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SOCRATES' IOLAOS: MYTH AND ERISTIC IN PLATO'S *EUTHYDEMUS*

I SOCRATES AND HERACLES

The *Euthydemus* presents a brilliantly comic contrast between Socratic and sophistic argument. Socrates' encounter with the sophistic brothers Euthydemus and Dionysodorus exposes the hollowness of their claim to teach virtue, unmasking it as a predilection for verbal pugilism and the peddling of paradox. The dialogue's humour is pointed, for the brothers' fallacies are often reminiscent of substantial dilemmas explored seriously elsewhere in Plato, and the farce of their manipulation is in sharp contrast to the sobriety with which Socrates pursues his own protreptic questioning. But the strategies of this text are complex: the *Euthydemus* may be a playful satire of the desire to confound, yet beneath its knockabout humour a serious purpose is also visible.

At one stage in the argument Dionysodorus accuses Socrates of attempting to evade the encounter:

> You are running away, Socrates, said Dionysodorus, and don't want to answer. And with reason, I replied. I am weaker than either of you, so it is hard for me not to run from two. I am much less strong of course than Heracles, and he was not able alone to fight it out with the Hydra, a sophistic monster (σοφίστρια) and irresistible owing to its cleverness (σοφία), such that if you cut off one of its heads of argument, it produces many in place of that one, especially with another sophistic crab (καρκίνῳ ... σοφιστῇ) arriving from the sea, only recently sailing in, I would guess. Now when the crab gave pain to the hero by talking to him on the left and biting him, he called in his nephew Iolaos to help, and Iolaos came to his aid effectively. *But if my Iolaos should come, he would do rather the opposite* (297b7–d2).[1]

Socrates' mischievous response prompts questions: who is Socrates' Iolaos and why is Socrates dubious about his assistance? In this paper I argue that a correct identification of Iolaos and an understanding of Socrates' doubts about his aid can cast light upon the relationship between Socratic and sophistic argument. As Gregory Vlastos has recently put it: 'the question always hanging over our heads as we work on Plato's Socratic dialogues is whether or not their protagonist allows himself deceit as a debating tactic'.[2] I suggest that solving a literary puzzle can help to assess the *bona fides* of Socrates' opposition to eristic.

II CTESIPPUS AND IOLAOS

The use of heroic simile at transitional points of the argument, often with playful effect, is common in Platonic dialogues.[3] It is especially apposite in the *Euthydemus*, where the brothers are regularly characterised as warriors, with ironic praise for their invincibility and a play on their earlier profession as military trainers (271cff., 277d, etc). In our passage Socrates' elaborate comparison of himself to Heracles facing his

[1] All translations are my own. At 297d1 the manuscripts read 'if my Iolaos *Patrocles* should come', but editors rightly delete Patrocles as a marginal gloss based on a misunderstanding of the reference to Socrates' Iolaos. The misunderstanding arises from the surrounding by-play over relations, one of whom is Socrates' nephew Patrocles (as Iolaos was Heracles' nephew), see 297e2ff.

[2] 'Socratic Irony', *CQ* 37 (1987), 79–96, p. 93.

[3] E.g. *Rp.* 423c–e, *Lch.* 196d, and see G. H. Billings, *The Art of Transition in Plato* (New York, 1979). Perhaps the closest parallel to our passage is Socrates' elaborate play on the 'Gorgon head of Gorgias' eloquence' between Agathon's speech and his *elenchos* (*Smp.* 198c).

greatest opponent, the Hydra, produces one of Plato's memorable images for sophistry, comparable with the peddler of the *Protagoras* (313c) or the man-hunter of the *Sophist* (223b).[4]

Socrates' description of Heracles in the familiar myth is intertwined with motifs drawn from his own plight.[5] The Hydra is a many-headed sophist, each of whose heads is an argument and whose sophistic skill makes it hard to resist.[6] Heracles' problem is that if he succeeds in cutting off one Hydra head, new ones immediately grow to replace it. Socrates' predicament is parallel: his Hydra grows multiple heads of argument as soon as he resists one. The image is particularly apt for the rapidity with which the brothers produce fallacies one after another, leaving little or no time for their analysis before speedily moving on to the next.[7]

But Heracles' and Socrates' problems are not restricted to the Hydra alone. Socrates introduces the Hydra image to illustrate how the brothers make particularly difficult opponents precisely because there are *two* of them. The brothers' duality is introduced at the very beginning of the dialogue, where Socrates corrects Crito for failing to notice it (271a1). It is clear that the support they lend each other makes them a more formidable adversary than either would be singly (271a6). Indeed the brothers are an accomplished double act. Their characteristic strategy is also twofold: it involves posing an either/or question, and then saddling their respondent with the unpalatable consequences of each alternative in turn. The first pair of fallacies, for example, are programmatic: Euthydemus asks 'who are the learners, the wise or the ignorant?' Cleinias opts for the former, and is refuted; whereupon Dionysodorus immediately demonstrates the impossibility of the latter, too (275d–276c). Asking questions from alternate directions is noted by Aristotle as a standard eristic device (*SE* 174a22f.).

Socrates described the brothers as the twin Dioscuroi, protectors of those at sea, whom he ironically calls on (anticipating the image in our passage of coming to someone's aid) to save himself and Cleinias from their perplexity (293a1). The sophists' twoness recalls Socrates' own familiar employment of images of duality, such as his use of the phrase 'two going together', to characterise dialectic as a co-operative rather than a competitive undertaking.[8] The brothers' duality is a

[4] Plato uses the Hydra head as an image of sophistic argument on several occasions. In the *Republic*, for example, those who attempt to serve ill-governed states by legislating against wrong-doing are deludedly attempting to chop up a Hydra (426e) (no further elaboration given). In the *Sophist* the multi-headed sophist (ὁ πολυκέφαλος σοφιστής – no need now to name the Hydra) compels us to grant being to what is not (240c).

[5] The Hydra myth was a popular subject in Greek art and literature, and early took on a uniform character: cf. F. Brommer, *Heracles: The Twelve Labors of the Hero in Ancient Art and Literature* (New York, 1986), pp. 12–18. J. Schoo, 'Der Kampf mit dem Hydra', *Mnemosyne* (1939), 281–317 develops a philological case (*Hydra/hydro-*) that the Hydra's intractability is a form of slipperiness deriving from its watery origins. But for the Hydra's pre-Greek origins, see W. Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (London, 1979), pp. 80ff.

[6] The name of this monster (σοφίστρια), which is female as usual for Greek mythical monsters, perhaps owes something to Aristophanes' συκοφάντρια (Plut. 970). Heracles was a popular figure in Old Comedy and Socrates frequently refers to his exploits (cf. *Phd.* 99c, *Euthd.* 299c, *Lch.* 196e, *Tht.* 169bff., etc.); cf N. Loraux '*Socrate, Platon, Héracles: sur un paradigme héroïque du philosophe*' in J. Brunschwig *et al.* (edd.), *Histoire et Structure: À la Mémoire V. Goldschmidt* (Paris, 1985), 93–105. On the relation between the *Euthydemus* and Aristophanes see B. B. Rogers (ed.), *Aristophanes Clouds* (introduction).

[7] E.g. 277b4, 297d–e, 300e.

[8] *Prt.* 348d, 358c, *Hp.Ma.* 295a–b, 369c. Aristotle also describes the duality of co-operative dialectic, in contrast to contentiousness, 'for then they cannot both reach the same goal, since more than one cannot be victorious' (*Top.* 161a38ff.).

perversion of this Socratic image of co-operation, for in their case it strengthens their eristic endeavours, as they come to one another's assistance to confound their respondent.

