The Twofold Requirements of Truth and Justice in the *Gorgias*[1]

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines Plato's views about the unity of argument and drama, and asks why Plato never made his views on this unity fully explicit. Taking the *Gorgias* as a case study it is argued that unity rests on the conception of refutative dialectic as justice and on the principle of self-consistency of thought and desire. As compared to the treatise, the dialogue form has the advantage of being able to defend these substantive views in action and thus to demonstrate the performative contradictions in the ideas of one's opponents.

Keywords: dialogue form, *Gorgias*, truth, justice, disciplining, performative contradiction.

INTRODUCTION

As the title indicates I wish to discuss that classic and still partially unresolved problem about the relation between drama and argument. I would like to begin with the question our host, Lloyd Gerson, raised in 2002 in his commentary on various chapters, including mine, in *Does Socrates Have a Method?*

> The larger question is, assuming that Plato did choose to set the written expression of his philosophical views in dramatic form, on what principles are we to understand how the drama contributes to understanding the philosophy? I think that many scholars assume that there is a clear answer to this question without explaining what it is.[2]

I have reflected on that question and think I can propose a better answer than I did at the time, although I would not be surprised if Lloyd thinks otherwise. Let me begin by conceding that he puts his finger on a real problem. If Plato deliberately chose the dialogue form, rather than simply following a fashion, he must have had reasons for doing so, he must have had some theory about the relation between drama and argument, between methods[3] and content. I believe that Plato holds principles in writing and reading in dialogue form, but I do not believe that he explained these principles in full. This is one reason why Lloyd's question is so difficult, perhaps even more so than he himself believes. I think we are dealing here with a theory that is partially implicit, and I argue that the implicit character of this conception is related to the nature of the dialogue form itself. The term "implicit" could be translated into Greek by the participle ὑπονοούμενον or the substantive ὑπόνοια ("the underlying

intention" or more freely "the hidden sense of the text"),[4] or more simply by ἔργῳ ("in practice"), the full phrase might then be ἔργῳ λόγος ("a theory in or by practice"), a phrase Plato uses once, in the *Laws*.[5] This theory, while implicit, is nevertheless closely linked to an explicitly stated doctrine, that of virtue as knowledge. The way to interpret the dialogues as representing a unity of drama and philosophy is to see it as bound up with the Platonic conception of the relationship between theory and practice, insofar as the argument is not to be separated from self-consistency and from self-knowledge.

I propose to take the *Gorgias* as a case study. It is well-suited for my purposes as it is rich in both drama and content. My interpretation will underline the link between the "personal" dimension of the *elenchos* and the desire for the good. This reading has implications beyond the *Gorgias* and possibly beyond the so-called Socratic dialogues, and I will occasionally refer to other dialogues. My interpretation owes more to recent studies than I can acknowledge here (such as those of Charles Kahn, Michael Erler and Christopher Rowe to name only a few),[6] but it also differs from these in many ways. It tries to incorporate and link elements that are usually ignored or downplayed, such as the overall question of the principle governing both the *logos* and the *ergon* and the role of literary or rhetorical techniques. I will also discuss the conception of dialectic as disciplining (or punishment), the performative contradiction and dialectic failure that stems from the conflict between the two opposed desires of self-preservation and self-consistency.

By "Socrates" I mean the "Platonic Socrates", not the "historical Socrates". I cannot discuss here the question of Plato's spokesmen; I must limit myself to the general claim that Plato uses various voices, not the least of which is that of Socrates, to communicate his views or concerns to the reader.

1. THE DIALOGUE'S JUSTICE

1.1. TWOFOLD THESIS AND PARALLELISM BETWEEN DRAMA AND ARGUMENT

In the *Gorgias* Socrates explicitly defends the following twofold thesis: the greatest evil is committing injustice and the greatest of all evils is to commit injustice and not to be disciplined (or punished). This twofold claim rests on the Socratic view that virtue is knowledge, and vice a form of ignorance.[7] It is also intimately linked to the interplay between theory (λόγος) and practice (ἔργον).[8] Here is how Socrates puts the thesis in positive terms (in terms of goods) at the very end of the dialogue (527b-c):

> But among so many arguments this one alone survives refutation (ἐλεγχομένων), and remains steady (μόνος οὗτος ἠρεμεῖ ὁ λόγος): that doing what's unjust is more to be guarded against than suffering it (τὸ ἀδικεῖν μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ ἀδικεῖσθαι), and that it's not seeming to be good but being good that a man should take care of more than anything, both in his public and his private life (καὶ ἰδίᾳ καὶ δημοσίᾳ); and that if a person proves to be bad in some respect, he's to be disciplined, and that the second best thing (τοῦτο δεύτερον ἀγαθὸν) after being just is to become just by paying one's due, by being disciplined (κολαζόμενον διδόναι δίκην); and that every form of flattery (κολακείαν), both the form concerned with oneself and that concerned with others, whether they're few or many, is to be avoided, and that oratory and every other activity is always to be used in support of what's just (τῇ ῥητορικῇ

οὕτω χρηστέον ἐπὶ τὸ δίκαιον ἀεί, καὶ τῇ ἄλλη πάση πράξει, 527b2-c4; trans. Zeyl).

Socrates' twofold thesis is part and parcel of the defense of philosophy understood as the practice of refutation (ἔλεγχος). While oratory as flattery ignores the good and is done in the service of injustice, dialectic (διαλέγεσθαι), and refutation in particular, benefits the interlocutor by being a form of justice, or disciplining (κολάζειν). Socrates attempts to have his three interlocutors, Gorgias, Polus and Callicles successively admit that they ought to submit to the requirements of justice, that is to the dialogue's justice. It is necessary and beneficial to be refuted when mistaken, just as it is necessary and beneficial to be disciplined when guilty.

