of an object---the body, beds---with which an art is constitutively interested. For Socrates has heretofore relied upon the preposition ‘περί’ to denote the relationship of an art to the item or items with which it is constitutively concerned.<sup>57</sup> Thus we are informed at 289b7-289c4 that the art of lyre-making and the art of lyre-playing are quite distinct (χωρίς) though both arts are concerned with the same thing (τοῦ αὐτοῦ περὶ), viz., lyres. This suggests, first, that since dialectic and politics are presumably different activities, it is not ruled out that they may be concerned (περί) with the same things; and second, that the relevant respect in which dialectic and politics differ by being aimed at (πρός) different things will not be that they are concerned (in this sense) with different things.

It would also appear that dialectic and politics will not be πρὸς something different in the sense of aiming at distinct ends in terms of which each activity is teleologically *evaluated*. This is of course as we should expect: since both philosophy and politics are said to be good, it cannot be that one or the other activity is πρὸς the good while the other is not. It is instructive in this regard to compare our text once again with *Gorgias* 464c1-5. There Socrates explains that while the two pairs of crafts, medicine and gymnastics, and justice and legislation, are concerned with (περὶ) different things (the body and the soul, respectively), all four are true crafts, as opposed to knacks, insofar as each always aims at the best (πρὸς τὸ βέλτιστον). However, where the *Gorgias* might say that both politics and philosophy *aim* at the good, the *Euthydemus* settles for simply

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<sup>57</sup> The preposition is also used for this purpose in the *Gorgias*; cp. 454a-b; 464c1. See below.

*predicating* goodness of both. As I argued in Chapter One, both philosophy and politics are good because, being led by wisdom, they reliably achieve those ends in terms of which philosophy (or, dialectic) and politics are teleologically *defined*, as the activities they are.<sup>58</sup> But what are these ends? And what semantic function could be left over for the preposition *πρός* in terms of which these ends could be expressed?

In the light of the important role played in the protreptic episodes by the distinction between productive and using arts, it is a promising hypothesis that dialectic and politics are *πρός* something different because politics is a *productive* art, while dialectic is a *using* art. That is, politics is related to or aims at producing that with which it is concerned (*περί*); while dialectic is related to or aims at using that with which it is concerned (*περί*). On the assumption that wisdom is the only thing that is determinately good, this suggests that both dialectic and politics are good because both are led by a single psychological power (wisdom) in the soul. When this power is directed at production of some kind, it is engaged in political activity; when it is directed at using of some kind, it is engaged in dialectical activity.

On the further assumption that the form of knowledge that completes happiness is an art that combines using and making, we may further surmise that politics and dialectic, like the arts of lyre-making and lyre-playing, are both concerned with (*περί*) the same thing. Our reading of the protreptic episodes suggests that this ‘thing’ (or things) will be the indeterminate goods, which are actually good only when guided by wisdom. Dialectic will be concerned with the indeterminate goods of justice, courage, self-control, unity, freedom, and prosperity, insofar as it is the task of dialectic to determinate what these items really are. If that is so, the political art may be said to be concerned with these same

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<sup>58</sup> See Chapter 1.1, 20-21, 33-34.

items insofar as it is its task to actually produce citizens and institutions that instantiate them.

This suggests in turn that politics in fact stands in a subordinate role to dialectic: just as the lyre-player dictates to the lyre-maker the model of the instrument he requires, so dialectic will dictate to the political art the form of the virtues and institutions needed to ensure human happiness. However, unlike the case of the former arts, there shall be little inclination to say that the form of knowledge that completes our happiness will in that case fail to combine using and making; for it is a single psychological power that underlies both dialectical and political activity. Dialectical wisdom dictates to the political capacity what results produced in both the city and the soul will make the citizens as happy as possible. Political wisdom will consist in part in the knowledge of how to reproduce in the available materials the dialectically determined model of such good results. But political wisdom will repose upon the dialectical capacity for the dialectical blueprint itself. Being the expression of a single psychological power in the soul---namely, wisdom---both dialectical activity and political activity are good; but insofar as dialectical activity stands to political activity as user to maker, dialectic and politics are directed at different things: politics is directed at making; dialectic is directed at using.<sup>59</sup>

I take it as a point in favor of this reading that the *Euthydemus* turns out to contain all of the conceptual resources needed for a solution to the *aporia*.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, further

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<sup>59</sup> I have borrowed the metaphor of a blueprint from Reeve (1988), 83: ‘...the aim of dialectical-thought is to discover the model or blueprint of the Kallipolis.’

<sup>60</sup> Parry, *op.cit.*, denies this because he thinks the *aporia* is caused when it is assumed that the kingly craft is the art of the ruler making the ruled good, where ruler and ruled are distinct, 22. He argues it follows that the puzzle can only await a solution in the *Republic*, where Plato explicitly argues for an analogy between wisdom in the city and wisdom in the soul: ‘The way out of the labyrinth then is to see that the kingly craft is not just the craft of ruling over others but can also be the craft of ruling over oneself’, 25. This solution

considerable support for this solution can be found elsewhere in the Platonic corpus. The discussion of using vs. productive arts in the *Cratylus* and the *Republic* are of course especially relevant here. The νομοθέτης of the *Cratylus* (389e-390e) is a producer of names who knows how to embody in sounds and syllables the name that is naturally suited to each thing. His work is supervised by the one who judges these products and knows how to use them in philosophical instruction by dividing things according to their natures. This overseer and teacher is ‘the person who knows how to ask and answer questions’ (390c6-8), i.e., the dialectician. It is unclear whether the *Cratylus* conceives of name making and name using as issuing from a single power in the soul that combines both using and making. For it seems that the original name-makers, at least, must have had to make do without the benefit of the supervision of the dialectician.<sup>61</sup>

The situation however is different in the *Republic*, where the relevant combination of using and making concerns precisely the dialectical and political arts. With respect to the ordinary productive crafts (e.g. flute-making),

...It is entirely necessary that it is the user of each thing that has the most experience of it and that it is he who tells the maker which of his products performs well or badly in actual use...Therefore, with regard to one and the same thing, the maker---through associating with and having to listen to the one who knows---will have right opinion (πίστιν ὀρθήν) about whether something he makes is fine or bad, but the one who is the user has knowledge (ἐπιστήμην) (601d8-602a1).<sup>62</sup>

But with respect to the extraordinary—or superordinate—craft exercised by the dialectician, the philosopher-king will exercise knowledge as both user and maker:

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however does not explain the allusion to the art of dialectic in the argument. Parry’s analysis also conflates the notion of the superordinate art being a *using* art and the notion of its conferring a benefit. Socrates insists it must do both. It is true that between the first and second protreptic episodes there is a shift in emphasis from a notion of wisdom as an individual virtue (an individual using conventional goods wisely) to the notion of a ruling craft using conventional goods wisely for the benefit of the citizens. My analysis however can accommodate this fact in a way that allows for individual virtue; for I have argued that the conventional virtues are conferred on the citizens by the ruling craft.

<sup>61</sup> Noted by Sedley (2003) 63 ff. It is possible however that Plato thinks the two crafts would be combined under ideal circumstances.

<sup>62</sup> Translation Grube/Reeve (1992) with modifications.

...As he looks upon and studies things that are ordered and eternally the same, that neither do nor suffer injustice, but are all in an intelligible order, he imitates them and tries to become as like them as he can...And if it becomes necessary for him to stamp into the malleable mores of people---whether public or private---the patterns that he sees there, do you think that he will be a poor craftsman of self-control, justice, and all the rest of demotic virtue?...[The philosopher-kings] would take the polis and human mores as a drafting board, but first of all they would clean it---no easy task...Then, I think that as they work they would glance frequently in either direction, now at the form of justice, the form of the fine, the form of self-control, and the like, now at the ones they are trying to implant in men, rubbing out one and putting in another way of life [in the model of the polis] until they produce that flesh-tint, so to speak, which Homer too called the godlike in men.' (500c2-501b7). (Cp.428c11-429a2: the complete guardians that rule the city possess ἐπιστήμη and the form of knowledge which among all the kinds of knowledge is to be called σοφία).<sup>63</sup>

It is noteworthy too that this passage from the *Republic* lends support to our claim that the products of the superordinate art---or its productive aspect---will include the demotic virtues. The *Republic* also seems to agree with the *Euthydemus* that it is virtually axiomatic that a productive art and its associated user art are concerned with 'one and the same thing.' (Cp. 601d8-602a1, quoted above).

These results however may seem to give rise to a potential difficulty. If politics and dialectic must be concerned with the same things, and in fact are expressions of a single psychological power, will it still be the case that they do not *partake* of each other, as we have interpreted that claim in Chapter One? I argued above that philosophy and politics are complete partakers of *themselves* when wisdom rightly uses the practices, behaviours, and characteristic activities that are constitutive of philosophy and politics respectively. In the light of our foregoing discussion, we may now fill this latter claim out as follows: philosophy is a complete partaker of itself when e.g., wisdom uses dialectical

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<sup>63</sup> Translation Grube/Reeve (1992). Plato's argument is usefully compared to Fr.B.9 of Aristotle's *Protrepticus* (on Düring's reconstruction, *op.cit.*): 'Again, there are different kinds of knowledge: some kinds of knowledge produce the good things in life, others use this first kind; some are ancillary, others proscriptive; with these last, as being more authoritative, rests the true good. If, then, only that kind of knowledge which entails correctness of judgment, that which uses reason and envisages good as a whole, that is to say philosophy, can use all other kinds of knowledge and prescribe to them according to <the principles of> nature, we ought to strive in every possible way to become philosophers, since philosophy alone comprises right judgment and unerring wisdom, commanding what ought to be done or not to be done.' (Transl. Düring).

investigation wisely; politics is a complete partaker of itself when e.g., wisdom uses polis-management and the persuasion of the citizens wisely. However, I also argued that philosophy and the political craft do not partake of or have a share in *each other* precisely on the grounds that they are directed at (πρός) different things. It is for this reason that the following three claims do not form an inconsistent triad: (a) dialectic and politics are concerned with the same things; (b) dialectical and political wisdom are expressions of a single complete psychological power; (c) dialectical activity and political activity do not partake of each other. For in its supervisory capacity as a using art, dialectic does not partake of the practices, behaviours, or characteristic activities of the political craft; nor, in its capacity as a producer, does the kingly art partake of the practices and activities characteristic of dialectical investigation.

## Chapter Three

### 3.1 Socratic Dialectic

Our reading of the Epilogue of the *Euthydemus* has revealed that the practitioner of Socratic dialectic exercises an art that (a) lies between the arts of (full-blown) dialectic and politics; (b) partakes of both these crafts; and (c) is worse than both for the respective ends for which dialectic and politics are useful, but better than speechwriting and eristic conversation in this regard. Our examination of the protreptic episodes of the dialogue has revealed that the respective ends of dialectic and the art of politics are using and making. In particular, it has emerged that (d) while dialectic and politics (rightly conceived) are directed by a single psychological power in the soul---namely, wisdom---it is dialectic that is the superordinate craft of crafts, and is related to the art of politics as a using art is related to a productive art. It is now time to take stock of these results. What do they tell us about the nature and scope of Socratic dialectic? The following consequences would seem to be the most salient:

(a) If Socratic dialectic is between philosophy and politics, it is a partial partaker of both; since it is a necessary condition of one art being a partial partaker of another that the former aims at the same ends as the latter, the ends of Socratic dialectic and philosophy and politics must be identical. We have explained how this can be true, despite the fact that the immediate ends of Socratic activity *as such* would seem to be the dual aims of protreptic and elenctic conversation: for motivating people to pursue virtue,

and the purgation of the false conceit of wisdom by means of genuine refutation not only *advance* the aims of the superordinate arts of philosophy and politics, but are their necessary prerequisites.

(b) If Socratic dialectic partakes of the two distinct arts of philosophy and politics, Socratic expertise must itself be dual in nature. The evidence of the Epilogue and the protreptic episodes suggests that this duality is manifested in the protreptic and refutatory aspects of Socratic dialectic; a conjecture which the very structure of the dialogue, with its alternating conversations between Socrates and Cleinias on the one hand, and Socrates and the sophists on the other, would seem to confirm.

(c) If the art which Socrates exercises is *worse* than philosophy and politics, but *better* than speechwriting and eristic argumentation for the ends for which philosophy and politics is useful, it follows that Socratic expertise is essentially *limited* in its scope and power; moreover, its limitations will be inextricably both epistemic and moral at once. Being an art---and not a form of ignorance such as eristic argumentation---Socratic expertise is a form of wisdom or knowledge (278b2-278e2); but the objects of its knowledge cannot be those of the philosopher/statesman; and its limited degree of goodness (we have argued) is a function of the extent to which it tends to reliably achieve its (merely) propaedeutic aims.

(d) The solution to the *aporia* of the second protreptic episode entails that the ends at which philosophy and politics are ‘πρός’ are using and making respectively. If



Socratic dialectic is moreover a partial partaker of the characteristic activities of both of these arts, result (d) would seem to entail that, while the dual aspects of Socratic activity are each conducted by a single psychological power in the soul---call it ‘Socratic’ (or human) wisdom---one of these is in some sense related to the other as a using art is related to a productive art. That is to say, just as, in virtue of its grasp of certain principles and norms (the Good, the Forms), the dialectical art of the philosopher-statesman stands in a supervisory capacity to the craft of politics, so must the art of genuine refutation be set over the art of protreptic, in virtue of a grasp of *its* own principles and norms.

Insofar as Socratic expertise is dual in nature, these consequences stand in need of further elaboration. Our foregoing discussion has provided us with a number of clues regarding the further specification of the nature of protreptic.

(Pa) *The aims of protreptic argument*: Socrates indicates that there is *ordered structure* of problems which the art of protreptic investigates: *first*, certain widely held beliefs regarding the conventional goods must be undermined, in order that *next*, it may be established that wisdom is the only thing which makes a man happy or εὐδαίμων; next in order is the investigation whether wisdom can be taught, or ‘comes to men of its own accord’, (282c-d); the next question to investigate after this is whether a man should acquire every sort of knowledge, or whether there is one sort a man must obtain in order to be both εὐδαίμων and good (282d-e). But Socrates also implies (274e) that it does not belong to the same art to persuade a man that virtue is teachable, and to persuade him that one is oneself the person from whom one should learn virtue. It is obvious that a form of

wisdom (σοφία) that guides the young to the solution of such problems may be utterly distinct from the wisdom by which the craft of politics is led, while simultaneously advancing the aims of the latter art.

(Pb) *The distinctness of protreptic argument and refutation*: The art of refutation and προτρεπτικὴ σοφία are a manifestation of a single psychological power. Indeed, the unity of Socratic expertise would seem to be a necessary condition of its proper exercise; for a single practitioner of both arts must presumably know the difference between the answerer who stands in need of refutation and the interlocutor who requires mere moral exhortation. It seems clear that in the *Euthydemus*, Plato is at pains to demonstrate that *this* Socrates, at any rate, *does* know the difference: Cleinias is disabused of certain false beliefs he holds about the conventionally recognized goods; but as he makes no claim to expertise, moral or otherwise (Cleinias denies that he is wise, and Socrates says he is no boaster, 283c8), he is an unsuitable candidate for elenctic refutation. It is however an immediate consequence of this requirement on the practitioner of Socratic dialectic that examinational and protreptic arguments will differ in both their form and content. Protreptic is distinctive in the identity of its interlocutors, its selection of problems (see (Pa))<sup>64</sup>, the character of its premises, and even in its preferred mode of inference. In this regard it is worth noting Socrates' frequent use of induction on the inexperienced and youthful Cleinias (e.g., at 279e-280b, to establish that in every field of endeavour, it is the

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<sup>64</sup> I do not take this claim to preclude the possibility that a question such as the teachability of virtue can be investigated in an examinational context; one obvious circumstance in which it will is where the examinee claims to *be* a teacher of virtue: cp. *Protagoras*, 319a-320c; and in our dialogue, 286d4-287b1. I analyze the latter argument below, Chapter 3.6, 154-158. What does seem to be the case is that Socrates regards the art of protreptic to consist in the investigation of a programmatic *set* of problems, whose pursuit is determined by the presumed needs of the general beneficiary of protreptic argument (thus if one is already convinced, as Cleinias is, that virtue can be taught, one may proceed to the next level of problem); their investigation is not provoked by a claim to knowledge.

wise rather than the ignorant who fare best and have good fortune; at 280c-280d, to show that the mere possession without the use of good things does not benefit the possessor; cp. 281a-b, 281c-d, 288e-289b, 289c-d 291e-292a). As Aristotle advises in the *Topics* (8.14, 164a12-13), ‘Assign exercise in inductive arguments to the young man, exercise in deductive arguments to the experienced.’<sup>65</sup> His rationale is that

Induction is more convincing (πιθανώτερον), and clearer, and more familiar (or intelligible: γνωριμώτερον) in the way sense-perception is, and is common to the public; deduction is more coercive (βιαστικώτερον), and more effective against those skilled in contradicting (A.12, 105a16-19).

Socrates’ frequent use of induction in turn entails that the type of premises he employs are also appropriate for use in encounters with the absolute beginner in argument. They are ‘more convincing and familiar’ because they are (as Aristotle would say) ἐνδοξότατον, that is, they are as acceptable as possible. (Indeed, Socrates twice apologizes to Cleinias for their ‘simple-mindedness’, 278e). As we shall soon discover when we turn to consider Cleinias’ treatment at the hands of the sophists, the brothers’ use of deductive argument, and their appeal to merely apparently acceptable premises, renders their art a false image of Socratic dialectic, and of protreptic in particular.

(Pc) *The limitations of protreptic argument*: It is clear that Socratic dialectic is limited in its power to incline others towards virtue and the pursuit of wisdom. If the succession of arguments in his protreptic program is indeed systematic, Socrates evidently considers it *in order*, in the second protreptic episode, to deliberately lead Cleinias into *aporia*. As I have argued, there is a way out of the labyrinth, and Socrates knows what this is. On the other hand, the ventriloquism scene of 290e-291a suggests

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<sup>65</sup> Cp. VIII.2, 157a18-21: ‘When arguing, use deduction with dialecticians more than with the public; contrariwise, use induction more with the public.’

that a full grasp of the *aporia's* solution and its philosophical implications is an achievement in reach of only the more advanced student of dialectic (whether in age or intellectual acumen: a Theaetetus, but not a Cleinias). Whether Cleinias is to make such progress then depends rather on the company he keeps. But *that* depends---as Plato seems to go out of his way to make clear---on Cleinias on the one hand (his own moral constitution, the nature of his erotic attachments), and his friends and society on the other (their moral constitution and the structure of their desires). As Socrates explains by way of introducing Cleinias to the sophists (275a7-275b4):

The boy's situation is this: both I and all these people want him to become as good as possible...He is young, and we are anxious about him as one naturally is about a boy of his age, for fear somebody might get in ahead of us and turn his mind to some other interest and ruin him.

Yet in spite of Socrates' best protreptic efforts, the question of the orientation of Cleinias' desires ends on a very troubling note. Consider Cleinias' reaction, at dialogue's end, to Ctesippus' evident mastery of the art of eristic argumentation:

Ctesippus gave one of his tremendous laughs and said, Euthydemus, your brother has made the argument sit on both sides of the fence and it is ruined and done for! Cleinias was very pleased and laughed too, which made Ctesippus swell to ten times his normal size. It is my opinion that Ctesippus, who is a bit of a rogue, had picked up these very things by overhearing these very men, because there is no wisdom of a comparable sort among any other persons of the present day. (300d3-9).

Cleinias' fate then does not wholly depend on the moral efficacy of Socratic protreptic, precisely because the Socratic art is not identical to the *πολίτικη τέχνη*.<sup>66</sup>

(Pd) *The relation of the art of refutation to protreptic*: As result (Pb) suggests, it is a function of his hortatory expertise that Socrates knows what *sort* of premises for

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<sup>66</sup> I discuss 300d3-9 in more detail below, Chapter 5.10, 322-325. Among other things, I take the passage to be a deliberate exculpation on Plato's part of the apparent moral inefficacy of Socratic protreptic.

which he must ask Cleinias---namely, those that are maximally *endoxon*---as well as what *mode* of inference---induction---it is most appropriate to employ with him. But a grasp of *what* induction *is* and how it works would seem to belong to the art of refutation; for induction may of course be used in refutation arguments.<sup>67</sup> The ability to gauge the degree of the acceptability of premises is presupposed by refutation also. For an examiner must select premises that are more *endoxon* than the conclusion he wishes to establish if they are to confer epistemic warrant on the conclusion, upon pain of begging the question, or appearing to do so, against the answerer he refutes.<sup>68</sup> Seen in this light, the art of refutation is revealed as a kind of repository of the norms and principles of argument that are used by protreptic. It is in this sense that the former aspect of Socratic wisdom is set over the latter as supervisory user to maker: as the philosophical conversation of the inquirer into Forms stands to the philosopher-king's address to the many, the art of refutation stands to protreptic.

Matters are less clear however regarding the further specification of the art of refutation itself.

(Ra): *The aims of refutation*: As we have conjectured, the immediate aim of the art of refutation is, as Plato consistently specifies, the purgation of the soul of that most blameworthy and 'largest' form of ignorance, viz., thinking that one knows what one does not know (*Apol.*, 21d3-6; 29a5-b2; *Soph.*, 229c1-6). Socrates' rationale for claiming that he can practice this art despite his own state of ignorance regarding the principles he

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<sup>67</sup> Cp. *Topics* VIII.1, 155b35-8: the necessary premises (that is, the premises through which the deduction in a refutation comes about, 155b20) should be obtained either through deduction or induction, or some by induction and others by deduction. (But in the case of certain premises which are 'extremely obvious', the premises themselves may be asked for without argument).

<sup>68</sup> Cp. *Topics* VIII.5, *passim*.

demonstrates his interlocutors to lack is familiar enough. If we accept his rationale, it seems obvious that the practitioner of Socratic dialectic may practice the art of refutation without cognitive access to Forms and the Good. If that is so, refutation will be distinct from the form of dialectic alluded to at *Euthyd.* 290c5-6; at the same time, Socrates' purgative art will nevertheless advance the aims of this higher form of philosophical conversation.

This result however would seem to entail the following difficulty. Socratic refutation is a form of τὸ διαλέγεσθαι (dialogue, discussion); that is, it is a mode of inquiry conducted in the form of a series of questions and answers. But so is the superordinate art of higher dialectic (*Crat.*, 390c6-8; *Rep.*, 534b8-c5).<sup>69</sup> Why then should Socratic dialectic---at least in its examinational aspect---be located in Socrates' taxonomy of wisdom as an art that is *in principle* subordinate to that of 'philosophy' (*Euthyd.*, 306b2, c4)? Granted, an art may be defined teleologically, in terms of its end; and the merely propaedeutic aims of the art of refutation are not identical to those of the higher dialectician. Yet if both forms of philosophical investigation are forms of διαλέγεσθαι, why should the *wise use* of the characteristic activities of Socratic dialectic not put its practitioner in reach of the objects of knowledge attained by the 'dialecticians of sense' (*Euthyd.*, 290c6)?

(Rb): *The distinct practices of refutation*: It seems we may not answer this question by the same means by which the art of protreptic was distinguished from

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<sup>69</sup> Indeed, Plato seems to think the structure of thought itself is dialectical in this sense. See *Tht.* 189e6-190a6.

refutation. As Socrates' δαίμόνιον alone attests, the art of refutation may be distinct from higher dialectic in its selection of interlocutor:

As good luck would have it, I was sitting by myself in the undressing-room just where you saw me and was already thinking of leaving. But when I got up, my customary divine sign put in an appearance. So I sat down again, and in a moment the two of them, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, came in, and some others with them, disciples of theirs, who seemed to me pretty numerous. (272e1-273a2)

But in its selection of problems---in particular, the investigation of first principles (e.g., the definition of a virtue); its grasp of the rank ordering of endoxa; and in its use of modes inference, the art of refutation will presumably differ in no way from higher dialectic. It follows that the epistemic limitations of Socratic wisdom in its refutatory aspect cannot be ascertained merely by appeal to such general characteristics of dialectical activity which seem to be shared by both arts.

(Rc): *The limitations of Socratic refutation*: Better progress in determining the epistemic limitations of Socratic wisdom may be made however by turning to consider the limitations of its moral efficacy. It is of course a major theme of the dialogue that Socrates is powerless to persuade the sophists of their ignorance. Indeed, at the end of the dialogue, it is not only the sophists and their disciples who seem unimproved by their exposure to Socratic conversation; it is the entire audience as well:

Whereupon, my dear Crito, there was no one there who did not praise to the skies the argument and the two men, laughing and applauding and exulting until they were nearly exhausted. In the case of each and every one of the previous arguments, it was only the admirers of Euthydemus who made such an enthusiastic uproar; but now it almost seemed as if the pillars of the Lyceum applauded the pair and were pleased. (303b1-b7)

It is evident then that Socrates' performance fails on a massive scale to achieve its purgative aims. But---despite Crito's misgivings---it does not follow that Socrates

exercises the art of refutation *unwisely* in his confrontation with the sophists. For the brothers are unsuitable candidates for elenctic purgation; not because, as in the case of Cleinias, they make no knowledge claims (on the contrary, they claim to be omnitemporally omniscient, 295b2-296c10); rather, they are irredeemable by the art of refutation because they do not recognize the principles of refutation itself.<sup>70</sup>

(Rd): *Refutation as an art of principles and norms*: This result suggests that we shall look in the wrong place in ascertaining the scope of Socratic wisdom in its refutatory aspect if we look to any *other* resource of Socratic activity other than the very principles and norms of genuine refutation itself. If therefore we are to ascertain and explain the epistemic limitations of Socratic wisdom, we must first determine what Plato takes the principles of genuine refutation to be. In the chapters which follow I will undertake to answer this question by a close examination of the eristic scenes of the dialogue. The results of my analysis of these passages may be summarized as follows:

(1) The sophists' fallacies are false refutations; and the cause of a false refutation's failure to be genuine is due to a violation on a condition of genuine refutation. Thus in those cases where Socrates' objections specify the cause of a refutation's failure to be genuine, we shall be able to determine a condition on genuine refutation that constitutes a principle of Socratic wisdom in its refutatory aspect. I argue that in those cases where Socrates' objections do have such causal explanatory force, they are grounded in a *Socratic definition of genuine refutation*. Because different false

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<sup>70</sup> In fact, as we shall discover below, they argue that there is no such thing as refutation, on the grounds that there is no such things as contradiction (286e). I discuss this text and Socrates' response to it in Chapter 3.6, 158-174.



refutations of the sophists' are due to various violations of clauses in this definition, Socrates' various solutions to the sophists' fallacies generate a *taxonomy* of fallacy.

(2) The fallacies surveyed in the *Euthydemus* are often regarded by commentators as so transparent, and their solutions so obvious, that Plato's opinion of their correct resolution cannot be an open question. I demonstrate that this is far from being the case. In several passages, Plato invites the learner in dialectic to consider alternative solutions to the fallacies with which Socrates is confronted; at the same time, Plato manages to indicate his preferred solutions through various textual clues. The eristic scenes of the *Euthydemus* thus constitute a sustained *argument* on Plato's part for a taxonomy of fallacy.

(3) Not every false refutation introduced by the sophists can be solved by citing a violation of a clause in the Socratic definition of genuine refutation. Hence there are certain fallacies committed by the brothers (e.g., the argument that false speaking is impossible) whose flaws cannot be explained by reposing upon the resources of Socratic dialectic so conceived. The source of fallacy in these arguments is located rather in certain false beliefs about the nature of predication. The evidence of certain of Plato's later dialogues suggests that the solution to these latter problems is a necessary prerequisite to understanding the predication relationships which obtain among the Forms. Since the solution to these sorts of puzzles lies outside the scope of the art of refutation, it is this fact which explains the cognitive limitations of Socratic wisdom *vis-à-vis* higher dialectic. Dialectical expertise at the highest level yields a synoptic view of

the interrelations among the Forms; Socratic dialectical expertise does not, despite the fact that both are forms of τὸ διαλέγεσθαι.

(4) Certain of the false refutations Socrates encounters---such as the sophists' arguments against false statement and contradiction----thus escape the explanatory scope of Socratic dialectic. It does not follow however that the objections Socrates mounts to these arguments fail to be dialectically adequate. I argue that Socrates responds to these cases by demonstrating that such theses are dialectically self-refuting. This mode of response does not explain *why* the thesis in question is false. Nevertheless, while the Socratic response to fallacy in such cases is *non-explanatory*, it is more than dialectically adequate; for the self-refutation arguments which Socrates wields against such theses do manage to demonstrate their falsehood.

In sum, in what follows we shall find that, just as in the protreptic scenes of the dialogue, so too in the eristic episodes Plato draws our attention to the existence of two epistemically distinct levels of dialectical activity. Socratic dialectic in its refutatory aspect thus emerges as an art that is indeed 'better than' its eristic false image, but 'worse than' philosophy in Socrates' taxonomy of wisdom. But this result, as it turns out, is a consequence of a familiar Greek tenet regarding arts and expertise: the principles of a craft must be explanatory, and one who knows must be able to explain what he knows (*Metap.*1, 981a24-981b10); therefore there will be a relation of 'fit' between the problems an art can solve and the resources it has to solve them. By reposing upon the principles of his craft, the practitioner of higher dialectic can explain certain fallacies

which lie outside the explanatory scope of the art of refutation; the practitioner of genuine refutation, by reposing upon the definition of refutation, may explain the fallacies which violate the principles of his craft. The sophist who is his false image is rather the source of fallacy; for his ‘craft’ is *unprincipled*; and its products are the expression of ignorance of refutation.

### 3.2 The First Eristic Episode: Learning about ‘Correctness in Names’

The first eristic episode (275d-278e) may be summarized as follows. Euthydemus begins his demonstration of his vaunted protreptic art by confronting Cleinias with a ‘weighty question’ (μεγάλου...ἑρωτήματος, 275d5): which are the men who learn; the wise or the ignorant (πότεροί εἰσι τῶν ἀνθρώπων οἱ μανθάνοντες, οἱ σοφοὶ ἢ οἱ ἀμαθεῖς, 275d2-3)? Even before Cleinias can reply, Dionysodorus whispers sneeringly in Socrates’ ear that ‘whichever way the boy answers he will be refuted.’ The brothers then proceed to fulfill this prophecy by leading Cleinias through the following connected series of four arguments, all of which exploit the ambiguity of the term ‘μανθάνειν’---a verb which, as Socrates will subsequently point out, may mean either ‘to learn what one does not yet know’ or ‘to understand or use knowledge one already has.’ The shifts in sense undergone by this verb and its cognates are indicated in bold below:

Question 1: Who are the learners (or: those who understand), the wise or the ignorant?

Answer 1A: The wise are the ones who learn/**understand**.

(1) There exist teachers who teach those who **learn**/understand.

- (2) Those who are **learning**/understanding do not yet know the things they **learn**/understand from their teachers.
- (3) Those who do not yet know the things they **learn**/understand are not wise.
- (4) Those who are not wise are ignorant.
- (5) Therefore, those who **learn**/understand what they do not know **learn**/understand while they are ignorant.
- (6) Therefore, the ignorant are the ones who **learn**/understand, and not the wise (275d2-276b5).

Answer 2A: So: the ignorant are the ones who **learn**/understand, and not the wise.

- (1) There exist writing masters who give dictation to those who **learn**/understand.
- (2) Those who learn/**understand** what the writing master dictates are the wise.
- (3) Those who are wise are not the ignorant.
- (4) Therefore, the wise are the ones who learn/**understand**, not the ignorant (276c3-276c7).

Question 2: Do learners (or: those who understand) learn/understand the things they know or the things they do not know?

Answer 1B: **Learners**/those who understand **learn**/understand the things they do not know.

- (1) Cleinias knows all his letters.
- (2) Whenever anyone (e.g. the writing master) dictates anything, he dictates letters.
- (3) So whenever anyone dictates to Cleinias, he dictates something that Cleinias knows.
- (4) So Cleinias learns/**understands** what someone dictates.
- (5) Therefore, Cleinias learns/**understands** what he knows.
- (6) Therefore, learners/**those who understand** learn/**understand** the things they know, not the things they do not know (276d7-277b2).

Answer 2B: So: learners/**those who understand** learn/**understand** the things they know [supplied].

- (1) **Learning**/understanding is the acquisition of the knowledge of what one **learns**/understands.

- (2) Knowing is having knowledge already.
- (3) So not knowing is not yet having knowledge.
- (4) Those who acquire something are those who do not have it already.
- (5) So those who do not know are those who do not already have.
- (6) So **learners**/those who understand belong to the group of those who acquire, not to those who already have.
- (7) Therefore it is those who do not know who **learn**/understand, not those who know (277b6-277c7).

At the signal of the sophists (276b6-7), every reversal of an answer on the part of an increasingly distressed Cleinias is loudly applauded by a jeering crowd of the brothers' local admirers. Socrates intervenes and, ironically comparing the sophists' sadism to the sportive leaps and dancing of attendants on an initiate into the Corybantic mysteries (277d6-277e2), reassures Cleinias that the behaviour to which he has just been subjected is merely an initiation into 'the first part of the sophistic mysteries':

In the first place, as Prodicus says, you must learn (μαθεῖν) about correctness in names (περὶ ὀνομάτων ὀρθότητος); and our two visitors are pointing out this very thing, that you did not realize that people use the word 'learn' (μανθάνειν) not only in the situation in which a person who has no knowledge of a thing in the beginning acquires it later, but also when he who has this knowledge already uses it to inspect the same thing, whether this is something spoken or something done. (Though as a matter of fact, people call the latter 'to understand' (συνιέναι) rather than 'to learn', but they do sometimes call it 'to learn' as well). Now this, as they are pointing out, had escaped your notice---that the same word is applied to opposite sorts of men, to both the man who knows and the man who does not. There was something similar to this in the second question, when they asked you whether people learn what they know or what they do not know. These things are the frivolous (παιδιᾶν) part of study (which is why I also tell you that the men are jesting); and I call these things 'frivolity' because even if a man were to learn (μάθοι) many or even all such things, he would be none the wiser as to how matters stand but would only be able to make fun of people, tripping them up and overturning them by means of the distinctions in words (τῇν τῶν ὀνομάτων διαφορᾶν), just like the people who pull the chair out from under a man who is going to sit down and then laugh gleefully when they see him sprawling on his back. (277e3-278c1)<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Translation Sprague (1993), with modifications.

Before turning to examine Socrates' diagnostic remarks, some initial observations about the object of his critique are in order:

(1) The first two arguments are obviously a pair: the sophists are out to demonstrate that they will refute Cleinias no matter how he answers; they pursue this goal by taking as the target thesis for the second argument the conclusion of the first, which is the (apparent) contradictory of Cleinias' original answer (as well as the only other alternative answer he is allowed to make).

(2) Socrates' solution as applied to the first pair of arguments has been criticized by some commentators on the grounds that it overlooks an alternative analysis, viz., that the arguments trade not on an ambiguity in the term *μανθάνειν*, but on an ambiguity in the terms 'σοφός' and 'ἄμαθής'.<sup>72</sup> Such critics allege that at the time Plato writes, 'σοφός' may mean either 'intelligent' or 'informed/knowing', while 'ἄμαθής' may mean either 'stupid' or 'uninformed/not knowing'; in that case, the sense of *μανθάνειν* may be held fixed, as indicating 'to learn', or 'to acquire information', the equivocation being located instead in the terms 'wise/ignorant.' Thus on this interpretation, the sense of the initial thesis (Answer 1A) attributed to Cleinias is that

1A\*: The wise (i.e., intelligent) are the learners (i.e., those who acquire information).

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<sup>72</sup> Cp. Stewart (1977), 26 and Sprague (1993), 10. Other commentators however have pointed out that it is very difficult to find convincing occurrences, either in the Platonic corpus or elsewhere, of the alleged ambiguity of *σοφός*: the term at any rate is never used by Plato in the sense of 'ability to learn': 'when Plato does want a word to describe this quality (which we may call intelligence), he uses the words *εὐμαθής*, *εὐμαθία* and *εὐμάθεια* (*Charm.* 159e3...*Meno* 88a8, b7, *Rep.* 486c3, etc.)', Hawtry (1981), 59; cp. Canto (1989), 193.

Equivocation will then occur when the sophists change the sense of ‘σοφός’ from ‘intelligent’ to ‘informed/knowing’. (Thus on this reading, premise (3) of the first argument becomes: those who do not yet know the things they acquire information about are not informed/knowing about them). What this challenge to Plato’s own diagnosis overlooks however is that it is Euthydemus, and not Cleinias who, in the first premise, introduces the notion of teachers and teaching. This surely indicates that Plato portrays Socrates as *correctly* suspecting that the sophist has introduced the concept of teaching so that he may overturn Cleinias’ first answer, by exploiting the association of teaching in Cleinias’ mind with the acquisition of new information---in other words, with *learning*. In that case, the first answer we must attribute to Cleinias is not 1A\* but rather

1A: The wise (i.e., the informed/knowing) are those who understand (i.e., those who grasp and use knowledge they already have).

We may therefore acquit Plato of an overlooked solution to the first pair of arguments. What the objection itself disregards is our first indication in the dialogue that the fallacies in the *Euthydemus* are not mere written argument schemas; if they were, the first pair of arguments would admit of the suggested dual solution, since the sense of *μανθάνειν* would in that case be indeterminate. However, in the context of a live dialectical encounter, the fallacy of equivocation occurs when the questioner’s conclusion fails to be the true contradictory of the answerer’s determinately *intended* thesis, because the questioner has employed a term from the answerer’s thesis in a sense in which the latter did not *intend*; a fact to which Plato will repeatedly draw our attention, in more or

less explicit ways, in what follows.<sup>73</sup> Since the text suggests that in his first premise Euthydemus deliberately employs ‘μανθάνειν’ in a sense contrary to Cleinias’ intention, the equivocation is, as Socrates suggests, on μανθάνειν throughout. The resulting equivocation in the first two arguments is indicated in bold above.

(3) The second pair of arguments is more problematic. The difficulty is that the pattern of the first pair of arguments raises the expectation that the conclusion of the third argument will become the targeted thesis of the fourth argument; and that therefore the conclusion of the fourth argument will be the contradictory of this thesis. Thus, given the conclusion of argument three:

C3: Learners/**those who understand** learn/**understand** the things they know, not the things they do not know.

...our expectation is that the fourth argument will conclude to the contradictory of this statement, with a shift in the sense of μανθάνειν to ‘learn/acquire information.’ But the conclusion of argument four is:

C4: It is those who do not know who **learn**/understand, not those who know.

...and Cleinias is never asked to explicitly state the thesis which this conclusion is alleged to contradict (he is simply told by Dionysodorus at 277b that Euthydemus has ‘deceived him’ into concluding to C3). I propose that this problem may best be resolved by attempting to satisfy the strong expectation that C3 is in fact the (unexpressed) target

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<sup>73</sup> Most explicitly at 295c.



thesis of the final argument. In that case, we should note that this thesis introduces the notion of an object of learning (or of understanding). This suggests in turn that C4 may be read as an elliptical expression of the contradictory of C3, wherein the object of learning is unexpressed:

C4\*: It is those who do not know (the things they learn/understand) who learn/understand, not those who know.

Thus if the object of learning in C3 is emphasized, C3 (on the sophist's construal) may be rephrased as:

C3\*: The object of learning that learners learn are the things they know.

In which case C4\* (again on the sophist's construal) becomes:

C4\*\*: The object of learning that learners learn are the things they do not know.

Dionysodorus may thus reasonably expect C4 to strike his (save for Socrates) dialectically untrained audience as the contradictory of the conclusion of its companion argument. While the second pair of arguments is admittedly sloppy, there seems little reason to attribute this flaw to Plato. It is far more likely that Plato here purposefully draws our attention to the brothers' dialectical slovenliness as part and parcel of their deliberately deceptive tactics.

(4) The third argument obviously also contains a fallacy of parts and wholes: if Cleinias knows all his letters, then he knows anything that is formed out of them in speech. Curiously, Socrates does not mention this fault in his subsequent diagnosis, despite the fact that Euthydemus seems to have been identified in antiquity as the author of fallacies of this type.<sup>74</sup> One explanation for this may be that in its context, the part/whole fallacy serves to facilitate the shift in sense of *μανθάνειν* from ‘learn’ to ‘understand’: Cleinias knows, and therefore understands, what is dictated to him. Socrates may therefore regard the move as merely contributing to the arguments’ main flaw. If that is so, it suggests that Socrates’ comments on the arguments should not be read as an attempt to identify every illegitimate move that they contain. (As we have already seen---see comment (3) above---they are not). It seems more fruitful therefore to approach Socrates’ remarks with the question, why should Plato give Socrates the occasion to make the limited observations that he does make by beginning his dramatization of eristic with this particular series of arguments?

(5) Dionysodorus warns Socrates more than once that Cleinias will be refuted whichever way he answers (275e5-6, 276e1-2; 276e5: ‘All of our questions are of this same inescapable sort.’) This is our first indication in the dialogue that we should resist---as many commentators have not---the temptation to attribute to the sophists any metaphysical or logical thesis as the philosophical basis of their more paradoxical

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<sup>74</sup> Cp. *Rhet.*, II, 24 1401a25-29. For evidence that Plato is aware of how to solve a part/whole fallacy of this type, see *Hipp.Ma.*300a-303c. It is worth noting that Aristotle also omits to mention the part/whole sophism as a separate fallacy when, at *SE* 4 165b30-32, he cites this very argument from the *Euthydemus* as an illustration of fallacies based on homonymy: ‘Those learn who know: for it is those who know their letters who learn the letters dictated to them; for ‘to learn’ is homonymous; it signifies both ‘to understand’ by the use of knowledge, and also ‘to acquire knowledge.’ Aristotle does however refer to the fallacy of letters in its own right at *Rhet.* II 24, 1401a29-31. It may receive a passing reference at *SE* 4 166a30-31, but interpretation of the latter passage is notoriously difficult.

subsequent assertions (e.g., the denial of the possibility of false statement and contradiction, 283e7-284a8, 284b3-284c6, 285d7-286b6). Unlike the Protagoras of the *Theaetetus*, no such philosophical coat-hangers are ever handed to the sophists in this dialogue. Moreover, their claim to refute an interlocutor *no matter how he answers* signals that since they would never commit themselves to any such thesis, they are in fact not committed to any such thesis. I will defend and expand on this important point below.

(6) It is clear that refutation, according to the sophists, is achieved simply through the confounding or dumbfounding of an interlocutor. If the answerer is stumped, he is refuted.<sup>75</sup> The logical or linguistic relationship of the conclusion to the answerer's original thesis or to the premise set is important only to the extent that the interlocutor (and any audience in attendance) *believes* that the contradictory of his thesis has been established.

(7) Finally, we should note the brothers' merciless employment of (spurious) deductive argument on the inexperienced and youthful Cleinias. The contrast here is with Socrates' frequent use of induction in his own conversations with the boy. As we have noted above (Chapter 3.1), Socrates' use of induction with a dialectical novice in turn entails that the premises in his inductive bases will be as acceptable as possible to Cleinias. The sophists' premises are by contrast frequently merely apparently acceptable. For example, Euthydemus' first premise, if taken in the sense Cleinias intended, is clearly false (it is false that teachers teach what their pupils already understand); and it is false,

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<sup>75</sup> I borrow the term 'stumping' from Zeyl (1998), 174, who concurs in this account of the brothers' notion of refutation.

though apparently acceptable, that whenever the writing master dictates to his pupils, he dictates merely letters.<sup>76</sup>

In his critique of the sophists' arguments, Socrates complains that the brothers' display falls far short of the demonstration of hortatory skill he and Cleinias had been promised. What is rather striking however is that Socrates' criticism does not seem to be limited to condemning the puerile quality of the arguments themselves. For Socrates seems also to belittle the sort of knowledge that is required to see through the brothers' fallacies. The sophists, Socrates pretends, were deliberately 'pointing out' for Cleinias' benefit the ambiguity in the term 'μανθάνειν'. But the knowledge Cleinias lacks on this score---namely, knowledge in 'the correctness in names', (περὶ ὀνομάτων ὀρθότητος, 277e4) and in 'the distinction in words' (τὴν τῶν ὀνομάτων διαφορὰν, 278b6-7)--is, as Socrates reminds us, the particular domain of expertise of the sophist Prodicus---a familiar butt of Platonic ridicule.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, Socrates' disparagement of the brothers' apparent exploitation of this knowledge as 'the frivolous (or: childish) part of study' (τῶν μαθημάτων παιδιά, 278b2) calls to mind the attitude toward eristic argument expressed by the unnamed critic of philosophy in the Epilogue: if it is indeed the case, as Socrates complains, 'that even if one were to learn all such things one would be none the wiser as to how things stand' (278b4-5), then why should the philosopher pay any attention to such 'ridiculous and worthless' (305a7-8) arguments?

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<sup>76</sup> Cp. Aristotle's definition of an eristic deduction at *Topics* I.1.100b23-101a1: 'An eristic deduction is one from what appears to be acceptable but is not, or an apparent deduction from what is actually or only apparently acceptable. For not everything which appears acceptable actually is so: for none of the acceptable things mentioned [i.e., what is acceptable to everyone, or to most people, or to the wise] has this appearance merely on the surface, as actually does happen in connection with the starting-points of eristic arguments (for in their case, the nature of the mistake is usually quite obvious at once to those capable of even modest discernment)'. (Translation Smith (1997), with modifications).

<sup>77</sup> See especially *Protag.* 337a-c, 339e-341c; cp. *Theat.* 151b.

Socrates' remarks thus lead to a question concerning Plato's own estimation of the value of the knowledge Socrates apparently denigrates: ought we to conclude that Plato thinks 'knowledge of correctness in names' falls outside the scope of philosophy or dialectic *per se*? Is Socrates' point then that such knowledge is really only a prerequisite to real philosophical investigation (as say, knowing ones times tables is a prerequisite to the study of higher mathematical arts)?<sup>78</sup> Another possible indication that this is Plato's opinion is a second striking fact about Socrates' critique: this is the only instance in the entire dialogue where Socrates is allowed to provide an explicit resolution of the sophists' fallacies.<sup>79</sup> Given the suppression of any further explicit resolutions on Socrates' part in the subsequent eristic episodes, ought we to conclude that Plato thinks that the *solutions* to all the fallacies employed by the sophists are *also* relegated to 'the childish part of study'—that it is enough to have them dramatized for the student to work out their solutions for themselves—again, as a kind of prerequisite to philosophical investigation that lies outside the scope of dialectic *per se*?

It seems clear upon consideration that this question must receive a negative answer. Socrates' dismissal of the brothers' knowledge as trivial does not entail that Plato dismisses as trivial or outside the scope of philosophy the kind of knowledge that Socrates displays in solving the arguments. To think that it does is to suppose that Plato

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<sup>78</sup> Cp. Richard Robinson (1942), 114: 'Plato appears to have remained till death at the point of view stated in the *Euthydemus*, that ambiguity [i.e. equivocation] is of no importance to the philosopher.' Cp. Sedley (2003), 154: 'In fact in the *Euthydemus* (277e3-278a7), on the one occasion in the entire corpus when Socrates explicitly points out an equivocation as the key to solving a philosophical problem, he does his level best to devalue it as the sort of thing you could learn by studying the 'correctness of names' with Prodicus.'

<sup>79</sup> Socrates' extended response (286b7-288a7) to the sophists' thesis that false speaking (or false opinion in general) is impossible does not constitute an exception to this claim. Socrates refutes the sophists' thesis; but he does not explain what is wrong with the sophists' arguments, either for this view or for their denial of the possibility of contradiction. I discuss the significance of the manner in which Socrates does and does not answer the sophists in this regard below, Chapter 3.6, 149-154.

identifies three forms of skill or expertise alluded to in the passage: (i) the knowledge that Prodicus possesses regarding ‘correctness in names’; (ii) the eristic knack, displayed by Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, of exploiting ignorance of this latter knowledge in the construction of sophisms; and (iii) the knowledge that Socrates displays in meeting and resolving the sophists’ arguments. Socrates does not imply that Prodicus’ grasp of fine distinctions in meaning is equivalent to the brothers’ eristic art (he says only that they exploited Cleinias’ lack of this knowledge). Indeed, we have no reason to suppose that the brothers are committed to any theory regarding correctness in names; nor may we assume that their knowledge of distinctions in the conventional meanings of words is particularly extensive, since (as becomes increasingly apparent as the dialogue proceeds) their eristic ‘art’ simply consists in the grasp of a series of canned arguments which they have committed to memory.<sup>80</sup> It is true that Plato is unimpressed by the expertise of Prodicus and the eristics alike. But that is because (recall the competition for wisdom from the Epilogue) the fault they share is the belief that their respective forms of expertise constitute true wisdom, i.e., the knowledge whose possession is sufficient to secure our happiness.

It is obvious however that these two forms of knowledge---of distinctions in the conventional meanings of words, and of a series of canned arguments---are distinct from the expertise dramatized by Socrates’ diagnosis of the sophists’ fallacies. Socrates’ solution is, to be sure, founded on his grasp of the homonymy of a name; but in his apt application of this knowledge, Socrates displays a skill that belongs to the expert answerer in dialectic: it is one thing to know about the ambiguity of certain expressions

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<sup>80</sup> Cp. Aristotle’s famous complaint, at *SE* 34 183b-184a8, of the unsystematic method of training in eristic argumentation extant in his day.

in a natural language; it is quite another to be able to discern that an argument turns upon the exploitation of such homonymy. Thus if Socrates had been in the answerer's role rather than Cleinias, he could have blocked the sophists' arguments by showing that he had not been refuted. This is then our first indication in the dialogue of the content of Socratic dialectic in its refutatory aspect: if Socrates knows anything, he knows what constitutes a genuine refutation. The *Sophist's* account of the purgative art of the 'sophist of noble lineage' tells us as much<sup>81</sup>:

These people (i.e., those who 'seem to have an argument to give to themselves that lack of learning is always involuntary') cross-examine (διερωτῶσιν) someone concerning things about which he supposes he is saying something though he is saying nothing. Then, because [sc. these men] are wandering (πλανωμένων) [in their beliefs] they readily scrutinize their beliefs, and collecting them together during the discussions they place them side by side (συνάγοντες δὴ τοῖς λόγοις εἰς ταὐτὸν τιθέασι παρ' ἀλλήλας), and having placed them so they demonstrate (ἐπιδεικνύουσιν) that they are opposed to one another (ἐναντίως) at the same time (ἅμα) concerning the same things (περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν) in relation to the same things (πρὸς τὰ αὐτὰ) and in the same respects (κατὰ ταύτᾳ) (230b4-8).<sup>82</sup>

It is clear that in indicating the solution of the μανθάνειν fallacies for Cleinias' benefit, Socrates reposes upon a clause in a definition of refutation such as that above: a refutation is an argument—in fact, demonstration (as Plato says here) which, using as

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<sup>81</sup> I take it for granted here that 'the sophist of noble lineage' is Socrates (and practitioners of his method). For an opposing viewpoint see Kerferd (1954). Kerferd however argues to the conclusion that eristic argumentation of the type exemplified by Euthydemus and Dionysodorus in the *Euthydemus* is meant--- which, so long as it is used 'in the right way could prepare the ground for a true understanding of reality based on the Forms', 90. I find the suggestion fantastic; unless, of course, by 'the right way', Kerferd means 'in the manner of Socratic dialectic.' To the objection that it is anachronistic to draw on the evidence of a dialogue as late as the *Sophist* in order to illuminate Socrates' dialectical in the *Euthydemus*, I reply: Plato here clearly takes himself to be offering the reader a *retrospective* account of Socratic activity as that is portrayed in the earlier dialogues. There is every reason to suppose therefore that Plato takes the above account of Socratic refutation to be consistent with Socratic practice in dialogues which predate the *Sophist*.

<sup>82</sup> Against White (1993) in my translation above I take πλανωμένων to modify men, not their opinions themselves; for evidence see *Alcibiades* 117ff. The verb cannot mean of opinions that they are inconsistent; the sense is that men are 'wandering' concerning the things about which they claim to be knowledgeable (e.g., the just and the unjust) because they are disposed to say first one thing about the subject and then another (contrary) thing; because they are disposed to wander in this way, their opinions are easily exposed as being contrary to one another (or inconsistent). Hence they do not know. Cp. *Protag* 356d5-6: the power of appearances cause us to wander up and down (ἡμᾶς ἐπλάνᾳ καὶ ἐποίει ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω) in our actions and choices; the art of measurement (knowledge) puts a stop to this.

premises the opinions of the interlocutor, establishes the contradictory of the answerer's original thesis, the terms in the refutation meeting all the conditions necessary in order for the inference to constitute a genuine refutation of the answerer's original thesis.<sup>83</sup> The *μανθάνειν* fallacies violate the condition that both the predicate term and the subject term in the refutation (including the conclusion) concern the same things (*περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν*)---that is, signify the same objects---as the predicate and subject in the answerer's original thesis. Socrates does not tell Cleinias in so many words that the sophists have violated the condition that the conclusion of a refutation must be about the very same *things* signified by the answerer in his original thesis, and not just the same *names*. If he does not appeal to such terms from his own art, that is no doubt because it is no part of Socrates' brief to do so: Socrates' immediate concern is to turn Cleinias towards virtue, not to make him into a dialectician. Plato may in any case rely upon his readers to draw the appropriate dialectical moral. It is clear therefore that Plato does not dismiss from the domain of dialectic the form of expertise Socrates here displays. On the contrary, Plato's portrait of Socrates at work upon the first fallacies in the dialogue has the effect of placing Socratic expertise squarely within his peculiar dialectical domain.

This result however should not lead us to ignore an indirect allusion in Socrates' remarks to another form of dialectical knowledge that lies beyond the sphere of Socratic dialectical activity. I have argued that Plato does not use Socrates' passing reference to the expertise of Prodicus to devalue the dialectical skill involved in the resolution of fallacy. We have every reason to believe however that Plato would agree that the

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<sup>83</sup> The Visitor's description of Socratic refutation as a *demonstration* or ἀπόδειξις (ἐπιδεικνύουσιν, 230b7) obviously raises many questions regarding the approximation or equivalence of this account to the Aristotelian account of a (genuine) refutation as a 'συλλογισμός with the contradictory added', (*SE* 1 165a2-3; *SE* 6 168a35-37). I shall have much more to say on this score below (see in particular Chapter 3.6, 168, and Chapter 4.3 *passim*).



sophist's grasp of distinctions in the conventional meanings of words can at best be characterized as a mere tool of philosophical investigation; it cannot form a constituent part of the wisdom of the dialectician *per se*. This is because, according to Plato, the dialectician and Prodicus have two very different notions of the 'correctness in names.' Prodicus' notion is merely semantic: 'correctness' in this sense entails the choice of one nearly synonymous term over another to convey a speaker's intended meaning.<sup>84</sup> The *Cratylus* tells us that the dialectician's notion is by contrast etymological and metaphysical: the correctness of a name in this sense consists in its power, given its constituent parts, to communicate the *being* or *essence* of that which it names (387d-388c; 428d-e). The highest good that a name can realize, or the true function of names, is to facilitate the dialectician---the 'user of names'---in philosophical instruction regarding the nature of being (390c-e).<sup>85</sup> Insofar as Prodicus is the butt of a joke in our passage then, the joke is the same as that with which Socrates begins his conversation with Hermogenes: if Socrates had only attended Prodicus' fifty-drachma course, he could contribute something worthwhile to the investigation of the correctness of names. (384b). The point of the irony in both passages is that Prodicus' notion of the 'correctness' of names is anything but correct, given the activity of the 'one who knows how to ask and answer questions'---the dialectician---who uses a name as 'a kind of instructive instrument, which separates being as a shuttle separates a web (388b13-388c1)'.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Unfortunately, our best evidence for this is Plato's own portrayal of the sophist (see especially *Protag.* 337a-c, 339e-341c). But the historical accuracy of Plato's portrait of the sophist does not affect my reading of the passage in the *Euthydemus*.

<sup>85</sup> The dialectical function of names receives insightful treatment in Sedley (2003), 62ff.

<sup>86</sup> As we have observed in Chapters One and Two, the *Euthydemus* and the *Cratylus* are closely aligned with respect to the doctrine of users as the overseers of makers. I hasten to add however that the observations above do not necessitate that the *Cratylus* antedates the *Euthydemus*; they require only the assumption that Plato believed in the objective correctness of names at time he wrote *Euthydemus*.

If that is so however, it follows that our passage recognizes a domain of dialectical activity that falls outside the scope of Socrates' distinctive expertise in refutation. For Socrates would of course disavow the knowledge of Forms possessed by the user of names---just as he would disavow the superordinate knowledge of the user/maker dialectician whose activity, we discovered, solves the *aporia* of the second protreptic episode. Moreover, the art of the dialectician *qua* instructor in the nature of being and the Socratic art of refutation are different in kind. This result suggests a general interpretative hypothesis for reading the eristic episodes of the dialogue. For our reading of the first episode raises the expectation that in the ensuing eristic encounters, Plato will be concerned to portray Socrates as working within the limits of his peculiar dialectical sub-domain. I shall argue below that this expectation is met in the second eristic episode.

In consequence we shall meet with two interesting discoveries. First, the content of Socratic expertise in its refutatory aspect is not limited to the knowledge of what constitutes a genuine refutation. For Plato assigns Socrates the task of identifying dialectical fouls committed by the brothers which cannot be described as violations of the definition of a refutation. Our reading of the second eristic episode will therefore broaden our understanding of the scope of Socratic expertise, as an art that includes expertise in what is *procedurally relevant* to genuine refutation. Second, the content of Socratic expertise in its refutatory aspect is not unlimited in its grasp of the resolution of fallacy. In particular, Plato does not allow Socrates to meet the sophists' denial of false assertion by drawing upon the solution from the *Sophist*. I shall argue that the proper conclusion to draw from this fact is not that Plato did not know how to resolve the no-false-speaking arguments at the time he wrote the *Euthydemus*. For that inference seems insupportable in

the face of evidence that Plato broadly hints at a *Sophist*-style solution in the text. The proper conclusion, rather, is that Plato's concern in this episode is to identify the response that Socrates *does* employ—viz., the charge that the thesis is self-refuting—as distinctively Socratic. Thus we shall find in the second eristic episode further evidence for our claim that in the *Euthydemus* Plato draws our attention to the existence of two distinct levels of dialectical expertise.

However, before we leave the first eristic encounter, a word is in order about a word. I suggested above that it is less fruitful to read Socrates' comments on the first fallacies in the dialogue as an attempt to catalogue every dialectical flaw they contain, and more fruitful to approach his remarks by asking why Plato should begin his dramatization of eristic argumentation with this particular series of fallacies. One plausible answer is that fallacies that depend upon homonymy are, as Aristotle says, 'the silliest' (εὐηθέστατος) of all (182b13-14). The modes of fallacy subsequently surveyed become increasingly difficult to solve (or even to type) as the dialogue proceeds; moreover, as their solution increases in difficulty, the Socratic hints as to their resolution become less frequent until, in the most difficult cases, the learner in dialectic is thrown entirely upon his own resources. It would therefore be in keeping with the pedagogical style of the dialogue that Plato would introduce the learner to the topic of fallacy and its resolution by first acquainting him with its shallower waters. It is worth noting, too, that Plato's selection of this species of fallacy will thereby serve both to justify Socrates' derision of the sophists' tactics as childish, as well as to underscore the cruelty of the

sophists, whose victim is so inexperienced in argument that he is unable to meet even the most simple-minded of sophisms.<sup>87</sup>

Yet another plausible answer consistent with these is that Plato begins with homonymy so that he may indulge in a bit of word play himself. At 274b1, Euthydemus has boasted to Socrates that he and his brother will teach and demonstrate their wisdom--- viz., virtue---to anyone present who wants to learn (μανθάνειν). In response, Socrates points to the two groups of auditors clustered around the main interlocutors: the followers and friends of Cleinias, and the pupils (μαθητὰι, 273a2) of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. Everyone, Socrates assures the sophists, is ready to learn (μανθάνειν, 274c7-d1). In his consoling remarks to the rattled Cleinias, Socrates informs the boy that, as Prodicus says, he must learn (μαθεῖν) about correctness in names (277e4); at the same time Socrates complains of the sophists' games that even if a man were to learn (μάθοι) many or even all such things, he would be none the wiser as to how things are (278b4-5).<sup>88</sup>

The sophists' tricks with the ambiguity of μανθάνειν are grotesque and insipid. Plato's play with the same term is by contrast not only subtle and delightful; it has, I suggest, a serious purpose. For while completely managing to avoid equivocation (every instance of the word above must be taken in the sense 'to learn'), the double sense of μανθάνειν is nevertheless invoked at every turn, as though in a pattern of instructions to

<sup>87</sup> But compare the manner in which the equally youthful Theaetetus adroitly solves a sophism at *Theaetetus* 163b8-163c3. Of course Theaetetus is a genius; but there is evidence at dialogue's end to suggest that Cleinias may not be philosophical material. I address this issue below, Chapter 5.10, 322-325.

<sup>88</sup> Burnyeat (2002) draws a different moral from this wordplay, according to which the point is whether the two sets of pupils (i.e. the lovers of Cleinias and the followers of the sophists) are ready to μανθάνειν in the same sense: 'Not if the sophists' teaching is at all effective. At least some of the pupils will be watching to *understand* better how the trick is played', 59. It is unclear to me however whether it makes sense (or is good Greek) to describe the sophists' pupils as ready or zealous (ἔτοιμοι) to understand (in the sense of use knowledge they already have) knowledge which they have not yet acquired.

the reader of the dialogue: you must learn about the correctness of names; but having learned, you will understand that that is only the wisdom of a beginner. You must learn how the sophists' tricks are played; but having learned, you will understand that you are none the wiser with respect to the nature of reality; and you will learn—if you are paying attention—how to respond to the sophists' tricks in the manner of the master of genuine refutation; but having learned, you will understand that that is only the beginning of true philosophical wisdom.

### 3.3 The Second Eristic Episode: the Impossibility of False Speaking

The arguments of the second eristic episode (282d-288d) are numerous and complex. It would be well therefore to begin our analysis of this passage by surveying its basic dialectical structure.

Having completed his own first protreptic display, Socrates reiterates his desire that the sophists put on a serious exhibition of their own protreptic art (282d-e). Dionysodorus (nearly hugging himself in anticipation of the effect his reply will have on the audience) obligingly responds with the following argument: if Socrates and Cleinias' other friends wish Cleinias to become wise, then they wish him to become what he is not; hence they wish him no longer to be what he is; hence they wish him no longer to be; therefore they wish him to die (283c5-283d6). Ctesippus---who here speaks for the first time in the dialogue---angrily retorts that that is a lie. Euthydemus counters that it is impossible to tell a lie, for it is in fact impossible to speak falsely at all. Ctesippus---who expresses less intellectual astonishment at the sophist's thesis than outrage at its

implications for the truth regarding the strength of his erotic attachment---is unable to deal with the two arguments Euthydemus proceeds to advance for the impossibility of falsehood (283e7-284a8, 284b3-284c6). When his best attempt to respond (284c7-8) is countered by a howler of Dionysodorus (284c9-284d7), Ctesippus explodes in anger a second time. Socrates gently intervenes, and diplomatically attempts to take over the role of answerer from Ctesippus: if the sophists have in fact discovered a form of destruction by means of which they can do away with a bad and stupid man and render him good and intelligent, then Socrates will offer himself up for such annihilation. Ctesippus, interrupting, ostentatiously chimes in that he, too, is willing to hand himself over to the visitors---they may even skin him alive, if they like----so long as Dionysodorus does not call Ctesippus' contradiction of him 'abuse'. Dionysodorus counters with an argument for the impossibility of contradiction (285d7-286b6). When Ctesippus 'falls silent' (286b7) at the argument, Socrates is at last free to engage the sophists on his own terms. Expressing astonishment at the sophists' theses, he first takes Dionysodorus down a notch by noting that the denial of falsehood is not terribly original---it is, Socrates observes, at least as old as Protagoras, and was used even before his time. He next pronounces his judgment upon it: 'It always seems to me to have a wonderful way of upsetting not just other arguments, but itself as well' (286c3-4). Adopting his familiar dialectical role of questioner, Socrates proceeds to examine the thesis that false speaking and that false opinion in general is impossible. Though Euthydemus and Dionysodorus repeatedly attempt to evade Socrates' efforts by forcing him back into the role of answerer, Socrates seems to consider himself to have reached his earlier summary judgment as a conclusion at 288a2-4: 'It looks as if this argument has made no progress

and still has the old trouble of falling down itself in the process of knocking down others.’

The present Chapter and Chapters 3.4 and 3.5 are devoted to an analysis of the sophists’ arguments for the impossibility of false speaking and contradiction; in Chapter 3.6, I turn to consider Socrates’ response to these arguments.

The opening altercation in this episode between Ctesippus and Dionysodorus (282d-283e) gives the brothers all the opening they need to trot out two of their most cherished theses: viz., the impossibility of false speaking and the impossibility of contradiction (hereafter NFS and NC, respectively). But the exchange also serves two other important functions, which deserve mention before we move on to examine Euthydemus’ arguments for NFS:

(1) Dionysodorus’ provocative discovery of the ill-will of Cleinias’ friends is the first of many instances in the dialogue of a single type of fallacy. Its strings and pulleys are perhaps fairly obvious even in the gloss above. Nevertheless a painfully literal rendering of the actual word order in Dionysodorus’ premises underscores how the argument is facilitated by the fact that the Greek verb εἶναι may be used to express both existence and the copula. The sophist argues (283c5-283d6):

Cleinias is not wise: Κλεινίας οὐκ ἔστιν σοφός.

You wish him to become wise: βούλεσθε γενέσθαι αὐτὸν σοφόν...

...and ignorant not to be: ἀμαθῇ δὲ μὴ εἶναι.

Therefore what he is not: Οὐκοῦν ὅς μὲν οὐκ ἔστιν...

