

as MacDowell says 'a traditional omen of failure in an enterprise', and so exploited by Aristophanes also in *Eq.* 197–210 – Atossa's dream is followed by the omen in which the Persian eagle is similarly humiliated by the Greek hawk. The choice of eagle, almost certainly by Aeschylus, and possibly by Aristophanes, is of course connected with the symbolism of the royal house of Persia (Xen. *Cyr.* 7.1.4, *An.* 1.10.12, Philostr. *Im.* 2.31, Quint. Curt. 3.3.16).

University of Edinburgh

E. KERR BORTHWICK

### THE COMPLEXITY OF SOCRATIC IRONY: A NOTE ON PROFESSOR VLASTOS' ACCOUNT<sup>1</sup>

Professor Vlastos argues that Socratic irony was responsible for a momentous change in the way in which irony was understood in ancient times. Before Socrates, he argues, irony is connected with lying and deceit, but after Socrates it is associated with wit and urbanity. Vlastos claims that Socratic irony is distinctive and complex. According to Vlastos, Socratic irony involves no hint of deception; it consists simply in saying something which when understood in one way is false, but when understood in another way is true.

I wish to cast doubt on the idea that the term 'irony'<sup>2</sup> changed its meaning, by pointing out an important aspect of Socratic irony which Vlastos overlooks. Socrates has two audiences, the 'in-crowd', Socrates' entourage who follow him around the market-place appreciating the wit and wisdom of his remarks, and the 'outsiders', those hapless interlocutors of Plato's early dialogues who are completely befuddled by Socrates' questioning. The in-crowd discern Socrates' true meaning; the outsiders do not. The in-crowd can see the humour in the outsiders' bumbling attempts at understanding; the outsiders cannot. The outsiders are justified in feeling cheated. They engage in discussion in good faith, while Socrates and his friends share a private joke at their expense. When Socrates says at his trial that he deserves free meals at the Prytaneum for the rest of his life,<sup>3</sup> he must have expected the outsiders to disagree with a vengeance.

In Plato's hands, Socratic irony takes on an added dimension. For the purposes of *dramatic* irony, Plato fully exploits the fact that Socratic irony amuses and pleases those in the know, while deceiving and angering those on the outside. Plato writes for those readers who, like Professor Vlastos, will understand what Socrates is saying, and who will become members of the in-crowd, enjoying the wit and humour of Socrates' remarks. Like Socrates, Plato makes no special effort to aid those who will not understand and who will identify with Socrates' accusers and feel angry and betrayed, for example, I. F. Stone.<sup>4</sup>

Quintilian and Cicero, whose comments Vlastos cites as evidence for a change in the ancients' understanding of irony, would have identified with the in-crowd. As orators, they not only appreciate irony, but are adept at dispensing it themselves. Therefore it is not surprising that Cicero thinks of irony as witty and urbane, and that Quintilian fails to mention its ability to deceive.<sup>5</sup> For the outsider, however, irony

<sup>1</sup> G. Vlastos, 'Socratic Irony', *CQ* 37 (1987), 79–96, now chapter 1 of his book, *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca, New York, 1991), pp. 21–44.

<sup>2</sup> In Greek, 'εἰρωνεία', in Latin, 'ironia'.

<sup>3</sup> Plato, *Apology* 36d.

<sup>4</sup> I. F. Stone, *The Trial of Socrates* (Boston, 1988).

<sup>5</sup> Cicero, *De Oratore* 2.67; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 9.22.44.

remains as tricky and deceptive as it ever was. Irony has not changed. It is just that one's view of irony depends on whether or not one is its butt. In short, Socratic irony, like irony in general, is even more complex than Professor Vlastos allows.

