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ON THE REFUTATION OF POLEMARCHUS:
ANALYSIS AND DIALECTIC IN REPUBLIC I

For Professor Leonardo Tarán
on the occasion of his retirement

The dialectical passages found in Book i of Plato’s Republic have long troubled students of the dialogue, for many of the arguments appear to be confused, possibly fallacious, or resting, at the very least, on premises implausible and unpersuasive. But if we overlook for a moment the material aspects of these arguments (e.g., abandoning attempts to determine the precise philosophical import of this or that particular premise or inference), and focus instead, so far as is possible, on the purely formal aspects of these arguments, many of the difficulties that scholars have noted will quickly evaporate; at the same time, a proper analysis of one of these passages, Socrates’ refutation of Polemarchus, will cast some needed light both on the purpose of Bk. i in its relation to the

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**Throughout, and unless stated otherwise, I follow Burnet’s lineation.
remainder of the dialogue – that is, on the vexed problem of the logical and compositional unity of the Republic as a whole – and on the positive value to be attached to Plato’s use of what otherwise appears to be a largely negative or destructive dialectic.

Book I of the Republic (327 A-354 C), explicitly marked as a προοίμιον (II 357 A 2), opens with a dramatic introduction in which Socrates and his associates are brought to the house of Cephalus, the father of Lysias and Polemarchus (327 A-328 B), and after some initial pleasantries, and a seemingly rambling discussion on the nature of happiness, old age, and wealth, a definition of Justice is elicited from Cephalus, formalized by Socrates, and then refuted (cfr. 331 A 10-B 7, with C 1-D 3). As such, this

1 Προοίμιον (see M. COSTANTINI-J. LALLOT, Λε προοίμιον εστι έν πρόευμη, in M. COSTANTINI et al. (éd.), Le texte et ses représentations, Paris 1987, pp. 13-27) was used early on (PIND. Nom. II 1-3; THUCYD. III 104, 4; PLAT. Phaed. 60 D 2) of the so-called Homeric Hymns (presumably because they were performed in advance of epic recitations; see N.J. RICHARDSON, The Homeric Hymn to Demeter, Oxford 1974, p. 3 f.; contrast J.S. CLAY, The Homeric Hymn, in J. MORRIS-B. POWELL (eds), A New Companion to Homer, Leiden 1997, pp. 494-8), and, more loosely, of certain preliminary statements or speeches in tragedy (AESCH. Agam. 829, 1354; EUM. 20, 142; Prome. 741, etc.); by the fourth century, if not earlier, it was a term of art in rhetoric (Phaedr. 266 D 7; see G.). DE VRIES, A Commentary on Plato’s ‘Phaedrus’, Amsterdam 1969, ad loc.; also P. CHIRON, Pseudo-Aristote. Rhetorique à Alexandre, Paris 2002, p. 170 note 468). On the other hand, the use of προοίμιον to signify the “prelude” to a legislative enactment, familiar from Plato’s Laws (718 b-723 D e passim; see G. MORROW, Plato’s Cretan City, Princeton 1960, pp. 552-60), is commonly thought to have been an innovation of Plato’s own (Leg. 722 D-E; cfr. Cic. de leg. II 16; certainly, the tradition concerning the “preambles” of Zaleucus and Charondas is worthless [see H. YUNIS, Taming Democracy, Ithaca 1996, p. 223 f.; K.J. HÖLKESKAMP, Schiedsrichter, Gesetzgeber und Gesetzgebung im archaischen Griechenland, Stuttgart 1999, p. 58 f.]). Yet it must be noted that long before the Laws was composed, Plato was wont to play with both uses of προοίμιον by punning on the double sense of νόμος as “law” and “song” (for νόμος as “song” or “tune”, cfr. M.L. WEST, Ancient Greek Music, Oxford 1992, pp. 215-7); see P. SHOREY, Plato’s Republic, Cambridge 1935-37 (rev. ed.), II, p. 194 note d ad loc. 351 D; P. LOUIS, Les Métophores de Platon, Paris 1945, pp. 83 and 211; P. FRIEDLANDER, Plato (trans. Eng.), Princeton 1958-69, III, p. 92 f.). This pun was all the easier in that the use of νόμος for legislative enactment was itself of fairly recent origin, dating from the time of Cleisthenes (if not later), and there is some evidence, curiously, that laws were sung, even down to the time of Cicero (R. THOMAS, Written in Stone: Liberty, Equality, Virtue and the Codification of Law, «Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies of the University of London», XL (1995) p. 63).
opening section of Bk. 1 (327 A 1-331 D 3), like the antechamber to the hall of a great house, itself plays the role of a mini-dialogue. And so, while Bk. 1 in its entirety serves as a *prooimion* to the dialogue as a whole, the opening section with Cephalus plays as a "prelude" to the whole of Bk. 1.

Before proceeding to our discussion of the refutation of Polemarchus, one point in the present section requires mention because it illustrates, in the clearest fashion imaginable, both the manner and the degree to which logical and dramatic elements are carefully coordinated in the Platonic dialogues. In response to Socrates’ query regarding how it is with old age, Cephalus observes that many of his companions are wont to complain that advancing age is the source of all their grievances. But Cephalus thinks that their view of it cannot be right, for if old age truly were the cause of all their ills, then he too would suffer likewise (τὰ ἄλλα ταύτα ἔκτηνόθης: 329 B 4 f.) – as would many others – which is not at all the case; and that the *real* cause of their misery is rather the character of men. As such, Cephalus dismisses the complaints of his companions by adducing both himself and others as counter-instances. We are thus prepared, by a type of compositional anticipation or *prolepsis* that abounds in the dialogues, for Socrates’ sole and swift refutation of Cephalus’ own definition of Justice.

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2 Republic 1 falls into three distinct sections (cfr. G. GIANNANTONI, *Il primo libro della ’Repubblica’ di Platone*, «Rivista critica di storia della filosofia», XII (1957) pp. 132-6 f. [i] the opening scene to and at the house of Cephalus (327 A-351 D); [ii] a discussion with Polemarchus (351 D-336 A); [iii] a discussion with Thrasymachus (336 B-fin.). While the transitions to the sections dealing with Polemarchus (331 D-4: *σολοφίκοι*) and Thrasymachus (356 B 1 ff.) are strongly marked, there is no formal break between the initial *mise-en-scène* and the conversation with Cephalus; rather, the shift from the meeting on the road to Piraeus over to the house (and to the conversation with Cephalus) is effected simply by the glide of a narrative *τὸν* (328 B 4: ἃνειν οὖν οἴκον κλ.κλ.). The similarity of structure that holds between resp. 1 and the *Gorgias* is often remarked. Each consists of a sequence of three conversations of ascending length. And, as in resp. 1, the opening conversation with Gorgias is interwoven into the *mise-en-scène* (cfr. *Gorg.* 448 A 1-3, with B 4 et seq.), while the transitions to Polus (461 B 3: τί δὲ, ὅ Ἱσόρροπος) and Callicles (481 B 6: Εἰμὲ μοι, ὅ Ἱσρορρόπε, κλ.κλ.) are each strongly marked by vocatives and other such devices (for these formulae of transition, see G.H. BILLINGS, *The Art of Transition in Plato*, Chicago 1920, esp. pp. 53-70).
Justice, Cephalus is made to concede, is to return whatever one has taken from another (331 C 3). But as Socrates can point to an instance of this (viz., returning weapons one has borrowed from a friend who, having since gone mad [μαθητής], demands them back again) which can in no way qualify as Justice (331 C), the definition fails. In other words, by counter-instance Socrates shows that the definition is, in fact, too broad. Thus, Plato’s preference for *logica utens* over *logica docens*, often noted when comparing the dialogues with the formal treatises of Aristotle, goes far deeper than is sometimes realized.¹

Cephalus, who represents a type of honest, if unreflective virtue, quickly withdraws, presumably because he has neither the inclination nor the aptitude for dialectic. His place is taken by his

Cambridge 1996) regarding the “proleptic” relationships that he finds between individual dialogues of the corpus (a fundamentally sound, though hardly novel intuition that suffers from having been applied in an overly schematic manner). Kahn, admittedly, has backed away from the use of the term *prolepsis* in this broader context of his (*Ancient Philosophy*), XX (2000) p. 190. But the term remains useful for describing the compositional techniques that are at issue here. I trust that my observations (here and elsewhere) on Plato’s use of “foreshadowing” will not be confused with the recent and far less modest attempt by M. Gifford, *Dramatic Dialectic in ‘Republic’* Book I, «Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy», XX (2001) pp. 55-106, to unlock the secrets of the text by appealing to what he deems to be Plato’s extensive and deliberate use of “tragic irony” — many of whose proposals, despite the occasionally clever hint (pp. 62 note 57, 68 note 47), rest on little more than accidental associations, innuendo, and surmise.


son, Polemarchus, ó τοῦ λόγου κληρονόμος, who reiterates his father’s position – formulated now as τὸ τὰ ὀφελόμενα ἐκάστῳ ἀποδίδοντα (331 E 3) – which he then confirms on the authority of the poet, Simonides. In order to avoid the very thrust that had caused Cephalus to give way (cfr. 331 E 8-332 A 8), Polemarchus draws a distinction and refines τὸ τὰ ὀφελόμενα ἐκάστῳ ἀποδίδοντα as doing good to friends and harm to enemies (A 9-B 8), which Socrates then reformulates, somewhat mischievously, as τὸ προσήκον ἐκάστῳ ἀποδίδοντα (C 2 f). Thus begins the refutation of Polemarchus (332 C 5-336 A 1).


1 Fr. 137a Page; cfr. G. GIANNANTONI, art. cit., p. 133 note 33. The use of Simonides here and throughout has a touch of malice to it (“ironical courtesy”: R. NETTLESHIP, Lectures on the ‘Republic’ of Plato, London 1901, p. 21). The objections of J. LABORDERIE, Le Dialogue platonicien de la maternité, Paris 1978, p. 95 note 1, are merely special pleadings. J. BEYERLEIN, op. cit., p. 204 f.; cfr. 192, tries to distinguish the views of Polemarchus and Cephalus on the ground that Cephalus, at 331 A 1-3, rejects the lex talionis, whereas Polemarchus obviously does not. Yet this interpretation is based on what is surely an unwarranted extension of the Greek, which simply states that those whose conscience is clear of any injustice (τὸ δὲ μηδὲν ἐκποτῳ ὀδίκον συνειδότα) will always have a “sweet hope” for the afterlife as a dear companion and nurse («als gute Alterspflegerin», Apelt) for his old age, as Pindar has it. (For ἔλασις here, see P. SHOREY, Plato, ‘Republic’, cit., ad loc.; F. Graf, Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athen in vorhellenistischer Zeit, Berlin 1974, p. 138 f.; A. TULIN, review of M. MORGAN, Platon. Priete, «American Journal of Philology», CXIII (1992) p. 63); S. LAVECCHIA, Filosofia e notizie misterici nel ‘Fedone’, «Seminari romani di cultura greca», II (1999) p. 276.) For a more accurate account of the relation that holds between the various doctrines espoused in Bk. 1, see infra, note 10.


5 Polemarchus apparently thinks this substitution by synonym (introduced with some fanfare: B 9 ff: πρεσβυτὸν ὀπον) significant, as it receives his hearty approval (C 4). But Socrates, though he often resorts in dialectical contexts to such dodges himself (cfr. 336
Socrates offers two distinct and independent refutations: the first, at 332 C 5-334 B 6, is punctuated (C 7-9) by Polemarchus’ statement of _aporia_ (οὐκέτι οἶδα ἐγώ ὅτι ἔλεγον), followed by a restatement of the _refutandum_: τοῦτο μέντοι ἐμοῖς δοκεῖ ἐπι, ὁφελεῖν μὲν τοὺς φίλους ἢ δικαιοσύνην, βλάπτειν δὲ τοὺς ἐχθροὺς.

The second refutation runs from 334 C 1-335 E 6\(^9\).

The first refutation, which utilizes (but does not attempt to justify) the familiar analogy of the arts, as well as the sound “Socratic” principle that all arts are of contraries\(^11\), ends with the paradoxical conclusion that justice is the art of thievery – for the benefit of friends, of course, and to the harm of enemies (334 B 3-5).