...you wish him to become: βούλεσθε αὐτὸν γενέσθαι...

and what he is now no longer to be: ὅς δ' ἔστι νῦν μηκέτι εἶναι.

Since you wish him what now he is no longer to be: ἐπεὶ βούλεσθε αὐτὸν ὅς νῦν ἐστὶν μηκέτι εἶναι,

...you therefore wish him to die: βούλεσθε αὐτόν...ἀπολωλέναι.

The predicate adjective σοφός—‘wise’—appears directly after the negated copula ἔστιν in final position in the first line. By line three the contrary complement ἀμαθῆ---‘ignorant’---has been shifted to first position, in isolation from the negated copula μὴ εἶναι. Thus separated from its complement the copula can fall on Greek ears as having existential implications: ‘not to be’ as opposed to ‘not to be F’. The impression is heightened by repetition: Dionysodorus substitutes for the qualifying complements in initial position the phrases ‘what he (is not)’, ‘what he (is) now’, ‘what now he (is)’, leaving the copula dangling in isolation at the end of each line. The addition to the shorn copula of the word μηκέτι---‘no longer’---also repeated---perfects the effect: clearly, Cleinias’ friends wish him no longer to be.

Viewed through the retrospective lens of the *Sophistical Refutations*, this fallacy is of course liable to be classified as a species of *secundum quid*. For as Aristotle explains, that fallacy can be generated by precisely the same ontological confusion of existence with being-in-a-certain-way:

For to-be-something (τὸ εἶναι...τι) and to-be without qualification (εἶναι ἀπλῶς) are not the same...[and] not-to-be-something and not-to-be without qualification are not the same. They appear to be the same on account of the closeness of the language and because ‘to-be-something’ differs little from ‘to be’, and ‘not-to-be-something’ is little different from ‘not-to-be. (SE 167a2-6).

But what is Plato’s view? Unlike the first episode, Socrates here provides no helpful gloss. We should not however jump to the conclusion that Plato believes the sophism needs only to be stated for its solution to be grasped. To do so would be to



suppose that opinion on these matters was settled at the time the *Euthydemus* was written. Yet we have no reason to suppose that that was the case. In the absence of a developed theory of fallacy, we may readily imagine, for example, that some of Plato's contemporaries would classify the fallacy as another case of homonymy, in this case turning upon the ambiguity of the verb εἶναι. Others may have advocated that the stilted word order of Dionysodorus' final premise creates an ambiguity in the syntax of that sentence.<sup>89</sup> In fact however we need not resort to such speculation. For we shall discover as the dialogue proceeds that Plato acknowledges the currency of alternative solutions to certain sophisms by means of various subtle stage directions in the text; at the same time, and largely through the same devices, he will indicate his own preferred solutions. Thus the present passage is the first of many that invites the reader to think about a fallacy without Plato's assistance ('discuss amongst yourselves'); as it turns out, subsequent Socratic interjections at reiterations of the same type of fallacy leave little doubt by dialogue's end that Plato does in fact view the present sophism as an instance of *secundum quid* ('now show your work: did you see how the trick was played?').<sup>90</sup>

(2) The passage also serves to introduce us to the character of Ctesippus. We shall see as the eristic scenes progress that Ctesippus fulfills two functions in the dialogue. On the one hand, his exchanges with the sophists are used to contrast the effect of Socratic protreptic on Cleinias with the effect of its false image on Ctesippus. As Socrates himself notes near the end of the dialogue (304a), Ctesippus quickly masters the sophists' art.

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<sup>89</sup> The dependent clause of the final line may be translated either: 'You wish him what now he is no longer to be' or 'You wish him no longer to be what he is now.'

<sup>90</sup> Subsequent instances of *Secundum Quid* occur at 293b1-294a10 (the 'Omniscience Argument', discussed in Chapters 4.2-4.3); 295b2-296d4 (the 'Always Omniscient Argument', discussed in Chapter 4.4); 297d4-298a9 (a related series of instances involving familial relationships which I treat in Chapter 5.2); 299a9-299c3 (analyzed below in Chapter 5.5, 'Medicine and Monsters'), and 299d1-e3 (the 'Gold Fallacy', discussed in Chapter 5.6).

What he does not say, but what Plato has spelled out for the reader in mile high letters, is that Ctesippus' character seems hardly to have been improved by this achievement. More troubling still is the apparent admiration of Cleinias at his lover's newly acquired skill (300d). The implication of these incidents for the moral efficacy of Socratic protreptic is however best reserved for later discussion.<sup>91</sup>

Ctesippus' second function is more directly relevant to our present inquiry into the nature of the refutatory aspect of Socratic dialectic. As I shall argue, Ctesippus' responses to the brothers' arguments are used by Plato to indicate how *not* to resolve their sophisms; Socrates' responses by contrast are implicitly endorsed. In some instances, Plato's criticism of Ctesippus on this score is overt. Our present passage is a case in point: in the face of outrageous provocation, Socrates will patiently mount a dialectically respectable challenge to the sophists' twin theses NFS and NC. In the same circumstances Ctesippus just loses his cool; and calling Dionysodorus a liar hardly amounts to a resolution of the sophism.

Plato's critique of Ctesippus as dialectician is however more than characterological in nature (Ctesippus' Goofus to Socrates' Gallant). For Plato will frequently use Ctesippus to indicate his disapproval of Ctesippus' dialectical tactics, and not merely his bad manners. Intriguingly, one of these tactics---'inquiring shamelessly' of ones opponent 'the most disgraceful things'---seems borrowed from a previous incarnation of Socrates himself in the earlier Socratic dialogues.<sup>92</sup> More importantly, even when Ctesippus seems to articulate a genuine insight into the resolution of a

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<sup>91</sup> See Chapter 5.10, 322-325.

<sup>92</sup> Here I have in mind in particular Socrates' resort to torrent-birds and catamites in the *Gorgias* (494a-495a). For Ctesippus' similar challenge to an interlocutor's sense of shame see especially 294d; I discuss the possible implications of Plato's assignment of this tactic to Ctesippus rather than to Socrates below, Chapter 4.6, 236-238, and Chapter 5.1, 254-255.

sophism, we will find that Plato has gifted Ctesippus with a solution which he himself regards as inadequate. ('Were you paying attention? Do you now see why that suggestion was a red herring?')

In particular, Ctesippus is portrayed as having a *general* tendency to complain that fallacies turn on a term being used in a sense different from the one he intended.<sup>93</sup> In this regard---or so I shall claim---Ctesippus is portrayed as reacting to fallacy in the manner of the common man: upon being refuted by a sophism, and sensing that the conclusion has been reached illicitly, the ordinary man is likely to express his dissatisfaction with the argument by complaining that the sophist has 'twisted his words'; but he will often infer upon that basis that the sophism therefore rests on his expressions not having been taken in the sense he intended. The character of Ctesippus thus provides Plato with a foil against which he may argue his theoretical opposition to the view that all fallacies rest on homonymy. Thus we shall find as the dialogue unfolds that it is Plato who was the first to advocate such pluralism in the resolution of fallacy, not the author of the *Sophistici Elenchi*.

With so much by way of prologue, I turn next to examine the two arguments of Euthydemus for the impossibility of false speaking.

### **The First Argument for NFS (283e7-284a8):**

**Ctesippus' thesis:** It is possible to speak falsely/tell lies (οἶόν τ' εἶναι ψεύδεσθαι).

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<sup>93</sup> This tendency and Plato's reaction to it is in evidence in the third eristic episode. I discuss it below at various points in Chapter Five.

**Question 1:** (Does a man tell lies) when he is speaking the thing his speech is about (Πότερον λέγοντα τὸ πράγμα περὶ οὗ ἂν ὁ λόγος ᾖ) or when he is not speaking it (ἢ μὴ λέγοντα)?

**Answer:** When he is speaking it (Λέγοντα).

**Q2:** Therefore, if in fact he speaks it, he does not speak any other of the things that are than that very thing which he speaks (Οὐκοῦν εἴπερ λέγει αὐτό, οὐκ ἄλλο λέγει τῶν ὄντων ἢ ἐκεῖνο ὅπερ λέγει)?

**Answer:** Of course.

**Q3:** And so naturally, that thing is in fact one of the things that are, which he speaks, separate from the others (Ἐν μὲν κακείνῳ γ' ἐστὶν τῶν ὄντων, ὃ λέγει, χωρὶς τῶν ἄλλων)?

**Answer:** Certainly.

**Q4:** Then the man speaking that thing is speaking what is (Οὐκοῦν ὁ ἐκεῖνο λέγων τὸ ὄν λέγει)?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Conclusion 1:** But surely the man who is speaking what is and things that are speaks the truth (Ἀλλὰ μὲν ὅ γε τὸ ὄν λέγων καὶ τὰ ὄντα ἀληθῆ λέγει); so that Dionysodorus, if in fact he speaks the things that are, speaks the truth and tells no lies about you.' ὥστε ὁ Διονυσόδωρος, εἴπερ λέγει τὰ ὄντα, λέγει ἀληθῆ καὶ οὐδὲν κατὰ σοῦ ψεύδεται).

**Ctesippus' objection 1:** Yes, but the man speaking *those* things (i.e., that Ctessippus wishes Cleinias to die) does *not* speak the things that are (ὁ ταῦτα λέγων οὐ τὰ ὄντα λέγει).

Euthydemus' argument seems easy enough to summarize: If a man speaks a falsehood, then he must speak of something, viz., the very thing his speech is about. But he can speak of the thing his speech is about only if that subject exists. But if the thing his speech is about exists, then his speech is true; in which case he speaks no falsehood after all. Difficulties arise when we remind ourselves that a sophism is supposed to have the appearance of being sound, no matter how superficial that appearance may be. Unfortunately each assumption of this argument seems more resistible than the next. If I falsely assert 'Socrates is tall' it may be that I have thereby spoken of some subject matter, viz., Socrates; and we may be inclined to describe Socrates as the thing my speech is about. But if I falsely assert 'It is raining', what is the particular thing which my assertion is about? Again, even if we assume that the proper subject matter of my false assertion regarding Socrates' height is Socrates, why must I agree that I can talk about Socrates only if Socrates exists? More objectionable still is the notion that Socrates' mere existence secures the truth of my speech about him.

On the other hand, if Euthydemus' argument is so obviously open to these objections, why does Ctesippus not avail himself of any of them? Instead of objecting, for example, that his own existence does not entail the truth of Dionysodorus' lies about him, Ctesippus weakly (and question-beggingly) insists that the things Dionysodorus has stated are not 'the things that are'. I suggest that Ctesippus' reaction on this occasion is best interpreted as due to confusion, rather than anger or simple inattention; and that if we have escaped Ctesippus' confusion it is only because we have failed to hear what he has heard in Euthydemus' argument. For there is an interpretation of Euthydemus' inference which is much more apparently sound than our objections above would seem to credit.

Ctesippus' incapacity is induced when the sophist forces him to toggle between this more apparently sound argument and the grotesque fallacy above.

As more than one commentator has observed, Euthydemus' argument relies upon the substitution of one interpretation of the subject matter of speaking or saying for another.<sup>94</sup> He begins in Question 1 by asking whether a man speaks falsely when he is at least speaking the thing his speech is *about*. To express the notion of *aboutness* he uses the preposition περί with the relative pronoun 'which' in the genitive case (οὗ). This notion of aboutness however introduces a *relationship* between the subject matter of speech on the one hand, and what is spoken of that subject matter on the other: the speaker of falsehood speaks the subject matter or thing about which his speech is; he speaks the thing his speech is about: τὸ πρᾶγμα περὶ οὗ. This relationship is most naturally taken as that of *predication*: the speaker of falsehood speaks about a subject by predicating something about it that does not in fact hold of it, e.g., tallness of Socrates. Thus the argument begins by inviting the interlocutor to understand the subject matter of speech to be the subject of some predication. It follows that the sophist begins too with a notion of a statement as a complex of parts: a speech or a statement (λόγος) consists of the subject matter of one's statement on the one hand, and what one says about it on the other.

This understanding of subject matter and statement is however subtly eclipsed in the next few lines by a quite different account of both notions. On this interpretation, the subject matter of speech (τὸ πρᾶγμα) is an entire state of affairs: e.g., the tallness of Socrates; the fact or state of affairs of Socrates' being tall. Correspondingly, a statement

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<sup>94</sup> See especially Burnyeat (2002), 50-56 and Denyer (1991), 8-14.

(λόγος) is conceived as an unstructured signifier for such a state of affairs: the statement ‘Socrates is tall’ is a name for the state of affairs of Socrates’ being tall; ‘Socrates is short’ is a name for the state of affairs of Socrates’ being short. The shift begins in Q2 when the sophist asks if, in speaking of his subject matter, a man speaks any other of the things that are than that very thing which he speaks. Here the preposition with the genitive, expressing the relation of aboutness, has been summarily dropped. At the same time the notion of the subject matter of speech has been replaced by a fusion of the original notion of a subject matter with *being*: that which one speaks is now one of the things-that-are. Euthydemus’ third question then fully obliterates the original notion of subject matter and achieves its complete substitution with a fact or state of affairs. Assent to Q2 entails that it is not a mere thing, but a thing-that-is that is the subject matter and the *only* subject matter of some statement S. Assent to Q3 entails that no two statements share a subject matter: each thing-that-is that is the subject matter of every S is ‘separate from the other’ things-that-are. On this conception of subject matter then, Socrates cannot be the shared subject matter of the two statements ‘Socrates is tall’ and ‘Socrates is short.’

It is evident on this conception of the subject matter of speech why Ctesippus finds himself in difficulties. For (as Q4 implies) if the subject matter of some statement S is the fact which it names, and if no other statement has that fact as its subject matter, then one may indeed speak the thing ones speech is about only if that fact obtains; but if that fact obtains, then the thing your speech is about exists; in which case your speech is true. On this understanding of the argument, Ctesippus’ first objection may be read as a broken-backed attempt to straddle two incompatible conceptions of the subject matter of

speech at once: ‘but the man speaking (falsely) that *some x is F* does not speak some *thing-that-is*.’

This reading of Euthydemus’ first argument for the impossibility of false speaking is confirmed by his second argument for NFS, to which we now turn.

### **The Second Argument for NFS: (284b3-284c6):**

**Ctesippus’ thesis** (same as the First Argument): It is possible to speak falsely/tell lies.

**Question 5:** The things that are not surely do not exist, do they (Τὰ δὲ μὴ ὄντα, ἄλλο τι ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν)?

**Answer:** No, they do not exist (Οὐκ ἔστιν).

**Q6:** Then surely, there is nowhere that the things that are not are things that are (Ἄλλο τι οὖν οὐδαμοῦ τά γε μὴ ὄντα ὄντα ἐστίν)?

**Answer:** Nowhere (Οὐδαμου).

**Q7:** Then is it possible that someone could in any way do anything in relation to these things, the things that are not, with the result that (whoever he is) he affects these things, even though they are nowhere (Ἔστιν οὖν ὅπως περὶ ταῦτα, τὰ μὴ ὄντα, πράξειεν ἂν τίς τι, ὥστ’ ἐκεῖνα ποιήσειεν ἂν καὶ ὅστισοῦν τὰ μηδαμοῦ ὄντα)?<sup>95</sup>

**Answer:** It doesn’t seem so to me, at any rate (Οὐκ ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ).

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<sup>95</sup> Reading ὥστ’ ἐκεῖνα in line 284b6 with Burnet, which he bases upon the marginal corrections in T and W, and rejecting Hermann’s emendation of ὥστε καὶ εἶναι, which is accepted by Gifford (1905), Hawtrey (1981), Canto (1989), and Sprague (1993)). Gifford translates: ‘Is it possible that any one, whosoever he may be, could do anything about these non-existing things so as to make the things that exist nowhere actually to exist?’ Burnyeat’s (2002) grounds for rejecting this gloss are surely sound: the argument is not about the impossibility of bringing what is not into existence: ‘Parmenides-mania is no better than Antisthenes mania’, 50. But see note 34 below on Burnyeat’s own interpretation of the argument.



**Q8:** Well, then, when the orators speak in the Assembly, do they do nothing (Τί οὖν; οἱ ῥήτορες ὅταν λέγωσιν ἐν τῷ δήμῳ, οὐδὲν πράττουσι)?

**Answer:** No, they do something (Πράττουσι μὲν οὖν).

**Q9:** Then if they do something, they also have some effect (Οὐκοῦν εἴπερ πράττουσι, καὶ ποιούσι)?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Q10:** Speaking, then, is doing and affecting (Τὸ λέγειν ἄρα πράττειν τε καὶ ποιεῖν ἐστίν)?

**Answer:** (He agreed).

**Conclusion 2:** Then nobody speaks things that are not, since he would then be affecting something, and you have admitted that no one is capable of affecting that which is not. (Οὐκ ἄρα τά γε μὴ ὄντ' λέγει ουδεῖς—ποιοῖ γὰρ ἂν ἤδη τί· σὺ δὲ ὡμολόγηκας τὸ μὴ ὄν μὴ οἶόν τ' εἶναι μηδὲνα ποεῖν). So that according to your own statement, no one speaks falsely/tells lies; but if Dionysodorus really does speak, he speaks the truth and things that are (ὥστε κατὰ τὸν σὸν λόγον ουδεῖς ψευδῆ λέγει, ἀλλ' εἴπερ λέγει Διονυσόδωρος, τὰληθῆ τε καὶ τὰ ὄντα λέγει).

**Ctesippus' Objection 2:** God yes, Euthydemus, but he speaks things that are in a certain way, not as really is the case (Νὴ Δία, ὦ Εὐθύδημε· ἀλλὰ τὰ ὄντα μὲν τρόπον τινὰ λέγει, οὐ μέντοι ὥς γέ ἔχει)!

Euthydemus' second round with Ctesippus picks up directly on the latter's objection that one who speaks falsely does not speak the things that are (οὐ τὰ ὄντα λέγει). In that case, the sophist infers (Q5), the speaker of falsehoods speaks the things

that are not (Τὰ δὲ μὴ ὄντα). But upon what conception of the subject matter of speech are the things that are not now conceived to be the subject of false speaking?

Upon first reading, Q7 may seem to suggest that Euthydemus returns to the original sense of subject matter with which he began Argument 1. For here we see the return of the preposition περί, which in the first argument expressed the notion of aboutness, and hence the notion of predication, and hence the notion of statements as structured complexes. Thus, having secured Ctesippus' assent that the things that are not are indeed nowhere (Q6), Euthydemus asks in Q7 whether it is possible to do anything *in relation to* these things that are not (περὶ ταῦτα τὰ μὴ ὄντα), even though they are nowhere. On the assumption that the preposition has the same sense in both of its appearances, this would seem to suggest that Euthydemus has now put forward the following model of false speaking: a false statement is a structured complex wherein something is said about, or predicated of, a non-existent subject matter.

In this instance however, the preposition is used with the accusative, not the genitive case. While this construction can---and certainly does here--suggest a relationship of some sort of one thing to another, it almost never expresses, and does not here express, the relation of *aboutness* in evidence in Argument 1.<sup>96</sup> The true sense of the preposition and its role in the argument may be gleaned from another feature of Q7. This is the dual employment of the verbs πράττειν and ποιεῖν. The sophist asks: is it possible to do (πράττειν) anything in relation to these things that are not (περὶ ταῦτα τὰ μὴ ὄντα) with the result that one affects (ποιήσκειν) these things. The verb πράττειν may be either

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<sup>96</sup> In general verbs of action take περὶ with the accusative, verbs of perception, emotion, and knowing take περὶ with the genitive; but λέγειν περὶ almost unexceptionally takes the genitive and expresses the subject *about* which one speaks. Burnyeat (2002), 54 cites some apparent violations of this rule: *Soph.* 232b2-3, *Polit.* 277e8.

intransitive (to do or fare so and so) or transitive in sense (to bring about, to manage, to render so and so). Here it is clearly transitive; and the function of the preposition περί is to indicate one of its transitive senses, viz., to do something to something else. The verb ποιεῖν, while it also has an absolute sense (to act), and a variety of transitive meanings (to make, to cause, to bring about), is here used without περί to express (as it commonly does) the very same notion of doing something to something else.<sup>97</sup>

While the two verbs are therefore virtually synonymous in sense in the passage, what the sophist aims to exploit is a *further* connotation of the verb ποιεῖν: given that the verb is taken, with πράττειν, in the sense of doing something to something else, ποιεῖν will carry with it the further suggestion that *acting on* something requires a correlative object that is *acted upon* or *affected*. It is clear from the sequel that with this invocation of the sense of the verb, the sophist returns us to the notion of the subject matter of speech as an entire state of affairs. For Euthydemus argues (Q8): surely the orators in the Assembly *do something*. So speaking is a doing something. That admission by Ctesippus would not have any implication that a speech act involves a correlative object, much less an object that gets affected by an act of speech. Unfortunately, Euthydemus has already (Q7) set ringing in Ctesippus' ears the entirely acceptable premise that doing (πράττειν)

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<sup>97</sup> Thus I disagree with those commentators who take the verb ποιεῖν in the sense of 'to make' (Cp. Burnyeat (2002), 55; Gillespie (1913-14), 20; Canto (1989), 199, note 109; 200, notes 112-112; Narcy (1984), 148; Hawtry (1981), 100; Gifford (1905)). On this interpretation, the point is that the words uttered by the orator (or his speech acts themselves) at least have existence as words (or as speech acts); so that he who speaks therefore speaks 'things that are.' Burnyeat is quite right that the difficulty with the sophist's inference is certainly *not* that it is absurd to make something that (previously) was not. However, readers who construe ποιεῖν as 'make' ignore the fact that the sophist introduces Q9 as an *acceptable premise*: but it is obviously false---it is not even apparently *endoxon*---that if one is doing something to something then one is making something. (Cp. *Charmides* 163b1-3, where Critias rejects Socrates' question whether he calls τὸ ποιεῖν and τὸ πράττειν the same thing as obviously false). On the other hand, it is completely acceptable that if one is doing something to something then one is acting on and affecting that thing. Moreover, it is crucial to the continuity of the lesson Plato means to teach the reader regarding the sophists' account of predication that speech is a relation to something *in the real world*---one of the things that are---it is not the mere act of speaking itself. Thus taking the verb in the sense of 'make' destroys the continuity of Euthydemus' first argument with his second.

something to something and acting on ( $\pi\omicron\iota\epsilon\iota\nu$ ) something come to much the same thing. But then---given the further connotations of the verb  $\pi\omicron\iota\epsilon\iota\nu$ ---it follows that speaking, being a species of doing, is also the having of some effect on something (Q9). Indeed, speaking just is doing and affecting (Q10). Yet in that case, no one speaks falsely (Conclusion 2). For the alleged object of false speaking---the things that are not (Q5)---being nowhere (Q6)---are incapable of being acted on or affected by any act of speech (Q7).

What sort of ‘affecting’ does the argument conceive speaking to be? Presumably, *naming*: speaking is not the mere utterance or production of words; speaking is the application of a name to a subject matter. That is why false speaking, conceived as an *action* in the relevant sense of  $\pi\omicron\iota\epsilon\iota\nu$ , is a failure to speak at all. The speaker of falsehood does not, like a poor archer, merely miss his target; rather, he has no target at which to aim; and an archer without a target may perform no archery at all.<sup>98</sup> And with that, we are right back where we ended up in Argument 1 as regards the subject matter of speech. False speaking is not the predication of what is not about one of the things that are. Rather, the object of false speaking is a bare nothing: a fact which is not a fact. It is equally clear that the argument returns us to the conception of a statement as an unstructured whole: for it is, of course, the entire speech act that is here conceived of as a species of doing and acting on. There is no room here for a structured act consisting of sub-acts e.g., speaking of something, and also speaking something *about* that thing, something that either holds or does not hold of that something. It follows that true speech is not the predication of what is of one of the things that are. Rather, as in the first

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<sup>98</sup> Cp. the similar argument in *Theat.* (188e-189a-b) wherein judging what is false, conceived as what is not ‘just by itself’ ( $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\kappa\alpha\theta’\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron$ ) is compared to the failure to see or touch.

argument, it is the naming, or speaking of, an unstructured whole: a state of affairs, one of the ‘things-that-are.’

What then of Ctesippus’ second objection to this account of false speaking? Does it constitute an advance on his first? In one sense, it seems beyond dispute that it does. For Ctesippus now objects that the speaker of falsehood in fact speaks things that *are*: he simply speaks things that are in a certain way, and not as really is the case. Contrast Ctesippus’ first objection: the speaker of falsehood does not speak the things that are---an assertion which the sophist immediately converts into the claim that false speech therefore speaks things that are *not*. Note too, that in the first argument, Ctesippus commits himself to the thesis that no two statements share a subject matter: each thing-that-is, as the subject matter of any statement, is ‘separate’ from the other things-that-are. On this conception of the subject matter of speech, we said, Socrates cannot be the shared subject matter of the two statements ‘Socrates is tall’ and ‘Socrates is short.’ Ctesippus’ second objection seems to constitute the first step in a retreat from this thesis. For his new assertion implies that both the speaker of falsehood and the speaker of truth about some subject matter speak of something that is (e.g., Socrates); they simply describe it in different ways (one as it is not, the other as it is).

Whether Ctesippus may be credited with a genuine insight on this score is perhaps another question. For when Dionysodorus makes a hash of his objection, Ctesippus seems unable to elaborate upon it or to otherwise rise to its articulate defense.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, whatever Ctesippus’ state of consciousness regarding the dialectical potential of his claim, Plato’s consciousness of its potential is unmistakable. This is evident from

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<sup>99</sup> In response to Ctesippus’ assertion that indeed there are some men---gentlemen, in fact---who speak of things ‘as they are’, Dionysodorus extracts the devastating admission that good men must in that case speak ill (κακῶς) of bad things (i.e., be poor speakers).

Ctesippus' next round with Dionysodorus, wherein the sophist argues for the impossibility of contradiction. The reader is struck as this argument begins with the indirectness of Dionysodorus' strategy. His brother has supposedly proven that false speaking is impossible. One would therefore expect Dionysodorus to argue against the impossibility of contradiction by drawing directly upon this result: if one person contradicts another, then the one person's statement is the contradictory of the other's; but of two contradictory statements, one is true and the other is false. But false statement is impossible; so contradiction is impossible. "Ὅπερ ἔδει δεῖξαι.

This argument however does not rely upon any particular conception of the nature or structure of contradictory statements; for it is sufficient for its purposes that one or the other of two contradictory statements is false. However, it seems quite natural to suppose that one statement *S* is the contradictory of another *S'* only if *S* and *S'* both manage to be about the same subject. Yet in the light of Ctesippus' second objection, it will be equally natural to suppose that two contradictory assertions *S* and *S'* will be about the same subject in precisely the sense Ctesippus has just introduced but failed adequately to defend: that is, two statements *S* and *S'* will be contradictory just in case *S* and *S'* are both about some *thing that is*—say, *x*---and that *S* (e.g.) speaks about *x* as it is (e.g., where *x* is *F*, by asserting that *x* is *F*) while *S'* speaks about *x* as it is not (e.g., where *x* is *F*, by asserting that *x* is not *F*).

What is therefore dialectically required---or at least expected---is not a refutation of the possibility of contradiction addressed to the claim that false speaking is speaking of 'things that are not'---for that claim has now been abandoned---but rather one that targets Ctesippus' (admittedly inchoate) suggestion that false speaking is speaking of

things that are ‘in a certain way’, viz., *as* they are not (οὐ μέντοι ὥς γε ἔχει, 284c6). I shall argue next that the sophist meets this expectation in the argument for NC. It is this dialectical state of play that explains why Plato equips Dionysodorus with a rather more complicated strategy for the denial of contradiction than the more direct argument above.<sup>100</sup> The selection of strategy allows Plato to achieve three didactic aims at once. First, it alerts the reader to the dialectical potential of Ctesippus’ suggestion regarding the nature of false speaking and predication in general. Second, it informs the reader that as stated, Ctesippus’ nascent account of false statement and the nature of predication are vulnerable to the sophistical usurpation that is exemplified by the argument for NC. Finally, the argument for NC invites the reader to rescue Ctesippus’ suggestion regarding predication from the sophist’s interpretation of it, either by modifying and clarifying Ctesippus’ claim, or by rejecting the sophist’s construal of it, or both. The sophist argues as follows:

### **The Argument for NC (285d7-286b6):**

**Ctesippus’ thesis:** There exists such a thing as contradiction (ὄντος τοῦ ἀντιλέγειν).

**Question 11:** Are there accounts (or: expressions, formulae, λόγοι) for each of the things that are (εἰσὶν ἕκαστῳ τῶν ὄντων λόγοι)?

**Answer:** Certainly.

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<sup>100</sup> Cp. Denyer (1991), 15-17, who argues that the indirection of Dionysodorus’ argument for NC is necessitated by the need to disguise the fact that while statements have negations, statements conceived of as names do not, since names do not have negations. This interpretation of the indirection of the sophist’s strategy is not incompatible with my own; however, it ignores the fact that the argument for NC is designed in part to address Ctesippus’ new suggestion regarding the nature of predication.

**Q12:** (Accounts for) each thing as it is, or as it is not (Οὐκοῦν ὥς ἔστιν ἕκαστον ἢ ὥς οὐκ ἔστιν)?

**Answer:** As it is.

**Q13:** For if you remember, Ctesippus, we showed just now that no one speaks (things) as they are not (Εἰ γὰρ μέμνησαι...ὥς Κτήσιππε, καὶ ἄρτι ἐπεδείξαμεν μηδένα λέγοντα ὥς οὐκ ἔστι); for it was made clear that no one speaks what is not (τὸ γὰρ μὴ ὂν οὐδεὶς ἐφάνη λέγων).

**Answer:** Well, what of that? Are you and I contradicting each other any the less?

**Q14:** Now would we be contradicting if we both were speaking an account of the same thing (Πότερον οὖν, ἀντιλέγομεν ἂν τοῦ αὐτοῦ πράγματος λόγον ἀμφότεροι λέγοντες), or in that case surely we would be speaking the same things (ἢ οὕτω μὲν ἂν δήπου ταῦτά λέγοιμεν)?

**Answer:** (He agreed).

**Q15:** But when neither of us speaks the account of the thing, would we be contradicting then (Ἄλλ' ὅταν μηδέτερος, τὸν τοῦ πράγματος λόγον λέγῃ, τότε ἀντιλέγομεν ἂν)? Or in this case, surely neither of us would be thinking of the thing at all (ἢ οὕτω γε τὸ παράπαν οὐδ' ἂν μεμνημένος εἴη τοῦ πράγματος οὐδέτερος ἡμῶν)?

**Answer:** (He agreed to this as well).

**Q16:** But then, when I speak the account of the thing, but you speak another of some other thing, are we contradicting each other then (Ἄλλ' ἄρα, ὅταν ἐγὼ μὲν τὸν τοῦ πράγματος λόγον λέγω, σὺ δὲ ἄλλου τινὸς ἄλλον, τότε ἀντιλέγομεν)? Or rather, am I speaking the thing, while you are not speaking at all? (ἢ ἐγὼ λέγω μὲν τὸ πρᾶγμα, σὺ δὲ



οὐδὲ λέγεις τὸ παράπαν)? And how could someone not speaking contradict someone who is speaking (ὁ δὲ μὴ λέγων τῷ λέγοντι πῶς < ἄν > ἀντιλεγοι)?

**Answer:** Ctesippus fell silent (Καὶ ὁ μὲν Κτήσιππος ἐσίγησεν).

As I read the argument, the sophist---responding to Ctesippus' second objection---abandons the account of false speaking as speaking of what is not in favor of a new account, one which construes false speaking as the misapplication to one thing of a λόγος or formula that properly describes something else. I take Dionysodorus' concept of a λόγος to be equivalent to Antisthenes' concept of an οἰκεῖος λόγος. However, in order to explain and defend these claims, I must address the long-standing controversy regarding the provenance of the sophist's argument; in particular, it must be decided whether we may draw upon Aristotle's testimony (*Metaph.* 1024b27-34, 1043b24-28; *Top.* I 11 104b19-21) regarding Antisthenes' denial of contradiction in our attempt to analyze this text.

### 3.4 An Antisthenian Interlude

I believe that we may draw on Aristotle's characterization of Antisthenes' argument, but for the following reasons, and with the following qualifications. In order to arrive at a responsible interpretation of the sophist's inference, we must ask what dialectical requirement the argument is designed to meet. As it turns out, what the argument is designed to meet---viz., Ctesippus' second objection---is met by Aristotle's testimony about Antisthenes' denial of contradiction; so I shall draw on that to explain

the argument. It does not follow however that the sophists exhibit a standing commitment, here or elsewhere in the dialogue, to Antisthenian principles regarding the nature of predication.

Here it is important to recall the Eleatic Stranger's second definition of the sophistic art (*Sophist* 223d-224d; 231d5-6): the sophist is a wholesale purveyor of a learning which is the invention of others, not his own. The opening scene of the *Euthydemus* nicely illustrates the point, which has been ignored by commentators who would view Euthydemus and Dionysodorus as masks for particular schools of philosophical thought. The indelible portrait of Euthydemus and his dimmer brother as recent instructors in the art of fighting in armor (the Tweedledum and Tweedledee of sophistry) while intended to amuse, has a serious purpose as well. This is to inform the reader that these 'new-fangled sophists' (καίνοί τινες αὐ οὗτοι...σοφισταί, 271b9-c1) are new-comers to the art of disputation (or, as they call it, 'teaching virtue'). As such they have, like the bald little tinker of *Republic* VI, leapt gladly from their former mechanical crafts to consort unworthily with philosophy for the first time. (Cp. 496a: 'What about when men who are unworthy of education approach philosophy and consort with her unworthily? What kinds of thoughts and opinions are we to say they beget? Won't they truly be what are properly called sophisms, things that have nothing genuine about them or worthy of being called true wisdom?')<sup>101</sup> That Plato has flagged their initiation into philosophy so prominently at the beginning of the dialogue surely puts paid to the notion that the sophists are committed Antisthenians on the subject of predication. On the contrary, as Socrates has remarked in the prologue (272b), and as he will shortly

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<sup>101</sup> Translation Grube-Reeve (1992). Whether Plato's portrait is fair from a historical point of view is another matter.

reiterate (287d), the sophists have come to Athens as men who claim to have mastered the art of disputation.<sup>102</sup> Their promise to refute a man regardless of his thesis entails in particular that a philosopher's argument may be pressed into service if it is needed in the context of a particular refutation. By the same token however the same argument, together with its particular theoretical commitments, may be shed like a suit of clothes as the contingencies of the next refutation arise. In sum: it is acceptable to draw on testimonial evidence regarding Antisthenes' denial of contradiction in our attempt to analyze Dionysodorus' argument for NC because doing so makes very good sense of the argument. It does not follow that the sophists exhibit a standing commitment to the theoretical underpinnings of Antisthenes' views on predication elsewhere in the dialogue.<sup>103</sup>

The most important piece of testimony regarding Antisthenes' denial of contradiction that is relevant to the present argument is the following account of Aristotle (*Metaph.* 1024b27-34):

(1) A false formula is the formula of things that are not, in so far as it is false. Hence every formula is false of something other than that of which it is true, e.g. the formula of a circle is false of a triangle. (2) In a sense there is one formula of each thing, i.e., the formula of its essence, but in a sense there are many, since the thing itself and the thing modified in a certain way are somehow the same, e.g. Socrates and musical Socrates. (3) The false formula is strictly speaking not the formula of anything. (4) Hence Antisthenes foolishly claimed that nothing could be described except by its own formula---one formula to one thing; from which it followed that there could be no contradiction, and almost that there could be no falsehood ((1) λόγος δὲ ψευδὴς ὁ

<sup>102</sup> Though as we shall see in the third eristic episode, the brothers' grasp of their art is somewhat tenuous. Cp. especially 297a, wherein Dionysodorus is chastised by his brother for 'ruining the argument'; cp. also Euthydemus' own difficulties (295b-296d) in dealing with a Socrates who insists on adding qualifications which ruin the sophist's fallacy.

<sup>103</sup> Pace McCabe (1998), who argues that throughout the dialogue, the sophists evince a commitment to a particular metaphysical picture of 'things': '...the *Euth.* betrays a view of a 'thing' more like that of an Aristotelian substance...for any two concrete things, they are either quite cut off from each other, or they collapse into one another, and there is only one thing after all.' (150). This metaphysical picture in McCabe's view has as its corollary a principle about statements which she calls 'cut off or clone': '...the relation of sameness and difference between statements is either the relation of cloning; or it is the relation of total distinctness. So any statement that has a bearing on any other is a clone' (i.e., is identical to it); 'any statement that is different from another has no bearing on it.' (150). For the reasons stated, I deny that the sophists are committed to a metaphysical picture or theory of language of any kind.

τῶν μὴ ὄντων ἢ ψευδῆς. διὸ πᾶς λόγος ψευδῆς ἑτέρου ἢ οὐ ἔστιν ἀληθής, οἷον ὁ τοῦ κύκλου ψευδῆς τριγώνου. (2) ἑκάστου δὲ λόγος ἔστι μὲν ὥς εἷς, ὁ τοῦ τί ἦν εἶναι, ἔστι δ' ὥς πολλοί, ἐπεὶ ταῦτό πως αὐτὸ καὶ αὐτὸ πεπονθός, οἷον Σωκράτης καὶ Σωκράτης μουσικός. (3) ὁ δὲ ψευδῆς λόγος οὐδενός ἐστιν ἀπλῶς λόγος. (4) Διὸ Ἀντισθένης ὥρετο εὐήθως μηδὲν ἀξιῶν λέγεσθαι πλὴν τῷ οἰκείῳ λόγῳ ἓν ἐφ' ἑνός· ἐξ ὧν συνέβαινε μὴ εἶναι ἀντιλέγειν, σχεδὸν δὲ μηδὲ ψεύδεσθαι).<sup>104</sup>

It is evident that in this text Aristotle is by turns (a) recording a current philosophical usage of the expression λόγος ψευδῆς ('false formula') and (b) critiquing a number of consequences which Antisthenes drew from this conception of a λόγος ψευδῆς. It is also fairly clear that Aristotle tells us that these consequences were three in number. These are (i) a doctrine to the effect that there exists a one-to-one correspondence between the things that are and their 'proper formulae' (οἰκείῳ λόγῳ): that is, that belonging to anything that exists, there is precisely one λόγος, and every λόγος belongs to precisely one thing; (ii) the denial of the possibility of contradiction; and (iii) the denial of the possibility of falsehood or false speaking (ψεύδεσθαι). Aristotle seems to suggest moreover (σχεδὸν δὲ μηδὲ ψεύδεσθαι, b34) that consequence (iii) does not quite follow from Antisthenes' premises. There are a number of reasons Aristotle may have had for making this further criticism; I consider some of these briefly below.

Aristotle reports that Antisthenes developed his theses (i)-(iii) on the basis of a conception of a λόγος ψευδῆς.<sup>105</sup> Unfortunately Aristotle's formulation of this conception in line (1) has struck many commentators as ambiguous. Does (1) tell us that a false λόγος a false *statement*---that is, a categorical assertion in subject-predicate form such as 'a triangle is a figure bounded by a line all the points on which are equidistant

<sup>104</sup> Translation Ross with modifications (1924), 1618.

<sup>105</sup> Aristotle does not specify here whether the doctrine of a λόγος ψευδῆς originated with Antisthenes. But see Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 6.3 1-2: '[Antisthenes] was the first to define λόγος by saying that a λόγος is that which indicates (δηλῶν) what a thing was or is', Hicks (1950).

from a point called the center'? Or is a false λόγος that *constituent* of a categorical statement that is falsely *said of* some subject---for example, 'the λόγος of a circle' when it is said of a triangle? As Ross has complained:

Now if for brevity we formulate a false definition in the form 'that A is BC', A is as essential an element in this as its being BC. Now 'that A is BC' cannot be true of something else; it is only BC, or rather, 'that it is BC', that can be true of something else. It is evident, then, that Aristotle passes from that notion of a λόγος which may be formulated as 'that A is BC' to that notion of it which may be formulated as 'that it is BC', leaving the subject indefinite. It is only the first that can be said to be false; it is only the second that can be described as being true of one thing and false of another. It is evident, however, that no particular statement can be formulated in the latter way; this is no real act of thought at all but an extract of what may be common to several.<sup>106</sup>

Ross concludes that Aristotle is 'apparently unaware of this ambiguity'.<sup>107</sup> I suggest however that we may acquit Aristotle of this charge if we bear in mind his role in the passage as philosophical lexicographer. On either construal of λόγος---statement or predicate, definition or *definiens*---a λόγος would seem to be an account or definition of a thing: for otherwise it would make no sense to report that the λόγος of a circle is false when applied to a triangle (since many descriptions of a circle which fall short of definitions are true of triangles as well, e.g. that the circle is a figure). Moreover, on either construal of a λόγος, this definition is said *of* something. (Note Aristotle's employment of the genitive throughout the passage to indicate the subject to which a λόγος is applied, e.g., ὁ τοῦ κύκλου ψευδὴς τριγώνου 1024b28). What is therefore essential to Aristotle's account in (1) is that a λόγος is *said of* a subject by way of giving an account or definition of it.<sup>108</sup> A λόγος will be false therefore when, as Aristotle indicates, it is *said of* a subject other than that of which it is true. However, one's conception of *how* we manage to speak of subjects in such a way as to speak either truly

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<sup>106</sup> Ross, *op.cit.*, 345-6.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 346.

<sup>108</sup> Cp. *Metaph.* 1043b24-28.

or falsely about them will vary depending on one's theory of predication; and it is no part of Aristotle's brief as lexicographer to pursue the determination of the *general* conception of a 'false formula' in alternative theories of predication.

Thus if, like Aristotle, one believes that we manage to speak truly or falsely by predicating predicate expressions of subject terms in a proposition, one will be inclined to disambiguate (1) along the following lines: a false λόγος is a predicate P that is said of a subject S which is not P. According to Aristotle's way of thinking, it will follow that a false *statement* results from the predication of such a false λόγος of a subject: for falsehood in general results when we speak of a subject *as* it is not.

On the other hand, the same general conception of a false formula may be cashed out in rather different terms if one is not working with this basic conception of a statement as a composite of a subject and predicate. There is for example considerable evidence that Antisthenes conceived of the subject and predicate of a statement as two names for the same thing.<sup>109</sup> According to this conception, a statement is the application of a name (ὄνομα) to a thing (πράγμα). A simple thing has only its own name predicated of it. The definition of a complex entity however is a statement in which a λόγος or formula consisting of several names (a λόγος μακρός) is substituted for a single name. To this extent Antisthenes may be said to conceive of the *subject* of predication as one of the 'things that are', while the complex λόγος ('S is P' or 'the SP') that is *said of* a subject may be said to be conceived of as consisting of the predicate alone.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> On the assumption that the writings of Antisthenes are the source of Socrates' dream in the *Theaetetus*. Since that assumption is controversial I have attempted here to reconstruct the basic notion of an Antisthenian λόγος on the basis of Aristotle's testimony alone. But see Maier (1896-1900), II. 2 11-16, and Gillespie (1912-13) and Gillespie (1913-14), for discussion of an Antisthenian λόγος as a complex name.

<sup>110</sup> Cp. Gillespie (1912-13), 493: 'Thus all propositions are ultimately denominative judgments, and the standard categorical form, S is P, is a double denominative judgment, with two names denoting or applying

According to this line of thought, predication is a form of *naming*: ‘circle the so-and-so figure’ being the complex name which is ‘true’ when said of a circle, but ‘false’ of anything else to which it is applied. But if that is so, there is no straightforward way for Aristotle to formulate the notion of a ‘false λόγος’ save in the manner of (1): a false λόγος is a complex name that is not inherently false, or false *simpliciter*, but is rather a formula that is said of that which is not, *when* it is said of that of which it is not a true name: λόγος δὲ ψευδὴς ὁ τῶν μὴ ὄντων ἢ ψευδής. It is I suggest the constraint imposed upon Aristotle by the lexicographer’s task to articulate a concept that is not his own, and not Aristotle’s ignorance of the distinction to which Ross draws our attention, that is responsible for Aristotle’s apparently ambiguous formulation, in (1), of the notion of a false λόγος.

Our next task is to understand how Antisthenes developed this notion into consequences (i) through (iii). We must obviously begin with consequence (i)---the alleged existence of a one-to-one correspondence between things and λόγοι; for Aristotle indicates that (ii) and (iii)---the denial of contradiction and falsehood---are in turn consequences of (i). Let us consider first the claim that for anything that exists, there is some unique corresponding λόγος which describes it. In the light of Aristotle’s reportage on the notion a false λόγος, this claim would seem to be fairly plausible. For it is clear from Aristotle’s account that the notion of ‘λόγος’ in play is that of a *definition*; and it is reasonable to suppose that for every real thing with a determinate nature, there will exist a single λόγος which expresses this nature.

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to the same object. From this point of view, little distinction can be drawn between grammatical subject and predicate; both become predicates of the real thing, and this real thing is the logical subject.’

But it is much less reasonable to suppose that for any λόγος there is, there exists some unique real thing that corresponds to it. Aristotle seems to take Antisthenes to task on both scores in (2) above: in one sense there is one formula of each thing, i.e., the formula of its essence; but in another sense there are many. Our first impression of the point of this remark is that Antisthenes wrongly assumes that the only function of predication is to describe the nature---or in Aristotle's terminology, the essence (ὁ τοῦ τί ἦν εἶναι)---of each existing thing. In that case we may suppose Aristotle's complaint is that there are other *kinds* of λόγοι that may be stated by way of describing things that fall short of defining them; in which case it is false that there is only one λόγος corresponding to each thing (Socrates is musical as well as a man); and equally false that for every λόγος, there is only one thing it describes ('the musical thing' describes Socrates, but equally, any literate human being). On this construal of Aristotle's remark, he criticizes Antisthenes, in effect, for a failure to grasp that 'λόγος' is 'said in different ways'. This is how Ross understands (2) as well:

So far λόγος has meant the essential account or definition of a thing...But Aristotle now points out that while in this sense there is only one λόγος of a thing, viz., the account of its 'what', in another sense (that in which it means 'statement' in general) there are many.<sup>111</sup>

I would urge however that this cannot be the point that Aristotle makes in (2). For this gloss overlooks the fact that Aristotle does not derive the conclusion---that in a sense there are many λόγοι of each thing---on the basis of the multivocity of the expression 'λόγος'. Rather Aristotle derives this conclusion on the basis of the observation ἐπεὶ ταυτό πως αὐτὸ καὶ αὐτὸ πεπονθός (1024b30): *since the thing itself and the thing modified in a certain way are somehow the same*, it follows that in a sense there is one

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<sup>111</sup> Op.cit., 346.



formula of each thing, i.e., the formula of its essence, but in a sense there are many. I suggest that once this inference is properly understood, it emerges that Aristotle scores a much neater dialectical point against Antisthenes than that attributed to Aristotle by Ross. This is that, even if the sense of ‘λόγος’ is held *fixed*, as an essence-revealing expression--that is, even on the Antisthenian assumption that the nature of predication is to reveal the essence of things---it will nevertheless be the case that any existing thing with a determinate nature will have many λόγοι. I claim moreover that unless the inference which Aristotle draws in (2) is interpreted along these lines, we cannot understand how it is that the impossibility of contradiction is supposed to follow from Antisthenes’ assumptions regarding λόγοι.

I take it that by means of the premise ἐπεὶ ταυτό πως αὐτὸ καὶ αὐτὸ πεπονθός, Aristotle means to invoke his peculiar notion of *accidental sameness*. It is Aristotle’s view that if being literate, being white, and being seated are accidents predicable of the substance Socrates, then there exist accidental compounds of these accidents and the substance in which they inhere---e.g., Socrates + literateness, or ‘the literate thing’, Socrates + white, or ‘the white thing’. Such accidental compounds are not the same in *being* or *definition* as the substance in which their constituent accidents inhere; nevertheless, Socrates, the literate thing, the white thing and the seated thing are all, in Aristotle’s view, the same in *number*; for the peculiar entities Socrates seated and literate Socrates are *accidentally* the same Socrates.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Cp. *Topics* I.7 103a6-10; 103a23-31. For discussion of Aristotle on accidental compounds and accidental sameness see Lewis (1982), and Lewis (1991), 85-135. I return to the topic of accidental compounds in Aristotle in Chapter 5.3 below, in connection with the fallacy of Accident in the *Euthydemus*.

It is on the basis of this assumption that a substance is ‘somehow (i.e., accidentally) the same’ as the substance ‘qualified in a certain way’ that Aristotle refutes Antisthenes’ claim that everything has one true λόγος and every λόγος is true of one thing. The refutation runs as follows: Antisthenes supposed that the nature of predication is to reveal the essence of things. This led him to conclude (a) that since each thing has one essence-revealing definition, each thing has precisely one λόγος and (b) every λόγος or statement one may assert is a definition that applies to precisely one thing. But this does not follow. For even if we assume that every predication reveals the essence of something, everything that has a determinate nature will in a sense have many such λόγοι; for each thing is in a way the same as the thing modified in a certain way. It is true that, just as the formula of a circle applies to the circle and nothing else, a λόγος such as ‘the literate thing’ or ‘literate Socrates’ applies to precisely the accidental compound Socrates + literateness, and to nothing else; but since a substance and its corresponding accidental compounds are ‘in a way’ the same, a substance may be said to inherit all of the λόγοι said of the compounds with which it is accidentally the same. Therefore---contrary to Antisthenes’ claim---in a sense each thing has many ‘Antisthenian’ λόγοι.

That brings us to (4): ‘Hence Antisthenes foolishly claimed that nothing could be described except by its own formula (τῷ οἰκείῳ λόγῳ)---one formula to one thing (ἐν ἑφ’ ἐνός); from which it followed that there could be no contradiction, and almost that there could be no falsehood.’ It is now clear that to claim that nothing can be described except by its own ‘proper λόγος’ is precisely to deny Aristotle’s conclusion that a substance may be said to share all of the λόγοι said of the accidental compounds with which it is

accidentally the same. It is equally clear why such a denial will lead directly to the denial of the possibility of contradiction.

Earlier we noted that it is natural to suppose that one statement *S* is the contradictory of another *S'* only if *S* and *S'* both manage to be about the same subject.<sup>113</sup> However, if everything has only one true λόγος, and every λόγος is true of precisely one thing, no two λόγοι *S* and *S'* can manage to be about the same thing; in which case contradiction is impossible. For suppose you assert that Socrates is literate, and I attempt to contradict you by asserting that Socrates is not literate. According to Antithenes, neither your assertion nor my denial is about Socrates. Your assertion is not about Socrates; for if it were, the statement 'Socrates is snub-nosed' would also be about Socrates; but this is false on the assumption that for every existing thing there is exactly one λόγος. What then is your assertion about? On the assumption that every λόγος belongs to precisely one thing whose essence it reveals, the subject matter of your assertion must be Socrates-the-literate, or *that* literate thing; similarly, the assertion 'Socrates is snub-nosed' is about Socrates-the-snub-nosed. What then is my denial about? Antisthenes' assumption that all predication expresses the nature of existing things would seem to commit him to regarding a 'negative' λόγος such as 'Socrates is not literate' as ill-formed; and if I attempt to contradict you by affirming the contrary predicate of Socrates, we shall once again fail to speak of the same subject: for the affirmation 'Socrates is illiterate', if true, is not a λόγος of Socrates, but of Socrates-the-illiterate; and if false, it is the λόγος of the μὴ ὄν, Socrates-the-illiterate; and 'a false formula is strictly speaking not the formula of anything' ((3), b31-32).

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<sup>113</sup> Cp.129.

Why then does Aristotle say that it only ‘nearly’ (σχεδόν, b34) follows from Antisthenes’ assumptions that false speaking is impossible? Initially the remark seems puzzling. For it is evident that the theory of predication embraced by Antisthenes will entail that there is nothing left to say about anything save its own ‘proper formula’: if it is denied that Socrates and musical Socrates are ‘in a way’ the same, then anything that is talked about will exist in complete separation from anything else that is talked about; a separation that is total in both a predication and a metaphysical sense. As Simplicius summed up the manner in which ‘the Megarians’ ran with the Antisthenian ball:

διὰ δὲ τὴν περὶ ταῦτα ἄγνοιαν καὶ οἱ Μεγαρικοὶ κληθέντες φιλόσοφοι, λαβόντες ὡς ἐναργῆ πρότασιν ὅτι ὧν οἱ λόγοι ἕτεροι, ταῦτα ἕτερα ἔστι, καὶ ὅτι τὰ ἕτερα κεχώριται ἀλλήλων, ἐδόκουν δεικνύναι αὐτὸν αὐτοῦ κεχωρισμένον ἕκαστον. ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἄλλος μὲν λόγος Σωκράτους μουσικοῦ, ἄλλος δὲ Σωκράτους λευκοῦ, εἴη ἂν καὶ Σωκράτης αὐτός αὐτοῦ κεχωρισμένος. (Simplicius in *Phys.* 9, 120, 12-17).

It was due to ignorance concerning these matters too that those Megarians called philosophers, taking it as an evident premise that of those things of which the formulae are different, there are different things, and that different things are separated from one another, took themselves to prove that each thing is separated from itself. For since there is one formula of musical Socrates, while there is another of white Socrates, Socrates must be separated himself from himself.

One may only speak of such metaphysical atoms in terms of their atomizing formulae.<sup>114</sup>

Why then should Aristotle hesitate to draw the conclusion of the impossibility of false speaking from the Antisthenian premises he has surveyed?

I conclude my discussion of *Metap.* 1024b27-34 by offering two possible explanations for Aristotle’s demurral. The first is that Aristotle is conscious that Antisthenes himself did not draw this conclusion. As Aristotle’s reportage in (1) suggests, it is likely that Antisthenes in fact allowed a form of false speaking, viz., that which occurs when a ‘true’ formula happens to be applied to a subject of which it is false. Such

<sup>114</sup> Hence the frequent identification of the late-learners of *Sophist* 251a-c with Antisthenes.

an account of falsehood will however assimilate false statement and false judgment to a form of ‘other-judging’ (ἄλλοδοξία) of the type examined at *Theaetetus* 189b10-191a5. If that is so, what Aristotle says in (4) is that the impossibility of false speaking will follow from Antisthenes’ premises, but only on the further assumption that false speaking *is* (merely) other-judging.

A second possibility however is that Aristotle reports that the conclusion does not follow regardless of Antisthenes’ account of falsehood. Aristotle’s awareness of challenges to the denial of false belief such as those canvassed at *Theaetetus* 169d3-171e9 will have drawn his attention to the numerous problems intentional contexts raise for the thesis NFS. (Suppose *x* believes that there are false beliefs; then whether all beliefs are true or not, there are false beliefs). In that case, what Aristotle says in (4) is that the impossibility of false speaking does not follow from Antisthenes’ premises without further argument to the effect that such intentional contexts are somehow senseless or ill-formed.

### 3.5 The Impossibility of Contradiction

From the point of view of its implications, both for a theory of predication and a metaphysics, the notion of an Antisthenian λόγος is clearly highly controversial. Yet the proposal that there are λόγοι for each of the things that are, which describe them as they are, will seem innocent enough to the unsuspecting Ctesippus. We are now in a position to observe how Dionysodorus exploits the concept of an Antisthenian λόγος in his argument for the impossibility of contradiction.

**The Argument for NC (285d7-286b6):**

**Ctesippus' thesis:** There exists such a thing as contradiction (ὄντος τοῦ ἀντιλέγειν).

**Question 11:** Are there accounts (or: expressions, formulae, λόγοι) for each of the things that are (εἰσὶν ἕκαστῳ τῶν ὄντων λόγοι)?

**Answer:** Certainly.

**Q12:** (Accounts for) each thing as it is, or as it is not (Οὐκοῦν ὥς ἔστιν ἕκαστον ἢ ὥς οὐκ ἔστιν)?

**Answer:** As it is.

**Q13:** For if you remember, Ctesippus, we showed just now that no one speaks (things) as they are not (Εἰ γὰρ μέμνησαι...ὦ Κτήσιππε, καὶ ἄρτι ἐπεδείξαμεν μηδένα λέγοντα ὥς οὐκ ἔστι); for it was made clear that no one speaks what is not (τὸ γὰρ μὴ ὄν οὐδεὶς ἐφάνη λέγων).

**Answer:** Well, what of that? Are you and I contradicting each other any the less?

**Q14:** Now would we be contradicting if we both were speaking an account of the same thing (Πότερον οὖν, ἀντιλέγομεν ἂν τοῦ αὐτοῦ πράγματος λόγον ἀμφότεροι λέγοντες), or in that case surely we would be speaking the same things (ἢ οὕτω μὲν ἂν δήπου ταῦτὰ λέγοιμεν)?

**Answer:** (He agreed).

**Q15:** But when neither of us speaks the account of the thing, would we be contradicting then (Ἄλλ' ὅταν μηδέτερος, τὸν τοῦ πράγματος λόγον λέγῃ, τότε ἀντιλέγομεν ἂν)? Or in this case, surely neither of us would be thinking of the thing at all (ἢ οὕτω γε τὸ παράπαν οὐδ' ἂν μεμνημένος εἴη τοῦ πράγματος οὐδέτερος ἡμῶν)?

**Answer:** (He agreed to this as well).

**Q16:** But then, when I speak the account of the thing, but you speak another of some other thing, are we contradicting each other then ( ' Ἄλλ' ἄρα, ὅταν ἐγὼ μὲν τὸν τοῦ πράγματος λόγον λέγω, σὺ δὲ ἄλλου τινὸς ἄλλον, τότε ἀντιλέγομεν)? Or rather, am I speaking the thing, while you are not speaking at all? ( ἢ ἐγὼ λέγω μὲν τὸ πρᾶγμα, σὺ δὲ οὐδὲ λέγεις τὸ παράπαν)? And how could someone not speaking contradict someone who is speaking (ὁ δὲ μὴ λέγων τῷ λέγοντι πῶς < ἄν > ἀντιλεγῶν)?

**Answer:** Ctesippus fell silent (Καὶ ὁ μὲν Κτήσιππος ἐσίγησεν).

Dionysodorus begins his argument (Q11) by drawing out of his sophistic kit-bag the Antisthenian assumption that there exist accounts (λόγοι) for each of the things that are. Thus there is at least one λόγος for every existing thing. Q12 secures the admission that each such account describes a thing as it is. This premise expresses the further Antisthenian assumption that since λόγοι describe the natures of things, there is at most one such account for each thing with a determinate nature. As I have suggested, the sudden introduction at Q12 of the relative particle ὥς is designed to address Ctesippus' recent suggestion, voiced in objection to the second argument for NFS, that true speech is speaking of a subject *as* it is (ὥς ἔστιν, 285e10; cp. ὥς γε ἔχει, 284c8); while falsehood is speaking of a subject *as* it is not (ὥς οὐκ ἔστιν, 285e10; cp. οὐ μέντοι ὥς γε ἔχει, 284c8). As we have argued, Ctesippus' notion of speaking of X 'as it is' is most naturally taken as saying of an X that is F that 'X is F'; while his notion of speaking of an X 'as it is not' is most naturally taken as saying of an X that is not F that 'X is F'. However, while allowing Ctesippus to believe that his objection is being addressed, Q12 subverts

Ctesippus' new account of true speech by construing all positive predications in Antisthenian terms. Q13 is then addressed to Ctesippus' new account of false speaking. The λόγοι that exist for each of the things that are describes them as they are, not as they are not; for---the sophist claims---it was previously demonstrated that no one speaks (things) *as* they are not (μηδέν᾽ ἀλέγοντα ὥς οὐκ ἔστι); for his brother's previous arguments have shown that no one speaks what is not (τὸ γὰρ μὴ ὄν οὐδεὶς ἐφάνη λέγων).

Now in fact the arguments for NFS do not establish this inference, since they make no mention at all of speaking of things either as they are or as they are not. While it is possible that the sophist is being deliberately deceptive on this score, it is more likely that Dionysodorus' premise is simply an elliptical expression of the following Antisthenian train of thought: suppose that false speaking is speaking of things as they are not. Then any account of speaking of things as they are not will inevitably involve speaking of what is not. For it was earlier admitted---in the first argument for NFS---that to the extent that anyone speaks a λόγος at all, there will be some existing subject matter whose λόγος it is, which is 'separate' (χωρὶς) from all the others things that are. (284a1-4). Construed in terms of the doctrine of Antisthenian λόγοι, this admission amounts to the claim that for any λόγος one may assert, there exists a unique subject matter which is defined by the λόγος in question. In that case, to speak of a subject *as it is not* is to apply to it a λόγος that properly belongs to something else (e.g., applying to the triangle the λόγος of a circle). To speak in this way however is to produce a 'false λόγος'; and a false λόγος is the λόγος of a μὴ ὄν, or thing that is not. But speaking of what is not has been shown by our previous results to be impossible.



Ctesippus, who is untutored in the notion of λόγοι of this peculiar sort, may be forgiven if he does not see around the corners of the sophist's inference. He asks (286a3-4) why the impossibility of contradiction should follow from the sophist's premises. From the point of view of the ordinary man, Ctesippus' question is quite reasonable. After all, if I apply the λόγος of a circle to a triangle, while you deny that that is its λόγος, and speak of the triangle in terms of its true account, do we not in some sense *still* speak in opposition (ἀντιλέγομεν) to one another?

The remainder of the sophist's argument annihilates even this notion of contradiction. Assumptions (Q11) through (Q13) together entail that there exists exactly one λόγος for each of the things that are, and that any λόγος one may assert applies to precisely one thing, 'separate' from all the others. It follows (Q14) that if two speakers A and B speak the account of the same thing---say, the triangle---they must both speak exactly the same formula. On the other hand (Q15), if A applies the formula of a circle to the triangle while B applies the formula of a prime number to it, then neither speaker has managed to secure reference to *the triangle* at all; for to secure reference to the triangle is to speak of it in terms of its proper formula. By the same reasoning, even the ordinary man's notion of contradiction is undermined. For (Q16) if A secures reference to the subject triangle by saying that it is such and such a figure, while B says that it is a figure of another sort, B fails once again to speak of the triangle, and is in fact speaking of some other subject matter entirely (σὺ δὲ ἄλλου τινὸς ἄλλον, 286b4). The only alternative, Dionysodorus insists, is that B is not speaking at all---in which case, of course, he is once again failing to contradict A.<sup>115</sup> Thus stripped of the concept of contradiction, the

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<sup>115</sup> Dionysodorus' final assertion is sometimes taken by commentators to entail that the speaker B in the third scenario does not in fact speak at all. (Cp. Sprague (1993): 'Notice that the person who speaks

unfortunate Ctesippus seems able only to confirm its impossibility by falling completely silent (286b7).

### 3.6 The Socratic Response: the Self-Refutation Argument (286b7-288a7)

Our next task is to consider the reaction to the foregoing proceedings of Socrates, who now at long last (286b8) takes over for the winded Ctesippus. What I want to suggest is most remarkable about this response is what it does *not* respond to. I have argued that the arguments for NFS, Ctesippus' objections to the latter, and the argument for NC, constitute a highly wrought dialectical exchange. In the course of this sequence of theses, refutations, objections, and replies, Plato has been at pains to draw to the reader's attention a series of false assumptions which the sophists have made concerning the nature of predication. These include: (i) that the subject matter of speech is an entire state of affairs; (ii) that a statement is an unstructured whole which names such a state of affairs; (iii) that no two statements share a subject matter (each existing thing that is the subject matter of some assertion is separate from the subject of any other assertion); (iv) that one who speaks falsely does not speak the things that are (οὐ τὰ ὄντα λέγει), but rather the things that are not (τὰ δὲ μὴ ὄντα), conceived of as a bare nothing; (v) that false

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something different from another person does not, according to the sophist, speak falsely; he simply does not speak. Cf. the passage about the man beating a bronze pot at *Cratylus* 430A.) On this reading the sophist's final scenario is a repetition of the third. However, it seems best to take the sophist's 'or' (ἢ) at 286b5 as adversative in sense, and thus as introducing a fourth alternative. Moreover, Cratylus says that the speaker who addresses him as Hermogenes makes pointless *noise* (i.e., speaks unmeaningfully), not that he does not speak at all. It follows that the final pair of questions in Q16 constitute a proposed redescription on the sophist's part of the third scenario: on the assumption that to speak at all is to speak significantly, and on the assumption that to speak a false formula of x is to fail to speak significantly of any existing thing, should we say rather that speaker B in scenario three fails to speak at all? But then, how could he contradict speaker A? The purpose of the redescription of course is to tighten the screws on Ctesippus by reducing the third scenario to an even more dialectically disastrous result.

speaking is a failure to speak at all; and that, (vi) since the essential function of predication is to describe the nature of each existing thing, there is at most a single meaningful λόγος for each thing with a determinate nature, while for any λόγος there is, there exists some unique real thing that corresponds to it.

It may be argued with considerable assurance that each of these theses regarding predication is examined and refuted in the *Sophist*.<sup>116</sup> In the *Euthydemus* they are by contrast passed over in complete silence: the same dialectical targets in his sights, Socrates takes aim at not a single one in his subsequent remarks to the sophists (286b8-288a7). What are we to make of this fact? It is of course possible that at the time he wrote the *Euthydemus*, Plato was---as Dionysodorus might say (287b4-5)---‘helpless in dealing with the present arguments’. This seems highly unlikely, however, in light of the careful construction of the sophists’ exchanges with Ctesippus: it beggars belief that Plato could share in Ctesippus’ perplexity while simultaneously dramatizing the latter’s halting progress, as well as his missteps, in dialectic.<sup>117</sup>

In particular, the proximity of Ctesippus’ second objection to the final account of false statement in the *Sophist* (261c-263d) recommends an alternative diagnosis: it is Plato’s view that the resolution of the fallacious arguments for NFS and NC belong to the domain of a higher dialectic than that exercised by Socrates. The full resolution of the philosophical perplexity that is induced by the sophists’ arguments requires an account of the copula and its role in predication. The function of the copula is explained in the *Sophist* in terms of the notion of participation, by appeal to the theory of the weaving together of Forms. The account of the community of Forms is in turn prior in explanation

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<sup>116</sup> Theses (i)-(iii) are taken up at 260a-263b; (iv) at 237c7-237e2, and 263b-d; (v) is addressed at 237e4-6; and (vi) at 251a-d, 252c, and 259d-c.