In the passage we are examining the duality theme has a neat application, for there too Heracles finds himself in particular trouble because he has *two* opponents. Indeed our passage builds on the proverbial saying 'not even Heracles could fight against two', clearly a favourite of Plato's.[9] And this is the point of our passage: the sophistic Hydra is supported by a second sophist, a crab recently arrived from the sea (271c).[10] The reference to recent arrival reminds us that the two brothers themselves have only lately acquired argumentative skills (272b6).[11]

It is not hard to identify Socrates' Hydra as Euthydemus and the crab supporting him as Dionysodorus. Although the younger brother, Euthydemus is the sharper and chief speaker. The crab's sideways motion fits the shallower and clumsier Dionysodorus, who has to be chastised more than once by his brother for his slip-ups (e.g. 297a5). More important, in our passage Socrates explicitly describes the crab as biting *on the left* (297c6), recalling that Dionysodorus took his seat on Socrates' left at the start of the discussion (271b7). Here, as often in Plato, seemingly minor dramatic details underline and reinforce the argument.

In standard versions of the myth the help that Iolaos supplies to Heracles, his uncle, arrives promptly and successfully. Iolaos hands Heracles burning brands to cauterise the wounds left by decapitation of the Hydra, preventing new heads from growing (e.g. Apollodorus 2.5.2). The image of comradeship makes theirs a famous relationship, comparable to Achilles and Patroclus or to Orestes and Pylades.[12] But Socrates says that he fears that if *his* Iolaos should come to his assistance, the result would be 'rather the opposite' (297d) – a strikingly enigmatic and puzzling observation.[13]

There is another context where Socrates refers to Iolaos' support for Heracles, which is much less mysterious (*Phaedo* 89c). The passage is once again transitional. Socrates invites Phaedo to counter the objections of Simmias and Cebes to his theory about the immortality of the soul, and Phaedo quotes the proverb that not even Heracles can take on two at once. Socrates volunteers to be Phaedo's Iolaos, but Phaedo observes 'I am Iolaos calling on Heracles, not Heracles calling on Iolaos', to

[9] Cf. *Phd.* 89c (see below). The origin of the saying is uncertain. The scholiast to *Phaedo* 89c refers to differing interpretations in antiquity, such as two wrestlers fought by Heracles at the Olympics, or two opponents in the Augean stable labour, as well as the Hydra combat. Cf. *Laws* 919b: 'it is an old saying that it is hard to fight against two enemies at once.' In the *Republic* we get an unusual inversion of the image: it is easier for a poor city to fight two rich cities at once, just as one trained boxer can easily fight two fat rich men, than to fight one rich city (422a–b).

[10] Our earliest literary source for the myth, Hesiod *Theog.* 313–18, refers to Iolaos, but not the crab. Hence J Schoo, art. cit. (n.5), p. 309, speculates that the crab may be a later accretion. But care is needed about inferences from Hesiod's six allusive lines, and in any event an engraved fibula of about 700 B.C. clearly shows Iolaos and the crab. Cf. B. Schweister, *Herakles* (Tübingen, 1922), fig. 32, reproduced in Burkert, op. cit. (n.5), p. 81.

[11] Cf. 271b, 303c5. T. J. Saunders (ed.), *Plato: Early Socratic Dialogues* (London, 1978), p. 357 n. 4 finds the reference to recent arrival baffling. Perhaps we are invited to contrast the Socratic search for virtue and knowledge, which is lifelong (*Ap.* 29d, *Phd.* 67c).

[12] Heracles is often portrayed as a solitary figure, and his comradeship with Iolaos is particularly prominent in the Hydra labour, rather than across the board. According to Apollodorus, Eurystheus discounted the Hydra labour because of the help received from Iolaos (2.5.2).

[13] The expression 'rather the opposite' (*πλέον ... θάτερον*) is euphemistic and colloquial (cf. 280e5, *Phd.* 114e).

which Socrates replies 'It will make no difference'.[14] Once again we have the Heracles and Iolaos myth used to illustrate tackling two opponents simultaneously, and although it is left open who helps whom (out of polite flattery, perhaps) there is no question of the efficacy of Iolaos' aid.[15] Why then in the *Euthydemus* is Socrates mysterious about the identity and the effects of his Iolaos?

Traditionally Socrates' Iolaos is identified with Ctesippus, a character with a prominent role in the dialogue as a companion of Socrates, who energetically joins in the discussion with the two sophists.[16] Recent scholars, however, have been sceptical.[17] De Vries, for example, thinks the potential mood of the verbs in our passage ('If my Iolaos should come, he would do rather the opposite') implies that no-one present is referred to. He suggests that Iolaos is 'Socrates' fictional helper, whose eventual support could only make things worse'.[18] But surely it makes little sense to say, without qualification, that someone's plight is so severe that help could only make it *worse*. A predicament might be so hopeless that help would be of little or no avail, but that is not the situation Socrates describes. His problem is precisely one in which the prospect of help threatens a move from bad to worse. So a precise identification of Socrates' Iolaos would be useful, for it would help to explain why the very thought of his help is alarming rather than reassuring. That rules out a purely fictional and neutral source of help. I suggest we take another look at Ctesippus.

It is not unusual for Plato to present encounters between Socrates and sophists as competitions for the attentions of the young, located at important moments of decision in their lives. In the *Protagoras*, for example, Socrates and Protagoras take each other on for the support of Hippocrates (cf. 310d), and in the *Phaedrus* Socrates' respondent is poised between the attractions of Lysianic and Socratic rhetoric. The discussion in the *Euthydemus* ostensibly concerns the welfare of Cleinias, a young aristocratic Athenian (275a–b).[19] But the sophistic brothers, after initially sitting next to Cleinias and using him as the butt of their opening sallies, take little further interest in him.

It is Socrates whom Cleinias makes for on first entering the gymnasium (273b1) and who gently coaxes him along in constructive dialectic that contrasts with the bewildering eristic of the sophists (278e–279a, 288d–e). And if Socrates has a rival for the attentions of Cleinias it is not the sophists but Ctesippus, who follows Cleinias into the gymnasium as one of those competing for his love (273a7). Indeed much of his conduct during the discussion is aimed at impressing Cleinias: he moves seats to be nearer Cleinias (274c2), he grows angry at a perceived suggestion that he might

[14] K. Dorter, *Dialogue* (1970), p. 570 suggests that Socrates' two opponents here are the case against immortality and the consequent threat of misology. While it is true that misology is not raised as a threat by Socrates until after this passage (as D. Gallop, *Plato Phaedo* (Oxford, 1975), p. 173 poins out), it is nevertheless striking how often in Plato discussion of coming to the aid of arguments occurs in contexts where arguments encounter the challenge of eristic or *antilogia*. See further below.

[15] R. Burger, *The Phaedo: A Platonic Labyrinth* (New Haven, 1984), p. 160 suggests, opaquely, that it is Phaedo who comes to Socrates' aid, demonstrating the 'impurity of hypothetical reasoning'.

[16] See, for example, the references *ad loc.* in the edition of E. H. Glifford (Oxford, 1905).

[17] Cf. R. K. Sprague (tr.), *Plato's Euthydemus* (Indianapolis, 1965), p. 47 n. 75, R. S. W. Hawtrey, *Commentary on Plato's Euthydemus* (Philadelphia, 1981), p. 159, R. Waterfield in T. J. Saunders, op. cit. (n.11), 358 n. 1.

[18] G. J. De Vries, 'Notes on Some Passages in the *Euthydemus*', *Mnemosyne* 25 (1972), 42–55, p. 51.

[19] There is also, mirrored in the outer frame of the dialogue, the choice facing Crito's son Critoboulos (271b2, 306d3ff.).

wish him harm (283e1), and when he succeeds in amusing Cleinias with a dialectical move he 'swells to ten times his size' (300d6, surely a sexual reference). Socrates describes Ctesippus as handsome and well-bred (καλός τε κἀγαθὸς τὴν φύσιν) but wild on account of his youth (ὑβριστὴς διὰ τὸ νέος εἶναι, 273a8–b1). Although keen on argument (φιλήκοος 274c3) his wildness appears as violent outbursts of temper (e.g. 283e1, 284d7) or an absence of restraint (e.g. 294d4, 300d3).[20] In the *Lysis*, in which he also appears, Ctesippus is again a contentious and excessive character, described at one point as a teacher of eristic (211b–c).