\(^9\) 335 E 1 f. (at the very end of the refutation of Polemarchus): εἰ ἕρα τὰ ὁφελημένα ἐκκέντρο ὑποδίδομεν θείες τις δίκαιον εἶναι κτλ.; also E 5: ὁφεληλογόω. 332 B 9-3 5 is thus heavy with irony.

Because this conclusion is disquieting and paradoxical, but in no way strictly contradictory, the argument is purely ad hominem. As there are two refutations, so the second refutation (334 C 1-335 E 6) itself breaks into two — i.e., it presents a dilemma, either horn of which leads to a refutation: if justice is to help one’s friends and harm one’s enemies, we must mean by “friends” either (a) those who only seem to each to be so (334 C 1-5), or else (b) those who both seem to be and really are (334 E 10, 335 A 8-10); and the first of these disjuncts itself is viewed from two points of view (334 C 6-E 3): for, as men’s judgment may be in error, so that the good will sometimes be one’s enemies and the wicked will sometimes be one’s friends, it will follow either that one will have to harm the good and aid the wicked (334 C 10-D 8) or help one’s enemies and harm one’s friends (D 9-E 3). Thus, from the first horn it follows that, however we turn it, we have contradicted (334 E 3-4: τούναντιον ἥ) the dictum of Simonides (cfr. B 7-9; Aristot. top. A 10. 104 a 20-7).

The original premise, the refutandum of B 7-9, obviously has not led itself into contradiction, as some writers might have us think. Several additional premises have been introduced. The specifics are interesting and highly instructive. Let us consider:

334 B 7 Οὐ μᾶ τὸν Δ', ἐφε, ἀλλ’ οὐκέτι οἶδα ἐγὼγε ὅτι ἔλεγον· τοῦτο μέντοι ἐμοίγε δοκεῖ ἐπι, ἐφελεὶν μὲν τοὺς φίλους ἢ δικαιοσύνη, βλάπτειν δὲ τοὺς ἐχθροὺς.

C 1  Φίλους δὲ λέγεις εἶναι πότερον τοὺς δοκοῦντας ἐκάστῳ
χρηστοῦς εἶναι, ἢ τοὺς ὄντας, κἂν μὴ δοκῶσι, καὶ ἐχθροὺς
ἀσοῦτας;
Εἰκώς μὲν, ἐφι, οὔς ἂν τις ἡγήται χρηστοὺς φιλεῖν, οὔς
δὲ ἂν πονηροὺς μισεῖν.
C 5  Ἀρπόν ὑμᾶς ἀμαρτάνουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι περὶ τούτο, ὡστε
δοκεῖν αὐτοῖς πολλοῖς μὲν χρηστοῦς εἶναι μὴ ὄντας, πολλοῖς
δὲ τούναντιοιν;
Ἀμαρτάνουσιν.
C 10  Τούτοις ἁρα οἱ μὲν ἁγαθοὶ ἐχθροὶ, οἱ δὲ κακοὶ φίλοι;
Πάνυ γε,
Ἄλλ᾽ ὃμως δικαίον τότε τούτοις τοὺς μὲν πονηροὺς
ὅφθελεν, τοὺς δὲ ἁγαθοὺς βλάπτειν;
Φαίνεται.
Ὅλλα μὴν οἱ γε ἁγαθοὶ δικαίοι τε καὶ οἱ μὴ ἁδικεῖν;
Ἀληθὼς.
D 1  Κατὰ δὴ τὸν σῶν λόγον τοὺς μηδὲν ἁδικοῦντας δικαίον
κακῶς ποιεῖν.
Μηδαμίως, ἐφι, ὁ Σάκρατες· πονηρός γάρ ἐπικεν ἐναι
ὁ λόγος.
Τοὺς ἁδίκους ἁρα, ἢν δ ἐγὼ, δικαίον βλάπτειν, τοὺς δὲ
δικαίους ἄφθελεν;
Οὕτως έκείνου καλλίων φαίνεται.
Πολλοῖς ἁρα, ὁ Πολέμαρχε, συμβήσεται, ὡσι διημηρ-
τήσας τῶν ἄνθρωπων, δικαίον εἶναι τοὺς μὲν φίλους βλά-
πτειν· πονηροῖ γὰρ αὐτοῖς εἰσὶν — τοὺς δὲ ἐχθροὺς ἄφθελεν
— ἁγαθοὶ γὰρ καὶ οὕτως ἔροιμεν αὐτὸ τούναντιον ἢ τὸν
Σιμωνίδην ἔσαμεν λέγειν.
D 10  Καὶ μᾶλλα, ἐφι, οὔτω συμβαίνει. ἂλλὰ μεταθώμεθα·

Like so many of the dialectical passages in the corpus, this
one is somewhat hard to analyze, harder than appears at first
glance, partially because several threads are running simultan-
eously. So, we are sometimes told that the difficulty here is that
Socrates equivocates on ἁγαθός; that, as he slides unobtrusively
from χρηστός (C 2, 4, 7) to ἁγαθός (C 10, D 1) to δικαίος (D 3), he
subtly shifts from a "non-moral" or utilitarian conception of φίλος
to a moral one14; that Polemarchus fails to realize that he has been

14 See, e.g., T.G. TUCKER, The Poem to the Ideal Commonwealth of Plato, London 1900,
led along thus until, confronted with the consequence that he may sometimes have to harm the just, he pulls up short. There is something to this view – for Polemarchus does indeed seem to grow more alarmed as the argument slides from term to term (cfr. C 4–5, 11, D 2, 7 f.). But there is not as much to this account as one might suppose. First, the semantics of χρηστός are not so clear-cut. Despite its etymological association with χρήσθαι and χρήσιμος, the term is not commonly used by Plato of "utility." On the other hand, if we allow that χρηστός here connotes "utility", then we are left (on the present analysis) with the clear implication that, were it not for the slide and equivocation of ἀγοθὸς, Polemarchus would have had no difficulty in accepting the proposition that one will sometimes want to harm χρηστοί – i.e., those who are serviceable – and promote those who are useless, though this admission, once made, would presumably entail difficulties of its own. Finally, even apart from semantics, this analysis fails to explain the peculiar criss-cross (shoe-laced) structure of the argument which results in a pair of reversals (D 5–6) and a contradiction (t 3–4: τοῦναντίον). In other words, it has not got the syntax right either. In fact, as we shall now try to demonstrate, the true root of the problem is that it is actually Polemarchus, and


15 His refusal to accept this consequence would, presumably, be ascribed to a sense of "shame"; cfr. Gorg. 461 B, 482 D, 494 C–E; resp. 350 D 3 (of Thrasybulus); E.R. DODDS, op. cit., p. 30 note 2.

16 See, e.g., Euthyd. 285 A–8, with C 5, which is fairly typical. On χρηστός, see K.J. DOVER, op. cit., pp. 296–9 (with 32 f., 58, 62 E, 65 note 6, 165, etc.). For Plato’s use, cfr. E. DES PLACES, Platon Oeuvres complètes, Tome XIV: Leçons, Paris 1964, i.e. Aristotle’s usage is similar (see H. BONITZ, Index Aristotelicus, cit., i.e.). The negative (ἄγοθους), on the other hand, is the contrary of χρήσιμος; cfr. resp. 332 E with K.J. DOVER, op. cit., p. 296.
not Socrates, who equivocates, and that he equivocates not with a slide on ἀγαθὸς, but squarely on φίλος.

We are often told that the initial question (C 1-3) is simply: by “friends” and “enemies” do you mean those who seem to, or those who are so? This is inaccurate. For the question is rather whether by “friends” and “enemies” we mean those who seem to be χρήστοι (or its opposite), or those who really are χρήστοι (or its opposite). As such, the question is, from the very start, synthetic. In the course of the elenchus, Socrates expands on χρήστος by equating it first with ἀγαθὸς (C 10) and then with δίκαιος (D 3). These expansions are immediately accepted by Socrates and Polemarchus both; and so, on the rules of dialectic (which is to argue from premises accepted and received), this move is not to be deemed problematic. It plays its role, as we saw above; but it is not the pivot on which the refutation turns. The relevant contrast is rather between those who really are good, serviceable, and just, and those who only seem to be so; and the question is which of these two should be accounted as φίλος. Polemarchus avers, in a highly conventionalist manner, that mere seeming will suffice – i.e., that each man should himself be the measure of his φίλος. This seems, at first glance, to be rather plausible. As soon as this point has been established, however, Polemarchus immediately concedes that the failure to take as friends (and enemies) those who are good (or bad, as the case may be) is the result of an error in human judgment (C 6-10: ὀμορφάνουσιν). As such, when we

17 E.g., T.G. Tucker, op. cit., p. XXXIV; cf. my own formulation (in the paragraph that is placed between notes 12 and 13 supra) – put thus so as not to prejudge the topic.
18 Tucker amazingly says that it is Polemarchus who confuses the matter by introducing this question of χρήστος. As such, his complaint that the question should have been kept simple, «that φίλος are simply those who φιλοῦσι», is not in the least relevant.
19 See text supra. This identification of friends with those who are good, just, etc., is thus brought about easily, and not «attraverso un lungo e non certo limpido tragitto dialectico» (S. Gastaldo in M. Vegetti (a cura di), op. cit., I, p. 188, contrast D. Blyth, Polemarchus in Plato’s ‘Republic’, «Prudentia», XXVI (1994) p. 77). It was typically assumed, as we certainly would expect, that one’s friends and enemies would be good or bad respectively; see the passages collected by M.W. Blundell, Helping Friends cit., p. 51 f.
judge correctly and when we do not err, presumably, we will get it right. And so there is, even for Polemarchus, and despite his conventionalist pose, an independent standard. And we will strive, so it seems, to the best of our ability, given the weaknesses due to our all too human limitations, to take as “friends” (and “enemies”) those who really are good, serviceable, and the like (or not, as the case may be). And so, the truth of the matter is that Polemarchus, during the course of a single argument (i.e., in this initial horn of the argument: C 1 - E 4), actually holds two different conceptions of what sort of φιλος he wants us to consider, and these two conceptions are inconsistent; hence, the contradiction that shatters the current horn\(^{20}\). Moreover, one of these two conceptions, the second, the more “realistic” or less conventionalist one, is actually the premise (as we know) on which the second horn will be constructed (see below), and is also the premise which the first horn had actually and explicitly claimed to have rejected (C 4-5). Polemarchus thinks he has dispensed with an independent standard – but he has not.

It is fully in Plato’s manner to have his interlocutors espouse what Plato deems to be a false and thoroughly conventionalist position, and then to allow them (often unremarked) to suddenly endorse what Plato considers to be the right position – as if the interlocutor could barely restrain himself – and then to wreck havoc dialectically with the inconsistencies that inevitably ensue\(^{21}\).

\(^{20}\) At 334 E 2, πονηροὶ γὰρ ἀλαίζεις εἰσίν, the dative (of course) is objective: «denn sie sind (ja in der Tat) schlecht gegen sie»; see K. VRETSKA, Platonica, «Wiener Studien»., LXIV (1949) p. 77 f.; cf. G.L. COOPER III, after K.W. KRUGER, Attic Greek Prose Syntax, Ann Arbor 1998., 49.8.0 and 49.13.2.