<sup>117</sup> Cp. Burnyeat (2002) for a more extended defense of this claim.

to the final account of true and false statement. From the theoretical standpoint of the *Sophist* therefore, it lies beyond the scope of the characteristic activity of the ‘sophist of noble lineage’ to provide a philosophical *explanation* of what has gone wrong in the arguments for NFS and NC.

This interpretation of Socrates’ dialectical unresponsiveness in our present passage gains in plausibility when we turn to consider how Socrates *does* respond to the sophists. For Socrates’ subsequent line of argument is conducted entirely within the limits of Socratic dialectic, as we have so far managed to characterize that activity. The following observations may be advanced in support of this claim.

First, it is entirely appropriate that Socrates intervenes at precisely the point at which the possibility of contradiction is threatened. For as we have argued, contradiction is Socrates’ stock in trade: the refutatory function of Socratic dialectic may be referred to Socrates’ grasp of the definition of refutation; and the execution of genuine refutation presupposes the existence of contradiction and falsehood, as well as an understanding of the nature of contradiction. Moreover, it is apparent from Socrates’ subsequent line of questioning (286eff.) that he means to make the world safe not merely for contradiction, but for refutation *in particular*. However, it is clear from the opening remarks of Socrates’ response that this defense will be conducted on the basis of the conceptual resources of Socratic dialectic alone. These initial remarks have proved puzzling to commentators precisely because this point has not been appreciated. Socrates begins by making the following observations:

Ctesippus fell silent at this, but I was astonished at the λόγον and said, ‘How do you mean, Dionsodorus? The fact is that I have heard this particular λόγον from many persons at many times, and it never ceases to amaze me. The followers of Protagoras made considerable use of it, and so did some still earlier. It always seems to me to have a wonderful way of upsetting not just other arguments, but itself as well. But I think I shall learn the truth about it better from you than

from anyone else. The λόγος amounts to claiming that there is no such thing as false speaking, doesn't it? And the person speaking must either speak the truth or else not speak? (286b7-c8)<sup>118</sup>

Many commentators have supposed that Socrates here asserts that the argument for NC which has just been concluded was used by Protagoras---or his followers---and by even 'earlier' thinkers. The inevitable candidates for the earlier thinkers are Parmenides and his followers, or 'the Eleatics' in general.<sup>119</sup> The difficulty generated by this supposition is that we have no reason to suppose that Protagoras or his followers, or Parmenides and his, argued for the denial of contradiction along Antisthenian lines. This fact has then led some commentators to deny that the argument for NC depends on Antisthenian assumptions at all.<sup>120</sup> These worries are however based upon a misreading of this passage; for Plato does not make Socrates say that the argument for NC originated with Protagoras and earlier thinkers. As the end of the passage makes clear, the 'λόγος' to which Socrates consistently refers is not the *argument* NC, but the general *thesis* that false speaking is impossible.<sup>121</sup> Thus Socrates' remarks do not constitute a backward glance at Dionysodorus' argument for NC; rather, they indicate a forward-looking selection of the thesis that Socrates means now to target for refutation, viz., the thesis that false speaking---and false judging as well, as Socrates quickly adds (286d1-5)---is impossible.

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<sup>118</sup> Translation Sprague (1993).

<sup>119</sup> Cp. Canto (1989), 204, Hawtry op.cit., 111.

<sup>120</sup> Cp. Bonitz (1886), 126-8, n.17.

<sup>121</sup> Among other things, λόγος can mean either an argument or a single proposition or statement, and hence a thesis. Thus it would be apt to translate the various occurrences of 'λόγος' in the text above in such a way as to reflect the manner in which Socrates narrows the focus of his interest upon NFS. A possible gloss would be the following: 'I was astonished at the argument (i.e., for NC) and I said the fact is I have heard this general line of argument (i.e., of arguments involving the denial of false speaking) from many different persons. ..This line of argument always seems to me to have a wonderful way of upsetting not just other arguments, but itself as well. ..But I think I shall learn the truth about it better from you than from anyone else. This line of argument boils down to the particular thesis of claiming that there is no such thing as false speaking, doesn't it? And the person speaking must either speak the truth or else not speak?'

It follows that the true significance of Socrates' reference to Protagoreans and those 'still earlier' is this: Socrates announces that his examination of the general thesis (hereafter NFO) that false opinion is impossible will be uncoupled from *any* particular philosophical school's argument for the paradox.<sup>122</sup> Thus no particular philosopher's assumptions about the nature of predication will be examined in Socrates' counterattack; neither then will any theses regarding the nature of predication be assumed or defended in Socrates' refutation. Rather, Socrates' attack on the impossibility of falsehood will employ the most minimal resource conceivable available to the practitioner of genuine refutation: it will seek to establish that the sophists' thesis 'upsets (or: refutes, ἀνατρέπων) not just other arguments, but itself as well' (καὶ τοὺς τε ἄλλους ἀνατρέπων καὶ αὐτὸς αὐτόν, 286c4).

What sense does Plato attach to Socrates' claim that NFO 'refutes itself'? Before we may determine this, we must first note that Socrates' examination in fact consists of two separate refutations. The first (which I shall call the 'Teaching Argument') is concluded at 287b1; the second (which I call 'the Refutation Argument') at 288a7. I suggest that when Socrates announces that NFO is self-refuting in some sense, he means that only the Refutation Argument demonstrates this; the Teaching Argument does not. The *prima facie* evidence that this is so is that Socrates' charge of self-refutation at 286c4 closely resembles in sense if not exact phrasing the conclusion of the Refutation Argument (288a2-4): 'It looks as if this argument has made no progress and still has the old trouble of falling down (itself) in the process of knocking down (others) (ἀλλὰ ἔοικεν...οὗτος μὲν ὁ λόγος ἐν ταύτῳ μένειν καὶ ἔτι ὥσπερ τὸ παλαιὸν καταβαλὼν

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<sup>122</sup> Of course another likely purpose of the reference to earlier thinkers is to charge the sophists with unoriginality.

πίπτειν)’. Nevertheless, the drift of Socrates’ first argument---the Teaching Argument---may appear upon first reading to contain its own charge that the sophists’ thesis is self-refuting in some sense. It is worthwhile to discover why this is not so; for this will bring us closer to understanding the sense in which Plato *does* regard the thesis to be self-refuting.

### **Socrates’ First Refutation (The ‘Teaching’ Argument):**

Socrates argues as follows:

Thesis: It is impossible to speak falsely (NFS).

- (1) If NFS, then there is no such thing as false opinion (NFO). (286d4).
- (2) Ignorance consists in false opinion, i.e., speaking or thinking falsely about things (286d6-7).
- (3) Therefore, there is no such thing as ignorance or ignorant men (286d6).
- (4) If there is no such thing as being ignorant (i.e., speaking or thinking falsely about things), then it is impossible for a man to make a mistake in his actions as well (287a1-4).

At this point Socrates abruptly concludes the first examination by asking the following

‘clownish question (φορτικὸν ἐρώτημα)’:

If no one of us makes mistakes either in action or in speech or in thought...what in heaven’s name did you two come here to teach? Or didn’t you say just now that if anyone wanted to learn virtue, you would impart it best? (287a6-b1).

I take it that these remarks entail that Socrates would continue from step (4) as follows:

- (5) Learners of any subject matter are ignorant of it.
- (6) Learners of virtue in particular learn to act well.
- (7) To make a mistake in ones actions is to act on the basis of false opinion(s).
- (8) Euthydemus and Dionysodorus have *acted* in coming to Athens on the basis of the belief that there exist Athenians who are ignorant of their subject matter; they have *said* that they would teach virtue to men who are ignorant of it (and thus that they would cause men to avoid mistakes in their actions); and they have said that they *believe* they impart it best to those willing to learn it (and therefore to those who are ignorant of it).

The difficulty is that it is not exactly clear, given Socrates' 'clownish question', what the intended conclusion of this implicit inference is. One possibility is that Socrates' strategy is simply to catch the sophists out in an inconsistency. In that case the conclusion of the argument is that the sophists have previously committed themselves, both in word and deed, to the existence of ignorance and ignorant men, which they now insist do not exist. This reading of Socrates' conclusion is perhaps suggested by Dionysodorus' retort (287b2-5):

Really, Socrates', said Dionysodorus interrupting, 'are you such an old Cronos as to bring up now what we said in the beginning? I suppose if I said something last year, you will bring that up now and still be helpless in dealing with the present argument.

On the other hand, it is possible that Socrates is driving at a somewhat stronger conclusion, to the effect that the sophists' thesis NFO commits them to a proposition that



is directly self-undermining. This possibility emerges once we remind ourselves that NFO (as well as NFS and NC) form part of the very *content* of the subject matter ('virtue') which the sophists claim to teach. In that case the point may be that the sophists are committed to the following claim: 'We teach that teaching is impossible', or 'We teach that nothing can be taught.' If that is so however, then this argument does not show that NFO is *itself* self-refuting. Rather, Socrates' claim will be that a statement to which the sophists' commitment to NFO has driven them has this character, viz., 'We teach that nothing can be taught'.

Moreover, this statement is more correctly described as *pragmatically* self-refuting, rather than absolutely self-refuting, or self-refuting in the strict sense. Following J.L. Mackie, let us say that a proposition or statement is pragmatically self-refuting when it is composed of a sentence forming operator which describes an action which is directly contradicted by the content of the noun-clause to which it is prefixed. Examples of such pragmatically self-refuting statements include: 'I write that I am not writing', 'I say that I am not saying anything', 'I believe that I believe nothing'. A simple proof establishes as a general result that what the sentential operators ('I write that', 'I say that', etc.) of such sentences operate on must be false.<sup>123</sup> In such a case then, it is not the entire sentence which is falsified by the formation of such a sentence: I can say that I

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<sup>123</sup> Thus Mackie (1964), 194: 'It can be shown as follows that whatever d stands for,  $Cd(N\Sigma pdp)N(N\Sigma pdp)$  is a logical law:

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|----|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. | $d(N\Sigma pdp)$                |                                      |
| 2. | $\Sigma pdp$                    | from 1 by existential generalization |
| 3. | $NN\Sigma pdp$                  | from 2 by double negation            |
| 4. | $Cd(N\Sigma pdp)N(N\Sigma pdp)$ | from 1-3 by conditional proof        |

That is, if the antecedent of this conditional is supposed, the consequent can be deduced from it, and therefore the conditional itself is a logical law.'

am not saying anything, and I can teach that I teach nothing; if I do either of those things, then the corresponding propositions ‘I say that I say nothing’, ‘I teach that I teach nothing’ will be true. It would seem then that the Teaching Argument is not designed to show that the sophists’ theses NFS or NFO are self-refuting; nor does it show that the sophists’ commitment to NFO drives them to an assertion that is self-refuting in an absolute sense. If we are to make sense of Socrates’ claim that NFO ‘upsets itself as well as other arguments’, we must therefore look to his second refutation, not his first.

Before moving on to the second refutation, it is worth noting that the argument we have just surveyed has a close parallel elsewhere in the Platonic corpus. It too is directed at a defender (on different grounds) of NFO:

Or what are we to say, Theodorus? If whatever the individual judges by means of perception is true for him; if no man can assess another’s experiences better than he, or can claim authority to examine another man’s judgment and see if it be right or wrong; if, as we have repeatedly said, only the individual himself can judge of his own world, and what he judges is always true and correct: how could it ever be, my friend, that Protagoras was a wise man, so wise as to think himself fit to be the teacher of other men and worth large fees; while we, in comparison with him the ignorant ones, needed to go and sit at his feet---we who are ourselves each the measure of his own wisdom? (*Theaetetus* 161d2-161e3).

In this text however it is perhaps clearer that Socrates does not complain that the sophist’s statements are merely inconsistent. If so, this would seem to provide some support for reading both passages as leveling the charge of pragmatic self-refutation against any sophist who simultaneously undertakes to practice sophistry and to defend NFO (on any grounds). The observation of this resonance between the two dialogues however leads at once to an observation of their dissonance: for Socrates’ complaint against Protagoras above is of course immediately disparaged by Socrates himself, speaking on the sophist’s behalf. Protagoras, Socrates tells us, would ridicule the argument as constituting not a proof, but a merely plausible speech designed for the ears

of those incapable of the rational assessment of a genuine demonstration (161d-163a). Nor does the sophist, thus impersonated by Socrates, merely disparage the argument; for Protagoras is subsequently allowed to respond to it fully on the basis of his own teaching: the wise teacher is one who is able to educate his pupils by changing their condition from a worse to a better state, inducing ‘good’ perceptions or beliefs in the place of not false, but pernicious ones (167a-d).

This circumstance thus raises a question about the constancy of Plato’s opinion regarding the strength of this particular type of argument against NFO. For if we suppose that the *Theaetetus* is the later dialogue, it is tempting to conclude that Plato came to see the Teaching Argument in the *Euthydemus* as vulnerable to the rejoinder he has provided Protagoras in the *Theaetetus*. I suggest however that there are adequate grounds for resisting this proposal. This is because the rebuttal Plato has invented for Protagoras is entirely grounded in the psychological and metaphysical theories (the theory of perception, the doctrine of Heraclitean flux), which are foisted on the sophist as components the Secret Doctrine. No such rebuttal is available to Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, who are strenuously uncommitted to any metaphysical or psychological picture of any kind. In sum: the existence of Protagoras’ rejoinder in the *Theaetetus* may signal new thinking on Plato’s part about the strength of the Teaching Argument vis-à-vis *Protagoras*; it does not indicate that Plato has changed, or would change his mind regarding the dialectical potential of the argument when it is wielded against the likes of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. I conclude therefore that Plato is perfectly satisfied with the soundness of Socrates’ first refutation.

### Socrates' Second Refutation (The 'Refutation' Argument):

Socrates' second refutation is in fact partially embedded in his first. Its progress is repeatedly impeded by both sophists (who, we may therefore suppose, can see what is coming). Nevertheless, it seems clear that its opening move is made at 286e1-7. In pursuit of a premise of the first refutation, Socrates has asked whether there is any such thing as an ignorant man. The following exchange with Dionysodorus ensues:

Just refute already!', he said.

Well, but is there such a thing as refutation if one accepts your thesis that nobody speaks falsely?

No, there is not, said Euthydemus.

Then it can't be that Dionysodorus ordered me to refute him just now, can it? I said.

How would anyone order a thing which doesn't exist? Are you in the habit of giving such orders?

Rather than attempt a direct response to this question at this stage, Socrates continues to construct the Teaching Argument. However, Dionysodorus refuses to respond to this latter refutation before Socrates has addressed his brother's previous denial of the existence of refutation. An extended *contretemps* (287b2-287d2) between Socrates and Dionysodorus ensues over who should answer whom first regarding the 'present arguments', viz., Euthydemus' denial of the existence of refutation:

Really, Socrates, said Dionysodorus interrupting, are you such an old Cronos as to recollect now what we said in the beginning, and if I said something last year, you will recollect that now, but still be helpless in dealing with things argued at present?

Well you see, I said, these arguments are very difficult---as is quite reasonable; for they are stated by wise men---since indeed this last one you mention turns out to be particularly difficult to deal with. Whatever in the world do you mean by the expression "be helpless in dealing with [the argument]" Dionysodorus? Or is it not clear that it means that I am unable to refute it? Just tell me, what else according to you is the sense of this phrase (τί σοι ἄλλο νοεῖ τοῦτο τὸ ῥῆμα) "I am helpless in dealing with the arguments"?

But at least it is not very difficult to deal with *this* [i.e., Socrates' phrase τί σοι ἄλλο νοεῖ τοῦτο τὸ ῥῆμα], he said; so just answer.<sup>124</sup>

Before you answer me, Dionysodorus? I said.

You refuse to answer then? he said.

Well, is it fair?

Perfectly fair, he said.

On what principle? I said. Or isn't it clearly on this one, that you have come to us on the present occasion as a man who is completely skilled in arguments, and you know when an answer should be given and when it should not? So now you decline to give any answer whatsoever because you recognize you ought not to?

Socrates' complaint suggests that if Dionysodorus would only behave, Socrates would extract a damaging argument from him. But what is the argument? I offer the following reconstruction:

Thesis: It is impossible to speak falsely (NFS).

- (1) If NFS, then there is no such thing as false opinion (NFO) (286d4).
- (2) A refutation is a dialectical demonstration of the falsehood of an interlocutor's opinion (i.e., it is the construction by a questioner of a valid deduction from premises conceded by the answerer of the contradictory of an answerer's thesis). [Implied].
- (3) Therefore, if NFS, there is no such thing as a refutation (286e2-3).
- (4) Dionysodorus bid Socrates to refute NFS (286e5-6).

But if this is the argument, where is the damage? The structural similarities between the argument at this stage and the Teaching Argument are evident; however,

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<sup>124</sup> Reading line 287c3 with Badham (1865) as: 'Ἄλλ' ὃ σὺ λέγεις, ἔφη, τούτῳ <γ' οὐ> πάνυ χαλεπὸν χρῆσθαι. Dionysodorus has here conceived of a sophism that plays upon a homonymy that lurks in Socrates' question regarding the sense or intention of the sophist's phrase (τί σοι ἄλλο νοεῖ τοῦτο τὸ ῥῆμα, 'what else does this phrase intend (i.e., mean or signify) to you?'). For the homonymy and the sophism see below, 131.

precisely because this is so, we are again faced with a question regarding the conclusion at which these premises aim. Does Socrates hope merely to catch the sophists in an inconsistency (their apparent simultaneous acknowledgement and denial of the existence of refutation?); or does Socrates aim to show that Dionysodorus' command is pragmatically self-undermining? On the latter interpretation, Socrates' point would presumably be that the sophist has enjoined Socrates to refute a thesis that entails that there is no such thing as refutation. In this case however it is unclear what purchase such a strategy has against the sophists' position: for it is doubtful whether it is, strictly speaking, pragmatically *self*-undermining for the sophist to bid *Socrates* to do something which the brothers maintain to be impossible. On the other hand, Euthydemus seems to think that the issuance of such a command *is* in some sense *self*-defeating: how, the sophist asks, could anyone order a thing which does not exist?

As I read the exchange above however, this issue is moot. This is because---on either interpretation of the conclusion at which these premises aim---Plato has provided the sophists with a bolt-hole of dialectical escape from Socrates' initial series of questions. This escape is grounded in their implicit recognition---shared by Socrates himself---of the distinction between the *rules* of dialectical (including eristic) argumentation on the one hand, and the *premises* of a dialectical argument on the other. It is a background presupposition of dialectical encounters of any kind that it is the task of the person playing the role of questioner to refute the thesis of the person playing the role of the answerer. It does not however follow that it is a *premise* of any answerer in a dialectical context that the questioner refute the thesis of the answerer. The sophists exploit this distinction in their stand-off with Socrates above; for the source of their

disagreement with Socrates is whether the brothers, in the role of answerers, have conceded it as a *premise* that there is such a thing as refutation when (at 286e1), in response to Socrates' question regarding the existence of ignorant men, Dionysodorus bids Socrates to refute him. Socrates pursues the statement precisely in order to extract it as a conceded premise, whose consistency (or pragmatic cohesion, as the case may be) with other premises Socrates is therefore free to examine. Faced with this result, the brothers' strategy is, in effect, to withdraw Dionysodorus' problematic assertion (and thus his apparent commitment to the existence of refutation) while simultaneously insisting on the background *rule* of dialectical engagement that Socrates refute their thesis NFS. Thus the sophists simultaneously deny the existence of refutation while insisting that this denial, and the thesis that entails this denial, be refuted.

Do the sophists 'play fair' in maintaining this position? And---a rather different question---is their position logically coherent? As I read the passage, Plato's answers are mixed: no, the sophists do not play fair; but yes, their eventual position is perfectly coherent from a logical point of view. The sophists do not play fair by the rules of dialectical encounters because, while raising no objection to Socrates' line of questioning, they refuse to answer Socrates in his repeated attempts to extract the sophists' admission of the existence of refutation as a premise in his examination.<sup>125</sup> Socrates' warm rebuke of the brothers on this score (287c9-287d2) is an obvious signal of Plato's agreement that the sophists' behaviour constitutes a dialectical foul---albeit an extra-logical one.

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<sup>125</sup> Cp. *Topics* VIII 11 161b1-5: the answerer who will not grant what is evident behaves contentiously and impedes discussion; cp. VIII 2 158a29-30: a questioner is expected to criticize an answerer who is refusing to answer.

On the other hand, that Plato regards the sophists' stance to be unassailable from a logical point of view seems evident from Socrates' immediate response to his impasse with Dionysodorus. His response is to abandon---temporarily---the role of questioner. Socrates' new tactic is to adopt the role of answerer in order that he may be 'refuted' by a new sophism of Dionysodorus. The Refutation Argument then begins anew (287e2-288a7) when Socrates, reclaiming the role of questioner, asks Dionysodorus how his claim to have refuted Socrates can possibly cohere with the brothers' commitment to NFO. It follows that Plato does not set Socrates the task of attacking the sophists on the grounds of their simultaneous adoption of NFO and NFS and the role of answerer in a dialectical encounter. And rightly so: for by the rules of dialectic argumentation, there is no logical incoherence involved in the mere *adoption* of an answerer's thesis---even one which entails the impossibility of dialectical examination. Rather, the brothers are attacked on the grounds of their simultaneous adoption of NFO and their claim to have refuted an interlocutor with respect to some *particular* thesis *p* in their role of questioner or examiner in a dialectical exchange. We may therefore read Plato's portrayal of Socrates' strategic adjustment as advice to learners in dialectic: the direct attack on NFO through the attempt to extract from its *defender* the admission of the existence of refutation is a dialectical dead-end, both from a practical standpoint (because skilled disputants will not concede the premise) and from a logical one as well (because the answerer *qua* answerer is not committed to the existence of refutation as a premise in the questioner's argument).

How then does Socrates' new strategy fare against the sophists' thesis? And in what sense, if any, does he succeed in demonstrating that their thesis is self-refuting? The



new sophism to which Socrates submits is of no philosophical importance; indeed its silliness seems chosen to keep our focus on its outcome, not its substance. At 287c3-4 above ('at least it is not very difficult to deal with *this*' i.e., your phrase<sup>126</sup>) Dionysodorus has conceived of a sophism that plays upon Socrates' question regarding the meaning of the sophist's phrase 'be helpless in dealing with the argument': Socrates had asked the sophist, 'what else, according to you, is the sense (νοεῖ) of this phrase?' (or more literally, what else does this phrase mean or intend to you, τί σοι ἄλλο νοεῖ τοῦτο τὸ ῥῆμα, 287b1-2). Dionysodorus now takes the fact that Socrates has asked such a question to indicate his commitment to the thesis that 'phrases sense (νοεῖ)'. However, the verb 'νοεῖν' is homonymous. Applied to living things, it signifies various cognitive capacities, such as to think, to see, to intend, or to have sense; it is only when applied to words or phrases that it signifies 'to mean' or 'to have sense' in the sense of 'to signify'. Socrates acquiesces in the sophist's construction of a false refutation which exploits this homonymy at 287d7-287e1:

Socrates' Thesis (p): Phrases have sense (τὰ ῥήματα νοεῖ). [Implied].

(i) Things that have sense (τὰ νοοῦντα) have soul (or: are alive, ψυχὴν ἔχοντα).

(ii) No phrase has a soul.

(iii) Therefore, no phrase has sense. [Implied].

The sophist then triumphantly inquires (287e1): if (ii) phrases don't have soul (and, he might have added, if (i) it is things with sense that have soul), why did Socrates ask Dionysodorus what the sense of his phrase was (or more literally: why did Socrates ask what it was that his phrase could *sense*)? Socrates responds as follows:

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<sup>126</sup> Reading τούτῳ <γ' οὐ> πάνυ χαλεπὸν χρησθαι with Badham (1865).

For what other reason, indeed, I said, than that I made a mistake on account of being so stupid (Τί ἄλλο γε, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ἢ ἐξήμαρτον διὰ τὴν βλακείαν)? Or did I not make a mistake but said even this correctly, when I said that phrases have sense (ἢ οὐκ ἐξήμαρτον ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦτο ὀρθῶς εἶπον, εἰπὼν ὅτι νοεῖ τὰ ῥήματα)? Do you say that I make a mistake or not? Because if I did not make a mistake, you will not refute me, no matter how wise you are, and you will be 'helpless in dealing with the argument'; (πότερά φῃς ἐξαμαρτάνειν με ἢ οὐ; εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἐξήμαρτον, οὐδὲ σὺ ἐξελέγξεις, καίπερ σοφὸς ὢν, οὐδ' ἔχεις ὅτι χρῆ τῷ λόγῳ.) And if I did make one, you said the wrong thing when you claimed it was impossible to make mistakes (εἰ δ' ἐξήμαρτον, οὐδ' οὕτως ὀρθῶς λέγεις, φάσκων οὐκ εἶναι ἐξαμαρτάνειν)---and I'm not talking about things you said last year. But it seems...that this statement [sc. the denial of false opinion] remains in the same place and still has the old trouble of falling down (itself) in the process of knocking down (others) (ἀλλὰ ἔοικεν...οὗτος μὲν ὁ λόγος ἐν ταύτῳ μένειν καὶ ἔτι ὥσπερ τὸ παλαιὸν καταβαλὼν πίπτειν), and your own art has not yet discovered how to prevent this from happening in spite of your wonderful display of precision in arguments. (287e2-288a7)

Socrates' reply is obviously argued by dilemma. The dilemma however is chosen with care. Socrates does *not* argue:

- (1) Socrates believes that p and adopted p as a thesis.
- (2) Dionysodorus has constructed an argument that not-p.
- (3) Either Socrates' belief that p is true or it is false.
- (4) If p is false, then not-NFO.
- (5) If p is true, then Socrates has not been refuted.

For such a gambit obviously runs the risk that the sophists will charge that Socrates begs the question against their thesis NFO.<sup>127</sup> Rather, he argues: the sophists maintain that all beliefs, and that all statements which reflect these beliefs, are true. Hence Socrates' thesis p is true; and hence his concessions which constitute the premises of the sophist's argument are true. The sophists maintain moreover that as a matter of logic, (i) and (ii)

<sup>127</sup> Socrates' strategy is usefully compared on this point to Aristotle's admonition (*Metaph.* IV 1006a18-21) to dialecticians confronted with a questioner who denies the principle of non-contradiction: the starting point in dealing with any case of this kind is not to ask the answerer to state something either to be or not to be (i.e., that something is or is not F), 'for that might well be supposed to ask for the original point at issue', i.e., the principle PNC itself).

entail (iii). (Note that Dionysodorus takes this fact to be so obvious that he does not even bother to explicitly state the conclusion of his inference at 287e1). They are also maintaining---again, as a matter of logic---that (iii) overturns Socrates' original opinion, the thesis p. For Dionysodorus has asked Socrates in effect: if the premises of his argument are believed (οἶσθα, 287d10) by Socrates, *why then* (τί οὖν, 287e1) did Socrates commit himself to his original thesis?

Thus Socrates' strategy is to point out that Dionysodorus, in the role of questioner, claims in effect that (a) Socrates' concessions entail the contradictory of his original thesis---which (b) by hypothesis is a true opinion. The sophist is committed to both (a) and (b): (a) in particular is not merely a background assumption of the dialectical activity in which they are engaged. For while it is a presupposition of dialectical encounters that it is the questioner's role to refute the answerer, Dionysodorus' inference is an activation of, or an instance of this role, with respect to some *particular* thesis p. The dilemma that Socrates constructs in response to this deduction thus demands that the sophists answer the following question: what is the truth value of the *conclusion* of this demonstration vis-à-vis Socrates' true thesis? The sophists' commitment to (a) entails that if the premises of the argument are true, and if the sophist has demonstrated this conclusion, then the conclusion 'No phrase has sense' is *true*; for only truths may be deduced from truths. But then the thesis 'Phrases have sense' is a 'mistake'; in which case the sophists' thesis NFO is false. The sophists' commitment to (b) entails that, alternatively, Socrates has not made a 'mistake' and the thesis 'Phrases have sense' is true. But then Socrates cannot have been refuted. For only truths may be deduced from truths; and if both Socrates' original thesis and the sophist's conclusion are true, the latter

cannot be the genuine contradictory of Socrates' original thesis---which of course in this case it is not. In other words:

- (1) Socrates opines that p and adopts p as a thesis.
- (2) Therefore, Socrates' belief that p is true (by NFO).
- (3) Dionysodorus has constructed an argument for the conclusion that not-p whose premises q and r are believed by Socrates.
- (4) Therefore, premises q and r of the sophist's argument are true. (by NFO).
- (5) A false conclusion may not be validly deduced from true premises.
- (6) The sophist's argument is conclusive (i.e., it is a valid deduction).
- (7) Therefore, the conclusion of the sophist's argument is true.
- (8) If the sophist's argument is conclusive, then either Socrates has made a mistake in opining that p or he has not.
- (9) If Socrates has made a mistake in opining that p, then not-NFO (by *modus tollens* and premises (1)-(4) of the Teaching Argument).
- (10) If Socrates has not made a mistake, then his thesis p and the sophist's conclusion that not-p are both true.
- (11) If the thesis p and the sophist's conclusion are both true, then Socrates has not been refuted.

Unlike the first construal of the argument above, this inference does not beg the question against the sophist; for it is conducted entirely in terms of the notion of the relationship between the premises and conclusion of a conclusive or valid deduction,

prescinding from any assumptions regarding the falsity of Socrates' initial thesis.<sup>128</sup> It is true that the necessary condition on valid reasoning upon which the argument turns does presuppose that from truths only truths may follow, and thus that true premises may not entail a false conclusion.<sup>129</sup> But such an assumption is entirely general, and makes no assertion with respect to the falsehood of any particular belief of Socrates. Moreover, the argument has the virtue of being completely general in its application: though the sophist's fallacy depends on the homonymy of the verb νοεῖν, Socrates' response is applicable to any fallacious argument of any type, or indeed, to any argument advanced by a defender of NFO.

It may be objected that this interpretation of the Refutation Argument gives too much credit to Plato, since it reposes upon the notion of a *sylogistic inference*; yet Plato has no formal theory of the syllogism. The proper response to this objection is that a grasp of the necessary condition on syllogistic reasoning upon which the strategy turns need not and does not presuppose the possession of a formal theory of the syllogism.<sup>130</sup> Moreover, our analysis credits Plato only with a grasp of a necessary, not a sufficient, condition on syllogistic reasoning, viz., that from truths only truths may follow. It is this insight which Plato exploits, and which serves as the fulcrum against which thesis of NFO is overturned. For how may the *denier of falsehood* object to the presupposition that from *truths only truths may follow*?

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<sup>128</sup> I take it Socrates does not bother to discuss the alternative that the sophist's inference is not conclusive, since if it is not he has not been refuted in any case.

<sup>129</sup> Thus another interesting feature of this argument is that it demonstrates Plato's grasp of this relationship prior to its articulation in Aristotle's *Analytics* (*APr* B 2, 53b11-16; *APo* 6 75a5-6).

<sup>130</sup> In any case, any doubts on the score of Plato's possession of the concept of a syllogism are dispelled below, Chapter 4.3, 193-203; I argue that Socrates' solution to the fallacy of *secundum quid* presupposes such a grasp.

If the foregoing analysis of the Refutation Argument is along the right lines, it would seem that the overall conclusion at which the argument aims is:

- (12) The practitioner of refutation who is committed to NFS must either falsify NFS in the very pursuit of his dialectical activity, or abandon the claim to be engaged in refutation.

In that case, we are now in a position to assess Socrates' dual characterization of the sophists' thesis NFO:

NFO upsets (or: refutes, ἀνατρέπων) not just other arguments, but itself as well (καὶ τοὺς τε ἄλλους ἀνατρέπων καὶ αὐτὸς αὐτόν, 286c4).

NFO still has the old trouble of falling down itself in the process of knocking down others (οὗτος μὲν ὁ λόγος ἐν ταύτῳ μένειν καὶ ἔτι ὥσπερ τὸ παλαιὸν καταβαλὼν πίπτειν, 288a2-4).

In the light of our analysis of the Refutation Argument, it is clear that Socrates does not mean by these remarks that the thesis NFO is self-refuting in the strict sense of entailing its own falsehood. Neither does he mean that the proposition that there is no such thing as false opinion is pragmatically self-refuting. Rather, he means that the practitioner of genuine refutation who is committed to NFO must either undermine NFO in the very pursuit of his dialectical activity, or abandon the claim to be engaged in genuine refutation. This explains an important feature of both characterizations above of

the sophists' thesis: for Socrates does not say merely that the thesis refutes itself, or that it simply falls down itself; he says rather that the thesis refutes itself, and that it falls down itself, *in the process of refuting or overthrowing other arguments*. A thesis that is self-refuting in this special sense is aptly designated a *dialectically self-refuting* thesis.<sup>131</sup> By way of a preliminary characterization of the notion, we may say that a thesis is dialectically self-refuting just in case its falsehood is entailed by any instance of the activity of genuine refutation.

However, this account of dialectical self-refutation may be too narrow for Plato's purposes elsewhere in the corpus. Consider the following remark of Burnyeat on the Refutation Argument:

The earlier dialogues [i.e., including the *Euthydemus*] get annoyed with the argument [i.e., for NFO]. They tell us it is absurd to deny the possibility of false judgment or statement. Socrates in the *Euthydemus* (287e-288a) argues very effectively that the denial is dialectically self-refuting, because if there is no such thing as false judgment, it cannot be false or wrong to judge that there is; hence if it is true there is no false judgment, but Socrates thinks it is false, then it is false that there is no false judgment. But to show that the conclusion of a fallacious argument is absurd or self-refuting is not yet to show what is wrong with the fallacious argument itself. Only the *Sophist* does that.<sup>132</sup>

I shall return to consider Burnyeat's distinction between explanation and annoyance below. My immediate concern is to point out that the above gloss does not describe the strategy of the Refutation Argument. For as we have seen, Socrates does not argue that the object of his 'mistake' is the thesis NFO itself; that *Socrates thinks it is false that there is no such thing as false judgment* constitutes no premise of the argument. On the other hand, the argument that Burnyeat does describe certainly seems to be dialectically self-refuting in some sense. And we can be certain that Plato agrees: for Burnyeat has in fact conflated the strategy of Refutation Argument of the second eristic

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<sup>131</sup> I borrow the phrase from Burnyeat (2002); but see next paragraph.

<sup>132</sup> Burnyeat (2002), 2.

episode of the *Euthydemus* with the celebrated ‘Exquisite Argument’ of the *Theaetetus* (170e7-171c7)---a refutation which Plato explicitly states (169e7-170a1, 171b6-c7) is directed at NFO itself---or Protagoras’ version of the thesis, the Man Measure doctrine. Yet the contours of the Exquisite Argument---even on the rough gloss above---do not seem to be captured by our preliminary account of dialectical self-refutation.<sup>133</sup> For Plato does not argue against the Measure doctrine that its falsehood is entailed by the genuine refutation of a thesis *p*, for any *p*. What is needed therefore is an account of dialectical self-refutation that covers both the Refutation Argument and the Exquisite Argument; an account moreover that promises to capture the notion of a dialectically self-refuting thesis in its full generality.

Of course such an account may be of little interest if---on the assumption that the *Theaetetus* is the later dialogue---the subsequent appearance of the Exquisite Argument in the corpus signals Plato’s abandonment of the Refutation Argument as an effective strategy against NFO. Perhaps the later argument supersedes, rather than adds to, Plato’s stock of self-refutation arguments? In support of such a view one might point to the fact that in the later dialogue, the defender of NFO is insulated from our initial construal of dialectical self-refutation. For, like the Teaching Argument, the Refutation Argument too has a near double in the *Theaetetus*:

Can we avoid the conclusion that Protagoras was just playing to the crowd when he said this [viz., that what an individual judges is always true and correct]? I say nothing about my own case and my art of midwifery and how silly we look. So too, I think, does the whole business of philosophical discussion. To examine and try to refute each other’s appearances and judgments, when each person’s are correct---this is surely an extremely tiresome piece of nonsense, if the Truth of Protagoras is true, and not merely an oracle speaking in jest from the impenetrable sanctuary of the book. (161e3-162a3)<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Of course, the precise contours of the argument are hotly disputed. However, I believe the structure of the argument may be discussed in a general way for my present purposes.

<sup>134</sup> Translation Burnyeat/Levett (1990).



Socrates' point is in obvious strategic alignment with the Refutation Argument of the *Euthydemus*: either the sophist may participate with Socrates in dialectical investigation by means of genuine refutation, or he must simply abandon the claim to be engaged in dialectic at all; in this respect then his thesis is dialectically self-refuting in our sense insofar as it is falsified by any attempt on his part to change men's opinions by means of refutation. Protagoras' defense against this charge is perhaps too often overlooked:

This, in my opinion, is what really happens: when a man's soul is in a pernicious state, he judges things akin to it, but giving him a sound state of the soul causes him to think *different things, things that are good*...If you observe [the distinction between eristic argumentation and serious discussion], those who associate with you will blame themselves for their confusion and their difficulties, not you. They will seek your company, and think of you as their friend; but they will loathe themselves, and seek refuge from themselves in philosophy, *in the hope that they may thereby become different people and be rid for ever of the men that they once were*... (167b1-168a7).

However, Protagoras' escape from the Refutation Argument (or its like) is facilitated by his reliance upon the tenets of the Secret Doctrine. Just as in the case of the Teaching Argument then, Protagoras' rejoinder to the Refutation Argument may indicate a new assessment on Plato's part of the strength of the Refutation Argument vis-à-vis Protagoras; a new assessment which necessitated Plato's invention of the Exquisite Argument. But since Protagoras' rejoinder is not available to Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, the subsequent appearance of the Exquisite Argument in the corpus is no evidence that Plato changed his mind regarding the soundness of the Refutation Argument in the earlier dialogue. We may safely conclude in that case that the Exquisite Argument constitutes a genuine addition to Plato's stock of modes of self-refutation arguments. So we are still left with the task of arriving at a covering description for both modes of argument.

It is however precisely upon consideration of Protagoras' appeal above to the Secret Doctrine that such a general covering description comes into view. Plato tailors the Refutation Argument in the *Euthydemus* as a response to two sophists who claim to have mastered the art of disputation. In particular, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus profess to be able to refute any thesis  $p$  which any answerer undertakes to defend. Thus it is necessary for Socrates to demonstrate to anyone who makes such a claim that the falsity of NFO is entailed by any instance of genuine refutation. It follows that it is a dialectical requirement in the earlier dialogue to show that NFO undermines itself when its adherent plays the role of *questioner*.

Protagoras by contrast denies in his response above that he is engaged in the business of refutation—at least as Socrates conceives of that activity. This parry is moreover grounded in the metaphysical and psychological theories to which the Measure thesis is conjoined in the *Theaetetus*. Since this is so, the demonstration that the Measure doctrine is dialectically self-refuting must meet two requirements: first, it cannot rely upon any premise to the effect that the sophist is engaged in the refutation of some thesis  $p$ ; and second---in consequence of the first requirement---it must take direct aim at the Measure doctrine itself. It follows that it is a dialectical necessity in the later dialogue to demonstrate that the Measure doctrine undermines itself when the sophist plays the role of *answerer*. And it is precisely this requirement that is reflected in the strategy of the Exquisite Argument: it is argued that the sophist's thesis is falsified the instant he concedes, in the role of answerer, that a questioner affirms the falsity of his doctrine.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Again, I believe that for the purposes of my argument, the sense in which the argument is dialectically self-refuting may be discussed independently of a more precise account of the strategy of the argument. For what it is worth, on the interpretation which I happen to favor, Protagoras is portrayed as a relativist, not a subjectivist; and the argument does not show and is not meant to show that the Measure doctrine is false

In that case we may offer the following as a general account of the notion of a dialectically self-refuting thesis: a thesis is dialectically self-refuting just in case its falsehood is entailed *either* by any instance of the dialectical activity of a *questioner* or by the dialectical activity of an *answerer* in defense of the thesis itself.<sup>136</sup>

### 3.7 The Socratic Art of Refutation: an Initial Characterization

Our reading of the second eristic episode has shown that Socrates' response to NFO is to demonstrate that the thesis is dialectically self-refuting. The attempt to respond to the sophists' various presuppositions regarding the nature of predication are left to the *Sophist*. It follows that no attempt is made in the *Euthydemus* to solve the sophists' fallacious arguments for NFS/NFO and NC. Nevertheless, it is a mistake to characterize the answer the dialogue does provide as a mere expression of annoyance with the sophists' arguments. It is more illuminating of the dialogue's purpose as a whole to construe Socrates' activity as an expression of a Socratic level of dialectical expertise. It is not the aim of such a response to explain the nature of predication; its purpose rather is

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*simpliciter*, but only that it is false in Protagoras' own world (and in every conceivable belief world). For an interpretation of the argument along these lines, see Sedley (2004), 57-62.

<sup>136</sup> Cp. Burnyeat (1976) on the *peritrope* of the Measure doctrine: 'Now it is the act of submitting a thesis for debate or maintaining it in the face of disagreement that causes its reversal and shows it up as false.' I believe it is more accurate to say that it is Plato's view that the thesis is falsified not merely when the answerer submits it for debate (see above on the brother's mere adoption of the denial of refutation); rather, it is falsified when the answerer concedes the opponent's disagreement as a premise. It is unclear to me whether Burnyeat would concede this point; for his project is to explain how the Stoics could construe the Measure doctrine (on a subjectivist interpretation of the thesis) as genuinely *self-refuting*, where the notion is taken to mean 'independently of any *additional* premises.' Burnyeat's point here is that the thesis is self-refuting in this sense because in the context of a dialectical encounter, the possibility of genuine disagreement with the Measure doctrine is presupposed by the mere adoption by the questioner of the contradictory of the sophist's thesis. My own view is that Plato requires the questioner to extract such disagreement as a premise---or as Burnyeat says, 'to *maintain* it in the face of disagreement'----before he can claim that the thesis upsets itself.

to construct a dialectically respectable refutation of the sophists' thesis from the resources of Socratic dialectic alone---and to teach the learner in dialectic how to do the same.

This result returns us to the question with which our investigation of the eristic episodes began. That question was: what exactly is the nature and scope of Socratic dialectic in its refutatory aspect? Our examination of the first eristic episode disclosed that one major component of Socratic wisdom is knowledge of what constitutes a genuine refutation---a knowledge which, we said, includes the apt application of the knowledge of the definition of a refutation. Thus we observed in Socrates' resolution of the brothers' 'μανθάνειν' sophisms that Socrates knows when the relationship between the conclusion of an argument and an interlocutor's original thesis do not meet a particular condition on genuine refutation. Socrates evinces the same awareness of the violation of this condition in his response to the 'νοεῖν' fallacy of 287d7-287e1. This condition is the following:

(1) Both the predicate term and the subject term in the refutation (including the conclusion) concern the same things (περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν)---that is, signify the same objects---as the predicate and subject in the answerer's original thesis.

I submit that our examination of the second eristic episode has broadened our understanding of the content of Socratic dialectical expertise. In particular we have discovered the following:

(2) The Refutation Argument discloses Plato's awareness of and dialectical sensitivity to the notion of begging the question. For as we have observed, Socrates'

selection of argumentative strategy against NFO is carefully designed to avoid begging the question against the sophists' thesis. We may claim therefore that Socratic dialectical expertise includes a grasp of this second condition on genuine refutation: the conclusion of a genuine refutation is different from the premises; it is not identical with any of them.<sup>137</sup>

(3) The Refutation Argument also reveals that Plato has grasped, prior to its explicit formulation in Aristotle's *Analytics*, the logical principle governing the relationship between premises and conclusion in syllogistic reasoning, viz., that from truths only truths may follow. This principle too therefore may be affirmed to be a component of Socratic dialectical expertise.

(4) Socratic expertise in its refutatory aspect is not limited to the knowledge of what constitutes a genuine refutation; for Socrates evinces a grasp of dialectical fouls which fall outside the definition of a refutation, as his rebuke of Dionysodorus at the conclusion of their tug-of-war over the obligation to answer (287b2-287d2) reveals. On the other hand, though this sort of knowledge may be characterized as extra-logical, Socrates' insistence on proper procedure is less concerned with the observance of fair

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<sup>137</sup> This result fills in a gap between the *Sophist's* account of Socratic refutation and Aristotle's definition of refutation at *SE* 167a23-25; for whereas the requirement that a refutation must not include 'the original point to be proved' is absent from the text of the *Sophist*, it is explicit in Aristotle's account: 'A refutation is a [deduction of] the contradictory [a deduction of the contradictory] of one and the same item [maintained by the answerer], not merely of the name but of the object, and of a name which is not synonymous but the same name [where the contradiction follows] necessarily from the premises granted, without including in the premises the original point to be proved [where the contradiction follows] in the same respect and relative to the same thing and in the same manner and at the same time [as in the original thesis]'. However, as I will suggest in Chapter 6.1, there is no reason to suppose that Plato takes the Visitor's conditions to constitute a list of exhaustive conditions on genuine refutation; his account may be readily expanded to include further conditions such as the avoidance of begging the question.

play and good intentions for their own sake than it is with dialectical rules of engagement which *promote* genuine refutation. Though the phrase is undesirably imprecise, we may designate this component of Socratic expertise as a grasp of what is *procedurally relevant* to genuine refutation. Socrates' acknowledgement of the distinction between rules of dialectical procedure and the premises of a dialectical argument also illustrate this department of his skill. The expectation that an interlocutor will admit to his previous concessions may be cited as another such dialectical rule of engagement. (Note that another aim of the Refutation Argument is to block the sophist's skirting of this rule: 'I'm not talking about things you said last year', 288a1-288a2).

(5) The requirement that the subject and predicate terms in a refutation signify the same things as the corresponding terms in the answerer's thesis may be said to constitute an explanatory principle of Socratic dialectic. Such a principle has explanatory force because it may be invoked to indicate the *cause* of a refutation's failure to be genuine: thus the objections Socrates raises to the *μανθάνειν* fallacies constitute their *solution* because they specify the cause of their failure to be genuine refutations. The same may be said of the requirement to avoid asking for the contradictory of the answerer's original thesis as a premise: any attempt to overthrow NFO by asking the sophist to concede the possibility of false opinion can only issue in fallacy; and the cause of the failure of such a refutation to be genuine will consist precisely in its violation of a principle of genuine refutation. The same may be said as well of the condition that if the premises of a refutation are true, its conclusion cannot be false. The components of a genuine refutation are the answerer's thesis on the one hand, and a syllogistic demonstration of its

contradictory on the other.<sup>138</sup> A demonstration that is in turn composed of true premises and false conclusion cannot be a syllogism. The citation of the violation of such a condition on syllogistic reasoning will therefore count as a causal explanation of the refutation's failure to be a genuine.

Socrates' argument that the sophists' thesis NFO is dialectically self-refuting similarly presupposes the knowledge of what constitutes a genuine refutation; on the other hand, it presupposes no principles of predication which would explain what is wrong with the sophists' arguments for the theses NFS and NC. We may conclude then that the Refutation Argument is distinctively Socratic insofar as it is *non-explanatory* in precisely this sense. The same may be said of the Teaching Argument, on the interpretation of that argument as a demonstration that the sophists' claim to teach is pragmatically self-refuting.<sup>139</sup> This result too, then, of our investigation of the second eristic episode may be put down as a component of Socratic dialectic in its refutatory aspect: the Socratic response to false refutation may be divided into two basic categories. Some of Socrates' objections constitute *solutions* to fallacy, and have causal explanatory force; other objections do not constitute solutions, and have no explanatory force.

Though the Socratic response to NFS and NC is non-explanatory in this sense, the second eristic episode brims with clues to the reader that point to a genuine explanation

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<sup>138</sup> Cp. *SE* 1 165a2-3: 'A refutation is a syllogism together with the contradictory of the conclusion' (ἐλεγχος δὲ συλλογισμός μετ' ἀντιφάσεως τοῦ συμπεράσματος).

<sup>139</sup> I believe the Exquisite Argument of the *Theaetetus* too may be said to be distinctively Socratic insofar as it is non-explanatory. Here the ground of the application of the term will however be different: the later argument does not explain what is mistaken with respect to the theory of perception that Plato foists upon Protagoras; only the final refutation of the thesis that knowledge is perception (183c-186e) explains this. It is beyond the scope of this project to provide a general account of the non-explanatory nature of Socratic refutation that applies to the entire Platonic corpus; but for a reading of the *Theaetetus* which I take to be in step with this notion of Socratic expertise, see D.Sedley (2004) Chapter 1, 1-37.

of and resolution of the sophists' arguments for their theses. At every turn, the learner in dialectic is invited to modify, clarify, or reject the various interlocutors' claims regarding the nature of predication. In the third and final eristic episode we will see this pattern repeated. By far the wildest scene in the dialogue---the brothers do not so much as dip into their bag of tricks as overturn its contents at Socrates' feet---we are conducted through a series of fallacious arguments of various types. Socrates' overt responses to the brothers' violation of clauses in a definition genuine refutation are in each case conducted at the level of Socratic expertise; at the same time, where Socrates is confronted with false presuppositions regarding the nature of predication, the learner is called upon to progress to a level of dialectical expertise that lies outside the explanatory scope of Socratic dialectic.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> See in particular my discussion of Dionysodorus' proof of the non-existence of beautiful things, Chapters 6.2-3, 334-373.



## Chapter Four

### 4.1 The Final Eristic Episode: Plato on *Secundum Quid* and *Ignoratio Elenchi*

The first five exchanges (293a7-297d2) of the final eristic episode constitute an identifiable cycle and so are best treated together. The passage begins with Euthydemus' offer to demonstrate to the despairing Socrates that he is already in possession of the knowledge that would make us happy (i.e. that knowledge which, the just concluded *aporia* of the second protreptic episode seemed to indicate, will always be out of Socrates' reach). Euthydemus argues first (293b1-294a10) that Socrates already possesses the knowledge in question because everyone in fact already knows everything. As an encore, the sophist obligingly demonstrates (295b2-296d4) that everyone is always omniscient: everyone knows, will know, and has always known everything. I shall refer to these fallacies below as the 'Omniscience Argument' (OA) and the 'Always Omniscient Argument' (AOA) respectively.

The OA and the AOA contain a number of dialectical defects of various types. The OA is enlivened by a spectacularly fallacious misapplication of a mode of indirect proof, the argument *ad impossible*; the AOA may contain a sophism familiar to readers of Aristotle's *Sophistici Elenchi* as the fallacy of Combination. By and large however, both arguments turn upon the fallacy of *secundum quid*. In the course of submitting to these arguments in the role of answerer, Socrates is portrayed as raising certain objections to their construction. These objections however never amount to a full articulation of the condition on genuine refutation which is violated by *secundum quid*. Thus the difficulty

that confronts the interpreter of these passages is the extent to which we are justified in viewing Plato's conception of the latter fallacy as a violation of syllogistic reasoning. I draw on Aristotle's advice to answerers who are confronted by an uncooperative opponent to explain that Socrates' behaviour in both passages may be put down to the contingencies of his dialectical situation. Further evidence culled from the Visitor's description of Socratic activity (*Soph.* 230b4-8) leaves no doubt that Plato conceives of refutation as a 'syllogism with the contradictory added'. I conclude that the objections Socrates does raise to the OA and the AOA constitute fully explanatory solutions to the sophist's fallacies: in his complaint that the sophist ignores certain qualifications to his conceded premises, Socrates is in effect pointing out that the sophist's arguments violate a clause in the 'Socratic' definition of genuine refutation, namely, that the syllogism of a refutation reaches its conclusion, the contradictory of the opponent's original thesis, by predicating terms of the subject in the same respect and relative to the same thing and in the same manner and at the same time as in the answerer's original thesis.

The first round of the final eristic episode also includes some much commented-upon remarks which are usually taken to indicate the sophists' commitment to the Principle of Non-Contradiction (*Euthyd.*, 293c8-d1). I shall argue that the sophists' remarks in fact amount to a claim to have provided a genuine refutation of an interlocutor on the grounds that an argument has met a list of conditions on genuine refutation. The passage thus provides important evidence of an extant dialectical practice whose breach (deliberate or otherwise) was already recognized as an identifiable type of fallacy, viz., 'ignorance of refutation'. I argue that this interpretation is confirmed by certain passages in the *Sophistici Elenchi*. In these texts, Aristotle's reference to 'ignorance of refutation'

as a separate type of fallacy is most readily understood if it is taken to presuppose precisely the dialectical practice dramatized in our passage.

A fact that is less often noted regarding this passage is that Socrates also raises objections to the Omniscience fallacies in the utterly distinct role of questioner. These challenges may be characterized as falling into two types: making the answerer say something paradoxical, (294b1-295a2), and making the answerer say something false (296e2-297a2). I shall suggest that while both tactics are instruments of the practice of Socratic dialectic, they constitute non-explanatory responses to false refutation. As such, these objections are dialectically inferior to explanatory solutions to fallacy. At the same time, there is evidence that the passage is concerned to acknowledge that such a ranking in dialectical desirability exists among the resources of Socratic dialectic : for example, the status of the generation of paradoxes is implicitly ‘downgraded’ by Plato’s portrayal of Ctesippus’ enthusiastic embrace of the tactic (294b11-294e1)---behaviour which is explicitly criticized in Socrates’ pointed lament that if he were to call upon his ‘Iolaus’ (i.e. Ctesippus) for help in dealing with the sophists’ fallacies, the latter’s intervention would do more harm than good. (297b9-297d2).

Finally, I argue that *Soph.* 259b8-259d7 constitutes an overlooked locus in the Platonic corpus of the fallacy of *secundum quid*. I demonstrate that the Visitor anticipates that those ‘who have just come into contact with the things that are’ will employ the fallacy in the construction of false refutations of his ‘beautiful and difficult’ discovery of the manner in which the kinds blend with one another. What is of even greater interest for the purpose of the present study is the Visitor’s summary dismissal of the late-learners’ challenge: deeming the solution of their false refutation unworthy of his attention and

dialectical expertise, he assigns this task to the practitioner of genuine refutation. Thus the passage may be taken as further evidence of the dialectical division of labour which informs the *Euthydemus*: the discovery of the true manner in which contraries may be predicated of contraries belongs to the domain of higher dialectic; the solution to false refutations of this discovery belongs to the practitioner of Socratic dialectic.

#### 4.2 The Omniscience Argument

The conclusion at which Euthydemus aims is that Socrates knows everything; hence he is already in possession of the knowledge that will make men happy. In his progress to this conclusion, the sophist dismisses as ‘making no difference’ (293b8, c3, c7) to the argument the various qualifications Socrates attempts to make to the premises offered for his acceptance:

**Socrates’ thesis:** Socrates does not know everything.

1. There is something which Socrates knows (293b7).

**Socrates’ qualification:** there are indeed many things he knows, but only ‘small things’ (σμικρά, 293b8).

2. It is not possible for any existing thing which is in fact *this* not to be precisely

*this* (τι τῶν ὄντων τοῦτο ὃ τυγχάνει ὄν, αὐτο τοῦτο μὴ εἶναι) (293b8-c1).

**Socrates' qualification:** none. The premise as stated is enthusiastically endorsed (293c1).

3. If Socrates knows something (ἐπίστασά τι) then he is one who knows (ἐπιστήμων εἶ) (293c1-3).

4. (Therefore) Socrates is one who knows. (By 1, 3).

**Socrates' qualification:** If he knows something, then he is knowing *in just that thing* (τούτου γε αὐτοῦ, 293c3).

At this stage in the argument, Euthydemus poses the following question: 'But it is *not* necessary if a man is in fact one who knows, that he knows everything?' (ἄλλ' οὐκ ἀνάγκη σε ἔχει πάντα ἐπίστασθαι ἐπιστήμονά γε ὄντα, 293c3-4). Socrates emphatically agrees: That cannot be, since there are many other things he does *not* know (Μὰ Δι' ὅτι...ἐπεὶ πολλὰ ἄλλ' οὐκ ἐπίσταμαι, 293c5).<sup>141</sup> I take it therefore that posed with the conditional premise, 'if x knows, then x knows everything', Socrates denies its truth by denying its consequent. As Euthydemus is intent on establishing the contradictory of this denial by an argument *ad impossible*, his motivation in eliciting this answer from Socrates at this stage is to secure as a premise the contradictory of the conclusion he aims to establish by indirect proof. The sophist then resumes his inference by employing Socrates' denial of his omniscience as his next independent assumption:

<sup>141</sup> Pace Sprague (1993), 40 who construes Euthydemus' question as 'mustn't you necessarily know everything, if you are knowing?', I construe the sophist's negative question, introduced by the adversative 'but' as expecting an affirmative answer. On Sprague's translation, Socrates' response ('How in heaven's name could that be?') expresses an objection, not agreement.

5. There is something which Socrates does not know (293c5). [Assumption targeted for rejection].
6. If there is something which Socrates does not know, then he is one who does not know (οὐκοῦν εἴ τι μὴ ἐπίστασαι, οὐκ ἐπιστήμων εἶ, 293c6-8).
7. (Therefore) Socrates is one who does not know. (By 5, 6).

**Socrates' qualification:** If there is something he does not know, he is not knowing *in just that thing* (ἐκείνου γε, 293c6).

8. (Therefore) Socrates is both one who knows and one who does not know. (By 4, 7).
9. (Therefore) Socrates is the very man he is and again he is not (the very man he is), with respect to the same things and at the same time (οὕτως τυγχάνεις ὧν αὐτὸς οὗτος ὅς εἰ, καὶ αὖ πάλιν οὐκ εἶ, κατὰ ταῦτ' ἅμα, 293c8-d1). (By 8).
10. But (9) is impossible. (By 2).
11. (Therefore) not-(5). (By argument *ad impossible*, on 5, 8).
12. (Therefore) Socrates knows everything. (By 11).

13. If Socrates knows everything, then he is already in possession of the knowledge that would make men happy. (Implied).
14. (Therefore) Socrates is already in possession of the knowledge in question. (Implied, by 12, 13).

Socrates' immediate response to this argument is to ask Euthydemus for a point of clarification:

Very good, Euthydemus---as the saying goes, "whatever you say is well said." So how do I know that knowledge we were looking for? Since it is indeed impossible for the same thing to be and not to be *this*, if I really know one thing I know absolutely everything---because I could not be both one who knows and one who does not know at the same time---and since I know everything, I also have that knowledge. Is this what you mean, and is this your piece of wisdom? (293d2-8).<sup>142</sup>

This is small wonder: for while the sophist's premises are alleged to establish Socrates' complete omniscience, they seem equally poised to establish his absolute ignorance. This is because the legitimacy of the sophist's employment of the argument *ad impossible* is merely apparent. To take a simple case---a syllogism through a middle term---for purposes of illustration, the proper procedure to follow when arguing διὰ τὸ ἀδύνατον ('through impossibility') is to (a) assume the contradictory of the desired conclusion as a premise targeted for rejection; (b) to combine this contradictory with a second prior assumption; and then (c) to reason syllogistically---in this case, through a middle term---to a conclusion that (d) contradicts another prior assumption, and is (e) 'impossible'---i.e., it is *known* and agreed in advance to be *false*. It is evident that the impossible conclusion thus reached by syllogism must contain the middle term that features in the

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<sup>142</sup> Reading πάντα λέγεις ('everything you say') line d3 with mss. BTW, as against Burnet's παταγῆς, ('you clatter/twitter'), an insult whose harshness is at variance with Socrates' usual good-humoured reactions to the brothers' sophistry.

other two premises in play.<sup>143</sup> It is equally evident that if this conclusion is not obviously false---if, in particular, it seems no less worthy of belief than any premise that was used to obtain it--- the legitimacy of the rejection of the targeted assumption is undermined.

The sophist's inference conforms only to steps (a) and (b) of this procedure. For while he has assumed at step (5) the contradictory of the proposition that Socrates knows everything, and while he has combined this assumption with Socrates' prior concession (1) that there is something that he knows, his deduction of (7)---that Socrates is one who does not know---proceeds through no middle term; nor is this result any less worthy of belief than its contradictory, premise (4). Euthydemus presents (8), the conjunction of these latter premises, as an instance of the violation of the principle of non-contradiction (hereafter PNC)---of which premise (2) is clearly a formulation. However, even if (8) is an instance of the violation of PNC, the sophist is no more entitled on the basis these assumptions to target premise (5) for rejection than he is entitled to reject premise (1). For the conjuncts of his contradiction are based on premises---that Socrates knows something and that there is something he does not know----that are equally *endoxon*, or worthy of belief.

The fact that the very same set of premises could be used thus to 'prove' Socrates omniscient and an utter know-nothing would seem to suit the sophists' express purpose in discussion, which is to refute a man 'no matter how he answers' (275e4-6). In this context however, Euthydemus' immediate aim is to establish Socrates' omniscience.

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<sup>143</sup> For example, if proving by impossibility a substitution instance of the sequent  $AaC, BaC, \vdash AiB$  ('A belongs to every C, B belongs to every C, therefore A belongs to some B'), one assumes  $AeB$  ('A belongs to no B'), the contradictory of  $AiB$ ; combined with  $BaC$ , one deduces that  $AeC$  ('A belongs to no C'), an agreed falsehood and the contradictory of  $AaC$ , a presumed truth. The impossible result  $AeC$  contains the middle term C of the syllogism whose proof is sought. For the requirement that the impossibility so deduced in the argument  $\delta\iota\alpha\ \tau\omicron\ \acute{\alpha}\delta\upsilon\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\nu$  be believed in advance to be false, see APr B14 62b29-38. For Aristotle's general account of the strategy see especially APr A23, 41a21-37, A29, and B11-14.



Socrates' paraphrase of the sophist's inference---'if I know one thing, I know absolutely everything'---thus constitutes a request for confirmation of the crucial feature of the argument which, the sophist alleges, makes his inference go through, namely, the rejection of premise (5), as opposed to the equally *endoxon* (1). In that case, Socrates' query may be said to evince an awareness of the sophist's abuse of the argument *ad impossible*.

Of course Socrates' main dissatisfaction with the argument lies elsewhere, as his vain attempts to qualify premises (4) and (7) make clear. The lesson for the learner in dialectic Plato signals by these means seems equally obvious: Socrates' concessions amount only to the conjunction of the claims that he knows *something* (premise (1)) and that he does not know *something* (premise (5)). But this conjunction is not equivalent to the conjunction of the claims (4) and (7) that Socrates is both one who knows *simpliciter* and one who does not know *simpliciter* (premise (8)); hence while premise (8) does constitute an instance of the violation of PNC, (8) does not follow from the sophist's premises; hence his deduction is a false refutation. On this reading of the passage, Socrates' dialectical behaviour in the exchange is unexceptional, and is so regarded by Plato; the source of fallacy in the argument is entirely due to the sophist alone---in particular, to his commission of the fallacy of *secundum quid*.

A recently proposed alternative reading of the passage denies precisely this.<sup>144</sup> On this interpretation, Socrates, due to inexperience in dialectic, is caught off guard by the sophist in his acceptance of premise (2). On this interpretation of the passage, premise (2) is the principle of non-contradiction. However, it is an inadequate formulation of the principle; and as such it is, strictly speaking, false. According to this proposal, a proper

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<sup>144</sup> This is the position of M.M. McCabe, defended at the May 2009 West Coast Annual Plato Conference.

formulation of PNC must include what Aristotle is wont to describe as ‘all...such conditions that we add to counter the sophistical annoyances’ (or the ‘dialectical difficulties’: ὅσα ἄλλα τῶν τοιούτων προσδιορίζομεθα πρὸς τὰς σοφιστικὰς ἐνοχλήσεις, *De Int* 6, 17a36-37; cp. *Metap* 4 1005b20-22, ὅσα ἄλλα προσδιορισάμεθ’ ἀν, ἔστω προσδιωρισμένα πρὸς τὰς λογικὰς δυσχερείας). Thus on this reading, a proper formulation of PNC would require the rejection of premise (2) in favor of (2)\*:

(2)\* It is not possible for any existing thing which is in fact *this* (i.e. F) not to be precisely this (i.e., F) at the same time and in the same respects, and in relation to the same things (and all such things as we must add to counter the sophistical arguments).

The ‘moral’ Plato means to teach the reader on this interpretation is that Socrates is blindsided by his acceptance of the unadorned version of PNC in (2). The alleged evidence for this reading is that, at the only stage in the argument where premise (2) is invoked----namely, (9) and (10)---the sophist *does* attach the appropriate qualifiers to PNC. This is taken to show that if PNC had been properly qualified at the earlier stage in the argument, Socrates would have been in a position to deny that the conclusion reached by Euthydemus at (8) is a genuine contradiction. Thus on this reading both premise (2), as well as the more obviously objectionable (4) and (7), are identified as the source of the sophist’s fallacy.

I believe this second interpretation of our passage to be insupportable. However, it is important to see why this is so; for the issue has immediate implications for our understanding of Plato’s conception of the fallacy of *secundum quid*. In the first place,

the interpretation requires us to suppose that Plato means to point to the error in the argument both by means of Socrates' numerous explicit objections to obviously questionable premises, as well as by his supposed failure to raise an objection to a perfectly innocuous-seeming one. To the counter that Plato may have intended only the more advanced student to pick up on the latter failure of omission, the reply is clear: the objections that Socrates does raise render the qualification of PNC in (2) completely redundant. The problematic steps in the argument are committed well before the sophist's application of PNC at (9) and (10); and if Socrates does not object that the contradiction reached at (8) does not follow from his concessions, it is not because he is not in a *position* to object, given his acceptance of (2); it is because the objections which he has raised to (4) and (7), which establish that the sophist is not entitled to (8), have been willfully ignored.