In the *Euthydemus* Ctesippus sets himself against the brothers' fallacious reasoning. Although it is common, it is surely too simple a reading of the dialogue's artistry to suppose therefore that Ctesippus' role is to be identified without qualification with that of Socrates.[21] It may have contributed to a sympathetic view of Ctesippus that he is one of those present on the last day with Socrates in prison (*Phaedo* 59b). But even Crito, although a devoted disciple, is pictured less than flatteringly in the *Euthydemus* and in the dialogue that bears his name. And in any event, if Ctesippus were just a faithful, albeit imperfect, follower of Socrates, his prominent role in the dialogue would court redundancy, save as an artificial device for achieving variety.

Ctesippus' role in the *Euthydemus* is in fact more complex than that of a simple Socratic. In his opposition to the sophists Ctesippus associates himself *prima facie* with Socrates, but in his desire for Cleinias he is potentially at odds with Socrates. And the exuberant extent of Ctesippus' enjoyment and participation in the brothers' game of logic-chopping soon gives rise to concern about his motives and orientation. His antics suggest that in the final analysis his support for the Socratic cause may be somewhat deceptive. This is doubtless the significance of an oblique reference by Socrates to Cleinias that wisdom is a prize to be sought 'from those who profess to be lovers, foreign *or fellow-citizen*' (282b2).[22] The foreigners are Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, the Athenian is Ctesippus. In short Ctesippus emerges as an ambivalent figure, whose partiality for the sophists' art makes him a Socratic ally of dubious value. It is not surprising therefore that Socrates does not choose him as respondent in the protreptic sections of the dialogue, nor does Ctesippus make any contributions to them. Just like the brothers, Ctesippus belongs to the strictly eristic sections of the dialogue.[23] We have to face the possibility that as the action proceeds Ctesippus, who was introduced into the dialogue as a supporter of Socrates, is portrayed as less and less like Socrates and more and more like his opponents.

Putative supporters of Socrates can receive rough handling in Plato. Compare the discussion of a poem of Simonides in the *Protagoras* (336–348), a passage whose comic strategies strongly resemble much of the *Euthydemus*. Protagoras' exposition of

[20] Cf. R. G. Hoerber, 'Character Portrayal in Plato's *Lysis*', *Classical Journal* 41 (1945–6), 271–3, p. 272.

[21] Cf. R. K. Sprague, op. cit. (n.17), p. 12, 'The sophists ... are obviously the villains of the piece, whereas Socrates and Ctesippus are equally obviously the heroes'; 'Plato's Sophistry', *PAS* supp. vol. 51 (1977), 45–61, p. 54, 'Ctesippus expresses the reader's reactions by functioning as a kind of chorus character here'; Hawtrey, op. cit. (n. 17), p. 13, 'the whole portrait of Ctesippus is too sympathetic for us to doubt that Plato intended us to see him as being in the end "on the side of the angels".'

[22] P. Friedlander, *Plato* (Princeton, 1962), ii. 180 describes Ctesippus as representing 'the false mode of loving'.

[23] Cf. S. Scolnicov, 'Plato's *Euthydemus*: A Study on the Relations between Logic and Education', *Scripta Classica Israelica* 6 (1981), 19–29, p. 26, '[Ctesippus] can see through the sophists' tricks, but because of his psychic make-up he is unable to participate in serious discussion.' Scolnicov oddly regards Ctesippus' disqualification from serious discussion as arising from his youthful impetuosity. Yet Cleinias is considerably younger than Ctesippus.

an alleged contradiction in a poem of Simonides draws great applause from the audience, and Socrates describes himself as struck dizzy like a man hit by a good boxer (339e1, cf. *Euthydemus* 303a4). He turns to Prodicus, the celebrated authority on synonyms, and asks him to come to the aid of (βοηθεῖν) Simonides, his fellow Cean, summoning him with another heroic analogy, this time the way that Scamander called on Simois against Achilles in the *Iliad*. Prodicus' assistance is by proxy: Socrates twice uses Prodican distinctions between meanings of words to defend Simonides against the charge of contradiction, each of which is enthusiastically approved by Prodicus, presumably since they imply respect for his art. But Socrates presently retracts his suggestions as clearly invalid, remarking that Prodicus was only joking, out of a desire to test Protagoras (341d6). Prodicus had in fact indicated no such intention, and the effect of Socrates' manoeuvre is to expose Prodicus as committed to a strategy now revealed as purely verbal and unworthy of serious attention.[24] Prodicus' assistance, like Ctesippus' perhaps, turns out to be deeply ambiguous, more revealing of the character of the would-be helper than genuinely helpful. Socrates can, it seems, invoke assistance with great irony, ultimately leaving his putative helper hopelessly exposed, and is apparently unconcerned that such a course might seem (to us) somewhat ungrateful.[25]

Like many of the causes of humour in the *Euthydemus*, 'coming to the aid of' (βοήθεια) is elsewhere often a serious matter in Plato. In the discussion of the weakness of writing in the *Phaedrus*, for example, it is the responsibility of one who knows the truth to supply assistance to his written statements by an oral defence of what he has written (278c5). Hence to come to the aid of statements is obviously to defend them, to vindicate them against stupid or malicious misunderstanding, to refute sophistical objections to them.[26] In the *Theaetetus* Socrates has to come to the aid of Protagoras to save him from the attacks of *antilogia* and to redirect attention to the substance of his views (165e–168c). And in the *Republic* Socrates thinks Glaucon's case against justice too strong for him to come to its rescue, but he does not know how he can refuse to try, for it may be impious to watch justice reviled (362d6ff., 368b4ff.). In the *Gorgias* 'coming to the aid of' is an important touchstone for the different perspectives of Callicles and Socrates. Callicles sees little benefit in philosophical principles that cannot guarantee the ability to render assistance in court, either to oneself or to others (486a–c, 522c4–6), whereas Socrates believes that they supply the greatest form of assistance one could wish for (522c7–e6).

In the *Euthydemus* the pattern is comically inverted: Socrates initially invites the brothers to show him how they can teach 'coming to one's own assistance' (αὐτὸν αὑτῷ βοηθεῖν) in the courts, a request they greet with guffaws (273c8), and one whole section of the dialogue (from which our opening passage comes) is introduced as the brothers' response to Socrates' appeal to them, as the Dioscuroi, to save him and Cleinias from their perplexity (293a ff.).[27] In each of these cases there is a consistent

[24] Cf. R. Scodel, 'Literary Interpretation in Plato's Protagoras', *Ancient Philosophy* 6 (1986), 25–37, M. C. Stokes, *Plato's Socratic Conversations* (London, 1986), pp. 313–22, D. Frede, 'The Impossibility of Perfection: Socrates' Criticism of Simonides' Poem in the *Protagoras*', *Review of Metaphysics* 39 (1986), 729–53.

[25] Yet those who wish to deny that Ctesippus is Socrates' Iolaos explicitly cite ungratefulness as a reason, e.g. Hawtrey, op. cit. (n. 17), *ad loc.*

[26] Cf. G. Vlastos, *Platonic Studies* (Princeton, 1973), p. 395. Cf. *Ap.* 34a7: Socrates can call on his associates (those supposedly corrupted by him) and their relatives to assist him (ἐμοὶ βοηθεῖν) rebut charges of corruption and sophistry (making the weaker argument the stronger); or *Phd.* 88e1 on coming to the rescue of the argument.

[27] Socrates had also intervened decisively and significantly earlier in the dialogue to rescue Cleinias from a third fall at the hands of the brothers (277d1).

pattern: the occasion for coming to the aid of arguments or arguers is when they face the threat of sophistic attack.

To return to Ctesippus: it is not long after Socrates expresses apprehension about his Iolaos that Ctesippus takes over Socrates' role as respondent. 'Taking over' (ἐκδεξάμενος 298b4) is exactly the verb used, in the vivid image of ball-tossing, for the way one brother assumes the lead in fallacious arguing from the other (277b4). In so doing, Ctesippus parallels the more positive role Cleinias had taken in his second protreptic conversation with Socrates (e.g. 290b1ff.). Ctesippus was a passive spectator in the first section of sophistic argument, and in the second his contribution was characterised by angry and abusive reactions and interjections. But for much of the third scene of sophistic argument, the most slapstick and logically wild section of the dialogue, Socrates remains silent, leaving the field to Ctesippus, who now enjoys his most prominent participation in the debate. He not only responds to the brothers' questions but also frequently frames his own and forces the brothers themselves on to the defensive as respondents.