\(^{21}\) An example of this can be found in the famous “Euthyphro argument”, especially in Euthyphro’s free admission (at 10 D 1-5) that the pious is loved because it is pious. Euthyphro has been criticized for this (e.g., P. GEACH, Plato’s Euthyphro: An Analysis and Commentary, «Monist», 1. (1966) p. 378; J. HALL, Platonic Euthyphro 10A1-11A10, «Philosophical Quarterly», XVIII (1968) p. 10; S.M. COHEN, Socrates on the Definition of Piety: ‘Euthyphro’ 10A-11B, «Journal of the History of Philosophy», IX (1971) pp. 1-14; T. PAXSON, Plato’s Euthyphro 10A-11B, «Phronesis», XVII (1972) p. 180, etc.). But such criticisms are beside the point. Another example can be found in the refutation of Callicles: cf. Gorg. 494 A-495 B, with 499 B 6- c 2 (and s.b. Socrates’ astonished cry at 9 b 6ο
It is part of his polemic against all sorts of relativisms that such positions cannot be consistently upheld. Nor is it hard to fathom why Polemarchus, in this particular instance, when it comes to choosing one’s “friends” and “enemies”, would find it difficult to maintain the view that mere “seeming” will suffice. Indeed, Plato always held that while men may be mistaken in their calculations, all seek at the very least what each takes to be the good; that while men may be content with a sham reputation (so long as they seem to be just or pious in the eyes of other men), the notion that anyone could possibly be satisfied with what merely appears to be useful, or with the seemingly good, is absurd. It is hardly surprising, then, that in spite of the conventionalist views espoused at 334 C 1-5, Polemarchus would show himself committed (albeit unwittingly) to a very different — indeed, to a contrary — set of views.

We may now turn to the other horn (334 E 5-335 A 5): the friend is he who both seems and actually is χρηστός (E 10). The definition can now be restated, once and for all (δη: A 6), such that Justice is to help one’s friends — provided that they are truly good (ἀγαθὸν ὀντα), and to harm one’s enemies, when they too are truly (ὄντα) bad (335 A 9-10). The refutation that follows is often treated and paraphrased in books and articles, but it is not commonly analyzed with any real precision. An appreciation of the actual structure of the argument will therefore be worthwhile in itself, and it will cast some needed light (as we have indicated) on the structure and purpose of Republic I both as a whole and in its relation to the remainder of the dialogue. The Greek runs as follows:

ioû, with E.R. DODDS, op. cit., ad loc.

22 See esp. T.KEAT. 171 D-172 B and 177 C-179 C, with P. SHOREY, art. cit., p. 191 (= Select. Pap. cit., II, p. 31); cfr. Democ. 68 B 69 D-K: ἀνθρώπως πάντων ἁγιασθέναι καὶ ἀληθῶς ιδέ & δε ἄλλο άλλο. For the doctrine that all men desire the good, cfr. Eub. 7 E 6 E, Gorg. 467 C-468 C, Men. 77 C-E, symp. 204 E-206 A, Euthyd. 278 E-279 A, rep. 413 A, 438 A, 505 D, Phel. 20 D, etc. A similar choice between that which seems and that which really is, is offered to Thrasymachus at 340 A-C. For the topic of τα προς ἀληθεύων τιν πρὸς δόξαν, cfr. Aristot. rhet. A 7. 1365 a 37-b 20, esp. b 5-7.
335 Α 6 Κελεύεις δή ἡμᾶς προσθείναι τῷ δικαίῳ ὡς τὸ πρῶτον ἐλέγομεν, λέγοντες δίκαιον εἴναι τὸν μὲν φίλον εῦ θεοείν, τὸν δὲ ἐχθρὸν κακᾶς: νῦν πρὸς τούτῳ ὥδε λέγειν, ὅτι ἔστιν δίκαιον23 τὸν μὲν φίλον ἀγαθὸν ὄντα εὐ θεοείν, τὸν δὲ ἐχθρὸν κακῶν ὄντα βλάπτειν;

Β 1 Πάνω μὲν οὖν, ἔφη, οὕτως ἂν μοι δοκεῖ καλῶς λέγεσθαι. Ἡστιν ἄρα, ὅν ὁ δὲ ἐγὼ, δίκαιον ἀνδρὸς βλάπτειν καὶ ὄντινον ἀνθρώπον;

Καὶ πάνω γε, ἔφη τοὺς γε πονηροὺς τε καὶ ἐχθροὺς δεῖ βλάπτειν.

Β 5 Βλαπτόμενοι δὲ ἵππωι βελτίους ἢ χειρός γίγνονται; Χείρος;

"Ἀρα εἰς τὴν τῶν κυνῶν ἀρετῆν, ἢ εἰς τὴν τῶν ἵππων;
Εἰς τὴν τῶν ἵππων.

Β 10 Ἄρ ὡς καὶ κύνες βλαπτόμενοι χείρος γίγνονται εἰς τὴν τῶν κυνῶν, ἀλλὰ οὐκ εἰς τὴν τῶν ἵππων ἀρετῆν;

"Ἀνάγκη.

C 1 Ἀνθρώπους δὲ, ὁ ἔταρχη, μὴ οὕτω φώνειν, βλαπτόμενος εἰς τὴν ἀνθρωπίαν ἀρετῆν χειροὺς γίγνεσθαι;
Πάνω μὲν οὖν.

"Ἀλλὰ ἡ δικαιοσύνη οὐκ ἀνθρωπεία ἀρετῆς;

C 5 Καὶ τοῦτ ἀνάγκη.

Καὶ τοὺς βλαπτόμενους ἄρα, ὁ φίλε, τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀνάγκη ἀδικωτέρους γίγνεσθαι.

"Εἰσικεν.

"Ἀρ ὡς τῇ μοισυχῇ οἱ μουσικοὶ ἁμοῦσους δύνανται ποιεῖν;

"Ἀδύνατον.

"Ἁλλὰ τῇ ἱππικῇ οἱ ἱππικοὶ ἁφίππους;
Οὐκ ἔστιν.

"Ἀλλὰ τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ δὴ οἱ δίκαιοι ἀδικοὺς; ἢ καὶ

D 1 συλλήβδην ἁρετῆ οἱ ἀγαθοὶ κακοίς;

"Ἀλλὰ ἀδύνατον.

"Οὐ γὰρ θερμοτήτου οἷμαι ἐργον πυγεύειν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ ἐναντίου. Ναι.

D 5 Οὐδὲ ἄρθροτητος ὑγραίνειν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ ἐναντίου.

Pánu ye.

Oúde δή τοῦ ἄγαθοῦ βλάπτειν, ἄλλα τοῦ ἑναντίου.

Φαίνεται.

"Ὁ δὲ γε δίκαιος ἄγαθός;"

D 10 Pánu ye.

Οὐκ ἁρα τοῦ δίκαιου βλάπτειν ἔργον, ὁ Πολέμαρχε, οustum ἄλλον οὔτε ἄλλα τοῦ ἑναντίου, τοῦ ἁδίκου. Παντάπασι μοι δοκεῖς ἀληθῆ λέγειν, ἢ, ὁ Σώκρατες.

E 1 Εἰ ἁρα τὰ ὅφειλόμενα ἐκάστῳ ἀποδίδοναι φησιν τις δίκαιον εἶναι, τούτο δὲ δὴ νοεῖ αὐτῷ τοῖς μὲν ἐχθροῖς βλάβην ὁφείλεσθαι παρὰ τοῦ δίκαιου ἀνδρός, τοῖς δὲ φίλοις ὅφελιαν, οὔχ ἴν σοφὸς ὁ ταῦτα εἰπών. οὗ γὰρ ἀληθῆ ἔλεγεν

E 5 οὐδαμοῦ γὰρ δίκαιον οὔδένα ἡμῖν ἐφάνη δὲν βλάπτειν.

Συγχαρῶ, ἦ δέ ὦς.

The refutandum of the second horn is stated at 335 A 9-10: it is just to help one’s friends (provided that they are truly good) and harm one’s enemies (if they are truly bad). Formally, the refutandum is a conjunction. Socrates now asks [A] whether it ever falls to the just man to harm anyone (B 2-5). This question is finally answered [C] in the negative at D 11-2, when Socrates infers (D 11: ἁρα) that it is never the function of the just man to harm anyone at all. From this, one may surmise that the entire midsection of this portion of text must be concerned with securing a single premise; and indeed, the lines intervening between [A] and [C] – viz., B 6-D 10 = [B] – are introduced, clearly and unequivocally, precisely in support of the premise queried at [A] and drawn (ἁρα) at [C]. The conclusion drawn at [C] states that one of the conjuncts posted by the refutandum (viz., the second) is false. And so, at E 1-5, the full refutation itself is finally drawn (E 1: ἁρα) thus: it is not, in fact, the case that Justice is to harm one’s enemies and help one’s friends, since the just man will not harm anyone at all24. The argument thus runs as follows:

24 That the conjuncts at A 9-10 and again at E 2-4 are chiastically arranged only serves, in typical fashion, to point the ring.
Refutandum: Justice is to help one’s friends and harm one’s enemies (335 A 9-10)

[A] But does the just man ever harm anyone? (b 2-5)
[B] Supporting argument (b 6-D 10)
[C] no (ἀρα), the just man never harms anyone at all (D 11-3)

Refutation: The proposal (that Justice is to harm one’s enemies and help one’s friends) therefore (ἀρα) fails; for one of the conjuncts (that Justice is to harm one’s enemies) is seen to fail (cfr. E 1-5).

The argument, so constructed, is simple and clear. The difficulties come only in [B].

As we saw, b 6-D 10 = [B] is given in support of [C]. But [B] itself falls into two parts, with a slight break in the argument falling after C 8 ἔοικεν (n.b. C 6 ἀρα). Each part, in fact, is syllogistic. Consider the following:

[B1]: Men that are harmed become unjust (b 6-C 8).

{α} Just as horses and dogs that are harmed become worse (χείρους) with respect to their own proper virtue or excellence (ἀρετῆς), so too (by φαγοῦ) men that are harmed become worse with respect to human excellence (b 6-C 3) 25;
{β} Justice is human excellence (C 4-5) 26;
{γ} Therefore (ἀρα: C 6), men that are harmed necessarily become more unjust (ἀδικωτέρους: C 6-8) 27.

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25 Another topos: SIMONID. fr. 37, 14-6 Page (= Prot. 344 C 4-5): ἄνδρα δ’ οὐκ ἔστι μη ὅπως κακόν ἐμεμεναι, θν ἀμηχάνους συμπορά καθέλη.
26 ἀλλ’ ἀδικαιόσυνη οὐκ ἀνθρωπεία ἀρετῆς Καί τούτ’ ἀνάγκη. For progressive ἀλλά, marking the transition from major to minor premise, see J.D. DENNISTON, The Greek Participle, Oxford 1950, p. 22.
27 This conclusion, of course, is dialectical, and as such is only as firm as the premises on which it rests. Consequently, to insist (as is often done) that the argument fails because of an equivocation on ἠλπίσεως (T.G. TUCKER, φ. 30 360 C), is unnecessary. For a more detailed explanation of Plato’s ‘Republic’.
[B2] It is not the function of the just man to harm anyone at all (C 9-D 13)\textsuperscript{28}.

\[
\begin{align*}
\{a\ i\} &= C\ 9-D\ 2 \\
\{x\ i\} &= \text{-The musical man cannot make others unmusical by means of the musical art (C 9-11);} \\
\{y\ i\} &= \text{-Nor can the expert in horses make others unskilled with horses (ουίππους) by the art of horsemanship (C 12-3)\textsuperscript{28};}
\end{align*}
\]


\textsuperscript{28} The lengthy \textit{epagoge} that follows (C 9-D 8) itself falls into two distinct parts: \((\alpha\ i\) = C 9-D 2 and \((\alpha\ ii) = D 3-8. The first part is based on the familiar analogy of the arts, which has already been utilized (and accepted by Polemar- chus) several times during the preceding discussion. The second part \((\alpha\ ii) provides the ground \((\Gamma 3 \gamma\) of \((\alpha\ i), and extends the \textit{epagoge} to additional instances: the musical man does not make others unmusical by virtue of his own special power or skill \((i.e., by virtue of being musical); nor does heat make things cold by virtue of its own special quality, heat; for \((presumably) the function of every power or art is to make things \textit{like} what they are, and not unlike what they are. This premise has not been justified and obviously rests on a metaphysical pre- supposition which Socrates cannot pass over to consider at this point in time. But it is \textit{prima facie} plausible (Polemar- chus, at least, accepts it), and it will be utilized again more than once later in this very book \((e.g., 346 A ff. \textit{[a.b. D} 5\) \(f.\) \(\kappaα\ \alphaι\ \alphaλλα\ \pi\acute{\sigma}α\ \alpha\nu\alphaς\ \phi\ \alpha\iota\alpha\varsigma\ \xi\acute{\kappa}ο\acute{\sigma}ι\ \epsilon\acute{\rho}π\acute{\rho}ι\ \epsilon\gammaρ\acute{\nu}\gamma\acute{e}τα\alpha\iota\), 352 D 8 ff.), whereupon Thrasymachus accepts it.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{29} \(\alphaλλα\ (at C 12 and 14) introduces a fresh example. J. BEVERSLSIUS, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 217-20, thinks that the premise used at 335 C 9-13 is inconsistent with a premise used in the first refutation (355 E-354 B). But the two arguments are logically independent and so the "inconsistency" (even if it should be admitted) is irrelevant to the formal validity, and thus to the dialectical flow of either passage. At any rate, the two principles \((\textit{pace} Beverslsius) are not really the same: for the first (333 E-334 B), see \textit{infra}, note 11; for the second (335 C 9-13), compare ARISTOT. \textit{phys.} B 3. 195 a 11-4 (= \textit{metaph.} A 2. 1013 b 11-
Nor will the Just make others unjust by Justice; nor, in general (συλλήβδην), can the good make men bad by means of virtue (C 14-D 2).\textsuperscript{30}

\{\alpha\ ii\} = D 3-8

\{x\} – For (γὰρ) it is not the function (ἐργαν) of heat to cool, but this task falls to the contrary power (D 3-4);

\{y\} – Nor of dryness to moisten (D 5-6);

\{z\} – Nor of the good to harm (D 7-8).\textsuperscript{31}

\{β\} And the just man is good (D 9-10).\textsuperscript{12}

\{\ast\} Therefore (ἂντι), it is not the function of the just man to harm anyone at all (D 11-3).