More importantly, the reading deeply misunderstands Plato's (and Aristotle's) conception of the principle of non-contradiction. As Aristotle implies in his own remarks on the fallacy of *secundum quid*, there is nothing false about the 'unqualified' formulation of the principle of non-contradiction:

Those [arguments] which depend upon something being said strictly or in a particular respect, or place, or manner, or relation, and not without qualification, must be solved by examining the conclusion in relation to the contradictory (σκοποῦντι τὸ συμπέρασμα πρὸς τὴν ἀντίφασιν) to see if any of these things can possibly have happened [to it]. *For it is impossible for contraries and opposites and an affirmation and a denial to belong to the same thing without qualification*; there is, however, nothing to prevent each from belonging in a particular respect or relation or manner, or to prevent one of them from belonging in a particular respect and the other without qualification. So that if this one belongs without qualification and that one in a particular respect, there is as yet no refutation, but one must inspect this [feature] in the conclusion in relation to the contradictory. (SE 25 180a23-3; emphasis mine).

Or, as Aristotle puts the same point elsewhere,

For of 'white in a certain respect' the negation is 'not white in a certain respect', while of 'white absolutely' it is 'not white, absolutely'. If, then, a man treats the admission that a thing is 'white in a certain respect' as though it were said to be white absolutely, he does not effect a refutation, but merely appears to do so owing to ignorance of what refutation is. (SE 6, 168b11-16)<sup>145</sup>

In Aristotle's view, the unqualified formulation of PNC is true because 'x is F' and 'x is not-F' constitutes a pair of genuinely contradictory propositions. The verification of the principle  $\square(x)(F) \rightarrow [Fx \ \& \ \neg Fx]$  does not await the discovery, either by empirical or dialectical means, of every possible exception to its unqualified expression, because every such conceivable counterexample will only express the challenger's ignorance of the nature of genuine refutation, a grasp of which presupposes knowledge of the nature of a genuine contradiction.<sup>146</sup> That is precisely why Aristotle's occasional acquiescence in the qualification of the principle amounts in fact to a denial that the qualification of PNC is necessary: it is because every conceivable challenge to the principle is a tiresome (ἐνοχλήσεις, δυσχερείας) piece of sophistical nonsense.<sup>147</sup> Since Socrates is portrayed as accepting the unqualified formulation of PNC without hesitation ('do you suppose that it is possible for any existing thing that is *this*, not to be *this*? 'Heavens no, not I!', 293c1), we have every reason to suppose that Plato accepts the formulation of the principle at (2) as well, and on the same grounds as Aristotle.

<sup>145</sup> Translation Pickard-Cambridge (1928).

<sup>146</sup> Cp. SE 1 165a2-3: 'A refutation is a syllogism together with the contradictory of the conclusion' (ἐλεγχος δὲ συλλογισμός μετ' ἀντιφάσεως τοῦ συμπεράσματος). As I understand McCabe's claim, the point of the *Euthydemus* passage is precisely that the necessary qualifications of the unqualified version of PNC await 'empirical and conceptual discovery' by Socrates.

<sup>147</sup> Cp. *Int.* 6 17a33-7: 'Let a contradiction be this: an affirmation and a denial which are opposite (I speak of sentences as opposite when they affirm and deny the same thing of the same thing, not homonymously, together with all other such conditions that we add to counter the troublesome objections of sophists' (καὶ ἔστω ἀντίφασις τοῦτο, κατὰ φασιν καὶ ἀπόφασιν αἱ ἀντικείμεναι· λέγω δὲ ἀντικεῖσθαι τὴν τοῦ αὐτοῦ κατὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ, —μὴ ὁμωνύμως δέ, καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τῶν τοιούτων προσδιοριζόμεθα πρὸς τὰς σοφιστικὰς ἐνοχλήσεις).

It follows that Plato does not mean to indicate his dissatisfaction with the formulation of PNC at (2) by putting a ‘correct’ formulation of the principle into Euthydemus’ mouth at step (9). Yet if that is so, just what exactly *is* the sophist up to in claiming to have demonstrated that ‘Socrates is the very man he is and again he is not (the very man he is), with respect to the same things and at the same time’? In claiming (at step (8)) to have demonstrated that Socrates is both knowing and not-knowing, Euthydemus aims to persuade his audience that his performance has met a condition on genuine refutation: the interlocutor’s beliefs are opposed to one another. In claiming (at step (9)) to have demonstrated that this conflict concerns the same subject, with respect to the same things and at the same time, the sophist aims to persuade his auditors that this conflict constitutes a genuinely contradictory pair of propositions. The first claim involves the assertion that PNC has been violated; the second, that this violation is not merely apparent, and thus that the answerer has been genuinely refuted. In chapter 4.6 below I will suggest that the sophist’s remarks illustrate a dialectical practice which was regarded by Plato and his contemporary theorizers on sophisms as the fallacy of ‘ignorance of refutation’: it is partly constitutive of this fallacy that at a certain stage in a false refutation, the sophist claims that his refutation is not merely apparent by reeling off the clauses in the definition of refutation by which its true practitioner abides. Our immediate task however is to extract, from the objections Socrates raises to the OA, an account of Plato’s conception of the fallacy *secundum quid*.

### 4.3 Plato and Aristotle on the Solution of *Secundum Quid*

Any reader familiar with the *Sophistici Elenchi* is naturally led to suppose that the Omniscience Argument turns upon the fallacy of *secundum quid*. While this is in one sense clearly true, the question that confronts the interpreter of this passage is the extent to which we are justified in viewing Plato's treatment of the resolution of this fallacy through Aristotelian lenses. The answer to this question lies in our understanding of Socrates' role in the passage. For in the course of submitting to the argument in the role of answerer, Socrates is portrayed as raising certain objections to its construction (protestations which the sophist of course willfully ignores); and as Aristotle says, 'objections [to fallacies] just are their solutions (λύσεις)', (SE 9, 170b4-5).<sup>148</sup> Thus a theorist's account of the cause of a false refutation, and hence the nature of a fallacy, is revealed by the way he thinks it should be solved.

Aristotle for his part maintains that fallacies due to *secundum quid* are violations of syllogistic reasoning. According to this account of the fallacy, the proper objection to raise to the OA is that (8) does not follow from the argument's premises, given the procrustean fashion in which (8) represents the answers Socrates has given at (1) and (5). It is worth noting however that Socrates does not say this in our passage: while he does complain of Euthydemus' procrustean tendencies, he does this as the argument is in progress; and at the conclusion of the argument, he does not complain that the conclusion does not follow. It is more remarkable still that---as we shall shortly discover---on the

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<sup>148</sup> Aristotle refers here to objections which are solutions; but he also uses ἐνστάσις in a looser sense in the *Topics* (see in particular VIII. 10, 161a1-12, where four varieties of objection are distinguished, only one of which constitutes a λύσις). For a helpful discussion of these varieties, see Slomkowski (1997), 38-42. I use the word 'objection' in an even broader sense in Chapter 6.1, as indicating any sort of strategic response to a sophism on the part of the answerer, whether the response is explanatory or not.

numerous subsequent occasions in the dialogue when he is confronted with false refutations due to *secundum quid*, Socrates objects to their construction in precisely the same manner: he is never once made by Plato to object that the sophist's conclusion does not follow from his premises.<sup>149</sup> The question then arises, why, if Plato thinks the fallacy constitutes a violation of syllogistic reasoning, Socrates is never allowed to say so in so many words.

Of course as we have already had occasion to note, the exigencies imposed by Socrates' dialectical situation may be advanced to explain his silence on this score. In the OA, as elsewhere in the eristic episodes, Socrates is confronted, on the one hand, with an uncooperative opponent; and on the other, with an audience which is largely relatively inexperienced in the art of argumentation. Rebuked by the objection that he has failed to syllogize to his conclusion, Euthydemus will of course refuse to concede the point; while the auditors for their part may very well be impressed by his denial. Better then to follow Aristotle's advice to answerer's caught between a similar rock and a hard place: get in one's objections beforehand, as the argument is in progress, to dispel any illusion that one is oneself responsible for the conclusion that is ultimately drawn:

Again, whenever one foresees any of the questions, one should put in an objection beforehand and speak up in advance: for by doing so one would impede the questioner most effectually. (SE 17 176b26-28)

Aristotle's elaboration upon this advice in *SE* 17 is addressed to the answerer who is confronted by a false refutation that turns upon a homonymous term or an amphibolous sentence; but he is clear that it applies equally to any false refutation whose solution

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<sup>149</sup> Subsequent instances of *secundum quid* in the dialogue occur at 295b2-296d4 (the 'Always Omniscient Argument', discussed below); 297d4-298a9 (discussed in Chapter 5.2); 299a9-299c3 (analyzed in Chapter 5.5); and 299d1-e3 (discussed in Chapter 5.6).

requires the drawing of a distinction with respect to one of the questions that has been asked<sup>150</sup>:

...so then it is not being refuted, but seeming to be, that we have to beware of [i.e., in eristic contexts] because of course the asking of amphibolies and of questions that turn upon homonymy, and all the other deceptions of that kind conceal even a genuine refutation, and make it unclear who is refuted and who is not. For since it is allowed one at the end, when the conclusion is drawn, to say that [the questioner] does not deny what one has said [i.e., one's original thesis], but only [e.g.] homonymously, no matter how precisely [the questioner] may have addressed his argument to the very same point as oneself, it is not clear whether one has been refuted: for it is not clear whether at the moment one is speaking the truth. If, on the other hand, having drawn a distinction, one had asked [the questioner] about the homonymous term or the amphiboly, the refutation would not have been unclear. (175a40-175b8)

...since if a man does not distinguish the senses of an amphiboly, it is not clear whether he has been refuted or has not been refuted, and since in arguments making distinctions is granted, it is evident that to grant the question without drawing any distinction, but simply, is a mistake, so that, even if not the man himself, at any rate his argument looks as though it had been refuted. It often happens, however, that, although they see the amphiboly, people hesitate to draw distinctions, because of the dense crowd of persons who propose these kinds of objections, in order that they may not be thought to be obstructionists at every turn; then, though they would never have supposed that that was the point on which the argument turned, they often find themselves faced by a paradox. Since then the right of drawing the distinction is granted, one should not hesitate, as has been said before. (175b28-38)<sup>151</sup>

Viewed against the backdrop of Aristotle's reflections upon contemporary dialectical practice, the manner in which Socrates objects to the OA is revealed as standard dialectical procedure. When to this consideration we add the didactic nature of the dialogue, his behaviour in the encounter only grows in intelligibility: the initiate in the resolution of fallacy who is among Plato's readers is after all in the same position, epistemically speaking, as many of Socrates' auditors in Plato's drama. But then there is

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<sup>150</sup> As Aristotle notes in *SE* 18, there are basically two kinds of arguments to which people attach the description 'false syllogism' (ψευδὴς συλλογισμός), viz., those which argue syllogistically to a false conclusion, and those which are merely apparent syllogisms. The former are solved by 'demolition' (denying the truth of one of the premises, at least one of which must be false if the conclusion is false); the latter must be solved by 'drawing a distinction' concerning one of the questions that has been asked. *Secundum quid* of course falls into the latter category.

<sup>151</sup> Aristotle's prediction regarding the accusation of obstructionism comes true for Socrates in the AOA at 295a-d: Euthydemus, fed up with Socrates' insistence on restoring qualifications to his answers, accuses his interlocutor of being senile. As Socrates relates to Crito: 'I realized he was angry with me for making distinctions in his phrases, because he wanted to surround me with words and hunt me down.' [Transl. Sprague].



no reason to withhold the attribution to Plato of a grasp of *secundum quid* as a failure in syllogistic reasoning on the grounds that Socrates' tactical responses fall short of a full articulation of the fallacy's cause. For it would suit Plato's purposes as a teacher to leave the full articulation of the sophist's error as an exercise to the student.

Still, for the interpreter who would extract from the passage the Platonic conception of the nature of this fallacy, a worry remains. The objections which Socrates raises to the OA make it evident that the conjunction of his concessions---that he knows something and that he does not know something---are not contradicted by the contradiction reached at (8). Perhaps then it is Plato's belief that fallacies due to *secundum quid* may be solved by reposing solely upon the notion of a genuine contradiction? If that is so, then Socrates' responses to this mode of fallacy, here and elsewhere in the dialogue, may not be taken as evidence that Plato's conception of the sophism is theoretically informed by the notion of a syllogism.

This worry however is defused by the observation that fallacies due to *secundum quid* simply cannot be solved by reposing upon the notion of a genuine contradiction alone. This is because false refutations that turn upon *secundum quid* always conclude to a proposition that is the genuine contradictory of the answerer's thesis. That is, as it were, their entire point: the virtue of the strategy as an *apparent refutation* consists in the fact that the questioner invariably meets an obvious condition on genuine refutation, viz., that he concludes to the genuine contradictory of the answerer's thesis.

This feature of the sophism is perhaps obscured in the riot of the OA. However, the *syllogistic core* of the sophist's illicit move may be represented as follows:

(Thesis): It is impossible for Socrates to be both knowing and not-knowing.

(ii) Socrates knows *something*.

(iii) Socrates does not know *something*.

Therefore, Socrates is both knowing and not-knowing.

Here the ‘thesis’ against which the sophist argues is the substitution instance of PNC to which Socrates commits himself in the course of the argument. The sub-conclusion which the sophist reaches at (8) is the genuine contradictory of this thesis. Thus the fallacy cannot be resolved by complaining that the conclusion fails to contradict the thesis; rather, its solution must be theoretically informed by the concept of syllogistic inference.

This feature of the fallacy is confirmed by noting that Aristotle’s examples of *secundum quid* in the *Sophistici Elenchi* conform to this pattern: the interlocutor’s thesis consists of a denial that a particular pair of contraries can hold of a subject without qualification; the conclusion of the apparent refutation of this thesis is the contradictory of this denial (or a substitution instance of it). An example:

Thesis: It is impossible for something to be both white and not-white.

The Indian is white with respect to his teeth.

The Indian is black with respect to his skin.

Therefore, the Indian is both white and not-white.<sup>152</sup>

A variation of this pattern distributes the contraries between the thesis and the conclusion:

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<sup>152</sup> SE 5 167a8-10.

Thesis: Wealth is a good thing.

The fool uses wealth incorrectly.

Wealth used incorrectly is not a good thing for its user.

Therefore, wealth is not a good thing.<sup>153</sup>

Aristotle describes this type of fallacy as that which depends on ‘something being said without qualification or in a certain respect and not strictly’, and says that it occurs ‘when what is said in part is taken as having been said without qualification’ (Οἱ δὲ παρὰ τὸ ἀπλῶς τόδε ἢ πῇ λέγεσθαι καὶ μὴ κυρίως, ὅταν τὸ ἐν μέρει λεγόμενον ὡς ἀπλῶς εἰρημένον ληφθῇ, SE 5 166b37-167a1). When this happens, the conclusion does not follow in fact but only ‘in name’: ‘instead of proving the contradictory universally and in the same respect and relation and manner, the fallacy may be dependent on some limitation or on one or other of these (qualifications) (ἀντὶ τοῦ καθόλου τὴν ἀντίφασιν καὶ κατὰ ταῦτό καὶ πρὸς ταῦτό καὶ ὡσαύτως, παρὰ τό ἐπί τι, ἢ παρ’ ἑκάστον τούτων, SE 8 170a6-8). Aristotle recommends that this fallacy be resolved by ‘considering the conclusion in relation to its contradictory, to see whether this sort of thing [i.e., depending on a certain respect, etc.] has happened to it’:

Those [arguments] which depend upon something being said strictly or in a particular respect, or place, or manner, or relation, and not without qualification, must be solved by examining the conclusion in relation to the contradictory (σκοποῦντι τὸ συμπέρασμα πρὸς τὴν ἀντίφασιν) to see if any of these things can possibly have happened [to it] (εἰ ἐνδέχεται τούτων τι πεπονθέναι). For it is impossible for contraries and opposites and an affirmation and a denial to belong to the same thing without qualification; there is, however, nothing to prevent each from belonging in a particular respect or relation or manner, or to prevent one of them from belonging in a particular respect and the other without qualification. So that if this one belongs without qualification and that one in a particular respect, there is as yet no refutation, but one must inspect this [feature] in the conclusion in relation to the contradictory.’ (SE 25 180a23-31).

<sup>153</sup> SE 25 180b9-10. Aristotle’s account of his examples are terse in the extreme. The sophism above could also be interpreted along the lines of the first example as follows: Thesis: It is impossible for A to be both good and not good. (1) Wealth is good for the wise man who uses it aright. (2) Wealth is not good for the fool who does not use it aright. Therefore, it is possible for A to be both good and not good.

In this text Aristotle describes what may be called the ‘strategic’ as opposed to the ‘tactical’ solution to *secundum quid*; that is to say, he is providing advice to the answerer who has been forced to the conclusion of the false refutation, either because he did not foresee the sophist’s aim, or because the tactical or ‘pre-emptive’ solution employed by Socrates in the OA has proved unavailing in impeding the sophist’s progression to his conclusion.<sup>154</sup> By the instruction to ‘consider the conclusion in relation to its contradictory, to see whether this sort of thing [i.e., depending on a certain respect, etc.] has happened to it’ Aristotle does not mean that the fallacy is resolved by objecting that the stated conclusion is not the genuine contradictory of the answerer’s thesis. For if the sophist has been careful in dropping his qualifiers, his conclusion *will* be the contradictory of the answerer’s thesis. Rather, Aristotle’s advice to ‘see what has happened’ to the conclusion means: see why the conclusion that *would* follow if the argument were a syllogism is not the genuine contradictory. For Aristotle conceives of a genuine refutation as a ‘syllogism with the contradictory added’ (165a2-3; 168a35-37); and he conceives of *secundum quid* as a violation of syllogistic inference or reasoning: if the sophist insists that ‘the Indian is white and not-white’ is the genuine contradictory of the thesis above, it does not follow from the conceded premises; if, on the other hand, the conclusion does follow, it is only once the requisite qualifications are in place; but in that case, it is no longer the contradictory of the answerer’s thesis.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Cp. *SE* 17 176a36-37: ‘if one is debarred from these things [i.e., these defenses], one must pass on to [the claim that] the conclusion has not been well demonstrated, approaching it in terms of the aforementioned distinction [i.e., the different modes of false refutation which have been distinguished]’.

<sup>155</sup> Aristotle’s remarks apply to both the fallacy of *a dicto secundum quid ad dictum simpliciter* (which involves, as in the OA and the AOA the illicit dropping of qualifiers to conceded premises) and the fallacy of *a dicto simpliciter ad dictum secundum quid* (which involves the illicit addition of qualifiers). We shall encounter the latter version of the fallacy at *Euthydemus* 299a9-299c3. I discuss this text in Chapter 5.5 below.

Once this feature of the fallacy is brought into focus, it becomes evident that its solution necessarily presupposes a theoretical awareness of the notion of syllogistic inference. Any remaining doubts that Plato's conception of *secundum quid* is so informed may be dispelled by turning, once again, to the Visitor's description of the Socratic activity in the *Sophist*:

These people (i.e., those who 'seem to have an argument to give to themselves that lack of learning is always involuntary') cross-examine (διερωτῶσιν) someone concerning things about which he supposes he is saying something though he is saying nothing. Then, because [sc. these men] are wandering (πλανωμένων) [in their beliefs] they readily scrutinize their beliefs, and collecting them together during the discussions they place them side by side (συνάγοντες δὴ τοῖς λόγοις εἰς ταὐτὸν τιθέασι παρ' ἀλλήλας) and having placed (τιθέντες) them so they demonstrate (ἐπιδεικνύουσιν) that they are opposed to one another (ἐναντίας) at the same time (ἅμα) concerning the same things (περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν) in relation to the same things (πρὸς τὰ αὐτὰ) and in the same respects (κατὰ ταῦτα) (230b4-8).

As we noted in Chapter 3.7, the practitioner of genuine refutation who abides by the condition that his demonstration 'concerns the same things' (περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν) as the answerer's thesis avoids the fallacy of homonymy: both the predicate term and the subject term in his refutation will concern the same things---that is, signify the same objects---as the predicate and subject in the answerer's original thesis. It is evident that the practitioner of genuine refutation who abides by the further conditions concerning time (ἅμα), relation (πρὸς τὰ αὐτὰ), and respect (κατὰ ταῦτα) avoids the fallacy of *secundum quid*: his refutation will affirm or deny the answerer's thesis precisely as it was originally qualified, or simply, if the thesis predicated a term of a subject without qualification.

But do the Visitor's remaining remarks provide sufficient evidence of a theoretical awareness on Plato's part that a genuine refutation is a syllogism? Perhaps *prima facie*, the observation that the sophist of noble lineage merely 'collects' (συνάγοντες) the answerer's opinions and 'places them side by side' (τιθέασι παρ'

ἀλλήλας) seems less expressive of the notion of a *mediated* inference, and more evocative of the notion of consistency testing.<sup>156</sup> However, in the context of refutation, the ‘conflict’ in the opinions to which the Visitor alludes will naturally be taken to refer to the contradiction between the answerer’s original thesis and the conclusion of a refutation. Unless the ‘demonstration’ (ἐπιδεικνύουσιν) of this contradiction is conceptualized by Plato to comprise deductive inference in general---i.e., deduction through middle terms and other forms of syllogistic reasoning---there will exist a curious asymmetry in theoretical sophistication between the Visitor’s account of the two component parts of a refutation, viz., a *syllogism* on the one hand, and a *contradiction* on the other. A syllogism is merely the ‘placing’ of an interlocutor’s opinions side by side; he is refuted however when it is shown that the result of this activity issues in a genuine contradiction: that is, in a pair of propositions each of which predicate the same predicate of the same subject, at the same time, in relation to the same things, and in the same respect, where one member of the pair constitutes an affirmation of the predicate of the subject and the other constitutes a denial of the same.

There is however no reason to attribute such a broken-backed account of a refutation to Plato. For the Visitor’s reference to the ‘placement’ of the answerer’s opinions ‘*side by side*’ is plausibly taken to refer to that *particular, intentional* arrangement of the key premises of a refutation which make it evident why the conclusion follows of *necessity*.<sup>157</sup> That is to say, the Visitor refers to the construction of

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<sup>156</sup> A familiar charge against the Socratic elenchus. Cp. Vlastos (1983), 29: ‘What Socrates in fact does in any given elenchus is to convict p [the answerer’s thesis] of being a member of an inconsistent premise set; and to do this is not to show that p is false but only that either p is false or that some or all of the premises are false.’

<sup>157</sup> In a dialectical context, wherein the questioner’s goal is to convince the auditors and the answerer that the latter has been refuted, it will be especially important that the questioner’s refutation be a ‘complete deduction’ (τέλειον συλλογισμός) in this sense, or come as close to a complete deduction as possible

a *sylogism*: that final stage of a refutation wherein the ‘necessary premises’---i.e., those premises through which the deduction comes about---are placed ‘end to end’ in such a way that it is evident that the conclusion follows of necessity from the premises<sup>158</sup>:

Everything that makes men good is good.

Every virtue makes men good.

Therefore, every virtue is good.<sup>159</sup>

If boxing is healthy, then boxing is productive of health.

Boxing is not productive of health.

Therefore, boxing is not healthy.<sup>160</sup>

In the light of this evidence from the *Sophist*, no further doubts can remain: Plato’s grasp on the concept of a genuine refutation is as firm as Aristotle’s<sup>161</sup>:

A refutation is a syllogism together with the contradictory of the conclusion (ἐλέγχος δὲ συλλογισμός μετ’ ἀντιφάσεως τοῦ συμπεράσματος). (*SE* 1 165a2-3)

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given the premises the questioner has been able to obtain from the answerer. For Aristotle’s notion of a complete deduction, see *APr* A1 22b22-26.

<sup>158</sup> The ‘necessary premises’ so described are those exclusive of the supplementary assumptions which may have been asked for in order to obtain the premises through which the deduction comes about, as well as any non-essential assumptions the questioner may have obtained for the sake of clarification, tactical obfuscation, embellishment, etc. For Aristotle’s account of the distinction between the necessary and non-necessary premises of a refutation, and for his discussion of the process of the ‘arrangement’ (τάξις) of the premises in a refutation, see especially *Topics* VIII 1 *passim*.

<sup>159</sup> A toy example; but compare a similar inference at *Chrm.* 160e to establish the goodness of σωφροσύνη.

<sup>160</sup> This example of a hypothetical syllogism is taken from Slomkowski (1997), 165.

<sup>161</sup> It is worth noting that Shorey’s (1924) classic paper, while arguing that *Phaedo* 104-105 provides unmistakable evidence of Plato’s grasp of syllogistic reasoning through a middle term, does not once cite this text from the *Sophist* as providing supplementary evidence for his thesis. The passage receives no attention in Solmsen (1929), (1941), (1951), or Ross (1939), and only a fleeting reference in a footnote in Maier (1896-1900), Pt.2.2, 41. Cornford (1957) 177-182; Robinson, (1953) 12-13; Goldschmidt, V., (1947) 29-31; Grube, (1935) 241-2 seem to recognize in the passage the practice of the Socratic elenchus. Kerferd (1954) by contrast identifies the method the Visitor describes with the ἀντιλογική τέχνη ascribed by Diogenes Laertius to Protagoras, and with the eristic argumentation of sophists in general, including the sophists of the *Euthydemus*. He does not explain how this identification will deal with the obvious objection that the practitioner of the art in question cannot *demonstrate* the ignorance of an interlocutor, and thus truly purge his soul of ignorance, by means of a sophistical refutation, or by means of an ‘antilogical’ pair of arguments for a contradictory pair of propositions; nor does he explain the obvious lack of correspondence between the Visitor’s description and the latter form of discussion.

It follows that, while Socrates' tactical objections to *secundum quid* in the OA do not amount to a complete specification of the fallacy's cause, there are no grounds for saying that they are less than fully explanatory; for we have no reason to infer on this basis that Plato does not conceive of the fallacy as a violation of syllogistic reasoning.

Further evidence of this conception of *secundum quid* may be found in the objections which Socrates raises to the sophist's encore to the OA, the Always Omniscient Argument. As in the OA, we shall find that in AOA as well, the sophist's stated conclusions are in fact the genuine contradictory of the answerer's thesis. Unlike its predecessor however, the AOA does not seem to run exclusively upon the skids of *secundum quid*. Whether Plato is of the same opinion is, as we shall see, a rather difficult question to settle with any assurance.

#### 4.4 The Always Omniscient Argument

Having demonstrated that Socrates is already in possession of the knowledge that would make men happy, Euthydemus next offers to prove that Socrates has always possessed the knowledge over which he has needlessly exerted himself in the protreptic episodes. Not only is everyone omniscient; everyone is omnitemporally omniscient: everyone knows, will know, and has always known everything. As in the OA, the sophist ignores Socrates' attempts to impede his progress to this conclusion by qualifying his answers. Euthydemus argues as follows:

**Socrates' thesis:** Socrates does not always know everything.



1. Socrates knows something (ἐπιστήμων του) (295b2).
2. If Socrates knows something, then he knows it by some means or other. (Implied).
3. (Therefore), Socrates knows something by some means or other. (By 1,2).
4. That by means of which (ὧς) he is knowing (ἐπιστήμων), by this means and by no other Socrates also knows (τούτῳ καὶ ἐπίστασαι) (295b2-3).

**Socrates' qualification:** That 'by means of which' he is knowing is *the soul* (οἶμαι γὰρ σε τὴν ψυχὴν λέγειν, 295b4-5).

At this point the argument is interrupted by a rather extended disagreement (295b6-c11) between Socrates and Euthydemus over the latter's insistence that Socrates answer the sophist's questions in an unqualified manner, and without asking questions of his own that seek to determine the implications of the sophist's premises.<sup>162</sup> The argument begins again, if not from the beginning (ἐξ ἀρχῆς) as Socrates proposes (295e3), at least with premise (3) above.

3\*. Socrates knows what he knows by means of something (ἐπίστασά τι ἃ ἐπίστασαι, 295e4-5).

<sup>162</sup> Cp. 295c4-6: 'Well then, I said, if you ask a question with one thing in mind and I understand it with another and then answer in term of the latter, will you be satisfied if I answer nothing to the point?' (Τί οὖν, ἔφη, ἂν σὺ μὲν ἄλλῃ ἐρωτᾷς διανοούμενος, ἐγὼ δὲ ἄλλῃ ὑπολάβω, ἔπειτα πρὸς τοῦτο ἀποκρίνωμαι, ἔξαρκεῖ σοι εἰ μὴ πρὸς ἔπος ἀποκρίνωμαι;). Dorion (1995), 268 correctly points out that Socrates' complaint adroitly expresses the fact of a sophism's 'not being addressed to the thought', a fault that is discussed by Aristotle in *SE* 10. Dorion is equally correct however in cautioning those who would on the basis of this correspondence see in this text the endorsement by Plato of the thesis---hotly denied by Aristotle in the same chapter---that all arguments may be divided into those that are 'directed to the thought' (πρὸς τὴν διάνοιαν) and those that are 'directed to the word' (πρὸς τοῦνομα), where the latter are all fallacious arguments: 'Il y a en effet loin entre remarquer, au cours d'un échange dialectique, que le questionneur n'accorde pas aux mots la signification que leur reconnaît le répondant, et proposer une véritable théorie qui permette de classer tous les arguments en deux groupes. Ce passage de l'*Euthydème* apporte néanmoins de l'eau au moulin de ceux qui prétendent, comme Poste, Cherniss, et Tarán...que la distinction ὄνομα-διάνοια a été conçue dans les cercles de l'Académie'.

**Socrates' qualifications:** Socrates insists once again upon specifying that *by which* (ὅτῳ) he knows---viz., the soul---and not simply that he knows by means of 'something' (τῷ) (295e5). Euthydemus insists that Socrates drop this qualification, asking simply whether Socrates agrees that he knows by means of something. (296a1-2). However, Socrates outstrips the sophist's demand to answer precisely the question he was asked by choosing to parrot back an affirmation, not of this latter question, but of the sophist's original question, viz., whether he knows *what he knows* by means of something. (296a3-5: 'Please forgive me and I shall answer simply that I know what I know by means of something.') The refutation resumes as follows:

5. Either Socrates knows sometimes by this means and sometimes by another (ἔστι μὲν ὅτε τούτῳ, ἔστιν δὲ ὅτε ἑτέρῳ) or he knows by this same means always. (296a5-7).
6. If Socrates knows by means of something, then he knows by this same means always and not by another. (By 3\*,4).
7. (Therefore), Socrates knows by this same means always (τῷ αὐτῷ τούτῳ γ' αἰεί, 296a6). (By 5,6).

**Socrates' qualification:** Always, *when* he knows, it is by this means ('Αἰεί, ὅταν ἐπίστωμαι...τούτῳ, 296a7). Though Socrates does not here include the qualifier 'what he knows' in his answer, he will shortly insist upon its restoration. Socrates' apprehension that 'this "always" may trip us up' (296a9) is fulfilled by the sophist's inferring, solely on the basis of 7:

8. Socrates always knows by this means (ἢ αἰεί τούτῳ ἐπιστάσαι) (296b2-3).

This step is not even introduced by an inferential connective, suggesting that the sophist represents the move from 7 to 8 as one of immediate implication. Having thus forced Socrates to concede that he is 'always knowing', the sophist moves next to (re)establish his omniscience:

9. Either Socrates knows some things by this means by which he knows, and other things by some other means, or he knows by this same means everything. (τὰ μὲν τούτῳ ἐπιστάσαι ᾧ ἐπίσται, τὰ δ' ἄλλῳ, ἢ τούτῳ πάντα). (296b4-5).

10. If Socrates knows by means of something, then he knows by this means and not by another. (By 6).

11. (Therefore) Socrates knows by this same means everything (τούτω πάντα).

**Socrates' qualification:** He knows all things (ἅπαντα) by this means---those, at any rate, that he knows (Τούτω...ἅπαντα, ὃ γ' ἐπίσταμαι, 296b5-6).

After forcing Socrates to concede that if he knows all things (ἅπαντα), then he knows everything (πάντα) (296b7-296c7)---as the sophist had insisted above---he draws his desired conclusion. Socrates must agree that:

12. Socrates always knows and at the same time knows everything. (ἀεὶ γὰρ ὡμολόγηκας ἐπίστασθαι καὶ ἅμα πάντα, 296c9-10).

Though the adverb 'ἅμα' may be understood as qualifying the verb ὡμολόγηκας (Socrates has agreed that he always knows and has agreed at the same time that he knows everything), it is evident from the sophist's *coup de grace* that he understands it as modifying ἐπίστασθαι: Socrates did not acquire his omniscience piece-meal; he has always known, everything, at once: he knew everything even when he was a child, when he was being born, and when he was conceived; better still, he knew all things even before he himself and the heaven and earth came to be; and he always will know all things in the future---'if that's how Euthydemus wants it', (296d4).

Though Euthydemus does not avail himself of the argument *ad impossible* in the AOA---thus establishing in the premise set that contrary predicates hold of the same subject---it is nevertheless clear that the sophist employs the same type of paralogism. The argument is distinctive however in its multiple applications of *secundum quid*.

Socrates' original thesis is in fact conjunctive, and the sophist takes on each of its conjuncts in turn, 'refuting' both. The first conjunct is: Socrates does not always know. What Socrates concedes in the course of the argument is that, with respect to the things which he does know, and with respect to the means by which he knows these particular things, he knows them by this same means always. Euthydemus arrives at the contradictory of this thesis by dropping these various qualifications:

Thesis: Socrates does not always know.

(1) Socrates knows what he knows by the same means always.

(2) Therefore, Socrates always knows [what he knows] by this same means.

(C): Therefore, Socrates always knows [what he knows] [by this same means].

As in the OA, the sophist's stated conclusion is in fact the genuine contradictory of the answerer's thesis. This is equally true of the second half of the AOA, which takes aim at the second conjunct of Socrates' complex thesis:

Thesis: Socrates does not know everything.

(1) Socrates knows everything he knows by some means.

(2) Socrates knows everything [he knows] by some means.

(C): Therefore, Socrates knows everything [he knows] [by some means].

The Socratic 'anticipatory' solutions to both halves of this argument are of the same nature as those he offers to the OA. What is of greater interest is Socrates' reaction to the sophist's move from premise (7) to (8). By way of objecting to this inference, he says only that he is afraid 'lest this "always" shall trip us up somehow', (296a9). Though

the nature of the objection is not further specified, it seems different in kind from Socrates' usual attempts to insist on the restoration of qualifiers to his conceded premises; for if Socrates thinks the inference should be met with the restoration of a qualification, why does he not say so? The question then arises: does Plato conceive of the sophist's move from (7) to (8) as yet another application of the fallacy of *secundum quid*? Or does he invite the reader to detect the commission of a sophism of an entirely distinct type at this stage of the argument?

The contrast with Aristotle's diagnosis of an inference of the same sort is instructive. Aristotle would discern an additional, and distinct, violation of syllogistic reasoning in the sophist's conversion of premise (7) to premise (8), namely, the fallacy of 'Combination':

Socrates knows by this same means always (τῷ αὐτῷ τούτῳ γ' αἰ).

Socrates always knows by this means (ἡ αἰ τούτῳ ἐπιστᾶσαι).<sup>163</sup>

In Aristotle's view, the shift in position of the adverb 'αἰ' results in the creation of a completely distinct predicate; hence premise (8) is a statement completely distinct from premise (7). The problem is not one of ambiguity: premise (7) is not an amphibolous sentence with two distinct significations.<sup>164</sup> The problem is that the *linguistic item* that is the predicate in (7) is not the same *linguistic item* as the predicate in (8)---any more than

<sup>163</sup> Aristotle does not employ this particular case as an example of Combination in *SE*; but it is clearly similar to examples of the fallacy which he does employ; e.g., 'Is it correct to say now that you have been born?' (ἀρ' ἀληθὲς εἰπεῖν νῦν ὅτι σὺ γέγονας;). [Therefore it is correct to say you have been born now]. Therefore, you have been born now (γέγονας ἄρα νῦν)', *SE* 20 177b 20-21.

<sup>164</sup> Cp. *SE* 6, 168a23-8: 'Of the [apparent syllogisms and refutations] that depend on language [or: the formulation: ἐν τῇ λέξει], some are dependent on something double (τὸ διττόν), such as homonymy, amphiboly, and similarity of expression...whereas combination and division and accent [come about] because of the sentence not being the same or [because of] the word [being] what is different (τῷ μὴ τὸν αὐτὸν εἶναι τὸν λόγον ἢ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ διαφέρον)'. For a helpful discussion of the fallacies of Combination and Division in *SE*, see Hasper (2009).

the predicate ‘being a mountain (ὄρος)’ is the same as the predicate ‘being a boundary (ὄρος)’.<sup>165</sup> The violation of syllogistic reasoning therefore involves the assumption that two completely distinct statements are related by immediate implication when in fact they are not:

...[the paralogisms of] Composition and Division and Accent are due to the phrase (τὸν λόγον) not being the same, or the name (τὸ ὄνομα) being different. For this too is necessary, just as it is also required that the thing (τὸ πράγμα) be the same if there is going to be a refutation or if there will be a syllogism (εἰ μέλλει ἔλεγχος ἢ συλλογισμὸς ἔσεσθαι), for example, if [there is to be a refutation of a thesis concerning] mantel (λῶπιον), one must not construct a syllogism with respect to a cloak (ἱμάτιον), but about a mantel (λῶπιον). For while the former [conclusion] is also true, it has nevertheless not been derived by means of a syllogism (ἀληθὲς μὲν γὰρ κᾶκεινο, ἀλλ’ οὐ συλλελόγισται), rather there is still need of a question whether it signifies the same thing, in response to the one who seeks to know the reason why [there is a refutation]. (SE 6 168a26-33).

Given the indeterminacy of Socrates’ objection to the sophist’s conversion, it is unclear whether Plato views the move from (7) to (8) as a fallacy distinct in form from *secundum quid*. On the one hand, as we have already had occasion to observe, Plato does not supply Socrates with a distinct objection to every fallacy in the dialogue that is arguably of a distinct type. (The paralogism concerning parts and wholes at 276d7-277b2, for example, is passed over in complete silence in the course of Socrates’ diagnosis of the μανθάνειν fallacies at 277e3-278c1). Moreover, as I shall argue below, although it is Plato’s considered view that the ‘dog fallacy’ of 298d8-298e5---a sophism which Aristotle classifies as dependent on the fallacy of Accident---is indeed a fallacy of a distinctive type, which does not depend (as Ctesippus would have it) on the ambiguity of the expression ‘your father’, the textual clues by which Plato leads the reader to this position are highly indirect.<sup>166</sup> It is quite possible therefore that in our present text, Plato

<sup>165</sup> Cp. SE 20 177a38-177b4.

<sup>166</sup> See discussion below, Chapter 5, especially sections 5.3 and 5.8.

leaves it to the reader to work out for himself that Euthydemus' adverbial juggling constitutes a fallacy of a sort utterly distinct from the fallacy of *secundum quid*.

On the other hand, the sophist's inference is embedded in a consecutive series of examples of *secundum quid* which begin with the OA; hence it is not implausible to suppose that Plato does not regard the move from (7) to (8) as different in kind from its neighbors. In that case Plato may conceive of the pairs of propositions in (7) and (8) as not qualified with respect to the 'same time': a violation of a Platonic condition on genuine refutation which, as we have noted above, is specified by the Visitor at *Sophist* 230b7. Compare:

Thesis: Socrates is not always writing.

- (1) Socrates is writing letters by the same means always.
- (2) (Therefore) Socrates is always writing letters by these same means.
- (C) Socrates is always writing [letters] [by these same means].

If the criterion of the equivalence of (1) and (2) is conceived of as depending on whether writing is predicated of Socrates in relation to the same thing, in the same respect (or manner), and at the same time, it would be natural to suppose that the appropriate objection to raise to their alleged equivalence is that writing is not predicated of the subject with respect to the same time. Aristotle would see the sophist's inference from (1) to (2) above as inexplicable except by reference to the notion of a substitution of one predicate expression for another. If Plato is aware of this same rather subtle condition on syllogistic reasoning, he may do the same; on the other hand, he may classify the same

inference as a case of *secundum quid*. The text is unfortunately indeterminate on this score.

#### 4.5 Plato and Aristotle on the Fallacy of *Ignoratio Elenchi*

The foregoing analysis of the OA and the AOA demonstrates that the Platonic conception of the fallacy of *secundum quid* is indistinguishable from its Aristotelian counterpart in the *Sophistici Elenchi*. On the other hand, our analysis of the AOA has revealed that Plato may have assimilated certain instances of the Aristotelian fallacy of Combination to *secundum quid*. I conclude my discussion of this passage by arguing for the claim that it provides important evidence that both Plato and Aristotle recognize ‘ignorance of refutation’ as a *sui generis* mode of fallacy. To see why this is so, we must return to the Omniscience Argument to consider in more detail the implications of Euthydemus’ remark (293e8-d1), that ‘(Socrates) is the very man he is and again he is not (the very man he is), with respect to the same things and at the same time (ὁὕτως τυγχάνεις ὡν αὐτὸς οὗτος ὅς εἰ, καὶ αὖ πάλιν οὐκ εἰ, κατὰ ταῦτ’ ἅμα).’ As noted above, this text has been frequently taken by commentators to be merely a restatement of the sophist’s commitment (293b8-c1) to the principle of non-contradiction. I shall argue that the remark signifies rather the sophist’s claim to have provided a genuine refutation on the grounds that his argument has met his specified conditions on genuine refutation. On the basis of this observation, I shall then argue that the hypothesis that it was common to close a refutation in this fashion makes very good sense of Aristotle’s apparent references in *SE* to ‘ignorance of refutation’ as a distinctive *type* of fallacy due to just



such a specific practice (*SE* 5 167a21-29; 26 181a1-14). Finally, returning to the OA, I shall conclude that my analysis of Aristotle's account of ignorance of refutation justifies my claim that precisely the same mode of fallacy is on display in our passage from the *Euthydemus*. It follows that both Plato and Aristotle recognize 'ignorance of refutation' as a *sui generis* mode of false refutation that is distinct from the fallacy of *secundum quid*.

In claiming (at step (8) of the OA) to have demonstrated that Socrates is both knowing and not-knowing, Euthydemus aims to persuade his audience that his performance has met a condition on genuine refutation: the interlocutor's beliefs are opposed to one another. In claiming (at step (9)) to have demonstrated that this conflict concerns 'the same subject with respect to the same things and at the same time', the sophist aims to persuade his auditors that his argument has met a second requirement on genuine refutation, viz., that the conflict in the answerer's concessions constitutes a genuinely contradictory pair of propositions. The first claim involves the assertion that PNC has been violated; the second, that this violation is not merely apparent, and thus that the answerer has been genuinely refuted. These claims are perhaps easily confused, since the difference between PNC and the notion of genuine refutation is perhaps easily confused. Indeed, evidence of their confusion abounds in the literature on Aristotle's own definition of refutation at *SE* Chapter 5 167a23-27, which is frequently simply identified by commentators as PNC itself.<sup>167</sup> But they are obviously distinct. Moreover, to miss the

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<sup>167</sup> Cp. Kirwin (1993), 84 and 94; Evans (1975), 51. Dorion (1995), 89 cites Evans with approval with the following comment: 'Evans rappelle justement que les arguments dus à l'ignorance de la réfutation violent tous l'un ou l'autre des critères de validité énoncés par le principe de non-contradiction; or comme ce principe est le fondement de tout raisonnement, et donc de toute réfutation, il n'est pas étonnant que l'*ignoratio elenchi* soit étendue à tous les modes de réfutations apparentes.'

distinction is to miss the exquisite joke of Euthydemus' effrontery, as well as its thematic connections with the dialogue as a whole.

It will be recalled that in the Epilogue, the art of sophistry was deemed a 'partial partaker' of the art of dialectic. We discovered that this entailed that the sophist, as an ignorant pretender to the art of dialectic, can only hope to achieve the good or end for which dialectic is useful by imitating the forms or practices that are *internal* to dialectic in a manner that is peculiarly *external* to the art. To understand dialectic, and the art of refutation in particular, from the 'inside', we said, is to use or conduct its constitutive practices in a wise fashion. To imitate the art from the 'outside' is to partake of as many of the art's constitutive activities as one ignorantly supposes one needs to achieve its good; led by ignorance however, these activities will fail miserably to achieve that end. The content of Euthydemus' assertion at (9) is best understood as an example of the 'external' nature of this imitation: for in the very act of committing the fallacy of *secundum quid*, the sophist claims that his refutation is not merely apparent by literally *mouth*ing the clauses in the definition of refutation by which its true practitioner abides. Since the sophist's conduct of dialectic is not led by wisdom (on even the Socratic level, which is the only sort relevant here), the result of his dialectical activity is fallacy due to his ignorance (willful or otherwise) of the definition of genuine refutation.

If this is along the right lines, our passage constitutes a piece of intriguing evidence concerning an extent dialectical practice both within and (one may suppose) outside the Academy. For Euthydemus is portrayed in our text not merely as guying the *rôle* of the dialectician, but as imitating him in a highly *specific* fashion: at the conclusion of his refutation, he reels off clauses *in a recognized definition of refutation*, in an effort

to persuade both his interlocutor and any auditors present that the contradictory of the answerer's thesis has been reached in a way that brooks no objection. I suggest that this interpretation of the sophist's remarks is supported by Aristotle's discussion of 'ignorance of refutation' in the *SE*. In fact, Aristotle's puzzling reference to *ignoratio elenchi* as a distinct *mode* of fallacy is best understood if it is taken to refer to precisely the same dialectical practice that is dramatized at *Euthyd.* 293e8-d1.

The main puzzles that arise in connection with Aristotle's discussion of *ignoratio elenchi* may be classified under the following two headings. First, Aristotle clearly seems to regard 'ignorance of the definition of refutation' as a distinct type of fallacy. This is evident from his claim, argued for and illustrated at length in *SE* 4-6, that there are thirteen distinct modes of false refutations which are apparent syllogisms. Although *SE* chapter 6 consists of an extended proof that the other twelve modes of paralogisms of this type may be 'reduced' (ἀναλύσαι, 168a19-20) to ignorance of the definition of refutation, it is nevertheless indicated prior to this proof that ignorance of refutation is a distinct mode of fallacy. Compare for example *SE* 5 167a21-22:

Those [false refutations] that depend on its not being defined what a syllogism is or what a refutation is arise especially on account of an omission in the definition [of refutation]. (Οἱ δὲ παρὰ τὸ μὴ διωρίσθαι τί ἐστὶ συλλογισμὸς ἢ τί ἐλέγχος ἄλλως παρὰ τὴν ἔλλειψιν γίνονται τοῦ λόγου).

More strikingly still, it is argued in the reduction proof of *SE* 6 that 'the false refutation that depends on the definition of refutation' may *itself* be reduced to the fallacy of ignorance of refutation:

The most evident [cases] of all are those [false refutations] that were said above to depend on the definition of refutation; this is also why they were so called; for the appearance [of refutation] arises due to an ellipsis in the definition [of refutation], and if we divide [false refutations] in this way we must set 'the ellipsis in the definition' as common to them all. (Φανερώτατοι δὲ πάντων οἱ πρότερον λεχθέντες παρὰ τὸν τοῦ ἐλέγχου διορισμόν· διὸ καὶ προσηγορεύθησαν οὕτως· παρὰ γὰρ τοῦ λόγου τὴν ἔλλειψιν ἢ φαντασία γίνεται, καὶ

διαιρουμένοις οὕτως κοινὸν ἐπὶ πᾶσι τούτοις θετέον τὴν τοῦ λόγου ἔλλειψιν). (SE 6 168b17-21).

That Aristotle regards ‘ignorance of refutation’ as a *class* of false refutation receives further confirmation by the fact that it is subsequently assigned its own mode of resolution when Aristotle turns to the topic of resolution in the second half of the treatise. Thus chapter 26, cited in its entirety below, is devoted to the topic of the resolution of false refutations that depend on ignorance of the definition of refutation:

One must meet the [false refutations] that arise due to the definition of a refutation (Τοῖς δὲ παρὰ τὸν ὅρισμὸν γινομένοις τοῦ ἐλέγκου, 181a1), as it was sketched above, by examining the conclusion in relation to the contradictory (σκοποῦσι τὸ συμπέρασμα πρὸς τὴν ἀντίφασιν), [to see] how it shall be [concerned with] the same thing in the same respect and relation and manner and time (ὅπως ἔσται τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ πρὸς τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ ὡσαύτως καὶ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ χρόνῳ). And if it [i.e. this question] is asked in addition at the starting point (ἐὰν δ’ ἐν ἀρχῇ προσέρηται), you should not agree that it is impossible for the same thing to be both double and not double, but say that it is [possible], only not in such a way as was agreed to constitute a refutation. All the following arguments depend upon this sort of thing: ‘Does a man who knows with respect to each thing that it is each thing, know the subject? And the man who is ignorant in the same way? But one who knows that Coriscus is Coriscus might be ignorant of the fact that he is musical, so that he both knows and is ignorant of the same thing.’ ‘Is a thing four cubits long greater than a thing three cubits long? But a thing might grow from three to four cubits in length; now ‘that which is greater’ is greater than a less: accordingly the thing in question will be both greater and less than itself in the same respect. (181a1-14).

Aristotle clearly refers in line 181a1 to a *kind of argument*, distinct from the other twelve modes of false refutation. But if that is so, what kind of argument is this?

A second puzzle arises immediately out of Aristotle’s remarks, cited above, concerning the solution of false refutations due to *ignoratio elenchi*. This is that the resolution Aristotle recommends in *SE* 26 seems indistinguishable from the resolution recommended in *SE* 25 for *secundum quid*:

Those [arguments] which depend upon something being said strictly or in a particular respect, or place, or manner, or relation, and not without qualification, must be solved by examining the conclusion in relation to the contradictory (σκοποῦντι τὸ συμπέρασμα πρὸς τὴν ἀντίφασιν) to see if any of these things can possibly have happened [to it]. For it is impossible for contraries and opposites and an affirmation and a denial to belong to the same thing without qualification; there is, however, nothing to prevent each from belonging in a particular respect or relation or manner, or to prevent one of them from belonging in a particular respect and the other without

qualification. So that if this one belongs without qualification and that one in a particular respect, there is as yet no refutation, but one must inspect this [feature] in the conclusion in relation to the contradictory. (*SE* 25 180a23-31).

Yet it is a guiding principle of Aristotle's theory of the resolution of fallacy that 'the correction of arguments that depend upon the same point ought to be the same' (*SE* 24 179b11-12). In that case, if *ignoratio elenchi* and *secundum quid* are two *distinct* modes of false refutation, how can their mode of resolution be identical?<sup>168</sup> These puzzles cannot be solved by the suggestion that, since Aristotle argues for the reduction of the other twelve modes to ignorance of refutation, he cannot have supposed that an 'argument due to ignorance of refutation' is an argument of a specific kind, which exhibits a specific dialectical practice or device. For even if he supposed that it was consistent with that position to assign the fallacy a particular mode of resolution, there would be no reason why the resolution in question should be more similar to the solution to one type of fallacy than any other.

I suggest that two important clues to the solution of both of these puzzles are contained in the first two lines of *SE* 26. The first is Aristotle's remark that false refutations that depend on ignorance of refutation must be 'met...as it was sketched above' (ὑπεγράφη πρότερον, 181a2). The back-reference must be to *SE* 5 167a21-22 and *SE* 6 168b17-21 (cited above), since there are no relevant intervening references to

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<sup>168</sup> A similar difficulty concerning the distinction of *secundum quid* and ignorance of refutation could be developed with respect to the *causa apparentiae* of both fallacies. Cp. *SE* 7 169b9-12: 'With those [false refutations] which depend upon an ellipsis in the definition [of refutation], and with those which depend upon the difference between that which [is said] in a certain way and that which [is said] without qualification, the deception consists in the smallness of the difference [in these statements]; for we agree [to the premise] universally on the assumption that [the limitation] to the particular thing or respect or manner or time signifies nothing in addition [i.e., adds nothing to the significance of the conceded premise]'.

*ignoratio elenchi* in the text.<sup>169</sup> What we have been told in chapter 5 in particular is that false refutations that depend on (παρὰ, 167a21) syllogism or refutation not having been defined depend on (παρὰ, 167a22) an ellipsis (ἔλλειψιν) in the definition of refutation. The sense of this remark cannot be that the fallacy in question is due to two distinct possible causes; the sense is rather that the definition of refutation or syllogism is not defined, *because* of an ellipsis or omission in the definition. In that case, it is the ellipsis that is clearly invoked by Aristotle as the cause of the fallacy: the failure of genuine refutation or syllogism *turns upon* the omission in the definition of conditions on genuine refutation or syllogism. Our reading of the Omniscience Argument of the *Euthydemus* has anticipated how this specification of the cause of the fallacy in question must involve a peculiar, specifiable dialectical practice: somewhere in the argument that turns upon ignorance of refutation---either in the thesis, the premise set, or the conclusion---the sophist will enumerate a select number of conditions on genuine refutation, while omitting to mention another.

This interpretation of the *Euthydemus* passage is confirmed by our second clue: for Aristotle's reference at *SE* 26 181a5 to 'an additional question' that may or may not be asked 'at the starting point' must refer to such a partial enumeration on the conditions on genuine refutation:

(A) One must meet the [false refutations] that arise due to the definition of a refutation (Τοῖς δὲ παρὰ τὸν ὀρισμὸν γινομένοις τοῦ ἐλέγκου, 181a1), as it was sketched above, by examining the conclusion in relation to the contradictory (σκοποῦσι τὸ συμπέρασμα πρὸς τὴν ἀντίφασιν), [to see] how it shall be [concerned with] the same thing in the same respect and relation and manner and time (ὅπως ἔσται τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ πρὸς τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ ὡσαύτως καὶ ἐν

<sup>169</sup> The brief discussion of the cause of the appearance of *ignoratio elenchi* in *SE* 7 (cited in the previous note) is not relevant here. The fallacy drops out of the catalogue of apparent syllogisms of *SE* 8; perhaps because Aristotle is focused there on matching up apparent syllogisms with the elements involved in genuine ones. There cannot be such a one-to-one correspondence between *the* cause of ignorance of refutation and *the* corresponding condition on a genuine refutation, since, as we shall see, the sophism may depend on any one of a variety of omissions in the definition of genuine refutation.

τῷ αὐτῷ χρόνῳ). (B) And if it [i.e. this question] is asked in addition at the starting point (ἐὰν δ' ἐν ἀρχῇ προσέρηται), you should not agree that it is impossible for the same thing to be both double and not double, but say that it is [possible], only not in such a way as is agreed to constitute a refutation (μὴ μέντοι ὥδ' ὡς ποτ' ἦν τὸ ἐλέγχεσθαι διωμολογημένον).<sup>170</sup>

This follows from the fact that, in the terminology of Aristotelian dialectic, the phrase 'ἐν ἀρχῇ' always refers to the questioner's thesis---that is, the conclusion at which the questioner aims. (For example, to beg the question in the context of a dialectical encounter is to assume or ask for that which is ἐν ἀρχῇ: *SE* 5 167a36-39; *SE* 8 170a8-9).<sup>171</sup> In that case however the 'agreement' between answerer and questioner alluded to in (B) above also bears upon the content of the answerer's original thesis; for this latter is of course supposed to be the contradictory of the questioner's thesis. Now in Aristotle's example, the content of the answerer's thesis involves the denial of the possibility of the co-instantiation of the contraries, double and not double. Yet if that is so, the thing that is 'asked in addition', since it is asked at the starting point, is also said to make its way into the content of the answerer's thesis. The only further content to the answerer's thesis to which Aristotle can here plausibly be taken to refer are the conditions on refutation alluded to in (A).

This result in turn clarifies the sense in which the fallacy that 'depends upon ignorance of refutation' turns upon a specific omission in the definition of refutation. Given the highly elliptical nature of line (B), it is possible to interpret the solution recommended therein in two ways. On either interpretation however, the resolution which Aristotle recommends pinpoints the manner in which a partial enumeration of the full conditions on genuine refutation in the answerer's original thesis may constitute *the* omission upon which an instance of *ignoratio elenchi* turns.

<sup>170</sup> I take it that the imperfect ἦν in the last line does not have temporal significance; the objection Aristotle recommends in (B) therefore need not be articulated only once the conclusion has been drawn.

<sup>171</sup> Cp. also e.g. *Topics* VIII 13 162b31-33; *Apr* 16 64b28 and *passim*.

Thus on Reading 1, we may suppose that the answerer is asked whether he accepts a certain thesis ‘with additions’: for example, he is asked whether he thinks it is possible or impossible for the same thing to be double and not double *at the same time* and *in the same respect*. The answerer is expected to select the negative, more ἐνδοξον, thesis as his starting point. Since however the sophist has omitted from his additions to this thesis the condition on sameness of relation, Aristotle’s advice to the answerer confronted with such case is to deny that it is impossible for the same thing to be double and not double at the same time and in the same respect. He should agree rather that it is possible for the same thing to be double and not double at the same time and in the same respect, only not in such a way as would constitute a refutation of this thesis; for it is possible for the same thing to be double and not double at the same time and in the same respect, but in relation to different things. Thus on Reading 1, the answerer is advised to defuse the argument that depends on ignorance of refutation at the starting point itself, to avoid entrapment in a fallacy of the following type:

(IE1) Thesis: It is not possible for the same thing to be double and not double in the same respect at the same time.

(1) x is double of y in length at t1.

(2) x is not double of z in length at t1.

Therefore, it is possible for the same thing to be double of y and not double of z in the same respect at the same time.<sup>172</sup>

On Reading 2, the answerer is confronted with a sophism of the same general type as IE1. However, (B) is taken to refer to two distinct stages of the fallacy, as opposed to

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<sup>172</sup> For the example, see *SE* 5 167a29-30.



the starting point alone. On this reading, the answerer has been forced to a conclusion as in IE1. Aristotle's advice is to deny that one has been refuted: if at the starting point, the answerer has selected a thesis as in IE1, then if he is subsequently confronted with a conclusion as above, he should 'not admit that it is impossible' that the same thing is double and not double in the same respect and at the same time, but concede that it is possible, only 'not in such a way as constitutes a refutation' of his original thesis. Although both readings are possible, Reading 2 perhaps makes better sense of the explicit reference in (A) to the conclusion of the argument: the false refutation that depends upon ignorance of refutation should be met by retrospectively comparing the original thesis with the conclusion once the latter has been reached. On the other hand, both solutions---the 'tactical', or pre-emptive, solution of Reading 1 and the 'strategic' solution of Reading 2---seem entirely acceptable by Aristotelian standards.

Moreover, on either scenario, it is evident why the false refutation in question depends on an ellipsis in the definition of refutation. At the starting point of the dialectical encounter, the answerer is asked whether it is impossible for a particular predicate to both belong and not belong to a subject when these predications are specified to hold in *n* number of ways. The answerer's acceptance of this thesis is taken by both parties as a specification of the conditions on genuine refutation.<sup>173</sup> In the simplest version of the fallacy, we would expect that the sophist will always ask for at least one such condition, namely, whether these opposite predications can hold *of the same subject*. Yet however many conditions he does specify, the conclusion of the argument will

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<sup>173</sup> This agreement between the questioner and answerer on a definition of refutation could be signaled implicitly or explicitly, of course. Implicitly, if the questioner simply asks his interlocutor for the thesis so qualified; explicitly if he adds language to the effect that both parties agree that these *are* conditions on genuine refutation.

contain  $n + 1$  conditions on refutation, where the new condition that surfaces in the conclusion is precisely that qualification which the sophist exploits to obtain his false refutation of the original thesis.

I submit that this analysis makes good sense too of the remaining two examples of the fallacy in our passage:

All the following arguments depend upon this sort of thing: 'Does a man who knows with respect to each thing that it is each thing, know the subject? And the man who is ignorant in the same way? But one who knows that Coriscus is Coriscus might be ignorant of the fact that he is musical, so that he both knows and is ignorant of the same thing.' 'Is a thing four cubits long greater than a thing three cubits long? But a thing might grow from three to four cubits in length; now 'that which is greater' is greater than a less: accordingly the thing in question will be both greater and less than itself in the same respect (εἰσὶ δὲ πάντες οἶδ' οἱ λόγοι παρὰ τὸ τοιοῦτο. "ἄρ' ὁ εἰδὼς ἕκαστον ὅτι ἕκαστον οἶδε τὸ πρᾶγμα; καὶ ὁ ἀγνοῶν ὡσαύτως; εἰδὼς δὲ τις τὸν Κορίσκον ὅτι Κορίσκος ἀγνοοίη ἂν ὅτι μουσικός, ὥστε ταῦτ' ἐπίσταται καὶ ἀγνοεῖ." "ἄρα τὸ τετράπηχυ τοῦ τριπήχεος μείζον; γένοιτο δ' ἂν ἐκ τριπήχεος τετράπηχυ κατὰ τὸ μῆκος· τὸ δὲ μείζον ἐλάττονος μείζον· αὐτὸ ἄρα αὐτοῦ κατὰ ταῦτ' οὐ μείζον καὶ ἐλάττον." (SE 26 181a8-14).

Aristotle's examples may be filled out along the following lines:

(IE2) Thesis: It is not possible that x knows and is ignorant of the same thing.

- (1) If x knows of each thing that it is each, then x knows the subject (τὸ πρᾶγμα), and if x is ignorant of each thing that it is each, then x does not know the subject.
- (2) It is possible that x knows of Coriscus that he is Coriscus but that x is ignorant that he is musical.
- (3) Therefore, it is possible that x knows of the same thing that it is Coriscus and is ignorant that it is musical.

(IE3) Thesis: It is not possible that A is both greater and less than itself in the same respect.

- (1) For all x, y, if x is 4 cubits and y is 3 cubits, x is greater than y.
- (2) It is possible that A is 3 cubits at t1 and A is 4 cubits at t2.
- (3) Therefore, it is possible that A is greater than itself at t2. (By 1, 2)

(4) For all  $w, z$ , if  $z$  is greater than  $w$ , then  $w$  is less than  $z$ .

(5) Therefore, it is possible  $A$  is less than itself at  $t_2$ . (By 3,4)

Therefore, it is possible that  $x$  is both greater and less than itself at  $t_2$  in the same respect.<sup>174</sup>

In the thesis of IE2, the sophist specifies the minimal condition on genuine refutation that his conclusion shall concern the same subject as the subject of predication in the answerer's thesis. The false refutation then turns upon the omission of the condition that the predicates hold in the same respect: to know a subject *simpliciter* is not to know the same subject with respect to its being musical; nor is knowing a subject in one respect inconsistent with failing to know it in another.<sup>175</sup> IE3 turns upon the omission in the thesis of the condition that the predications in question hold at the same time. Both fallacies are resolved on Reading 1 by the answerer's anticipatory objection that it is possible for the opposite predicates to hold under the specified conditions  $n$  when they fail to hold under conditions  $n + 1$ . On Reading 2, both fallacies are resolved in much the same way by the answerer's objection that the conclusion is harmless to his original thesis.

<sup>174</sup> Given the complexity of the thesis and conclusion, and the number of premises Aristotle utilizes, I construe this fallacy as a pair of two-premise syllogisms, as above.

<sup>175</sup> Alternatively, it is possible (just) to construe Aristotle's phrase  $\acute{\alpha}\ \epsilon\iota\delta\omega\varsigma\ \acute{\epsilon}\kappa\alpha\sigma\tau\omicron\nu\ \acute{\omicron}\tau\iota\ \acute{\epsilon}\kappa\alpha\sigma\tau\omicron\nu$  as a highly elliptical expression of the phrase 'The man knowing of each thing that it is each thing (it is)'. On this interpretation, the sophist introduces in this premise the dodgy (but as stated, apparently *endoxon*) assumption that to know something is to know absolutely everything there is to know about it. While this assumption is a sophistical favorite (see *Tht.* 188a-c and *Meno* 80e), I do not think it makes much sense of the structure of the rest of the argument. Even if the premise were taken as introducing a necessary condition on knowledge, it would seem to undermine the acceptability of another premise the sophist asks for, viz., that  $x$  knows of Coriscus that he is Coriscus: on the alternative reading, the sophist should be interested in demonstrating that  $x$  does not know even this fact if he does not know that Coriscus is musical. Thus I have interpreted the sophism upon the much simpler lines above. The same considerations rule out that the fallacy bears any similarity to Aristotle's famous 'masked man' sophism of *SE* 24 179b. For another thing, Aristotle of course classifies that argument as a case of Accident; this one he classifies as an instance of the *sui generis* fallacy of ignorance of refutation.

If this interpretation of our passage is along the right lines, we are in a position to state the solution to our puzzle regarding the nature of the fallacy. The mark of the false refutation that depends upon ‘ignorance of the definition of refutation’ is the performance of a dialectical shell game, wherein a condition on genuine refutation that is occluded from the answerer’s thesis reappears in the premise set and the conclusion, resulting in an argument that produces an irrelevant conclusion that does not contradict the answerer’s conceded starting point.<sup>176</sup>

This solution to our first puzzle immediately suggests an attractive solution to our second. The latter concerned the apparent identity of the solutions recommended for the fallacies of *secundum quid* and *ignoratio elenchi* in *SE* 25 and 26 respectively. We are now in a position to observe that this apparent identity is false. This is because the argument that depends upon *secundum quid* will, as we have seen, treat its conclusion in procrustean fashion, dropping (or adding) qualifiers in the attempt to create the appearance that the conclusion deduced is the genuine contradictory of the answerer’s thesis. Thus the very same argument designated IE1 above may be run as an argument

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<sup>176</sup> This analysis raises the question whether false refutations such as IE1-3 are also *apparent* syllogisms, as the taxonomy of *SE* requires (*SE* 6 168a17-18; *SE* 8 169b18-20). Two responses are possible. First, Aristotle may simply regard such arguments as syllogisms which happen to be false refutations. This would explain his otherwise puzzling compulsion in *SE* 6 168a17-18 and *SE* 8 169b18-20 (and elsewhere) to speak conjunctively of ‘apparent syllogisms and apparent refutations’ as a class of false refutations that do not include those false refutations, such as Bryson’s and Antiphon’s squaring of the circle, which *are* syllogisms (and which do *not* syllogize to irrelevant conclusions). Alternatively, we may construe Aristotle’s dictum that a refutation is a syllogism ‘with the contradictory added’ (*SE* 1 165a2-3) in a strong sense, as indicating that the syllogistic deduction of an irrelevant conclusion is a cause of a failure to be the *kind* of syllogism that a refutation *is*: in a refutation, the conclusion of the argument is known by both the questioner and answerer before the former ever constructs his proof; this conclusion is therefore a given constituent of the syllogism at which the questioner must aim. Failure to syllogize to this given constituent may reasonably be regarded by Aristotle therefore as the production of an *apparent syllogism*, despite the fact that such an argument may satisfy every condition on syllogistic inference. For these latter conditions, cp. *SE* 1 164b27-165a2: ‘A syllogism is from certain things which have been assumed, such that they necessarily involve the assertion of something else than what has been assumed, through what has been assumed’ (ὁ μὲν γὰρ συλλογισμός ἐκ τινῶν ἐστὶ τεθέντων ὥστε λέγειν ἕτερον ἐξ ἀνάγκης τι κειμένων διὰ τῶν κειμένων).

that depends on *secundum quid* if the stated conclusion is only rewritten to reflect such a stratagem:

(SQ1) Thesis: It is not possible for the same thing to be double and not double in the same respect at the same time.