1.2. DIALECTIC AS DISCIPLINING

The final myth, from which the passage quoted above is taken, is dominated by the notion of punishment. In Socrates' myth, physical punishment is appropriate and pain a legitimate disciplinary measure (cf. 524c, 527d). According to some, the appeal to punishment is incompatible with what is usually called the Socratic paradox.[9] According to the Socratic view of virtue as knowledge, which Socrates holds in the *Gorgias*, human beings do what they believe to be best for them, and mistaken judgments are the sole cause of their erring behavior. This is why Socrates, in the "Socratic dialogues", seeks to change their ways of thinking by discussing with them rather than by punishing them. Yet he also seems to defend punishment, conventional punishment that is, such as flogging, imprisonment and the like.

The contradiction is only apparent. Socrates does not refer only to conventional punishment. He mentions another type too,

albeit in subtle ways, namely the dialectical or philosophical. For both kinds he often uses the term κολάζειν, which can be translated by "punishment" or "disciplining". While retributive punishment is sometimes clearly meant (as in 480d2 in the case of execution, and likewise in the final myth, *passim*), corrective disciplining is meant in many other places. The term "punishment" can conceivably be used to translate κολάζειν in both cases insofar as Plato's conception of "punishment", notwithstanding modern connotations, allow for therapeutic as well as retributive kinds.[10] I will however use "disciplining" in most cases although not all, as does D. Zeyl.[11]

Socrates passes back and forth from the conventional to the dialectical conception of disciplining or punishment without warning. This movement can be observed at the end of the exchange with Polus. Let us recall the context. At the beginning of the conversation with Polus Socrates claims that rhetoric is not a craft (τέχνη) but mere flattery (κολακεία) with the goal of providing pleasure at the expense of the better, and that it is therefore devoid of any value or usefulness (463a-466a). At the end of that conversation, however, he admits that rhetoric can be of some use for the opposite purpose, namely in accusing (κατηγορεῖν). Rhetoric can and must be used to accuse oneself (ἑαυτοῦ) first and foremost, and then one's family and anyone else dear who happens to behave unjustly (480c1-3). Rhetoric must not keep injustice hidden, as flattery does, but bring it out into the open, so that each one may pay his or her due and get well (ἵνα δῷ δίκην καὶ ὑγιὴς γένηται). Shortly after Socrates remarks (480c4-7):

> [O]ne should compel oneself and the others not to play the coward, but to grit his teeth and present himself with grace

and courage as to a doctor for cauterization and surgery (ἀνδρείως ὥσπερ τέμνειν καὶ κάειν ἰατρῷ) (trans. Zeyl).

This phrasing recalls the medical reference first employed, in its literal sense, by Gorgias (456b3-4: ἢ τεμεῖν ἢ καῦσαι: "surgery or cauterization"). It also takes up elements of Socrates' earlier classification in which he opposed rhetoric, understood as pastry baking and flattery, to the true arts of medicine (ἰατρική) and justice (δικαιοσύνη).[12] Here Socrates mentions this analogy at the very moment he is refuting Polus, and will again do so later with Callicles. In both instances he refers to the effects of dialectic refutation in the very same terms he before used to speak of judiciary and medical treatment. These passages are usually either passed over by the commentators or disconnected from their larger implications. First, then, in reaction to Polus' hesitation to recognize the refutation, Socrates exhorts him as follows (475d4-6):

> Don't shrink back from answering, Polus. You won't get hurt in any way. Submit yourself nobly to the argument (γενναίως τῷ λόγῳ), as you would to a doctor (ὥσπερ ἰατρῷ), and answer me (trans. Zeyl).[13]

Socrates appeals here to the medical analogy, as he did in his classification of the arts, and he inserts it now into the drama. It applies to what they are talking about, to the kind of discussion they are having. This reveals a parallelism between the subject matter of the discussion (λόγος) and the drama (ἔργον). The same parallelism can be observed during the conversation with Callicles. Confronted with the latter's refusal to recognize the refutation or even to respond, Socrates makes the following remark (505c3-4):

This fellow won't put up with being benefited and with his undergoing the very thing the discussion's about, with being disciplined (πάσχων περὶ οὗ ὁ λόγος ἐστί, κολαζόμενος). (trans. Zeyl)

Refutation is here described as a form of justice, as a disciplinary measure.[14] In both passages Socrates is as explicit as he gets with regard to the interplay between action and argument. His way of discussing and refuting coincides with the subject matter of their conversation, namely justice. He thus attributes a disciplinary function to dialectic refutation as he is practicing it. This parallelism is carefully crafted and reveals Plato's art of writing. David Sedley in his insightful study on the myth (2009) is one the few who takes note of the parallelism between dialectic and justice, but he underestimates some of its larger implications, in part no doubt because he refers to one of these three passages only (505c).[15] The parallelism reveals nothing less than the fusion of argument and drama. Contrary to conventional forensic oratory that seduces through pleasure, dialectic refutation induces pain similar to medical treatment or physical disciplinary measure, as it frees from ignorance and therefore from the injustice that results from it. These three passages, in connection with others, enact the principle of the unity of argument and drama. This principle is not stated but implied in the drama (ἔργῳ) in forming one body with it.