At first glance it would appear as if the conclusion \{\ast\} at D 11-3 follows simply as the conclusion of [B2] alone. After all, the

\textsuperscript{30} D 1 συλλήβδην marks the critical instance to which the ἐργαν has led; obviously, this instance is not quite parallel to the previous instances (A. Jeffrey, \textit{art. cit.}, p. 65 f.), and it is presumably this fact which necessitates the explanation (γὰρ) that follows in D 3-8. The explanation itself, however, is given by further instances, rather than in a generalized or abstract form; see \textit{infra}, note 28.

\textsuperscript{31} Compare the similar leap made at (α i) \{iz\} = C 14-D 2 (cfr. note 30 \textit{infra}), and see next paragraph.

\textsuperscript{12} ὁ δὲ γε διὰ τοῦ ἐργαν ἀνόητος. δὲ γε is often used to mark the minor premise (e.g., 346 C 9, 431 C 5, \textit{Lamb}. 198 C 6, 199 E 9, \textit{Gorg}. 499 D 2 [with E.R. Dodds, \textit{Ad loc.}], etc.); see E.S. Thompson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 208 \textit{ad loc.} 95 E 4; G.H. Billings, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 69 note 94; J.D. Denniston, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 154. This premise is offered here without any support because it had already been accepted by Polemarchus at 334 D 3.
conclusion at D 11-3 does follow formally from \{α ii\} \{iz\} = D 7-8 and \{β\} = D 9-10; the compositional structure of the argument suggests this as well, for \{⊕\} in [B2] seems to be structurally analogous to \{γ\} in [B1]. But this cannot be right. For in this case, [B1] = B 6-C 8 would be utterly superfluous; yet all of [B], as we saw above, had been subordinated to the establishment of the conclusion \[C\] = D 11-3. Still worse, the argument thus construed from [B2] is circular: for \{α ii\} \{iz\} = D 7-8 (as we saw; cfr. supra, note 31) is not strictly parallel to the other cases of the \emph{epagoge}, and is – given the substitution that follows at \{β\} = D 9-10 – just what has to be proved. The question is begged, and the argument is fallacious (cfr. Aristotle. \textit{Top. Θ} 13. 162 b 34-163 a 1). Yet now we can see precisely why [B1] = B 6-C 8 was needed, though it seemed, as we read along, to have been established at C 6-8, only to be left at the roadside as something of a relic. For, if men who are harmed become unjust = [B1], and it is not the function of the just (or of the good, for that matter; cfr. [B2] \{β\} = D 9-10) to make men unjust (see [B2] \{α i\} \{iz\} = C 14), then it surely ought to follow that it is not the function of the just (or of the good; D 9-10) to harm anyone at all (D 11-3) 33.

The compositional structure of the argument and the logical structure of the argument are thus not in accord. This must be intentional. It is precisely this, in fact, that produces the impression, so common in the Socratic elenches, that we have been carried along by the flow of the argument, and yet..., that something is wrong, that somehow we have somewhere been hoodwinked 34.

33 This conclusion, of course, is a commonplace of “Socratic” discourse: see, e.g., the passages cited by T.C. BRICKHOUSE-N.D. SMITH, \textit{Socrates on Trial}, Princeton 1989, p. 44 note 152; G. VLASTOS, \textit{Socrates: Irmist and Moral Philosopher}, Ithaca 1991, ch. 7; add leg. 904 B 2-3: καὶ τὸ μὲν ἠμέλειαν αἰτὶ πεσοῦκος, ὅσον ἀργεῖον μυχῆς, διηνεκῆ, τὸ δὲ κακὸν ἑβὰπτεν. Yet we are not here concerned with the ethical dimensions of this thesis, but only with the \textit{formal} aspect of the passage.

34 Socrates purports to follow the argument wherever it leads (\textit{e.g.}, \textit{Euthyph.} 14 C, \textit{Gorg.} 527 E, \textit{Phaed.} 82 D, 115 B, rep. 365 D, 394 D 7-9, 415 D, 607 B, \textit{Theeot.} 172 D, leg. 667 A; cfr. R. BLONDELL, \textit{Play of Character cit.}, p. 124 note 73), and the interlocutors of Socrates often feel not merely stymied (\textit{Men.} 80 A-B), but hoodwinked (\textit{e.g.}, 356 B 8-D 4
Still, and despite appearances, the argument is sound. But if the conclusion [C] (≠ {*}) at D 11-3 rests on both [B2] and, now, as we see, also on [B1], we can also see that [B1] itself rests not only on the epagoge of B 6-C 3 = [B1] {α} (whose premises are plausible enough), but also on the bald assertion, neither prepared nor supported, that Justice, after all, is human excellence (C 4-5): viz., on the minor premise at [B1] {β}. Thus, the whole refutation of the second horn remains suspended from this single hook. And, as we shall see, quite a hook it is!

The refutation of Thrasy machus (344 D-354 C), which immediately follows upon the refutation of Polemarchus, first attacks Thrasy machus’ claim that Justice is the advantage of the stronger (τὸ μὲν τοῦ κρείττονος συμφέρον; cfr. 345 B-347 E) before turning to the “greater” question (πολὺ δὲ μοι δοκεῖ μειζόν ἕναν: 347 E 2 f.) of whether the life of the unjust man is better than (κρείττω) that of the just man. After the argument from plonexia (348 E-
and that from the congeries of thieves (350 D-352 C), the third and final refutation (352 D 1-354 A 9) – just before the epilogue (354 A 10-C 3) – first establishes the general notion that everything has its own proper function (έργον) and its own special virtue or excellence (ἀρετή) by virtue of which each thing does its own proper function well; and then argues specifically that, as the function of soul is to care, to rule, to counsel and, indeed, to live (353 D 3-11), while it had been agreed to previously (συνεχορήσαμεν: E 7) that the virtue of soul is justice (D 11-E 9), it follows (ἄρα: E 10) that the just soul and the just man lives well and that the unjust soul lives ill. That the function of "soul" is, indeed, to live (τι δ' αὖ τὸ ζῆν; οὐ γνώμης φήσαμεν ἐργὸν εἶναι; 353 D 9) is almost a truism; it is the minor premise (353 D 11-E 9) that needs, apparently, to be bulked with argument. Hence the attempt to secure the truth of this premise by referring us back (συνεχορήσαμεν: E 7) to the place of its proof.

The reference at 353 E 7 (συνεχορήσαμεν) to a prior agreement refers, of course, to 350 D where we were told in narratione –


though we were not shown it in actione — that Thrasymachus had finally, though reluctantly (οὐχ [...] ῥαδίως [...], ἀλλὰ ἐλκύμενος καὶ μόγις: C 12 f.), granted that justice is virtue and wisdom (D 4 f. ἐπειδὴ δὲ ὁνὸν διομολογησόμεθα τὴν δικαιοσύνην ἀρετὴν εἶναι καὶ σοφίαν, τὴν δὲ ἀδικίαν κακίαν τε καὶ ἁμαθίαν). The actual proof, however, while thus alluded to, is itself withheld. This, then, is the basis of the final refutation of Thrasymachus and it rests, as we see, on the very same premise on which the refutation of Polemar- chus relied (335 C 4-5). The refutation of Polemar- chus, of course, was only ad hominem — not least because this critical premise had been introduced (though it was accepted) baldly and without support. In the case of Thrasymachus, the refutation is scarcely even that. Though there has been an allusion at 350 C-D to some type of argumentation (extra scriptam), it now appears that Thrasy- machus only accepts the premise (contrast Polemar- chus’ assent at 335 C 5: καὶ τοῦτ ἀνάγκη and its implications for the sake of argument (353 e 12 f.: φαίνεται, ἔφη, κατὰ τὸν σὸν λόγον); for, indeed, Thrasy machus had long since announced that he would merely nod assent to whatever Socrates said simply so as to keep his rival satisfied (350 D 9-E 10)\(^{37}\) — though he himself believes none of it. His own view is rather that virtue is really injustice\(^{38}\).

We have now found the weakest and most vulnerable formal link in the refutations alike of Polemar- chus and Thrasy machus, and it turns out also to be the very premise that lies at the root of contention throughout the dialogue as a whole: what is justice —


\(^{38}\) 348 B 8 ff., esp. E 1-4; also 344 C. For the shift that has occurred here vis-à-vis Thrasy machus’ original position (338 C 1-2), see L. TARÁN, art. cit., pp. 102-7.
that is to say, the moral life\textsuperscript{39}? And wherein lies human excellence? We must assume that this procedure, and the interweaving in this fashion of the formal and material threads, is quite deliberate; it is handled too deftly, at any rate, to be merely accidental.

We turn now to a matter of more general import. Vlastos thought that Plato believed he had established the doctrine of 335 A-E positively, by means of the so-called Socratic elenchi – that critical examination by question and answer of his several interlocutors that serves to reveal (and thereby confute) the inconsistencies and contradictions in their held positions\textsuperscript{40}. Vlastos was hardly the first to argue that the elenchi was not entirely negative, that


it was somehow capable of actually establishing ethical and other
doctrines on a relatively sound epistemological basis, but his ul-
timate conversion to this position certainly gave renewed impetus
to the notion that there somehow existed some sort of "positive"
elenchus. This question is critical to the present study as it will
obviously affect any interpretation of Republic 1, both in itself and
in its relation to the remainder of the dialogue.

Considerations of space preclude a detailed examination of
this now popular conviction. Suffice it to say that while Vlastos’
writions on the elenchus have been hailed in many quarters, they
have not escaped detailed criticism by at least a few, and the stric-
tures have in some cases been quite deservedly severe. His argu-
ments rest on a developmentalist thesis whose chronology, in the
absence of any explicit supports, can only be established in a circu-

41 G. VLASTOS, Socratic Studies, cit., pp. 1-37 and 135 f., is a modified version of The
concise account of the status questionis, see G. A. SCOTT (ed.), Does Socrates Have a Method?