(1) x is double of y in length at t1.

(2) x is not double of z in length at t1.

Therefore, it is possible for the same thing to be double [of y] and not double [of z] in the same respect at the same time.

IE3 may be similarly transformed, thus:

(SQ3) Thesis: It is not possible that A is both greater and less than itself in the same respect.

(1) For all x, y, if x is 4 cubits and y is 3 cubits, x is greater than y.

(2) It is possible that A is 3 cubits at t1 and A is 4 cubits at t2.

(3) Therefore, it is possible that A is greater than itself at t2. (By 1, 2)

(4) For all w, z, if z is greater than w, then w is less than z.

(5) Therefore, it is possible A is less than itself at t1. (By 3,4)

Therefore, it is possible that x is both greater than itself [at t2] and less than itself [at t1] in the same respect.

What Aristotle claims in *SE* 25 is that the starting point in resolving SQ1 and SQ3 and their like is to ‘examine the conclusion in relation to the contradictory, [to see] whether it is possible that any of these things’---i.e., being said strictly vs. in a certain respect, place, manner or relation, and not *simpliciter*---‘has happened [to it]’ (180a24-26). As we have noted above, the point of this remark is to instruct the answerer to look for a *transformation* that has occurred in the conclusion: that is, he is to examine why the conclusion that *would* follow if the argument were syllogistically reasoned is not the true

contradictory of his original thesis. It follows that the fallacy of *secundum quid* cannot, by Aristotle's lights, be solved by simply comparing the conclusion and the answerer's thesis and objecting that they are not the same. What Aristotle claims in *SE* 26 by contrast is that the fallacy that depends on ignorance of refutation is precisely to be met by 'examining the conclusion in relation to the contradictory, [to see] how it shall be [concerned with] the same thing in the same respect and relation and manner and time', (181a2-5).<sup>177</sup> The point of this instruction is that, unlike arguments such as SQ1 and SQ3, arguments IE1-IE3 and their like do *not* conclude to the genuine contradictory of the answerer's original thesis.

It follows that, despite initial appearances, Aristotle denies the identity of the resolution of false refutations due to *secundum quid* and *ignoratio elenchi*. This result in turn vindicates Aristotle's commitment to a key claim in his theory of the resolution of fallacy: false refutations fall into distinct classes just in case their modes of resolution are distinct. (*SE* 24 179b11-12).

At the same time, the foregoing analysis removes a perennial obstacle to understanding the famous claim of the reduction proof of *SE* 6.<sup>178</sup> As I have indicated above, this is the claim that, of the thirteen modes of false refutations that are apparent syllogisms which Aristotle recognizes in his taxonomy of fallacy, all thirteen---including 'ignorance of refutation'---may be reduced to the mode of 'ignorance of refutation'. In

<sup>177</sup> Thus the force of ὅπως with the future indicative ἔσται (even without the occurrence of the verb σκοπέω in the phrase σκοποῦσι τὸ συμπέρασμα πρὸς τὴν ἀντίφασιν in the preceding line) is: σκοπεῖτε (see to it) that the conclusion and the contradictory shall be concerned with the same thing in the same respect', etc.

<sup>178</sup> I note in passing that our analysis also renders perfectly unproblematic Aristotle's classification (*SE* 4 166b24) of 'ignorance of refutation' as a fallacy 'outside of language' (ἔξω τῆς λέξεως)---under which heading he locates *secundum quid*---as opposed to 'dependent on language' (παρὰ τὴν λέξιν)---under which heading he classifies false refutations such as homonymy and amphiboly, which depend on a 'double meaning' in a linguistic component. The latter distinction and Aristotle's interest in it however lies outside the scope of this study.

the absence of any definite conception of the thirteenth mode of false refutation, commentators have been driven to the assumption that this claim amounts to no more than the assertion that ‘ignorance of refutation’ is a mere covering description of the other twelve modes of apparent syllogism in Aristotle’s system. The difficulty with this assumption is that it is not evident why Aristotle would be disposed to describe a mere covering description of twelve completely heterogeneous modes of fallacy as a mode of fallacy in its own right. We are now in a position to see that a mode of false refutation known as ‘ignorance of refutation’ did exist which was regarded by Aristotle and his contemporaries as a fallacy in its own right. We are however also in a position to see that Aristotle’s reduction proof does not commit him to the claim that his other twelve modes of apparent syllogism are of the same *form* as this recognized mode of fallacy. Rather, Aristotle’s reduction proof amounts to the claim that all false refutations that are apparent syllogisms may be reconceptualized as exploiting the *distinctive* mark of the ‘original’ fallacy of ‘ignorance of refutation’. This distinctive mark, as we have seen, is the performance of a dialectical shell game that is brought off by an ellipsis in a recognized set of conditions on genuine refutation. As Aristotle claims, it is the exploitation of an ellipsis in the definition of refutation---and not the fact, e.g., that the original fallacy syllogized to an irrelevant conclusion---that is ‘common’ to all thirteen modes<sup>179</sup>:

The most evident [cases] of all are those [false refutations] that were said above to depend on the definition of refutation; this is also why they were so called; for the appearance [of refutation] arises due to an ellipsis in the definition [of refutation], and if we divide [false refutations] in this way we must set ‘the ellipsis in the definition’ as common to them all. (Φανερώτατοι δὲ πάντων οἱ πρότερον λεχθέντες παρὰ τὸν τοῦ ἐλέγχου διορισμόν· διὸ καὶ προσηγορεύθησαν οὕτως· παρὰ γὰρ τοῦ λόγου ἦν ἔλλειψιν ἢ φαντασία γίνεται, καὶ

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<sup>179</sup> Since of course the fact that a fallacy does or does not syllogize to the genuine contradictory of the answerer’s thesis cannot be used to determine Aristotle’s taxonomy of apparent syllogisms. Both the fallacy of accident and *secundum quid* for example will always conclude to the genuine contradictory (if the sophist is doing his job); fallacies due to homonymy sometimes do and sometimes do not conclude to the contradictory; ‘ignorance of refutation’, as I have argued, never does.

διαιρουμένοις οὕτως κοινὸν ἐπὶ πᾶσι τούτοις θετέον τὴν τοῦ λόγου ἔλλειψιν). (SE 6 168b17-21).

Our analysis squares too with an interesting result that has emerged from our discussion. This is that Aristotle's reportage regarding the 'original' fallacy of 'ignorance of refutation' clearly presupposes a pre-Aristotelian account of genuine refutation which Aristotle has inherited from his predecessors. This recognized set of conditions on genuine refutation however would presumably have been rather fluid: certain conditions would have been discovered sooner than others; other we would expect to have been the subject of controversy among Aristotle's contemporary theorists on fallacy. Aristotle's thirteen modes of apparent syllogism by contrast evidently constitute both an expansion upon and a regimentation of this earlier set of conditions on genuine refutation. (An expansion, since it is at least arguable that certain of Aristotle's thirteen modes are discoveries of his own---for example, the fallacy of form of expression, a kind of category mistake, may be one such case; and a regimentation, since Aristotle gives the distinct impression that it is his view that there are *exactly* thirteen modes of false refutation which are apparent syllogisms).<sup>180</sup> For this reason too then, it is no objection to our analysis that it entails Aristotle's commitment to the claim that the thirteen modes of the taxonomy of SE 4-5 can be strictly assimilated to the original fallacy of 'ignorance of refutation'; for the 'definition of refutation' which any sophist wielding the fallacy offered to an answerer would not have been a fixed affair; and any such set of conditions would have only partially overlapped with Aristotle's own definitions of refutation, syllogism ('deduction'), and contradiction:

<sup>180</sup> Cp. SE 4 165b27-30 for the claim that the number of false refutation that are 'dependent on language' (παρὰ τὴν λέξιν) are precisely six in number; that the number of false refutations 'outside of language' (ἔξω τῆς λέξεως) are seven in number is claimed at 4 166b21-22. See also 8 169b18-20, 170a10-11.



A refutation is a syllogism together with the contradictory of the conclusion (ἐλεγχος δὲ συλλογισμός μετ' ἀντιφάσεως τοῦ συμπεράσματος). (*SE* 1 165a2-3)

Let a contradiction be this: an affirmation and a denial which are opposite (I speak of sentences as opposite when they affirm and deny the same thing of the same thing, not homonymously, together with all other such conditions that we add to counter the troublesome objections of sophists (καὶ ἔστω ἀντίφασις τοῦτο, κατάφασις καὶ ἀπόφασις αἱ ἀντικείμεναι· λέγω δὲ ἀντικεῖσθαι τὴν τοῦ αὐτοῦ κατὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ, –μὴ ὁμωνύμως δέ, καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τῶν τοιούτων προσδιορίζομεθα πρὸς τὰς σοφιστικὰς ἐνοχλήσεις.' (*Int.* 6 17a33-7)

A syllogism (deduction) is from certain things which have been assumed, such that they necessarily involve the assertion of something else than what has been assumed, through what has been assumed (ὁ μὲν γὰρ συλλογισμός ἐκ τινῶν ἐστι τεθέντων ὥστε λέγειν ἕτερον ἐξ ἀνάγκης τι κειμένων διὰ τῶν κειμένων). (*SE* 1 164b27-165a2)<sup>181</sup>

A refutation is a [deduction of] the contradictory [a deduction of the contradictory] of one and the same item [maintained by the answerer], not merely of the name but of the object, and of a name which is not synonymous but the same name [where the contradiction follows] necessarily from the premises granted, without including in the premises the original point to be proved [where the contradiction follows] in the same respect and relative to the same thing and in the same manner and at the same time [as in the original thesis]. (ἐλεγχος μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶν ἀντίφασις τοῦ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐνός, μὴ ὀνόματος ἀλλὰ πράγματος, καὶ ὀνόματος μὴ συνωνύμου ἀλλὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ, ἐκ τῶν δοθέντων ἐξ ἀνάγκης (μὴ συναριθμουμένου τοῦ ἐν ἀρχῇ) κατὰ ταῦτ' καὶ πρὸς ταῦτ' καὶ ὡσαύτως καὶ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ χρόνῳ. (*SE* 5 167a23-25).

Finally, I claim that it is a virtue of my analysis of ignorance of refutation in the *SE* that it reveals the true import of the sophist's remarks at 293e8-d1 in the *Euthydemus*. In claiming to have demonstrated that '(Socrates) is the very man he is and again he is not (the very man he is), with respect to the same things and at the same time (οὕτως τυγχάνεις ὢν αὐτὸς οὗτος ὅς εἰ, καὶ αὖ πάλιν οὐκ εἰ, κατὰ ταῦτ' ἅμα), Euthydemus is not schooling Socrates in the appropriate qualifications which must be attached to the principle of non-contradiction. Rather, he is treating Socrates to a variation on the fallacy of ignorance of refutation. His variation on the fallacy unfolds as follows. At the beginning of the OA, Euthydemus asks Socrates to accept PNC as a premise---an assumption to which Socrates may mount no rational objection. Next, he suppresses the

<sup>181</sup> Cp. *Topics* 1 100a25-27; *Apr* 1 24b18-22; *Rhet.* 1356b 16-18.

question with which he might have begun if he was wielding the fallacy in its ‘normal form’, viz., is it then possible for the same subject to both be a knower and not a knower? The condition on refutation that this suppressed premise promises to meet is that the opposite predications shall hold of the same subject; the omission in the definition of refutation is of course the condition that the subject shall be knowing and not knowing in relation to the same things. The sophist then proceeds to ‘demonstrate’ that the opposite predications in question can hold of the same subject; and he concludes his demonstration by claiming that it meets a number of other specified conditions on genuine refutation---omitting however from this list the very condition upon which his fallacy turns.

An immediate objection that this suggestion must face is that it is committed to an overdetermination of the source of fallacy in the OA. I have argued that the OA turns upon *secundum quid*, and is solved by Socrates on the same assumption. It may be granted that the same argument may have any number of many flaws (*SE* 24 179b17). Yet how can one and the same sophism *causally* depend on two distinct causes of false refutation?

The answer is that, like all the examples of false refutation in *SE*, the examples of ignorance of refutation canvassed in *SE* 26 are toy examples. As such they are taken to represent syllogisms which exhibit precisely the single flaw of which they are instances.<sup>182</sup> Moreover, Aristotle’s brief discussion of the fallacy is, reasonably enough, focused on the fallacy in its ‘normal form’. Given Aristotle’s report, this normal form seems to have been exemplified when the sophist adds certain qualifications to the answerer’s thesis, while omitting a qualification upon which the argument will turn.

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<sup>182</sup> Thus the examples of false refutations in *SE* are either two-premise syllogisms through a single middle term, or hypothetical syllogisms with only two to four premises, or---in some cases of the fallacies of combination or division---immediate false conversions.

However, Aristotle implies (*‘if this additional question be put at the start’*, 181a5) that the fallacy *need* not take this standard form if the additional qualifications are asked for, not at the starting point, but at a subsequent stage of the argument. Taken together, these facts suggest that in a live dialectical encounter, where complex chains of inferences are in play, we should not be surprised to find the fallacy of ignorance of refutation used in combination with one or more distinct false refutations; indeed, given the potential for sowing greater confusion in the answerer, we should rather expect to find the fallacy yoked in complex chains of inferences to false refutations different in kind.

That Plato dramatizes such a complex strategy in the OA is perhaps most readily seen if we consider the distinct *disadvantage* to the sophist of using ignorance of refutation in its ‘normal form’ in this particular argument. The basic contradiction at which Euthydemus aims involves the predication of the opposites ‘knowing’ and ‘not knowing’ of one and the same subject. A ‘normative’ example of ignorance of refutation directed at such a conclusion would be the following:

Thesis: It is not possible for the same subject to know and not know. [Omission: in relation to the same thing(s)].

1. x knows y.
2. x does not know z.

Therefore, it is possible for x to know y and not to know z.

The problem with such an inference of course is its extreme insipidity; Aristotle’s nomination of homonymy as ‘the silliest fallacy’ (SE 33 182b13-14) is perhaps unjust, since (one would hope, at any rate) even Cleinias would notice that the sophism above does not conclude to the contradictory of the answerer’s thesis. This problem may

however be overcome if the fallacy is made to work hand in glove with an inference that depends on *secundum quid*. Consider for example the contentious refutation of the ‘knowledge is perception’ thesis at *Theaetetus* 165b-d:

Soc: Well, then, here is the most alarming poser of all. It goes something like this, I think: ‘Is it possible for a man who knows something not to know this thing which he knows?’ (ἆρα οἶον τε τὸν αὐτὸν εἰδότα τι τοῦτο ὃ οἶδεν μὴ εἰδέναι;’).

Theod: What are we going to answer now, Theaetetus?

Theat: That it is impossible, I should think.

Soc: But it is not, if you are going to premise that seeing is knowing. For what are you going to do when some intrepid fellow has you ‘trapped in the well-shaft’, as they say, with a question that leaves you no way out: clapping his hand over one of your eyes, he asks you whether you see his cloak with the eye that is covered---how will you cope with that?

Theat: I shall say that I don’t see it with this one, but I do with the other.

Soc: So you both see and do not see the same thing at the same time? (Οὐκ οὖν ὁρᾷς τε καὶ οὐχ ὁρᾷς ἅμα ταυτόν;).

Theat: Well, yes, in that sort of way I do. (Οὕτω γέ πως).

Soc: ‘That’s not the question I’m setting you’, he will say, ‘I was not asking you in what way it happened. (τοῦτο οὐτε τάττω οὐτ’ ἡρόμην τὸ ὅπως). I was asking you “Does it happen that you don’t know what you know?” You now appear to be seeing what you don’t see; and you have actually admitted that seeing is knowing, and not to see is not to know. I leave you to draw your conclusion.’

Theat: Well, I draw a conclusion that contradicts my original suppositions.<sup>183</sup>

The eristic reasoner’s argument may be glossed as follows:

Thesis: Seeing is knowing.

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<sup>183</sup> Translation Levett in Burnyeat (1990).

- (1) It is not possible that the same subject knows and does not know the same thing which he knows.
- (2) It is possible for the same subject to see A with one eye and not to see A with his other eye.
- (3) Therefore, it is possible for the same subject to see the same thing [with one eye] and not to see the same thing [with his other eye] at the same time.
- (4) Therefore, the same subject knows and does not know the same thing at the same time, (by Thesis, but which is not possible by 1).
- (5) Therefore, 'to see' is not 'to know'.

The argument is an instance of the argument *ad impossible*. The impossibility reached at premise (4) is obtained by means of *secundum quid*. However, at the same stage in the argument, the sophist emphasizes the dialectical *bona fides* of the latter inference by invoking certain conditions on genuine refutation (same subject, same thing, same time) while suppressing the one condition upon which the application of *secundum quid* turns, namely, that the subject knows by the same manner (or means). (As Socrates notes, that is precisely the question the sophist, if challenged, will say he has *not* asked). By this combined strategy, the contentious reasoner avoids the greatest defect of *ignoratio elenchi*, viz., deducing an irrelevant conclusion; at the same time, by invoking elements of the latter sophism near the conclusion of the argument, he avails himself of its greatest utility: the misdirection of the attention of the answerer away from the true cause of fallacy, and towards the misapprehension that he has been refuted fair and square. Yet if that is so, it would clearly be inaccurate to characterize such a complex argument as a single sophism with two distinct causes. As an *inference*, the fallacy turns upon *secundum quid*; the tactics of *ignoratio elenchi* do not contribute, in this case, to the

asyllogistic nature of the argument; they contribute rather to the appearance of genuine refutation. At same time, the tactics of the latter sophism are salient enough to justify the claim of its recognition by Plato as a distinct mode of fallacy.

My claim is that precisely the same may be said of the Omniscience Argument of the *Euthydemus*:

**Socrates' thesis:** Socrates does not know everything.

- (1) There is something which Socrates knows.
- (2) It is not possible for any existing thing which is in fact *this* (τοῦτο) not to be precisely this (τοῦτο).
- (3) If Socrates knows something (ἐπίστασά τι) then he is one who knows (ἐπιστήμων εἶ).
- (4) (Therefore) Socrates is one who knows. (By 1,3).
- (5) There is something which Socrates does not know. [Assumption targeted for rejection].
- (6) If there is something which Socrates does not know, then he is one who does not know.
- (7) (Therefore) Socrates is one who does not know. (By 5,6).
- (8) (Therefore) Socrates is both one who knows and one who does not know. (By 4, 7).
- (9) (Therefore) Socrates is the very man he is and again he is not (the very man he is), with respect to the same things and at the same time (οὕτως τυγχάνεις ὧν αὐτὸς οὗτος ὅς εἶ, καὶ αὖ πάλιν οὐκ εἶ, κατὰ ταῦτ' ἅμα, 293c8-d1), which is impossible (by 8).
- (10) But (9) is impossible.
- (11) (Therefore) not-(5).
- (12) Therefore Socrates knows everything. (By 11).
- (13) If Socrates knows everything, then he is already in possession of the knowledge that would make men happy.

(14) Therefore, Socrates is already in possession of the knowledge in question. (By 12, 13).

The similarity between the OA and *Theaet.* 165b-d is striking. Both are arguments *ad impossible*. They differ strategically only in that the latter argument exploits the tactics of ignorance of refutation in a more nearly normal form: the first premise of the *Theaetetus* argument asks for the qualifications of sameness of subject and relation ‘at the starting point’; in the OA, as we have noted, this device is completely suppressed. In both sophisms however qualifications are subsequently introduced only at the stage where the impossibility has been reached by applications of *secundum quid*. Moreover, at this same stage both arguments suppress mention of the condition upon which the application of *secundum quid* turns: sameness of manner or means in the case of the *Theaetetus*; sameness of respect in the case of the OA. (Thus Euthydemus is careful not to conclude that Socrates is knowing and not knowing with respect to the *same things*; his odd phrase ‘Socrates is the very man he is and again he is not κατὰ ταῦτά’ signifies rather that Socrates has turned out both to be and not to be *this* (τοῦτο)---viz., knowing, an instance of a violation of premise (2). The plural ‘ταῦτά’ may be put down to the incantatory recitation of the ‘standard phrases’ invoked in an application of *ignoratio elenchi* or dialectical encounters in general).<sup>184</sup> It follows that in both cases the fallacy is appropriately resolved on the assumption that the argument turns upon *secundum quid*. Nevertheless, the contribution to the appearance of genuine refutation made by the tactic

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<sup>184</sup> Alternatively, we may suppose Euthydemus’ phrase ‘κατὰ ταῦτά’ refers to ‘everything’, which Socrates both knows and does not know. The difficulty with this suggestion however is twofold. First, it is not stated in any previous premise that Socrates is ‘not knowing of everything’; second, and more importantly, Euthydemus is arguing for the conclusion that Socrates is ‘knowing everything’, so he has no right to the conjunct at this stage of the argument. A third possibility of course is that the phrase κατὰ ταῦτά refers to nothing in particular: the sophist may simply hope to sow greater confusion by his inclusion of the phrase (let God and the answerer sort it out).

of *ignoratio elenchi* is sufficient to justify the claim that the latter fallacy is recognized in the *Euthydemus* as a sophism in its own right.

#### 4.6 Socratic Dialectic and the Production of Paradox

The foregoing analysis of the OA and the AOA has focused exclusively on Socrates' role as answerer in the passage. I have argued that, despite the sophist's efforts to frustrate his performance in that role at every turn, the answers Socrates does manage to give constitute dialectically adequate resolutions of the sophisms with which he is confronted. What then are we to make of the fact that Plato allows Socrates to score his greatest triumph in the passage (296d8-297b1) only in the role of questioner, and only by asking a question that is irrelevant to the resolution of sophist's fallacies?

But tell, me, I went on: with respect to other things I am at a loss as to how I can dispute with men of such prodigious wisdom as you that I do not know everything, since you have stated [that I do]; but how shall I say that I know things of this sort, Euthydemus---that good men are unjust? Come tell me, do I know this, or do I not know it?

Oh yes, you know it, he said.

Know what?, I said.

That the good are not unjust.

Quite so, I said, I've always known that. But this isn't my question----but rather, where did I learn that the good are unjust?

Nowhere, said Dionysodorus.

Then this is something I do not know, I said.

You are ruining the argument, said Euthydemus to Dionysodorus, and this fellow here will turn out to be not knowing, and then he will be one who knows and one who does not know at the same time. And Dionysodorus blushed.

But you, I said, what do you say, Euthydemus? Does it seem to you that your all-knowing brother speaks incorrectly?



A brief résumé of Socrates' performance as questioner in our text will suffice to explain the thematic connection of this passage to the foregoing proceedings. Confronted with the conclusion of the OA, Socrates begs Dionysodorus for reassurance that in fact not only Socrates, but all of mankind, the brothers included, know everything if they even know one thing (294a4-10). Do the brothers, Socrates inquires, know the arts of carpentry and shoe-making? And leather stitching? And do they know the number of the stars and of the sands and things of that sort too? (294b1-9). But Socrates' thrusts draw no blood: for as the sophist makes clear, the answer he will receive to all such questions will be, yes, of course: did anyone think the brothers would fail to agree that they know any of these things? (294a10). At this point, Ctesippus interrupts Socrates' questioning, demanding physical proof that Dionysodorus is telling the truth. Does he know how many teeth Euthydemus has? Does Euthydemus know how many his brother has? A molar count would persuade the audience and himself to trust the brothers in their other claims; their bald assertions of knowledge are not enough. (294b11-294c10). When the brothers demur, we are told that Ctesippus pursued this mode of questioning relentlessly,

And there was practically nothing Ctesippus did not ask them about in the end, inquiring shamelessly whether they knew even the most disgraceful things. (294d3-5).

When the brothers outface Ctesippus' assault by answering each question in the affirmative, Socrates recounts that he was compelled, out of 'disbelief' (ὑπ' ἀπιστίας, 294d7-8), to resume his former line of questioning: does Dionysodorus know how to dance, to somersault over swords, and to be turned about on a wheel? Does he know everything not only at the present moment, but always? Did the brothers then know everything when they were children, and even when they had just been born? Upon receiving the brothers' assent to even the latter question, Socrates reports,

Now the thing struck us as unbelievable (ἄπιστον ἐδόκει τὸ πρᾶγμα εἶναι); but Euthydemus said, ‘do you not believe (ἀπιστεῖς), Socrates?’ (295a1-2).

The AOA is of course Euthydemus’ attempt to relieve Socrates of his incredulity on this score; and as we have noted, Socrates’ response to the latter argument, having resumed the role of questioner, is to lure his dimmer brother to the admission of a *false statement*, viz., that ‘good men are unjust’ (296e4, 297a2).

While it is true that the latter admission reduces the brothers to utter confusion, unparalleled elsewhere in the dialogue---they fall out, Dionysodorus blushes---it does not follow that Plato regards this chink in the sophistic armor, or the dialectical means by which it is produced, to have a greater philosophical value than the solutions to the OA and AOA implicit in Socrates’ role as answerer. On the contrary: there is no response more philosophically valuable to fallacy than its solution; and the production of counterexample to the brothers’ claim to omniscience does nothing to advance understanding of the error in their reasoning. The lesson Plato does hope to convey to the learner in dialectic by means of these exchanges is neatly summarized in SE 3:

In the first place then one must grasp at how many things those aim who are contentious and lovers of rivalry in arguments. These are five in number: refutation and falsehood and paradox and solecism and fifthly making the opponent in discussion babble (this is to compel him to say the same thing many times)---or [they aim at] that which is not really but only that which appears to be each of these things. For they choose most of all to be manifestly refuting, second to demonstrate that [the opponent] is saying something false, third to lead [him] into paradox, fourth to make [him] commit a solecism (this is to make the answerer, by means of his expression, to speak barbarously in consequence of the argument). Last is saying the same thing repeatedly. (165b12-22)

The *Sophistici Elenchi* records the rules of eristic combat of the sort which are dramatized in the *Euthydemus*. Its rank-ordering of the desirability of the aims of contentious reasoners is correspondingly dramatized in our passage: causing the opponent to utter one maximally ἄπιστον or παράδοξον proposition after another scores some

points with the audience; obviously preferable is the production of undeniable falsehood. (Of course actual refutation is the greatest prize; but then Socrates has already achieved that---or so I have argued---in his role as questioner in the self-refutation argument of 286b7-288a7). The same rank-ordering of the production of falsehood vs. paradox is reflected too in Ctesippus' overly-enthusiastic embrace of the latter tactic. (The imagination runs rampant at the delicate omission of 'the most disgraceful things' he inquired of the sophists; would an Athenian gentleman ask a foreign gentleman how many hairs he had on his arse?)<sup>185</sup> The 'downgrading' of the production of mere paradox is evident too in Socrates' rueful reflection upon his dialectical colleague:

I am much more worthless than Heracles, who was unable to fight it out with both the Hydra, a kind of lady-sophist who was so clever that if anyone cut off one of her heads of argument, she put forth many more in its place, and with another sort of sophist, a crab arrived on shore from the sea---rather recently, I think. And when Heracles was in distress because this creature was chattering and biting on his left, he called for his nephew Iolaus to come and help him, which Iolaus successfully did. But if my Iolaus should come, he would do more harm than good. (297b10-297d2).<sup>186</sup>

In the light of this remark, as well as our foregoing analysis, it seems we may safely conclude that Plato's purpose in these final exchanges is simply to indicate to the learner in dialectic the rank-order in desirability of Socrates' tactics as questioner: while inferior both to outright refutation and the resolution of fallacy, the production of falsehood and paradox are tackle in the toolkit of Socratic dialectic, despite their lack of explanatory power.

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<sup>185</sup> It is interesting to note that the technique of pushing an argument to an indecent conclusion is foisted on Socrates at *Gorgias* 494b-e (where Socrates' assertions regarding flux-birds and catamites are, unlike Ctesippus' indecorous questions, allowed unexpurgated expression); in the *Euthydemus* by contrast, Socrates is pointedly relieved of this dialectical tactic.

<sup>186</sup> Translation Sprague, *op.cit.* Jackson (1990) argues persuasively for the identity of the Hydra, the crab, and Iolaus with Euthydemus, Dionysodorus, and Ctesippus, respectively.

#### 4.7 *Secundum Quid* in the *Sophist*

Our examination of the first five exchanges of the final eristic episode has shed considerable light upon the use to which the fallacy of *secundum quid* was put in eristic contexts by Plato's contemporaries. Before venturing further into the *Euthydemus*, it would be well to pause briefly to consider the dialectical havoc that is wrought by the same fallacy in the mouths of the 'late learners' of the *Sophist*. At 259b8-259d7 the Visitor anticipates that those 'who have just come into contact with the things that are' will employ the fallacy in the construction of a false refutation of his 'beautiful and difficult' discovery of the manner in which the kinds blend with one another. The Visitor's remarks deserve careful study, for two reasons. First, it has not been sufficiently noticed that the false refutation to which he refers runs through the fallacy of *secundum quid*; hence the passage has escaped the attention of commentators as a locus of the Platonic treatment of the fallacy in the corpus. What is perhaps of even greater interest is the manner in which the Visitor responds to the late-learners' challenge to his thesis. Dismissing the solution of their false refutation as unworthy of his attention and dialectical expertise, he evidently assigns its solution to the practitioner of genuine refutation. Thus the passage may be taken as further evidence of the dialectical division of labour we have discovered in the *Euthydemus*: the discovery of the true manner in which contraries may be predicated of contraries belongs to the domain of higher dialectic; the resolution of false refutations of this discovery belongs to the domain of Socratic expertise.

As our passage begins, the Visitor summarizes the results of the foregoing discussion. It has been established that *that which is not* is; that the kinds blend with one another; and that *that which is* and *the different* pervade all the other kinds and each other (258e6-259b6). The Visitor then lays down the following challenge:

Visitor: And then if someone does not believe in these contrarities, let him investigate it and say something better than the things said just now. But if as though having recognized some difficulty he delights in dragging the words [or: the arguments: τοὺς λόγους] to one thing at one time and to another at another, (εἴτε ὥς τι χαλεπὸν κατανενοηκῶς χαίρει τοτὲ μὲν ἐπὶ θάτερα τοτὲ δ' ἐπὶ θάτερα τοὺς λόγους ἔλκων), he has paid serious attention to what is not worthy of serious attention, as far as our present arguments say. For this is neither something clever nor difficult to discover, whereas the former thing is already both difficult and at the same time beautiful.

Theat: What thing?

Visitor: What was also said before, having let these things go as [δυνατά] to be able to follow closely, examining step by step, the things that are said ("Ο καὶ πρόσθεν εἶρηται, τὸ ταῦτα ἑάσαντα ὥς † δυνατά † τοῖς λεγομένοις οἷόν τ' εἶναι καθ' ἕκαστον ἐλέγχοντα ἐπακολουθεῖν), both when someone says that a thing that is different is in some way the same and when [he says] a thing that is the same is [in some way] different, in what way and in what respect which of the things which he says has happened (ὅταν τέ τις ἕτερον ὃν πη ταῦτόν εἶναι φῇ καὶ ὅταν ταῦτόν ὃν ἕτερον, ἐκείνη καὶ κατ' ἐκείνο ὃ φησι τούτων πεπονθέναι πότερον). But to show that the same is different in just any old way and that the different is the same and the great small and the like unlike, and to delight in this way in constantly introducing contraries into the discussions (τὸ δὲ ταῦτόν ἕτερον ἀποφαίνειν ἀμη-γε-πη καὶ τὸ θάτερον ταῦτόν καὶ τὸ μέγα σμικρὸν καὶ τὸ ὅμοιον ἀνόμοιον, καὶ χαίρειν οὕτω τάναντία ἀεὶ προφέροντα ἐν τοῖς λόγοις)---this is not true refutation and is the obvious new-born child of someone who has just come into contact with the things that are (οὔτε τις ἐλεγχος οὗτος ἀληθινὸς ἄρτι τε τῶν ὄντων τινὸς ἐφαπτομένου δῆλος νεογενὴς ὢν). (259b8-259d7).

It is fairly clear that the Visitor imagines that the late-learners---those who have only recently come into contact with Being---may pose a challenge to the 'contrarities' which, the Visitor has just explained, have been licensed by the foregoing argument. The contrarities in question will involve the predication of 'contraries of contraries', e.g., that Being is Not, that Not-Being Is, that the Same is Different and the Different is the Same, etc. The challenge which the Visitor seems to imagine the late-learners will pose to the predication of such contraries (or alleged contraries) of contraries will evidently be

that such predications are in fact impossible (note the characterization of the challenge as an attempt, albeit no ‘true’ one, at *refutation*: ἔλεγχος, 259d5).

However, three aspects of the Visitor’s remarks are less clear. First, the Visitor says that this challenge will be mounted by means of the attempt to demonstrate that ‘the same is different and that the different is the same and the great small and the like unlike in just any old way’. But how can the late-learners hope to *refute* the claim that the kinds blend with one another---(e.g.) that it is possible that the Same is Different and the Different is Same---by demonstrating that such predications are possible in ‘just any old way’ (ἀμῆ–γε–πη)? How can a demonstration that such predications are possible amount to a demonstration that such predications are impossible? Next, the text at 259c8 seems badly garbled. If we retain the reading τὸ ταῦτα ἐάσαντα ὥς δυνατὰ (‘having let these things go as possible’), what sense can we assign to this assertion? What could the Visitor mean by the recommendation to let go as ‘possibles’ the demonstration that the blending of kinds is *impossible*---especially if the demonstration is false? If on the other hand we reject the emendation, what shall we put in its place?<sup>187</sup> Finally, what exactly does the Visitor mean by the recommendation that the late-learners’ challenge should be ‘left alone’? If he thinks a rebuttal to their challenge is beneath his dialectical notice, does he dismiss the diagnosis of their mistake---whatever it is---from the domain of philosophical investigation?

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<sup>187</sup> Campbell (1867) notes that ‘the word is suspicious’, but rejects Badham’s conjecture of ἀνήνυτα (‘endless’), as well as the suggestion to retain ὥς δυνατὰ as signifying, ‘as easily managed’ (‘which is hardly Greek’); suggesting that ‘it is more likely that a few letters have dropt out, e.g. ταῦτα ἐάσαντα ὥς δυνατ | ὃν μάλιστ | ἄ’, he advocates the following gloss: ‘Letting these contradictions alone, as not inconsistent with the nature of things.’ But see note 52.

I suggest that plausible answers to all three of these questions are readily disclosed once it is seen that the false refutations in question must be argued by *secundum quid*.

Several features of the Visitor's remarks indicate that the late-learners' fallacies will depend on *secundum quid*. Perhaps the most telling is that we are told that they will demonstrate that the same is different, the like unlike, etc., in 'just any old way' (ἀμνηγε-πη); for the expression is strongly suggestive of the manner in which *secundum quid* disregards qualifications in respect, relation, time, etc. in predication. Next, the fallacies concern the predication of contraries; and as we have seen from both the Platonic and Aristotelian examples of the sophism we have surveyed, the fallacy of *secundum quid* lends itself peculiarly to the predication of pairs of contraries (whereas e.g. the fallacy of Accident and False Cause do not). Finally, we may note that the Visitor describes the late-learners as those who delight in 'dragging words (or arguments: τοὺς λόγους ἔλκων) to one thing at one time and to another at another' (259c1-2). Plato uses the verb ἔλκω elsewhere in the corpus where eristic arguments based on *secundum quid* are clearly indicated. Compare Protagoras' rebuke of Socrates (*Theat.* 168b7-c2):

But you will not proceed as you did just now. You will not base your argument upon the use and wont of language; you will not follow the practice of most men, who drag words this way and that, so making every imaginable difficulty for one another (οὐχ ὥσπερ ἄρτι ἐκ συνηθείας ῥημάτων τε καὶ ὀνομάτων, ἃ οἱ πολλοὶ ὅπη ἂν τύχωσιν ἔλκοντες ἀπορίας ἀλλήλοις παντοδαπὰς παρέχουσι).<sup>188</sup>

It is clear that the sophist's back-reference is to the contentious refutations of the 'knowledge is perception' thesis at 165b-d, which are argued by *secundum quid*. (If such a contentious reasoner claps a hand over one of Theaetetus' eyes, the boy will say that he

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<sup>188</sup> Translation Levett in Burnyeat (1990), with modifications.

sees the same thing with the one eye, but he does not see it with the other; but the eristic will conclude on this basis that he both sees and does not see the same thing at the same time).<sup>189</sup>

The manner in which the late-learners may, on the basis of such fallacies, proceed to ‘find a difficulty’ in the Visitor’s contrarieties is readily seen once we remind ourselves of the use to which Euthydemus put the principle of non-contradiction in the Omniscient Argument. The conclusion at which the challengers aim is that none of the kinds may blend with one another; hence the only predications possible in our discourse are ‘the same is same’, ‘the different is different’, ‘the large is large’, etc. They will take as their first assumption therefore the principle of non-contradiction. They will then proceed to demonstrate, by repeated applications of *secundum quid*, that any answerer who accepts PNC will contradict themselves if they accept the Visitor’s thesis with respect to the blending of kinds in discourse. For example, such an argument concerning the contraries Sameness and Difference could be constructed along the following lines:

Visitor’s Thesis: It is possible for the kinds to blend with one another.

1. It is not possible for x to be both F and not F. (PNC)
2. x is the same as y in some respect r1.
3. Therefore, x is the same as y [in some respect r1].
4. x is different from y in some respect r2.

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<sup>189</sup> It would not appear however that Plato uses the verb ἔλκω exclusively in connection with the fallacy of *secundum quid*. The verb is used at *Tht.* 199a5 to allude to an unspecified version of the μανθάνειν / ἐπίστασθαι homonymy; see also *Rep.* 539b6, where it is used to describe ‘the game of contradiction’, i.e., eristic argumentation in general, that is the aggressive and socially disruptive pastime of young people who have been introduced to dialectic too soon in a corrupt city. The same general sense seems to be in play at *Phlb.* 57d4, τοῖς δεινοῖς περὶ λόγων ὀλκήν.



5. Therefore, x is different from y [in some respect r2].
6. If x is different from y, x is not the same as y.
7. x is both the same [in respect r1] and not the same [in respect r2] as y, which is impossible (by 1).
8. Therefore, it is not possible to predicate Difference of that which is 'the same', or Sameness of that which is 'the different' (generalized: it is not possible for the kinds to blend with one another).

Similar false refutations of the Visitor's thesis, which flout his previously enunciated conditions on genuine refutation in any number of ways (e.g. with respect to time, relation, or respect) may of course be constructed for any pair of contrary predicates. In that case we may state the answer to our first difficulty with the Visitor's remarks as follows: the Visitor anticipates that the late-learners will attempt to demonstrate the *impossibility* of the blending of kinds by an application of the argument *ad impossible*; but their challenge is a false refutation which runs through the fallacy of *secundum quid*; and as such it assumes that contraries are predicated of contraries in 'just any old way'.

This result leads us in turn to a solution to our second problem. There is no need to emend the Visitor's recommendation that we may 'let these things go as δυνατό'. For in the light of our reconstruction above of the 'things' in question, a highly relevant and precise sense may be assigned to the Visitor's description of such false refutations as 'δυνατό'. He means they are οὐκ ἄδύνατα: that is to say, they are *not* impossibilities, but

mere possibilities.<sup>190</sup> They are not impossibilities because they are failures as instances of the argument *ad impossible*; and they are such failures because the conclusion of their typically allegedly impossible result (e.g. line 7 above) is not reached syllogistically.

This brings us to our third problem. The Visitor's dismissal of the late-learner's sophisms is indeed harsh: he declares that 'we can leave these things alone' (259c7) since they are 'not worthy of serious attention' (259c2-3); nor are they anything 'clever or difficult to discover' (259c4). His assessment is reminiscent of Socrates' observation in the first eristic episode, that the brother's equivocations on *μανθάνειν* are 'the frivolous (*παίδιον*) part of study' (*Euthyd.* 278b2); it is reminiscent too of the unnamed critic of philosophy of the Epilogue, who condemned the brothers' arguments as 'ridiculous and worthless' (305a7-8). We should however be no more inclined in the present case than in the former to conclude that Plato thereby dismisses the examination and resolution of such sophisms from the domain of philosophical study. For properly understood, the Visitor's declaration that 'we' can leave such things alone entails only that the practitioner of higher dialectic---of which he himself is of course an exemplar---may leave the study and resolution of such fallacies to the practitioner of 'Socratic' dialectic---the expert at 'true refutation' (*ἐλέγχος ἀληθινός*), to whose craft he makes particular reference (*Soph.* 259d5-6).

The Visitor's dismissal of the late-learners thus constitutes yet another example of the dialectical division of labour we have detected in the *Euthydemus*: given its nature as a *false refutation*, the appropriate response to the late-learners' challenge to the blending of kinds is to hand their argument over to the expert at genuine refutation. The

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<sup>190</sup> The marginal gloss (Par.F) 'οὐκ ἰδύναται' on our textual crux noted by Campbell, *op.cit.*, 166, may have been inspired by an interpretation along the same lines.

explanation and resolution of their error does not require that the Visitor rehearse his argument for how the kinds blend for the late-learners' sake. He has argued for his thesis and asked for a challenge; the appropriate response to the challenge of the sort which (he anticipates) the late-learners will make is to defuse it by Socratic means. From a dialectical point of view, this response to the denial of the 'possibility of all discourse' (259e4-6) is completely adequate: the Visitor's thesis stands, and requires no more sophisticated defense; or it requires no such defense, at any rate, until someone should 'examine such contrarities and say something *better* than the things that have been said' (259b9).

As for the practitioner of Socratic dialectic, as an expert of a protreptic and a refutatory art, his brief does not include the exposition of a positive theory of the predication of Forms of Forms. Since that is so, the practitioner of higher dialectic will possess a general capacity to explain the sense in which pairs of propositions such as the following are only apparently contradictory:

Change is the Same & Change is not the Same

And in general, why propositions such as the following do not form contradictory pairs:

The F is G (καθ' αὐτό) & The F is not G (πρὸς ἄλλο)

The F is F (καθ' αὐτό) & The F is not F (πρὸς ἄλλο)

The practitioner of the propaedeutic art of Socratic dialectic will by contrast possess a general capacity to explain why propositions such as the following do not form contradictory pairs...

x is writing letters & x is not writing

y is white in respect of his teeth & y is not white in respect of his skin

z is not *simpliciter* & z is not pale

...an explanatory capacity which he will exploit in the purgation of the false belief in their contradiction which impedes progress towards the predication insights of higher dialectic:

I think I see a large, difficult type of ignorance marked off from the others and overshadowing all the other parts of it.

What sort is it?

Not knowing, but thinking that you know. That's what probably causes all the mistakes we make when we think. (*Soph.* 229c1-6)

#### 4.8 Taking Stock

It is time now to take stock of our examination of the first five exchanges of the final eristic episode. The results of our analysis considerably expand the set of principles which constitute the art of Socratic refutation. Perhaps our most fundamental result has emerged from the analysis of the Socratic response to the fallacy of *secundum quid*. This is the confirmation that like Aristotle, Plato holds that a refutation is a *syllogism*; that is to say:

(REF): A refutation is a syllogistic demonstration of the contradictory of an opponent's thesis.

As for Plato's notion of a contradiction, we have noted in the OA the following Platonic formulation of the principle of non-contradiction: 'It is not possible for any existing thing which is in fact *this* (τοῦτο) not to be precisely this (τοῦτο)' (293b8-c1). This principle must then also be included among the principles of Socratic dialectic in its refutatory aspect:

(CONT): A contradiction is a pair of propositions one of which affirms of some subject *x* that it is *this* (for some predicate *F*) and the other of which denies of the subject *x* that it is *this*.

Our examination of the first and second eristic episodes disclosed that Plato recognizes that a refutation so conceived must meet the following two conditions:

(HOM): Both the predicate term and the subject term in the refutation (including the conclusion) concern the same things (περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν)---that is, signify the same objects----as the predicate and subject in the answerer's original thesis.

(BQ): The conclusion of a genuine refutation is different from the premises; it is not identical with any of them.

In the light of our analysis of Plato's treatment of *secundum quid*, we may now add to this list the following condition on genuine refutation:

(SQ): The syllogism of a refutation reaches its conclusion, the contradictory of the opponent's original thesis, by predicating terms of the subject in the same respect and relative to the same thing and in the same manner and at the same time as in the answerer's original thesis.

In the course of our examination of the AOA, we noted that it is indeterminate whether Plato assimilates a particular caper of the sophist (296b2-3) to the fallacy of *secundum quid*. If he does not, it would seem Plato recognizes something like the Aristotelian fallacy of Combination as a distinct mode of false refutation; in that case, we may extract from the AOA the further rather subtle condition on genuine refutation:

(COMB): Both the predicate term and the subject term in the deduction (including the conclusion) are the same linguistic items as the predicate term and subject term of the opponent's original thesis.<sup>191</sup>

In Chapter 4.5, I argued that a certain feature of the OA provides evidence that like Aristotle, Plato recognized a distinct mode of false refutation which was known by his contemporaries as the fallacy of 'ignorance of refutation'. Given the nature of the fallacy in its original form, it is difficult to formulate a single condition on genuine

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<sup>191</sup> In fact, as noted above, Aristotle takes violations of this clause to cover false refutations due to Combination, Division, and Accent. See *SE* SE 6 168a26-33. I far as I can tell however, the brothers turn no tricks due to the latter two fallacies in the dialogue.

refutation the violation of which constitutes ignorance of refutation; but perhaps the following will serve:

(IE): The syllogism of a refutation concludes to the genuine contradictory of the answerer's original thesis, in conformity with every condition on genuine refutation *whether these conditions are explicitly asked for by the questioner at the starting point (or anywhere else in the refutation) or not.*

In Chapter 4.2, I suggested that Socrates' paraphrase (293d2-8) in the OA of an argument *ad impossible* evinces an awareness on Socrates' part of the sophist's violation of this method of syllogistic inference. In Chapter 3.6, I argued that Socrates' refutation of NFO presupposes his awareness that from true premises only truths may follow. These principles of syllogistic reasoning too therefore may be affirmed to be components of the art of Socratic refutation:

(TP): Only a true conclusion may be deduced from true premises.

(AI): The impossible result that is reached by syllogism in an argument *ad impossible* must be known and agreed in advance to be false.

This observation however suggests that a certain refinement is called for in our classification of these components. All of the principles in the survey above are explanatory starting points of the art of Socratic refutation. For the violation of any one of these principles will render an argument a false refutation; and the explanation of their

failure to be genuine refutations will thus run through the corresponding principle in our survey. However, it is now evident that some of these principles will be grounded in Plato's conception of a syllogism alone; others will be grounded in his conception of a refutation. Still others will not be components in the definition of either a syllogism or a refutation, but will rather be general principles of syllogistic reasoning.

Thus BQ will be grounded in the definition of a refutation *as* a συλλογισμός: a syllogism is a kind of deduction which meets a certain epistemic condition on syllogistic inference: a συλλογισμός establishes a new proposition *through* premises previously assumed; hence the conclusion of a syllogism must be different from the premises. As a component in the definition of a syllogism, BQ is thus concerned with the manner in which a refutation constitutes a syllogism, independently of the manner in which the argument in question constitutes a refutation; for BQ does not make essential reference to an answerer's thesis or the terms within it.

Conditions HOM, SQ, COMB, and IE by contrast *do* make essential reference to an answerer's thesis or its constitutive terms. Hence HOM, SQ, COMB, and IE concern the manner in which an argument constitutes a syllogism that is a *refutation*.

Finally, TP and AI may be characterized as general principles of syllogistic reasoning, as opposed to component clauses in either Plato's definition of a syllogism or a refutation.

The objections the practitioner of Socratic dialectic raises to violations of these conditions on genuine refutation constitute explanatory solutions to fallacy. However, as our analysis of the first two eristic episodes has shown, not every sophistical argument with which Socrates is confronted in the dialogue is resolvable by reference to the



principles above. Our brief excursus into the Visitor's remarks at *Sophist* 259b8-259d7 has provided further confirmation of this fact. Hence not every Socratic response to false refutation in the *Euthydemus* has causal explanatory force. As I have argued in Chapter 3.6, the Socratic response to the brothers' arguments for NFS and NC---the Teaching Argument and the Refutation Argument---fall into this non-explanatory category. However, to this finding we may now add the following refinement: certain Socratic responses to false refutation which *are* non-explanatory may be directed at sophisms to which there *also* exist explanatory Socratic solutions. Hence all four of the following techniques must be placed in the category of non-explanatory Socratic responses to false refutation:

(NE 1) Establishing that the interlocutor (as questioner or answerer) is saying something dialectically self-refuting.

(NE 2) Establishing that the interlocutor (as questioner or answerer) is saying something pragmatically self-refuting.

(NE 3) Making the answerer say something false.

(NE 4) Making the answerer say something paradoxical.

Finally, Socratic expertise in its refutatory aspect includes a grasp of what is procedurally relevant to genuine refutation. As we noted in Chapter 3.6, Socrates' rebuke (287b2-287d2) of the sophist for his refusal to answer falls into this category. The dust-up between Euthydemus and Socrates in the AOA (295b6-c11) constitutes another example of this resource: Socrates' refusal to answer the sophist's question before he understands 'what the sophist means by it' is an invocation of the answerer's right to refuse to answer yes or no, but to say rather "I do not understand"; (*Top.* VIII 7 160a17-23); such an objection is however different in kind from the drawing of a distinction that constitutes an explanatory solution to an asyllogistic inference.

## Chapter Five

5.1 Plato on the Distinctness of *Secundum Quid*, Homonymy, and Accident

But if my Iolaus should come, he would do more harm than good (ὁ δ' ἐμὸς 'Ιόλεως εἰ ἔλθοι, πλεόν ἂν θάτερον ποιήσειεν, 297d1-2).<sup>192</sup>

Socrates' dismissal of Ctesippus has struck some commentators as not only ungrateful, but illogical: granted, in his characteristically impetuous fashion, Ctesippus may have pursued the production of paradox with a little too much enthusiasm; but why should Socrates anticipate on that ground that his further intervention in the discussion would produce *more* harm than good---as opposed to little, or even no good at all?<sup>193</sup>

I suggest that the answer to this question is two-fold. First, as we have seen, Socrates' production of paradox serves a perfectly legitimate and recognized dialectical purpose. On the other hand, Ctesippus' indecorous behaviour in pursuit of the same aim may clearly be put down to his desire to impress his favorite. Yet in that case Socrates—who has considerable experience in these kinds of arguments (286c), and hence considerable experience of their effect on individuals of Ctesippus' character---has every reason to anticipate that Ctesippus' dialectical performance will actually *degenerate*, from the extraction of paradox to the production of sophisms of his own---a prediction

<sup>192</sup> Literally, 'he would rather produce the other [effect]'; for the euphemism of ἕτερος (other) for κακός (bad/evil) see LSJ III.2. The same euphemism has been employed previously at 280d5.

<sup>193</sup> To avoid the attribution of ingratitude to Socrates de Vries (1972), 51 argues that Socrates refers to no one in particular in this text: 'His [Socrates'] plight is even worse than Heracles' was: Heracles could call for Iolaus' support, but Socrates' position is so desperate that even an (eventual) support by his Iolaus could only make things worse.' According to this suggestion however, Socrates says that the intervention of absolutely anyone else---regardless of his dialectical skill or the orientation of his desires---would do more harm than good. But it is not clear why Socrates should think or say this. What does seem clear is that the discussion deteriorates because of Ctesippus' errors in dialectic and because of the orientation of his erotic attachments.

which is of course confirmed by subsequent events. One source of Socrates' concern is thus the harm this descent into sophistry will have on Cleinias: whatever dialectical *good* Ctesippus may contribute to the argument, he will do *more* harm to Cleinias by stooping to the brother's level of debate.

However, Socrates' anticipatory evaluation of Ctesippus' further contributions to the discussion has a second ground. For in the next series of arguments (207d3-300d9), Ctesippus is at his most dialectically active in the entire dialogue---in both the role of questioner *and* answerer. In the former role he degenerates into an eristic reasoner. In the latter he raises a number of implicit objections to several of the sophist's fallacies. I shall argue that as resolutions of the sophist's fallacies, Plato endorses none of these---a fact that has received no attention from commentators on the dialogue. Hence Socrates' prediction is also used by Plato as a device---the first of several---to indicate his theoretical disagreement with the modes of resolution implicit in Ctesippus' objections. As we shall see, Socrates' mythical metaphor is in consequence particularly apt: for in the myth, the team-work of Heracles and Iolaus consisted in the fact that as Heracles smashed the Hydra's heads, Iolaus cauterized the stumps---without which action they would have continued to sprout and proliferate. By contrast, Socrates' Iolaus will 'do more harm than good' in two ways: in his role as questioner, Ctesippus only produces more Hydra-heads of sophistical argument; in his role as answerer, he fails to follow Socrates in the application of Socratic solutions to the sophists' various fallacies----without which infliction of true dialectical wounds the sophists will never be silenced.

## 5.2 The Other Than $F \rightarrow \text{Not-}F$ Argument

Picking up on Socrates' mythical reference, Dionysodorus introduces a new question (297d4-5): was Iolaus any more the nephew of Heracles than of Socrates? Socrates responds that while Iolaus was the nephew of Heracles, he is not a nephew of his, since Socrates' brother, Patrocles, was not Iolaus' father (297d9-297e3). Upon receiving this answer, the sophist drops his line of questioning regarding Iolaus in order to pursue another sophistical hare. Since this new sophism involves the just-mentioned Patrocles, some commentators have supposed that the aborted line of questioning regarding Iolaus and nephew-hood is only inserted to give Socrates a reason to mention his half-brother Patrocles, and hence to introduce the next series of sophisms, which concern the relation of fatherhood.<sup>194</sup> This suggestion is however unnecessary, since it is fairly easy to reconstruct the argument Dionysodorus does not pursue and to see its connection with the other sophisms in the passage. As the immediately succeeding arguments make clear, the sophist's initial object must have been to show that Iolaus is *equally* the nephew of Heracles and Socrates. This he evidently aimed to do by a flatfooted application of *secundum quid*:

1. Iolaus is the nephew of Heracles.
2. Iolaus is not the nephew of Socrates.
3. Therefore, Iolaus is both a nephew [of Heracles] and not a nephew [of Socrates].
4. But this violates PNC.
5. Therefore, Iolaus is the nephew of Socrates.

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<sup>194</sup> The view of e.g. Sprague (1993), 48.

Dionysodorus' aborted sophism is therefore another instance of an argument *ad impossible*; the implicit thesis he attacks is premise (2) above (asserted by Socrates at 297e1). Moreover, it is obvious in the light of the immediately succeeding sophisms that he could have developed this argument to lead to the even more impressive conclusion that Iolaus is the nephew of absolutely everyone.

Socrates however spoils this simple-minded strategy by exploding the fallacy before it is even enunciated by his opponent---and in a manner that is entirely consistent with his solutions to *secundum quid* in the OA and the AOA. For the effect of his citing the respective lineages of Patrocles and Iphicles is to insist on the inconsequential nature of the argument which, Socrates anticipates, the sophist has up his sleeve: 'x is F in relation to y and x is not F in relation to z' entails no violation of PNC. The only difference here is that Socrates gets in his objections before the argument he resolves is even articulated.

Thus frustrated, the sophist tries again, using an argument of precisely the same form. Seizing upon Socrates' admission that Patrocles is only his half-brother (297e4-5), Dionysodorus plumps for:

1. Patrocles is a brother of Socrates by the same mother.
2. Patrocles is not a brother of Socrates by the same father.
3. Therefore Patrocles is a brother of Socrates [by the same mother] and Patrocles is not a brother of Socrates [by the same father]. (297e5-6).

It is obvious---again, in the light of the brothers' eventual proof (297e8-298c8) that any

arbitrary individual who is a father is the father of absolutely everyone---that this argument may be developed to the following conclusion:

4. But this violates PNC.
5. Therefore, Patrocles is the brother of Socrates (and, implicitly, of everyone).

Socrates however rejects premise (3), reapplying the necessary qualifiers by appeal to some expansion on his family history: Patrocles is not a brother of Socrates by the same father, since Chaeredemus was the father of the former, Sophroniscus the father of the latter. Though his objections are in this case made after the sophist has derived his impossible result, Socrates relies upon the same mode of resolution of *secundum quid* here as before.

The sophist has now been twice foiled. His immediate aim was to show that with respect to some *x*, *x* is both *F* and not-*F*; his ultimate aim was to arrive at a conclusion of the general type: *x* is *F* in relation to all *y*. But as Socrates has now twice drawn explicit attention to the transparency of the fallacious move required, Dionysodorus----always the duller brother---is stuck; and his next hopeful sally ('but Sophroniscus and Chaeredemus were both fathers?' 297e8) clearly spins in the same sophistical rut, as the argument at which he aims is the following:

1. Chaeredemus is the father of Patrocles.
2. Sophroniscus is the father of Socrates.
3. Therefore, Chaeredemus is not the father of Socrates.

4. Therefore, Chaeredemus is both a father [of Patrocles] and not a father [of Socrates].

Socrates---for the third time---anticipates the sophist's move, insisting on restoring the appropriate qualifiers above (298a1); but the penny eventually drops, even for the likes of Dionysodorus. The sophist---at long last---hits upon a work-around, substituting for premise (3) above,

- 3\*. Therefore, Chaeredemus is *other than* a father [of Socrates]. (298a1-2)

It is evident that the sophist's aim in doing so is the introduction of a new locution---'other than' (ἕτερος with the genitive, 298a1-2)---by means of which he may neutralize---or appear to neutralize---Socrates' tiresome habit of restoring qualifiers. For when Socrates patiently rejects (3)\* (Chaeredemus is other than *his* father, at any rate, 298a2), Dionysodorus blithely ignores this refusal, supplying a brief inductive argument for premise (7) below:

4. If x is other than a stone, then x is not a stone. (298a5-7)
5. If x is other than gold, then x is not gold. (298a7)
6. Therefore, for all x and F, if x is other than F, then x is not-F (i.e., *simpliciter*).  
[Implied].
7. Therefore, if x is other than a father, then x is not a father (i.e., *simpliciter*).  
(298a8-9)



Having thus ‘established’ the latter premise, he arrives at his desired conclusion on its basis:

8. Therefore, Chaeredemus is not a father (i.e., *simpliciter*).
9. Therefore, Chaeredemus both is a father (*simpliciter*) and is not a father (*simpliciter*) [Implied].

Euthydemus caps off the series, chiming in that if on the other hand Chaeredemus *is* a father, then ‘Sophroniscus, being other than a father, is not a father, so that you, Socrates, are without a father.’ (298b1-3). I take it the sophist means: if Socrates tries to object with the same qualification he attempted before, i.e., that Chaeredemus *is* a father, but he is just not the father of Socrates, Euthydemus will interpret the objection as an admission that Socrates is at any rate fatherless with respect to Chaeredemus; he will then rerun the argument above for Sophroniscus to show that Socrates is also fatherless with respect to his own father---a conclusion to which, the sophist supposes, Socrates may no longer object ‘he is a father, but not the father of mine.’

The absolute beginner in dialectic who has been paying attention will nevertheless anticipate the Socratic response: despite Dionysodorus’ novel stratagem, the argument still relies upon an application of *secundum quid*: the sophist plugs (3)\* into the antecedent of (7); but Socrates has rejected (3)\*, and conceded only (3); therefore Dionysodorus’ inductive argument for (6) is irrelevant to the argument, as are the conclusions (7)-(9). The more advanced student would presumably be interested in hearing what Socrates makes of the universal premise that is reached in the induction

itself: for all  $x$  and  $F$ , if  $x$  is other than  $F$ , then  $x$  is not- $F$ . Both types of student are however thrown upon their own resources---at least temporarily---by the interruption of Ctesippus, who ‘taking up’ (ἐκδεξάμενος, 298b4) the argument at this point, does not shut up for nearly three Stephanus pages---throughout which, significantly, Socrates is completely silent. When Socrates finally breaks his silence (at 300e1), he asks a question which Dionysodorus transforms into a sophism which turns upon the very principle (other than  $F \rightarrow \text{not-}F$ ) introduced in the present argument. The Socratic response to the principle is thus not neglected, but merely postponed; yet we may suppose in that case that Ctesippus’ own disinterest in its examination constitutes a pointed example of the manner in which Ctesippus’ dialectical intervention is subtly criticized by Plato in the present episode.<sup>195</sup>

The objections Ctesippus does raise to the argument have received generally positive reviews by commentators.<sup>196</sup> Close examination of these objections however reveals that Plato cannot have shared their enthusiasm:

Here Ctesippus took up the argument, saying, ‘Well, isn’t your father in just the same situation? Isn’t he other than my father?’

Far from it, said Euthydemus.

What! Is he the same?, he asked.

The same, certainly.

I should not agree with that. But tell me, Euthydemus, is he just my father, or the father of everyone else as well?

Of everyone else as well, he replied. Or do you think the same man is both a father and not a father?

I was certainly of that opinion, said Ctesippus.

What, he said---do you think that a thing can be both gold and not gold? Or both a man and not a man?

<sup>195</sup> The Socratic response to the principle is analyzed below, Chapter Six, sections 6.2-6.3.

<sup>196</sup> Cp. Hawtrey, op.cit., 163-164; Sprague, op.cit., 49; Canto (1989), 220.

But perhaps, Euthydemus, said Ctesippus, you are not uniting flax with flax (οὐ λίνον λίνῳ συνάπτεις), as the proverb has it.<sup>197</sup> Because you are making an alarming statement if you say your father is the father of all. (298b4-298c8).

It is perhaps natural to suppose that Ctesippus' final complaint---that the sophist 'is not joining flax with flax' (298c6)---amounts precisely to the Socratic objection to the fallacy of *secundum quid*. This would be so if he invokes the proverb in order to point out that whereas the predicates 'gold', 'man' (and 'stone', above, 298a5-7) are not relative terms, 'father' is. In that case Ctesippus objects that by dropping the appropriate *relata* to the latter in the argument, the sophist is in effect insisting upon the similarity of cases which are in fact dissimilar: while it is true that x cannot be both gold and not gold, it is true that x can be both a father and not a father, because x can be the father of y, and not the father of z.

Closer inspection however reveals that Ctesippus has not kept pace with Socrates' insight into the sophism. Socrates' anticipatory rejection of (3)\* renders the sophist's induction irrelevant to his denial of the universal fatherhood of fathers; Ctesippus by contrast is drawn into the induction, and attempts to bring an objection against the universal premise reached at (6): for all x and F, if x is other than F, then x is not-F. In raising a proper objection to a universal premise reached by induction, it is of course not necessary to argue that it is universally false; it is sufficient to bring counterexamples---or at least one---against its claim to be universally true.<sup>198</sup> Ctesippus' only 'counterexample' however is the very conclusion at which Dionysodorus aims. In that case, in claiming that

<sup>197</sup> The proverb is used to criticize those who would maintain as similar cases which are not similar; cp. Aris.*Phys.*III.6 207a17 (of Melissus): Οὐ γὰρ λίνον λίνῳ συνάπτειν ἔστι τῷ ἅπαντι καὶ ὅλῳ τὸ ἄπειρον.

<sup>198</sup> Cp.*Topics* VIII 157b28-33: 'The premises which are of this type are those that are true about some things and false about others: for it is in these cases that it is possible to subtract and leave behind a true remainder. But if you put forward a premise about many cases and he [i.e., the answerer] brings no objection, then he is expected to concede it, for a premise is dialectical if it holds of many cases and there is no objection against it.'

the sophist is not uniting ‘flax with flax’, Ctesippus merely weakly insists that the sophist’s general principle does not hold of the conclusion which he denies, without offering to demarcate a larger class of cases which, in virtue of some common feature, falls outside the sophist’s universal premise.<sup>199</sup>

Moreover, it is surely impossible to believe that Plato congratulates Ctesippus on lessons learned by crediting him with the further objection:

Or do you think the same man is both a father and not a father?

I was certainly of that opinion, said Ctesippus. (298c2-4)

On the contrary: having borne witness to no less than three (and implicitly, four) more examples of the proper solution to *secundum quid*---examples in *addition* to the lessons of the OA and the AOA of the preceding section---Ctesippus should know that this is precisely how he should *not* answer the sophist’s claim to have legitimately arrived at an unqualified instance of a violation of PNC. So far from having benefitted from Socrates’ instruction, it is small wonder that Ctesippus’ remaining objections descend once again to the mere generation of paradoxes, e.g., isn’t the sophist’s father in the same case? (298b4-5). Indeed, as their exchange continues, it would seem that Ctesippus has not yet even learned that one cannot play the dozens with the sophist and win:

Because you are making an alarming (δεινὸν) statement if you say your father is the father of all.