But there is a difficulty. If Socrates uses κολάζειν ("disciplining" or "punishment") to mean dialectic, why does he appeal to conventional forms of punishment such as flogging (πληγῶν), imprisonment (δεσμοῦ), exile (φυγῆς) and death (θανάτου, 480c8-d3)? Why does he formulate his argument on

punishment as if he accepted the conventional view? The most likely explanation seems to me to be the following. Socrates refers to the conventional or forensic view on punishment because it is the conception that his non-philosophical interlocutors understand and accept.[16] This corresponds to his usual way of arguing. In the case of the definition of rhetoric for instance, he first lets Gorgias present and defend his occupation, rhetoric, as a craft (τέχνη), only later to express his personal view in an elaborate, well prepared classification that denies the status of a craft to rhetoric (ὁ ἐμὸς λόγος, 463b3: 462e-466a), and to admit at last the existence of a true rhetoric (ἡ ἀληθινὴ ῥητορική, 517a5; cf. 504d5-6). Likewise he first denies that he practices politics, that is conventional, institutionalized politics (473e6), and then later declares himself to be one of the very few who practice the true art of politics (τῇ ὡς ἀληθῶς πολιτικῇ τέχνῃ, 521d7). In all these cases he starts from the conventional conception of his interlocutors and then gradually proceeds to the philosophical view.[17] In the *Gorgias* Socrates goes to see Gorgias, who is surrounded by friends and a crowd of admirers (458c3). As a result, the conversation takes place on what we might call enemy territory. Socrates will make some use of techniques of conventional rhetoric although for opposite purposes.[18] Contrary to conventional rhetoric and punishment, dialectic aims at truth and justice, at making people better, which is the role of the true art of politics. Dialectic consists in disciplining the interlocutor whenever his opinions are confused or contradictory. The discussion in the *Gorgias* turns into an open conflict between Socrates and Callicles. The resulting dialectical impasse will lead Socrates to appeal to a myth of final judgment in which unrepentant people such as Callicles suffer punishment.[19]

2. THE *LOGOS* AND THE INTERLOCUTOR

2.1. OBJECTIONS

Some might object to this interpretation as attributing undue importance to the drama in general and to the interlocutor in particular. Here is a short list of some of the general counter-arguments that might be raised at this point. Socrates repeatedly claims that only the *logos* matters. In the *Charmides* for instance, he says that "the question at issue is not who said it, but whether what he said is true or not."[20] Dialectic is fundamentally logical and impersonal in nature.[21] The frequently used phrase "as the discussion (*logos*) points out"[22] reflects the authority of reason and the best argument.[23] As he indicates in the *Gorgias*, Socrates proceeds as he does not for the sake of his interlocutor, in this case Gorgias, but for the sake of the *logos* (οὐ σοῦ ἕνεκα ἀλλὰ τοῦ λόγου) in order to achieve the greatest explicitness and clarity (453c2-4, 454c2-3).[24] If the argument is logically valid, it can convince any competent and honest interlocutor.[25] What the *logos* teaches no one can dismiss (cf. 527b3-4), and Socrates, like all others, must submit to it.[26] The Socratic paradox implies a purely intellectual conception of dialectic. This is why Socrates says in the *Gorgias* that he always says the same things about the same things (491b6-7).[27] Dialectic is ethically neutral, and committing a logical error is not immoral. Sincerity or frankness (παρρησία) as a condition of dialectic[28] is not always required.[29] Socrates sometimes examines an opinion regardless of the respondent's convictions.[30] In the *Gorgias* this requirement only becomes central in the Callicles exchange,[31] and even then it is violated several times without repercussions.

Callicles admits that he is willing to continue the dialogue only to please Gorgias, against which Socrates does not raise objections (501c7-8). Socrates later complains that Callicles does not respect their previous agreements, but he pursues the discussion nonetheless (516d4-5).

2.2. RESPONSES

The importance of the impersonal dimension of dialectic is undeniable. Therein lie the logical principles of non-contradiction and of the best argument.[32] It would, however, be inaccurate to claim that this dimension constitutes the whole of dialectic as practiced in the dialogues. The *logos* is not alone in guiding the dialectical exchange: the art of the questioner is not only logical in nature. Socrates questions his interlocutor with rigor and in the spirit of common quest, but always with a view to refuting or establishing a thesis,[33] with due regard to the kind of interlocutor he seeks to refute or convince. He displays an ability to play two roles at once, that of searcher and guide.[34] In the dialectical exchange he strives to demonstrate the inconsistency of the other participant's thesis and to that purpose starts from the latter's premises and adapts to some extent to his dispositions. This explains why he sometime varies the type of argument used, including rational argumentation and the appeal to authority or myths.[35] Let us also recall Aristotle's well-known remark in the *Poetics* about the *sokratikos logos*: its action is governed by two causes (αἴτια), thought (διάνοια) and character (ἦθος).[36] In other words, that kind of conversation offers an understanding of the participants' character in addition to confronting ideas.[37] When Socrates defends his rather picky way of asking questions as not being aimed at his interlocutor, Gorgias, but at the *logos* (453c, 454c), the rationale is to conduct the discussion in a fashion as orderly as possible, although this includes the various steps that are likely to lead to the interlocutor's refutation and therefore represents some strategy on his part. The Socratic examination, it is true, does not always examine his interlocutor's way of life (βίος), as it is the case in the oft-quoted passage in the *Laches* (188c-e). It involves various methods and aims according to the context. Still the ethical dimension is never entirely absent. According to the identification of virtue with knowledge, our opinions - whether well-founded or not - are the cause of our desires and behavior. This view is closely linked with the notion of a rational desire for truth and self-consistency, that is the desire to maintain or reestablish inner harmony with oneself (ὁμολογία, ἁρμονία, συμφωνία).[38] To accept to answer questions means being willing to express one's opinions and to defend them, that is to be refuted and to refute. The *logos* is not, however, invariably presented as an irresistible force, but sometimes also as a difficult goal to reach. The obstacle does not lie in the *logos*, which in principle is sound, but in the interlocutors' weakness. Socrates remarks in the *Phaedo* (90d9-e3):

> "This then is the first thing we should guard against […]. We should not allow into our minds the conviction that argumentation has nothing sound about it; much rather we (ἡμεῖς) should believe that it is we who are not yet sound (ὑγιῶς) and that we must take courage (ἀνδριστέον) and be eager to attain soundness (προθυμητέον ὑγιῶς)" (trans. Zeyl).