42 The logical problem, for Vlastos and his followers, is to explain how a method
that advances solely by exploiting the inconsistencies and imprecisions latent in the
largely conventionalist views of the interlocutors can be in any way constructive. Pro-
ponents proceed by segregating out a group of putatively early, "Socratic" dialogues (in
which the metaphysical apparatus of the theory of Ideas appears to be absent), and then
by allowing (if often tacitly) that the elenchus is productive of positive knowledge only
insofar as knowledge itself can be reduced to one or another species of "elenctically" justi-
fiable true belief – i.e., only insofar as knowledge is reduced to doxai; see, e.g., T. IRWIN,
35, 47-62 (esp. 51-3); T.C. BRICKHOUSE-N.D. SMITH, Plato's Socrates, cit., esp. pp. 23, 33
note 9, 36 ff., 43 f., 57 f., 126-8; G. VLASTOS, Socratic Studies, cit., pp. 42 f., 48-58. The
Socratic limb, thus severed from the Plaronic corpus, proves to be indistinguishable from
the sophist and isocratean ideal which finds our highest aspirations only on the plane of
dōxa or εἴδουσία. Against this it may be said that the early dialogues "already" contain
certain clear and unmistakable signs that Plato had sharply distinguished knowledge
and opinion (see L. TARAN, art. cit., p. 88 note 7; H. BENSON, Socratic Wisdom: The Model of
Knowledge in Plato's Early Dialogues, Oxford 2000, p. 93 f.), and that even in Republic 1
εἴδουσία is the ideal not of any "Socrates", but only of Thrasymachus (348 B 2). On
εἴδουσία, see W. SCHMID-O. STÄHLIN, Geschichte der griechischen Literatur, München
1920-24, I, 3, p. 22 note 3; W. NESTLE, Platon, Protagoras, Leipzig 1931 , ad 318 f.; R.A.
GAUTHIER-J. Y. JOLIF, op. cit., II, p. 509 f.
lar fashion; on the importation of certain assumptions, intrinsically implausible, for which there is no textual support; and on a blatant misinterpretation of a critical passage in the Gorgias. Be that as it may, I believe that we are now in a position to introduce one further argument against this doctrine of a “positive” elenches – at least as concerns the conclusion drawn at 335 A-E; an argument, admittedly, which is far more difficult to establish conclusively, but which, if established, is perhaps the most decisive of all. If my analysis of the second horn of the second refutation of Polemarchus (335 A-E) should prove correct (an analysis that has at least the merit of being directly falsifiable, simply by having recourse to the text), then we need to admit that the argument as a whole – regardless of whether each of its component premises proves to be “true” – is, at the very minimum, formally sound.

43 Vlastos does not rely (wisely enough) on the somewhat dubious claims of stylo-metry, and bases his chronology instead on a development in doctrine that he sees within the corpus (G. VLASTOS, Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher, cit., p. 46 note 2). But since the development he postulates is grounded necessarily in a controversial interpretation of the dialogues that itself is predicated on the prior adoption of one or another postulated sequence of texts or of doctrines, the whole procedure is circular, as many have seen (e.g., H. RAEDER, op. cit., p. 74 f.; J. CHEVALIER, La Notion du nécessaire chez Aristote et chez ses prédécesseurs particulièrement chez Platon, Paris 1915, p. 218; L. STEFANINI, Platon, Padova 1949, i, p. LXII f.; J. BEVERSLUIS, op. cit., p. 55).


45 Vlastos’ interpretation of Gorg. 479 e 8 is demonstrably erroneous (see H. BENSON, The Dissolution cit., pp. 106-8 = Socratic Wisdom cit., p. 83 f.), and depends on an over-literal interpretation of a chance phrase (σοφοίς εἴπε) which, as Vlastos surely ought to have known, is entirely neutral; see FR. AST, Lexicon Platonicum, Lipsiae 1835-38, s.v. σοφοίς; also G. STALLBAUM, op. cit., i, 1: Gorgias, Gotthae 1861, ad 516 b. The verbal instances adduced by C.D.C. REEVE, Socrates in the Apology, cit., p. 54 f., are frankly naïve.

46 In speaking of the “truth” of a premise, I simply refer to its correspondence with the actual state of affairs – this being the only conception of truth that Plato ever entertained: see Crat. 385 b; Euthyd. 283 E-284 c; soph. 262 b-263 b (cfr. F. CORN福德, Plato's
For all of its apparent complexity, the structure of the argument is actually quite elementary; each of the inferences — both mediate and final — rests squarely and securely on its premises. Plato holds the threads firmly in his grasp; he knows what leans on what. And yet the ultimate support (335 c 4-5 = [B1] [B]) — as Plato shows us clearly and unequivocally (albeit in purely dramatic fashion; see infra on Plato’s use of logica utens as opposed to logica docens) — is the most astonishing and controversial of all. It is precisely the premise which much of the remainder of the dialogue seeks to establish and confirm. Clearly, then, the author knows that nothing has been established positively, that everything here is provisional.

But why, then, one asks, all this play and sport with inference, all this thrust and parrying of thesis and refutation whose frequent clashes, to the dismay of so many critics, are often so thick in Plato’s “Socratic” dialogues? In part, at least, the answers have long been known. The elenchus was fashioned out of the self-same tools that had been forged by sophistic dialectic — that formal or semi-formal parlor game of question and answer and refutation developed by the wits and intellectual virtuosi active in late fifth century sophistic circles, strikingly parodied in Plato’s Euthydemus, and eventually analyzed and formalized in Academic treatises like Aristotle’s Topica and Sophistic Elenchi[47].


For the Sophists, no doubt, such dialectical exercises served several purposes: vanity, displays of virtuosity, φιλονική, the accumulation of wealth, of influence⁴⁸, even pure entertainment and joie d’esprit. But its most vital function was to serve as a sort of mental gymnastic⁴⁹. It not only helped to develop mental agility in general terms; it was actually a vehicle — indeed, the principal vehicle — for the analysis and transmission of both sound and unsound logical method. And though the practitioners of this art do not seem at this stage, at least, to have tried to elaborate any regulatory precepts regarding the more technical aspects of the art of reasoning, but were content instead to teach and analyze by means of specimen and exemplum — that is, it was by means of a logica usits, rather than a logica docens, that logic or proto-logic was first developed⁵⁰ — nonetheless, diverse modes of inference, rules of conversion, proofs direct and indirect, equivocations, amphibolies,

f., 167-71; E.S. THOMPSON, op. cit., pp. 275-8; H. THROM, Die These, Paderborn 1932, pp. 166-71. But as Dorion is concerned solely with the method of question and answer narrowly conceived, and allows in any case that «l’école de Mégare […] exist même déjà au moment où Platon commence à rédiger ses premiers dialogues» (L.-A. DORION, op. cit., p. 47 note 1), his thesis does not fundamentally affect the point at issue.

⁴⁸ Sophistic displays undoubtedly served as advertisements aimed at the recruitment of students; see F. HEINMANN, Eine vorplatonische Theorie der Tēgyn, «Museum Helveticum», xviii (1961) p. 110 f.


⁵⁰ At the close of the Sophistici Elenchi (183 a 37-fin.), Aristotle states that whereas his attempts to formalize rhetoric had its predecessors in the early writers of handbooks (νεκτα), nothing of the sort had been done previously for dialectics, and that all those who taught dialectics professionally (τῶν περὶ τόν πόλιον λόγον μεθορινότων) taught in the manner of Gorgias simply by producing specimen arguments for memorization. Had he wished, Aristotle could probably have pointed to predecessors in the Academy (cfr. L.-A. DORION, op. cit., p. 415); but his boast may at least be said to hold in a more general sense. For the presence of precept in early rhetoric, by contrast, see the literature cited by A. TULIN, review of E. GONDOS, Auf dem Weg zur rhetorischen Theorie, «Classical World», xiiii (1999) p. 221; S. Usher, Greek Oratory: Tradition and Originality, Oxford 1999, p. 2 note 3, with p. 21 f.; D. WHITEHEAD, Tradition and Originality: Aspects of Athenian Fornsic Oratory in the Late Fifth and Early Fourth Centuries B.C., «Electronic Antiquity», vii (2003) np.
and other types of fallacy — all this and more must have been on quite conscious and deliberate display. And so, a culture that traditionally had thought of education simply in terms of exhortation, *gnome* and illustration, suddenly found itself being trained, in the course of a few quickening decades, to think sharply and critically and increasingly abstractly.

Admittedly, Plato never tired of distinguishing his dialectic\(^{51}\) from the petty, logic-chopping sophistic which he terms eristic, antilogic, and the like\(^{52}\): his seeks the truth; theirs seeks only victory, *doxa*, and appearance\(^{53}\). But this said, the fact remains that there is no *formal* difference between the two, and that Plato retains (from first to last) a lively interest in the gymnastic, or purely logical aspect of the elenchus — developing by example many of the fine points of logic which Aristotle would later formalize as precept\(^{54}\). Much of the dialectical play found in the dialogues must therefore be analyzed and understood within just this

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\(^{51}\) The term “dialectic”, of course, is used by Plato to cover everything from elenchus to hypothesis to diacresis (T.R. ROBINSON, *op. cit.*, p. 70). I use the term loosely here to cover the sort of arguments (probing and refutative) encountered in the early, “Socratic” dialogues and elsewhere. But *n.b.* the comments of L. TARÁN, *art. cit.*, p. 90, with what follows in the text of this paper below.


\(^{54}\) This does not mean that Plato did not fully understand the underlying precepts; that he did not develop them as such is due primarily to his use of the dialogue form (on which, see below).
context. As such, a purely formal analysis of these passages is always justifiable.\footnote{The premises of a dialectical argument need be neither true nor necessary, but simply generally accepted (ἔνοχον), whether by the many or by the wise (ARISTOT. top. A 1. 100 a 25-b2; H. BONITZ, Index Aristotelicus, cit., 250 a 12-27); hence, for most purposes, Socrates is content to argue from commonplaces or from his interlocutors’ assent. By the same token, as dialectics is something of a game, the use of fallacy is legitimate: it is the task of the answerer, who is striving to maintain a thesis and avoid contradiction, to detect them; it is not the obligation of the questioner always to avoid them (Men. 75 C 8-D 2; top. Θ 1. 155 b 26-8; 11. 161 a 24-36, with b 16-7: τίνος δ’ ὑποχρέομενος, τι μὲν οὐ δοκῶς, τι δὲ τοιαύτα δοκῶς; cfr. P. MORAUX, art. cit., pp. 286 and 289.}

It is futile, then, to complain that an argument fails through an equivocation in one of its terms, or through ignoratio elenchī, secundum quid, or any other fallacy of this sort, all of which were openly recognized by the Greeks.\footnote{Much work still needs to be done on Plato’s use of fallacy, the book by R.K. SPRAGUE, Plato’s Use of Fallacy, New York 1962, being incomplete; cfr. S.R. SLINGS, Plato. Crito, cit., pp. 158-60. Equivocation especially was treated extensively by Plato in the dialogues and became a mainstay of Academic debate; for the latter, cfr. ARISTOT. soph. enth. 4. 165 b 30-166 a 6, with L. TARAN, Stauropou of Athens, Leiden 1981, pp. 72-7; for the former, cfr. Euthyd. 277 D ff., with P. SHOREY, The Unity of Plato’s Thought, cit., p. 16 note 86; ID., What Plato Said, cit., pp. 126 (with notes ad loc.), 518 f.; also E.H. GIFFORD, The Euthydemeus of Plato, Oxford 1905, pp. 55-9; E.R. DODDS, op. cit., p. 335 f.; L.-A. DORION, op. cit., pp. 91-104 (also pp. 218-22, 337-9).}

It is up to the interlocutor — or rather, up to the reader — to diagnose the problem. For only thus can we truly come to “see” it. And if the interlocutor is sufficiently on guard so as to require that a word previously taken thus should henceforth be taken thus, or if he longs now to specify or wishes in any other way to retract or modify a move, then we should follow the Logos whither it leads, reconstitute the argument, and start off boldly on a fresh examination, upon a new elenchus. From this point of view, at least, nothing is ever finalized. Everything is open to examination. We must always try to see what is involved in any claim, what is entailed by what. And every dialectical claim, it seems, every popular conception offered by
the interlocutors in these putatively “early”, elenctic dialogues, can be pushed and probed still further, unpacked yet again, until…

But let us pause for a moment, lest we run ahead of ourselves. In 1957, Gabriele Giannantoni launched a fresh attack on Republic I. Though he resolutely opposed the separatist views of those who held that it was simply an early, independent dialogue later “recycled” for use in the finished Republic, and though he recognized that, from a logical point of view, the elenchus was entirely negative, he thought that therein lay its limitation, that Plato had written Bk. I to draw this very point, and that Bks. II-X were to be seen as announcing Plato’s rejection of this ultimately sterile use of the elenchus, formerly used by Plato himself in the “early” dialogues. The Republic, in other words, was a work of self-criticism. This thesis has now been revived as part of a far broader attack on the elenchus by Ruby Blondell58.