As Socrates later observes in his ironic summing-up of the discussion, Ctesippus' example, which Socrates says he has watched very closely, shows that anyone at all, of any age or intelligence, can learn the eristic art very quickly (303e6, 304a4). Ease of imitation (another piece of mock praise from Socrates) is a point frequently made against the sophists' art (272b3, c7, 273d9, etc.), suggesting that it is not a real skill.[28] They themselves had learned it quickly (272b8–9), so that in this respect Ctesippus is again bracketed with them. There is a strong contrast between this section and Ctesippus' earlier participation in the discussion. His entrance there was prompted by annoyance at a fancied slight to Cleinias (283e1), and his response to being used as the butt for fallacies was a mix of sensible qualifications (e.g. 284b1, c2–3) and casting insults at the brothers (284e2ff., 294c4, etc.). The brothers are also abusive, calling Socrates an old fool (287b2, 295c11). Indeed resort to insults is a feature that Ctesippus and the brothers have in common, as if to suggest an ignorance of the distinction between argument and abuse, even though Ctesippus early on himself insists on the importance of the distinction (285d3). In the earlier parts of the discussion Socrates had to intervene several times to calm Ctesippus down to allow the discussion to continue (e.g. 285a3, 288b3). But now, though no less abusive, Ctesippus has clearly picked up the sophists' game and is able confidently to go onto the offensive. Instead of protesting at the brothers' fallacies, that is to say, he now happily joins in with them, and shares their mocking laughter (300d3, cf. 288a8ff., 278c1).[29]

What Ctesippus does in the third eristic section of the dialogue is to take on Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, *but at their own game*: he too plays logical knockabout, indulging in fallacious argument, what Socrates calls tripping people up by pulling out the stool they expect to sit on (278b4). He silences Euthydemus (299c8), and then turns Dionysodorus' argument against him when he tries to support his brother (299e3–4). He forces Euthydemus to insist on qualifications (296a8), and caps the brothers' quibbles (triumphantly at 300d4–5). He proves as adept as the brothers at the exploitation of simple verbal ambiguities: his play on 'theirs' (ἑαυτῶν, 299e5ff.), for example, is as gross as any of the brothers' equivocations. Ctesippus

[28] It recalls Protagoras' guarantee of immediate improvement to his pupils (*Prt.* 318a); cf. Sprague, 'Plato's Sophistry', p. 56.

[29] Cf. *Grg.* 473e: 'Is this another form of refutation, that when someone says something, you laugh, instead of refuting him?'

clearly has a taste for this sort of all-in wrestling, the art of apparent, rather than real, refutation.

In his desire for victory Ctesippus hopes above all to impress Cleinias (300c1). He is successful, too, and it is Cleinias' delighted laughter at Ctesippus' performance that brings Socrates back into the discussion to chide them for laughing at serious and fine matters (300e1). Under Ctesippus' influence Cleinias has forgotten Socrates' distinction, elaborated in response to the sophists' initial sally, between preliminary play and the serious business of seeking virtue (277dff.). Like the brothers (once again) Ctesippus' antics have reduced matters to a joke.

And it is at this point that the text confirms the identification of Ctesippus as Socrates' Iolaos. By the time Socrates resumes as respondent, the discussion has become chaotic. Socrates fares poorly, 'knocked out speechless' (303a4) by the combined potency of Dionysodorus and Euthydemus. Thereupon Ctesippus *comes to his aid* (*ἰὼν ὡς βοηθήσων* 303a5), exclaiming 'Bravo, by *Heracles* (*πυππὰξ ὦ Ἡράκλεις*) what a fine speech!', only to have Dionysodorus (the crab) turn that immediately into a bizarre fallacy, asking 'Is Heracles a bravo, or is the bravo Heracles?' This is the final and most blatant fallacy of all in the dialogue, turning on the taking of an adverb as a proper name and an exclamation as a predication.[30] It is unusual among the fallacies in the dialogue in having no substantial philosophical analogue. Ctesippus exclaims that he must admit defeat, for the brothers are invincible (*ἀμάχω*).[31] In this passage we have explicit verbal recollection of the passage with which we began: Socrates once again expresses a need for assistance, and this time it is clear that Ctesippus is the one who comes to his aid. Once again there is a reference to Heracles, now openly farcical, and the aid Socrates receives is immediately followed by a concession of defeat to the brothers (in the dual number). This is where the encounter between Socrates and the brothers ends, with defeat. Ctesippus shares with the brothers a taste for mocking laughter, but the brothers have the last laugh. Recall Socrates' doubts about his Iolaos' help: has Ctesippus' assistance actually made things worse?

Ctesippus is thus not just a crude caricature of Socrates, analogous to his boorish *alter ego* in the *Hippias Major*; he is importantly a perverted caricature. As a rule Socrates welcomes outspokenness, since it permits sincere and direct engagement, but Ctesippus distorts this into insults.[32] As Socrates says of Ctesippus' interrogation of the brothers, 'in the end there was nothing that Ctesippus did not demand straight out from them whether they knew it, *not even the most foul things*' (294d3–4). Ctesippus' problem is that he can't distinguish seriousness from play, exactly the problem the sophists suffer from, according to Socrates' diagnosis (278c1 etc.). Ctesippus falls for play (e.g. about the not-being of Cleinias) as if it were serious, and yet by the end, in defiance of Socrates' explicit instructions, he has wholeheartedly adopted the brothers' farcical approach. One is reminded of Socrates' remark in the *Republic* (539b3ff.), that youthful attraction to *antilogia* and misuse of it brings philosophy into disrepute. That is just what happens at the end of the *Euthydemus*.[33]

[30] For the odd word *πυππάξ* cf. Aristophanes, *Eq.* 680, *ὑπερπυππάζειν*, 'congratulate'. The fallacy is slightly less hideous in Greek than English, since the exclamation's form is similar to that of a noun.

[31] He affirms this 'by Poseidon', perhaps recalling the crab recently arrived from the sea (297c8).

[32] E.g. *Grg.* 487a–d, where Socrates welcomes Callicles' frankness (*παρρησία*).

[33] Cf. also *Ap.* 27c–d, where youthful imitations of Socratic examinations contribute to Socrates' bad reputation.

III WHY IS SOCRATES DUBIOUS ABOUT HIS IOLAOS' HELP?

The contrast between Ctesippus and Socrates turns on their different strategies for dealing with the brothers: Ctesippus quite clearly attempts to beat them at their own game, to outdo them in eristic. Socrates on the other hand is less transparent. Sometimes his response is to interrupt and to point out that he is not deceived by the purely verbal nature of their arguments. Hence he characterises the brothers' activity as mere play, analogous to religious practices preliminary to the main ritual of initiation, and invites them to become serious (277d6ff.). Generally speaking, he maintains an amused and unconcerned detachment, congratulating the brothers on their expertise with heavy irony (e.g. 277e5, 288b6, 303b7–c1). Sometimes Socrates employs his favourite anti-sophistic device of self-refutation (*peritropē*, cf. *Tht* 169–71), drawing out unsuspected consequences of their fallacies: for example, eristic depends on demonstrating contradictions, but the brothers' denial of false speaking makes contradiction impossible (286c4).[34] Similarly, they claim that if we know anything we know everything, which undermines their profession as teachers (287a8). Hence Socrates' delicious question, after forcing Euthydemus to criticise a move by Dionysodorus: 'So do you think your brother who knows everything is not saying what's true?' (297b1).