As for frankness (παρρησία) it is a requirement in other dialogues too, for instance the *Crito* (49c-d), the *Protagoras* (331c), the *Laches* (193c) and the *Republic* (346a).[39] This rule is of course often violated, but its violation does not

undermine its relevance. These instances of violation are deliberately included in the drama in order to highlight the importance of that violation and the difficulty in respecting that rule. In order to be able to follow this rule at least two conditions must be satisfied. First we must know what we think and understand what we say. This implies possessing a degree of dialectical competence (ἐπιστήμη) in addition to a good will (εὔνοια, 487b5-6). Polus has hardly reflected on the questions Socrates asks him and as a result does not know what he really thinks. Secondly, it presupposes that the interlocutor desires to know the truth even at the cost of refutation. Callicles is unable to remain consistent, especially with regard to the radical hedonism he wishes to defend. This is because he is a proud aristocrat and an ambitious politician, who like Polus, is more concerned with winning votes than with finding the best argument.[40] Thus the violation of frankness, whenever required, underlines one of the difficulties of dialectic. In the *Gorgias* specifically, it reveals the conflict between Socrates and his non-philosophical fellow-citizens. The absence of this requirement in other dialogues, in favor of the examination of theses that are independent of the interlocutor's conviction, points to transformations in the dialectical method, but it does not call into question the ideal of self-knowledge and self-consistency.

3. PRINCIPLE OF SELF-CONSISTENCY

3.1. AMBIVALENCE IN THOUGHT AND DESIRE

The twofold thesis of the *Gorgias* (that committing injustice and committing injustice without being punished are the two greatest evils) must be understood in connection with two other aspects of the dialogue, namely the criticism of rhetoric as flattery and Socrates' indifference to any concerns other than for virtue, including the risk of death.[41]

Callicles' defense of rhetoric suffers from ambivalence. He simultaneously sides with the rich and the powerful and with the Athenian people (δῆμος). As in the case of Alcibiades, the ambition of always having more than the others (τὸ πλεονεκτεῖν), makes him into a lover (ἐραστής) of the people. Hence his ambivalence between the desire for power and the desire to conform to the majority's desires. The paradigm of the tyrannical life and its pleasures is one of the popular, conventional beliefs at the time. This ambivalence between the desire for domination and the desire for mimetic conformity, found in all three of Socrates' interlocutors, leads them to contradict themselves in word and deed. Callicles is unable to defend radical hedonism to its logical conclusion, and comes to recognize the distinction, accepted by the majority,[42] between good and bad pleasures.[43] Moreover he is particularly concerned about the fact that justice is weaker than injustice, and worries about a wicked man killing one who is admirable and good (καλὸν κἀγαθὸν; 511b3-6). "Isn't that just the most irritating thing about it?" Callicles exclaims. To which Socrates replies:

> No, not for an intelligent person, anyway, as our discussion points out. Or do you think that a man ought to make sure that his life be as long as possible (ὡς πλεῖστον χρόνον ζῆν) and that he practice those crafts that ever rescue us from dangers (ἐκ τῶν κινδύνων σῴζουσιν), like the oratory that you tell me to practice, the kind that

preserves us in the law courts? (511b7-c2; trans. Zeyl).

This is Socrates' well-known fundamental distinction, stated in many other dialogues, between life, or mere survival, and the good life. Callicles has first praised great public deeds, and then later the life of unlimited pleasures. He finally comes to defend mere survival, that is, the all-importance of protecting himself against the danger of suffering the worst evil, for him, namely violent death.

In the end, then, the profound cause of conflict between Callicles and Socrates seems to lie in the opposition of two irreconcilable desires: the desire for self-preservation and the desire for self-consistency (511c-513c).[44] Each of these desires rests on a certain conception of the good. The desire for self-consistency, both logical and moral, implies the rejection of the view that survival is the supreme good, and death the worst evil. In other words, choosing the philosophical life, the life of self-consistency, means rejecting the life of pleasure and safety.[45]

3.2. PERFORMATIVE CONTRADICTION

Socrates' fundamental intention in the *Gorgias* is to have his three interlocutors admit that power must be subjected to the requirements of reason and justice, which without them would be blind and harmful, including for the agent. This is why submitting power to justice requires the practice of dialectic, which is itself a practice of justice. In other words, to defend justice is to defend the necessity of dialogue. This is not a small task given the interlocutors' hostility. Callicles rejects the principle of frankness (παρρησία) at least twice,[46] in order to avoid refutation, and thus becomes guilty of inconsistency.