The answer to this type of criticism has been offered repeatedly59. Plato holds to an intellectualist ethics. Our actions are

58 For Aristotle, the conceptions formed by men over long periods of time — certainly those formed by the wise (top. A 14. 105 b 17 f.) — are often fundamentally sound, needing only to be purified and parsed so as to yield their quotient of truth (cfr. rhet. A 1. 1355 a 15-7; eth. nic. A 8. 1098 b 27-9; Z 11. 1143 b 11-4; de cond. A 3. 270 b 16-20; metaph. A 8. 1074 b 10-4; pol. H 9. 1329 b 25-31, etc.; J.M. LE BLOND, Logique et méthode chez Aristote, Paris 1939, pp. 15, 247-68; also H. CHERNISS, Aristotle’s Criticism of Presocratic Philosophy, Baltimore 1935, p. 348). For Plato, by contrast, operating with a quite different set of epistemological presuppositions, the conceptions formed by the many (οἱ πόλεοι), as also those framed by those reputed to be wise, have no such intrinsic credibility. All are gist for the dialectical mill; all may quite well be erroneous.


60 P. SHOREY, The Unity of Plato’s Thought, cit., pp. 9-27; Id., What Plato Said, cit., p. 296 f. et passim; Id., Plato. Republic, cit., p. 261 note b; II, p. 124 note a; L. TARAN, art. cit., passim; A. TULIN, Diète Phénom: The Right of Prosecution and Attic Homicide Procedure, Stuttgart 19966, pp. 94-7; and for Hellenistic and later discussion of this view of the elenchus, H. CHERNISS, Plutarch’s Moralia 13.3: Platonic Questions, Cambridge 1976, p. 22 notes a-b ad 999 E-F. None of these works is so much as noticed by Blondell, though each contains argument and copious evidence.
guided in critically important ways precisely by the ideas we hold. Knowledge — not, to be sure, mere opinion, but a far more deeply rooted type of knowledge, one capable of exercising control over the will — is thus an essential component of virtue. As such, no one who truly knows the good, could ever do otherwise. Yet most men suppose that they already know what they do not really know at all (P. Shorey, What Plato Said, cit., p. 547 ad symp. 203—4). This is the worst sort of ignorance (apol. 29 b 1—2; sof. 229 b 7—c 6; leg. 863 c; Shorey, loc. cit., p. 490 ad Lys. 218 a—b; L. Tarán, art. cit., p. 97 f.), for such men not only act amiss, they refuse to learn anew (symp. 204 a). The initial task of philosophy is therefore negative and therapeutic, to uproot this false concept of wisdom so as to found in the ensuing aporia a healthier and more philosophic type of ignorance, one that will allow for and encourage constructive thought. The elenchus, in other words, is essentially purgative (sof. 229 e—230 e). To this extent — and here students of Vlastos will generally concur — the elenchus is ad hominem. For it is a testing not merely of ideas, but of the men who hold them.11

Yet one final point concerning the elenchus still needs to be made, one that is far less familiar, perhaps, but equally important,

11 Ladd. 187 e—188 a; cfr. G. VLASTOS, Socratic Studies, cit., p. 9 f.; C.D.C. REEVE, Socrates in the ‘Apology’, cit., p. 46; M. Frede, Plato’s Arguments and the Dialogue Form, in J.C. KlAGGE—N.D. SMITH (eds), Methods of Interpreting Plato and His Dialogues, Oxford 1992, pp. 216—8; T.C. BRICKHOUSE—N.D. SMITH, Plato’s Socrates, cit., pp. 11—6, 23—9; J.—F. BALAUDÉ, La finalité de l’elenchos d’après les premiers dialogues de Platon, in G. GIANNANTONI—M. NARCY (a cura di), Lezioni Socratiche, Napoli 1997, pp. 244—50; j. BEVERSLUIS, op. cit., p. 38 f.; R. BLONDELL, Play of Character cit., p. 113 f., with 124 note 70; in the older literature, see L. STEFANINI, op. cit., i, p. lxxxi f.; P. FRIEDLÄNDER, op. cit., ii, p. 41; R. SCHAEFER, La Question platonicienne, Neuchâtel 1969, p. 13 f.; finally, Aristotle, sof. elench. 8. 170 a 12—3. This "testing of persons", however, must be understood in the context of the intellectualism described above (for a clear illustration drawn from Plato’s Euthyphron, see A. TULIN, Dike Phronis cit., pp. 93—100); it has nothing to do with the probing of some vaguely defined existential or pathetic state (see infra, note 86). For the rest, one ought to recall that character for Plato is both inborn and acquired (see J.W. BEARDSLEY, Jr., The Use of ΨΩΤΗΣ in Fifth—Century Greek Literature, Chicago 1918, pp. 97—100) and, insofar as it is acquired, it must be molded by an intelligent and purposeful ordering of action and environment. To this extent, character is always subordinate to thought; cfr. rep. 400 e 2—3: τὴν ὡς τοιοῦτος ἔτος τοῦ κυρὶου καθαρασμένη διάνοια, et sapse.
for it affects our understanding not only of the elenchus and of Platonic dialectic generally, but of Plato’s use of the dialogue form itself. For the dialogue is merely an externalization of those interior processes of thought (διάλογος) which Plato describes as a “conversation” of the soul with itself (πρὸς ἑαυτὸν διάλογος), a process by which the soul posits to itself (at best, serially and systematically) propositions to be either affirmed or denied. In the seventeenth century, René Descartes distinguished analysis and synthesis (i.e., resolution and composition) as the methods of discovery and exposition respectively. In analysis, a complex whole is resolved into its elemental components, while synthesis recombines them again into the complex whole, whose logical structure is thereby rendered explicit. In metaphysics, the primary task is that of analysis, since the deductions are relatively easy if one has successfully isolated the principles and elements (prima notiones). But, in contrast with geometry, whose elements are accepted easily because they accord with sensation (quaes [...]), cum sensum usu convenientes, facile a quibuslibet admittan-


65 «Ac deinde ex omnium simplicissimarum intuitu ad alienum omnium cognitionem per eodem gradus ascendere tentemus» (reg. V, AT X 379, 19-21).
tour»), it is precisely the elements that are disputed in metaphysics,
«contra vero in his metaphysicis de nulla re magis laboratur,
quam de primis notionibus clare et distincte perciipientis»). This,
says Descartes, is why he wrote Meditations rather than a scholastic
treatise, more geometrico, as several of his objectors had urged\textsuperscript{66}. This
conception of analysis was a mainstay of sixteenth and seventeenth
century thought\textsuperscript{67}, and it can be traced to medieval discussions on
the nature and scope of scientific induction (known under the
Averroist term of regressus) that were themselves derived (via Latin
and Arabic intermediaries) from Greek medical, mathematical, and
philosophical writers\textsuperscript{68}.

Students of Descartes have complained of inconsistencies in
the Cartesian use of these terms, but this only reflects the some-
what protean nature of the Greco-Arabic tradition on which Descar-
tes ultimately relied. Analysis was generally conceived of as be-

\textsuperscript{66} Rep. sec. obj., AT VII 156, 27-157, 26; cfr. AT VII 128, 11-9.\textsuperscript{67}
Gebhardt); T. HOBBES, \textit{De corpore} VI, 1; G. LEIBNIZ, \textit{ Nouveaux Essais} IV, ii, 7. For
Descartes’ immediate sources, see E. GILSON, \textit{René Descartes. Discours de la méthode cit.}, pp. 181 f., 187
(a 16\textsuperscript{th} century Latin translation of PAPPUS Bk. vii by Commandinus, for which see now
L.J. BECK, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 157 note 1, citing the handbook used at La Flèche: «σύνδεσμη και
συνεργασία, hoc est resoluto et collectio […] Resolutionis ordo est, cum ab a primo ad
partes interagentes procedimus […] Collectionis vero est, cum ab inferioribus ad superiores
concedimus» (where inferioribus and superiora clearly refer to what is “furthest” and
“closest” respectively, in the order of knowledge, to us; see infra, note 76; this, I might add,
explains Descartes’ otherwise controversial use of \textit{tanguum a priori}… \& \textit{tanguum a posteriori}
at AT VIII 156, 24/156, 6 f.; see note D. GARBER-L. COHEN, \textit{art. cit.}, p. 139 note 5). J.
COTTINGHAM et al. (tr.) \textit{The Philosophical Writings of Descartes}, Cambridge 1984-91, ii,
pp. 110 note 2).

\textsuperscript{68} See J.H. RANDALL, \textit{The School of Padua and the Emergence of Modern Science}, Padua
1961 (orig. 1940), pp. 15-68; A.C. CROMBIE, \textit{op. cit.}, passim; L.M. RÉGIS, \textit{Analyse et syn-
Flandorum 1948, pp. 303-30; for Galen, see A.C. CROMBIE, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 76 f.; for Chal-
cidius, cfr. CHALCID. \textit{in Tm.} 302: \textit{Est sive propositionum quaeque per equum duplex probatio, aliter
quae ex antiquis proprioribus posteriora confirmat, quae est proprium syllogismo — praeceptis quippe ordine
acceptum, quae elementa vocantur; conclusionem —, aliter item, quae <ex> posterioribus ad praecep-
tia syllogismum gradatim pervenit, quod genus probationis resolutio dictur} (303, 10-5 Wass-
zink, with notes ad loc.).
ing only a single branch of dialectics\textsuperscript{69}, but the term itself was nonetheless used in many ways\textsuperscript{70}. In addition to geometrical analysis, whose propositions are convertible \textit{simpler}\textsuperscript{71}, it included the

\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Alcin. did.} 156, 30-3; \textit{Whittaker, Ammon. in Porph. isag.} 34, 17-25; Busse (this and all subsequent references to the Aristotelian commentators are, unless stated otherwise, to \textit{the Commentaria in Aristotelis Graece [C.A.G.], ed. H. Diels, Berlin 1892-1909}]; \textit{David, in Porph. isag.} 88, 6-8; \textit{Elías, in Porph. isag.} 57, 9-19 (et seq.): \textit{álλα καὶ έπεις τοις διάλεκτοις} μεθόδους τούτους γέρον αὐτῶ, διατριβη ὁριστική ὁπωδεικτική, ἀνάλυσις \ldots \textit{ίδιον} δὲ τῆς μὲν διατριβῆς τὸν ἐν πολλὰ ποιεῖν, οἷον τὸν ζῷον διελθὲν εἰς λογικοῖς καὶ λόγους, ὅτι καὶ ἐξετάσθην, τῆς δὲ ὁριστικῆς τοῦνταν τὰ πολλὰ ἐν ποιεῖν, τοὺς \textit{ἐπί} λοιπῶν τὸν ζῷον, τὸ λογικόν, τὸ θεατῶς καὶ ὁρίσασθαι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις. \textit{ίδιον} δὲ τῆς ὁπωδεικτικῆς τὸ δεῖξαι ἀλλο ἀλλὰ ὑπάρχει δὲ ἀλλοῦ μέσου \ldots \textit{ίδιον} δὲ τῆς ἀναλυτικῆς τὸ λαβὲν συνθετὸν τι πράγμα καὶ ἀναλύσας εἰς τὰ ἀπάλα εἴν τον συνεκτέντα κτλ.; also \textit{Procl. Plat. theol.} 1, 40, 5-10 Saffrey-Westerink (cfr. in \textit{Eucl.} 42, 20-43, 1 Friedlein; \textit{in Parn.} 987, 25-8 Cousin), \textit{S.F.P. II}, 135. Analysis is sometimes contrasted with the other three (\textit{Ammon. in art.} 7, 26-8, 14).