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<sup>199</sup> Cp. *Topics* VIII 2 157a21-29: ‘In some cases, it is possible for a person performing an induction to put the universal as a question. In other cases, however, this is not easy because a common name has not been assigned to all similarities; rather, when people have to obtain the universal, they say ‘thus in all such cases’. But this is one of the most difficult of things, to determine which of the cases brought forward are ‘such’ and which are not. It is also by this means that people often hoodwink one another in arguments, some saying that things are similar when they are really not and others protesting that similar things are not similar.’ The sophist of course exploits the fact that there is no familiar ‘common name’ for the items in his induction base in his attempt to persuade Ctesippus and the audience that fathers are a similar case. However, the auditors Aristotle describes would have been familiar with answerers who attempt to evade the universal conclusion of an induction by *falsely* complaining that ‘the cases are not similar’. (Cp. also *SE* 17 175a40-175b8 on this point). Hence it is imperative for Ctesippus to articulate the source of the dissimilarity in question, as Socrates does, if he wants to a) specify the solution to the sophist’s fallacy and b) convince the audience that he has not been refuted.

But he is, he replied.

Just of men, said Ctesippus, or of horses and all the other animals?

All of them, he said.

And is your mother their mother?

Yes, she is.

And is your mother the mother of sea urchins?

Yes, and so is yours, he said.

So you are the brother of gudgeons and puppies and piglets.

Yes, and so are you, he said.

And your father turns out to be a boar and a dog?

And so does yours, he said (298c7-298d6).

Plato does not therefore endorse the objections Ctesippus raises to this series of sophisms. To suppose that he does is to misunderstand the true pedagogical purpose of Ctesippus' intervention: Socrates presumably knows what he is about; Ctesippus is a less reliable guide, and his intrusion forces the learner to guess at the game that is played: are all of the fallacies in the series of a piece, i.e., the *same* fallacy? Or is one of these things--the Other than  $F \rightarrow \text{Not-}F$  argument---*not* like the others, and a fallacy of a different *type*? In either case, is Ctesippus' objection to the final argument a sound one?

What is more, Ctesippus' performance in our present passage shall lead him to the commission of a deeper error in the next. I have suggested that insofar as Ctesippus has a *reason* for rejecting the induction above---that is, insofar as he is not being merely cantankerous---it is because he insists that the argument's universal premise, while true of the items in the induction base, is simply false of fathers:

If x is other than a stone, then x is not a stone.

If x is other than gold, then x is not gold.

Therefore, for all x and F, if x is other than F, then x is not-F.

- (i) Therefore, if x is other than a man, then x is not a man. (TRUE).
- (ii) Therefore, if x is other than a father [of y], x is not a father. (FALSE)

The inadequacy of this response suggests that Ctesippus is insufficiently sensitive to the logical *form* in which the sophist casts (and recasts) conceded premises. In that case, we should not be surprised to discover in Ctesippus a disposition to solve fallacies that are in fact due to the form of an argument by appeal to quite another cause---namely, a difference in the *signification* of the argument's terms. As we shall see, it is precisely this disposition that is dramatized in the next series of arguments, as Ctesippus undergoes a two-fold transformation: from an opponent to a producer of fallacy; and from an inept diagnostician of fallacy to an advocate of its *false resolution*.

### 5.3 The Dog Fallacy

The sophist's interlocutor has refused to admit that he is the brother of puppies and the son of a dog. No worries: the always eager Dionysodorus obligingly promises to extract the admission, if only Ctesippus will continue to answer his questions (298d7-8). Though he aims at the same conclusion, the sophist now adopts a completely new tactic

towards its acquisition: Ctesippus owns a dog; this dog has puppies; so it is a father;  
therefore

Since he is a father he is yours, so that the dog turns out to be your father, and you are the brother of puppies, aren't you? (Οὐκοῦν πατήρ ὢν σὸς ἔστιν, ὥστε σὸς πατήρ γίγνεται ὁ κύων καὶ σὺ κυναρίων ἀδελφός, 298e4-5).

If that is not enough to satisfy Ctesippus, what more does he want? Perhaps more of the same:

Do you beat this dog (of yours)? (τύπτεις τὸν κύνα τούτον, 298e8)  
And Ctesippus laughed and said, Heavens yes, since I can't beat you!  
Then do you beat your own father? (Οὐκοῦν τὸν σαυτοῦ πατέρα...τύπτεις, 298e9-10).

The sophist has thus evidently argued as follows:

- (1) The dog is yours.
- (2) The dog is a father.
- (3) Therefore, the dog is your father.
  
- (1)\* The dog is your father.
- (2)\* The dog is beaten by Ctesippus.
- (3)\* Therefore, your father is beaten by Ctesippus.

To this pair of arguments Ctesippus offers neither petulant resistance nor a reasoned solution, but only good-natured surrender (298e8-9; 299a1-2). Socrates of course will not break his silence for another two Stephanus pages. The fallacy is, *prima facie*, different in kind from any previously encountered in the dialogue. What then is Plato's opinion of its nature? What is his view as to its proper resolution? Or---given Plato's silence in our passage---is the proper conclusion to draw that Plato is agnostic on

both counts? Perhaps he includes the pair of sophisms in the dialogue precisely because, being puzzled by them himself, he invites the more advanced student of dialectic to share in his puzzlement.

Of course one of Plato's advanced students who did go home and think these arguments over was Aristotle. The reader of the *Sophistici Elenchi* will recognize the first 'dog' fallacy above as an example which Aristotle classifies as *παρὰ τὸ συμβεβηκός*, i.e., as depending on the fallacy of Accident:

All arguments such as the following depend upon Accident: '...Is the dog your father?'... (εἰσὶ δὲ πάντες οἱ τοιοῖδε τῶν λόγων παρὰ τὸ συμβεβηκός· "...σὸς ὁ κύων πατήρ;", SE 24, 179a34-35).

"If this is a father, and it is yours"... ("εἰ ὅδε ἐστὶ πατήρ, ἔστι δὲ σός", 179b14-15; cp. 179b39).

Aristotle also classifies as cases of Accident a number of other examples which are exact parallels of the dog fallacy:

'Is the statue your work (of art)?' ('ἄρ' ὁ ἀνδριὰς σὸν ἐστὶν ἔργον;', 179a34).

....(the syllogisms) that (someone) is your father or son or slave, τοὺς συλλογισμούς ὅτι σὸς ἐστὶ πατήρ ἢ υἱὸς ἢ δοῦλος, 179b39.

'Is this yours?' 'Yes.' 'And is this a child?' [Yes]. 'Then this is your child', because he happens to be both yours and a child; but he is not *your child*. (ἄρ' ἐστὶ τοῦτο σόν; ναί. ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο τέκνον· σὸν ἄρα τοῦτο τέκνον, ὅτι συμβέβηκεν εἶναι καὶ σὸν καὶ τέκνον· ἀλλ' οὐ σὸν τέκνον. (180a4-7)<sup>200</sup>

Yet we have no right to suppose that Plato shares Aristotle's conception of a fallacy's

<sup>200</sup> Reading the last line with the mss., and the Oxford and Loeb editors, and omitting the quotation marks inserted by most editors. Ross and Wallies transpose the phrases of the last line thus: ἄρ' ἐστὶ τοῦτο σόν; ναί. ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο τέκνον· σὸν ἄρα τοῦτο τέκνον. ἀλλ' οὐ σὸν τέκνον ὅτι συμβέβηκεν εἶναι καὶ σὸν καὶ τέκνον. It is unclear to me at this writing why the latter think the transposition is necessary. Perhaps because they believe the mss. reading puts Aristotle's solution into the mouth of the sophist: 'So this is your son, as we say, on the ground that he is both yours and a child'. But I do not see that it is necessary to attribute Aristotle's insight into the solution of the sophism to the sophist in this manner. Aristotle could simply mean, ' "So this is your child"---the sophist infers, on the basis that he is yours and a child.'



classification, simply on the basis of the fact that a sophism that is expressed in the same formulation of words appears in both Plato's dialogue and the *Sophistici Elenchi*. On the contrary: there are many considerations which severely complicate the question whether Plato conceives of the dog fallacy along Aristotelian lines.

One such consideration is that it is doubtful that Plato has the conceptual resources which Aristotle brings to bear upon his own analysis of the fallacy. It is of course beyond the scope of this project to provide a detailed interpretation of Aristotle's treatment of the fallacy of Accident. For one thing, many of Aristotle's examples of the sophism seem quite remote in kind from the sophism in our text. For another, Aristotle's discussion of these examples is extremely dense; consequently, its interpretation has been the subject of scholarly controversy since ancient times. For our purposes however it will be sufficient to take note of a few of the essential features of Aristotle's analysis of the fallacy.

First, false refutations that depend on Accident violate the following clause of Aristotle's definition of a true refutation:

The conclusion follows necessarily from the premises. (*SE* 167a23-25)

This condition simply requires that there be a relation of *necessary consequence* between the conclusion of a refutation and the premises of its syllogistic subcomponent (i.e., the refutation *sans* answerer's thesis). Aristotle explains how this condition is violated in false refutations due to Accident in the following terms:

Paralogisms, then, that depend on Accident occur whenever any [property] is claimed to belong equally both to a thing and to its accident. For since many things are accidents of the same thing, it is not necessary that all the same things belong to all of a thing's predicates and to that of which they are predicated [i.e., their subject] as well (Οἱ μὲν οὖν παρὰ τὸ συμβεβηκὸς παραλογισμοί

εἰσιν ὅταν ὁμοίως ὅτιοῦν ἀξιωθῇ τῷ πράγματι καὶ τῷ συμβεβηκότι ὑπάρχειν. ἐπεὶ γὰρ τῷ αὐτῷ πολλὰ συμβέβηκεν, οὐκ ἀνάγκη πᾶσι τοῖς κατηγορουμένοις καὶ καθ' οὗ κατηγορεῖται τὰ τὰ πάντα ὑπάρχειν). (SE 5 166b28-32).

The fallacy which Aristotle describes in this text presupposes the validity of the following sort of thought pattern: suppose Socrates is white. Then Socrates is a white *thing*; moreover, Socrates is numerically the *same* as this white thing. But then any further property that holds of Socrates must hold of the white thing which he is; and contrariwise, any further property that holds of the white thing which he is must hold of Socrates. That is to say, 'it is claimed that a property belongs equally to a thing and to its accident'. The term 'accident' here clearly serves as short-hand for Aristotle's peculiar notion of an accidental compound---in our example, Socrates + white, not merely the accident *being white*.<sup>201</sup> As we learned in our encounter with Aristotle's discussion of Antisthenian λόγοι, it is Aristotle's view that if being white and being seated are accidents predicable of the substance Socrates, then there exist accidental compounds of these accidents and the substance in which they inhere---e.g., Socrates + white, or 'the white thing', Socrates + seated, or 'the seated thing'.<sup>202</sup> Such accidental compounds are not the same in *being* or *definition* as the substance in which they inhere; neither are they *identical* with their corresponding substances. Nevertheless, they are the same in *number*; for the peculiar entities Socrates seated and the white thing are *accidentally* the same Socrates; and accidental sameness is in Aristotle's view a species of numerical sameness. Thus the principle that is assumed to necessitate the relation of consequence in cases of Accident may be glossed as follows: where any accident  $\phi$  is predicated of some subject

<sup>201</sup> This is noted by Lewis (1991), 100, n.27; Peterson (1969), 118, n.40 notes that Aristotle's references to 'Coriscus' accident' in the famous masker paradox of SE 24 179a26-b7 must be to 'the one approaching', not 'approaching'.

<sup>202</sup> See above, Chapter 3.4, 140-141.

$a$ , the subject  $a$  and the accidental compound  $a + \phi$  share all of their properties in common. Or slightly more formally:

$$(PAS): a \text{ is accidentally the same as } a + \phi^1 \rightarrow (\phi^2(a) \leftrightarrow \phi^2(a + \phi^1)).^{203}$$

The conclusion of a false refutation that depends on Accident may be either true or false; but in no case will the conclusion follow of necessity from the premises. Thus the following example of the fallacy would seem to feature an argument with true premises and a false conclusion:

If then there is no syllogism as regards an accident, a refutation does not come about... Nor, if the triangle has its angles equal to two right-angles, and it is accidental to it (συμβέβηκε δ' αὐτῷ, 168b1) to be a figure or an element or starting point, it is not because it is a figure or a starting point or element that it is this. For the demonstration is not *qua* figure or *qua* element, but *qua* triangle. Likewise also in other cases. So that if refutation is a sort of syllogism, the [syllogism] according to accident (κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς could not be a refutation. (SE 6 168a40-168b5)

Selecting the predication of *being a figure* of triangle from Aristotle's three options, we may construct the following fallacy of Accident on the basis of this passage:

- (1) The triangle necessarily has the sum of its interior angles equal to two right angles.
- (2) The triangle is the figure.
- (3) Therefore, the figure necessarily has the sum of its interior angles equal to two right angles.<sup>204</sup>

<sup>203</sup> I have borrowed this formulation of the principle directly from Lewis, op. cit., 113, who however designates the principle 'Strong (S1)'.

<sup>204</sup> The same formulation of the argument appears in Lewis, op.cit., 121, who notes that this construal is 'an idealization of that in Aristotle's text'. This is true, since the term ἀνάγκη (necessarily/of necessity) does not appear in the Greek.

According to Aristotle, the thought-pattern behind the inference is that if the triangle *is* a figure, it is accidentally the same as the accidental compound triangle + figure; in which case by (PAS) it is inferred that the 2R property holds of its ‘accident’ as well:

- (1)\* The triangle necessarily has the sum of its interior angles equal to two right angles.
- (2)\* The triangle is accidentally the same as the triangle + figure.
- (3)\* Therefore, the triangle + figure necessarily has the sum of its interior angles equal to two right angles.<sup>205</sup>

However, a syllogism that depends on Accident may also issue in a true conclusion, as Aristotle seems to be concerned to point out in the following text:

If then there is no syllogism as regards an accident, a refutation does not come about. For if these things being [so] it is necessary that this is [so] (and this is white), there is no necessity that it is white on account of the syllogism. (εἰ οὖν μὴ ἔστι συλλογισμὸς τοῦ συμβεβηκότος, οὐ γίνεται ἔλεγχος. οὐ γὰρ εἰ τούτων ὄντων ἀνάγκη τόδ’ εἶναι (τοῦτο δ’ ἐστὶ λευκόν), ἀνάγκη λευκὸν εἶναι διὰ τὸν συλλογισμόν (SE 6 168a37-40).

The example Aristotle seems to have in mind is evidently a parallel of sorts to the triangle example above, which immediately succeeds it in the text.<sup>206</sup> Thus just as the first premise of the triangle example may be imagined to have been produced by syllogistic reasoning (in fact, a scientific demonstration), so the present example begins with the

<sup>205</sup> Robert Bolton has suggested to me that the syllogism Aristotle has in mind here may be rather:

- (1) The triangle is accidentally the same as the triangle + figure.
- (2) The triangle + figure necessarily has the sum of its interior angles equal to two right angles.
- (3) Therefore, the triangle necessarily has the sum of its interior angles equal to two right angles.

It is true that the fact that my premise (1)\* is introduced by the conditional ‘if’ (εἰ, 168a40) does not necessitate our taking it as a premise of the argument, as opposed to the conclusion. However, I believe taking (1)\* as a premise rather than the conclusion (which is standard) makes better sense of the second example of the fallacy in the passage. For discussion of the second example, see next page.

<sup>206</sup> Note that the two cases are linked in the text by the connective οὐδέ (‘nor’), 168a40.

supposition that a certain conclusion has been produced by a legitimate syllogistic inference ('suppose these things being (so) it is *necessary* that this is (so)'); moreover, as in the triangle example, we are to suppose next that some accident is predicated of the subject of this initial syllogistic inference ('and suppose this is white'); it follows that (as in the triangle case) this subject is accidentally the same as 'its accident'---in this case, 'the white thing' or 'this (τοῦτο) + white'. A fallacy of Accident that runs through assumptions of this sort could then be constructed along the following lines (where 'FG' designates some *definiens* in terms of genus and differentiae):

- (1) (Therefore), this swan is an FG.<sup>207</sup>
- (2) This swan is white.
- (3) Therefore, this swan is accidentally the same as (this) swan + white.
- (4) Therefore, (this) swan + white is an FG.
- (5) Therefore, this swan is a white FG.

However incontrovertibly true the conclusion that *this* swan is a white FG, there is as Aristotle observes no necessity that it is white 'on account of the syllogism'. The fault is not that syllogisms that depend on Accident illegitimately combine accidental and essential predications in a single deductive inference; for this is not true of most of Aristotle's examples of Accident (it is not true e.g., of the dog fallacy); the fault rather is

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<sup>207</sup> I employ a case involving the accident being white and a swan because Aristotle seems to allude to such an example of Accident in a subsequent passage (*SE* 6 168b27-35), where he is discussing the difference between the fallacies of Accident and Consequent: 'Those [false refutations] that depend upon the consequent are a branch of Accident: for the consequent is an accident. But it differs from the accident [in this], that it is possible to obtain [an admission of] the accident in the case of one thing only, for example that the yellow thing and honey are the same thing, and that the white thing and a swan [are the same thing], whereas [obtaining an admission] that depends on the consequent always involves more than one thing', etc.

that the accumulation of predications in the conclusion is traceable once again to the dubious principle (PAS).<sup>208</sup>

Though the dog fallacy issues in a false conclusion, it shares an instructive feature with the fallacy above:

- (1) The dog is yours.
- (2) The dog is a father.
- (3) Therefore, the dog is your father.

The conclusion as formulated above is that which is articulated by the sophist in Plato's text (298e4-5): the complex predicate 'being your father' is predicated of the subject, Ctesippus' dog. The same formulation of the conclusion is found in Aristotle's remarks on the fallacy (or its various doubles):

All arguments such as the following depend upon Accident: '...Is the dog your father?...?' (σὸς ὁ κύων πατήρ, *SE* 24, 179a34-35).

'Is the statue your work (of art)?' ('ἄρ' ὁ ἀνδριᾶς σὸν ἐστὶν ἔργον;', 179a34)

'Is this yours?' 'Yes.' 'And is this a child?' [Yes]. 'Then this is your child', because he happens to be both yours and a child; but he is not *your child*. (ἄρ' ἐστὶ τοῦτο σὸν; ναί. ἐστὶ δὲ τοῦτο τέκνον· σὸν ἄρα τοῦτο τέκνον, ὅτι συμβέβηκεν εἶναι καὶ σὸν καὶ τέκνον· ἀλλ' οὐ σὸν τέκνον. (180a4-7)

<sup>208</sup> I take it therefore that it is simply for the purpose of dramatizing the invalidity of syllogisms based on Accident that Aristotle chooses to illustrate the fallacy with examples which do feature both essential and accidental predications. It is also important to note that he is concerned to remark at the end of this passage in *SE* 6 that even knowledgeable experts and men of science are tripped up by the sophism, due to their inexperience in the art of argumentation: 'But it is due to this that even experts and men of science [or: men who know, ἐπιστήμονες] are refuted by the unscientific [or: the ignorant]; for they construct their syllogisms based on Accident against men who know; and these men through an inability to draw distinctions either concede [a premise] upon being asked [for it] or are taken to have conceded it when they have not conceded it.' (168b5-10). In that case we should not be surprised to find that certain of Aristotle's examples involve a combination of essential or *per se* predications with accidental predications.

On Aristotle's analysis of the fallacy however, the term 'father' would seem to move into subject position:

- (1)\* The dog is yours.
- (2)\* The dog is a father.
- (3)\* Therefore, the dog is accidentally the same as the dog + father.
- (3)\* Therefore, the dog + father is yours.

This peculiarity may however be explained by comparison with the manner in which the eristic reasoner helps himself to the conclusion of the swan argument above: on the basis of the assumption that the dog that is a father is yours, it is concluded that the dog is your father.

Aristotle's advice to answerers confronted with fallacies due to Accident is to deny that the conclusion follows. But they must do more than this if they would provide a genuine *solution* to the sophism:

Against [false refutations] that depend on Accident, one and the same solution meets all cases. For since it is indefinite on what occasion one ought to say [some property] belongs to a subject when it belongs to an accident [of the subject], and [since] in some cases it is widely believed to hold and people say that it does, while in other cases people deny that it is necessary [that it belong], one ought then to declare as soon as the conclusion has been drawn against all [such cases] alike that it is not necessary, though one ought to be able to produce the 'such'...For it is evident in all these cases that it is not necessary that what is true of the accident [of the subject] be true of the subject; for it is only for things that are indistinguishable and one in being that all of the same things are held to belong. (SE 24 179a26-39)<sup>209</sup>

Aristotle has been taken to task by some of his commentators for claiming in this text that

<sup>209</sup> Πρὸς δὲ τοὺς παρὰ τὸ συμβεβηκὸς μία μὲν ἡ αὐτὴ λύσις πρὸς ἅπαντας. ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἀδιόριστόν ἐστι τὸ πότε λεκτέον ἐπὶ τοῦ πράγματος ὅταν ἐπὶ τοῦ συμβεβηκόντος ὑπάρχη, καὶ ἐπ' ἐνίων μὲν δοκεῖ καὶ φασίν, ἐπ' ἐνίων δ' οὐ φασιν ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι, ῥητέον οὖν συμβιβασθέντος ὁμοίως πρὸς ἅπαντας ὅτι οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον, ἔχειν δὲ δεῖ προφέρειν τὸ οἶον...φανερὸν γὰρ ἐν ἅπασιν τούτοις ὅτι οὐκ ἀνάγκη τὸ κατὰ τοῦ συμβεβηκόντος καὶ κατὰ τοῦ πράγματος ἀληθεύεσθαι· μόνοις γὰρ τοῖς κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν ἀδιαφόροις καὶ ἐν οὖσιν ἅπαντα δοκεῖ ταῦτα ὑπάρχειν.

sometimes syllogisms based on Accident are conclusive and sometimes they are not, without providing a criterion for telling these cases apart.<sup>210</sup> I take it however that Aristotle says here that *all* deductions that presuppose (PAS) as a licensing principle of inference are asyllogistic; hence *all* such arguments must be met by the objection that the conclusion does not follow. The claim that it is ‘indefinite’ (ἁδιόριστον, 179a27) when one ought to *say* some property belongs to a subject when it belongs to its accident (or vice versa) is not equivalent to the claim that it is indefinite whether a property *does* belong equally to a subject and to its accident *as a result of the syllogism*. The point of Aristotle’s observation rather is that across the spectrum of false refutations due to Accident, there is widespread *disagreement* about whether the conclusion *does* follow: indeed, as Aristotle has already observed (*SE* 6 168b5-10), even experts and men of science can be convinced (however fleetingly) that they have been refuted by fallacies due to Accident; moreover, the fact that the sophism may proceed from true premises to a true conclusion also confers the appearance of genuine refutation to syllogisms of this type.

Aristotle’s allusion to this disagreement is therefore advanced in aid of explaining why it is *not* sufficient to solve the fallacy merely by objecting that the conclusion does not follow. The reason for this insufficiency is that people can disagree whether the conclusion *does* follow; hence if the answerer would not be taken for being cantankerous or naïve, he must be prepared to subsume the *particular* syllogism with which he is confronted under a *general* description.<sup>211</sup> In Aristotle’s phrase, this general description

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<sup>210</sup> This charge is leveled against Aristotle by e.g. Poste (1866), 158, Bueno (1988), 12, and Kapp (1975), 44.

<sup>211</sup> Here it is important to remind ourselves that it was evidently an expected practice in eristic combat that the answerer would object that the conclusion does not follow (cp. *Topics* VIII 10, 161a1-15 on the various



must articulate the ‘such’ (οἷον, 179a31); that is, it must formulate an objection in the following terms: ‘the conclusion does not follow, for in all arguments of *such* a type the conclusion does not follow’.<sup>212</sup> The ‘such’ in question is the presupposition of the truth of (PAS); for it is only if the reliance of cases of Accident upon it is specified that the inconsequence of such syllogisms can be truly *explained*. As Aristotle implies, the form that such an explanation of inconsequence will take will involve the drawing of a *distinction* between the unasked-for premise (PAS) and the principle which the answerer will have taken himself to have implicitly conceded in its place: it is only to things that are the same in *being*---not merely accidentally the same---to which we hold that all the same properties belong;<sup>213</sup> or more formally:

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devices answerers may employ to impede questioners from reaching their conclusion); so merely insisting that it does not will not cut much ice as a solution, unless one is prepared to explain why it does not follow.

<sup>212</sup> For this interpretation of this sort of formula in another context see *Topics* VIII 2 157a21-25: in obtaining a universal premise by induction, if no common name has been assigned to the items in the inductive base, one must resort to the claim, ‘and thus in all such cases (οὕτως ἐπὶ πάντων τῶν τοιούτων)...but this is one of the most difficult things to determine, which of the cases brought forward (προφερομένων) are of this sort and which are not of this sort (τοιαῦτα καὶ ὅποια οὐ)’.

<sup>213</sup> A fuller defense of this interpretation of Aristotle’s remarks on the solution to Accident is beyond the scope of this chapter; nevertheless, it may be useful to indicate in brief the further abundant textual support for it in *SE*. (1) First, it is supported by Aristotle’s remarks on the solution of false syllogisms in *SE* 18. In this chapter Aristotle divides ‘false’ syllogisms into two categories: those that are syllogistically reasoned but have a false conclusion, and those that are asyllogistic. In the former case they are solved by ‘annihilating’ a premise; but fallacies due to Accident are not syllogistically reasoned; as such they are solved by ‘drawing a distinction’ in a premise. (2) Next it must be observed that in *SE* 8 Aristotle argues that in the case of false refutations due to apparent syllogisms, the appearance that the refutation is genuine is induced by a ‘missing question’ (τὸ ἐνδεές, 169b35); this latter is a false presupposition which the answerer has supplied on his own which he has been induced to assume by the sophist. (For example, in the case of fallacies due to homonymy, the missing question is the false assumption that two terms in the syllogism have the same signification). It seems clear that in the case of apparent syllogisms due to Accident, the only plausible candidate for such a false presupposition is that to which Aristotle alludes in our text: the answerer has presupposed the truth of (PAS); in which case his mistake is to be explained by drawing a distinction between this false assumption and (PSB). Alternatively, by the ‘such’ Aristotle may simply have in mind the production of a ‘counterexample’: that is, an argument which has the same logical form but true premises and a false conclusion. However, apart from ignoring the evidence of *SE* 18 and 8, this mode of solution would seem to be of little utility in those cases where it is already clear that the premises of the argument are true and the conclusion false; for if it is evident that the argument is inconclusive, the game is to explain *why* it is so. Moreover, even a solution of such a type would not seem to count as truly explanatory unless the *grounds* of the similarity in logical form were exposed; but the grounds of the similarity would seem to be, as Aristotle suggests, the assumption of (PAS).

(PSB): If  $x$  is numerically the same in being as  $y$ , then  $\phi$  is a property of  $x$  iff  $\phi$  is a property of  $y$ .<sup>214</sup>

Now it is obvious that the theoretical apparatus which informs Aristotle's account of the fallacy of Accident is nowhere in evidence in Plato's *Euthydemus*. The first difficulty which consequently invests the question of Plato's conception of the dog fallacy is equally obvious. Assuming that Plato even has a positive account of the fallacy, what is the textual evidence that this is so? If he has such an account, where does he indicate that he would classify the argument as a fallacy 'due to Accident'? Moreover, even if Plato does conceive of the dog fallacy as dependent on Accident, in the absence of the Aristotelian apparatus that is brought to bear on its solution in the *Sophistici Elenchi*, what reason do we have to suppose that Plato does not have his own ('Platonic' or 'proto-Aristotelian') notion of the proper resolution of the fallacy of Accident?

A second complication to our interpretative puzzle arises directly out the first: why should we suppose that Plato conceives of the dog fallacy as dependent on Accident, as opposed to some *other* cause of false refutation? This question is not only a natural one to ask; it is inescapable in the light of evidence we possess regarding the views of Plato's contemporary theorizers on fallacy. Thus in Chapter 10 of the *Sophistici Elenchi*, Aristotle reports that some (unnamed) theorists argued that all apparent refutations are 'dependant on language' (παρὰ τὴν λέξιν, 170b38); that is to say, they maintained that the cause of the failure of any refutation to be genuine could be attributed to a multiplicity in signification, in either a term or other significant linguistic unit, in the

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<sup>214</sup> Cp. Lewis, op.cit., 121, who designates the principle '(S2)'.

sophism.<sup>215</sup> Aristotle also reports that certain of his contemporaries (he does not say whether they are the same lot as the former) brought this thesis to bear upon the very sophism that confronts us at *Euthydemus* 298e3-5. These thinkers, Aristotle tells us, argued that the dog fallacy and fallacies like it were cases of *double signification* (τὸ διττῶ); as such, the answerer's task in resolving the sophism was to draw a distinction in the signification of some term or expression in the argument. Aristotle of course disagrees with their analysis:<sup>216</sup>

Some people also solve these syllogisms by means of double [signification] (τὸ διττῶ), for example the [syllogism] that a father or son or slave is yours. Yet it is evident that if a refutation is apparent due to [something] being said in many ways (παρὰ τὸ πολλαχῶς λέγεσθαι), it is necessary that the name (τοῦνομα) or the expression (τὸν λόγον) [in question] must be [said] in the strict sense (κυρίως) in more than one [way]. But no one says in the strict sense that this one here is the child of that one (τὸ δὲ τόνδ' εἶναι τοῦδε τέκνον οὐδεὶς λέγει κυρίως), if he is the master of the child (εἰ δεσπότης ἐστὶ τέκνου), rather, the combination depends upon Accident (ἀλλὰ παρὰ τὸ συμβεβηκὸς ἢ σύνθεσις ἐστίν). 'Is this yours?' 'Yes.' 'And is this a child?' [Yes]. 'Then this is your child', because he happens to be both yours and a child; but he is not *your child*. (ἄρ' ἐστὶ τοῦτο σόν; ναί. ἐστὶ δὲ τοῦτο τέκνον· σόν ἄρα τοῦτο τέκνον, ὅτι συμβέβηκεν εἶναι καὶ σόν καὶ τέκνον· ἀλλ' οὐ σόν τέκνον. (SE 24 179b38-180a7)<sup>217</sup>

Aristotle's point here is that if the cause of a refutation's failure to be genuine is due to the double signification of either a name or other linguistic unit, then each such signification must be recognizably *standard* in the language in question.<sup>218</sup> This is a test

<sup>215</sup> The thesis that all paralogisms depend on 'the name' (170b13), or on 'signifying more than one thing' (πλείω σημαίνοντος, b20) (a thesis evidently rejected elsewhere in *SE* (177b7-9)), is related in *SE* 10 to the distinct thesis that all arguments may be categorized as either 'directed at the name' (πρὸς τοῦνομα) or 'directed at the thought' (πρὸς τὴν διάνοιαν) [i.e., of the answerer]. *SE* 10 is largely devoted to undermining the latter thesis. Aristotle does not specify what he takes the logical relationship between the two theses to be (if any); but it seems natural to suppose that while the thesis that all false refutations are due to double signification does not entail the thesis that all arguments may be classified as either 'directed at the name' or 'directed at the thought', the entailment does hold in the other direction. Aristotle also does not specify the originators of the ὄνομα/διάνοια thesis, or whether they were identical to theorists who maintained the view that all paralogisms are due to double signification.

<sup>216</sup> It is possible to find modern defenders of this analysis of the dog fallacy and its kin, e.g. Schreiber (2003), 126-128.

<sup>217</sup> See note 9 above on my rejection of Ross and Wallies' transposition of phrases in this text.

<sup>218</sup> Thus the sophism, 'Things that must be (τὰ δέοντα) are good; evils must be (δέοντα); therefore, evils are good' (*SE* 4 165b34-35) is according to Aristotle due to homonymy 'because the phrase τὸ δέον is double (διττὸν), [it signifies] both what is inevitable (ἀναγκαῖον), which happens often with evils too (for some evil is inevitable)---while we also say of good things that they are needful (δέοντα).'

which the μανθάνειν fallacies of the *Euthydemus* pass. For as Socrates informs Cleinias,

You did not realize that people use the word ‘learn’ (μανθάνειν) not only in the situation in which a person who has no knowledge of a thing in the beginning acquires it later, but also when he who has this knowledge already uses it to inspect the same thing, whether this is something spoken or something done. (Though as a matter of fact, people call the latter ‘to understand’ (συνιέναι) rather than ‘to learn’, but they do sometimes call it ‘to learn’ as well). Now this, as they are pointing out, had escaped your notice---that the same word is applied to opposite sorts of men, to both the man who knows and the man who does not. (277e5-278a7)

It is however a test which the ‘child’ fallacy fails. The latter---an obvious double of the dog fallacy---runs:

(1) This is yours. (Addressed to a δεσπότης, a master of a household and its slaves).

(2) This is a child (τέκνον).

Therefore, this child is yours / this is your child.

The paradoxical conclusion reached in this sophism is that a boy-slave is the son of a master who is not the child’s father, but merely his owner: as in the dog fallacy, an item that began life as mere piece of property in the premise set is transformed in the conclusion into a family member. What Aristotle reports here is that some theorists attempted to solve this fallacy by claiming to detect a double signification in the combination of the terms ‘yours’ and ‘child’. On its own---as in premise (1)---the name ‘yours’ signifies possession. Similarly, taken by itself---as in premise (2)---the name ‘child’ signifies ‘offspring’. The claim of Aristotle’s theoretical opponent is that when these two names are combined---‘your child’---an expression (λόγος) results that renders the conclusion of the argument doubly significant:

‘This child is yours’: **This is your property / This is your offspring.**

It is important to the ‘double meaning’ theorist’s account that the conclusion may be phrased in such a way as to produce the requisite combined expression, ‘your child’. (σὸν ἄρα τοῦτο τέκνον: then this child is yours. τοῦτο ἄρα σὸν τέκνον: then this is your child. Cp. *SE* 180a7: ἀλλ’ οὐ σὸν τέκνον: but he is not *your child*). For Aristotle himself recognizes a sub-class of fallacies due to double meaning which involve such ‘combined expressions’:

And there are three modes of [false refutations] that depend on homonymy and amphiboly. (1) One, when either the phrase (λόγος) or the name (τοῦνομα) signifies more than one thing in the strict sense (κυρίως), for example ‘eagle’ (ἄετος) and ‘dog’ (κύων).<sup>219</sup> (2) [Another] one, when by custom we speak in this way;<sup>220</sup> (3) and third, when a compound expression (τὸ συντεθὲν) signifies more than one thing (πλείω σημαίνει), but when separated [signifies] simply (κεχωρισμένον δὲ ἀπλῶς). For example, ‘knowing letters’ (ἐπίσταται γράμματα); For each [name], as it may be, signifies one thing, viz., ‘knowing’ and ‘letters’; but both together signify more than one [thing] (ἄμφω δὲ πλείω), either that the letters themselves have knowledge or that someone else has [knowledge] of the letters. (*SE* 4 166a14-21).<sup>221</sup>

<sup>219</sup> Besides the bird of prey, LSJ includes the following senses of ‘ἄετος’: the standard of an army, the pediment or gable of a building, and a species of fish (*Hist. Anim.* V 5 540b18); the senses of ‘κύων’ include (besides the mammal), the dog-fish or shark (*HA* 566a31), the dog-star, and the ace (the worst throw at dice).

<sup>220</sup> Unfortunately Aristotle does not provide any examples of this class. Moreover, his attempt to delimit it by means of the phrase ὅταν εἰωθότες ὦμεν οὕτω λέγειν (a17) is puzzling, since of course Aristotle holds that *all* names are significant ‘by convention’ (κατὰ συνθήκην, *De Int.* 2 16a19-20). However, he appears to have in mind certain words and expressions whose double signification is so highly idiomatic or dependent on context that even native speakers cannot explain its origin. The standard of an army may have the image of an eagle, the pediment of a building may have outspread ‘wings’, the dog-star is ‘the hound of Orion’; but why do we say ‘the F’ in more than one way? We just do, by custom. Certain euphemisms, puns, and slang expressions may fall into this category. The νοεῖν sophism of *Euthyd.* 287d-e may be another case in point: strictly speaking, we apply the verb to things having soul; by custom however we apply it to certain lifeless things, e.g., linguistic items.

<sup>221</sup> A thorough discussion of this difficult text is of course beyond the scope of the present study. For my purposes it is sufficient to point out that in it Aristotle recognizes a class of homonymous combined expressions whose constituent parts signify ‘simply’ when taken in separation. Beyond this I will add only the following observations. First, the term λόγος (166a15) in Class 1 should be taken to include either entire sentences or those linguistic sub-units of amphibolous sentences which produce amphiboly, since Aristotle has just indicated that he is classifying modes of both homonymous and amphibolous arguments. Thus in principle it should be possible to produce examples of homonymous and amphibolous arguments in all three classes. It does not follow however that we should expect Aristotle’s examples of homonymous and amphibolous arguments in the *SE* to be evenly distributed among all three classes. (Indeed, they are not). Next, Aristotle may be assuming that *because* the constituents of the compound expressions in Class 3 signify simply, they always involve a syntactical ambiguity when combined. This is a natural assumption to make; and if Aristotle does assume this, he may classify a phrase such as ἐπιστήμονα γράμματα (‘knowing letters’) as a Class 3 homonymous expression, while ἐπίσταται γράμματα (‘s/he/it is knowing letters’) will count as a Class 3 amphiboly; moreover, the assumption would also account for most of

The proposed solution of the double meaning theorist is thus that the ‘child’ fallacy is a case of *homonymy*: on the ‘property’ reading of the phrase ‘your child’, the conclusion allegedly follows from the premises, but it is not the genuine contradictory of the master’s denial that the child is his offspring. On the ‘offspring’ reading of the combined expression, the conclusion is the genuine contradictory of this denial, but the conclusion does not follow from the premises. The same solution is then alleged to hold for the sophism’s various doubles: on the ‘property’ reading of the expression ‘your father’, the conclusion of the dog fallacy does not contradict Ctesippus’ heated denial that he is the offspring of a dog; on the ‘offspring’ reading, it does, but there is no syllogism. The only alleged difference between this type of homonymy and more familiar cases such as the *μανθάνειν* fallacies, is that the cause of the homonymy is a ‘combined’, as opposed to a simple, name or phrase.

Aristotle rejects this proposal on the ground that the fallacy does not fall into any of the three sub-classes of homonymy that he recognizes. It does not fall into Class (2), since his opponent is not even attempting to argue that the double meaning turns upon a non-standard coinage. The fallacy does not fall into Class (1), since his opponent *is* maintaining that the double signification in question arises from a compound expression

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Aristotle’s examples of amphiboly in *SE*, which do seem to involve syntactical shifts. (Cp. *SE* 4 166a9-10: the sentence ‘ὃ ὅρα τις, τοῦτο ὅρα’ may mean either ‘that which someone sees, this thing he sees’, or ‘that which someone sees, this thing sees’; if this falls into Class 3, it is because the words *τοῦτο ὅρα* signify more than one thing in combination, but signify ‘simply’ in separation). However, it will not follow that Class 1 homonymous and amphibolous expressions do involve such syntactical transformations (they may or may not); only that their relevant constituent part(s) are irremediably and irreducibly double in signification. Thus Class 1 homonymous arguments will involve the multiple signification of single words (*μανθάνειν*) or phrases (*τὰ δέοντα*, ‘needful things’, 165b35-38; *ὁ κάμνων*, ‘the sick man’, 165b39-166a6); Class 1 amphibolous arguments would then include both sentences such as ‘You saw a fruit fly’, (my example) and ‘Save soap and waste paper’, (Hamblin (1970), 16), but also Herodotus’ famous Croesus prophecy (‘Croesus, by crossing the Halys, will destroy a great realm’). At *Rhet.* III 5 1407a32-39, Aristotle is willing to designate the latter an amphibolous sentence, despite the fact that it does not involve any syntactical ambiguity; *perhaps* because he considers its predicate expression to be irreducibly multiply significant. On amphiboly in the *Euthyd.*, see below Chapter 5.9, 314-320.

(τὸ συντεθέν). But neither does the sophism fall into Class (3); for if it did, there would have to be two standard (κυρίως) senses of the combined expression ‘your child’. Aristotle insists however that there *is* no strict or standard sense in which we use the combined expression ‘your child’ to signify someone’s property: in the strict sense, the phrase signifies only one’s offspring.<sup>222</sup>

Aristotle concludes that the true fact of the matter is that ‘the combination (ἡ σύνθεσις) depends on Accident’. By this last observation Aristotle underscores both the true cause of the appearance of refutation and the true cause of the argument’s failure to constitute a genuine refutation. The refutation does not appear to be genuine because of a double meaning in one of its terms or expressions; for the expression ‘your child’ has only one signification. Rather, the appearance of refutation is due to the apparent *legitimacy* of the combination of the terms ‘yours’ and ‘child’ in the conclusion of the argument: this is *your child*, i.e., your offspring. Similarly, the cause of fallacy is not the double signification of this combined expression. The cause of fallacy is rather the *arrival* at this combination itself: the child is not *your child* merely because he happens to be both a child and yours. Rather, the σύνθεσις reached in the conclusion does not follow, for it presupposes the truth of the dubious principle (PAS).

Aristotle’s intriguing reportage on this fallacy and its doubles indicates that its solution was the subject of considerable controversy. In particular, it informs us that some of Aristotle’s near or actual contemporaries maintained that the fallacy was due to homonymy. Yet if that is so, we have no reason to suppose that Plato was necessarily in the Aristotelian camp regarding its solution; indeed, in the absence of further evidence,

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<sup>222</sup> If I am right in supposing (see previous note) that Class 3 homonymous combined expressions also always involve a syntactic ambiguity, this would constitute another reason for Aristotle to eliminate them from his tripartite classification of homonymous expressions.

we would be equally justified in supposing that Plato is, on the contrary, a target of Aristotle's critique of the homonymy solution.

#### 5.4 Plato's Examination of the Dog Fallacy

If the brief exchange dramatized at *Euthydemus* 298d7-299a2 were Plato's last word on the dog argument, we could make no progress regarding Plato's attitude toward the classification of the sophism. Fortunately for the student of dialectic---both ancient and modern---the passage is very far from being Plato's last word. Indeed, it is my contention that the next series of exchanges between Ctesippus and the sophists constitute a sustained examination of the sophism and the problem of its classification in a taxonomy of fallacy. It will be well to outline the various stages in this examination, since it is complex.

In the first exchange in this series (Medicine and Monsters, Chapter 5.5 below) Ctesippus is for the first time portrayed as answering the brothers' sophisms with sophisms of his own invention. In what follows I shall argue that these responses leave his own insight into the sophisms he confronts an open question. In particular, Plato's aim in the passage is to underscore a doubt he has raised earlier, in the Other than  $F \rightarrow \text{Not-}F$  Argument, regarding Ctesippus' facility in discerning the logical form of a fallacy due to *Secundum Quid*.

The motivation for raising this red flag is divulged in the second encounter in the series. In this passage, (The Gold Fallacy, Chapter 5.6) Ctesippus is confronted with a fallacy that clearly depends on *Secundum Quid*. In the course of responding to this



sophism with sophistical inventions of his own, he misconstrues the gold fallacy, misidentifying it as a case of homonymy. In virtually the same breath, he makes a sudden and enigmatic, but unmistakable, back-reference to the dog fallacy (299e3-299e9). I shall argue below that Ctesippus' remark must be unpacked as follows: He now proposes that the dog fallacy---whose solution had initially escaped him---must similarly be assimilated to the class of false refutations which depend upon double signification. Ctesippus' assimilation of the gold fallacy to homonymy is however implicitly rejected by Plato. It follows that in this exchange, Plato quite deliberately portrays Ctesippus as an unreliable guide in regard to the nature of false refutations that depend on homonymy.

I conclude that in the 'Gold Fallacy' passage, it is Plato's concern to raise, but not to answer, two theoretical questions regarding the proper resolution of the dog fallacy. The first question concerns a matter of classification. Ctesippus is mistaken in his identification of a case of *Secundum Quid* as an instance of homonymy. Is he therefore equally mistaken in his reduction of the dog fallacy to the same category of sophism? The second question concerns method: if it is a matter of controversy whether a false refutation depends on homonymy or not, how does one decide the issue that it does? How does one *settle* the question that it does *not*?

Plato answers neither of these questions, directly or indirectly, in the lengthy passage wherein Ctesippus is in the dialectical spotlight. It is my contention however that Plato returns to address these issues at the conclusion of the dialogue. In his final encounter with the sophists, (The Gold Fallacy, Chapter 5.8 below) Socrates is confronted with a double of the dog fallacy. I shall argue that Plato has embedded in this passage two methodological arguments against the assimilation of this fallacy (and consequently, any

double of it) to homonymy.

The result for Plato's theory of the resolution and classification of fallacy is limited, but nonetheless highly significant. Plato supplies the learner in dialectic with good reasons for regarding the dog fallacy and arguments of the same form as *sui generis*: they are neither instances of homonymy, nor of any other type of fallacy that has been surveyed in the dialogue. Moreover, it is an implication of Plato's rejection of the assimilation of the fallacy to homonymy that there is in his view *no signification* of the argument's terms according to which the conclusion follows from the premises. In consequence, though Plato has nothing like the conceptual apparatus of the *Sophistici Elenchi* at his disposal, he nevertheless arrives at a conception of the fallacy of Accident that is recognizably Aristotelian in at least the following respect: the fallacy of Accident is a type of false refutation that is 'outside of language' (ἔξω τῆς λέξεως, SE 4, 165b24, *passim*); that is to say, the cause of the failure of such arguments to be genuine refutations is due to the argument's form alone.

### 5.5 Medicine and Monsters

Having graciously conceded that his father is a dog, Ctesippus congratulates the sophists' own father. Surely he has derived great benefit from the wisdom of such sons? Euthydemus demurs: his father has no need of such benefits; for no one does, and he will prove it. No has need of many good things (πολλῶν ἀγαθῶν, 299a6-9).

It is initially unclear whether the thesis the sophist means to overturn is the

contradictory of this conclusion (that someone, at least---Ctesippus, for example---needs many good things), or its contrary (that everyone does). As the latter thesis is the more ἔνδοχον, its usurpation would be the greater dialectical prize. Moreover, attacking the universal thesis would provide the sophist the opportunity to overturn a key Socratic premise used earlier in the first protreptic episode (279a1-3: ‘Since we all wish to do well, how are we to do so? Would it be through having many good things?’, πολλὰ καὶ γαθὰ). The arguments which he actually supplies would seem to conclude to the contradictory of the universal affirmative thesis; for Euthydemus appears to argue that not everyone needs many good things, since the sick man and the man at war do not:

Tell me, Ctesippus, do you think it a good thing for a sick man to drink medicine whenever he needs it, or does it seem to you not a good thing? And do you think it good for a man to be armed when he goes to war rather than to go unarmed?...Since you admit that it is a good thing for a man to drink medicine whenever he needs it, then oughtn’t he to drink as much as possible? And won’t it be fine if someone pounds up and mixes him a wagon load of hellebore?...It also follows that since it is a good thing to be armed in war, that a man ought to have as many spears and shields as possible, if it really is a good thing? (299a9-299c3)

Yet if that is so, it is unclear how he imagines that he may gain---even by fallacious means---his stated conclusion (299a6-9), viz., that *no one* needs many good things.

A likely solution to this problem comes into view once we notice that Euthydemus furnishes Ctesippus with not one, but two arguments for the same universal negative conclusion. In that case it is plausible to suppose that the sophist takes himself to be arguing for his stated conclusion by induction: that is, he implies that he can run the same type of argument for any individual, given that it will always be possible to find circumstances or respects in which that which is good without qualification is not good for a particular man in some respect or circumstance.

Euthydemus’ arguments are highly compressed; yet it is evident that for the first time in the dialogue, the fallacy of *a dicto secundum quid ad dictum simpliciter* (hereafter

SQ) is combined with its reverse, *a dicto simpliciter ad dictum secundum quid* (hereafter QS).<sup>223</sup> I offer the following reconstruction. (Square brackets, as usual, indicate the dropping of qualifiers; bold italics are used to indicate the illicit addition of qualifiers):

Thesis: Everyone needs a large quantity of good things.

Argument 1:

- (1) Whenever the sick man needs medicine, he drinks medicine.
- (2) Whenever the sick man drinks medicine, it is good for him.
- (3) Therefore, whenever the sick man needs medicine, it is a good thing for him to have.
- (4) If something is a good thing to have, then having *as much of it as possible* is good.
- (5) But it is not good for the sick man to drink *as much* medicine *as possible*.
- (6) Therefore, the sick man does not need [as] much medicine [as possible].

Argument 2:

- (1) Whenever a man goes to war, he needs weapons.
- (2) If a man needs weapons in war, weapons are a good thing for him to have.
- (3) If something is a good thing to have, then having *as many* of them *as possible* is good.
- (4) But it is not better for a man in war to have *as many* weapons *as possible*.

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<sup>223</sup> Aristotle implies that the latter strategy was particularly exploited in arguments which, like those of Euthydemus, involve the predicate 'good': 'For all arguments of the following kind depend upon this.' 'Is health, or wealth, a good thing?' 'Yes.' 'But to the fool who does not use it aright it is not a good thing: therefore it is both good and not good.' 'Is health, or political power, a good thing?' 'Yes. "But sometimes it is not particularly good: therefore the same thing is both good and not good to the same man.' Or rather there is nothing to prevent a thing, though good absolutely, being not good to a particular man, or being good to a particular man, and yet not good or here.' (SE 25, 180b8-14).

(5) Therefore, a man in war does not need [as] many weapons [as possible].

Therefore, no one needs [as] large a quantity of good things [as possible].

As usual in the application of SQ, qualifying expressions in play in the premise set are dropped from the conclusion in order to convey the appearance that the genuine contradictory of the answerer's thesis has been obtained by legitimate means. The novel feature of the present argument is the additional application of the fallacy's reverse, QS: qualifying expressions which are not those of the answerer are illicitly added to conceded premises by the sophist himself.

His role as answerer usurped by his doubtful Iolaus, the Socratic response to the sophist's new device is not articulated in the text. Even so, enough has been said in Socrates' previous encounters with the fallacy of SQ to guide the learner to the solution of its reverse: from the concession that some X is good *simpliciter*, it does not follow that X is good in some particular respect, or circumstances, or amount, or that it is good for some individual qualified in some respect. Ctesippus' rejoinder to the sophist's induction is by contrast decidedly un-Socratic. In response to Argument 1, Ctesippus replies that indeed,

If the man drinking [the medicine] is as big as the statue at Delphi [drinking as much medicine as possible is good for him]. (ἐὰν ᾗ γε ὁ πίνων ὅσος ὁ ἀνδρίας ὁ ἐν Δελφοῖς, 299b9-c1).

His response to Argument 2 is that

If the man wielding the weapons were Geryon or Briareus [having as many weapons as possible would be good for him]. (σὺ δ' οὐκ οἶει, ὦ Εὐθύδημε, ἀλλὰ μίαν καὶ ἓν δόρυ; ...Ἡ καὶ τὸν Γηρυόνην ἀν...καὶ τὸν Βριάρεων οὕτως συ ὀπλίσας; 299c4-6).

Yet if Ctesippus does not supply the expected Socratic solution to the sophist's fallacy, perhaps he at least supplies a pair of counterexamples to the sophist's universal negative conclusion? It is clear however that Ctesippus rebuts not the conclusion, reached by SQ, at which the sophist has stated that he aims:

Conclusion SQ: No one needs a large quantity of good things.

Rather, he contradicts the conclusion that *would* follow given the sophist's application of QS:

Conclusion QS: No one needs as large a quantity of good things as possible.

For his counterexamples adopt the sophist's specification of 'quantities as large as possible' as indicating quantities which are more than needful for any normal human being (a wagonload of medicine; a hundred spears and shields). Moreover, Ctesippus only gains the appearance of contradicting this conclusion by an illicit extension of the domain of discourse from (normal) human beings to giants and monsters, thus committing an instance of QS of his own. (If it is true that no normal human being needs a wagonload of hellebore or a hundred spears and shields, such claims are false *for a giant* or *for a hundred-handed monster*). No less disquieting is the fact that Ctesippus' response seems poised to reproduce the sophistic game of tag so prominently on display in the *μανθάνειν* fallacies of the first eristic episode (275d-278e), wherein the sophist, having arrived at a merely apparent contradictory of an answerer's thesis, constructs a second argument for the merely apparent contradictory of this contradictory----thus 'refuting' the answerer 'no matter how he answers'. It seems clear then that, in contrast to

his entirely earnest, if inadequate, answers in the preceding encounter, Ctesippus in our present passage abandons himself to the sophist's horseplay: Socrates' would-be companion at arms now imitates the imitators of Socratic dialectic.

What is less clear is the degree of insight into the solution of fallacy that is entailed by this imitation. On the one hand, Ctesippus' grip on the nature of genuine contradiction has never been terribly firm. (Recall his intuition, noted above in connection with the No Contradiction argument, that if x says that Socrates is a man, while y says that he is a horse, x and y nevertheless contradict (ἀντιλέγουμεν) one another, 286a3-4). Moreover, the fact that Ctesippus not only neither solves the argument in Socratic fashion, but attacks the irrelevant Conclusion QS---and by sophistic means no less---would seem to be entirely consistent with his insensitivity, noted above, to the logical form of propositions, and hence to the logical form of propositions which do not form genuine contradictory pairs. On the other hand, his behaviour in our present passage is equally consistent with an interlocutor who has decided that he may as well join the sophists if (as Ctesippus has declared) he cannot beat them (299a1-5); in which case we may not infer from his opting to imitate the brothers rather than Socrates that the latter performance is beyond his dialectical ken.

Ctesippus' degree of insight into the resolution of this fallacy is therefore evidently underdetermined by his answers to Arguments 1 and 2 above. This question mark is however removed by Plato in the immediately succeeding exchange. This exchange and Ctesippus' role in it deserve careful study; for as we shall see, Plato has embedded in the passage an unmistakable, if subtle, clue to the reader that his estimation of Ctesippus' skill as a *resolver* of fallacy is decidedly unfavorable.

## 5.6 The Gold Fallacy

In what is surely another joke at the expense of Dionysodorus, the younger brother ‘returns to the answers Ctesippus had given earlier’ (299c8-d1), in effect limping late on the scene---*after* the latter has ‘refuted’ his brother’s argument---to add a third case to Euthydemus’ induction for Conclusion SQ. Having secured Ctesippus’ agreement that gold, at any rate, is a good thing to have in large quantities (299d1-3) Dionysodorus argues as follows:

Thesis: Everyone needs a large quantity of good things.

Argument 3:

- (1) Gold is a good thing to have in large quantities.
  - (2) If something is a good thing to have in large quantities, then it is good to have it in large quantities *always and everywhere*.
  - (3) Therefore, it is good to have a large quantity of gold *in ones stomach, skull, and eyes*.
  - (4) But it is not good to have a lot of gold *in ones stomach, skull, and eyes*.
- [Implied].

Therefore, no one needs [a] large a quantity of good things [always and everywhere]. (299d1-299e3)

Ctesippus’ response to this sophism is inspired, if nothing else:

Well, they do say, Euthydemus, that among the Scythians the happiest and best are the men who have a lot of gold in their own skulls (the same way that you were talking a moment ago about the dog being my father); and, what is still more remarkable, the story is that they also drink out of their own gilded skulls and gaze at the insides of them, having their own heads in their hands! (Φασί γε οὖν, ὡς Εὐθύδημε...τούτους εὐδαιμονεστάτους εἶναι Σκυθῶν καὶ ἀρίστους



ἄνδρας, οἱ χρυσίον τε ἐν τοῖς κρανίοις ἔχουσιν πολὺ τοῖς ἑαυτῶν, ὥσπερ σὺ νυνδὲ ἔλεγες τὸν κύνα τὸν πατέρα, καὶ ὁ θαυμασιώτερόν γε ἔτι, ὅτι καὶ πίνουσιν ἐκ τῶν ἑαυτῶν κρανίων κεχρυσωμένων, καὶ ταῦτα ἐντὸς καθορῶσιν, τὴν ἑαυτῶν κορυφὴν ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν ἔχοντες, 299e3-299e9).

Ctesippus clearly makes a back-reference to the dog fallacy of 298d6-298e10.

Why does he do this? And more importantly----why does he do this *here*? How does Ctesippus take the gold fallacy to run? Why does he now suggest that the dog fallacy---to which he originally offered no solution but only genial surrender (299a1-5)---is in some sense ‘said in the same way’ as his present response to the gold fallacy? And why does he seem confident that he may exploit some perceived similarity between this response and the dog sophism to his advantage in the present context?

To address the question of Ctesippus’ interpretation of the gold fallacy first: I suggest he answers as he does because he has not construed the sophism as Argument 3 at all. Rather, the argument which *he* has heard runs along the following lines:

Argument 3\*

- (1) Gold is a good thing to have/**possess** (ἔχειν) in large quantities.
- (2) If something is a good thing to have/**possess** in large quantities, then it is good to have/**possess** it in large quantities always and everywhere.
- (3) Therefore, it is good to have/**contain** (ἔχειν) a large quantity of gold in ones stomach, skull, and eyes.
- (4) But it is not good to have/**contain** a lot of gold in ones stomach, skull, and eyes.

Therefore, no one needs to have/**possess** a large a quantity of good things.

That is to say, Ctesippus diagnoses the fallacy as an instance of *homonymy*: on his

interpretation above, in premises (1), (2), and the conclusion, the verb ἔχειν signifies simple possession; in premises (3) and (4), the same verb signifies having as a constituent part. In the light of this diagnosis, we may make good sense of Ctesippus' assertion (a) that his remarks about the Scythians are 'said in the same way' as the dog fallacy of 298d6-298e10. We may also make good sense of his presupposition (b) that his remarks about the Scythians constitute *relevant* answers to the gold fallacy.

To see why this is so, let us first recall how the dog fallacy runs:

The dog is yours.

The dog is a father.

Therefore, the dog + father is yours / the dog is your father.

What Ctesippus says in particular at 299e6 is that the assertion that (1) the Scythians have a lot of gold in their own skulls is 'said in the same way' as the assertion that his dog is his father. He would then presumably also go in for saying that the assertions that (2) the Scythians drink from their own skulls, that (3) they gaze down at the insides of their own skulls, and that (4) they hold their own heads in their hands are also 'said in the same way' as the assertion that his dog is his father. Next we observe that the latter assertion is the *conclusion* of the dog fallacy. In that case it seems safe to infer that Ctesippus suggests that there are four sophisms extractable from his claims (1)-(4), all of which he takes to exhibit the same flaw as the dog fallacy, and all of which feature as their conclusions his statements (1)-(4). How does Ctesippus imagine would they go? The dog fallacy features a subject (the dog) and two attributes (being a father, being yours); in

each premise one of these two properties are predicated of this subject. In the conclusion, one of these attributes is predicated of the other. In the first parallel fallacy of Ctesippus, the possible terms in the argument are: Scythians, being golden, their own, skulls. In the second: Scythians, drink from, their own, skulls. The third: Scythians, gaze at, their own, skulls. The fourth: Scythians, hold (in their hands), their own, heads. In that case, we may reconstruct the four sophisms Ctesippus has in mind as follows:

Parallel (1):

The skulls (i.e., of the Scythians) are theirs (ἐαυτῶν)

The skulls are golden.

Therefore, the golden (things/skulls) are theirs (ἐαυτῶν).

Parallel (2):

The skulls are theirs.

The skulls are drunk from.

Therefore, that which is drunk from is theirs.

Parallel (3):

The skulls are theirs.

The skulls are gazed at.

Therefore, that which is gazed at is theirs.

Parallel (4):

The heads (of the Scythians) are theirs.

The heads are held in the hand.

Therefore, that which is held in the hand is theirs.

If we assume that the name ‘Scythians’ does not in fact figure as a subject term in the Ctesippean parallels, it is possible, albeit with a bit of awkward rephrasing, to reproduce fallacies which are similar in form to the dog fallacy using the terms from Ctesippus’ statements (1)-(4). Yet by his assertion (a), that his Scythian fallacies are ‘said in the same way’ as the dog fallacy, Ctesippus must mean more than that the sophisms in question are similar in the arrangement of their terms. For given his presupposition (b), that his remarks are relevant answers to the gold fallacy, and given Ctesippus’ interpretation of the latter as dependent on homonymy, Ctesippus’ point must be that each of his four parallel sophisms, the dog fallacy, and the gold fallacy, are all instances alike of homonymy.

Given his construal that is Argument 3\* above, it is clear how Ctesippus could arrive at such a conclusion with respect to the gold fallacy and his Scythian parallels; for although the latter do not equivocate upon the verb ἔχειν *per se*,<sup>224</sup> they do appear to exploit the same ambiguity in the notion of *having* that is in play in Argument 3\* above: for in the first premise of each Scythian parallel, the genitive case signifies simple possession. However, in the conclusion in each case, Ctesippus takes the genitive to signify a constituent part (the partitive genitive):

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<sup>224</sup> Note the verb features in only the first and fourth of Ctesippus’ parallels; it is absent from the second and third.

The skulls (i.e., of the Scythians) are *ἐαυτῶν* (possession).

The skulls are golden.

Therefore, the golden (things/skulls) are *ἐαυτῶν* (constituent part).

By Ctesippus' lights then his Scythian sophisms are highly relevant ripostes to Dionysodorus: his inventions not only mirror the *type* of fallacy Ctesippus perceives in the gold fallacy; they actually exploit the *same* homonymy---as he sees it---in the notion of 'having'.

Given his perspective on the gold fallacy and his Scythian analogs, it is short work to explain how Ctesippus arrives at his sudden insight into the solution of the dog fallacy: it too, he now supposes, must turn upon an equivocation in the notion of 'having', in this case, a homonymy that Ctesippus locates in the expression 'your F':

Thesis: **Your father** is not a dog.

The dog is **yours/your dog** (possession).

The dog is a father.

Therefore, the father is **yours/your father** (family member).

Again, as in the gold and Scythian fallacies, the notion of 'having' signified in the first premise is simple possession; the same term in the conclusion signifies family membership; hence, according to Ctesippus, this sophism is 'said in the same way' as his Scythian analogs, insofar as both are instances of the fallacy of homonymy, and insofar as both exploit the many ways in which the notion of 'having' may be expressed by the

same terms in ordinary language.

As we have observed above, the fact that Ctesippus' solution to this fallacy had its advocates among contemporary thinkers is confirmed by Aristotle. As we have also noted, Aristotle's rejection of this solution turns upon his insistence that if the cause of a refutation's failure to be genuine is in fact due to homonymy, it must be the case that the allegedly homonymous expression is multiply significant in the *strict* (κυρίως) *sense*: a test which the μανθάνειν fallacies (275d-278e) pass, but which the dog fallacy and its like fail.

### 5.7 Aristotle Against the Double Signification of the Genitive Case

However, Aristotle would also resist Ctesippus' assimilation of the dog fallacy to his Scythian parallels. For that assimilation depends upon the assumption that the genitive case is ambiguous. But this is an assumption which Aristotle denies:

There is also [the argument] that something of evils is good (τὸ εἶναι τῶν κακῶν τι ἀγαθόν); for wisdom is a knowledge of evils (ἡ γὰρ φρόνησις ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμη τῶν κακῶν). But the expression 'this is of these things' (τὸ δὲ τοῦτο τούτων εἶναι) is not said in many ways, but rather [signifies] property (κτῆμα). But suppose then [it is said] in many ways (for we also say that man is of the animals (τὸν ἄνθρωπον τῶν ζώων), though not their property; and also that if anything is said in relation to evils expressed by the genitive case, this thing is on that account a 'so-and-so of evils', though this is not *one* of the evils), [granted] but in that case it appears to depend on whether the term is used relatively or absolutely (πῇ... καὶ ἀπλῶς). And yet [someone might object] perhaps it *is* possible that the expression 'something of evils is good' [signifies] in two ways, [perhaps], but not in the case of the phrase in question, but more nearly [in the case of the phrase] 'some servant is good of the wicked'. But perhaps not even in this way [is the alleged ambiguity found]; for it is *not* the case that if a thing is good and is X's, it is at the same time X's good. Nor is the saying 'man is of the animals' said in many ways; for it is not the case that if we signify something elliptically that this [expression] is said in many ways; for also signify 'Give me the Iliad' by stating half a line of it, for example '[Give me] "Sing, goddess, of the wrath..." (SE 24 180a8-22).

In this text, Aristotle is arguing against the claim that a particular fallacy may be

solved by claiming that certain expressions employing the genitive case are homonymous. The fallacy Aristotle evidently has in mind runs as follows:

Thesis: Nothing **of evils** is good.

(1) Wisdom is good.

(2) Wisdom is knowledge **of evils**. (φρόνησις ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμη τῶν κακῶν).

(3) Therefore, something **of evils** is good. (τῶν κακῶν τι ἀγαθόν).

Those theorists who would claim that the false refutation above turns on homonymy maintain that the phrase ‘x of evils’ has a different signification in its various occurrences in the argument; in the thesis and the conclusion, the sense is that of the partitive genitive; in premise (2) (they claim) the genitive is neither possessive, nor partitive, but expresses some third ‘relational’ sense of the genitive.