The dialogue form, by comparison to the treatise, makes a pragmatic justification of philosophy possible. By pragmatic justification, I mean a justification that occurs in and as part of the drama. A refutation that takes the form of a performative contradiction implies a contradiction in both word and deed. The logical principle of non-contradiction is the most general and basic of all dialectical rules. While Plato gives more or less direct definitions of it,[47] perhaps the clearest and most useful to our purposes is given by Aristotle, since his definition has a direct bearing on dialectic as practice. One might think of his remark in the *Protrepticus* that asking the question whether one should philosophize or not is already to philosophize.[48] But the most relevant passage is the one in *Metaphysics* Gamma. Here Aristotle formulates and defends the principle, and with it the very possibility of knowledge and truth, against Protagoras and the relativists:

> But we have now posited that it is impossible for anything at the same time to be and not to be (ὡς ἀδυνάτου ὄντος, ἅμα εἶναι καὶ μὴ εἶναι), and by this means have shown that this is the most indisputable of all principles (βεβαιοτάτη αὕτη τῶν ἀρχῶν πασῶν). Some indeed demand that even this shall be demonstrated, but this they do through want of education, for not to know of what things one may demand demonstration, and of what one may not, argues simply want of education. For it is impossible that there should be demonstration of absolutely everything; there would be an infinite regress, so that there would still be no demonstration. [...] We can, however, demonstrate by refutation (ἔστι δ' ἀποδεῖξαι ἐλεγκτικῶς) even that this view is impossible, if our

opponent will only say something (ἂν μόνον λέγῃ ὁ ἀμφισβητῶν). (1006a3-13, trans. Ross slightly modified)

The principle of non-contradiction, being the principle upon which all the others rest, can only be demonstrated negatively, by refutation (ἐλεγκτικῶς). The adversary must however accept to speak and discuss. Its proof is practical or performative in nature.[49] Now the dialogue form allows for that sort of confrontation with the relativist or the anti-philosopher. Indeed such is one of the basic aims of the Platonic dialogues opposing Socrates to non-philosophers or anti-philosophers, as it is the case of the *Gorgias*. I readily grant that Aristotle rejects Plato's conception of dialectic as science and that he does not mention Plato's dialogues in this passage. Still some of the Platonic dialogues offer a brilliant illustration and a concrete application of Aristotle's thesis. Aristotle provides as it were the "thematic," and Plato the "operating" concept. Philosophy's adversary in rejecting the *logos* concedes in deed (ἔργῳ) that which he is trying to deny. This elenctic method constitutes an *ad hominem* argument. The principle expounded by Aristotle states in abstract terms the individual, personal experience of self-contradiction. In other words, Socratic dialectic simultaneously operates on the objective plane (*ad rem*), with regard to the subject under discussion, and on the subjective plane (*ad hominem*), with respect to the person speaking[50].

Dialectic sometime aims at the interlocutor's conversion or transformation, as Pierre Hadot has eloquently showed. It would be, however, reductive and one-sided to exclude the subject of discussion (*logos*) and the defense of substantive views from the core of Platonic dialectic by invoking Socrates' avowal of ignorance.[51] Admittedly the results of dialectic practice in Plato's dialogues are never portrayed with an air of finality. Defining terms

and the giving of account are ever renewed tasks. Yet progress is made in the cleansing of the soul[52] and in defending certain views. The possibility of progress, and indeed of communication, ultimately rests upon the initial intelligibility, however inarticulate, that the interlocutors have of the subject matter and of the principle of self-consistency.

3.3. SELF-CONSISTENCY OF THOUGHT AND DESIRE

The good then, for us human beings, according to Socrates-Plato, might indeed be nothing other than self-consistency, that is harmony with the *logos* in us.[53] Good as self-consistency would be at once logical and ethical, composed of consistency among our opinions, and between our opinions and our actions respectively. If this is so, Plato's position is akin to that of the Stoics.[54]

The principle of self-consistency would seem to have the following implications. The Socratic paradox presupposes an analogical relation between the desire for truth and the desire for the good. The requirements of thought would be inseparable from those of action, logic would be inseparable from morality.[55] This is illustrated by the status of Socrates in Antiquity as the paradigm of unity between life and thought.[56] Moreover, as we have seen, the link between logic and morality cannot be fully demonstrated theoretically.

The pragmatic dimension has in turn consequences for the way we should read Plato. The reader must constantly move from the argument to the drama, that is from the semantic (or explicit) dimension to the pragmatic (or implicit) dimension, and vice-versa. This hermeneutical principle is not stated by Plato in so many words, it largely remains implicit, notably

in the form of literary or rhetorical indications, which the reader must pick up and link to the explicit argumentation.

This approach finds support in some of the ancient commentators. Proclus for instance in his *Timaeus* commentary defends the superiority of examples presented in the Platonic dialogues (especially in the prologues) over the precepts conceived in treatises, such as those of the Stoics. Proclus writes (*In Tim*. 16.6-12):

> Other people had written handbooks on duties (περὶ καθηκόντων τέχνας), through which they expect to improve the habits (τὰ ἤθη) of those educated by them. Plato, however, gives us an outline impression (τύπους) of our duties through dramatic depiction (δι᾽ αὐτῆς τῆς μιμήσεως) of the best of men, an impression that has much that is more effective (πολὺ τὸ δραστικώτερον) than what is committed to lifeless rules (ἐν κανόσι ψιλοῖς). That is because dramatic imitation informs the lives of the listeners according to its own distinctive character (κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτῆς ἰδιότητα) (trans. Tarrant).