Another tactic Socrates standardly employs consists of resisting a choice between exclusive alternatives or declining to omit relevant qualifications from his answers. So for example in responding to questions about kinship arising from the mention of Heracles' nephew Iolaos, Socrates' qualifications thwart Dionysodorus' desire to bring out a contradiction of 'brother and not a brother' (297e1ff., cf. 296a1ff.). Failure to observe appropriate distinctions and qualifications is offered as a diagnosis of eristic as opposed to dialectic in the *Republic* (454a1ff.) and insistence on relevant qualifications is the dialectical tactic recommended by Aristotle in such circumstances (*SE* 175b28). In the *Euthydemus* the result is consistent frustration of the sophists' tactics.[35]

My fundamental point here is that Socrates' tactics do *not* include using the brothers' tools against them, that is, outdoing them in the deployment of fallacious argument. Such a procedure would in any case be inconsistent with Socrates' general principles of dialectical conduct, and in particular with his explicit comments in this dialogue. In his summing-up at the end of the discussion in the *Euthydemus*, for example, Socrates describes the brothers' distinctiveness:

> I know well that there are very few people like you who would welcome such arguments, and the rest understand them so little that I know well they would be more ashamed refuting others by means of such arguments than being themselves refuted (303d2–5).

The contrast is repeated emphatically in Crito's response, when he agrees that he is one of those 'who would prefer to be refuted by such [*sc.* fallacious] arguments than to refute' (304c8–d1).

Socrates' point importantly recalls his profession in the *Gorgias*:

> I am one of those who would happily be refuted if I say something untrue, and would happily refute another if he says something untrue. However I would no less happily be refuted myself than refute, for I regard that as a greater good, in so far as it is a greater good to be saved oneself from the greatest harm than to save another. And I think there is no harm for a man as great as a false opinion about the matters of our discussion (458a1–b1).

[34] Cf. 288a4, 303d–e. On the Socratic employment of the dialectical tactic of self-refutation see M. F. Burnyeat, 'Protagoras and Self-Refutation in Plato's *Theaetetus*', *Phil. Rev.* 85 (1976), 172–95.

[35] 'Gun-spiking', as it is nicely put by Sprague, 'Plato's Sophistry', pp. 54–6.

Together these passages convey a consistent Socratic attitude toward eristic argument, distinguishing Socrates from its practitioners. In the *Euthydemus* his remark is pointed: it accurately describes Socrates himself, who despite persistent provocation resists eristic; but it does not capture Ctesippus, who out of desire for victory in debate and love succumbs to its temptations.

My claim that Socrates resists eristic will surprise those scholars whose Socrates freely uses fallacious arguments, either as a general strategy or at least against sophists. They hold that Socrates does indeed engage in eristic, sometimes parodically, as he uses rhetoric, but also as shock tactics, to open up a discussion and facilitate dialectic. So in the *Protagoras*, for example, it is held that Protagoras co-operates in philosophical discussion (351ff.) only after he has been out-gunned in an eristic exchange over the interpretation of the poem of Simonides (339a–349a). So too, where dialectic is impossible in the face of sophists committed to eristic point-scoring, as in the *Euthydemus*, it is maintained that it is permissible for Socrates to engage in eristic to out-do them, with the important proviso that Socratic eristic is not aimed at victory. It is an employment of sophistic means, but not for sophistic ends. For it is governed, so it is claimed, by an ultimately educational goal, perhaps for the sake of the audience, if not for the victim, who, like Euthydemus or Dionysodorus, may be beyond help.[36]

It is worth noting what a remarkable position Socrates would find himself in if, as these scholars suggest, he were himself to adopt the sophists' tactics. For he explicitly characterises the brothers' wisdom as 'prowess in verbal competition and in the refutation of what is said, *regardless of whether it is true or false*' (272a9–b1). But in view of his own frequent attestations to the contrary, it would be hard to accept that Socrates shared such disregard for truthfulness.[37] Nor does it take much reflection to see how odd and inconsistent it would be for Socrates knowingly and deliberately to engage in unsound argument, when he is someone for whom consistency is of supreme importance.[38]

In the *Crito* Socrates not only outlaws acts of injustice, he also issues a ban on retaliation: one may never repay injustice with injustice, no matter how grave the provocation (48c–d). And in the *Gorgias* Socrates famously maintains that to suffer injustice oneself is better than to commit it (474cff.). This point, as we have seen, is explicitly echoed even within the *Euthydemus*: in his summing up at the end of the dialogue Socrates acidly observes that very few would appreciate the brothers' eristic style, most people 'being more ashamed to refute others by means of such arguments than themselves to be refuted' (303d3–4). In the *Gorgias* Socrates describes himself as 'one of those who would gladly be refuted if what I say is not true' (458a1–b1). But if so, how could he himself consistently engage in fallacious argument? How could he hope to advance his search for truth by slipping in a false premise or a sophistical inference? Certainly, it will not do to explain a Socratic recourse to eristic in this dialogue simply as a response to its prior employment by the brothers.

[36] The classic exposition of the view that Socrates uses eristic tactics for his own ends is P. Friedlander, op. cit. ii. 181ff. More recent advocates of widespread employment of deliberate fallacy include W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* iv (Cambridge, 1975), p. 275, R. K. Sprague, *Plato's Use of Fallacy* (London, 1962), B. A. Sichel, 'Is Socrates a Sophist?', *Paideia* 5 (1976), 141–58, p. 166, G. Klosko 'Criteria of Fallacy and Sophistry for Use in the Analysis of Platonic Dialogues', *CQ* 33 (1983), 363–74, and H. Teloh, *Socratic Education in Plato's Early Dialogues* (Notre Dame, 1986), p. 18.

[37] E.g. *Ap.* 17b8, *Ion* 523de, *Hp.Mi.* 288d5.

[38] 'Better for my lyre to be out of tune... and for the majority of mankind to oppose me, rather than that I... should be out of tune with and contradict myself' (*Grg.* 482c).

The issue has been sharpened by recent analyses of the intensely *ad hominem* character of Socratic argument.[39] They reveal that Socrates typically uses his opponents' own premises and methods of inference to arrive at conclusions that confront them with a contradiction. Such tactics in no way imply Socratic endorsement of those premises or methods, though they have the convenience that the interlocutor is deprived of a retort by his own professional pretensions and methods. But the *Euthydemus* presents Socrates with very special opponents, wholesale manipulators of fallacy, who have no sincere beliefs for him to latch on to as premises and whose persistent clowning prevents any formal elenchus from getting off the ground. Does Socrates respond by employing their own eristic techniques against them? Or would that conflict with his own principles of sincerity and commitment to argument? It would of course be naive to regard Socratic dialectical conduct, especially with hostile partners, as wholly open or devoid of deviousness. Socrates can be wily in argument, and his highly public focusing of attention onto his interlocutors' own pretensions and characteristic procedures seldom makes things easy for them. But it is one thing for Socrates to leave a respondent floundering in the dark, and quite another for him to introduce as his own propositions that he knows to be false, or to trade on inferences he knows to be invalid.[40] If Ctesippus, on the other hand, suffers from no such scruples, we can see why Socrates might have doubts about him.[41]

IV DOES SOCRATES COMMIT FOUL PLAY WITH THE FINE?

We cannot leave the issue, however, without examining a passage in the *Euthydemus* itself that is often read as a striking example of Socrates knowingly engaging in fallacy (300e–301c). When Socrates criticises Ctesippus and Cleinias for making serious and fine things a laughing-matter (300e3), Dionysodorus characteristically takes a word at random to launch the next fallacy, asking 'have you ever seen a fine thing?' To Socrates' answer that he has seen many, Dionysodorus asks 'were they different from the fine, or the same as the fine?' Dionysodorus here introduces the concept of the fine, familiar to readers of the *Hippias Major* and other dialogues, mentioning it twice as if to emphasise the distinction between it and the many fine things.[42] Presumably the strategy behind Dionysodorus' question is as usual dilemmatic, each horn

[39] See especially M. C. Stokes, op. cit. (n. 24), K. Seeskin, *Dialogue and Discovery: A Study in Socratic Method* (Albany, 1986), and also R. Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic* (Oxford, 1953), pp. 15–17.

[40] R. Kraut, *Socrates and the State* (Princeton, 1984), 263ff, 294ff. nicely illustrates the point. He believes that Socrates on occasion defeats an opponent through sleight of hand, but that his sin is venial, since what it does is shorten the argument, not change its outcome. Although Socrates is prepared, for example, to employ an opponent's dubious belief for the sake of an argument, without revealing his own opposition to that belief, he does so only within an argument whose conclusion he himself affirms. This conclusion could have been reached, as a matter of logic, from premises other than those actually employed for dialectical purposes. This suggests that the elenchus is, as all would agree, an unusual form of argument, but not that it is indistinguishable from eristic.