Aristotle’s response to these theorists is that the strict (κυρίως) sense of the genitive case signifies property or possession (κτῆμα).<sup>225</sup> He concedes that there would appear to be many instances of the use of the genitive which do *not* signify possession: for example, the statement ‘Man is of the animals’ (τόν ἄνθρωπον τῶν ζώων εἶναι) does not mean that the species Man is a *possession* of the animals; the genitive here is the partitive genitive. But Aristotle denies that it follows that the genitive case has more than one strict sense. For the statement ‘Man is of the animals’ may be taken as an ellipsis for a statement which does not employ the genitive case at all. (Aristotle does not supply his own example, but presumably he has in mind the statement ‘Man is an animal’). Hence

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<sup>225</sup> Note Aristotle does not employ the word κυρίως in this text; but his reasoning is clear in the light of *SE* 24 179b38-180a7.

the genitive case in the original expression is *eliminable*. In precisely the same way, Aristotle suggests, the alleged third signification of the genitive case in premise (2) above is eliminable, as it is in fact an ellipsis for a relative clause (e.g., ‘wisdom is knowledge with respect to evils’). In that case, the proper solution to the false refutation is that it is due, not to homonymy, but to *secundum quid*.<sup>226</sup>

If the homonymy theorist were correct, then we must introduce a *semantic thesis*--viz., the homonymy of certain expressions in the genitive---in order to explain the fact that ‘Man is of the animals’ does not mean ‘Man is a possession of the animals’. Aristotle’s point is that we need not introduce any *semantic thesis* at all to explain this fact: for a phrase does not become homonymous merely because we express it elliptically.<sup>227</sup> The assimilation of the fallacy in question to a case of homonymy is therefore theoretically extravagant; for we need not locate a homonymy in these genitive expressions in order to explain why the argument is not a refutation. Aristotle’s reply to Ctesippus’ inventions would therefore presumably run along similar lines: it is theoretically extravagant to locate a κυρίως sense of the genitive reflexive pronoun in the statement ‘the golden (things/skulls) are ἐαυτῶν’, because the statement is an ellipsis for ‘the golden things/skulls are bodily parts.’ Rather---as Aristotle would say---‘the combination depends upon Accident’<sup>228</sup>; hence Ctesippus’ parallels are all instances of

<sup>226</sup> The phrase ‘relatively or absolutely’ (πῆ...καὶ ἀπλῶς, 180a14) serves here as elsewhere in *SE* as Aristotle’s short-hand tag for false refutations due to *secundum quid*; cp. e.g. *SE* 7 169b10-11: ‘...καὶ τῶν παρὰ τὸ πῆ καὶ ἀπλῶς ἐν τῷ παρὰ μικρὸν ἢ ἀπάτῃ’).

<sup>227</sup> Similarly, in Aristotle’s *Iliad* example: the constituent expression ‘Sing, goddess, of the wrath’ in the sentence ‘Give me “Sing, goddess, of the wrath”’ does not mean the same as the entire poem of Homer; but we may not on this basis introduce a *semantic thesis* to the effect that this phrase must then possess a sense in *addition* to its usual sense; rather, when we say ‘Give me “Sing, goddess, of the wrath”’, the constituent phrase is an ellipsis for the phrase ‘the *Iliad*’.

<sup>228</sup> This is of course precisely the point Aristotle is making at 180a17-18 above (‘it is *not* the case that if a thing is good and is X’s, it is at the same time X’s good’); the resemblance of the inference to the dog fallacy is obvious.



the fallacy of Accident.

But what is Plato's view? Plato has supplied Ctesippus, first, with fallacies similar in form to the dog fallacy; and second, with an argument that *both* the dog fallacy and its parallels are dependent on homonymy. It would seem then that Plato has, at the very least, gone out of his way to illustrate how one *could* approach the fallacy's solution. But does our passage contain any clues as to how Plato thinks the fallacy *should* or *should not* be resolved?

One thing does seem clear: Plato does not concur in Ctesippus' assimilation of the gold fallacy---an instance of a combined application of SQ and QS----to a case of homonymy. Nor does it seem likely that Plato's confidence is misplaced if he expects the learner to follow him in rejecting Ctesippus' gloss without more explicit direction: the Socratic instructions in preceding passages have been both explicit and numerous enough to warrant such confidence. As we have suggested above, Ctesippus' false resolution may be put down to his inattention to propositional form, and a consequent misdirection of attention to the signification of terms: indeed, even on Ctesippus' construal of the gold fallacy, the argument turns upon an application of QS in the second premise, where both occurrences of the verb ἔχειν have the same signification:

- (2) If something is a good thing to have/**possess** in large quantities, then it is good to have/**possess** it *in large quantities always and everywhere*.

Yet if that is so, then Plato has done more in our passage than merely supply a mouthpiece for those who would classify the dog fallacy as a case of homonymy; for he has flagged this particular mouthpiece as a *homonymy-happy*, unreliable, false resolver of

fallacy.<sup>229</sup> It follows that Plato aims in this text to confront the student of dialectic with a pair of particularly acute questions. First, is Ctesippus *equally* wrong---that is, wrong on the same *grounds*---about the dog fallacy? And second, if it is a matter of controversy whether a false refutation turns upon homonymy or not, how does one *settle* the question that it does *not*?

Plato does not of course pursue this question further in our passage, either by direct or indirect means; nor is the question broached again elsewhere in Ctesippus' close-up (concluded at 300d5). Nevertheless, Plato does not let the question drop. Though we must take the argument out of sequence, I suggest that Plato returns to an examination of the dog fallacy, and the theoretical question he has raised concerning it, in the final fallacy of the dialogue (301e1-303a3).<sup>230</sup>

## 5.8 The God Fallacy

Appropriately enough, it is Socrates, and not Ctesippus, who confronts the sophist

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<sup>229</sup> Ctesippus' false solution sheds some light on the notoriously obscure comment of Aristotle (*SE* 5, 167a35) that 'one might forcefully drag this (τοῦτον) into those that depend on language'. In this passage, Aristotle has just surveyed a number of examples of *ignoratio elenchi*; thus I take the reference of 'τοῦτον' to be to the particular *set* of examples he has just mentioned. The remark has puzzled commentators, because Aristotle has previously argued that *ignoratio elenchi* is a false refutation that is 'outside of language'. However, as I have argued in Chapter 4.5, Aristotle's examples of IE may be reconstructed as examples of SQ. Aristotle's point then I believe is that given the variety of 'respects' in which a term may be predicated of another, some theorists have attempted (at least on the basis of the kind of arguments Aristotle has just surveyed in this paragraph) to assimilate the *type* of sophisms which feature in IE and SQ to cases dependant on homonymy. The motivation for their attempt was that it may be disputed whether having *x* in *some respect* or *other* should more properly be considered having *x* in *some sense* or *other*. However, by conceding only that these arguments could be *forcefully dragged* (ἔλκοι) to the class of false refutations that depend on language, Aristotle is indicating his theoretical *disagreement* with this classification. If that is so, Ctesippus' solution to the gold fallacy and Plato's implicit rejection of it constitutes another example of a contemporary dispute among theorists of fallacy which is recorded in the *SE* as well.

<sup>230</sup> Final, not counting Dionysodorus' ridiculous sally at 303a.

in this final exchange. As usual, the brothers take as their starting point some expression dropped innocently into their laps by their interlocutor. In this case, the trigger is Socrates' use of the first personal dative pronoun *μοι* with the term *οἰκεία* (possession, property):

By Poseidon, I exclaimed, you are putting the finishing touches on your wisdom! And do you think that it will ever come to be **my possession** (*μοι οἰκεία*, 301e1-3).

With that, the concept of possession and ownership has been rolled onto the pitch. It is Dionysodorus who takes up the ball:

And would you recognize (*ἐπιγνοίης*) it, Socrates, he asked, if it did become **your possession** (*οἰκείαν*)?

If only you are willing, I said, I clearly would.

What's that, said he---do you think you recognize **your own things** (*τὰ σαυτοῦ οἷε γιγνώσκειν*)?

Yes, unless you forbid it---for all my hopes must begin with you and end with Euthydemus here.

Another trigger: Socrates has employed a traditional manner of addressing a deity in his last response. The sophist duly proceeds to construct a false refutation of the thesis that Socrates recognizes his own possessions---which, surprisingly, turn out to include 'his own' ancestral gods. Dionysodorus' specification of the thesis in question is a bit unclear. On one reading---suggested by the exchange above---he takes the thesis under attack to be precisely that Socrates does not recognize or know his own *things*. In that case the sophist argues as follows:

(1) For all *x*, *x* is **yours** if and only if it is such that you have the authority to use it as you wish (e.g., as with an animal, to sell, give away, or sacrifice to a god).

(301e10-302a4).

(2) For all *y*, if *y* has a soul *y* is a living being. (302a8).

(3) Therefore, living beings are **yours** only if they are such that you have the authority to use them as you wish. [By 1]. (302b1-302b3).

(4) There exist gods which are **yours** (viz., Socrates' 'ancestral Apollo', 'Zeus of the household', etc.). (302d5-302d7).

(5) These gods have souls. (302e1-2).

(6) Therefore, these gods are living beings. [By 2, 5]. (302e2-3).

(7) Therefore, these living beings are **yours** such that you have the authority to use them as you wish (e.g., to sell, give away, sacrifice, or treat like any other animal). [By 3, 4, 6]. (302e3-303a3).

(8) Socrates did not recognize that these living beings are **his possessions**.

[Implied].

(9) Therefore, Socrates does not recognize **his own things**. [Implied].

However, another (in my view, more likely) possibility is that the thesis under attack is premise (1) above: on this construal, Dionysodorus extracts from Socrates an *account* of what it is for something to be his possession or 'his'. The sophist's strategy then is to undermine this account; if he can, then he will take himself to have shown that Socrates does not know or recognize what his own things are, since he does not know his own *account* of these things. On this reading, the argument is essentially the same, but runs through an implicit application of the argument *ad impossible* at its conclusion:

Thesis: For all x, x is **yours** if and only if it is such that you have the authority to use it as you wish (e.g., as with an animal, to sell, give away, or sacrifice to a god).

- (1) For all x, if x is yours then it is such that you have the authority to use it as you wish. [Implied, by Thesis].
  - (2) For all y, if y has a soul y is a living being.
  - (3) Therefore, living beings are **yours** only if they are such that you have the authority to use them as you wish. [By 1].
  - (4) There exist gods which are **yours**.
  - (5) These gods have souls.
  - (6) Therefore, these gods are living beings. [By 2, 5].
  - (7) Therefore, these living beings are **yours**. [By 4, 6].
  - (8) Therefore, you have the authority to use them as you wish. [By 3, 7].
  - (9) But you do not have this authority over the gods. [Implied].
  - (10) Therefore, NOT-(1)
- Therefore, NOT-Thesis.

On each gloss above, I have highlighted terms (e.g., σὸν, ‘yours’) to bring out the fact that in some way or other, the fallacy turns upon these expressions (which translate various grammatical cases of the pronoun in the Greek). I have also followed the order of the actual inferences in the text: (3) follows from (1); (2) is only put to use at step (6) (in order that the sophist may conceal his strategy; though Socrates reports he could see

where the argument was headed as soon as premise (4) was asked for, 302b5-7). At the argument's conclusion, Socrates provides no helpful hints as to its solution; he tells Crito that the only reaction he could muster was to simply lie speechless (ἐκείμην ἄφωνος), as though stunned by a boxer's blow (303a4-5).

No hint however is needed that we have encountered this argument before; for the fallacy is an obvious double of the dog sophism of 298d6-298e10. The essential terms of the two sophisms are arranged in precisely the same way:

The dog is yours.

These gods are yours.

The dog is a father.

These gods are living beings.

Therefore, the dog is your father.

Therefore, these gods are your living beings.

Thus in two premises above, 'god' is in the subject position, taking two different attributes (viz., 'yours' in line (4), and 'living beings' in line (6)). Compare the dog fallacy, wherein 'dog' in the subject position receives the same attribute---'yours'---in one premise and a distinct attribute in the second. In both arguments the first attribute of the subject is combined with the second in the conclusion. The similarity to the previous argument is therefore unmistakable. The passage constitutes at least a back-reference to the earlier argument, and perhaps even a commentary upon it. But what is Plato's comment?

There would seem to be three interpretative possibilities. First, Plato is embracing Ctesippus' suggestion that the argument turns upon an equivocation on an expression of

the form ‘your F’. Second, Plato is leaving the proper solution of the argument a completely open question; he is counting on his students to recall Ctesippus’ earlier diagnosis, and to simply recognize the similarity of this argument to its double. On this interpretation, Plato is remaining agnostic regarding the proper solution of this type of fallacy---in which case the ‘lesson’ to learners in dialectic is simply: ‘discuss amongst yourselves’.

There is however a third possibility. This is that Plato does leave the solution open for discussion, but he is not himself agnostic as regards its solution. The evidence for this interpretation is that the god fallacy (on either construal above) has a highly significant feature which is different from its predecessor—a feature which, once noticed, can only be regarded as a fairly audible stage-whisper on Plato’s part. This is that, unlike in the argument’s previous instantiation, Plato quite deliberately *specifies* the signification of an expression of the form ‘your F’ at one stage of the argument: for the sophist’s opening move is to extract from Socrates an account regarding ‘your things’ (ταῦτα σά, 301e10), where this phrase clearly is taken to signify Socrates’ *possessions* (οἰκείαν, 301e4; τὰ σαυτοῦ, e7).

The first observation to make about this opening move is that it is a distinctly *odd* thing to do---if one is a contentious reasoner intent on creating the appearance of genuine refutation by resort to the fallacy of homonymy. The skillful sophist at any rate would do well to avoid extracting the following concessions from his victim:

Thesis: the poem of Homer is not a figure (σχῆμα).

- (1) For all x, x is a circle (κύκλος) just in case it is a plane figure contained by one line such that all the straight lines falling upon it from one point among those lying within the figure are equal to one another.

- (2) Therefore, the **circle** is a figure.
- (3) The poem of Homer is a **circle**.
- (4) Therefore, the poem of Homer is a figure.<sup>231</sup>

For the whole point of arguing by homonymy (as by means of any apparent refutation) is to conceal from the answerer that one is doing so; in which case it would seem to be distinctly self-defeating to extract from the answerer a semantic thesis regarding the very expression upon which ones apparent refutation turns.

It is clear that if Plato's only purpose in inserting this fallacy at the end of the dialogue is to produce a double of the dog fallacy, he need not have bestowed this peculiar feature upon it. It is equally clear that if the sophist means to argue by homonymy, it would have been more advantageous for him not to proceed as he does. The fact that he secures a commitment (Socrates' account of 'his things') that entails a thesis regarding the signification of the very expression upon which his fallacy turns therefore stands in need of explanation. But perhaps the explanation is that Plato makes the sophist proceed in this fashion precisely *in order* to provide a clue to the student of dialectic that the fallacy depends upon homonymy---a homonymy which arises from the occurrence in the argument of a combined expression such as 'your F'?

On this proposal, the semantic thesis is included to prod the learner to object that the combined expression 'your living beings' has a double signification. Socrates agrees in premise (1) that 'the things which are yours' are his possessions, which he may use as he sees fit. Included among such possessions are living beings: for Socrates has agreed

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<sup>231</sup> The example---sans the first premise---is Aristotle's (*APo* I 12, 77b27-33). The fallacy, Aristotle implies, is due to homonymy in the middle term: Homer's poem is a cycle/circle (κύκλος), not a geometrical figure. Hence if the middle has the same signification in both its occurrences, the argument is a syllogism, but then one of the premises will be false; if it does not, the argument is not a syllogism.



that a man's ox or his sheep (βοῦς καὶ πρόβατον, 302a1) are his to use as he will. However, he would of course deny that those living beings that are his *gods* are his property in any sense. For while Socrates has conceded (premise (4)) that 'certain gods are yours', he has done so on the grounds that the household gods in question are his 'ancestral gods' (302d2). To solve the sophism by appeal to homonymy is thus to object that at its fallacious core, the sub-conclusion reached at (7) has the following two senses:

These gods are yours. (Ancestral sense).

These gods are living beings.

Therefore, these gods are your living beings: **These are your ancestors / your property.**

On the 'ancestral' reading of the combined expression 'your living beings', the conclusion is alleged to follow from the premises, but it is irrelevant to Socrates' implicit denial that those living beings that are his gods are his possessions. On the 'property' reading of same phrase, the conclusion does contradict this denial; but it does not follow from the premises. If Plato endorses this solution for the sophism, he invites the learner in dialectic to revisit the dog fallacy with the same type of solution in mind. If this is the moral of the god fallacy, then Plato embeds the semantic thesis at the beginning of the argument in order to signal his agreement with Ctesippus' earlier proposal: both the original argument and its double are instances of the fallacy of homonymy.

Upon consideration, however, this explanation of the inclusion of the semantic thesis seems deeply problematic. For it commits Plato to the view that the expression σά

ζῶα ('your living beings') has, in addition to a core sense indicating possession, a second sense indicating a relation of ancestry. That the expression σοὶ θεοὶ ('your gods', 302d5) should signify a relation of ancestry would be found no more controversial to a Greek than that the expression οὐκ πατήρ ('your father') signifies a familial relationship. But that the expression 'your living beings' *also* signifies a relation of ancestry is not controversial; it is simply false. That we should hesitate to ascribe so implausible a view to any Greek speaker who is not laboring to defend a thesis at all costs is evident. But that Plato may be discharged of so misguided a motive is equally clear, once it is noticed that one may undermine such a thesis by precisely the sort of *reduplication* of argumentative form in which Plato is engaged in our passage.

At its fallacious core, the god sophism is a duplicate of the dog fallacy. As we have seen, the homonymy theorist must claim that two senses of a compound expression--'your father'---are in play in the latter argument: one indicating simple possession; the other indicating a familial relationship. If the god fallacy is solved by the same means, the homonymy theorist must posit an 'ancestral' sense for the combined expression 'your living beings'. The unacceptable consequence of such a theoretical recourse is obvious: for the combined expression 'your F' shall have as many distinct significations (e.g., 'your work of art', 'your master') as there are variations on the dog argument---and Aristotle's testimony (cited above) informs us that his contemporaries knew of many such doubles.

The same considerations undermine Ctesippus' assimilation of the dog fallacy to his Scythian parallels. In the absence of Aristotle's 'ellipsis' argument, we may be initially inclined to acquiesce in Ctesippus' solution: for there is, after all, both a genitive

of possession and a partitive genitive in Greek. However, Ctesippus' proposal seems theoretically extravagant in the light of the god fallacy; moreover, Ctesippus will be unable to explain why arguments that are all of the same apparent form require for their solution such a complex array of semantic hypotheses: the genitive of possession, the genitive of the partial whole; the 'property' sense of the phrase 'your father'; the 'ancestral' sense of the expression 'your living beings'. Yet if this is so, then so far from endorsing Ctesippus' proposal, Plato rejects this solution of the god fallacy---and its doubles----precisely by means of the 'reduplication' argument above: a theoretical strategy that his most talented student of dialectic may well have encountered for the first time in his master's dialogue.

This result however would seem to leave us with our original problem. For if we have explained the presence of the god fallacy in Plato's dialogue, we have yet to explain its most distinctive property: why does the exchange begin with an extraction of Socrates' account of his 'possessions'---the formula of which account seems to fix the signification of the term 'your things' at the initial stage of the argument? The 'reduplication' argument for the denial that the sophism turns upon homonymy clearly does not require the inclusion of this peculiar feature. Plato could have availed himself of a much simpler double, allowing the sophist to argue, for example, that if the stone busts in Socrates' ancestral shrine are his, and are works of art, then they are his works of art. Alternatively, the sophist could have argued by means of our first construal of the god fallacy above, while completely suppressing the first premise. I have argued that the presence of this latter feature in the argument does not signal Plato's classification of the sophism as a case of homonymy. Then what purpose *does* it serve?

I suggest this purpose is discovered once attention is drawn to an aspect of the sophist's opening move which we have so far ignored. This is that Dionysodorus seems to commit a curious conversion in the process of soliciting from Socrates his account 'the things which are his'.<sup>232</sup>

And **do you consider those things to be yours** (ταῦτα ἡγῇ σὰ εἶναι) **over which you have control and which you are allowed to treat as you please?** For instance, an ox or a sheep: do you regard these as yours which you are able to sell or give away or sacrifice to any god you please? And **those things which you could not treat in this fashion, they are not yours** (ἃ δ' ἂν μὴ οὕτως ἔχῃ, οὐ σά)? (301e10-302a4)

The two propositions in bold which the sophist elicits from Socrates do not constitute a contradictory pair; therefore they are not the two alternative theses offered by a questioner to an answerer at the starting point of a dialectical encounter. While it is possible to suspect that the sophist illicitly infers the second proposition from the first, it seems far more natural to take him (as I have above) to be asking Socrates for both the sufficient (line 1) and necessary (line 3) conditions which constitute his account of the things he considers his own possessions. It follows that Plato employs the pronoun σά (yours) in order to formulate a *necessary condition* of an object's being Socrates' possession; indeed, he goes out of his way to do so, since he could have easily used any number of nouns or adjectives signifying 'possession' (τὰ οἰκεῖα, τὰ κτήματα) to express the same condition in Greek.

I suggest the most likely reason Plato does so is to plant a second clue in the text as to the fallacy's true solution. This is to draw our attention to the fact that, given the formulation of Socrates' thesis, there is only one strict sense in which living beings are 'yours'; there is no additional sense in which the expression signifies some other

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<sup>232</sup> Noted by Hawtrey, op.cit., 181; Sprague op.cit., 58.

relationship, such as a relation of ancestry. Hence premise (3) follows unproblematically from this thesis: living beings are ‘yours’ just in case they are ones’ possessions to use as one sees fit. The use of the pronoun *σά* to formulate a necessary condition on an object’s being a *possession* therefore draws the learner’s attention to a *κυρίως* sense---indeed, *the* *κυρίως* sense---of the argument’s key expression: in the *strict* sense, ‘living beings are yours’ only if they are at ones’ disposal to use as one wishes; therefore, any *other* occurrence of the phrase in the argument which does *not* seem to signify such items does not signify a second *sense* of the term; rather, ‘the combination depends upon Accident.’ The clue embedded in the passage for the learner in dialectic then is just this: one ought *not* to seek to supply a second sense to the occurrence of this combined expression in the argument in order to solve the sophism; for the cause of the argument’s failure to be a genuine refutation is not due to the homonymy of the terms of the argument.

On this proposal, the god sophism, with its peculiar complications, turns out to contain two hints to the beginner in dialectic regarding the proper solution of the fallacy. The first is the ‘reduplication argument’. The second is (as we may as well call it) the ‘*κυρίως* argument’. Both are strategies for rejecting the classification of the dog fallacy and its doubles as cases of homonymy. In this sense, both are arguments for a negative thesis. Nevertheless, the truth of the particular negative thesis in question entails a significant positive result for Plato’s taxonomy of fallacy. This is because a fallacy which is not due to ‘double signification’ is such that there is no ‘reading’ of the argument according to which the conclusion follows from the premises. In consequence, such fallacies are, as Aristotle puts it, ‘outside of language’ (*ἔξω τῆς λέξεως*, SE 4, 165b24, *passim*): the failure of such an argument to constitute a genuine refutation is due to its

form alone.

Whether Plato conceives of the dog fallacy as due to Accident in a more robustly Aristotelian sense is of course another question. In Aristotle's view, false refutations due to Accident violate the condition on genuine refutation that the conclusion follows of necessity from the premises. Insofar as Plato grasps the inconsequence of such syllogisms, he may be said to share Aristotle's conception of the fallacy. However, as we have seen, Aristotle requires more of a solution to the sophism than the mere objection that the conclusion does not follow. One must in addition explain *why* it does not follow; and this is done by drawing the distinction between (PAS) and (PSB), the principle that 'only to things that are one and indistinguishable in being do all the same attributes belong' (*SE* 24 179a37-39).

It is evident that Plato's treatment of the dog fallacy in the *Euthydemus* articulates no such principle. The *κρίως* argument implicit in the God Fallacy shows at most that if the dog fallacy is due to homonymy, then there must be a strict sense of 'your father' which signifies ownership or possession; if there is no such sense, then the fallacy is not due to homonymy. It follows that Plato conceives the fallacy as in some sense due to form alone. Yet for all that his text tells us, Plato himself, as well as certain of his contemporaries, may have advocated a merely 'quasi'- or 'proto-Aristotelian' solution for the sophism. For example: a form of fallacy of 'combination', which did not recognize Aristotle's further condition on sameness in being of the subjects of predication.

On the other hand, Plato may have anticipated something like Aristotle's sameness in being requirement. Yet if he did, we would not expect Socrates to appeal to such a principle by way of raising an objection to the God Fallacy. For it would not

belong to the domain of Socratic dialectic to articulate and defend such a general metaphysical thesis regarding the nature of predication. Though the suggestion is speculative, this may explain why the fallacy of Accident---if Plato regards it as such---leaves Socrates literally ‘speechless’ (ἄφωνος, 303a5): it lies outside the scope of Socratic dialectic, but belongs to higher dialectic, to explain the metaphysical underpinnings of the nature of predication.

### 5.9 Amphiboly and Many Questions in the *Euthydemus*

The final series of exchanges between Ctesippus and the sophists illustrate a cause of false refutation which has not been previously encountered in the dialogue. As is the case with false refutations due to homonymy, the fallacies generated in this passage turn upon double signification. However, the linguistic unit of signification bearing multiple senses is in this case not a single term or phrase, but an entire statement. It is Euthydemus who first plays circus-master for this round, constructing an argument that is difficult to reproduce in English:

Thesis: The Scythians and the rest of mankind (including Ctesippus) see things capable of sight (ὁρώσιν τὰ δυνατὰ ὁρᾶν, 300a1-2).

(1) Ctesippus sees (ὁρᾷ) the cloaks of the sophists (300a3-4).

(2) But these things see nothing (μηδέν, 300a5).

Therefore, the Scythians and the rest of mankind (including Ctesippus) see things incapable of sight (ὁρώσιν τὰ ἀδυνατὰ ὁρᾶν). [Implied].

I have construed the argument as a two-premise syllogism, to bring out the fact that the double signification appears in the thesis and the conclusion, not in the premise set.<sup>233</sup>

The expanded version in the text, with implicit premises supplied, runs:

- (1) Ctesippus sees the cloaks of the sophists. (300a3-4).
- (2) So these things are capable of sight. (Δυνατὰ οὖν ὁρᾶν ἔστιν ταῦτα, 300a4).
- (3) But these things see nothing (μηδέν, 300a5).
- (4) Therefore, these things are incapable of sight (ἀδυνατὰ ὁρᾶν). [Implied].

Therefore, the Scythians and the rest of mankind (including Ctesippus) see things incapable of sight (ὁρῶσιν τὰ ἀδυνατὰ ὁρᾶν). [Implied].

The cause of the false refutation is due to what Aristotle in the *Sophistici Elenchi* calls ‘amphiboly’ (ἀμφιβολία, 166a6).<sup>234</sup> Though many of Aristotle’s examples of amphiboly are difficult to understand, his clearest illustrations seem to suggest that the following account constitutes at least a sufficient condition of an argument’s being amphibolous: the refutation (including, potentially, the conclusion) contains a sentence with two different significations, whose source is a linguistic sub-unit of the sentence which may play different *syntactic* roles. For example, the sentence ὃ ὁρᾷ τις, τοῦτο ὁρᾷ is an amphibolous sentence according to Aristotle, because the neuter demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο (‘this’) may serve as either grammatical subject or object of the verb ὁρᾷ (‘sees’). Thus the sentence in question may mean either ‘what someone sees, this thing sees’, or

<sup>233</sup> As Aristotle notes (*SE* 19 177a9-15), in amphibolous as well as in homonymous false refutations, the double signification may occur either in the premises, or in the conclusion and answerer’s thesis. All of Plato’s examples of the fallacy happen to feature the latter fault.

<sup>234</sup> Cp. *SE* 4 166a6-21; 19 177a9-32.



‘what someone sees, (he) sees this thing.’ By such means the sophist may gain the conclusion that an inanimate object (e.g. a pillar) sees, from the unsuspecting concession that whatever one sees, one sees that thing.<sup>235</sup>

Euthydemus’ amphiboly is perhaps a bit more subtle from a grammatical point of view; nevertheless, it similarly exploits a syntactic ambiguity between subject and object. The fallacy depends on the fact that the linguistic sub-units τὰ δυνατὰ ὁρᾶν / τὰ ἀδυνατὰ ὁρᾶν can each take either an active or a passive sense, despite the fact that the verb ὁρᾶν (‘to see’) is grammatically active in all of its occurrences in the argument. The active/passive ambiguity is due in turn to the fact that the verb ὁρᾶν (which serves here as an object infinitive after an adjective of ability) can have two active meanings, depending upon whether a subject or object of the verb is implied: ‘able to see’ applies to the person with the eyes; ‘able to behold’ applies to the object seen. In consequence, the infinitive ὁρᾶν is, in the thesis, passive in sense---Ctesippus agrees that he sees things capable of being seen---whereas in the conclusion (on the reading of it that follows syllogistically) it is active: the sophist concludes that he sees things that lack the capacity to see.

Ctesippus makes no attempt to provide a solution to the sophism:

Well, what do [the cloaks of the sophists] see?

Nothing at all. And you, perhaps, don’t suspect the sight of them (σὺ δὲ ἴσως οὐκ οἶει αὐτὰ ὁρᾶν), since you are such a sweet innocent. But you strike me, Euthydemus, as having fallen asleep with your eyes open; and if it is possible for the speaking to speak nothing (οἷόν τε λέγοντα μηδὲν λέγειν), you are doing just that.<sup>236</sup> (300a5-8)

Nevertheless, the answer that he does make indicates that he has cottoned on to the cause of the fallacy. For Ctesippus’ retort contains its own amphibolous phrase, αὐτὰ ὁρᾶν

<sup>235</sup> Cp. *SE* 4 166a9-10. It is however less clear that Aristotle regards syntactical ambiguity to be a necessary feature of amphibolous false refutations. See our comment on *SE* 4 166a14-21, note 22 above, 199-200.

<sup>236</sup> Note this remark would seem amount to revenge of sorts for Ctesippus’ subjection to the brothers’ arguments in the second eristic episode against false speaking and contradiction.

(300a6). The most natural translation of this retort is: ‘And you, perhaps, don’t think that *they* (i.e., the cloaks) see’. However, Ctesippus’ subsequent joke about the blindness and the innocence of the brothers suggests that he responds ‘And you, perhaps, don’t think that you see *them*’---which would be the most natural translation of his response when his phrase is reversed (ὁρᾶν αὐτὰ).<sup>237</sup> It is nearly impossible to capture both senses in English with a single translation, but ‘you don’t suspect the sight of them’ perhaps comes close. In that case Ctesippus may be taken to answer fallacy with fallacy, as he has done in the past, adopting the sophist’s conclusion as a thesis in a sophistic game of tag: no doubt the brothers will deny they can even see their own cloaks, and these cloaks lack the capacity of sight. Then Ctesippus sees things *incapable* of sight; and the argument may be run in the other direction.

However, if the next series of exchanges is anything to go by, the ante will be upped for Ctesippus as answerer: if one will enter the dialectical arena *as an eristic reasoner*---as Ctesippus has now proposed to do---it is not enough to answer fire with fire by simply mirroring a sophist’s invention, which the audience has already heard. *False refutation* is mere dumbfounding: its standard of success is measured, not by clauses in the account of genuine refutation, but by the applause of those ignorant of refutation. Accordingly, if Ctesippus would be victor in this contest he must outstrip the sophist in the invention of fallacy. In his final triumphant encounter, Ctesippus avails himself of three opportunities to do precisely that.

Picking up on the formulation of Ctesippus’ last remark (οἷόν τε λέγοντα μηδὲν λέγειν, 300a7-8), Dionysodorus offers to refute the following two theses:

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<sup>237</sup> This may explain why T reads ὁρᾶν αὐτὰ instead of αὐτὰ ὁρᾶν with B and W: the former reading makes better sense of the jokes which Ctesippus actually articulates in the text.

(T1) It is impossible that σιγῶντα λέγειν (300b1-2)

(T2) It is impossible that λέγοντα σιγᾶν (300b2-3).

Both theses are amphibolous sentences; and both ensuing fallacies again exploit a syntactical ambiguity between subject and object. The ambiguity in this case is facilitated by two constructions of the Greek infinitive with the accusative case. Thus the sophist counts on Ctesippus to take (T1) in the sense ‘It is impossible for the silent (σιγῶντα) to speak (λέγειν)’. Here the term σιγῶντα functions as accusative subject of an infinitive in indirect discourse. The sophist ‘refutes’ this thesis by establishing that ‘it is possible to speak of silent things’---construing the term σιγῶντα as accusative object of the infinitive:

(T1): It is impossible σιγῶντα λέγειν. (300b1-2).

(1) Wood, stones, and iron are silent things. (300b3-4).

(2) It is possible to speak of wood, stones, and iron. (300b3-4).

Therefore, it is possible σιγῶντα λέγειν. [Implied].

Ctesippus’ retort to this argument does not aim at the sophistic game of tag of overthrowing its conclusion:

Not if I go by blacksmith’s shops...because there the pieces of iron are said to speak out and cry aloud if anyone handles them. So here, thanks to your wisdom, you were talking nonsense without being aware of it. (300b4-7)

For he declines to argue either that it is impossible for silent things to speak, or to speak of silent things. Rather, he would appear to be undermining the sophist’s premise (1) by

discovering in premise (2) an entirely new amphiboly of his own: it is possible to speak of iron; it is possible that iron ‘speak’. At the same time, Ctesippus’ amphiboly is due to precisely the same cause---the same two constructions with the infinitive and accusative--as that which lurks in the thesis and conclusion of the sophist’s argument.<sup>238</sup> In that case it is fair to say that the brothers’ pupil has more than caught up to his teachers.

Ctesippus displays the same virtuosity in his answer to the ‘refutation’ of (T2). It is Euthydemus who attacks the thesis, arguing as follows:

(T2) It is impossible that λέγοντα σιγᾶν. (300b2-3).

(1) Whenever Ctesippus is silent, he is silent with respect to all things (πάντα σιγᾷς). (300c2).

(2) The things that speak are included in all things. (300c3-4).

Therefore, it is possible that λέγοντα σιγᾶν.

Euthydemus counts on Ctesippus to take the thesis to be ‘It is impossible for the speaking (λέγοντα) to be silent (σιγᾶν)’; the sophist then argues to the amphibolous conclusion that it is possible to be silent with respect to the speaking. Ctesippus answers by locating a new amphibolous sentence in the sophist’s premise set:

What, all things are not silent, are they? (τί δέ;...οὐ σιγᾷ πάντα;) (300c4-5).

In this instance Ctesippus challenges (1) by inventing an amphiboly based on the sophist’s phrase πάντα σιγᾷς (300c2). Like the participles λέγοντα and σιγῶντα, πάντα is a neuter plural which takes the same form in the nominative and accusative case. Thus

<sup>238</sup> Granted, Ctesippus’ amphiboly reposes upon a merely metaphorical sense of the verb ‘to speak’ (λέγειν); but the sophists are scarcely in a position to quibble over this fact.

Ctesippus can pretend to understand Euthydemus to have asserted, not that he is silent with respect to all things whenever he is silent (πάντα as accusative object of the infinitive) but that when he is silent, all things are silent (πάντα as nominative subject to the infinitive)---an obvious falsehood, and hence an unacceptable premise. Once again, Ctesippus has managed to evince his awareness of the source of an amphibolous refutation while simultaneously topping it with an amphibolous question of his own.

Ctesippus' final sally in our passage does not concern amphibolous arguments. Rather, it introduces the learner in dialectic to a new sophism which has not been previously encountered in the dialogue:

What, said Ctesippus, all things are not silent, are they?  
 Presumably not, said Euthydemus.  
 Well, then, my good friend, do all things speak?  
 All the speaking ones, I suppose.  
 But, he said, I am not asking this, but rather do all things keep silence or speak (ἀλλὰ τὰ πάντα σιγᾷ ἢ λέγει, 300c7)?  
 Neither and both, said Dionysodorus, breaking in, and I'm convinced you will be helpless in dealing with that answer!  
 Ctesippus gave one of his tremendous laughs and said, Euthydemus, your brother has made the argument sit on both sides of the fence and it is ruined and done for! (300c4-d5)<sup>239</sup>

Euthydemus answers in the negative to Ctesippus' question whether all things are silent. Ctesippus immediately follows up with the question whether, *therefore* (ἄρα, 300c5), all things speak. Ctesippus implies thereby that his pair of questions constitutes a contradictory pair of propositions; but of course they do not. Whether Ctesippus is aware of the niceties of the nature of contradiction is, as we have had occasion to observe, open to doubt. What he does obviously realize is that if he combines the two questions he has asked into one as in line 300c7 above, he can force the sophist to assert a falsehood so long as he insists on the brothers' own oft-expressed rule that the respondent answer

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<sup>239</sup> Transl. Sprague, op.cit., with modifications.

categorically ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Thus if the sophist answers categorically ‘yes’ as though to the single question, ‘Is everything such that it either has the capacity to speak or lacks this capacity?’, he may be ‘refuted’ on the assumption that he has answered ‘yes’ to the pair of questions, ‘Do all things keep silence?’ and ‘Do all things speak?’, on the other hand, if Euthydemus answers categorically ‘no’ as though to this latter pair of questions, he may be rebuffed for denying the truth of the single question regarding the capacity of speech. The correct response to Ctesippus’ question is of course to refuse to answer categorically ‘yes’ or ‘no’, and to draw attention to the flaw in the premise asked for. (*SE* 30 *passim*). Dionysodorus’ irrefutable answer ‘neither *and both*’ seems to express his gleeful appreciation that his new-found pupil has discovered yet another weapon in the sophistic arsenal, namely, the fallacy of ‘many questions’:

Those [false refutations] that depend upon making more than one question into one consist in our failure to articulate the definition of a *proposition* (προτάσεως). For a proposition is an [affirmation or denial of] one thing of one thing...So if a single proposition is the claiming of one thing of one thing, a proposition without qualification will also be the putting of this kind of a question. Now since a syllogism is composed from propositions and a refutation is a syllogism, then a refutation, too, will be composed from propositions. If, then, a proposition is an [affirmation or denial of] one thing of one thing, it is obvious that this [false refutation] too consists in ignorance of refutation; for [in it] a proposition that is not genuine appears to be a proposition. (*SE* 6 169a6-16).<sup>240</sup>

It seems clear then that the passage introduces a new type of sophism into Plato’s taxonomy of fallacy which has not been previously showcased in the dialogue. At the same time, Ctesippus’ commission of the fallacy of many questions was made possible by his failure (deliberate or otherwise) to observe the distinction between contradictory and contrary pairs of propositions. In that case Ctesippus’ lengthy *tour de force*

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<sup>240</sup> Cp. *APr* A1 24a16-17; A23 41a4-5: ‘A syllogism without qualification is from propositions’ (προτάσεων).

concludes, appropriately enough, with a reflection upon a *general* source of the false refutations it has surveyed: ignorance of the nature of genuine contradiction.

### 5.10 Socrates' Iolaus and the Taxonomy of Fallacy

His unhelpful Iolaus triumphant, it is Socrates' turn to comment upon the foregoing proceedings:

Ctesippus gave one of his tremendous laughs and said, Euthydemus, your brother has made the argument sit on both sides of the fence and it is ruined and done for! Cleinias was very pleased and laughed too, which made Ctesippus swell to ten times his normal size. It is my opinion that Ctesippus, who is a bit of a rogue, had picked up these very things by overhearing these very men, because there is no wisdom of a comparable sort among any other persons of the present day. (300d3-9).

Socrates' portrait of this dialectical climax (so to speak) would seem an expression that his worst fears regarding Ctesippus have been realized. The impressionable and good-natured boy who, unlike Ctesippus (274c), made a bee-line for Socrates in the changing room (273b1-2); who is as modest, and brave at answering questions (275c3-4, 283c8) as his lover is by turns brash and easily rattled (283e); and who has declared himself for the pursuit of wisdom (282d2-3), is, at dialogue's end, in mortal danger of the seductive charms of---not to mince words, since Socrates does not---a prick. The tumescence in question however is not so much Ctesippus the man as it is his instantiation of the art of sophistry. The danger posed by Cleinias' admiration of this instantiation is, of course, *genuine* in Plato's view because it concerns the condition of Cleinias' *soul*<sup>241</sup>: the seduction in progress is psychological because it involves a reorientation of Cleinias' desire for wisdom, away from Socratic dialectic and protreptic,

<sup>241</sup> Cp. *Euthyd.* 275a-b, 282a-b, and the first protreptic episode generally; the soul of course is that on whose condition 'ones all' for doing well or badly depends (*Protag.* 313a7-8: τὴν ψυχὴν, καὶ ἐν ᾧ πάντ' ἐστὶν τὰ σα ἢ εὖ ἢ κακῶς πράττειν).

and towards its false image. Ctesippus' descent to the sophistic level of debate thus confirms one sense that we have assigned to Socrates' original warning regarding the undesirability of Ctesippus' intervention in the proceedings: the alliance would do more harm than good to *Cleinias*---on the quite reasonable assumption that the latter, as an absolute beginner in dialectic, is in no better a position to distinguish a true from a false refutation than he is a genuine lover from a false one.

There is however no reason to suppose that the sophists have inflicted the same harm upon Ctesippus. The mere fact that Ctesippus has argued sophistically---joining the brothers at their game because he cannot beat them through Socratic means---does not entail that he has abandoned all belief in the distinction between genuine and false refutation. Neither do we have any particular reason to suppose that Ctesippus has, in virtue of his descent into sophistry, adopted the negative stance towards philosophy of the critic of the epilogue.<sup>242</sup> On the other hand, neither Ctesippus' performance, nor Socrates' comment upon it, justify the ascription to Ctesippus of a genuine grasp of the nature of either true or false refutation. What Socrates credits Ctesippus with having learned is how the sophist's tricks are *played*. But as we have seen, knowledge of how to produce a fallacy does not necessarily entail a grasp of its solution. For while Ctesippus has discovered how to imitate---and eventually, even to surpass---the brothers in the production of fallacy, his productions do not always constitute solutions to the false refutations to which he responds. It is therefore only Ctesippus' facility in the generation of fallacy which earns Socrates' praise. Indeed, if I am right, Ctesippus' unimpeded intervention in the episode is included in large part precisely in order that Plato may flag his theoretical *disagreement* with the modes of resolution implicit in several of

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<sup>242</sup> Both of these attitudes seem to be ascribed to Ctesippus by Jackson, *op.cit.*, 385, 395.



Ctesippus' answers. This result confirms the second sense that we have assigned to Socrates' misgivings regarding Ctesippus' contribution: his alliance with Socrates would do more harm than good to *Socratic dialectic*---which, in its refutatory aspect, includes a grasp of the proper resolution of fallacy.

In particular, Ctesippus has been endowed by Plato with a *general* tendency to complain that fallacies turn on a term being used in a sense different from the one he intended. In this regard, Ctesippus is portrayed as reacting to fallacy in the manner of the common man: upon being refuted by a sophism, and sensing that the conclusion has been reached illicitly, the ordinary man is likely to express his dissatisfaction with the argument by complaining that the sophist has 'twisted his words'; but he will often infer upon that basis that the sophism therefore rests on his expressions not having been taken in the sense he intended. The character of Ctesippus thus provides Plato with a foil against which he may argue his theoretical opposition to the view that all fallacies rest on 'double signification'. At the same time, Plato's particular choice of his foil allows him to characterize the view in question as dialectically naïve. Aristotle, as we know, concurs: for he reports, with the impatience of the advanced theorist, that such a monistic thesis was actually embraced by certain of his contemporary, or near contemporary, theorists on fallacy.<sup>243</sup> What our examination of the final eristic episode of the *Euthydemus* reveals however is that of the two, it was Plato, and not the author of the *Sophistici Elenchi*, who was the first to advocate for pluralism in the theory of the resolution of fallacy.

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<sup>243</sup> Cp. *SE* 10, where Aristotle expresses his opposition to the thesis with considerable heat.

## Chapter Six

### 6.1 Socratic Dialectic and the Causal Explanation of Fallacy

Our examination of the eristic episodes of the *Euthydemus* is now nearly complete. Our aim in analyzing these passages was to determine the principles, norms, and resources of Socratic dialectic in its refutatory aspect. Before proceeding further, it would be in order to take note of our cumulative results.

I have demonstrated that the Socratic response to false refutation may be divided into two basic categories: some of Socrates' objections constitute *solutions* to fallacy, and have causal explanatory force; other objections do not constitute solutions, and have no explanatory force.

#### **Explanatory objections to fallacy:**

I have argued that Socratic objections of the first type are grounded in a *Socratic definition of genuine refutation*. It is precisely this fact which underwrites their *bonae fides* as fully explanatory *solutions* to false refutation. Objections of this category have explanatory force because they are *causal*: the objections specify the cause of a refutation's failure to be genuine as due to the violation of a clause in the Socratic definition of genuine refutation.

In Chapters 3 and 4 I argued that a close reading of the eristic episodes down to 297d2 reveals that, even where Socrates himself does not raise a specific objection to a fallacy, Plato nevertheless implicitly reposes upon the following principles of genuine refutation:

(REF): A refutation is a syllogistic demonstration of the contradictory of an opponent's thesis.

(CONT): A contradiction is a pair of propositions one of which affirms of some subject *x* that it is *this* (for some predicate *F*) and the other of which denies of the subject *x* that it is *this*.

(HOM): Both the predicate term and the subject term in the refutation (including the conclusion) concern the same things (περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν)---that is, signify the same objects---as the predicate and subject in the answerer's original thesis.

(BQ): The conclusion of a genuine refutation is different from the premises; it is not identical with any of them.

(SQ): The syllogism of a refutation reaches its conclusion, the contradictory of the opponent's original thesis, by predicating terms of the subject in the same respect and relative to the same thing and in the same manner and at the same time as in the answerer's original thesis.

(COMB): Both the predicate term and the subject term in the deduction (including the conclusion) are the same linguistic items as the predicate term and subject term of the opponent's original thesis.

(IE): The syllogism of a refutation concludes to the genuine contradictory of the answerer's original thesis, in conformity with every condition on genuine refutation *whether these conditions are explicitly asked for* by the questioner at the starting point (or anywhere else in the refutation) *or not*.

In Chapter 5 I argued that it is implicit in Ctesippus' various responses to the sophists' fallacies that Plato recognizes QS, Amphiboly, and Many Questions as distinct forms of false refutation. I also argued that the second half of the third eristic episode constitutes a sustained critique on Plato's part of a contemporary alternative solution to the fallacy of Accident. On the basis of this indirect textual evidence, I concluded that Plato recognizes the latter sophism as a *sui generis* form of false refutation. It seems clear however that the condition on genuine refutation which is violated by QS may be said to be fully captured by the principle SQ above; thus SQ and QS are as it were variations of the same fallacy. The fallacy of Amphiboly by contrast is not so readily subsumed under our principle HOM above; for the linguistic unit whose dual signification is exploited in the case of Amphiboly would seem to be either the entire predicate, or the sentence as a whole. In that case we may offer the following account of the condition on genuine refutation violated by amphibolous arguments:

(AMPH): The combination of the predicate and the subject in the refutation (including the conclusion) concerns the same things (περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν)---that is, signifies the same state of affairs---as the combination of the predicate and subject in the answerer's original thesis.

The conditions on refutation violated by instances of Many Questions and Accident are easier to specify:

(MQ): The refutation is composed from *premises*, i.e., from affirmations or denials of one thing of a single subject.

(ACC): The conclusion of the refutation follows of necessity from the premises.

The violation of any one of these principles will render an argument a false refutation; and the *causal explanation* of its failure to be genuine will involve the specification of one of the principles above. Because such solutions specify a variety of causes of false refutation, they generate a *taxonomy* of fallacy. However, as we noted in Chapter 4.8, some of these principles are grounded in Plato's conception of a syllogism alone; others are grounded in his conception of a refutation. Thus BQ is concerned with the manner in which a refutation constitutes a syllogism, independently of the manner in which the argument in question constitutes a refutation; for BQ does not make essential reference to an answerer's thesis or the terms within it. Conditions HOM, SQ, COMB, and IE by contrast *do* make essential reference to an answerer's thesis or its constitutive terms. Hence HOM, SQ, COMB, and IE concern the manner in which an argument constitutes a syllogism that is a *refutation*. We are now in a position to supplement this classification with the observation that AMPH falls into the latter category, while MQ and ACC fall into the former; for the requirements that a refutation proceeds from

premises, and that it be conclusive, are conditions on the syllogistic fragment of a refutation; and as such, they may be specified without reference to the answerer's thesis.

**Other explanatory objections:**

We have also noted that Plato recognizes further conditions on genuine refutation which resist classification as either principles concerned with the definition of a syllogism or with the definition of a refutation. Thus the following two principles would seem to be more naturally characterized as general principles of syllogistic reasoning:

(TP): Only a true conclusion may be deduced from true premises.

(AI): The impossible result that is reached by syllogism in an argument *ad impossible* must be known and agreed in advance to be false.

Our examination of the Refutation Argument (286e1-288a7) disclosed Plato's commitment to TP; Socrates' paraphrase (293d2-8) of the OA reveals Plato's commitment to AI. Like false refutations which depend on Accident, arguments which violate TP and AI are inconclusive. It is possible therefore to conceive of TP and AI themselves as entailed by the general requirement that the conclusion of a syllogism follows necessarily from its premises. For our purposes however the more important classificatory result is that TP and AI will qualify as explanatory principles of Socratic expertise. For example, if the premises of a refutation are true, while its conclusion is

false, the citation of TP will count as a causal explanation of the argument's failure to be a genuine refutation.

### **Non-explanatory objections to fallacy: Self-refutation arguments**

Our analysis of the eristic episodes has also disclosed the existence of a variety of non-explanatory responses to fallacy in the Socratic arsenal. We noted that these may be ranked in terms of their dialectical force. In the first rank are self-refutation arguments. We have discovered two sub-categories of these in the text:

(NE 1) The Refutation Argument of 286e1-288a7 proves that the sophists' thesis NFO is *dialectically self-refuting*. By way of a general account of this type of argument, we said that its aim is to establish that the falsehood of the opponent's thesis is entailed either by any instance of his dialectical activity as a questioner, or by his dialectical activity as an answerer in defense of his thesis.

(NE 2) The Teaching Argument of 286d4-287b1 proves that the sophists' thesis NFO is *pragmatically self-refuting*. Of the two forms of self-refutation arguments wielded by Socrates, it is evident that he regards the former to outrank the latter in dialectical force. However, neither mode of refutation appeals to any principles of predication which would explain what is wrong with the arguments to which they constitute objections (viz., the brothers' arguments against the possibility of false speaking and contradiction). I have argued that these modes of refutation are therefore distinctively Socratic precisely because they are non-explanatory in this sense.

### **Other non-explanatory responses to fallacy: Falsehood and paradox**

We have detected two further types of non-explanatory objections to false refutations in the dialogue. The first type occurs at 296d8-297b1, when Socrates forces Dionysodorus to say that Socrates knows that good men are unjust; examples of the second are numerous (e.g., that the sophists know the number of the stars and sands, 294b8-9). I have argued that such objections were recognized by Plato's contemporaries as the perfectly legitimate, albeit less desirable, dialectical stratagems, namely:

(NE 3) Making the answerer say something false.

(NE 4) Making the answerer say something paradoxical.

I have argued that of the two, Socrates regards (NE 3) as having greater dialectical force than (NE 4).

### **Dialectical fouls procedurally relevant to genuine refutation:**

Finally, we have noted that Socratic expertise in its refutatory aspect includes a grasp of what is procedurally relevant to genuine refutation. The objections Socrates raises to the sophists' violations of these procedures may be classified as non-explanatory responses to fallacy. However, such responses are objections to procedures rather than to theses or arguments. Since they consequently find the least purchase against one skilled in eristic combat, we may conjecture that Socrates regards such objections as occupying the last rank in the order of non-explanatory responses to false refutation. Examples of such violations of dialectical procedure include:



An answerer's refusing to acknowledge the obligation to answer a question (287b2-287d2).

An answerer's refusing to admit to having conceded a premise at an earlier state of his examination (288a1-288a2).

A questioner demanding the categorical answer 'yes' or 'no' to an equivocal or otherwise ill-formed question (295b6-c11).

Whether Plato recognized other modes of objection to false refutation beyond those which appear in the *Euthydemus* is I take it a completely open question. The answer will depend in part on whether he recognizes modes of fallacy besides those canvassed in the dialogue. Such a question must be settled by a close examination of the corpus.<sup>244</sup> Moreover, just as there is no reason to suppose that at *Soph.* 230b4-8 the Visitor takes himself to be supplying an *exhaustive* list of conditions on ἔλεγχος ἀληθινός, there is no reason to suppose that Plato takes the principles above to exhaust the refutatory function of Socratic dialectic.<sup>245</sup> What is important for Plato's didactic purposes in the

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<sup>244</sup> My own intuition is that such an examination would discover at least some of the false refutations recognized by *SE* which do not put in an appearance in the *Euthydemus* (Division, Form of Expression, Accent, Consequence, and False Cause). Protagoras for example seems to accuse Socrates of committing the fallacy of Consequence at *Protag.* 350c6-351b2. As I read this exchange, the accusation is unjust; however, whether Protagoras is being sincere or not in leveling the charge, he is being a good sophist by attempting to make it appear to the audience that Socrates has committed a dialectical fault. The fallacy due to Form of Expression seems to be regarded by Aristotle as a form of category mistake; as a peculiarly Aristotelian discovery, it is perhaps less likely to turn up in a survey of the Platonic corpus. It is of course equally possible that a careful survey of the corpus could turn up modes of false refutation not recognized in the *SE*.

<sup>245</sup> One obvious lacuna in the refutatory aspect of Socratic dialectic as it is portrayed in the *Euthydemus* is Socrates' reliance upon principles which govern his rejection of certain kinds of definition offered by his interlocutors. For example, a proper definition must not be a list; a definition of F must specify a single property that all things correctly called 'F' have in common; a proper definition must not be redundant or

*Euthydemus* is not the dramatization of every conceivable mode of false refutation, but rather the dramatization of causally explanatory responses to false refutation.

Neither does our classification of the responses above into distinct modes of objection entail that they may not be used in combination against the same argument. Distinct modes of false refutation, it is true, must be resolved by the citation of their distinct violations of the conditions on genuine refutation; nevertheless, such explanatory responses may be used in combination with non-explanatory objections against false refutation. As we have noted above, Socrates has availed himself of this complex mode of objection in his response to the AOA, by (i) indicating that it is a case of SQ, (ii) making the sophist say something false, and (iii) making the sophist say something paradoxical. In his two remaining encounters with the brothers, Socrates exhibits a similar versatility: a flurry of combined punches is directed at a single sophistical dilemma---culminating in a knock-out blow (303d5-303e4) which silences the sophists forever.

## 6.2 Dionysodorus' Ox: Other Than $F \rightarrow \text{Not-}F$ Redux

Socrates' encounter with Dionysodorus at 300e1-301c5 has received no satisfactory treatment by commentators on the *Euthydemus*. This is perhaps unsurprising, given the highly elliptical nature of the remarks of both characters in the passage. Their exchange in its entirety runs as follows:

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circular, etc. For a discussion of Socratic dialectic as partially constituted by a grasp of principles of definition of this type, see Sedley (2004), 19-27, 33.

And I said, Cleinias, why are you laughing at such serious and beautiful things? (Κάγῳ εἶπον. Τί γελᾷς, ὦ Κλεινία, ἐπὶ σπουδαίοις οὕτω πράγμασιν καὶ καλοῖς;)

Why Socrates, have you ever yet seen a beautiful thing?, said Dionysodorus. (Σὺ γὰρ ἤδη τι πώποτ' εἶδες, ὦ Σώκρατες, καλὸν πρᾶγμα; ἔφη ὁ Διονυσόδωρος.)

Yes indeed, Dionysodorus, I said, and many of them. (Ἐγώ γε, ἔφη, καὶ πολλὰ γε, ὦ Διονυσόδωρε.)

And were they different from the beautiful, he said, or were they the same as the beautiful? (Ἄρα ἕτερα ὄντα τοῦ καλοῦ, ἔφη, ἢ ταῦτ' αὖ καλῶ;)

This put me in a terrible fix, which I thought I deserved for my grumbling. All the same I answered that they were different from the beautiful itself; yet at the same time there was some beauty present with each of them. (Κάγῳ ἐν παντὶ ἐγενόμην ὑπὸ ἀπορίας, καὶ ἡγούμην δίκαια πεπονθέναι ὅτι ἔγρυξα, ὅμως δὲ ἕτερα ἔφη αὐτοῦ γε τοῦ καλοῦ· πάρεστιν μέντοι ἐκάστῳ αὐτῶν κάλλος τι.)

Then if an ox is present with you, he said, you are an ox, and because I am present with you now, you are Dionysodorus? (Ἐὰν οὖν, ἔφη, παραγένηταί σοι βοῦς, βοῦς εἶ, καὶ ὅτι νῦν ἐγώ σοι πάρεμι, Διονυσόδωρος εἶ;)

Heaven forbid, I said. (Εὐφήμεῖ τοῦτό γε, ἦν δ' ἐγώ.)

But in what way, he said, can the different be different just because (the) different is present with (the) different? (Ἀλλὰ τίνα τρόπον, ἔφη, ἑτέρου ἑτέρῳ παραγενομένου τὸ ἕτερον ἕτερον ἂν εἶη;)

Are you in difficulties there?, I said. (I was so eager to have the wisdom of the pair that I was already trying to copy it). (Ἄρα τοῦτο, ἔφη ἐγώ, ἀπορεῖς; Ἡδὲ δὲ τοῖν ἀνδρῶν τὴν σοφίαν ἐπεχείρουν μιμεῖσθαι, ἅτε ἐπιθυμῶν αὐτῆς.)

How can I not be in difficulties?, he said, both I myself and every man concerning what cannot be? (Πῶς γὰρ οὐκ ἀπορῶ, ἔφη, καὶ ἐγὼ καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ἅπαντες ἀνθρώποι ὃ μὴ ἔστι;)

What are you saying, Dionysodorus?, I said. Is not the beautiful beautiful and the ugly ugly? (Τί λέγεις, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὦ Διονυσόδωρε; οὐ τὸ καλὸν καλὸν ἔστιν καὶ τὸ αἰσχρὸν αἰσχρὸν;)

Yes, if I like, he said. (Ἐὰν ἔμοιγε, ἔφη, δοκῇ.)

So do you like? (Οὐκοῦν δοκεῖ;)

Sure, he said. (Πάνυ γ', ἔφη.)

Then is it not also the case that the same is the same and the different different? Because I don't imagine that the different is the same, but I thought even a child would hardly be in difficulty over this, that the different is different. But you must have neglected this point deliberately, Dionysodorus, since in every other respect you and your brother strike me as bringing the art of argument to a fine pitch of excellence, like craftsmen who bring to completion whatever work constitutes their proper business. (Οὐκοῦν καὶ τὸ ταῦτόν ταῦτόν καὶ τὸ ἕτερον ἕτερον; οὐ γὰρ δήπου τό γε ἕτερον ταῦτόν, ἀλλ' ἔγωγε οὐδ' ἂν παῖδα ὦμην τοῦτο ἀπορῆσαι, ὥς οὐ τὸ ἕτερον ἕτερόν ἐστιν. ἀλλ', ὦ Διονυσόδωρε, τοῦτο μὲν ἐκὼν παρήκας, ἐπεὶ τὰ ἄλλα μοι δοκεῖτε ὥσπερ οἱ δημιουργοὶ οἷς ἕκαστα προσήκει ἀπεργάζεσθαι, καὶ ὑμεῖς τὸ διαλέγεσθαι παγκάλως ἀπεργάζεσθαι.)<sup>246</sup>

Some have seen in Socrates' contention that 'the beautiful is beautiful, and the different is different' a reference to the 'self-predication' of Platonic Forms---on some interpretation or other of that doctrine.<sup>247</sup> A more recent commentator has argued that Socrates' entire response is a deliberate parody of the sophist's alleged commitment to the predication thesis of the 'later learners' of the *Sophist* (251b-c, 252c-d; 259d):

[Socrates] forces [the sophists] to concede first that the beautiful is (just) beautiful; and then that the same is (just) the same, the different just the different. After all—Socrates continues in his sophistic persona—we couldn't say that the different is the same (why not? Not if we have denied, as the sophists seem to have done, that there are differential relations between things; and not if we suppose that being different is being cut off, being the same is identity or cloning). But we can still insist that the different is different. And that insistence is what Socrates finally dismisses: everything else the sophists say may be clever; but this sort of remark is not conducive to good conversation.<sup>248</sup>

<sup>246</sup> Translation Sprague (1993) with modifications.

<sup>247</sup> See for example Sprague *ibid.*, 55: 'Since the important article of G.Vlastos ('The Third Man Argument in the *Parmenides*')...the self-predication discussion has centered on the *Parmenides* with a few side glances at the *Protagoras* and the *Phaedo*. But the *Euthydemus* 300e-301c should have its place in the discussion too, as an analysis of the passage will quickly show.' Sprague however takes Dionysodorus to be raising an objection to the theory of Forms in this passage. I argue below that it is not a necessary condition on the proper interpretation of the sophist's dilemma that he is attacking the Platonic theory of Forms in particular. Sprague proceeds to argue that Socrates rebuts the attack on Forms by assuming that Dionysodorus has himself used the language of Forms: 'The sophist has asked, "in what way can the different be different?" Socrates answers, "well, why not, if the beautiful is beautiful and the ugly ugly?"' [i.e., if the Beautiful itself is beautiful and the Ugly itself ugly]. 'In other words, he meets Dionysodorus' objection to the theory of Forms by making it appear, by analogy, that Dionysodorus has himself been using the language of Forms', 56. I argue below that this sort of construal of Socrates' response would reduce it to a merely verbal riposte that would not constitute a genuine refutation by the standards of Socratic dialectic.

<sup>248</sup> McCabe, *op.cit.*, 158.

It is clear however that Socrates does *not* say in our text that the different is *just* different, and the beautiful *just* beautiful. Nor does he say that it is *impossible* for us to say that the different is the same. What he *does* say---a fact which seems to be completely ignored in the gloss above---is that even a child would not be in difficulties over the statement that ‘the different is different’. This suggests, first, that Socrates thinks that the statement is obviously *true*; and second, that he thinks that the sophist----so far from having asserted that we can *only* make statements of the form ‘the different is different’--has *on the contrary* somehow argued himself into the corner of denying the obvious truth of such statements. For these reasons (and for further reasons given below) we have no right to suspect that Socrates takes his response to Dionysodorus to be sophistical in any way; on the contrary, we have every reason to expect that Socrates’ reply is grounded in the resources of *Socratic dialectic*.

On the other hand, it seems equally clear that we cannot hope to understand this reply if we do not first attempt to reconstruct the sophistical argument which Socrates anticipates and to which he responds. This task is of course complicated by Socrates’ very intransigence in our passage: his answers derail the sophist’s argument at every turn. Nevertheless, as a number of commentators have pointed out,<sup>249</sup> Dionysodorus’ original aim must have been to confound Socrates with a dilemma. The conclusion of the dilemma is the denial of the existence of a plurality of beautiful things. Thus Socrates is asked:

(a) whether he has ever seen a beautiful thing (300e3-4) and

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<sup>249</sup> See in particular Zeyl, *op.cit.*, 174.

(b) whether these beautiful things are *different from* the beautiful or *the same as* the beautiful. (301a1)

Given Socrates' thesis (300e5)---viz., that there *is* a plurality of beautiful things---it seems clear that the first horn of the sophist's dilemma would run as follows:

Thesis: There are beautiful things.

- (1) If there are beautiful things, they are either the same as or different from the beautiful.
- (2) The beautiful things are the same (**in number**) as the beautiful.
- (3) If beautiful things are the same (**in number**) as the beautiful, then there is no difference (**in number**) between beautiful things and the beautiful.
- (4) Therefore, there are no beautiful things.

It is evident that in order to gain his conclusion, the sophist must construe the contraries *same* and *different* as signifying *numerical* sameness and difference: if each beautiful thing is numerically one and the same as the property of beauty, then the allegedly many beautiful things will in turn be identical to each other; hence there is no plurality of beautiful things.

Having reached this result, the sophist would presumably begin the second horn of his dilemma by extracting from the answerer the concession that the many beautiful things are *different* from the beautiful. Nevertheless, the precise contours of the second horn are a bit more difficult to guess at. Dionysodorus' aim must be to argue from the

fact that the many beautiful things are different from the beautiful to the non-existence of beautiful things. Given the strategy of the first horn, our expectation is raised that he would achieve this aim by a shift in the signification of the contrary *different*. However, in previous eristic episodes the brothers have availed themselves of more than one sophistical stratagem that would obtain the requisite conclusion. One possibility is that Dionysodorus means to recycle the strategy of 283c-d, wherein it was argued, from the fact that Cleinias' friends desired him to change from being ignorant to being wise, that they desired his non-existence.<sup>250</sup> On this reconstruction, the second horn of the dilemma would run as follows:

Thesis: There are beautiful things.

- (1) The beautiful things are different (**in account**) from the beautiful.
- (2) If the beautiful things are different (**in account**) from the beautiful, they are not-beautiful.
- (3) If the beautiful things are not-beautiful, they are-not.
- (4) Therefore, there are no beautiful things.

Call this (after premise (3)) the NOT-F→NOT strategy. On this reconstruction, the second horn exhibits two flaws. First, we meet with the expected shift in signification of the contrary *different*: the many beautiful things, each of which is called 'beautiful' (καλόν), are now to be taken to be different in account, or description (λόγος) from beauty (τὸ καλόν). Thus stripped of their qualification as beautiful things, they are not-beautiful. The textual precedent as a stratagem in the sophists' kit-bag is 298a-c, wherein

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<sup>250</sup> See Chapter 3.3, 114-115.

it was argued, on the inductive grounds that if x is other than (ἕτερος) a stone, then x is not a stone, and if y is other (ἕτερος) than gold, then y is not gold, then for all x and F, if x is other than F, then x is not-F. Next, the sophist avails himself of an application of *secundum quid* in premise (3) in order to obtain the denial of the existence of the many beautifuls.

One consideration that weighs rather heavily against taking this to be Dionysodorus' intended line of attack is that a certain amount of verbal transposition would be required on his part to make premise (3) an even remotely apparently acceptable premise. It will be recalled that in the 'death-wish' argument of 283c-d, the sophist brought off this trick by the following transpositions and elisions:

Cleinius is not wise: Κλεινίας οὐκ ἔστιν σοφός.

You wish him to become wise: βούλεσθε γενέσθαι αὐτὸν σοφόν...

...and ignorant not to be: ἀμαθῇ δὲ μὴ εἶναι.

Therefore what he is not: Οὐκοῦν ὅς μὲν οὐκ ἔστιν...