In Proclus' view then, while the Stoics produce systematic classifications of moral rules and elaborate moral theories, the Platonists think the rules of conduct have been transmitted in the best way possible by Plato through examples. This observation is based on and largely confirmed by the theory of imitation in book 3 of the *Republic* (392d–398b) according to which imitation presents character traits specific to the person portrayed and exerts in turn a decisive influence on the audience's character.[57] What about the counter-examples given by philosophy's adversaries? These might still serve as model to follow insofar as they submit to refutation. Extreme cases such as Callicles might perhaps be regarded as instructive counter-examples to be avoided and contrasted with that of Socrates.

Overall, then, dialectic would have two dimensions, one objective, the other subjective. Both are equally indispensable albeit in tension with each other. They would correspond to two purposes in Plato's dialectic. The objective purpose is the attainment of a perfectly self-sufficient or absolute object, an entirely impersonal norm, such as the idea of the Good. The subjective dimension pertains to the individual's interest, its object is relative, always different. These two purposes must be understood in the light of the Platonic doctrine of Eros. There is a fundamental tension between the desire for individual self-realization and the desire for the beautiful that transcends all individuality. In the *Lysis* the good is conceived as the beloved (φίλον) and humans as beings of want. That very tension constitutes for us the incentive for the search (218d-220b; 220b-222a). Similarly in the *Symposium*, Diotima defines the beautiful (τὸ καλόν) as the object of the great desire, the *raison d'être* of all our strivings (210e): we desire to possess the beautiful and the good (γενέσθαι αὑτῷ, 204d-205a), that is to overcome our individual, ephemeral self.[58] This is when presumably the self, delivered from the body, can finally achieve its full, original unity.[59]

CONCLUSION

Let us sum up, very briefly. In the *Gorgias* the subject matter coincides with the drama. Socrates seeks to persuade his interlocutors to accept the constraints of justice by refuting them and thus disciplining them justly. The parallelism or unity of the argument and the drama is alluded to but not discussed. It

is carefully crafted and is part of Plato's art of writing. This parallelism also implies the refutation of the adversaries of philosophy through performative contradiction. This can be so because basic philosophical questions can only be answered in the first person singular as (objective) knowledge can never be acquired vicariously.[60] We must answer these questions in our name, and be answerable to our answers as we are answerable to our deeds.

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NOTES

1   I heartily thank Debra Nails for her first set of incisive remarks, which allowed me to clarify and rectify various aspects of my paper, and my colleague and friend Jeremy Hayhoe for kindly proofreading it.

2   Gerson 2002, 227; cf. 2013, 37-38, 87-88.

3   The plural is here important as Socrates' and Plato's "dialectical method" involves various strategies, some of which are exemplified in this paper.

4   While ὑπονοούμενον (in participial form) is not to be found in Plato, the substantive ὑπόνοια is used with regard to the allegorical readings of Homer (*Rep.* 378d6-7). Socrates' remark in Xenophon (*Symp.* III, 6, 24: Δῆλον γάρ, ἔφη ὁ Σωκράτης, ὅτι τὰς ὑπονοίας οὐκ ἐπίστανται) seems to confirm that he (the historical Socrates) was well aware of that kind of writing and apparently in favor of the notion of hidden meanings in Homer.

5   *Laws* 814d1; Saunders translates: "statements with concrete examples"; Brisson and Pradeau: "la théorie associée à la pratique."

6   Kahn 1983, 1996; Erler 2006, 2007; Rowe 2007.

7   In the *Gorgias* there is not much talk of "the greatest good" (μέγιστον ἀγαθόν: four occurrences but all in 452a-d), far more of "the greatest evil" (μέγιστον κακὸν or μέγιστον τῶν κακῶν, of which seven occurrences). In this paper, all textual references without a title are to the *Gorgias*.

8   Cf. Erler 2006, 13.

9   See for instance Brickhouse - Smith 2012, 108-131. In a recent article in which they revise their view on the matter, they attempt to accommodate the two meanings of "disciplining" in regarding it primarily as a condition of dialectic and secondarily as an occasional use of it (Brickhouse - Smith 2015, 22). They also refer to Socrates' method of "shaming" (cf. *Apol.* 29e5-30a2) as another Socratic means appealing to the "irrational" in the interlocutor. If however shaming has two distinct meanings for Socrates, one heteronomous (or conventional) and the other autonomous (or Socratic), as some claim (cf. Woodruff 2000, 134, 143-44), it might be necessary to distinguish between a rational or pre-rational dimension of the sense of shame as source and the "irrational" effect of it such as blushing.

10   Cf. Mackenzie 1981, 183-184; Saunders 1991, 133-136; Shaw 2015. As is often the case in Plato the terminology is not strict or tidy. In the *Apology* (25e6-26a7) for instance Socrates rejects conventional punishment (κολάζειν) as ineffective in the case of unwilling wrongdoings (which all wrongdoings are according to him), as opposed to private instruction (νουθετεῖν) that teaches (διδάσκειν). In the *Sophist* (229b7-230e3) the same distinction is drawn, however, in different and even contrary terms, between (a) admonition (νουθετητική), again considered ineffective (insofar as virtue is knowledge), and (b) refutation (ἔλεγχος), by far superior as it purges the individual of the false pretence of knowledge, which impedes learning. While the vocabulary varies and is sometimes contradictory,

the basic distinction between conventional and Socratic punishment (or disciplining) is maintained.

11 Rowe 2007 and Sedley 2009 usually prefer "punishment", although they do refer (especially Rowe) to its corrective meaning too.

12 Cf. *Soph.* 230c8-d2 on refutation as cleansing.

13 Cf. 456b4.

14 Xenophon too employs the term κολάζειν (punishing, disciplining) to characterize the refutation that Socrates inflicted on those who thought they knew everything: *Mem.* I, 4, 1 (ed. Bandini-Dorion 2000).