[41] Similar issues are raised by Aristotle's treatment of eristic, cf. G. E. L. Owen, 'Dialectic and Eristic in the Treatment of the Forms', in his *Logic, Science and Dialectic* (London, 1986), 221–38, p. 224.

[42] It is amusing that Dionysodorus himself offers this distinction, in view of Socrates' difficulties in getting other interlocutors, such as Hippias (*Hp.Ma.* 287e1ff.), to grasp it. Note however that Dionysodorus speaks only loosely of the fine, and it is Socrates who refers more precisely to the fine *itself*.

threatening a contradiction: if fine things are different from the fine, then fine things are not fine; if fine things are the same as the fine, then there is only one fine thing, not many; in each case Socrates is drawn into a contradiction.

Socrates confides to Crito (and hence to us) that he was once again baffled, and his grumbling intervention had got what it deserved. His reply nevertheless succeeds in escaping the dilemma: 'fine things are different from the fine itself, but some fineness is present to each of them' (301a3–4). Socrates' middle way resists the exclusive alternatives, permitting fine things to be both the same as and different from the fine itself. His use of 'being present to' as a tentative model for predication or property possession recalls other contexts in Plato where a similar account of the relationship between a unique quality and its many participants is developed. So it is not surprising that there has been considerable discussion of the extent to which the mature theory of Forms is referred to in this passage.[43] It is sufficient for us to note, however, that once again we have an eristic sally introduced by the brothers that reflects a concern taken seriously elsewhere in the dialogues.

Dionysodorus now has two Socratic propositions to fasten upon:

(1) Fine things are different from the fine itself (301a3–4).

(2) Each fine thing is fine by some fineness being present to it (301a4).

He first tries to extract an embarrassing consequence by a characteristically gross misreading of (2), taking 'being present' as the physical proximity of some particular concrete thing:

(3) So you are an ox, if an ox is present to you; and you are Dionysodorus, because Dionysodorus is present to you (301a5).[44]

Socrates ironically rebukes him for blasphemy, presumably because Socrates unlike Dionysodorus is not divine – Socrates regularly describes the brothers as quasi-divine.[45] So Dionysodorus proceeds to summon Socrates' notion of 'being different' from (1), the resultant verbal obfuscation also containing an element of genuine puzzlement:

(4) How could the different be different by (a) different (thing) being present to (a) different (thing) (301a8)?

Dionysodorus' question is so spectacularly opaque and open-ended that it permits a multitude of readings, and no-one could be certain in which direction he is heading.[46] But here is one reconstruction of the problem his question might be thought to raise:

If (5) x is F by some F-ness being present to it,

then (6) x is different by some difference being present to it.

[43] E.g. *Hp.Ma.* 289d6, 294c–d, *Phd.* 100d, *Lys.* 217c, *Prm.* 130b–c; see most recently R. D. Mohr, 'Forms in Plato's *Euthydemus*', *Hermes* 112 (1984), 296–300. But for the view that the language of forms can occur neutrally, without commitment to the full-blown theory, see P. Woodruff, *Plato Hippias Major* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 166–7.

[44] R. K. Sprague, 'Parmenides' Sail and Dionysodorus' Ox', *Phronesis* 12 (1967), 91–8 compares this passage to *Prm.* 131b.

[45] E.g. he likens them to Proteus (288b8) or the Dioscuroi (293a2).

[46] Particular problems are posed by the use of the article and the repeated ἕτερον. Does τὸ ἕτερον designate a substantive ('the different') or rather the first of a pair of distinct items (in accordance with Greek idiom ἕτερος ... ἕτερος ..., 'the one ... the other ...')? Sprague, *Plato's Use of Fallacy*, pp. 26–7, Hawtrey, op. cit. (n. 17), *ad loc.*, and Guthrie, op. cit. (n. 36), p. 278 n. 2 take it to be the former (Sprague sees the substantive in question as a Form of Difference), whereas M. Canto, *Platon Euthydème* (Paris, 1989), p. 227 takes it in the latter sense. Certainly the absurd effect derives from the repeated use of ἕτερον, whose homonymy Dionysodorus is exploiting. See also Mohr, op. cit. (n. 43), p. 298, who argues that the question serves to establish the transcendence of Forms. Nothing turns on the substitution of προσγενέσθαι in (3) for παρεῖναι in (2), which is paralleled elsewhere in Plato (e.g. *Hp.Ma.* 289dff, *Phd.* 1005d5–6).

Since x is itself a case of 'the different', from (1), Dionysodorus substitutes 'the different' for x:

hence (7) the different is different by some difference being present to it;

hence (8) but how can the different be different when something different is present to it?

The expression of (8) is of course rendered opaque in the text by Dionysodorus' further substitution of 'different' for 'it', and 'something different' for 'some difference'. But the problem his question poses may perhaps be brought out thus: the presence of 'some difference' to a subject gives it a different character; so even when the subject is the different, if it has present to it something different, one would similarly expect the different to change, i.e. to become different from different, and hence not different, perhaps even the same.

There is, as usual in this dialogue, a serious issue underlying (8), about how Socrates' proposed model of predication ('being present to') works; about how, that is, a subject takes on a character (admitted to be different from it) by that character's 'being present to' it. It is tempting to suppose that under the influence of the Socratic *elenchus* Dionysodorus has been induced, however momentarily, into expressing genuine puzzlement about an issue of significance, and that (8) somehow conveys that puzzlement. But in view of Dionysodorus' and his brother's behaviour elsewhere it is more likely that his point at (8) is as superficial and verbal as ever, and if his question gives a hint of substantial issues, they remain textual undercurrents.

Dionysodorus' question poses a challenge, in the form of a repudiating *reductio*. By putting the relation at issue in the form 'the different is different', he thinks he has seen a way to generate, characteristically, a specious contradiction from the analysis that Socrates has given of how a fine thing is different from the fine.[47] Dionysodorus presumably hopes that the verbal opacity of his fourfold repetition of 'different' will suffice to confuse and allow him to escape. Similarly, although he wants to take advantage of Socrates' description of fine things as different from the fine itself, by using a single phrase ('the different') to stand for both the fine and a fine thing, and by applying one description ('different') to each (dropping all qualifications), he obscures the distinction which he himself had originally sought.

Socrates' response is to point to the reversal of roles that Dionysodorus has unwittingly facilitated. It is now Dionysodorus rather than his victim who is on the defensive, and who is admitting perplexity (ἀπορεῖς). Socrates wryly observes to Crito 'now I was attempting to imitate the wisdom (*sophia*) of the two men, since I was enthusiastic for it' (301b1–2). Imitation of the sophists has been Ctesippus' domain hitherto, but here is Socrates expressly describing himself as adopting that same course. This is doubtless why many scholars infer that Socrates is sincerely signalling his intention to meet the sophists with their own weapons, that is, by arguing fallaciously.[48] But in fact all Socrates has done is challenge Dionysodorus that he, like his victims, has been caught in perplexity. This is a perfectly valid dialectical manoeuvre in itself and especially appropriate for an opponent one of whose claims was that he knew everything (294a). In now describing himself to Crito as imitating the brothers' wisdom Socrates need mean no more than that he is following their

[47] Sprague, *Plato's Use of Fallacy*, pp. 25ff. takes this section to be levelling a sincerely Eleatic critique against Platonic dualism. But that the verbal issue raised here has an Eleatic dimension does not turn the brothers into Eleatic spokesmen.

[48] Sprague, 'Plato's Sophistry', p. 56, *Plato's Use of Fallacy*, p. 27; Hawtrey, op. cit. (n. 19), *ad loc*; Mohr, op. cit. (n.43), p. 298; L. Meridier (ed.), *Platon* (Paris, 1970) v. 111.

example in trapping an opponent into a confession of perplexity.[49] Certainly nothing in his remark by itself commits Socrates to an abandonment of his principles in favour of a policy of low punches, and after all of Socrates' burlesque of the brothers hitherto it would be odd to take his words here without the irony they surely require.[50] His remark also fits in with his repeated jibes about ease of imitation and learning as a characteristic of the sophist's teaching (cf. 272b3, c7, 273d9).