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{λέγεται γὰρ ἀνάλυσις} πολλάχις \ldots \textit{καὶ ἄλλας} δὲ \textit{πολλάχις λεγομένης} ἀνάλυσις (\textit{PhiloP. in art.} 5, 16-21; cfr. \textit{EustRat. in art.} 5, 3, 10-1); \textit{Ammon. in art.} 5, 5-7, 25: καὶ \textit{λέγωμεν ὅτι ἐστὶν ἐν τοῖς συλλογιμαῖς} σύνθεσις, ἐστὶν δὲ καὶ \textit{ἀνάλυσις} ὑπὲρ καὶ παρὰ τοῖς γραμματικοῖς ἐστὶν σύνθεσις καὶ ἀνάλυσις, σύνθεσις μὲν καὶ καθ ἃ πάντα τοὺς συντεχόμενοι ἐν τῷ συντεχόμενον ὑπὸ τοῦ συντεχόμενον ἔπει τὰ ἀπάλα \ldots \textit{ἐστίν} δὲ καὶ παρὰ τοῖς φυσικολογοῦσι συνθέσεις καὶ ἀνάλυσις \ldots καὶ παρὰ τοῖς περιοχοφόροις \textit{ὁποῖος} \textit{ἐστὶν} σύνθεσις καὶ ἀνάλυσις, σύνθεσις μὲν, ὅτι ἐν τοῖς ἀπάλαν εἴδουσιν ἔλθον ἐπὶ τὰ σύνθετα, οἷον ἐπὶ τοῦ καθ ἀυτὸ καλύτερον ἐπὶ τὸ ἔν τὸ νῦν καλόν, ἐπὶ τὸ ἔν τὸν μηχανή, ἐπὶ τὸ ἔν τοῖς σώμασι ἀνάλυσις \textit{ἐστίν}, ὅταν ἐπὶ τοῦ ἐν τοῖς σύσσωμις εἰδῶν ἀναδιαμόρφωσιν ἐπὶ τὰ \textit{ἐν τοῖς} νοησις, ἐστὶν δὲ καὶ ἐρωτική ἀνάλυσις. \textit{ἡ κέρτη} ἐν τῷ \textit{Συμφωνία} ἀπὸ τοῦ \textit{ἐν τοῖς} αἰσθητικῇς κάλλους ἀναφέρεται ἐπὶ τὸ νοησὶν κάλλους \textit{ἐστίν} δὲ καὶ \textit{γεωμετρικὴ ἀνάλυσις} \ldots καὶ τὴν ταινίαν ἀναλύσαν \textit{ὁ Ἐμμὸς} ὁρισμοῖς περί \textit{ἀνάλυσις} \textit{ἐστὶν} \textit{ἀποδείξεως} εὐρέσεως \ldots \textit{ἐστίν} δὲ καὶ \textit{παρὰ τοῖς} \textit{ἀστρονομοῖς} σύνθεσις καὶ ἀνάλυσις, \textit{ἐστὶ} \textit{νῦν} καὶ \textit{ἐν τοῖς} \textit{συλλογισμοῖς} \ldots \textit{ὁποῖος} \textit{ἐστὶν} ἄλλο εἴδους \textit{ὁποίας} \textit{ἐστίν} \ldots \textit{ἀλλὰ} \textit{εἴσοδο} τοῖς \textit{καὶ} \textit{περὶ} \textit{συνθέσεις} \textit{ἀποδήσα} καὶ \textit{περὶ} \textit{εὐρέσεως}, \textit{τὸ δὴ} \textit{ὁποῖος} \textit{συνθετικὴς} \textit{ἐπέργασαν} \textit{οἷον} \textit{ἐρημικῇς} \textit{ἄλλῃ} \textit{Ἀνάλυσις} \textit{τὴς ῥήματος} καὶ \textit{λέγωμεν ὅτι ἐπὶ τοῦ} \textit{ἐπιστήμων} \textit{καὶ} \textit{τοῦ} \textit{μεταφέρου} \textit{ὁ γὰρ} \textit{ἐίδος} \textit{ἐπιστημονικῆς} \textit{ἀναλύει καὶ συνθετά} \textit{οἷον}, \textit{οὐ} \textit{πάντως} \textit{δὲ} \textit{ὁ} \textit{ἐίδος} \textit{συνθετά} καὶ \textit{ἀναλύει} \textit{κατά}, (cfr. \textit{PhiloP. in art.} 5, 30-2); \textit{Alcin. didac.} 157, 11-5; \textit{Whittaker} \textit{(Ἀνάλυσις} \textit{δὲ} \textit{εἴσοδο} \textit{ἐπὶ} \textit{τρία}; \textit{Areth. schol. in Porph. isag.} 16, 7, 29-8, 4 \textit{Share διττή} \textit{δὲ} \textit{Ἀνάλυσις} \textit{φυσικῇ, λογικῇ} \ldots \textit{ἡ λογικὴ} \textit{δὲ} \textit{Ἀνάλυσις} \textit{διττή}; also \textit{David, in Porph. isag.} 103, 24-30).

“upward path” of *Symposium* 210 a-211 e\(^{72}\), the method of hypothesis described in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*\(^ {73}\), collection (συναγωγή)\(^ {74}\), and the division of any complex whole into its component parts – including substance and attribute, genus and difference, matter and form\(^ {75}\). This last is but an extension of Aris-

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73 ALCIN. *disc. 157, 36-43* Whittaker: Η δέ εἰς ὑποθέσεως ἀνάλογος ἔστιν τοιοῦτο [...]. μέρισμα οὐ ἂν ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄρχουσιν ἐνυπόθηκον ἔλθῃ ποιεῖ. This method, termed “dialectics” in the central books of the *Republic*, should not be confused with geometrical analysis – though both are obviously analytical. In geometrical analysis we proceed by deductive inference from the proposition that needs to be proved to one that is already known to be true (or false), and the inferences are convertible *simpliciter*, so that the “upward” and “downward” paths are essentially the same. In “dialectics”, by contrast, we proceed by hypothesis from a proposition already known to be true to one that entails it (but which is not in turn entailed by it), thus moving “upwards” till we reach one that is not itself entailed by any other (τὸ ἄνυποθέτον); see H. CHERNISS, *Plato as Mathematician*, cit., p. 242 f.

74 See IAMBL. *protr. 23, 5-16* Pistelli (= 54, 21-55, 5 Des Places), with H. CHERNISS, *Plato as Mathematician*, cit., p. 245 note 56. That collection and comparison were among the initial steps to be taken in analysis or resolution (see A.C. CROMBIE, *op. cit.*, p. 64 f.), receives its clearest form in Bacon’s Tables of Presence, Deviation, and Degrees (A.C. CROMBIE, *op. cit.*, p. 301 f.). Compare the handbook used at La Flèche (note 67 supra) which contrasts analysis with συναγωγή or collective (which last was then itself interpreted as composition), and one realizes why there is confusion in the Cartesian usage.

75 AMMON. *in an. pr. 8, 4-9*: συνάγωγας δὲ εἰπεῖν ἢ μὲν διαμερική τῇ γένει εἰς τὰ ἐλθὲν τήματα, ἢ δὲ ἀναλυτικῆ τῇ ἐλθὲν συνάγει εἰς τὰ γένη, πάλιν δὲ μὴν ὑποδιεικτικῇ ἢ μὴν μερικῇ ἡ ὅλων ποιεῖ, ἢ δὲ ἀναλυτικῇ ἀπὸ τῶν ὅλων εἰς τὰ μέρη μεταβολικῆ εἰς δὲ ὅλων γέγονεν. πάλιν δὲ ἢ μὲν ὑποδιεικτικῇ ἢ μὲν μερικῇ ἡ ὃ τῶν αὐτῶν τὰ αὐτά ἀναλυτικά διείκνυσαν, ἢ δὲ ἀναλυτικῇ ἀπὸ τῶν αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὰ αὐτὰ μεταβολικαί. EUSTRAT. *in an. post. 3, 16-8*: ἢ μὲν ἀναλυτική καὶ ἢ μὴν τῶν μερικοτερῶν ἄνδρον ἢ μὲν τὸ καθολικότερον, ὅλων ἢ μὴν τῶν καθ’ ἑαυτά ἢμάστικα καὶ ἢ μὴν τίτικα ἢ ἐπὶ τὰ ἀπὸ τὰ αὐτὰ γένη. ALEX. *in metaph. 686, 53-687, 1*; AMMON. *in Porph. isag. 37, 7-13*; PHILIP. *in an. post. 335, 6-35* (esp. 9-11: εἰς ἀνάλογα γὰρ ἢ μὲν ἢ ἄρχουσι τάτης εἰρήκοντο ἢ πάντων προτερῶν αὐτῶν ἀναλογικά ἢ πάντων προτερῶν ἀναλογικά, ἢ πάντων προτερῶν auctiorum analogeticum, ἢ υπό τῶν προτερῶν auctiorum analogeticum, cfr. *in phys. 382, 16-7*; *in phys. 160, 3-11* (substance and attribute); SIMPL. *in phys. 179, 18-9, 480, 9-13* (form and matter); cfr. ARETH. *schol. in Porph. isag. 16, 7, 12 f. Share; L.M. RÉGIS, *art. cit.*, p. 315 f. (St. Thomas).
tote's conception of the role to be played by analysis in physics\textsuperscript{76}, which was glossed by Pacius as a «methodus resolutiva a toto integrata ad partes integrantes». A slightly different, but still related form of analysis is described by Plato himself in the \textit{Phaedrus}\textsuperscript{77}. It will be noticed that the concept of analysis here canvassed covers quite well the entire range of meanings ascribed in various dialogues to the single notion of dialectics, a range (as we noted; \textit{cfr. supra,} note 51) that Robinson and others found troubling. Yet Plato’s intuition, it now appears, was far sounder than his critics had realized\textsuperscript{78}. The elenchus does not correspond precisely to any of these modes of analysis; in fact, from a logical point of view, it is not

\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Phys.} A 1, 184 a 16-23: πάθοςει δὲ ἐκ τῶν γνωριμιστέρων ἢ μὲν ἡ ὀδὸς καὶ σωφρότερον ἐπὶ τὰ σωφρότερα τῇ φύσει καὶ γνωριμιστέρων οὐ γὰρ τούτῳ ἡμῖν τὰ γνώριμα καὶ ἐπιφάνεια. διότι ἀνάκατα τὸν πρῶτον πάντων προήλθεν ἐκ τῶν ὁποιομετέρων μὲν τῇ φύσει ἢ μὲν δὲ σωφρότερον ἐπὶ τὰ σωφρότερα τῇ φύσει καὶ γνωριμιστέρων. ἐστὶ δὲ ἡμῖν τὰ πρῶτον δῆλον καὶ σωφρονιστήν ταχεύσμενον μᾶλλον ἄστερον δὲ ἐκ τούτων γέγραπται γνώριμα τὰ σχοινία καὶ αἱ ἀρχαὶ διαπρόσθε τάσις. For the doctrine that we ought to proceed from what is more knowable to us (ἡμῖν), \textit{i.e.} from the sensible particulars, to what is more knowable \textit{per se} (τῇ φύσει), see G. RODIER, \textit{Aristote. Traité de l’âme}, Paris 1900, II, pp. 188-91.