15 Likewise in Cholbi 2002; see however Shaw 2015, 79 and 86.

16 Rowe 2007, 147-152.

17 This might also be the case (although I cannot argue for this here) of Socrates' appeal to self-mastery (ἐγκρατῆ αὐτὸν ἑαυτοῦ), which appears equally incompatible with the Socratic paradox: he means by it, he says, the same as do most people (ὥσπερ οἱ πολλοί; 491d7-e1). For a detailed reading that on the contrary Socrates personally adheres to this notion, see Dorion 2014, 38-50.

18 Cf. Macé 2003, 11; Erler 2007, 504.

19 Cf. Sedley 2009, 69.

20 161c5-6: ὅστις αὐτὸ εἶπεν, ἀλλὰ πότερον ἀληθὲς λέγεται ἢ οὔ. Cf. *Phaid.* 100a4: ἑκάστοτε λόγον ὃν ἂν κρίνω ἐρρωμενέστατον εἶναι; 85c8-d1: τὸν γοῦν βέλτιστον τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων λόγων λαβόντα καὶ δυσεξελεγκτότατον. Cf. *Rep.* 534c1-2: ὥσπερ ἐν μάχῃ διὰ πάντων ἐλέγχων διεξιών (with a view to the attainment not of δόξα but οὐσία, that is the Idea of the Good, 534b-c).

21 *Gorg.* 482a1-4, 487b3-6, 491b5-8, 527d-e; cf. *Symp.* 221e5-a1. Cf. Xenophon, *Mem.* IV 4, 6.

22 Cf. *Gorg.* 511b7, 527c6, 473b10-11; *Phaid.* 66e.

23 This is also part of his role as midwife: *Theait.* 150c.

24 Cf. 457d3 (κατὰ φθόνον) and 457e5 (πρὸς σέ).

25 Cf. Irwin 1995, 125.

26 Cf. *Phil.* 59b-c; *Theait.* 164a, 200c; also *Prot.* 361a-b; *Parm.* 137a; *Laws* 701b-c.

27 491b5-8. Cf. Xenophon, *Mem.* IV 6.

28 Cf. *Gorg.* 495a; *Alc. I* 110a2-3.

29 Cf. *Prot.* 333c6-7: "It makes no difference to me, provided you give the answers, whether it is your own opinion or not (οὐδέν μοι διαφέρει, ἐὰν μόνον σύ γε ἀποκρίνῃ, εἴτ᾽ οὖν δοκεῖ σοι ταῦτα εἴτε μή). I am primarily interested in testing the argument (τὸν γὰρ λόγον ἔγωγε μάλιστα ἐξετάζω)". But Socrates goes on to say (c7-9): "although it may happen both that the questioner, myself, and my respondent wind up being tested (συμβαίνει μέντοι ἴσως καὶ ἐμὲ τὸν ἐρωτῶντα καὶ τὸν ἀποκρινόμενον ἐξετάζεσθαι)."

30 Cf. *Rep.* 349a-350e; *Men.* 83d, 86e4-5: λέγω δὲ τὸ ἐξ ὑποθέσεως ὧδε, ὥσπερ οἱ γεωμέτραι πολλάκις σκοποῦνται.

31 487a-b; 499b-c; 500b cf. 482e.

32 509a4-b1.

33 The refutation can also coincide with the defense of the contrary these, as is the case in 474b-476a.

34 Cf. Apelt 1912, 103.

35 Cf. e.g. 493d-e. For the larger implications see Tarrant 1990.

36 Arist. *Poet.* 1447b9-13, 1449b36-1450a3.

37 The interlocutor can, no doubt, be of lesser importance in the case of a dialogue composed of long speeches such as in the *Timaeus*. The Middle Platonist commentator Albinus (*Prol.* I, 4) makes the following observation: "while the explanatory directs its aim to things, the exploratory does so to persons" (ὁ μὲν ὑφηγητικὸς τῶν πραγμάτων στοχάζεται, ὁ δὲ ζητητικὸς τῶν προσώπων).

38 Answering questions (ἀποκρίνεσθαι τὰ ἐρωτώμενα) is according to Socrates the only thing Alcibiades ought to do if he is to take care of himself (*Alc.* 127e5-7). Cf. Renaud - Tarrant 2015, 16, 56, 213.

39 *Crit.* 49a1-2; 49c11-d1: "And Crito, see that you do not agree to this, contrary to your belief" (καὶ ὅρα, ὦ Κρίτων, ταῦτα καθομολογῶν, ὅπως μὴ παρὰ δόξαν ὁμολογῇς). *Men.* 83d1-2: "Good, you answer what you think" (Καλῶς· τὸ γάρ σοι δοκοῦν τοῦτο ἀποκρίνου).

40 Cf. Kahn 1996, 137.

41 Cf. Schofield 2010, xviii.

42 499a6-7: ὡς δὴ σὺ οἴει ἐμὲ ἢ καὶ ἄλλον ὁντινοῦν ἀνθρώπων. Callicles even seems to feel shame (494e3-4). Cf. Olympiodorus, *in Gorg.* 30.

43 Plato's criticism of *characters* such as Alcibiades' and Callicles', and more generally of the corruption of potential philosophers turned into tyrants (cf. *Rep.* 493a-495c) is, however, part of a larger, *social* critique of rhetoric as such. See on this Barney 2010, 117-119, who considers the social character of that critique as aiming at rhetoric as "a kind of socially constructed parasitism" (119) and as resting upon the objective criteria of genuine craft (τέχνη). I believe another significant component of that critique lies in the *mimetic* nature of rhetoric's social role and alleged power (cf. 512d7-a4; 513b2-6; cf. 513c7-8), a view I cannot argue for here.