University of Wisconsin-Madison

PAULA GOTTLIEB

LUCILIUS AND HIS NOSE (PLINY, *N.H.*, PRAEF. 7)

In his prefatory epistle dedicating his *Naturalis Historia* to Vespasian, the elder Pliny takes great pains to plead that his *magnum opus* (which at praef. 1 he compares with Catullus' *nugae*!) is unworthy of the emperor: 'maiorem te sciebam, quam ut descensurum huc putarem' (praef. 6). Continuing in this vein, Pliny goes on to say praeterea est quaedam publica etiam eruditorum reiectio', and appeals for support to the great Cicero: 'utitur illa et M. Tullius extra omnem ingenii aleam positus, et, quod miremur, per aduocatum defenditur' (praef. 7). Cicero's *aduocatus* is the satirist Lucilius, from whom a mangled fragment in trochaic septenarii is then quoted: 'nec doctissimis. Manium Persium haec legere nolo, Iunium Congum uolo.' The sense of this fragment, which Pliny very probably quoted from the now-lost beginning of Cicero's preface to his *De Re Publica*, can be restored from Cicero, *De Oratore* 2.25: 'nam ut C. Lucilius... dicere solebat ea quae scriberet neque ab indoctissimis se neque a doctissimis legi uelle, quod alteri nihil intelligerent, alteri plus fortasse quam ipse; quo etiam scripsit "Persium non curo legere"' (hic enim fuit, ut noramus, omnium fere nostrorum hominum doctissimus), "Laelium Decimum uolo" (quem cognouimus uirum bonum et non illiteratum, sed nihil ad Persium): sic ego...'. This latter passage has allowed the former to be restored, to some extent *exempli gratia*, to the following form in Warmington's<sup>1</sup> and Krenkel's<sup>2</sup> editions of Lucilius:

$\bar{u} \quad \bar{o} \quad \bar{u} \quad \bar{u} \quad \bar{u} \quad \bar{o} \quad \bar{u}$  <ab indoctissimis>  
 nēc doctissimis <legi me>; Mán<iúm Manil>iúm  
 Pérsiúm<ue> haec légere nólo, Iúniúm Congúm uoló.

<ab indoctissimis> Warmington      <legi me> Warmington      Man<ium Manil>ium Cichorius  
 Persium<ue> Marx

Whatever one thinks of these supplements, it is clear that this passage, as transmitted in the MSS. of Pliny, is very lacunose; even allowing for the possibility that Cicero was deliberately excerpting phrases rather than transcribing complete verses, it is obvious that at a minimum the isolated 'nec doctissimis' requires some supplement to yield grammar and sense. Since it is virtually certain that Lucilius' verse was not turned into gibberish by Cicero, nor Cicero's quotation of Lucilius by Pliny, the lacunae in the preserved text doubtless arose from scribal omissions during the process of the transmission of the *N.H.* from antiquity to the Carolingian era, the date of the earliest extant MSS. which preserve the preface (the best and oldest MSS. do not).<sup>3</sup> This example clearly illustrates 'the general truth, that where no

<sup>1</sup> E. H. Warmington [ed.], *Remains of Old Latin*, iii (*Lucilius, The Twelve Tables*) (London, 1938), pp. 200–1.

<sup>2</sup> W. Krenkel [ed.], *Lucilius, Satiren*, ii (Leiden, 1970), pp. 344–5.

<sup>3</sup> L. Jan and C. Mayhoff [edd.], *C. Plini Secundi Naturalis Historiae Libri XXXVII*, i (Leipzig, 1906), p. 3, cite as witnesses to this part of the preface E = Paris. Lat. 6795 (s. IX/X), a = Vindobonensis 234 (s. XII), d = Paris. Lat. 6797 (s. XII<sup>3/4</sup>), and e = Paris. Lat. 6796A (s. XIII), 'a faithful copy of E', in the words of L. D. Reynolds in his article 'The Elder Pliny' in *Texts and Transmission* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 307–16, from whom I have taken these dates. See B. Munk Olsen, *L'Étude des Auteurs Classiques Latins aux XI<sup>e</sup> et XII<sup>e</sup> Siècles*, ii (Paris, 1985), pp. 243–73, for the particulars of several other MSS. (Munk Olsen's nos. 4, 12, 23, 29, 36, 38, 52, and 65), none