...you wish him to become: βούλεσθε αὐτὸν γενέσθαι...

and what he is now no longer to be: ὅς δ' ἔστι νῦν μηκέτι εἶναι.

Since you wish him what now he is no longer to be: ἐπεὶ βούλεσθε αὐτὸν ὅς νῦν ἔστιν μηκέτι εἶναι,

...you therefore wish him to die: βούλεσθε αὐτόν...ἀπολωλέναι.

It is of course possible to conceive of similar verbal jugglery by whose means premise (3) could be rendered (apparently) acceptable. The difficulty is that it is possible to conceive of any number of forms such verbal trickery could take. Socrates' intransigence however prevents the sophist from fully articulating the argument at which he aimed; and Plato



could not rely on the reader to supply, from the resources of his own imagination, the steps of an essentially indeterminate line of questioning.

In that case, it seems much more attractive to suppose that the sophist had an alternative, and simpler, strategy in mind. On this reconstruction, the second horn runs as follows:

Thesis: There are beautiful things.

- (1) The beautiful things are different (**in account**) from the beautiful.
- (2) If the beautiful things are different (**in account**) from the beautiful, they are not-beautiful.
- (3) Therefore, there are no beautiful things.

On this reconstruction, the sophist dispenses with the application of *secundum quid* which is employed in NOT-F→NOT. He may do so however precisely because the contrary predicate *different* is taken in the sense of difference in *account*. Once again, the textual precedent is 298a-c: as Dionysodorus had implied in that passage, if x is different from man, x is *not a man* (298c5): not because x is not identical or numerically the same as some *particular* man, but rather because x does not take the qualification or account or λόγος of ‘man’ at all.<sup>251</sup> In that case, the sophist may argue directly that if the many beautifuls have turned out to be not-beautiful, then there are no beautiful things after all.

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<sup>251</sup> Again, as noted above (Chapter 5.2, 262-265), Dionysodorus introduces the predicate ‘man’ not in the induction base for his argument that if anything is different from F, it is not F, but in an instance of the principle of non-contradiction; but as he uses the predicate ‘gold’ in the same breath as another such instance, and as the latter predicate does enter in to his induction base for his principle, in challenging Ctesippus whether x can be both a man and not a man (299c5), he is in effect claiming that his principle and his inductive argument for it hold just as much for ‘man’ as it does for gold.

This construal of the second horn of the sophist's dilemma is admirably straightforward. Nevertheless, there are good reasons for supposing that the inference which Socrates anticipates includes three additional features. A full reconstruction of the second horn which includes these features would run as follows:

Thesis: There are beautiful things.

- (1) The beautiful things are different (**in account**) from the beautiful.
- (2) If the beautiful things are different (**in account**) from the beautiful, they are other than the beautiful (i.e., 'the beautiful' is not their λόγος).
- (3) If the beautiful things are other than [the] beautiful, they are not-beautiful.
- (4) If the beautiful things are not-beautiful, they are ugly.
- (5) Therefore, there are no beautiful things.

In his initial response to Dionysodorus, Socrates insists that 'some beauty is present to each' of the beautiful things (πάρεστιν μέντοι ἐκάστῳ αὐτῶν κάλλος τι, 301a4)---just as though he anticipates that it is the sophist's intention---as in premise (2) above---to strip that qualification from the beautiful things.

In the same breath, Socrates insists while the many beautiful things take the *qualification* 'beautiful', they are nevertheless *numerically* different from the beautiful *itself* (ὅμως δὲ ἕτερα ἔφην αὐτοῦ γε τοῦ καλοῦ, 301a3-4). The remark suggests, first, that Socrates anticipates that the sophist's dilemma turns upon a shift in the signification of ἕτερον (different), from numerical difference to difference in qualification or account; at the same time, Socrates' use of the intensive pronoun and the article with καλόν suggests

that he anticipates that the sophist would attempt to conceal this homonymy by obscuring the difference between the adjective καλόν (beautiful) and the abstract noun τὸ καλόν (beauty, the beautiful). (A fudge that is facilitated by the fact that the abstract noun *beauty* may be expressed in the Greek by καλόν with or without the article). This obfuscation is represented in premise (3) above, wherein the article with καλόν which the sophist did employ at 301a1 (τοῦ καλοῦ...τῷ καλῷ) is quietly dropped.<sup>252</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that on the proposed reconstruction above, it is quite possible for the sophist to reach his conclusion without availing himself of premise (4). I have included it on two grounds, which I will discuss below. The first is the fact that Socrates himself takes the initiative in introducing the contraries (viz., the same and the ugly) to the terms the sophist has used in his dilemma---just as though he anticipates that the argument he derails was aiming at a sub-conclusion which contained the term ‘the ugly’. The second piece of evidence is admittedly more remote:

What was also said before, having let these things go as [δυνατὰ] to be able to follow closely, examining step by step, the things that are said, both when someone says that a thing that is different is in some way the same and when [he says] a thing that is the same is [in some way] different, in what way and in what respect which of the things which he says has happened. But to show that the same is different in just any old way and that the different is the same and the great small and the like unlike, and to delight in this way in constantly introducing contraries into the discussions---this is not true refutation and is the obvious new-born child of someone who has just come into contact with the things that are. (259b8-259d7)

I have argued above<sup>253</sup> that in this text from the *Sophist*, the new-born brain children of which the Visitor complains are fallacies due to *secundum quid*. The second horn of Dionysodorus’ dilemma in our present passage is not argued by *secundum quid*. The

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<sup>252</sup> I take it as evidence that the sophist would exploit such an ambiguity that he rephrases his challenge to Socrates at 301a8-9 with the following ellipses: ‘But in what way can the different be different [from the different] by the presence of [the] different to [the] different?’ (Ἀλλὰ τίνα τρόπον, ἔφη, ἑτέρου ἑτέρῳ παραγενομένου τὸ ἕτερον ἕτερον ἂν εἴη;) .Note that Socrates restores the article in his response at 301b5-6: ‘is not the beautiful beautiful and the ugly, ugly?’ (οὐ τὸ καλὸν καλὸν ἐστὶν καὶ τὸ αἰσχρὸν αἰσχρὸν;).

<sup>253</sup> In Chapter 4.7, 239-247.

value of the passage for my immediate purposes however is that it provides evidence that it would have been a common sophistical strategy for Dionysodorus to aim to argue, not just that the beautiful things are not-beautiful, but that they are ugly; for the Visitor's remarks suggest that it was a *general* sophistical strategy, when refuting theses in which a contrary is predicated of a subject, to conclude to the predication of the contrary of the contrary.<sup>254</sup>

Let us call the full reconstruction of the second horn of the sophist's dilemma the OTHER THAN  $F \rightarrow \text{NOT-}F$  strategy. The reasons for its adoption are numerous. It is the dilemma to which Socrates seems to offer an anticipatory solution in his response at 301a2-4. It gets Dionysodorus to the conclusion at which he aims. It is simpler than its only apparent alternative. There is textual precedent elsewhere in the dialogue for the assumption which drives the argument, viz., if  $x$  is other than  $F$ , then  $x$  is not- $F$ . Lastly, but not least, the latter assumption was left unexamined in its previous dialectical incarnation in the dialogue. For it will be recalled that in its initial appearance (298a-b), the premise was wheeled into service against Socrates; but that any examination of the premise on his part was suppressed by the untimely intervention of Ctesippus. Ctesippus did not evince an interest in its interrogation; and Socrates has not spoken a word since his subjection to the inductive argument for the premise in the earlier passage. If Plato makes Socrates break his silence now, it would be highly appropriate that he does so to allow Socrates to resume the potential examination of the thesis that was broken off in his last encounter with the sophist.

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<sup>254</sup> Compare also Socrates' report of Zeno's paradoxes at *Parmenides* 127e: if things are many, they must be both like and unlike.

In what follows then, I will defend a reading of our present passage which assumes that Socrates anticipates that Dionysodorus meant to complete his dilemma along the lines of OTHER THAN  $F \rightarrow \text{NOT-}F$ , and not along the lines of  $\text{NOT-}F \rightarrow \text{NOT}$ . The conclusion of the dilemma of course (on either reading) is that no matter how Socrates answers on the score of the sameness or difference of the beautiful things and the beautiful, there are no beautiful things; therefore, there are no beautiful things.

As we have noted above, Socrates refuses to accept either horn of the dilemma, choosing to answer instead that (a) the beautiful things are different from the beautiful itself (αὐτοῦ τοῦ καλοῦ, 301a3-4) but also (b) at the same time ‘there is some beauty present with each of them’ (πάρεστιν μέντοι ἐκάστῳ αὐτῶν κάλλος τι, 301a4). A number of questions arise here about the sense Socrates attaches to these claims. Thus with respect to (b): what does he mean by the ‘present to’ relation? Is ‘being present to’ the converse relation to ‘sharing in’, or participation? It is noteworthy too that Socrates does not explain how the ‘present to’ relation works, such that the beautiful things are, as a result, beautiful. He stops short of saying that ‘some beauty is present to the many beautiful things as a result of the beautiful itself *causing* some beauty to inhere in each.’

And with respect to (a): in what sense are the many beautiful things different from the beautiful itself? Does Socrates mean that they are simply numerically distinct? Or does he mean that they also do not share the same nature as the beautiful? Again, does Socrates mean by ‘the beautiful itself’ the separated Platonic Form of beauty? A positive answer would not necessarily require that Socrates assumes knowledge on Dionysodorus’ part of Socrates’ belief in such items and relations.<sup>255</sup> Neither would a negative answer

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<sup>255</sup> Socrates indicates at 271-273 (see esp. 273c-e) that although the brothers have visited Athens before, they had not yet then acquired the art of disputation, but were teachers of forensic speaking, generalship,

entail that the sophist's dilemma is thereby defused. For it is sufficient for the sophist's purposes if he can get Socrates to deny that the property of beauty---however that is conceived---is a distinct being from the many beautiful things. It is quite possible then that Socrates here commits himself at most to an ordinary notion of the existence of 'inherent' forms that are distinct from the individuals in which they inhere. (Compare the forms 'in us' in the *Phaedo*). In sum, (a) and (b) would seem to commit Socrates at most to the following claims: i) there are on the one hand the many beautiful things; ii) there is on the other hand the beautiful itself, which is either the Form of the Beautiful or merely the property of beauty inherent in beautiful things; iii) the beautiful things are at least numerically distinct, and hence different, from the beautiful itself; iv) some beauty is present to each of the beautiful things, in virtue of which they are beautiful.

However, even the most judicious reading of Socrates' remarks cannot allay the impression that there are metaphysical complexities here which Socrates perhaps chooses to avoid.<sup>256</sup> This impression is heightened by Dionysodorus' follow-up question. For that question would seem to amount to a parody of the Platonic notion of participation. The sophist asks:

So if an ox is present to you, are you an ox? And if I am present to you, are you Dionysodorus?  
(301a5-6)

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and fighting in armour; presumably therefore, if they had a prior conversation with Socrates---which the latter does not mention---they would not have discussed philosophical subjects. If Plato wants us to believe they have heard of Socrates' belief in the Forms from others, he does not say this.

<sup>256</sup> Compare the explanation of Socrates' account of the cause of the beauty of the beautiful things at *Phaedo* 100d4ff.: 'There is nothing else that makes [a beautiful thing] beautiful but the presence or sharing (παρουσία εἴτε κοινωνία), or however [the relationship] is described, of that beauty [i.e., of the Form]; I do not insist beyond this point, only that it is by the beautiful that all things are beautiful. For this seems to me to be the safest answer to give both to myself and to anyone else.' The suggestion of Sprague (1968) that Socrates regards his answer as 'safest' because it may elude the sort of sophistical attack inherent in Dionysodorus' follow-up question seems plausible.

At least one commentator has suggested that we must interpret the thrust of this riposte as a serious critique of the participation relation; just as though Dionysodorus' question is addressed to the inexperienced Socrates of the first part of the *Parmenides*.<sup>257</sup> There is however a danger of over-interpretation here. In the first place, Socrates has (perhaps purposefully) made no unambiguous reference to the notion of participation in the content of his response (a) and (b). Moreover, what the sophist is surely intent on, as Socrates anticipates, is the dilemma outlined above—not a critique of the notion of Platonic participation. It is perhaps helpful to remind ourselves in this regard that of the two brothers, Dionysodorus in particular has been consistently portrayed by Plato in previous exchanges as fit to burst to spring his particular fallacies on his victims. It would therefore be more characteristic of this brother if his question were motivated by his single-minded intention to wind up Socrates with the dilemma he has up his sleeve; it would be less characteristic of him to be distracted in this purpose by inquiring into the metaphysical commitments of middle-period Platonism. Moreover, given Dionysodorus' intention to use the dilemma we have reconstructed above, it makes perfect sense that he asks Socrates the question he does ask. For given his strategy, the point of his question is not to critique a key Platonic tenet, but rather to get Socrates to *deny* that if an F is present to some x, then that x is the *same* as an F: for if Socrates denies that if an **ox** is present to x, x is an **ox**, then the sophist may hope to secure Socrates' denial that if any F is present to some x, then x is as a result *the same* as an F; a denial which---as subsequent

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<sup>257</sup> Cp. Friedlander (1965), 192-3, who contends that 'no one has any doubt' that Dionysodorus aims at 'the problem of participation' in this passage. Sprague (1967) goes so far as to compare the argument to the 'sail' argument of *Parm.*131c ff. Sprague however thinks the brothers are Eleatics intent on annihilating the metaphysical distinction between things and properties. I reject here and have rejected elsewhere the notion that the brothers are committed to metaphysical doctrines of any kind. Though they do occasionally borrow arguments from other philosophers, they have only half-digested these; and they are interested only in refuting someone 'no matter how he answers' with respect to any particular thesis.

events prove---the sophist will attempt to exploit to draw Socrates into the admission that the despite the presence of the beautiful to them, the many beautiful things are not-beautiful.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that Dionysodorus' question contains at least a whiff of a parody of Platonism—even if we deny that Socrates' 'present to' relation is the converse of participation. I suggest that the best way to accommodate this impression is to read this passage as I have suggested the entire dialogue must be read: that is, as aimed at readers of different levels of philosophical sophistication. The jibe about the ox may go over the head of the beginner Cleinias, who is presumably intently listening, and who is, we may further suppose, innocent of the Platonist account of the Form of Beauty as a cause of the beauty of the many beautiful things. But the *cognoscenti* would presumably appreciate the joke. We may even suppose that they see that, so far from being a self-deprecating attempt at *self*-parody on their master's part, Dionysodorus' cheap swipe at Platonism recoils upon the sophist; for the more advanced student would be as certain that there are deep waters here as they would be of Dionysodorus' complete inability to sound them. (Cp. *Parmenides* 135a7-b2: 'Only a very gifted man can come to know that for each thing there is some kind, a being itself by itself; but only a prodigy more remarkable still will discover that and be able to teach someone else who has sifted all these difficulties thoroughly and critically for himself.'<sup>258</sup>).

Reading the argument on this double level seems to make best sense of the exchanges which follow as well. Thus in response to Socrates' denial (301a7) that the formula 'if an F is present to an x, then x is (the same as) an F' holds if the F in question is an ox, Dionysodorus returns to Socrates' assertions (a) and (b), asking how Socrates

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<sup>258</sup> Translation Gill, in Cooper (1997).



can insist on the one hand that the formula *does* hold if the F in question is ‘the beautiful’, while insisting on the other that the latter is different from the beautiful things:

But in what way, he said, can the different be different just because the different is present with the different? (‘Ἀλλὰ τίνα τρόπον, ἔφη, ἑτέρου ἑτέρῳ παραγενομένου τὸ ἕτερον ἕτερον ἂν εἴη;’, 301a8-9).<sup>259</sup>

It is evident that in his question, Dionysodorus has substituted the phrase ‘the different’ for both the *beautiful things* (which are different from the beautiful itself) and the *beautiful itself* (which is different from the beautiful things). The question he has asked is therefore: ‘but in what way can the beautiful things be different (from the beautiful) just because the beautiful is present with the beautiful things?’ It is obvious that one motive for the sophist’s making these substitutions is that they give him the opportunity of putting a question in a deliberately obfuscatory fashion. If Dionysodorus cannot hope that his question will stop Socrates in his tracks, he may at least be assured that he can make it appear to the less experienced members of the audience that Socrates’ admissions have committed him to an embarrassing-sounding result.<sup>260</sup>

On the other hand, Dionysodorus’ substitutions have a very clear dialectical point, on the assumption that the sophist aims to argue along the lines of OTHER THAN F→NOT-F. This can perhaps best be brought out by consideration of his question *sans*

<sup>259</sup> I interpret the participle causally. Also, although (as I have noted above) the sophist intentionally omits the article from the first and second occurrences of ‘the different’ in this question, here and in what follows I translate the question with the articles included simply to render its discussion more intelligible.

<sup>260</sup> I would however hesitate to embrace the suggestion of Hawtrey (op.cit.) that the sophist intends to reduce Socrates to ‘babbling’ (ἄδολεσχία) in the sense Aristotle assigns to this remoter goal of dialectical encounters (*SE* Chapter 3, 165b13 ff.; Chapter 13, 173a31-40; Chapter 31, 181b25-182a6). At least, given Aristotle’s examples---the famous case of ‘the snub’; ‘the double’ (‘if it is all the same to state a term and to state its definition, ‘the double’ and the ‘double of half’ are the same: if then ‘double’ be the ‘double of half’, it will be the double of half of half’, etc.)---babbling would seem to be confined to contexts in which an answerer’s definition of some term is being reduced to absurdity. Moreover, the goal is to make one’s interlocutor babble, not (as here) to babble oneself. For an enlightening discussion of ἄδολεσχία in the *SE* and Aristotle’s *Metaph.* Z, see F. Lewis (2005).

substitutions, and as directed at the following claim of Socrates, to which, I have argued, the latter is at least minimally committed:

Socrates: Beautiful things are different from the beautiful itself, though some beauty is present with the beautiful things, in virtue of which they are beautiful.

Dionysodorus: But how can beautiful things be *different* from [the] beautiful just because the beautiful is present with the beautiful things?

The point of Dionysodorus question is just this: if beautiful things are ‘different from’ the beautiful, then they are ‘other than’ the beautiful; but if beautiful things are other than (the) beautiful, then they are not-beautiful; in which case they are not beautiful things after all. So Socrates’ explanation of the difference of the many beautifuls and the beautiful itself is incoherent: how could beautiful things be *different* (i.e., other than) beautiful *because* beauty is ‘present to’ them? How can things possibly manage to be qualitatively *different* by the presence of that which causes them to be the qualitatively the *same*? It is this alleged incoherence that the sophist is picking at; not the deeper metaphysical implications of the nature of the presence relation itself, but rather the immediate claim that---as the sophist (mis)construes Socrates’ response---things can manage to be different from F by the presence of that which causes them to be F.

Now of course this is clearly not what Socrates has claimed. Socrates has not said that beautiful things are different from (the) beautiful by the presence of beauty; but only that (a) beautiful things are different from the beautiful itself; and (b) they have some

beauty present to them—meaning that they are beautiful through the presence to them of beauty (either the separated Form or an inherent property of beauty). Nevertheless, the attribution to the sophist of the suggested misinterpretation (deliberate or otherwise) of Socrates' position makes perfect sense of his immediate dialectical aim, which is to argue (via OTHER THAN  $F \rightarrow \text{NOT-}F$ ) from the difference between the many beautiful things and the beautiful itself to the non-existence of the former. It also makes perfect sense of Dionysodorus' subsequent avowal (301b3-4) that Socrates has committed himself to something which is, strictly speaking, *impossible*:

How can I not be in difficulties?, he said, both I myself and every man concerning what cannot be? (Πῶς γὰρ οὐκ ἀπορώ, ἔφη, καὶ ἐγὼ καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ἅπαντες ἄνθρωποι ὃ μὴ ἔστι;)

For though the sophist's misconstrual of Socrates' position may be deliberate, he is nevertheless on solid ground in claiming that it is *impossible* that beautiful things be different (i.e., not beautiful) by the presence of the cause of their own beauty.

What then are we to make of the remark of Socrates' (301b1-2) that prompts the sophist's charge of incoherence? The remark in question constitutes Socrates' initial response to Dionysodorus' obfuscatory rephrasing and misstatement of his position. But this initial response is evasive:

Are you in difficulties there?, I said. (I was so eager to have the wisdom of the pair that I was already trying to copy it). (Ἄρα τοῦτο, ἔφην ἐγὼ, ἀπορεῖς; Ἡδὲ δὲ τοῖν ἀνδρῶν τὴν σοφίαν ἐπεχείρουν μιμεῖσθαι, ἅτε ἐπιθυμῶν αὐτῆς.)

As noted above, this reply has been taken by one recent commentator to indicate that Socrates takes his entire subsequent answer—down to 301c5—to be deliberately sophistical in nature. There are however a number of reasons for rejecting this interpretation. First, it would presumably be disastrous for Socrates---the practitioner of

genuine refutation and genuine protreptic argument---to argue in a deliberately sophistical fashion in front of Cleinias. Next, it is extremely forced---indeed, impossible--to read ἤδη ('already', 301b1) with the past tense as indicating projected action: Socrates is not telling us he is adopting a sophistic guise in what *follows*; the force of the ἤδη is of *completed* action.<sup>261</sup> Finally, what Socrates *says* is only that he takes his *last* remark---'are you at a loss over *that*?'---to be an 'imitation' of the sophists' wisdom. I take it that Socrates means that his response is imitative of the sophists' wisdom *just insofar* as he is being evasive, downplaying the dialectical purchase of Dionysodorus' question by refusing to answer directly. We have met with many such examples of the sophists' behaviour which Socrates admits he imitates. To take just one: compare the extended *contretemps* between Dionysodorus and Socrates over who should answer whom first at 287b-c.<sup>262</sup> It is highly relevant that in this passage, Socrates identifies this *particular* behaviour---evasiveness in answering---as the possession of someone who is 'completely wise (πόσοφος) in arguments', (287c10). Thus Socrates' parenthetical remark above is about the 'wisdom' of *not answering*. We have no grounds to infer on its basis therefore that when in his subsequent remarks he *is* answering that he has previously signaled that he believes that his answer is sophistical in *any* way.

Since that is so---and bearing in mind once again the different levels of reader at which the dialogue is addressed---it seems much more plausible to take Socrates' aside as a deliberate laugh-line written for the benefit of the more advanced reader. Compare the tone a physicist might adopt when confronted in a public arena by a layman crank's

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<sup>261</sup> I owe this latter point to Alan Code. The same consideration rules out Hawtrey's suggestion (*ibid.*, 177): 'the sequel shows that Socrates' imitation of the men's wisdom consists in his insistence that τὸ ἕτερον is equivalent to ἕτερον.'

<sup>262</sup> Discussed above, Chapter 3.6, 159-160.

devastating ‘refutation’ of his theory: it is just more satisfying, prior to blowing the ignorant out of the water, to pretend to ones’ colleagues that he has one on the ropes. Socrates’ pretense similarly manages both to signal that there are difficulties here of which Dionysodorus has no inkling, and to fault the sophist for not anticipating the opening he has left to Socrates as a rejoinder.

That rejoinder unfolds as follows:

What are you saying, Dionysodorus?, I said. Is not the beautiful beautiful and the ugly ugly?

(Τί λέγεις, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, ὦ Διονυσόδωρε; οὐ τὸ καλὸν καλὸν ἐστὶν καὶ τὸ αἰσχρὸν αἰσχρὸν;)

Yes, if I like, he said. (’Εὰν ἔμοιγε, ἔφη, δοκῇ.)

So do you like? (Οὐκοῦν δοκεῖ;)

Sure, he said. (Πάνυ γ’, ἔφη.)

Then is it not also the case that the same is the same and the different different? Because I don’t imagine that the different is the same, but I thought even a child would hardly be in difficulty over this, that the different is different. But you must have neglected this point deliberately, Dionysodorus, since in every other respect you and your brother strike me as bringing the art of argument to a fine pitch of excellence, like craftsmen who bring to completion whatever work constitutes their proper business. (Οὐκοῦν καὶ τὸ ταῦτόν ταῦτόν καὶ τὸ ἕτερον ἕτερον; οὐ γὰρ δήπου τό γε ἕτερον ταῦτόν, ἀλλ’ ἐγώ γε οὐδ’ ἂν παῖδα ὥμην τοῦτο ἀπορῆσαι, ὥς οὐ τὸ ἕτερον ἕτερόν ἐστιν. ἀλλ’, ὦ Διονυσόδωρε, τοῦτο μὲν ἐκὼν παρήκας, ἐπεὶ τὰ ἄλλα μοι δοκεῖτε ὥσπερ οἱ δημιουργοὶ οἷς ἕκαστα προσήκει ἀπεργάζεσθαι, καὶ ὑμεῖς τὸ διαλέγεσθαι παγκάλως ἀπεργάζεσθαι.)

But what exactly is the opening which Socrates exploits in this response? And does this response constitute a *refutation* of anything the sophist has said? If it does, what particular statement of the latter does it overturn? I have argued above that we have no reason to read into Socrates’ answer any parody of the late-learners’ thesis regarding the impoverished possibilities of predication (i.e., the thesis that the only kind of statements we can make are ‘the beautiful is beautiful, the same is the same’ etc.). I have also argued that we have no reason to read into Socrates’ previous remarks a commitment to any thesis regarding the ‘self-predication’ of the Forms (on any interpretation of that thesis).

In my view it is thus a condition on the correct construal of Socrates' answer that it thread the Scylla and Charybdis of these inclinations to over-interpretation.

One account of Socrates' answer that promises to meet this condition is the following. Socrates is responding to the particular question the sophist has just raised at 301a8-9:

But in what way, he said, can the different be different just because the different is present with the different? (Ἀλλὰ τίνα τρόπον, ἔφη, ἑτέρου ἑτέρῳ παραγενομένου τὸ ἕτερον ἕτερον ἂν εἴη;)

However, on this proposal, he is only making difficulties for the *first fragment* of this question, viz., 'how can the different be different?' He does so by, first, construing the fragment as the denial that the different is different. Next, Socrates constructs a brief inductive argument that is intended to establish the truth of its contradictory: surely the sophist admits that the beautiful is beautiful and the ugly, ugly? (If he does, this is not because he is a 'late-learner'; rather it is simply on pain of immediate contradiction if he does not). The point of Socrates' induction is that if Dionysodorus accepts that the beautiful is beautiful, and that the ugly is ugly, then his commitment to the different being different must be stronger than his commitment to any premise he has relied upon in arriving at the denial of the latter thesis. Finally, expressing surprise that the sophist would be in difficulties over a thesis which even a child would accept, Socrates blandly (but obviously ironically) allows that the sophist's failure to anticipate his vulnerability to Socrates' counter must surely have been deliberate.

This reading of Socrates' response is attractively straightforward. Upon consideration however it is more problematic than its straightforwardness would suggest. The first difficulty concerns its portrayal of the manner in which Socrates selects a thesis

for refutation. The starting points of Socratic dialectic are always the stated opinions of his interlocutor. On the present proposal, it is a stated opinion of Dionysodorus that the different is not different. However, the sophist has not stated any such proposition (whether sincerely or not, or interrogatively or in the indicative mood) in any of his remarks. For the alleged thesis in question is only a fragment of a question he has asked, namely, how can the different be different just because the different is present with the different? To so selectively 'compose' a thesis an interlocutor has not uttered out of the statements he has is not proper Socratic procedure. The attribution of such a practice to Socrates thus runs the risk of reducing his response to a merely verbal riposte---or worse, to the sort of parody of sophistical argumentation which, we have been at pains to argue, is nowhere in evidence in the passage.

A second problem with the proposed reading is related to the first. This is that the refutation it attributes to Socrates does not seem ever to engage with the presuppositions upon which the sophist's challenge rests. The latter challenge---the whole of it, not a fragment---is the alleged impossibility Dionysodorus levels at 301a8-9, and reasserts at 301b3-4: it is impossible that the different be different just because the different is present with the different. According to the present proposal, it is implicit in Socrates' induction that the sophist's commitment to the different being different must be stronger than his commitment to any premise he has relied upon in arriving at the denial that the different is different. On the suggested interpretation however, the identity of any such antecedent premise or premises is left unspecified. By contrast, we have argued that both the sophist's challenge and his original dilemma are grounded in his reliance upon the strategy OTHER THAN  $F \rightarrow \text{NOT-}F$ . Yet if that is so, it is natural to suppose that

Socrates' response down to 301c5 is directed at the entirety of sophist's challenge at 301a8-9; for it is the latter as a whole, and not its initial fragment, that is entailed by the sophist's strategy.

For these reasons, I suggest we must understand Socrates' rebuttal as follows. His answer at 301b5-301c5 is in fact composed of two parts. The first part (301b5-301b8) consists of an inductive argument for the claim that the different is different, and the same is the same. This part of Socrates' answer does assume that the sophist would deny that the different is different; however, this thesis is not un-Socratically 'composed' from the sophist's challenge at 301a8-9. The second part (301b8-301c2) consists of a follow-up observation: Socrates, for his part, never supposed that the different is the *same*; and he thought even a child would scarcely be in difficulties over the fact that the different is different. This part of Socrates' answer is aimed directly at the sophist's challenge: how can the different be different from the different by the presence of the different? Both parts of this answer take aim at the sophist's commitment to OTHER THAN  $F \rightarrow \text{NOT-}F$  --the second particularly so---but they do this in different ways. I shall explain and defend this reading of each part of Socrates' response in turn.

What our initial gloss of the first part of Socrates' answer gets right is the point of his induction: if Dionysodorus accepts that the beautiful is beautiful, and that the ugly is ugly, then his commitment to the different being different must be stronger than his commitment to any premise he has relied upon in arriving at the denial of the latter thesis. What it gets wrong is the manner in which Socrates has determined the sophist's commitment to the denial that the different is different. This he infers not by truncating the sophist's challenge at 301a8-9, but by observing that the sophist's argument for the



denial of the existence of beautiful things may be generalized for any property whatsoever. Dionysodorus happens to have begun the encounter by asking Socrates whether he has ever seen a beautiful thing (300e3-4). But clearly any predicate is grist for the mill of the sophist's dilemma: the first horn, combined with the machinery of OTHER THAN  $F \rightarrow \text{NOT-}F$  in the second, may just as well be used to 'prove' that nothing is ugly, white, oblong, bloody-minded---or even the same, or different.<sup>263</sup> Thus while the sophist has now 'raised a difficulty' concerning the different being different, he is committed to the denial that different things are different in virtue of his commitment to the premises of his dilemma.

Socrates' induction thus confronts Dionysodorus with a dilemma of his own: the sophist must either accept the maximally *endoxon* premises for *his* proof that the different is different---'the beautiful is beautiful' and 'the ugly is ugly'; or he must deny these.<sup>264</sup> But the cost of such a denial, Socrates calculates, is too high: either the sophist will immediately contradict himself---if he *simply* denies that the beautiful is beautiful, etc.; or he will beg the question---if he attempts to argue for this denial by means of his dilemma. But these difficulties, Socrates politely suggests, must surely have been a matter of deliberate oversight on the sophist's part.

The strategy of the second part of Socrates' answer is considerably subtler than the first. Socrates allows that it is no doubt false, at any rate, that the different is the *same*; but he thought even a child would scarcely be in difficulties over the fact that the

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<sup>263</sup> I take it however that Socrates does not thereby make the further point that *if* nothing is beautiful or white or oblong, etc., then none of these things---which *are* different in virtue of being so qualified---*are* different. I argue below (Chapter 6.3) that this universal generalization upon the results of the sophist's dilemma is saved by Socrates as a *coup de grace* which receives expression in his back-reference, at 303d5-303e4, to the present encounter.

<sup>264</sup> If Socrates regards 'the beautiful is beautiful' as maximally *endoxon*, I take it that he rules out a third option: the sophist could accept the premises of the induction, but insist that the premises of his own dilemma are *more endoxon* than Socrates' premises.

different is different. But why is it false that different is the same? Could not things that are different be the same as themselves? And could not things that are different be qualifiedly the same in certain respects? As we have noted above, Socrates' remark has been taken as evidence of a pretense to adopt the late-learner's thesis: the different is *just* different. Yet we may easily avoid such a radical interpretative hypothesis if we attend to the first part of Socrates' answer in our passage. As we have seen, Socrates' induction anticipates that the sophist would in fact *deny* that the different is different. What he insinuates now is that the sophist is thereby committed to affirming that the different is the *same*.

Exactly why Socrates insinuates this---and why he thinks it spells trouble for the sophist---becomes clear if we suppose that he is now taking aim at the sophist's challenge: how can the different be different from the different by the presence of the different? The sophist has claimed---by asserting his challenge---that Socrates' account of the difference between the many beautiful things and the beautiful itself is incoherent. Socrates responds that the sophist cannot coherently level this charge against Socrates' view; for Dionysodorus' reliance upon OTHER THAN  $F \rightarrow \text{NOT-}F$  in turn renders incoherent the sophist's very expression of the alleged incoherence of Socrates' view. Socrates' point is that the sophist has expressed his allegation of the incoherence of Socrates' position by claiming that it is impossible that different things are different from the different because the different is present to them. However, Dionysodorus' commitment to OTHER THAN  $F \rightarrow \text{NOT-}F$  renders this very claim vulnerable to the following transformations:

From:

‘How could the different be different from the different by the presence of the different?’

To:

‘How could the different be other than the different by the presence of the different?’

To:

‘How could the different be other than [the] different by the presence of the different?’

To:

‘How could the different be not-different by the presence of the different?’

And finally to:

‘How could the different be the same by the presence of the different?’

I take it that it is the vulnerability of the sophist’s challenge to these transformations which elicits Socrates’ twin ripostes at 301b8-301c2: (i) presumably it is *not* the case on *these* grounds that the different is the *same* (or did the sophist *want* to go there?); and (ii) Socrates for his part, at any rate, was under the impression that even a child would hardly be in difficulties over *this* fact: that the different is different (ἀλλ’ ἐγώ γε οὐδ’ ἂν παῖδα ᾧμην τοῦτο ἀπορῆσαι, ὥς οὐ τὸ ἕτερον ἕτερόν ἐστιν).<sup>265</sup> The ‘difficulty’ (ἀπορῆσαι) to which Socrates alludes, and which he claims no child would be in, must be the very ‘difficulty’ he has alluded to above (ἀπορεῖς, 301b1), and to which the sophist has himself referred (ἀπορώ, 301b3); namely, the sophist’s ‘difficulty’ which is expressed in his challenge at 301a8-9: not (merely) how can the different be different *simpliciter*, but how can the different be different from the different by the presence of the different?

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<sup>265</sup> As Hawtrey (ibid.) explains, the ὥς clause is negated because ‘Greek, unlike English, expresses the upshot of the hypothetical bewilderment’, 179.

Socrates' point is that Dionysodorus' reliance upon OTHER THAN  $F \rightarrow \text{NOT-}F$  will entail---via the transformations above---that the sophist is in difficulties over how the different could be the same by the presence of the different; but no one *is* in difficulties over *that*. For it is straightforwardly contradictory to ask how the *different* could be the *same* by the presence of the different; and it is trivially true that it is impossible that the different be the same by the presence of the different. Hence it is incoherent to level such a charge as proof of the incoherence of Socrates' explanation of the difference between the many beautiful things and the beautiful itself. Dionysodorus' attempt to *create* a difficulty on that score has misfired: and it always will, because of the sophist's reliance upon OTHER THAN  $F \rightarrow \text{NOT-}F$ . But this failure, Socrates generously allows, must surely have been deliberate; for the brothers in every other respect have proven themselves master craftsmen at the art of argumentation (τὸ διαλέγεσθαι, 301c4).<sup>266</sup>

Socrates' confrontation with the sophist at 300e1-301c5 is among the most densely argued passages in the entire dialogue. Its treatment has in consequence required detailed discussion. Apart from properly unpacking this text, I claim the foregoing analysis has yielded the following dividend: it has emerged from our discussion that in this encounter, Socrates inflicts upon a single hydra-head of sophistical argument three utterly distinct wounds. All three responses are grounded in the resources of Socratic

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<sup>266</sup> It is perhaps worth pointing out that Socrates' own explanation of how beautiful things are beautiful, or ugly things ugly, is *invulnerable* to the same transformations. For---at least when this explanation is not being misconstrued by Dionysodorus---Socrates' account of these facts does not predicate *difference* of the beautiful or ugly things. For Socrates has nowhere claimed that beautiful things are beautiful by the presence to them of the different. Hence Socrates' explanation cannot be run through the machinery of OTHER THAN  $F \rightarrow \text{NOT-}F$ : there is no grist for the sophist's mill in Socrates' statement that the beautiful things are beautiful, and ugly things ugly, through the presence to them of the beautiful, and the ugly, respectively. But then there is equally no difficulty involved in the different being different from the different by the presence of the different.

dialectic; all three are dialectically adequate; but only one of these responses is fully explanatory as a *solution* to the sophist's fallacy. I conclude my discussion of the passage by explaining why this is so.

The fallacy which Socrates confronts in our text is a dilemma that remains largely unarticulated by Dionysodorus. This dilemma aimed to refute Socrates' original assertion (300e5), viz., that there exists a plurality beautiful things. As we have seen, Socrates readily defends his thesis against this particular sophistical attack in his nuanced response at 301a3-4. I have argued that the distinctions Socrates' draws in these remarks suggest that Plato regards the sophist's fallacy as due to homonymy: in particular, to a shift in signification, between the first and second horn of the dilemma, of the contrary predicates *same* and *different*. The sophist's dilemma thus violates a clause in the Socratic account of genuine refutation: in particular, the condition (HOM), the requirement that both the predicate term and the subject term in a refutation 'concern the same things' (περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν, *Soph.* 230b7-8) as the predicate term and the subject term of the answerer's original thesis.

It follows that Socrates' initial response to the sophism in our passage is fully explanatory. For in drawing the distinctions he does draw at 301a3-4, Socrates manages to indicate (albeit implicitly) the sophist's violation of condition (HOM) on genuine refutation; and to specify an argument's violation of a condition on genuine refutation just is to fully explain its failure to be a genuine refutation.

Socrates' second and third responses to Dionysodorus---what I have termed the first and second part of his reply at 301b5-301c5---are much more difficult to characterize; in consequence, their dialectical purchase is rather more difficult to gauge. I

have argued that these answers are aimed---the second particularly so---at the second horn of the sophist's dilemma:

Thesis: There are beautiful things.

- (1) The beautiful things are different (**in account**) from the beautiful.
- (2) If the beautiful things are different (**in account**) from the beautiful, they are other than the beautiful (i.e., 'the beautiful' is not their λόγος).
- (3) If the beautiful things are other than [the] beautiful, they are not-beautiful.
- (4) If the beautiful things are not-beautiful, they are ugly.
- (5) Therefore, there are no beautiful things.

Sophistical pitfalls seem to lurk in virtually every premise of this argument; yet none of these seem to violate any clause in the Socratic account of genuine refutation. The snares in the inference above are rather the snares of ontology; their likely victim is not the answerer who is ignorant of the nature of refutation, but rather the answerer who is ignorant of the predication of not-being. I suggest this fact explains the rather novel approach Socrates takes in his second and third responses to the fallacy with which he is confronted in our passage. For the difficulties concerning the predication of not-being raised by the argument above cannot be sorted by simply pointing to clauses in the Socratic definition of genuine refutation.

Thus premise (2) seems to conflate two different senses in which a thing may be said to be not-F---or put another way, to fail to have the λόγος 'F'. In one sense, it is perfectly true that if a beautiful thing is different in account from the beautiful, 'the

beautiful' is not its λόγος. For beauty may be predicated of x *per accidens*, and not in its essence. However, it is only the predication of a thing's λόγος in the latter sense that will support the sophist's sub-conclusion, in premise (3), that the many beautifuls are not-beautiful: just as that which is 'different from a man' in its essence is not a man, or that which is 'different from a stone' in its essence is not a stone, so that which is 'different from the beautiful', being other than the beautiful in its essence or what-it-is, is not-beautiful. On the other hand, if beauty is predicated *per accidens* of x, there is a perfectly straightforward sense in which 'the beautiful' is its λόγος (it is a quality or qualification of the beautiful thing)<sup>267</sup>; but then it will not follow that the item in question is not-beautiful. It seems clear however that the failure to disambiguate the nature of the 'not-beautiful' cannot be explained as a violation of any condition in the Socratic definition of genuine refutation.

Similar considerations explain Socrates' silence regarding (4), which seems to commit a fallacy concerning the predication of not-being whose resolution is articulated at *Sophist* 257bff.<sup>268</sup> Such difficulties however would seem to require resolution by appeal to a positive account of the nature of predication; an account which is not included in the brief of Socratic dialectic, as we have so far managed to characterize that domain of expertise.

It follows that Socrates' response to the second horn of the sophist's dilemma is less than fully explanatory. The expected examination of its motivating assumption, viz.,

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<sup>267</sup> Cp. *Cat.* 5, 3b19, 3b15-16, on the ambiguity of 'ποῖον' questions: we may ask what kind of thing Socrates is, expecting to receive in answer some qualification or other (ποῖον) of him (he is white or beautiful); or we may ask what kind of thing Socrates is, expecting to receive in answer a specification of the kind of substance he is (a man, an animal).

<sup>268</sup> I have argued above that Socrates' remarks at 301b5-6 anticipate that the sophist aimed at this final move.

if x is other than F, then x is not-F---an examination which was postponed in its previous incarnation in the dialogue---is, in one sense, fulfilled. Yet Socrates' treatment of this assumption is---to put it mildly---highly indirect. This indirectness however may be put down to the dialectical division of labour which, I have argued, informs the entire dialogue. The Socratic ripostes at 301b1-301c5 expose, but do not explain, the possibly distinctive nature of the property of the Different. The induction of 301b5-301b8, and the insinuation at 301b8-301c2 enlighten neither Dionysodorus nor the reader regarding the predication of not-being. The nature---even the existence---of Forms, and the participation relation between Forms and particulars, remain unarticulated and undefended in Socrates' response to the sophist. All such considerations are left to the practitioner of a higher form of dialectical inquiry; Socrates' answers by contrast are fully grounded in the resources of Socratic dialectic. The passage reveals Socrates at work within the confines of his peculiar dialectical domain, and wielding its familiar tools: contradiction, deduction, induction, and the rank ordering of *endoxa*.

This result leaves us with the task of providing a positive characterization of Socrates' two non-explanatory answers to the sophist's dilemma: if these are not solutions to fallacy, what *kind* of arguments are these? Here one is perhaps tempted to say that the sophist in each case is hoist by his own petard. Thus Dionysodorus levels a charge of incoherence at Socrates' explanation of the difference between the beautiful and the beautiful things; Socrates neutralizes this charge by indicating that the sophist's commitment to OTHER THAN F  $\rightarrow$  NOT-F renders his challenge incoherent.

However, while this description of Socrates' third riposte is in some sense true, the argument does not aim to prove that the sophist's challenge is *dialectically self-*



*refuting*. For we have defined that notion as follows: a thesis is dialectically self-refuting just in case its falsehood is entailed either by any instance of the dialectical activity of a questioner, or by the dialectical activity of an answerer in defense of the thesis itself.<sup>269</sup> It is true that Socrates implicitly casts the sophist into the role of answerer in neutralizing his challenge. But the sophist's thesis---that it is impossible that the different be different from the different by the presence of the different---cannot be reduced to incoherence *simply* in virtue of the fact of his rising to its dialectical defense. For the sophist's charge is rendered incoherent only insofar as it is grounded in a *particular* defense, viz., the second horn of his intended dilemma; and while that argument is invalid and its premises false, none of these premises is dialectically self-refuting.<sup>270</sup> Similar considerations go to show that Socrates' inductive strategy at 301b5-301b8 is not a self-refutation argument.

Socrates' second and third assaults upon the sophist's dilemma do not explain its flaws; self-refutation arguments *are* non-explanatory of fallacy; but Socrates' answers are not self-refutation arguments. However, self-refutation arguments are not the only non-

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<sup>269</sup> See Chapter 3.6, 169-170.

<sup>270</sup> In this regard, it may be useful to compare Socrates' counter to *Protag.* 355a7-9, d1-4---the first horn of a dilemma in which Socrates argues that the many's account of being overcome by pleasure is incoherent. In the first horn Socrates has elicited from the many the following account: 'Often a man knows that what he does is bad but nevertheless does it, when it is possible for him not to do it, because the good in what he does is worthy of conquering (ἀξίων ὄντων νικᾶν, d3) the badness in what he does.' As several commentators have noted, the word ἀξίος (worthy) is used as a value term in the argument. The sense therefore is that the good (or pleasure) in some course of action is 'worthy of conquering' the badness or pain in that action iff the good outweighs or exceeds the badness. As Socrates points out however, we have assumed that the agent we are describing pursues a course of action wherein the evil outweighs the good, i.e., a course of action in which the good in what is done is not 'worthy of conquering'. ('For otherwise we would not say that he who is overcome by pleasure does wrong', d4-6). But in that case, this first explanation of weakness may indeed be dismissed as 'a ridiculous thing' without further ado, because it is straightforwardly contradictory: 'Often a man knows that the badness in what he does outweighs the good, but he nevertheless does it, when it is possible for him not to, because the good in what he does outweighs the badness.'

The similarities between Socrates' strategy in our passage and this one may be summed up as follows: 1) both are *ad hominem* arguments: the conclusion does not follow from a *single* statement; rather, given other assumptions of the answerers, their utterance is incoherent; 2) both arguments employ the strategy of substitution; 3) both arguments level the charge of incoherence against a statement of the interlocutor; 4) both arguments are leveled in the context of an *explanation* of some phenomenon.

explanatory response to fallacy in the Socratic arsenal. As our analysis of 296d8-297b1 has shown, Socrates will resort to two less desirable dialectical goals---the generation of falsehood and paradox---either in lieu of, or in addition to, a fully explanatory resolution of a fallacy.<sup>271</sup> And indeed, ‘demonstrating that [the opponent] is saying something false,’ (*SE* 3, 165b19) seems an apt positive characterization of the twin strategies of 301b5-301c5: if the sophist would avoid being driven to the contradictory of his dilemma, he must assert that the beautiful is not beautiful, and the ugly not ugly; if he insists on turning the crank of OTHER THAN  $F \rightarrow \text{NOT-}F$  to affirm the incoherence of Socrates’ account of the beauty of beautiful things, he will be driven to affirm that the different is the same. (If the latter proposition is not false *tout court*, it is at any rate so regarded by Dionysodorus).<sup>272</sup>

Of non-explanatory responses to fallacy, the generation of falsehood is admittedly a lesser dialectical prize than proof of self-refutation. But Socrates is not finished with Dionysodorus’ dilemma. In his concluding address to the sophists (303b7-304b5), he seems to assert that the dilemma commits the brothers to a thesis which *is* dialectically self-refuting. Our final task is to understand how this can be so.

### 6.3 The Final Self-Refutation Argument

Socrates’ valedictory address to the sophists (303b7-304b5) occurs immediately after his final ‘refutation’ at their hands (the ‘god fallacy’ of 301e1-303a5). It seems clear however that these remarks are not offered as a solution to this latter sophism.

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<sup>271</sup> See Chapter 4.6, 235-238.

<sup>272</sup> In which case ‘making the answerer say something paradoxical’ may be a more apt description of Socrates’ third argument.

(Indeed, that argument, as we have noted above, has left Socrates ‘speechless’). Rather, the speech expresses Socrates’ summary assessment of the brothers’ art and the men who practice it. After praising the sophists (in highly ironical terms) on a number of scores---the speed with which they have acquired their wisdom, the exclusivity of their peculiar specialty (303c4-303d5)---Socrates commends the brothers on another ground: the sophists’ not only sew up the mouths of other men, but their own mouths as well. Unfortunately, neither his account of precisely *how* the brothers manage to achieve this feat, nor the source of his evidence for this observation, is terribly clear. I offer the following translation of Socrates’ explanation; three clauses which are especially problematic are enumerated for ease of reference:

And the following is in turn another public-spirited and kindly feature in your arguments. (1) Whenever you say that no thing is beautiful or good or white, (2) nor any other of these sorts of things, (3) nor yet that any of the different [things] are in any way different, you do in fact completely stitch up the mouths of men, just as you claim as well; but since you would seem to stitch up not only the [mouths] of others, but your own as well, this is very graceful and the harshness of your arguments [or discussions] is quite removed. (καὶ τόδε αὖ ἕτερον δημοτικόν τι καὶ πρᾶγον ἐν τοῖς λόγοις· (1) ὅποταν φῆτε μήτε καλὸν εἶναι μηδὲν μήτε ἀγαθὸν πρᾶγμα μήτε λευκὸν (2) μηδ’ ἄλλο τῶν τοιούτων μηδὲν, (3) μηδὲ τὸ παράπαν ἑτέρων ἕτερον, ἀτεχνῶς μὲν τῷ ὄντι συρράπτετε τὰ στόματα τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὥσπερ καὶ φατέ· ὅτι δ’ οὐ μόνον τὰ τῶν ἄλλων, ἀλλὰ δόξαίτε ἄν καὶ τὰ ὑμέτερα αὐτῶν, τοῦτο πάνυ χάριεν τέ ἐστὶν καὶ τὸ ἐπαχθὲς τῶν λόγων ἀφαιρεῖται). (303d5-303e4)

I read the *μηδὲν* in (1) as an adjective modifying *πρᾶγμα* (thing). I take the ‘other such things’ referred to in (2) simply to be additional properties such as those referred to in (1): beauty, goodness, whiteness. More vexing is the proper rendition of the difficult phrase *ἑτέρων ἕτερον* in (3). *ἕτερον* (different), it seems clear, is in predicate position, and is thus another property (‘another thing of this sort’), in correlation with beauty, goodness, and whiteness, which, Socrates observes, the sophists say no thing is; in which case the most natural way to translate *ἑτέρων* is as a partitive genitive (‘of the different’,

i.e., ‘of the different things’).<sup>273</sup> The force of the phrase ἑτέρων ἕτερον is thus: [whenever you say that none] *of the different things are different*.<sup>274</sup>

However, three further facts strongly suggest that the predicate ἕτερον in (3), while grammatically correlated with the predicates is-beautiful, is-good, and is-white in (1), and the ‘other such things’ of (2), is nevertheless not on a logical par with these.

<sup>273</sup> Cp. *Sophist* 255d1-7 for a similar use of this phrase: ‘But the different is always in relation to a different, isn’t it? ... But it wouldn’t be, if that which is and the different were not completely distinct. If the different shared in both kinds the way that which is does, then some of the things that are different would be different (ἦν ἂν ποτέ τι καὶ τῶν ἑτέρων ἕτερον) not in relation to a different. But as it is, it quite definitely turns out that whatever thing is different, it follows of necessity that it is this very thing which it is from a different.’

<sup>274</sup> McCabe, op.cit., insists on translating the phrase as (a): [whenever you say that no thing] *is different from anything else*.’ She supposes moreover that this construal is equivalent to her literal gloss of the Greek, which is (b): no different is different *from differents*. I agree that it is possible (just) to take the genitive as in (a), as a genitive of comparison. (Cp. *Parm.* 146d1-2: ‘What then? If anything is different from something, will it not be different from something that is different?’, Τί οὖν; εἰ τοῦ τι ἕτερόν ἐστιν, οὐχ ἑτέρου ὄντος ἕτερον ἔσται;). However (i) her gloss (b) seems to translate the genitive twice over, as both comparative and partitive (no different, i.e., none *of the* differents, is different *from* differents); (ii) I do not understand how to extract (a) out of (b) since these two statements do not seem to be logically equivalent; (iii) Socrates’ generalization (3) should follow logically from (1) and (2), which, on McCabe’s construal, it does not; (iv) I do not agree with her stated motivation for gloss (b). McCabe argues, 159: ‘Socrates pushes the sophists into the position later taken by the late-learners of the *Soph.* For if our utterances are restricted to mere repetition (the different is different, the beautiful is beautiful...) then we cannot expect to be able to make complex predications, such as ‘the man is good’ (as the late-learners insist from the start...). And in that case...it will be impossible to say *of* any thing that it is ‘fine or good or white or anything else like that’ (for predicating something *of* something else *eo ipso* introduces complexity). But that impossibility would have arisen from the sophists’ original objection to a complex account of the relations between things, the objections of Dionysodorus’ ox. They will not be able to say that ‘anything is different *from anything else*’ because this might entail the absurdity that something different is different because the different is present to the different. Instead the sophists may only say that the different is different: no relation of ‘present to’ is allowed. So Socrates is right to complain that the sophists ‘say that no thing is fine or good or white or anything else like that, nor, in short, that anything is different from anything else.’ For the sophists have indeed denied that anything different is different *from anything else*, just because they treat difference as *cut off*, as complete distinctness: if anything is different, then it is different from everything, different *simpliciter*.’ If I follow McCabe (and I’m not sure I do), she takes Socrates’ point in (3) to be that the sophists are committed to the thesis that ‘no different is different from differents’ *because* Dionysodorus has previously raised the ‘ox’ objection; thus (I take it) McCabe takes (3) and the ox objection to be at least logically equivalent; moreover, she takes the latter to be an objection to ‘a relational account of difference’ that is entailed by her interpretative thesis cut off or clone. But (as I have argued in my analysis of the ox passage) Dionysodorus’ objection amounts to a perfectly sound challenge to a thesis Socrates happens not to have endorsed, viz., how could things manage to be different from beautiful through the presence of the cause of their own beauty? It does not amount to a metaphysical thesis regarding the ‘separateness’ of ‘things’. (v) Moreover, it is not clear to me why McCabe thinks that saying anything is different *from anything else* is ruled out by the ox passage, whereas saying that the different is different is ruled *in*; for on any reading of Dionysodorus’ challenge, it is directed at an explanation of how one may predicate ‘difference’ of any subject; thus if McCabe were right, statements of the sort ‘the different is different’ should be ruled out by Dionysodorus’ objection.

First, (3) is in third place in a list of the denials the sophists make. Next, the adverb τὸ παράπαν (in *any* way; or: to *any* degree) is added to the third sort of denial the sophists make, as though to give it summary force. Finally, beautiful, good, and white things---and ‘any other things of this sort’---just are a set---or *the* set, rather---of *different* things. That is to say, beautiful, good, and white things, and all other things of this sort, are the values of the partitive genitive ἐτέρων. These facts, taken together, suggest that Socrates’ observation in (3) has the summary force of a *universal generalization*. Plato does not have our devices for formally indicating a universal generalization; but the point of moving from particular predicates to the predicate *different* is precisely to express a universally quantified claim. Socrates therefore does not say in (3) merely that the sophists deny that the different is different, *in addition* to denying that the beautiful is beautiful and the white, white. What he says rather is that for all predicates F, and for all things x, the sophists deny that x is F.

Our next problem is to determine why Socrates thinks the sophists assert this latter denial, as well as the denials (1) and (2). The solution to this problem however evidently turns upon the solution of another. Socrates seems to affirm in (1) (‘whenever you say’, ὅποταν φῆτε) that the brothers have in fact made such assertions in (at least) one of their previous eristic displays. But which one(s)? As several commentators have noted, the only plausible candidate is Socrates’ encounter with Dionysodorus at 300e1-301c5.<sup>275</sup> This text at any rate features a discussion of at least a subset (beautiful, and different) of the terms Socrates’ introduces in his back-reference in (1)-(3) above; moreover, it is perfectly clear that in this previous encounter the sophist denies---or at any rate, attempts to prove---that ‘no thing is beautiful’, as (1) suggests.

<sup>275</sup> Cp. Sprague (1993), 61; Gifford, op. cit., 40, 66; Zeyl, op. cit., 174; Canto (1989), 232, n.308.

It is perhaps less clear that in the same passage the sophist is equally keen on proving that ‘no thing is different’; but our analysis of 300e1-301c5---in particular, our interpretation of Socrates’ induction at 301b5-301b8---has revealed that the sophist’s dilemma is in fact designed to deny not only that ‘the different is different’, but equally, that the same is the same, the oblong, oblong---and indeed, that the white is white, and the good, good. It would seem then that Socrates is on solid ground in claiming that the sophists *have* previously undertaken to assert the denials he specifies in (1) and (2); especially since, in stating that they have ‘said’ (φῆτε) these things, Socrates need only be taken to mean that they have implicitly offered to prove them by refuting their manifestly more *endoxon* contradictories.

This result however would seem to immediately entail that the brothers have also ‘said’ (in this extended sense) the universal generalization expressed by (3). For if by turning the crank of the dilemma in question, the brothers have previously offered to prove that nothing is beautiful or white or good---‘or any other thing of that sort’---it follows that they have also implicitly offered to defend the universally quantified thesis that *none* of the things that are different (beautiful, white, good) are different (beautiful, white, good). In other words, the brothers have embraced the thesis that for all predicates F, and for all things x, no x is F; moreover, they think they have an *argument* that establishes its truth.

Seen in this light, Socrates’ summary dismissal of the sophists makes perfect sense: the brothers do indeed ‘stitch up not only the mouths of other men, but their own as well’; for their embrace of the thesis that no x is F amounts to a refusal to adopt as either a thesis or a premise in a dialectical context either member of any contradictory

pair of propositions whatsoever. For such is the consequence of their thesis that none of the different is different: if it is the case that for all subjects *x* and all properties *F*, no *x* is *F*, no *subject* of predication may be successfully characterized or differentiated by the concatenation of a subject term and a predicate term in a proposition.<sup>276</sup> Even to predicate not-being *F* of a subject is, as the *Sophist* points out, to predicate being of it. But if *nothing* is *F*, even those subjects of predication which are not-*F* by being different from *F* cannot be successfully differentiated from any other subject of predication. In which case, there is nothing to talk about.

It follows that, as dialectical interlocutors, the brothers *say nothing significant*. Socrates' rebuke of the sophists on this score is reminiscent of Aristotle's famous advice to the learner in dialectic who is confronted by an answerer who denies the principle of non-contradiction:

But even this can be demonstrated to be impossible, in the manner of a refutation, if only the disputant says something (τι λέγει). If he says nothing, it is ridiculous to look for a statement (λόγον) in response to one who has a statement of nothing, in so far as he has not; such a person, in so far as he is such, is similar to a vegetable... In response to every case of that kind the original [step] is not to ask him to state something either to be or not to be (for that might well be believed to beg what was originally at issue), but at least to signify something (σημαίνειν τι) both to himself and to someone else; for that is necessary if he is to say anything (λέγει τι). For if he does not, there would be no statement (λόγος) for such a person, either in response to himself or to anyone else. (*Metaph.* IV, 1006a11-24).<sup>277</sup>

<sup>276</sup> The gloss of Zeyl, op. cit., of Socrates' point is close to my own: '...if nothing is *F* as opposed to anything else (not-*F*, or *G*, or whatever), statements are impossible, regardless of who makes the statement. For statements are about 'things', and indeed are distinguished by the 'things' they are about. But if 'things' themselves are indistinguishable, then so are the statements that are about them...', 175. I have attempted i) to clarify why (3) commits the brothers equally to the denial of either member of a contradictory pair of propositions, and ii) to argue that Socrates infers on this basis that (3) commits the brothers to a dialectically self-refuting thesis.

<sup>277</sup> Translation Kirwin (1993). As Bolton (1994), 332-334, has persuasively argued, in the context of his discussion, Aristotle is considering a dialectical opponent who has at least taken up a thesis, viz., the denial of PNC; thus when Aristotle says this opponent may yet be elenctically refuted if only he 'says something', the minimal dialectical requirement to which Aristotle refers is that the opponent accept determinately significant premises under further dialectical questioning. In other words, he must, when asked for premises, say 'yes' or 'no', and not 'yes and no', or 'not yes and not no'; if he tries on the latter sort of answers, he 'says nothing' (οὐθεν λέγει, 1008a31). The brothers' thesis that no *x* is *F* reduces any premise they may concede as answerers in a dialectical encounter to insignificance in this sense; however, it also rules out their adopting any determinate thesis as answerer, or, in the role of questioner, adopting any significant thesis to establish as the conclusion of a refutation, or extracting any significant premises from

I conclude that while Socrates' present remarks do constitute a back-reference to the previous encounter, they also constitute a new response to the sophist's dilemma. For Socrates' claim that the brothers say nothing is the conclusion of a new argument, arrived at on the basis of new premises (viz., (1)-(3)), which were not brought to the surface in the brief encounter at 300e1-301c5. It is equally clear however that this final response is different in *kind* from its predecessors. Previously Socrates had managed to (a) indicate that the dilemma was a false refutation, and (b) draw the sophist into making false statements in its defense. His final point (c) may be summed up as follows: *saying nothing significant is dialectically self-refuting*. Or put another way: the falsehood of the thesis that no x is F is entailed by *any* dialectical activity of a questioner *or* an answerer, since in any dialectical encounter both questioner and answerer must (i) defend one or the other of a pair of contradictory propositions, and (ii) do so by means of affirmations or denials of the form 'x is F'.<sup>278</sup> The charge of dialectical self-refutation thus constitutes the *coup de grâce* of an entire series of ripostes Socrates has made to the sophist's dilemma.

I take it to be consistent with this result that Socrates does not undertake to explain the full implications of the sophists' claim that *none of the different things are different*. The complex structure of statements---the fact that statements *are*

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an answerer in order to establish a conclusion. Hence they are in a much worse case, dialectically speaking, than the denier of PNC.

<sup>278</sup>This is a much stronger result than McCabe's construal of Socrates' mouth-stitching remark, since she takes its point to be that one can only say 'the B is B', 'the F is F'. Thus McCabe thinks Socrates in *both* passages is 'forcing' the sophists to the 'late-learner's' position: we can only say 'the B is B, the F is F'. But this (as I understand McCabe) just is a consequence of 'cut off or clone'. But then how does forcing the sophists to a position they already accept constitute a *refutation* of them or a way of showing that 'cut off or clone' is *false*? Moreover, McCabe thinks Socrates' argument at 286e1-288a7 against the NFS thesis is a 'failure' because it presupposes the falsehood of cut off or clone (whereas I have argued above, Chapter 3.6, that it is a success); but since it is difficult to see why she does not regard the present argument as a second failure, it is not clear why she thinks Socrates *ever* succeeds in 'silencing the sophists'.



concatenations of a subject and predicate term; the nature of the predication of not-being; the distinctive nature of the property of the different---are all subjects that are left for treatment by the practitioner of the higher dialectic. The final self-refutation argument---like the first that was wielded against the thesis NFS---is non-explanatory in this sense. But in proving that the sophists' thesis is false, it has surely done enough. The same may be said of Socrates---who, by dialogue's end, has explained the nature of wisdom, and the relationship of his own craft to the superordinate arts of philosophy and politics; provided Cleinias with a compelling argument to devote himself to the pursuit of wisdom; made the world safe for false statement, contradiction, and even the very possibility of statement in general; and who---in the teeth of the dialectical sabotage of the world's worst interlocutors---has considerably clarified and refined the notion of a genuine refutation. All in a day's work for the practitioner of Socratic dialectic.

## Conclusion

Socrates begins his encounter with the sophists by beseeching them to display their expertise in protreptic argument (275a-b). I conclude my analysis with the observation that the *Euthydemus* is a protreptic dialogue in a very special sense. It is the fact that the dialogue showcases various levels of philosophical argumentation that makes it especially valuable as a protreptic tool. Thus the relatively less sophisticated argument of the first protreptic episode is conducted on a level which ‘even a child’ can understand. (279d7). It seems to give Cleinias a compelling reason to acquire wisdom as soon as he can. Yet the more sophisticated argument of the second protreptic episode loses Cleinias completely (both figuratively and literally). The reader must retrace the steps of the aporetic argument again and again to solve its puzzle. Even then it will only be the more advanced reader, who has grasped the relation of the mathematical sciences to higher dialectic, who will fully appreciate its solution.

This property of the dialogue is as characteristic of the eristic scenes as it is of the overtly protreptic episodes. The dialogue concluded, Crito wonders whether it is the task of the philosopher to examine the shameless devices of eristic sophistry. Plato’s answer is a resounding ‘yes’. However, such an inquiry will be conducted at various levels of sophistication, corresponding to the various stages of one’s philosophical education. At the level of the absolute beginner, one may learn that certain of the more simple-minded of the sophists’ fallacies—e.g., those depending on equivocation---may be explained if one knows about ‘correctness regarding words’ (ὀνομάτων ὀρθότητος, 277e4). Mastery of *Socratic dialectic* leads to a deeper understanding of the inadequacies of eristic

argument. But this insight can only be acquired once the novice, having learned about the correct use of words, returns to the dialogue, and assesses for himself the dialectical purchase of Socratic examination in its confrontation with an array of fallacies whose solution requires greater philosophical sophistication as the dialogue proceeds. Finally, a theoretical explanation of the fallacies that elude Socrates' explanatory net is encoded in the text as well, awaiting discovery by the more advanced student of the higher dialectic. In one sense then the *Euthydemus* is a protreptic dialogue because it exhorts the novice to begin the study of philosophy; in a deeper sense however the *Euthydemus* calls every student of philosophy to its continuous pursuit.

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## Carrie E. Swanson

### **Education:**

Reed College, (B.A. Philosophy, 1991)

Princeton University (Program in Classical Philosophy, 1991-1993)

Rutgers University (Ph.D. Philosophy, May 2011)

### **Positions:**

Spring 2004-Spring 2008: Teaching Assistant, Department of Philosophy, Rutgers University

Fall 2008-Spring 2009: Rutgers University Sellon Dissertation Fellowship

Summer 2009-Spring 2010: Teaching Assistant, Department of Philosophy, Rutgers University

Fall 2010: Teaching Assistant, Department of English, Rutgers University

Spring 2011: Teaching Assistant, Department of Philosophy, Rutgers University

### **Publications:**

‘Aristotle’s Expansion of the Taxonomy of Fallacy in *Sophistici Elenchi* 8’: forthcoming in a special issue of *Logical Analysis and History of Philosophy* (*Philosophiegeschichte und logische Analyse*). Guest editor: Prof. Dr. Christof Rapp (München).