44 Let us recall Socrates' famous remark (482b7-c3): "And yet for my part, my good man, I think it's better to have my lyre or a chorus that I might lead out of tune (ἀνάρμοστόν), and dissonant (διαφωνεῖν), and have the vast majority of men disagree with me and contradict me, than to be out of harmony with myself, to contradict myself, though I'm only one person (μὴ ὁμολογεῖν μοι ἀλλ᾽ ἐναντία λέγειν μᾶλλον ἢ ἕνα ὄντα ἐμὲ ἐμαυτῷ ἀσύμφωνον εἶναι καὶ ἐναντία λέγειν)."

45 Hence Socrates' deliberately exaggerated and provocative story about the helmsmanship (511d-512b). Socrates, the new Achilles, prefers death to shameful behavior (*Apol.* 28b3-d10); cf. Homer, *Il.* 18, 70-137.

46 495a7-b3, 499b4-c2, cf. 505c10-e1.

47 Cf. *Rep.* 436b8-c1: "It is obvious that the same thing will not be willing to do or undergo opposites in the same part of itself, in relation to the same thing, at the same time (ταὐτὸν τἀναντία ποιεῖν ἢ πάσχειν κατὰ ταὐτόν γε καὶ πρὸς ταὐτὸν οὐκ ἐθελήσει ἅμα). […] Is it possible for the same thing to stand still and move at the same time in the same part of itself? Not at all." (trans. Grube, rev. Reeve). In the *Sophist* (230b4-8) refutation is discussed as a form of teaching which delivers from double ignorance;

here the principle of non-contradiction is formulated as follows: "(Visitor) They cross-examine someone when he thinks he's saying something though he's saying nothing (ἂν οἴηταί τίς τι πέρι λέγειν λέγων μηδέν). Then, since his opinions will vary inconsistently, these people will easily scrutinize them. They collect his opinions together during the discussion, put them side by side, and show that they conflict with each other at the same time on the same subjects in relation to the same things and in the same respects (τιθέντες δὲ ἐπιδεικνύουσιν αὐτὰς αὑταῖς ἅμα περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν πρὸς τὰ αὐτὰ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἐναντίας)."

48 τὸ ζητεῖν αὐτὸ τοῦτο εἴτε χρὴ φιλοσοφεῖν εἴτε μή, καὶ τὸ τὴν φιλόσοφον θεωρίαν μετιέναι (*Protrepticus*, fr. 6, 2, ed. Düring 1961).

49 The *ontological* meaning of the principle consists in denying the possibility that reality is contradictory, or that all things are one (ἅπαντα ἔσται ἕν): "For the same thing will be a trireme, a wall, and a man, if it is equally possible to affirm and to deny anything of anything" (1007b19-20). In other words, it affirms the necessity of distinguishing. According to Cassin and Narcy 1989, 195-213 the *logical* meaning constitutes the key aspect of that principle.

50 For a comparison, on that question, between Aristotle and Aquinus, see Isaye 1954, 206-209.

51 Cf. Jeanmart 2007, 39.

52 Cf. *Soph*. 227a-b; *Theait*. 187b.

53 The principle of self-consistency, of harmony with the *logos* in us is inseparable from the requirement of adequacy, of harmony with the *logos* outside of us, that is, speaking and thinking rightly about (περί) things, including ourselves.

54 Seneca (*de vita beata* VIII, 6) defines the supreme good (*summum bonum*) as the harmony or agreement of the soul with itself (*animi concordiam*). Cf. Mansfeld 1994, 190-91. Kant will take up this principle, namely not to contradict oneself, that is not to contradict one's superior, thinking self (*Kritik der Urteilskraft*, in *Werke*, Bd. III, B 884).

55 Cf. McCabe 2006, 18.

56 Cf. Xenophon, *Mem*. IV 3, 18. In the *Republic* (473a1-2) Socrates affirms the primacy of λόγος (or in this case λέξις): "Or is it in the nature of practice to grasp truth less well than theory does (φύσιν ἔχει πρᾶξιν λέξεως ἧττον ἀληθείας ἐφάπτεσθαι)" (trans. Grube rev. Reeve). This would be due to the fact that virtue can only be fully realized in language (*Rep*. 472c; *Laws* 746b-c) and that virtue is knowledge. Cf. *Apol*. 23a-b; *Phaid*. 68c-69c; *Phaidr*. 244d, 256e; *Symp*. 203a.

57 Cf. Tarrant 2006, 110, n. 93. The Stoic school seems to be the only one in Antiquity not to have produced any dialogues (those of Epicurus have been lost). Sedley 1999 explains the difference between the Platonic dialogue portraying *exempla* and treatises expounding *praecepta* in terms of the Platonic tripartite psychology by contrast to Stoic intellectualism: in the case of the compound psychology, a purely intellectual grasp is not enough. One might perhaps object that the "Socratic dialogues" are intellectualist too, and that intellectualism, on a different reading of it, does not reject the relevance of all emotions but understands them as necessarily deriving from opinions, which are often misguided.

58 I owe much on this point to Gaiser's insightful analysis (1969, 100-101).

59 *Rep*. 611a-e; *Phaid*. 79d1-7.

60 This paradox overlaps with the tension referred to in the preceding paragraph, and is also directly linked to the "dialectic" of the universal and particular discussed in F. Gonzalez's paper included in this issue.

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