In response to Socrates' accusation of perplexity, Dionysodorus asks 'how could I and all other men[51] fail to be perplexed about what is not (ὃ μὴ ἔστι)?' (301b–4). His tactic is to look for sanctuary in that great sophistic standby, the impossibility of what is not. Earlier in the dialogue, for example, Euthydemus supported an eristic insistence on the impossibility of contradiction with a similarly rhetorical question 'for how could one urge what is not?' (286e7).[52] There is also a fallacy employed earlier (297dff.), which turns on the substitution of 'is not' for 'is different': if Chaeredemus is different from a father, then he is not a father; if Socrates is different from a stone, or gold, then Socrates is not a stone, or gold. And the third of the brothers' fallacies (283cff.) converted wanting someone to become different (e.g. wanting Cleinias to become wise) into wanting him *not to be*, at which implication Ctesippus lost his temper. Hence predications of difference, the brothers standardly maintain, introduce notions of not-being, which are illegitimate. On such a model, Dionysodorus seems to be proposing, how would we handle 'the different is different'? His invitation to Socrates therefore amounts to a challenge to demonstrate the intelligibility of the locution 'x is different', especially in the case x stands for the different itself.[53]

To his surprise Socrates seizes the opportunity at once, offering Dionysodorus simple examples of self-predication: 'Is not the fine fine and the base base?' (301b5–6). 'If I think so' is Dionysodorus' lame effort at a relativist escape from what he fears is coming, but it fails.[54] For Socrates proceeds with parallels: 'And the same is the same and the different is different? For surely at any rate the different is not the same, and I would have thought that not even a child[55] was perplexed about the

[49] Cf. Waterfield in Saunders, op. cit. (n. 11), p. 365: 'Chiefly he means no more than that he is taking over the sophists' role as questioner.'

[50] No-one would doubt the irony in Socrates' similar remarks elsewhere in the dialogue: 'Now I intend to become their pupil' (272b); 'Will this (wisdom of yours) never be with me as my very own?' (301e); 'I knew that something fine would emerge from their questions, and besides I wanted to hear it as soon as possible' (302a); 'You must come with us to be taught by these two' (304b).

[51] Dionysodorus' appeal to the assembled company for support in his ignorance conflicts with his earlier claim about universal knowledge, and contrasts with the Socratic use of universal assent for premises in the protreptic sections of the dialogue (cf. 278e, 279a–c, 282a).

[52] The text has raised doubts whether the question should be assigned to Euthydemus or to Dionysodorus. See H. Neitzel, 'Platon, *Euthydemos* 286e', *Hermes* 112 (1984), 372–7.

[53] We should note that although Dionysodorus' question included a reference to 'being present', that relationship is now receding from the centre of attention, being eclipsed by the multiple repetition of 'different'. Socrates is thus not to be blamed for ignoring the relationship of presence in his response, since it is clear that Dionysodorus is less interested in exploring that relationship than he is in alleging that to be different is what is not, i.e. is not possible at all. And such a claim is of course open to refutation by counter-example.

[54] Only recently much the same words had expressed Dionysodorus' triumphant boast (296d4). Socrates will ironically echo them a little later (301e6).

[55] What even a child knows is an image of irresistible truth: as Socrates says to Cleinias, even a child would know that wisdom is good fortune, 279d7; or as Polus incredulously exclaims, even a child could prove Socrates wrong (about the relative value of suffering and inflicting injustice) *Gorgias* 470c5. The use of the image here also contrasts with Dionysodorus' recent

different being different' (301b7–c2). It looks as though Socrates has successfully produced an example of the challenged locution 'x is different': Dionysodorus cannot convert 'the different is different' into 'the different is not' in his usual manner, for that would produce only 'the different is not the same', which is harmless. Nor can he deny the truth of 'the different is different', save at the price of obvious contradiction (an inversion of the brothers' normal tactic of driving their victims into contradictions). Nor on this occasion, it seems, can Euthydemus rescue his brother, but remains silent (a clear signal of dialectical embarrassment). Socrates ironically observes that, being good craftsmen, they must have deliberately overlooked this possibility. The extent of their discomfiture may be gauged by the eagerness with which Dionysodorus picks on the casual reference to crafts to launch another, unrelated fallacy.

Many scholars have found this exchange uncomfortable, and have targeted as the culprit what they take to be Socratic equivocation on the different. What disturbs them is that Dionysodorus' question seems to employ the different (*τὸ ἕτερον*) in the sense of 'something that is different', and thus challenges Socrates to justify an analysis of ordinary predication. But Socrates' response replaces ordinary predication with the special case of self-predication, taking *τὸ ἕτερον* as 'the different (itself)'.[56] It is the self-predication of the different that has disturbed.[57] Now it is indeed most unlikely that Dionysodorus has self-predication in mind in posing his question, and to that extent it is true that Socrates answers in terms other than those in which the questioner thought he was asking. But that is Dionysodorus' fault, not Socrates': for in framing his question so ambiguously (doubtless for the purpose of obfuscation) he permits a wide variety of possible interpretations, among which Socrates' self-predication of the different is a perfectly respectable candidate. Further, however skilful the dialectical footwork Socrates may show here in his manipulation of the different, there is a world of difference between it and the purely verbal equivocations of the brothers, although their superficial appearance may be similar. For Socrates is exposing a deep ambiguity in the different, whose disentanglement requires substantial philosophical work elsewhere in Plato. There is something grotesque about the equation of Socrates' move here with a typical eristic equivocation.

There is little unanimity over what account to give of Socratic self-predications.[58] Nor does Socrates give Dionysodorus or us any help here. We might note, however, that instances of self-predication are often introduced in the dialogues without fanfare, as interesting but otherwise unremarkable cases of predication.[59] Of course what it *means* for the different itself to be different may well turn out to be importantly distinct from what it means for anything else to be different, but they can each count as an acceptable case of being different.[60]

appeal to the ignorance of 'all other men' (301b4), and his earlier claim that if one knows all things always, then one knew them *as a child* (296c10).

[56] Another way in which the passage has been read is that Socrates replaces a predicative expression ('the different is different') with one of identity ('the different is the same as the different'), cf. D. M. Robinson, review of Hawtrey, op. cit. (n. 17), *JHS* 104 (1984), 206–7, Canto, op. cit. (n. 46), p. 228.

[57] Few would now agree with Sprague, *Plato's Use of Fallacy*, p. 27, that self-predication is both an un-Socratic notion and introduced here by Socrates as a deliberate fallacy. Yet it is surprising how vigorously the diagnosis of deliberate fallacy in this passage persists.

[58] Woodruff, op. cit. (n. 43), pp. 157ff. provides a useful sample of the range.

[59] E.g. *Hp.Ma.* 292e6–7, *Prt.* 330c4–5, neither of them technical contexts about Forms.

[60] Similarly, the self-predication of 'the different' requires a more complex analysis than do other self-predications, such as is explored at *Sph.* 256ff., but nothing in our passage turns on the contrast.

So Socrates has not explained how his notion of presence might account for the way in which a subject has some share of a quality that is different from it, or in what sense, if any, self-predication is a special sort of predication. But what would be the point of even attempting such an explanation to this audience? Socrates has to deal with a more immediate challenge: not defending the intelligibility of the relationship of presence, but the intelligibility of difference itself.

A hint of this comes later in the dialogue, when in his summing up of the discussion Socrates attributes to the brothers the view that 'nothing is fine or good or white or any such thing, *nor generally speaking that any different is different*' (303d7–e1). The part of the discussion that this is most likely a reference to is the current section. But Socrates has shown the brothers that at least one different is different, and he does so by attacking a flank that Dionysodorus has unwittingly exposed by his way of posing a question about difference. If, as I have argued, Socrates has consistently maintained throughout what he believes to be true, then the onus is strongly on those who would argue that here alone in the *Euthydemus*, regardless of inconsistency, Socrates openly participates in falsehood and fallacy.