\textsuperscript{77} See \textit{Phaedr.} 270 c 9-D 7; τὸ τοῖνοι περὶ φύσεως σχέσιν τὶ ποιν λέγει Ἰπποκράτης τε καὶ ὁ ἄλλης λόγος, ἀρ όν ὁδὸν δει διενοθήσαν περὶ ὠσμον φύσεως πρῶτον μὲν, ἀπόλυτον ἡ πολυτελείας ἐστίν ὁ περὶ βοηθήσω ἀνδρὰς αὐτός τεχνικῶς καὶ ἄλλον δυνατοὶ ποιεῖν, ἀπεικόνισε δὲ, ἢ μὲν ἀπόλυτον ἡ σχοινία τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ τίνα πρὸς τὸ πάθος εἰς τὸ ὀνόμα ἄν ἢ τίνι εἰς τὸ παθέντος ὑπὸ τοῦ, ἢν δὲ πλείον εἴδε ἢ ἐστὶ γραμματέμενον, ὑπὸ τῇ ἐν εἰς ἄνδρα, τῷ ῥυθμίζοντος, τῷ τῇ ποιεῖν αὐτῷ πάθοσαν ἢ τῷ τῇ παθέντος ὑπὸ τοῦ, \textit{Thaet.} 201 C-206 C, and compare the method pursued in \textit{Phil.} 12 C-22 E, esp. 16 C-18 D (with AMMON. \textit{in an. pr.} 8, 11 E: ὡς ἐν τῷ Φιλόδρῳ τὴν διαμετακῆν καὶ τὴν ὀρτοποιῆν, ὡς ἐν τῷ Φιλόδρῳ τὴν ὀρτοποιῆν καὶ τὴν ὀρτοποιὴν, ὡς ἐν τῷ Φιλόδρῳ τὴν ὀρτοποιηθεὶς καὶ τὴν ὀρτοποιηθεὶς καὶ τὴν ὀρτοποιηθεὶς καὶ τὴν ὀρτοποιηθεὶς καὶ τὴν ὀρτοποιηθε砀κλ.).

\textsuperscript{78} Dialectics, then, is Plato’s Universal Science (\textit{his methodos universalis}, so to speak), Superior to mathematics and, indeed, to all of the special sciences (H. CHERNISS, \textit{Plato as Mathematician}, \textit{cit.}, p. 223; L. TARÁN, \textit{Academica: Plato, Philip of Opus, and the Pseudo-Platonic ‘Epinomis’}, Philadelphia 1975, p. 28 notes 116-7), it is the capstone (ὦργανος, P. SHOREY, \textit{Plato, Republic}, \textit{cit.}, II, p. 209 note g; for the subsequent history of this image, see J. WHITTAKER, \textit{Acmeos}, Paris 1990, p. 95 note 135). And because it ultimately deals directly with the Ideas (\textit{rep.} 531 D-533 C; dialectic investigates the relations that hold between the Ideas, which notions cohere and which do not; see \textit{sophb.} 253 D-E; P. SHOREY, \textit{What Plato Said}, \textit{cit.}, p. 302 f, with notes ad loc.; H. CHERNISS, \textit{Lysis/On Dous, ‘Dialogue’}, XXII (1983) p. 157 note 43), it is the only truly autonomous science; see L. TARÁN, \textit{Spausdippos cit.}, p. 62 note 304, with references.
really a single method at all. But it is quite clearly analytical⁷⁹. Like a weaver teasing apart the threads of a valued cloak, it lays bare the fine reticulations of thought and argument. It reveals, as we have seen, the weaknesses in, as well as the interconnections between, the apparently diverse views of his interlocutors. But it may also reveal something about the various topics themselves. For it brings to light the very assumptions on which Socrates’ own refutations rest, and thereby points the way, like posts set along a path, to yet further analysis. The elenches, in other words, is clarifying as well as purgative⁸⁰. And so, to return at last to our point of departure, the destructive analysis of the interlocutors in Republic I, whose largely conventionalist views are thus shown to harbor the seed and fruit of a most radical immoralism, but which itself is shown, explicitly and repeatedly, to rest on the quite remarkable assertion that justice is, indeed, the excellence or virtue of the soul – a position itself in need of extended support – all this forms a most fitting prelude to the more constructive por-

⁷⁹ Bacon, at least, seems to have realized this (Bacon, Novum Organum, I, 105: «The induction, which is to be available for the discovery and demonstration of sciences and arts, must analyze nature by proper rejections and exclusions; and then, after a sufficient number of negatives, come to a conclusion on the affirmative instances: which has not yet been done or even attempted save only by Plato, who does indeed employ this form of induction to a certain extent for the purpose of discussing definitions and ideas»; cfr. Cic. tusc. 1.8: Hanc est enim, ut sci, vetus et Soractica ratio contra alterius opinionem diversandi. Nam ita facilissime quod veri similimuni est in inveniri poste Socrates arbitrahatur; Chrísip. apud Plutarch. de stoic. rep. 1037 B Casevitz-Babur (= S.V.F. II 129): pró̂s mé̂n γερ την τω̃ν ἀληθινω̂ν εὐρέω̂ν δεῖ χρήσθαι αὐτή [sic. τη το̃ν λόγο̂ν δυνάμει] κα̂πρ την τω̃ν συμμονάσσαν, εἰς τάναντα δ ὁ οὐ̂, πολλῶν ποιο̂νο̂ν το̂νο̂ν; Aristot. ἕρμ. elench. 16. 173 a 26-30; συμβλέπει δ ἐὰν καθό̂περ ἑν το̂ς διαγράμμασιν κα̂πρ ἑὰ̂ν ἀκε̂ι ἀναλο̂γίσαντες ἐν το̂ς συνήθειαν πάλιν ὀδυνατο̂μενο̂ν οὕτω κα̂πρ ἐν το̂ις ἔλεγχοις, εἰδότες παρ’ ὃ ὁ λόγος συμβλέπει συνεργὰ, διαλύσα το̂ν λόγον ἀπορο̂μεν (οὐ̂ διαλύσαν here, see H. Bonitz, Index Aristotelicus, cit., 184 a 43-8; rhet. B 4. 1382 a 17-8, with E.M. Cope, ad loc.; eth. nic. H 2. 1146 a 24-7, with b 6-8); finally, Xenoph. mem. IV 6, 13: ἐπ’ την ὑποθέσει ν ἐπανήγερν ἐν πάντω̂ το̂ν λόγω̂ν ὑδὶ πάς̂ το̂ς κτλ.

⁸⁰ Cfr. Gorg. 453 A 8-454 C 6, esp. 453 C 1-4: το̂ το̂ν ἔνεκα δ ὀւ̂το̂ς ὑποτετεθα̂ν σε̂ ἐρήμω̂να̂, ὁ μὲ̂ν ὀου̂ς̂ λέγει, οὐ̂ σο̂ι̂ν το̂ν ἄλλω̂ν το̂ν λό̂γω̂, το̂τα̂ ό̂ντα̂ προ̂ς ὁμι̂ς̂ μᾶλλο̂ν ἐν το̂ις καταθε̂νε̂σις̂ ποι̂ ού̂ πε̂ρι̂ ὅτο̂ν λέγεται; cfr. Th. 210 C 1-2: ἐν τη̂ν γέ̂γη̂ [sic. ἐγχίσμα], βελτίω̂ν ἐσθι̂ πλη̂ρης δια̂ της̂ νό̂ν ἐξει̂ς̂ (with 150 B 9-c 3).
tions of the dialogue (Bks. II-X), which deal extensively and in depth, if not quite conclusively, with just this very strange assertion. This, then, is proof that the “attachment” of Republic I was no mere afterthought, but that it formed an integral part of Plato’s conception of the dialogue ab initio.

If the elenchus nonetheless seems to break apart on the ever-shifting sands of debate, this is only because the interlocutors invariably fail to recognize the need for the assumption of absolute standards. Plato was forever haunted by the specter of relativism, and he saw more clearly than most that in the absence of such absolutes there could be no stability, no form, no delimitation at all, that everything would crumble and dissolve into an infinite crumbling of infinite parts ad infinitum such that nothing could any more be said to be this than not-this; and that even change, the sine qua non of such a thoroughly relativized environment, itself required the assumption of fixed and absolute termini of change, since any unrestricted, absolutely infinite motion or change, without any limits from which and to which change may be said to proceed, is, it would seem, strictly indistinguishable from absolute rest. To this extent, then, the very failure or negativity of the elenchus is of itself an indirect argument for the assumption of a theory of Ideas\textsuperscript{81} – those fixed points in a universe that is otherwise victim to an unending and self-annihilating flux\textsuperscript{82}.

\textsuperscript{81} Plato’s method is to follow the Logos wherever it leads (note 34 supra) so as “to show that wherever the logos begins and whatever course it takes it ends either in an impasse or in the doctrine of ideas” (H. CHERNISS, review of G. MÜLLER, Studien zu den platonischen Nomoi, «Gnomon», XXV (1933) p. 378; also Lafrance on Dous, cit., p. 144 ff., with note 14).

\textsuperscript{82} There is not, in the corpus, nor can there be, any deduction of the theory of Ideas (any more than there is a deduction of categories in Kant or in Aristotle), all first principles being by nature indemonstrable. The Ideas are simply required ex hypothesi so as to sort and save phenomena. They are, in other words, the final products in the “upward” path of analysis and dialectic. For Plato’s critique of relativism and its philosophical implications, see H. CHERNISS, Aristotle’s Criticism of Presocratic Philosophy, cit., pp. 76-89; Id., The Philosophical Economy of the Theory of Ideas, «American Journal of Philology», LIII (1936) pp. 443-56; Id., Aristotle’s Criticism of Plato and the Academy, cit., pp. 214-20; also P. SHOREY, The Unity of Plato’s Thought, cit., p. 29 ff.; Id., What Plato Said, cit., pp. 266
Certainly, at the end of the day, the elenchus cannot actually discover the truth in any positive or constructive fashion. This can only be gained through a recollection (anamnesis) of those primary realities (the Ideas) that are said — always, perhaps, with a slightly mischievous gleam — to have been discerned originally in the prenatal state. Yet the elenchus can, for all that, through repeated questioning, help to rouse the mind to recollection.

Dialectics, then, to return to the more general point, plays for Plato an impressive variety of roles: it is gymnastic, purgative, protreptic. It is also analytical in a broad sequence of ways: through question and answer, it allows us to dissect and clarify, to articulate thoroughly the often imprecise notions we form of...
things; through hypothesis, it drives us on to the assumption of
ideas that can serve as the ground of experience; and by collection
and by division it helps us to map out the schema of ideal rela-
tions that girds this phenomenal reality. It is, in sum, the philo-
sophical method of investigation par excellence. And this, I venture
to add, if only by way of a coda, amply explains, even in the face of
mounting controversies, Plato’s adoption of the dialogue form.
For quite apart from its obvious dramatic functions, it was only
natural that Plato would attempt to fashion a mode of exposition
that directly mirrored his dialectical procedures – the dialogue, as
we saw, being merely the externalization, in dramatic key, of those
internal processes of analysis and thought through which we seek
to reduce the complex and ever-changing particulars and events
presented by phenomenal reality to their underlying logical and
ontological patterns and foundations.

85 This is especially clear in the field of ethics, where the dramatic element allows
us to see ideas in action, to see their real implications and entanglements, so to speak, in
the actual world (cfr. supra, notes 60-61 with the accompanying text).
86 See supra, note 62. Aristotle’s very different handling of the dialogue form, con-
sisting of long, continuous speeches anthropically arranged so as to present competing
views for synthesis and arbitration, mirrored his own, quite different conception of dialect-
cics; see H. CHERNISS, Ancient Forms of Philosophical Discourse, cit., p. 31 f. As for Plato’s use
of the dialogue, the literature admittedly is enormous. For varied discussion and bibliog-
raphy, see J. LABORDERIE, op. cit., esp. pp. 531-46; J. BÖSSL, op. cit., p. 7 note 10; F.M.
GIULIANO, Filosofia in letteratura: il dialogo platonico e la sua interpretazione, «Atene e
in Id. (ed.), Who Speaks For Plato?, cit., p. 29 note 9. The foregoing should be taken as an
attempt to demonstrate that we need nor resort to those types of argument that see Plato’s
use of the dialogue form as inspired by a desire to hide his true intentions (CH. KAHN,
Plato and the Socratic Dialogue, cit., pp. 65-70 et passim), to avoid or destroy philosophical
dogmatism (R. BLONDELL, Play of Character cit., pp. 39-46, 103 f.), or as necessitated by
the fact that truth is in some way essentially incomplete (P. STEMMER, Platonis Dialektik:
Die früh en und mittleren Dialoge, Berlin 1992; cfr. N.P. WHITE, Observations and Questions
about Hans-Georg Gadamer’s Interpretation of Plato, in CH. GRISWOLD (ed.), Platonische
Writings, Platonische Readings, University Park 1988, pp. 247-57) or otherwise ineffable (P.J.
It is instead the vestment of his analytical and dialectical procedure and it presupposes
that reality is indeed patent to knowledge.