In this exchange with Dionysodorus, Socrates may not have communicated all that he has in mind, or dealt with Dionysodorus in a spirit of charity. Socratic argumentation rarely does. But Socrates has not given any answers that he himself does not believe to be true, nor has he traded on superficial verbal ambiguity. So to identify Socrates' dialectical manoeuvring with wholesale manipulation of falsehood, the brothers' strategy, is to miss an important distinction between participation in dialectic and employment of eristic.[61]

This is not to say that such a distinction is obvious. There are many points of similarity, such as contentiousness and pursuit of contradiction, and not all have found these similarities superficial.[62] Eristic is customarily presented in Plato as the non-methodological pursuit of refutation regardless of truth or falsity (as Socrates says of the brothers, 272a–b). The Socratic elenchus, on the other hand, is a method of discovery, for coming to know what is true.[63] Plato emphasises the difference in *aims* of eristic and elenchus just because their methods can seem so similar.[64] Nevertheless there has to be more than aims to distinguish them, or else fallacy and falsehood would be permitted within the elenchus, and this is ruled out by Socrates' explicit descriptions of his practice. However harsh Socrates may be in argument, what seems not to be sacrificed is the need for sincerity or the demands of truthfulness and justice.[65] Dionysodorus boasts that he can refute anything, not only falsehoods (275e5), and challenges adversaries to refute him (286e1). Socrates, by contrast,

[61] That seems to me to be the failure of many scholars' judgement on Socratic tactics here: e.g. Sprague, *Plato's Use of Fallacy*, p. 278 ('deliberate nonsense'), M. Stewart, 'Plato's Sophistry', *PAS* suppl. vol. 51 (1977), 45–61, p. 31 ('Socrates... in emulation of the Sophists avoids serious philosophical engagement by petulantly blocking their questions'), Mohr, art. cit. (n. 43), p. 298 ('Socrates merely eristically exploits the amphibolous nature of τὸ ἕτερον ἕτερον').

[62] G. Ryle, *Plato's Progress* (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 126ff.; cf. J. E. Thomas, *Musings on the Meno* (The Hague, 1980), pp. 16–20. Cf. G. Hinrichs, 'The *Euthydemus* as a locus of the Socratic elenchus', *The New Scholasticism* 25 (1951), 178–83, pp. 179–80.

[63] E.g. *Grg.* 505e, 458e, *Mn.* 75c–d, *Rp.* 454a; cf. G. B. Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 62–3.

[64] Cf. T. Irwin, *Plato's Gorgias* (Oxford, 1979), p. 122, Friedlander, op. cit. (n.22), i. 181: 'Eristic is indistinguishable from dialectic in form, distinguishable only by beneficial intention.'

[65] Compare Vlastos' reluctance to see Socratic irony as an attempt to deceive, 'Socrates' Disavowal of Knowledge', *PQ* 35 (1985), 1–31, p. 30 n. 71.

maintains a confident stand that his deepest beliefs he will never be forced to deny (283c3–5).[66]

V CONCLUSION

In the light of Ctesippus' enthusiastic adoption of eristic strategies we can see why Socrates was dubious about the prospect of his aid. For immediately before the passage with which we began, in which Socrates compared himself to Heracles facing the Hydra, Socrates' own more restrained tactics were enjoying considerable success. Euthydemus had shown his irritation at the qualified nature of Socrates' answers to his either/or questions (295d1). In response to the brothers' claim that we know everything, Socrates had asked Euthydemus to show him how he knew (the obvious impossibility) that the good are unjust (296e4). Euthydemus' somewhat desperate attempts to fudge the issue by misunderstanding the point failed to alert Dionysodorus, who granted that this was a point Socrates did not know. Euthydemus' furious rebuke of Dionysodorus for his error prompted Dionysodorus to blush, a clear image in Plato of dialectical discomfiture.[67] This was the most triumphant part of the discussion for Socrates, since he had caught the brothers out and set them against one another, exposing their duality as a liability rather than an asset.

We might say then that despite ironic descriptions of his plight and appeals for assistance (e.g. 293a2), Socrates can survive handily against the brothers just on his own resources. Sometimes he succeeds in frustrating their arguments. More often he lets them proceed, but leaves no-one in any doubt that their victory is Pyrrhic, maintaining an ironic distance that thwarts their perversion of dialectic And Cleinias makes sufficient progress in Socrates' hands that he draws Crito's incredulous admiration, even from the outer frame of the dialogue (290eff.). But after Ctesippus takes a major role in the debate, he distracts Cleinias' attention and obtains his enthusiastic approval for what Socrates describes as 'over-acting in front of his beloved' (*ὑπεραγωνιᾶν* 300c1, and especially 300d5–7). The brothers' final victory generates laughter and applause, which Socrates explicitly describes as universal, *thus including Cleinias* ('there was no-one present who did not applaud', 303b1). This applause is greater than any applause hitherto, which had been restricted to followers of Euthydemus (303b1–7). Cleinias is now lost, just as Socrates had feared earlier: 'We are afraid for him, as for other young men, that someone may get in first and turn his mind in some other direction [*sc.* than virtue] and ruin him' (275b2–4). So when Socrates offers himself and Cleinias to the brothers as their pupils, his irony extends only to himself (304b7). And when in the epilogue Socrates recommends the role of sophistic pupil to Crito there is no objection, even though Crito characterises himself as preferring to be refuted by sophistic arguments than to refute by means of them (304d1–2).

The conclusion drawn by an observer of the debate, Crito's unnamed speechwriter, is that eristic and philosophy are indistinguishable and that the whole business is worthless and contemptible, philosophy as much as eristic (305a–b).[68] And while Crito himself demurs from that general estimate (in his opinion philosophy possesses 'some charm', 304e6), nevertheless he agrees that debating publicly with the brothers

[66] Cf. *Grg.* 473b: 'the truth is never refuted.'

[67] Cf. the famous blush of Thrasymachus (*Rp.* 350d3), and Hippocrates (*Prt.* 312a2), and cf. the protest of Callicles (*Grg.* 494e7).

[68] This observer is traditionally identified with Isocrates, left unnamed to avoid anachronism. In support of the identification one might mention Isocrates' persistent encouragement of the confusion between eristic and Socratic conversation (e.g. *Adv. Soph.* 291b, *Antid.* 258).

deserves censure, and is himself now in doubt about directing his son towards philosophy. The confusion of elenchus and eristic has made even him, a follower of Socrates, sceptical about the value of philosophical education in general (306dff.). Now Plato often leaves the success or failure of Socratic conversations ambiguously unresolved. But in the *Euthydemus*, as Gilbert Ryle observed, Socrates suffers a clear technical knockout unmatched in the dialogues.[69] Those who maintain that Socrates can successfully employ underhand tactics need to explain why he doesn't do so to avoid this defeat.

What is disturbing about Ctesippus' putative assistance in the *Euthydemus* is that while on the surface it looks like a defence of Socrates against sophistic attack, in fact it employs the very devices that Socrates is seeking help against, and thus serves to undermine the Socratic alternative. The dialogue as a whole, that is to say, not only points a contrast between Socratic elenchus and sophistic logic-chopping, it also exhibits their closely similar appearance.[70] The similarity between logical discussion and its fallacious image is not restricted to the ancient world, as viewers of Monty Python will recognise. But there is a serious dimension to Socrates' predicament, for Plato elsewhere argues that it was a jury unable to tell the difference between elenchus and sophistry that condemned Socrates.[71] The role of Ctesippus in the *Euthydemus* illustrates how their similarity is such that even a follower of Socrates can fail to distinguish them.[72]

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[69] Op. cit. p. 159.

[70] Cf. Scolnicov, art. cit. (n. 23), esp. p. 29.

[71] *Ap.* 18bff., etc. and cf. Anytus' threat (*Mn.* 94e3ff.).

[72] A number of colleagues and friends were kind enough to read this paper in draft. None will object if I make special mention of assistance and encouragement received from George Gellie (1918–1988).